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BRONZEVILLE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT REPORT

An overview of community plans and revitalization projects for the Bronzeville community



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Overview

The purpose of this report is to give an overview of the available community development plans for the Bronzeville neighborhood of Chicago, Illinois.

Formerly known as the “Black Belt”, the Bronzeville area is located on the near south side of Chicago, about one mile west of the lakefront. Historically, Bronzeville has provided the African American community in Chicago with access to housing and jobs—among other opportunities—as they moved north in great numbers during the early 20th century. The Bronzeville area thrived for decades because it was comprised of African Americans of all social classes. As the nation de-industrialized late in the 20th century, the Bronzeville community fell on hard times, as did many neighborhoods on the south side of Chicago. Since the late 1990’s, reinvestment has begun in Bronzeville, from new residential housing and improvements to its public transit locations.

Over the last ten years, Bronzeville has grown in popularity and in the number of community organizations and advocate groups. This report represents a compendium of plans, which have the intent of spearheading economic development, strengthening partnerships, and fostering good relations in Bronzeville. While it does not have an official plan, various entities have all presented plans on the future of Bronzeville, ranging from university students, planning groups, urban development consultants and community organizations.

This document will attempt to summarize the scope of these plans, give the reader the opportunity to understand the purpose of each plan and list the challenges and great opportunities they believe Bronzeville possesses.

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Bronzeville 2040: Revitalization of Chicago's Southside Neighborhood, Part of a Redevelopment Template for Chicago's Neighborhoods

Prepared by:

Ball State University, Department of Urban and Regional Planning:
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Chase C.K. Morris
Corey Feldpausch
Kory Robinzine

Presented:

Tuesdays at APA, American Planning Association Headquarters, Chicago, Illinois, on January 25, 2011

Goal:

The goals of the Southside neighborhood of Bronzeville are to:

- Shape how land is used
- Generate more opportunities for residents
- Elevate the quality of life for all individuals

Challenges:

- How can Bronzeville...
 - Avoid social ills and negative perceptions?
 - Overcome outside competition for the same resources, including public and private investment?

Background:

- Large migration of African Americans to Southside Chicago in early 1900s:
 - 330,000 African Americans in 1940
 - Nicknamed the "Black Belt" in 1945
 - Restrictive covenants placed on 75 percent of residential property

Focus Areas:

Market Research was extracted from the following neighborhoods:

Primary Trade Area neighborhoods:

- Douglas
- Grand Boulevard
- Oakland
- Kenwood

Secondary Trade Area consists of all neighborhoods in the Primary Trade Area, and:

- Near Southside

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- Washington Park
- Hyde Park

Development is encouraged to take place within the following boundaries:

- Bowen Avenue (to the north)
- Cottage Grove Avenue (to the west)
- Ellis Avenue (to the east)
- 46th Avenue (to the south)

Community Assets:

- Close proximity to various modes of public transit
- Adjacency to the lakefront
- Access to numerous elementary and high schools
- University partnerships
- Great history and architectural features
- Existing economic infrastructure

Recommendations:

Primary Revitalization Strategies:

- Affordable Housing
 - Innovation: Alleviating the burden of housing costs for low-to-moderate income individuals
 - Location: Residential zones
 - Strategy for Success: Partnering with affordable housing developers and pursuing funding
- Creative Class
 - Innovation: working professionals of art and knowledge-based professions living in one area
 - Location: Proximity to universities (knowledge base) and high exposure locations (art base)
 - Strategy for Success: Provide resources that attract art and knowledge-based professionals
- Economic Development
 - Innovation: Attracting and retaining wealth in the community
 - Location: Throughout Bronzeville
 - Strategy for Success: Attracting businesses to move to Bronzeville, promoting entrepreneurship, attracting tourists, and shopping within the community instead of outside
- Employee-Assisted Workforce Housing

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- Innovation: Provide high quality and affordable housing at a reduced cost for the workforce
- Location: Place workforce housing in close proximity to employers and transit options
- Strategy for Success: Form strategic partnerships with all major employers in the community
- Mixed-Use Development
 - Innovation: Multi-story buildings with a wide range of uses that bring vitality to the area
 - Location: Street intersections, which will be transformed into successful economic nodes
 - Strategy for Success: Promote pedestrian environment and increase social activity
- Student Housing
 - Innovation: Incorporate specific amenities that will attract prospective students
 - Location: Emphasis on Bronzeville's cultural features and proximity to partner universities
 - Strategy for Success: Developing opportunities; fostering good relations with residents
- Transit-Oriented Development
 - Innovation: Ability to access one's home, job, and leisure within ½ of a mile from transit
 - Location: Half-mile radii from transit stations
 - Strategy for Success: Create pedestrian-oriented environments by transit; promote walking
- Workforce Development
 - Innovation: Provide business incubation, job training, and other relevant resources
 - Location: Throughout Bronzeville
 - Strategy for Success: Form strategic alliances with appropriate policy makers, including the Chicago Community Development Corporation

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Secondary Revitalization Strategies:

- Business Development
- Community Development
- Education Development
- Marketing Campaign
- Park and Trail System
- Physical Improvement
- Sustainable Development

Source:

Frankel, B., Morris, C., Feldpausch, C., & Robinzine, K. (2011, January).
A Redevelopment Template for Chicago's Neighborhoods. Muncie, Indiana: Ball State
University.

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Reconnecting Neighborhoods: Final Recommendations Report

Prepared by:

HNTB Corporation
MKC Associates
Metropolitan Planning Council

Adopted by:

Chicago Plan Commission, on July 15, 2009

Goal:

To reconnect regions of Chicago by improving access to public transportation, increasing commercial services, and improving the pedestrian environment. The major focus is the Mid-South area, which encompasses the Bronzeville neighborhood.

Challenge:

How will all of the South Side be connected to services and activity generators in the future?

Background:

The process of putting together *Reconnecting Neighborhoods: Final Recommendations Report* involved:

Community Input:

- Kick-off meeting in November 2007
- IGAC and Taskforce meetings (*for more details, see page 9*)
- Various community meetings

Focus Area:

The zone of focus is officially designated as the “Mid-South” area. It is bounded by:

- 35th Street (to the north)
- Lake Shore Drive (to the east)
- Martin Luther King Drive (to the west)
- 43rd Street (to the south)

Assets:

- Hyde Park and University of Chicago (to the south)
- Burnham Park and nearby Lake Michigan (to the east)
- Illinois Institute of Technology and Rail Transit service (to the west)

Liabilities:

- Lacks regular and convenient connections to the lakefront and Lake Shore Drive
- Nearby rail transit is beyond the ideal walking distance from stations

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Recommendations:

Frame all future projects and initiatives in the natural context of:

- Equity
- Affordable housing
- Greenhouse gas reduction
- Transportation cost reduction

Place Planning Recommendations into three main categories:

- **Transit Improvements**
 - Short-term (1-5 years)
 - Conduct long-term studies to improve access to the South Side and within
 - Explore the feasibility of operating a streetcar along key commercial corridors
 - Continue the extended service hours of the #43 bus
 - Install bus shelters and build a bus turnaround at the 39th Street Beach parking lot
 - Improve bike parking at all train stations and bus stops
 - Mid-term (5-10 years)
 - Improve signs, lighting, and sidewalks for Green Line stations at Indiana and 43rd Street
 - Provide greater levels of bus shelter enhancements at retail node stops
 - Establish an express bus along Cottage Grove Avenue and onto Lake Shore Drive
 - Add weekend service on route #39 between “Sox-35th” and “39th Street Beach”
 - Explore adjusting headways on #3 and #4 bus routes to alleviate rush hour crowding
 - Long-term (10-15 years)
 - Follow the in-depth study; if warranted by ridership projections and availability of funds:
 - Introduce service on the Metra Electric District within the study area
 - Implement Bus Rapid Transit and/or streetcar circulator service to serve other transit modes, along with existing Green Line stations
- **Access and Design**
 - Short-term (1-5 years)
 - Make façade and signage enhancements for buildings, awnings, and stores
 - Design a gateway feature at Lake Shore Drive
 - Implement signage to guide lakefront visitors to neighborhood businesses
 - Mid-term (5-10 years)
 - Improve pedestrian crossings:
 - At the 35th and Cottage Grove intersection
 - Along Martin Luther King Drive at 37th, Pershing, 41st, and 43rd Streets
 - Along Cottage Grove at 38th and 35th Streets
 - Improve access to the lakefront via existing and planned pedestrian/bicycle bridges at:

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- 35th Street
- 39th and 43rd Streets, and Oakwood Boulevard (partially funded by CMAQ grants)
- Long-term (10-15 years)
 - Make streetscape enhancements in conjunction with commercial developments along:
 - Pershing from MLK Drive to Langley
 - 43rd Street from Berkeley to Prairie
 - Oakwood from Mandrake Park to Lake Shore Drive
 - Improve the pedestrian environment with enhanced sidewalks and lighting along:
 - Vincennes from 43rd to Browning
 - 37th from MLK Drive to Cottage Grove
 - Pershing from Evans to Ellis
- **Commercial Development Approach**
 - Short-term (1-5 years)
 - Encourage development of stores next to existing transit stops
 - Undertake zoning that encourages commercial and mixed-use development
 - Conduct a market trade area study to retain retail nodes and attract more commercial development
 - Support a future Arts and Recreation Center, at or near 35th and Cottage Grove
 - Support the establishment of independent retailers near the Green Line station at 43rd Street, and along 43rd Street between Vincennes and Langley
 - Mid-term (5-10 years)
 - Focus retail development along transit-accessible streets, particularly 43rd Street
 - Support development on Pershing Road, Cottage Grove Avenue, and 35th Street
 - Develop mixed-use retail and housing near the Green Line station at 43rd Street
 - Long-term (10-15 years)
 - Develop mixed use retail and housing on Cottage Grove between 40th and 43rd Streets

Source:

Quad Reconnecting Neighborhoods: Final Recommendations Report. (2009, July).
Chicago, Illinois: Metropolitan Planning Council.

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Cottage Grove Beautification Plan

Mission:

Beautification initiatives for the Cottage Grove Corridor include:

- Establishing identity and character.
- Raising awareness and preserving cultural assets.
- Creating a commercial corridor that is a unique destination.
- Accelerating commercial development and attracting new businesses.
- Using art to foster a sense of community between residents, business owners and customers.

Focus Area:

The project area includes all of the land and development along Cottage Grove Avenue, from 39th Street to 51st Street.

Vision:

- Bus shelters with stained glass murals
- Mosaic sidewalk squares
- Bus stops with commemorative posts
- Paintings at tree grates and manholes
- Murals painted on vacant buildings
- Banners on lamp posts
- Obelisks at the 39th and 51st street intersections with Cottage Grove Avenue

Strategy:

- Get assistance from various intergovernmental bodies to develop a “Cottage Grove Beautification Implementation Plan”
- Create and install banners
- Raise money through an effective fundraising campaign
- Place any additional artwork along Cottage Grove Avenue

Key Players:

- Quad Communities Development Corporation
 - Role: Community Organizing
- Partnership of New Communities
 - Role: Project Funding
- Little Black Pearl Resident Artists and Dunbar/CPS Youth
 - Role: Providing the Artwork
- Chicago Department of Transportation, the Department of Planning, the Department of Cultural Affairs, and the 4th Ward Alderman
 - Role: Policy Making

Source: *Cottage Grove Beautification Plan*. (n.d.).

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Mid-South Strategic Plan

Prepared by:

Mid-South Planning Group
Wendell Campbell Associates and Applied Real Estate Analysis
1992-93

Vision:

This strategic plan will be a blueprint for the rejuvenation of one of the most historically significant areas of the City of Chicago. The plan is the result of an evolutionary process involving years of effort by the city and community, represented by the Mid-South Planning Group and its major institutions.

Goal:

For the community to immerse themselves in a revitalization effort that benefits the current residents, rather than displacing them, as new people as come into the community

Methodology:

- Exploration of:
 - Physical and natural resources of the area, as well as the community's human capital
 - Potential economic opportunities
 - Resources that require additional stimulus

Timeline:

- June 1990: The City of Chicago is awarded a grant to prepare a Comprehensive Community Plan for the area surrounding the Illinois Institute of Technology campus
- October 1990: The grant was presented to the City of Chicago Planning Department
- January 1991: the Mid-South Planning Group becomes the community's advisory council
- September 1992: Wendell Campbell Associates and Applied Real Estate Analysis are hired by the city (after the community's approval) as consultants on the Comprehensive Plan.
- January 1993: The planning team goes on a 2.5-day retreat to prepare for the Plan implementation.
- February 1993: A planning charrette was held to determine the uses of historic landmarks.

Study Area:

- The study area is bounded by:
 - Cermak/22nd Street (to the north)
 - 51st Street (to the south)
 - Lake Michigan/Cottage Grove (to the east)
 - Dan Ryan Expressway (to the west)

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Strategic Assessment:

- Community Development
 - Build on existing strengths and past positive trends in and around the community
 - It should revolve around the area's history and character
 - Current residents should not be displaced, opportunities should be created for them
 - A range of job opportunities for all area residents, including long term economic opportunities for low income individuals and public housing residents
- Residential Development
 - The study area can adequately house 100,000 people
 - Accommodating households with wide ranges of incomes
 - Increased population density will help bring in more community services and transportation modes
- Retail Development
 - Increased population density is crucial in supporting a wide variety of retail establishments
 - Up to 900,000 square feet of retail space can be supported by local residents
 - With an influx of tourism, retail space can be expanded to 1.4 million square feet (see *"Tourism-Oriented Development"*)
- Non-Retail Commercial and Industrial Development
 - The following amenities will help attract more employers to the Mid-South Area:
 - Excellent access to the region's expressway system
 - Proximity to downtown employment centers
 - An existing area of small businesses, as a base for future growth
 - Local hospital and educational facilities that can bring "spin-off" development into the area
- Tourism-Oriented Development
 - Important for diversifying the local economy
 - An influx of visitors should support an additional 400,000 to 500,000 square feet of retail space
 - Restoration of the "Black Metropolis"
 - Concentration of nightclubs in the "Blues District" on 43rd Street
 - Construction of a 15,000-20,000 seat multi-purpose facility and supplementary hotel(s) near McCormick Ave
- Historic Preservation
 - Important in maintaining the Mid-South's cultural and historical identity
 - Vacant structures and under-utilized buildings have made it hard to preserve historical buildings
 - Stronger code enforcement is needed
 - Preservation needed specifically along major east-west arterials, Cottage Grove Avenue, and Oakwood Boulevard

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Assets:

- Lake Michigan: provides scenic views, attracts tourists, and works as a great public recreation area
- Dan Ryan Expressway, Lake Shore Drive, and I-55 provide access to the entire region
- Key redevelopment activities already in progress, including:
 - McCormick Place Expansion
 - Light Rail Circulator
 - Dearborn Park Expansion
 - Chinatown Expansion

Land-Use Recommendations:

- Residential
 - Retain the residential character of the community
 - Create individual neighborhoods, proposed for every square half-mile of land: a “quadrant”
 - Each neighborhood quadrant should have:
 - A mixture of housing types
 - Elementary school and park
 - Designated street pattern
- Circulation
 - Re-designation of the street system/pattern
 - Aside from commercial and manufacturing areas, all streets should have a residential feel
 - Indiana and Michigan avenues should revert back to being two-way streets
 - Major north-south arterials should become formal boulevards with landscaped curbsides
 - Parking lots should be landscaped
 - The Light Rail Circulator should be extended to Hyde Park (terminating at the Museum of Science and History)
- Hotel/Office
 - A planned 400-room hotel and 15,000 to 20,000-seat multi-purpose facility (at the north side of the study area) will accommodate conventions and bring in tourists
- Retail
 - Community Retail
 - Large shopping area, requiring a minimum 11 acres of land for development
 - Variety of consumer goods and services (shoe stores, grocery, restaurants, etc.)
 - Designated nodes at 35th and King Drive, and also at 47th and Cottage Grove Avenue
 - Neighborhood Retail
 - Small to medium sized shopping areas, requiring a minimum of 7 acres of land
 - Affords people the opportunity to shop within walking distance
 - Locations at 31st, 35th, 39th, 43rd, 47th, and 51st Streets

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- Neighborhood Convenience Centers
 - Very small, isolated, and clustered with other shops
 - Located all throughout the study area
- Light Industrial/Research and Development Parks
 - Expressways, truck route designations, and buildings with open floor plans are needed to accommodate light industrial and research parks
- Parks, Open Space, Plazas, and Recreational Areas
 - All homes should be within at least 3.5 blocks of significant park and recreational facilities
 - Parks should surround existing schools to create campus settings and to improve recreational facilities
- Neighborhood Support Services
 - More elementary, high schools, and institutions of higher learning need to be woven into the residential fabric
 - Medical institutions in the area should be accommodated for future expansion as they provide jobs and access to health care

Source:

Wendell Campbell Associates and Applied Real Estate Analysis, & Mid-South Planning Group. (1993). *Mid-South Strategic Plan*. Chicago, Illinois.