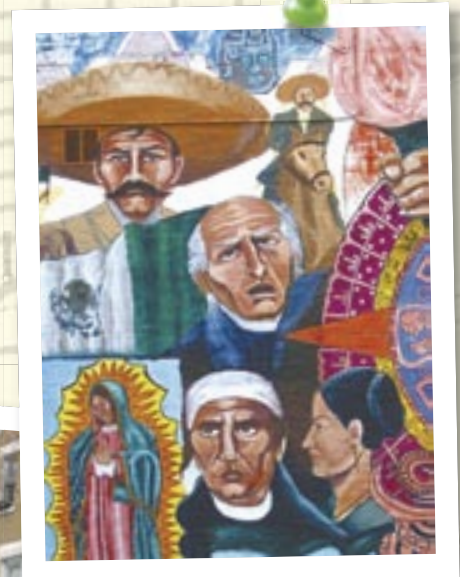


LITTLE VILLAGE: Capital of the Mexican Midwest

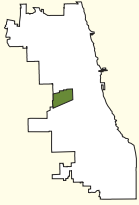
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



LITTLE VILLAGE

MCKINLEY PARK

Little Village



Planning Task Force

Little Village Community Development Corporation (LVCDC) thanks the more than 150 community residents, leaders, business owners and social-service providers who shared their ideas, time and effort to develop this quality-of-life plan. The energy and resources they bring to changing and improving our community are invaluable.

Luis Alva *Little Village Chamber of Commerce*

Debbie Alvarado *Piotrowski Park*

José J. Alvarez *LVCDC Board Member*

Guadalupe Ayala *Eli Whitney School*

Julieta Bolivar *Community resident*

Theeb Darwish *Unilever*

Martha de la Vega *Little Village Chamber of Commerce*

Fanny Diego *Farragut High School Career Academy student*

Elena Duran *LVCDC Board President*

Jesús M. Estrada *Jorge Prieto Health Clinic*

Ricardo Estrada *Erie Neighborhood House*

Sgt. Gabriel Flores *Chicago Police Department*

Victor Flores *LVCDC Public Safety Committee*

Rev. Matt Foley *St. Agnes Parish*

Jesús García *LVCDC Executive Director*

Marcos Gamez *La Villita Community Church*

Marilu Gonzalez *Violence Prevention Collaborative of Little Village*

Nilda Laurel *Community resident*

Janice Lopez *Women's Business Development Center*

Martin Lopez *St. Agnes Parish*

Tim McCormick *St. Anthony Hospital*

Rev. Peter McQuinn *Epiphany Parish*

Ald. Ricardo Muñoz *City of Chicago, 22nd Ward*

Cristina Padilla *Community resident*

Salvador Pedroza *Little Village Chamber of Commerce*

Renee Plaza *Unilever*

Rev. Victor Rodriguez *La Villita Community Church*

Maria A. Rojas *St. Anthony Hospital*

Jose Saldaña *Community resident*

Juan Salgado *Instituto del Progreso Latino*

Leopoldo Saucedo *LVCDC Board Member*

Mauricio Sone *LVCDC Board Member*

William Velazquez *LVCDC Board Vice President*

Olga Verduzco *LVCDC Board Treasurer*

Josie Yanguas *Little Village High School Transition Advisory Council*

Little Village Community Development Corporation (LVCDC)

LVCDC was formed in 1990 by Little Village residents who came together as volunteers to redevelop the abandoned industrial park at 26th Street and Kostner Avenue. Through this effort, the LVCDC founders felt they needed to create an organization that would engage neighborhood residents in planning for their community's development.

LVCDC became a staffed organization in 1998, when the board hired its first executive director, a former Little Village alderman and Illinois state senator. Today the organization has more than 15 staff and has broadened its work to address both economic and educational development. Its mission is to:

Ensure a balanced development of the Little Village community that respects the wishes of community residents, including working families, local businesses, faith-based organizations, senior citizens, and youth.

Unlike many community development corporations, LVCDC has thus far put less emphasis on bricks-and-mortar projects and more on community organizing and collaboration with other organizations and individuals.

It helps identify neighborhood needs and involves residents in projects that will benefit them and their families. LVCDC hopes to guarantee a strong, consistent community voice in matters affecting Little Village.

In the last six years, LVCDC has worked on the 26th and Kostner development, established block clubs and implemented programs in industrial retention, violence prevention and housing counseling, as well as multiple efforts to elevate the quality of education for children and adults. LVCDC is committed to creating an "education renaissance" in Little Village that will break the cycle of low educational achievement, violence and limited economic mobility.

A Healthy, Safe and Prosperous Mexican Community



Neighborhood residents participated in creation of the vision statement.

Little Village will be the retail, residential and cultural capital of the Mexican community in the Midwest—a healthy, safe and prosperous neighborhood alive with Mexican arts and culture, and a great place to live for both longtime residents and new immigrants. *La Villita* will be an attractive, peaceful community where residents of all ages have the opportunity to learn, work, worship, play and create a better life for themselves and their families.

KEY PROJECTS

Mixed-use development around CTA train stations

Commercial corridor streetscape enhancements

Housing opportunity site
New housing
Rehabilitation

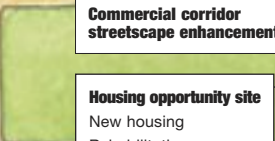
New park development

Manuel Perez Jr. Plaza improvements/enhancement

Industrial identity program

Boulevard beautification

High school/park connection



SUMMARY

La Villita: A Cultural and Business Destination



Generations of Mexicans have adopted Little Village as their home.

Little Village, or *La Villita*, is the retail, residential and cultural capital of the Mexican Midwest, and we want to retain that role for many years to come. With more than a thousand businesses along famous 26th Street and elsewhere, our neighborhood attracts visitors from all over Illinois and other states. To continue as a cultural and economic magnet, we must preserve our Mexican identity and strengthen the services, businesses, organizations and people that make us unique.

Over the past 30 years, Little Village has become a major port of entry for Mexican immigrants, and our community has been strengthened by the economic power, traditions, determination and hope that they bring.

While solid housing stock and thriving commercial districts have been key to our prosperity, we are challenged to invest in our human resources—especially in our youth and families. Half of our residents are under the age of 25, creating a demand for better schools, recreation programs and health and social services. Our schools are overcrowded and under-performing. Little Village has high rates of diabetes, obesity, and depression. We are among the city neighborhoods with the most violence and fewest parks.

This plan lays out eight strategies and more than 40 projects for making Little Village a great place to live. We want to create a large new park on the east side of the

community and a new retail and housing development on vacant land at 26th and Kostner. We plan to improve academic performance by creating more small schools and community schools and by supporting the new Little Village High School campus.

We will partner with established organizations to bolster our health and human services, strengthen our business districts and improve public safety. And we will generate more positive activities for youth, including recreation, entertainment and arts opportunities.

Through all of these activities, Little Village can maintain its position as a vibrant center of Mexican life.

STRATEGIES AND PROJECTS

STRATEGY 1 Expand access to parks and open space by improving facilities and creating a large new park.

1.1 Develop a large new park on the east side of the neighborhood, with connections to residential areas and the canal.

1.2 Improve facilities at Piotrowski Park, create connections to the new Little Village High School campus and explore expansion of green space.

1.3 Improve campus parks, small parks and play lots throughout the neighborhood.

1.4 Establish a management entity for the Manuel Perez, Jr., Plaza and continue to enhance the plaza as a center for community activities.

STRATEGY 2 Make high-quality education for youth and adults the cornerstone of Little Village's future.

2.1 Support the small-school culture at the Little Village High School campus.

2.2 Promote the community-schools model and support expanded evening and weekend programming throughout Little Village.

2.3 Create a community-schools network.

2.4 Create programs to promote college and other post-secondary education.

2.5 Develop a student-teacher community center and residence.

2.6 Broaden local education choices.

STRATEGY 3 Create a safe and peaceful community through violence prevention, gang intervention and increased resources for youth and families.

3.1 Build and strengthen the Violence Prevention Collaborative (VPC) as a key vehicle to address community safety issues.

3.2 Promote positive, respectful and productive relationships between police and community members.

3.3 Expand street-level gang intervention to deter local youth from crime and violence.

3.4 Support prevention efforts and establish new programs to address family and domestic violence, gang violence, teen dating violence, alcoholism and drug abuse.

3.5 Address the needs of juvenile offenders through programs such as Balanced and Restorative Justice and the Juvenile Intervention and Support Center (JISC).

3.6 Broaden opportunities for youth to engage in constructive activities.

STRATEGY 4 Foster healthier families by improving and expanding health and social services for all residents, regardless of age, income or immigration status.

- 4.1** Develop the Mexican Immigrant Resource Center (MIRC), which will begin with services for Mexican immigrants and expand into a multi-service youth and family center.
- 4.2** Develop the St. Anthony Wellness Center, which will take a holistic approach to individual and family wellness.
- 4.3** Increase affordable, accessible preventive and primary health care.
- 4.4** Expand comprehensive health and mental health education and screenings for adults and children.
- 4.5** Improve the quality of child care and expand options for families by establishing a child-care providers network and center.
- 4.6** Research the viability of connecting social-service providers through information technology.
- 4.7** Create a multi-agency partnership to provide services for senior citizens.
- 4.8** Plan and implement a community-wide campaign to reduce teen pregnancy in Little Village.

STRATEGY 5 Improve the business district and create new mixed-use developments at 26th and Kostner and other sites.

- 5.1** Support mixed-use redevelopment at 26th Street and Kostner Avenue.
- 5.2** Improve the appearance and functioning of established commercial corridors.
- 5.3** Bolster the community's image with gateway and corridor treatments.
- 5.4** Explore opportunities for transit-oriented development around new CTA Blue Line stations.

STRATEGY 6 Attract sustainable, environmentally friendly industry and expand economic opportunities for local workers.

- 6.1** Establish a Planned Manufacturing District (PMD) in industrial portions of the neighborhood.
- 6.2** Build corridor identity around a signature industrial activity.
- 6.3** Establish a dedicated industrial road south of 31st Street.
- 6.4** Develop streetscape and signage programs.
- 6.5** Link workforce development to employer needs by addressing three major barriers to employment: language, skill deficits, and immigration status.

STRATEGY 7 Maintain the neighborhood's attractive and affordable housing and create new housing to meet changing needs.

- 7.1** Develop housing for seniors.
- 7.2** Expand programs to support homeowners and renters.
- 7.3** Develop new housing and preserve existing housing.
- 7.4** Develop a strategy to address the short-term and long-term housing needs of the homeless in the neighborhood.

STRATEGY 8 Create and expand arts opportunities for youth and families.

- 8.1** Create a Little Village arts collaborative to organize and expand arts, music, and cultural activities.
- 8.2** Open a school-community facility at the Telpochcalli/Maria Saucedo campus.
- 8.3** Create new partnerships with city music and art schools to offer in-school and out-of-school programs to children and adults.

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.

For more information

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Richard Wilson, Camiros, Ltd., cover (middle left,
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Juan Francisco Hernandez, cover (far left, far right)

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