



Smart Communities

CHICAGO DIGITAL EXCELLENCE INITIATIVE

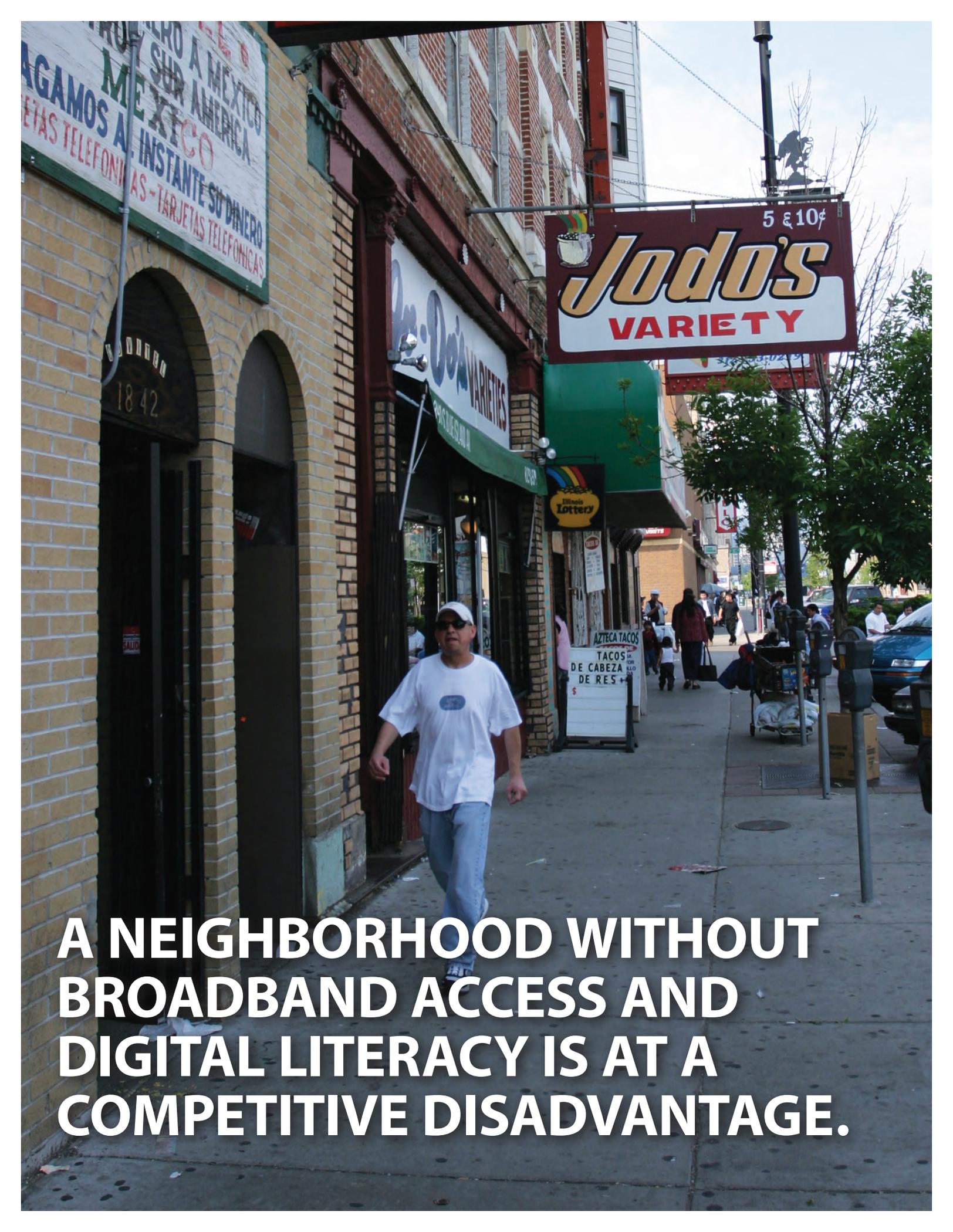
# A Platform for Participation and Innovation

**SMART COMMUNITIES IN CHICAGO  
MASTER PLAN**

By LISC/Chicago and its neighborhood partners in Auburn Gresham •  
Chicago Lawn • Englewood • Humboldt Park • Pilsen

DECEMBER 2009





**A NEIGHBORHOOD WITHOUT  
BROADBAND ACCESS AND  
DIGITAL LITERACY IS AT A  
COMPETITIVE DISADVANTAGE.**

# Smart Communities: An Opportunity for Chicago

Digital technology is transforming our commerce, culture and community. How we buy books, apply for jobs, watch movies and make friends has radically changed. But for many Chicago neighborhoods the Internet presents a participation paradox. Inexpensive computers or free broadband access does not, *by itself*, bring the full power of the Internet to residents who lack online experience, nor does it protect an untrained user from identity theft. When youth gain proficiency in digital media, this does not guarantee they are using technology in meaningful, educational ways. And while the advent of e-government provides access to more information and services, it does not automatically bring into civic life those who've historically been disconnected.

A neighborhood without broadband access and digital literacy is at a competitive disadvantage in an age when local economies are increasingly connected to regional and global economies. To move our neighborhoods forward economically requires investing in their broadband infrastructure as much as their physical infrastructure. To improve the quality of life of our residents requires improving their access to, and comfort with, technology tools that can help them get a job, find a babysitter, reach new customers or pay their bills.

The barriers we face are real and substantial. A 2009 study shows that many Chicago residents have not embraced broadband and digital technology because they perceive it to be too difficult, are not interested, or feel the cost is too high. Many community organizations and businesses are also behind the curve, hampered by outdated technologies, aging or insufficient equipment, and lack of familiarity with the software and Internet tools that could help them with their everyday work.

We are about to change all that.

Widespread digital adoption in homes, businesses and other local institutions begins with the availability of high-speed Internet access and the hardware and software that are already widely available in higher-income communities. But building a culture of digital excellence will require outreach, personal

connections, family-friendly computer-access centers and culturally appropriate training. It will require building new "digital leadership" by identifying the early adopters of technology in our communities. It means tailoring outreach and education efforts to reach all our neighbors. It will take content and applications that speak to and serve local residents and businesses. Together, these resources can transform our communities, connect them to the information economy and unleash new creativity and economic potential.

The programs and projects in this plan are catalysts. No one program is sufficient to provide all the digital resources a community needs. But by putting in place a network of resources to jumpstart a culture of technology, we can support and enhance the assets of our neighborhoods — where we care for our children and our seniors, where education is a lifelong process, where local economies thrive and grow because they are connected to the larger economy, and where residents connect with government and can advocate for their needs.

Broadband access is not an end goal. This plan builds on our existing quality-of-life goals — from education to economic development to safety and youth programs. Throughout our planning process, hundreds of people came together over an intense and condensed period of time to determine ways in which broadband access and digital technology could be

used to support and enhance existing strategies and reach neighborhood objectives. Our communities concluded that combining “high touch” personal connections with the expansion of existing programs through technology would achieve tangible benefits in education, job development and social networks. The result would be an improved quality of life and expanded economic opportunities.

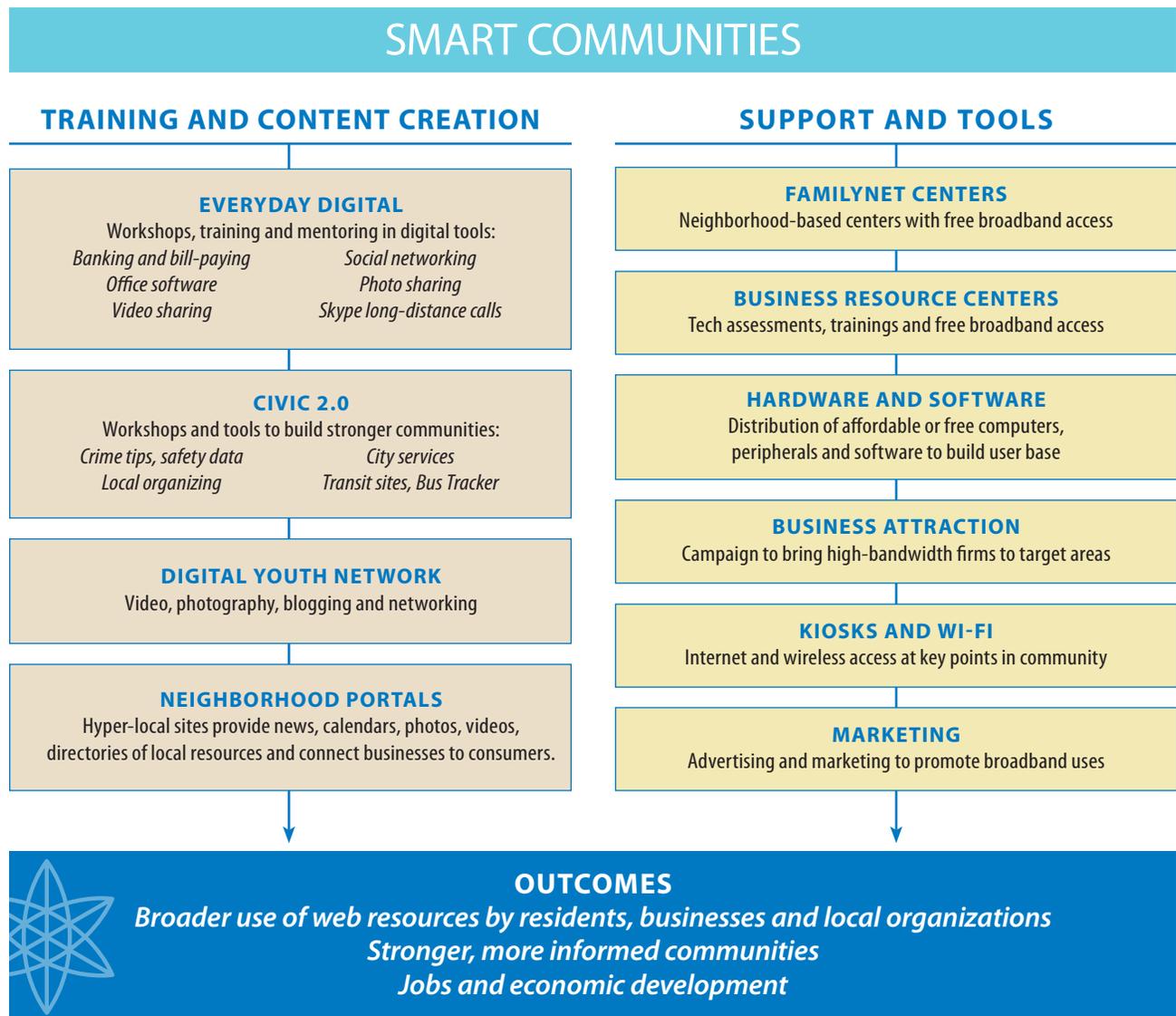
We can break down the barriers to Internet use and connect our neighborhoods. But to do this we need an investment of capital and the right people with the right tools. Together, our five communities can create a diverse culture of technology that values people first, and therefore sees technology as a tool to improve residents’ quality of life.

We will achieve this by investing in common-sense training in Internet usage and by taking advantage of available hardware

and software. We will provide more Internet access at public settings, along our commercial corridors and in residents’ homes. We will help youth lead the way with more after-school and summer programs that encourage them to create content and consume it wisely. And we will support local businesses to gain a competitive edge through technology use.

Our work will be organized around five key strategies:

- Build awareness of the power of digital technologies.
- Expand digital education and training for individuals, families and businesses.
- Improve access to technology and the Internet at home and in the community.
- Generate local content and improve access to neighborhood news and resources.
- Help existing businesses grow and attract new businesses.



# A Platform for Digital Excellence

The Smart Communities program aspires to enable full participation in meaningful digital activities by households, businesses and institutions. Smart Communities will increase local knowledge, expand economic and educational opportunities, and enhance connections among residents and businesses. The program is a key part of the City of Chicago's Digital Excellence Initiative, which was launched by Mayor Richard M. Daley in July 2009 to help close the digital divide. Local Initiatives Support Corporation/Chicago is the program administrator, and the MacArthur Foundation, The Chicago Community Trust, Microsoft and the State of Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity have provided early support for this pilot program.

Smart Communities responds to a major recommendation of the Mayor's Advisory Council on Closing the Digital Divide, whose work culminated in the 2007 report, [The City that NetWorks](#). Our Smart Communities will develop a series of pilot projects to "test how best to convert digital excellence into personal and community transformation." The projects will reflect five "drivers of digital excellence," identified by the Advisory Council, which allow full participation in the information revolution:

- **Raised awareness and evolving mindsets** that value learning, connecting and communicating through technology, and that recognize the personal and economic opportunities of Internet participation.
- **Effective Internet access** that is high-speed, affordable and available everywhere.
- **Affordable hardware** that can run the full range of Internet resources and includes **suitable software** that meets the needs of individuals, families, businesses and communities.
- **Digital education** that provides the training and technical support for users to become comfortable and proficient with technology.
- **Digital programming, skills and content** that make technology relevant and useful to a broad array of users and improves information flows into and out of neighborhoods.

The projects in this plan provide the structure and momentum to create these drivers over the next two to five years. As the pilot Smart Communities achieve digital excellence — universal,

meaningful participation in technology — they show the way for all Chicago communities to have the same opportunities.

## FIVE CHICAGO COMMUNITIES

The program serves five digitally underserved communities: Humboldt Park, Pilsen and the Southwest District comprising Auburn Gresham, Chicago Lawn and Englewood. Each of our communities has its own assets and challenges, but they share a need for increased investment and opportunities for residents and local businesses. Working together provides an excellent opportunity for us to link our communities through the use of technology, build solutions that work in different neighborhoods, and use the process of designing and implementing technology solutions to foster communication and collaboration. The Smart Communities Master Plan offers a platform to advance digital participation and innovation across these five communities.

**Auburn Gresham** is an African-American, moderate-income neighborhood that rebounded in the late 1990s after two decades of residential flight and commercial disinvestment along 79<sup>th</sup> Street. New facilities, programs, housing, and businesses have opened through the joint efforts of the alderman, the city, local churches and community leaders. Auburn Gresham has approximately 53,300 residents, with a large number of seniors.

**Chicago Lawn** is a multi-ethnic working class community determined to create an attractive, safe and inviting place to live for families from many backgrounds. From 1990 to 2005, Chicago Lawn’s population grew by 23 percent, to 62,100. The area has also become more diverse as the African-American population has reached more than 50 percent and the Latino population has grown to 40 percent.

**Englewood**, once home to the city’s second-busiest shopping district at 63<sup>rd</sup> and Halsted streets, in recent decades has struggled to reverse a long decline in population and economic health. But new development in this largely African-American community, including the Kennedy-King College campus, has begun to breathe life into the neighborhood and attract additional investments. Englewood’s population was 36,700 in 2005, from a peak of 97,000 in 1960.

**Humboldt Park** is home to 62,600 residents and is anchored by the 207-acre green space of Humboldt Park. Always an entry point for immigrants, the community today has a large Puerto Rican population to the east, a sizable African-American community to the west, and a growing influx of Mexicans. Recent years have seen commercial and residential development along the Division Street Paseo Boricua (Puerto Rican Way) and new revitalization strategies for the Chicago Avenue commercial district.

**Pilsen** has been a center for Mexican-American culture in Chicago for more than 50 years. Four miles south and west of the Loop, it has excellent access to transportation and major

job centers. Thanks to decades of organizing, Pilsen has made substantial progress in housing, education and economic development. Its population of 45,200 is 95 percent Latino and about 42 percent non-citizens.

**CONFRONTING THE PARTICIPATION GAP**

Four of every 10 Chicagoans face barriers to broadband access and therefore are limited or nonparticipating users of the Internet, according to the July 2009 study, *Digital Excellence in Chicago*. The study — conducted by the University of Illinois at Chicago and the University of Iowa and commissioned by the City of Chicago — found particularly low levels of Internet usage in the five Smart Communities and similar neighborhoods across the city whose residents are older, Latino, African-American, low-income or less educated.

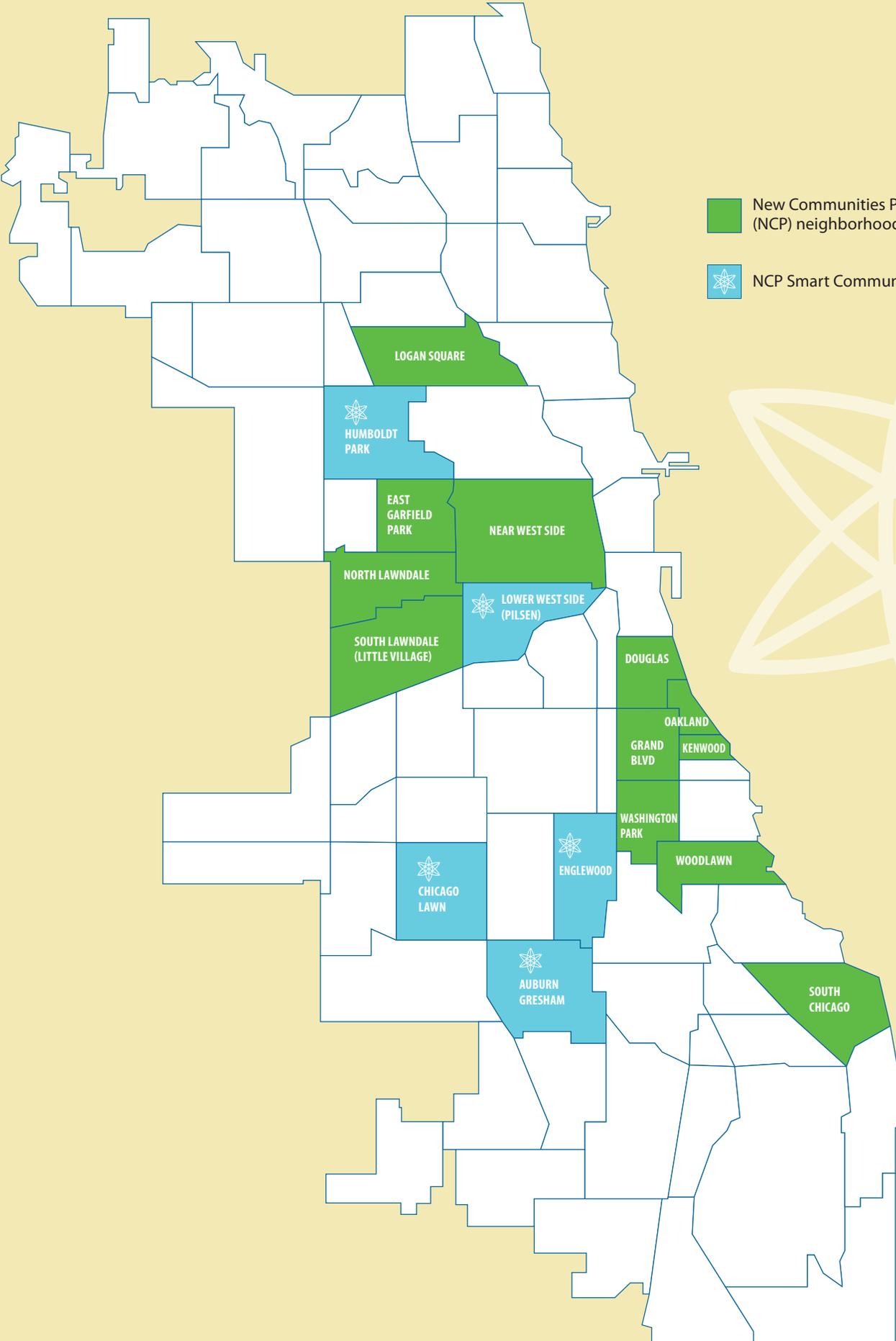
A survey of residents identified three primary barriers to regular broadband use:

- cost
- lack of interest
- difficulty of use

This plan provides a roadmap for addressing each one of these barriers so that residents of Smart Communities can take full advantage of digital resources, from online city services and social networking to employment opportunities and online banking. Access to these resources will in turn help make technology a transformational tool in the ongoing development of our communities.

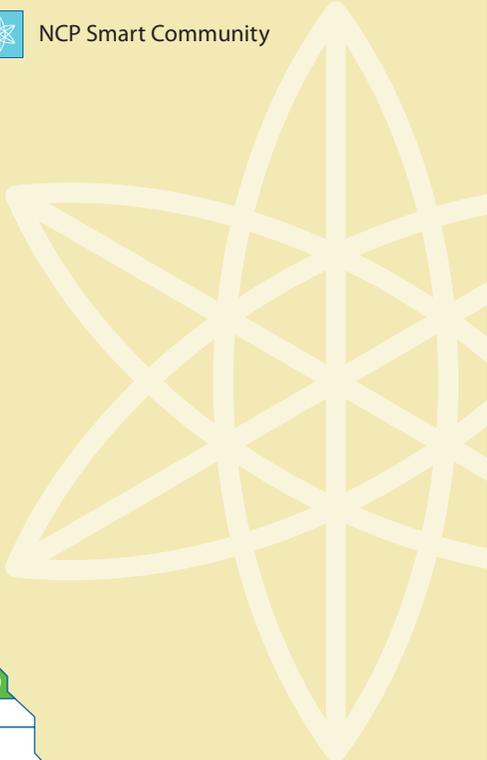
**DIGITAL PARTICIPATION**

Community	Population 2000	Current Broadband Usage	Residents Without Broadband	Reason: Cost	Reason: No Interest	Reason: Difficult to Use
AUBURN GRESHAM	55,928	38%	34,675	49%	41%	35%
CHICAGO LAWN	61,412	51%	30,092	50%	39%	32%
ENGLEWOOD	40,222	56%	17,698	35%	39%	18%
HUMBOLDT PARK	65,836	43%	37,527	53%	33%	29%
PILSEN	44,031	38%	27,299	62%	39%	41%



New Communities Program (NCP) neighborhood

NCP Smart Community



# 3 Planning Provides Local Roadmaps

All five Smart Communities convened residents and organization leaders in 2009 to develop projects that would improve the quality of life of residents through the use of digital technologies and the Internet. Each community benefited from existing relationships among local partners, many of whom had contributed to earlier quality-of-life plans and subsequent implementation efforts. The City of Chicago and LISC/Chicago provided a framework, planning resources and opportunities for small grants to bring project ideas to life.

Each planning effort was adapted to meet local traditions, styles and community assets. The Southwest Partners and Pilsen began with meetings in February and March 2009. Participants developed draft vision statements and goals, identified key constituencies, defined potential geographic corridors for broadband access, and brainstormed strategies and goals to address the five drivers of digital excellence.

**Southwest Partners** — A steering committee with representatives from each of the three lead agencies met to identify community partners, plan a series of public meetings and create a district vision statement. The committee held three public meetings in April and May, with more than 130 participants from the three Southwest Side neighborhoods. Southwest staff also reached out to local businesses, schools, libraries and other stakeholders. Throughout the process, the lead agencies have given special attention to disconnected populations including residents who are ex-offenders, have a disability, are seniors, have limited or no English, are undocumented, or are Section 8 voucher holders. These people, often disconnected from the wider society, are prime candidates for the benefits of technology.

**Pilsen** — Planning was based on the framework of the Pilsen Planning Committee and included outreach meetings that brought together nearly 40 community members and agency representatives. Lead agency staff made special efforts to engage Spanish-speakers and members of the business community. The resulting vision and work plans reflect the ideas, hopes and insight of residents, business owners, youth- and arts-program staff and volunteers, librarians, educators and other institutional leaders.

**Humboldt Park** — The digital excellence plan was based on goals and projects identified by the Humboldt Park New Communities Program Task Force, which completed a new quality-of-life plan in 2008. Since the plan was so recently undertaken, it was agreed that the digital excellence plan would focus on implementing the projects and activities of the new plan, rather than starting from scratch. A Smart Communities committee was formed to represent a cross-section of the organizations of the Task Force, and its recommendations were brought to the Humboldt Park NCP Task Force to solicit input from agencies throughout the community.

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## EARLY ACTION PROJECTS

Building on the “doing while planning” approach used by the New Communities Program, each community launched early action projects to show the promise of their local plans.

Pilsen developed and launched a community news portal ([www.pilsenportal.org](http://www.pilsenportal.org)) that has already drawn thousands of readers and a core of local contributors.

The Southwest Partners and Humboldt Park have supported youth in developing their technology skills and creating new digital content.

The communities also benefited from more than \$1 million worth of Microsoft Software Grants, which were awarded to dozens of local nonprofits.

# 4 Strategies and Projects

Providing access to the Internet is not enough. Access, outreach, equipment and training are all essential to achieving digital excellence in the home, at work and at our local institutions. We will create a culture of technology in our communities that supports, strengthens and furthers the shared values already captured in our quality-of-life plans. This culture will encourage all of our residents to use digital technology to improve their quality of life and connect them more fully to their immediate community and new opportunities in the Chicago region and beyond.

The strategies below provide a framework for all five neighborhoods. Implementation will vary based on local needs and community strengths. Individual neighborhoods may place more emphasis on one strategy or another, but all will be able to use the enhanced platform to improve communication, expand local services, and better access and use existing resources.

## STRATEGY 1

### Build awareness of the power of digital technologies

In each community, we will design and implement a Broadband Adoption Campaign that uses grassroots outreach and marketing to show residents the power of digital tools and, over time, convert them to everyday users. The campaign and marketing efforts will reach the vast majority of community residents with simple and clear messages that digital tools can improve their lives, make everyday tasks easier and provide new forms of recreation. The campaign will lay the groundwork for broad participation in the trainings, Internet access points, incentive programs and other digital resources covered under the other strategies. As meaningful participation in and adoption of broadband technology increases, our five communities will provide a stronger platform for innovation and new investment in other advanced applications, from tele-medicine to smart meters.

#### 1.1 CONDUCT A “HIGH-TOUCH” OUTREACH CAMPAIGN IN EACH COMMUNITY

In each of our communities, we will develop a public outreach campaign managed and led by community organizations that have trusted relationships with local residents. Tech-savvy organizers in each community will connect with institutions and residents to promote and market trainings at new “FamilyNet Centers” that offer free access to computers and the Internet. Some trainings will help people learn “Everyday Digital” skills, ranging from word processing and use of social networks to online commerce and photo sharing. “Civic 2.0” sessions tailored for community leaders will demonstrate how to access culturally relevant content, contribute to “neighborhood web portals,” and use the Internet to improve community safety, monitor local government and get involved in advocacy.

Unlike conventional top-down advertising campaigns, the Smart Communities campaign will be led by local organizations that have strong experience in reaching residents in that neighborhood. Residents will be familiar with the sponsoring organizations and may have benefited from their programs or services in the past, so they are more likely to participate. The outreach will respond to known interests in that neighborhood (as defined during the Smart Communities planning processes) and work to break down barriers identified in the *Digital Excellence in Chicago* report.

The approach is viral. The intent is to use “high-touch” personal interaction to connect interested individuals, community leaders and youth with Internet tools that they find useful. As they become proficient, they will become “digital leaders” and bring along their peers, family members, grandparents and others who would be much harder to reach through a

traditional advertising or promotion campaign. For instance:

- A teenager learns to shoot video and post it on YouTube at her local library. She shows her friends the video and they start shooting their own videos.
- A parent leader at a local school learns how to use websites to find information about public safety, local schools and community organizations. She shows other parents.
- A small business owner posts a directory listing on the community portal and offers coupons as a download. It brings in business; other businesses join in.

Our goal is for the awareness and marketing program (see 1.2) to reach more than 80 percent of residents in the Smart Communities. That will create direct participation of more than 11,000 people over two years through trainings and free broadband access. These “change agents” will each influence at least one other person, bringing the total “conversion” population to 22,000 people. This is about 15 percent of the population without broadband at home in the Smart Communities, a critical mass that will lead the cultural shift to digital excellence.

**1.2 LEAD A MARKETING CAMPAIGN TO INCREASE LOCAL ADOPTION**

To supplement the outreach, a broad-based marketing campaign will reach people both online and through traditional means. The goal — to reach everyone in the community — will be achieved through strategies that were developed based on survey results, community meetings and focus groups conducted for this project.

**Marketing** — A community-focused marketing firm will provide ongoing services to expand awareness of the campaign through local media, including community newspapers, radio stations, television, newsletters, websites and, for major events, larger newspapers. In Pilsen, Chicago Lawn and Humboldt Park, where many residents speak Spanish, Spanish-language media and local radio stations will be targeted. These methods will reach an estimated 150,000 people in the five Smart Communities.

**Advertising on buses and elsewhere** — Greater Auburn-Gresham Development Corporation, the lead agency in Auburn Gresham, has been very successful in raising awareness of its annual Renaissance Festival by purchasing advertisements on the sides and backs of Chicago Transit Authority buses that drive routes in the neighborhood. The Smart Communities campaign will use similar ads tailored to each of the five neighborhoods, providing messages that encourage participation in the trainings, workshops, portals and other program elements. The advertising will reach an estimated 200,000 residents in the Smart Communities and many more in nearby neighborhoods.

**Community portals** — We will build neighborhood-created and -managed websites (see Project 4.1) that will provide ongoing information about the power of digital tools and a calendar of related trainings and events. Each portal will have an estimated reach of 10,000 unique visitors per quarter.

**PILSEN PLANNING AREA**



## STRATEGY 2

# Expand digital education and training for individuals, families and businesses

Each of our communities will create and manage a broad menu of free or low-cost programming to help residents discover the benefits of digital tools and broadband use. By offering many types of programs, all in local settings, thousands of individuals will begin using tools that are useful to them. Topics and methods will be tailored for families, youth, senior citizens, business owners, ex-offenders, community leaders and others as appropriate. To encourage participation in the programs below, residents will have the opportunity to earn refurbished computers and netbooks by graduating from multi-session courses.

### 2.1 CREATE FAMILYNET CENTERS FOR TRAINING AND ACCESS

Equipped with 10 or more modern computer workstations for adults and children (including kid-friendly workstations) and high-speed Internet connections, six new FamilyNet Centers will become central points of digital access and learning in the Smart Communities. Because they are connected to Centers for Working Families (CWFs), participants will have built-in access to a variety of employment, financial education, and other services. The FamilyNet Centers will offer programs listed below such as “Everyday Digital” and “Civic 2.0” classes, but also provide hands-on training in specific skills and certifications. By adding new computer capacity, higher broadband speeds, trained staff, and expanded weekday and weekend hours, the FamilyNet Centers will be able to serve more than 5,000 additional individuals per year.

FamilyNet locations will be established at:

- St. Sabina’s Employment Resource Center in Auburn Gresham
- Southwest Reach Center in Chicago Lawn
- Kennedy-King College in Englewood
- Association House in Humboldt Park
- Chicago Commons in West Humboldt Park
- Instituto del Progreso Latino in Pilsen

All of the locations would be at expanded CWFs except Kennedy-King College and Chicago Commons, which would be located off-site but include connections to CWF resources through the broadband network.

### 2.2 PROVIDE TRAININGS IN “EVERYDAY DIGITAL” USES

We will develop new curricula and tap into existing workshop offerings to train residents on what they need to use technology

every day. Workshops will help residents learn tools such as online bill-paying and financial software; Facebook and other social networks; online commerce; office software including Google docs; photo sharing (Flickr); video (YouTube); blogging; supervision of Internet use by children; and use of Skype for free long-distance calls.

### 2.3 HELP BUSINESS OWNERS AND EMPLOYEES BUILD TECHNICAL SKILLS

Business trainers with strong technical skills will be contracted to teach multi-session courses in the use of business software, accounting software, databases, video conferencing and other online tools. They also will lead hands-on sessions in business hardware, including selection and setup of servers, networks, secure Wi-Fi routers and broadband-based telephone services. Training will take place at enhanced business resource centers (see Project 5.1), on-site at a small business, or by using technology to provide “webinars.”

### 2.4 PROVIDE SPECIALIZED TRAININGS INCLUDING TECHNICAL CERTIFICATIONS

Based on the needs of local residents and market demand of specific skill-sets, specialized certifications such as CompTIA CTT+, Certified Microsoft Application Specialist Instructor and Internet and Computing Core Certification (IC3) should be offered in the community at FamilyNet Centers and added or expanded at local City Colleges such as Humboldt Park Vocational Education Center, Kennedy-King and Westside Tech. For example HPVEC has a partnership with Battelle that has provided A+ and Network + Certification programs and will soon be offering a Certified Wireless Network Administrator program. Additional technical training certifications in the broadband industry should also be added such as Broadband Premises Installer, Broadband Premises Technician and Broadband Communications Engineer to prepare our residents to install, service and maintain fiber-optic infrastructure.

### 2.5 DEVELOP “CIVIC 2.0” PROGRAMS FOR COMMUNITY LEADERS

To increase use of technology in civic engagement, experienced community organizers with web and social-networking skills will teach “Civic 2.0” courses designed for community leaders. These courses will cover how to use web tools to access public services information and how to use such information to advocate for community improvements. The leaders in turn will pass on the skills at the block club and community organization levels. Topics will include use of: transit maps and BusTracker (including mobile applications); CLEARpath, the Chicago Police Department’s safety information database; City of Chicago web services; locating your city, state and federal representatives online, and local portals and organization websites.

## 2.6 PROVIDE TARGETED TRAININGS FOR SPECIALIZED AUDIENCES

Each of our communities puts a high priority on development of new curricula and targeted trainings that meet the needs of those most disconnected and at risk of not benefiting from technology, such as the formerly incarcerated, seniors, physically disabled and monolingual immigrants. For example, we will coordinate with the Safer Foundation as well as local partners serving the formerly incarcerated to insure that pre-release orientations provide up-to-date resources on where ex-offenders can access computer training, Internet access and other technology support. We will build up a youth and senior tech ambassador program to help teach seniors at FamilyNet centers or at Senior Centers how to use the web safely and securely. And the “Civic 2.0” and “Everyday Digital” classes will make sure all teaching materials are available in Spanish and that bilingual instructors are available as needed in our communities.

### STRATEGY 3

## Expand access to technology and the Internet at home and in the community

Each of our communities has an array of public access points through local libraries, community technology centers, and Centers for Working Families. But during our community meetings residents shared the challenges to public access such as inconvenient hours and locations, limited software applications, time limits, and lack of childcare. Our nonprofit organizations, as well, are often managing their missions on antiquated equipment and without the applications or training to better serve residents. Our goal is to continue to enhance and expand public access to technology, improve the technology capacity of our community organizations, and enable sustainable use of the Internet and technology within the home.

### 3.1 EXPAND BROADBAND AT PUBLIC COMPUTING SITES

To bring affordable broadband access closer to all residents in our communities, we will work with public and private partners to develop a network of computer-access sites and wireless hotspots throughout the Smart Communities. These services will be created and promoted by trusted local partners and will be free or at affordable prices.

**Backbone Fiber Network** — Our Smart Communities encourage and support the City of Chicago’s efforts to increase very high-speed fiber-optic connectivity with public

institutions serving as hubs, including firehouses, police stations, libraries, park field houses, community colleges and public schools. While most of these facilities (including all schools and libraries) have some access to the Internet now, new programs and services require much faster and more-reliable offerings. Examples of locations that could make a particularly high-impact with advanced broadband include:

- Community Colleges: Kennedy-King College, Englewood; West Side Tech, Pilsen; Humboldt Park Vocational Education Center, Humboldt Park
- Chicago Public Schools: Marquette School and Gage Park High School, Chicago Lawn; TEAM Englewood Community Academy and Urban Prep Charter Academy for Young Men, Englewood; Benito Juarez High School and Orozco Community Academy, Pilsen; Roberto Clemente Community Academy, Ryerson Elementary School, Orr Community Academy, Pedro Albizu Campos High School, and Von Humboldt Elementary School, Humboldt Park; Perspectives Charter School, Auburn Gresham
- Chicago Public Library branches: Humboldt Park, West Humboldt Park (under development) and North Pulaski, in Humboldt Park; Chicago Lawn, Coleman, Gage Park, West Lawn and Woodson Regional in the Southwest District; West Englewood in Englewood; and Thurgood Marshall in Auburn Gresham.

**Wi-Fi** — We envision a network of high-speed wireless transmitters that tap into the public-sector hubs to allow free Internet access in public places and cooperating private partners. Current Wi-Fi transmitters can serve a 250-foot radius, potentially reaching hundreds of homes and businesses with free or affordable access. A pilot project is being established in 2009 in Chicago Lawn, where 26 blocks of 63<sup>rd</sup> street (from Oakley to Central Park avenues) will be served by a series of Wi-Fi access points “back-hauled” with fiber-optic connections.

**Commercial Corridors** — Affordable, high-speed broadband access is particularly needed for small- to mid-size businesses and multi-family housing along commercial corridors. The density of businesses and housing makes a business case for new fiber-optic or advanced point-to-point wireless services (in addition to Wi-Fi for public access) to be provided along major commercial corridors, including:

- Halsted Street and 79<sup>th</sup> Street in Auburn Gresham
- 63<sup>rd</sup> Street in Englewood and Chicago Lawn
- Division Street, Chicago Avenue and North Avenue in Humboldt Park
- 18<sup>th</sup> Street, Ashland, and Western Avenue in Pilsen

**Tech Kiosks** — To further technology access for underserved populations, Internet kiosks will be placed at accessible and popular sites in each Smart Community. Kiosks will be hard-wired to online resources and applications via the community portal, offering community information, employment resources and other information, and potentially general



HUMBOLDT PARK PLANNING AREA

Internet access. Some will also serve as a wireless connection for Wi-Fi and Bluetooth devices for people with laptop computers or mobile devices.

A specialized kiosk project originating from Gage Park High School will celebrate and provide information about Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s 1966 open-housing march in Marquette Park and the Chicago Lawn community. In Pilsen, planners are considering temporary Internet kiosks in public locations during tech outreach and other community-based events.

### 3.2 PROVIDE WI-FI ACCESS AT AFFORDABLE HOUSING AND SENIOR DEVELOPMENTS

The Smart Community lead agencies are among the most respected nonprofit developers of affordable housing in Chicago. Bickerdike, The Resurrection Project and Greater Southwest Development Corp. own and manage 1,272 units of affordable housing in the Smart Communities. Another 1,600 units of affordable and senior housing are owned and managed by other entities, and an additional 283 units of affordable housing are in the pipeline across the five communities. While some existing developments offer affordable

Internet connections to rental households, we will work to provide faster and more affordable services through negotiation of package deals with vendors and development of a Smart Building Fund that supports retrofit of existing units and high-speed access in all new developments.

### 3.3 PROVIDE HARDWARE, SOFTWARE AND TRAINING TO LOCAL ORGANIZATIONS TO BUILD THEIR CAPACITY

The Smart Communities program will help local lead agencies and partners update and expand their hardware and software to take full advantage of broadband technologies to better serve residents and manage their organizations.

**Neighborhood use**—Computers are needed at the six new FamilyNet Centers for use by participants in classes and workshops and for drop-in users during open-computer times.

**Community organization use**—To support heavier use of the Internet and high-bandwidth tools, additional computer equipment, printers, appropriate software and training should be deployed at lead agencies, other partner organizations and existing community technology centers.

### 3.4 PROVIDE HARDWARE TO RESIDENTS AND SMALL BUSINESSES AS INCENTIVES FOR TRAINING AND TECHNOLOGY ADOPTION

To encourage individuals and families to use the Internet every day, we will create an incentive program that provides refurbished or new equipment to individuals who complete training programs at the FamilyNet Centers or Business Resource Centers.

**Personal use**—Free distribution of refurbished desktop and notebook computers will be used as incentives by community groups to encourage youth and adults to participate in and graduate from multiple-session training programs. They will be distributed only after participants have completed a series of trainings and shown a sustainable interest in use of broadband tools or services.

**Business use**—Graduates of rigorous business training programs should receive a mid- to high-end refurbished laptop or desktop capable of core business functions with a goal of 500 refurbished machines, 100 for each of five communities.

Simple, low-end machines will be incentives for basic programs. More powerful computers or laptops will be awarded for more-rigorous training programs and those that require higher processor speeds, memory and screen size, such as multimedia programs. The incentive program has the added

value of supporting and partnering with local computer refurbishment programs, many of which provide job training and employment to community residents.

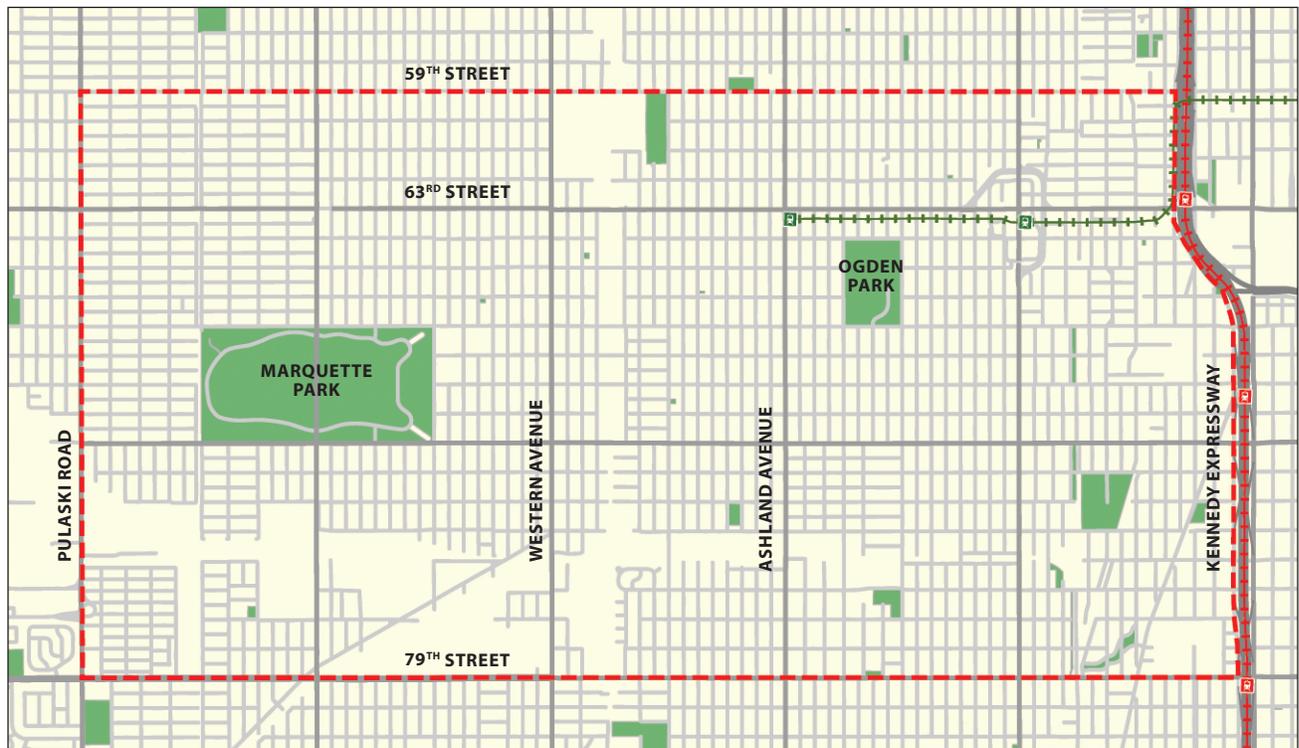
An innovative pilot incentive program will provide 250 new netbook computers (50 per community) to be earned by community leaders and program graduates. This may include organized block clubs implementing “Civic 2.0” trainings that feature research actions requiring use of online data, web-based mapping and civic-oriented social networking. Incentives will also support outreach to residents in affordable rental buildings and senior buildings; classes could be offered on site for “EveryDay Digital” and “Civic 2.0,” with residents receiving a computer upon completion.

## STRATEGY 4

### Generate local content and improve access to neighborhood news and resources

Technology has the ability to reinforce place-based strategies, overcome geographic barriers, and bring people together. Community portals can be a bridge across populations, a

#### SOUTHWEST DISTRICT PLANNING AREA



platform for neighborhood news, and an entry point for local business marketing. Programs that engage youth through content creation may also draw into productive learning opportunities young people previously disconnected from traditional teaching methods.

#### 4.1 BUILD COMMUNITY PORTALS FOR EACH OF THE FIVE NEIGHBORHOODS

Interactive web portals for each neighborhood will encourage residents to post and read about neighborhood news, find a local babysitter, and connect to community services. For example, small businesses will be able to set up a simple web page on the portal at no charge. The portals are a response to several ideas that came up at many of the planning meetings— from creating “community Craig’s lists,” to supporting local businesses, to moving residents from being consumers of digital information to the creators of local content.

The portals will provide an online place for residents and non-profits to post calendar items, directory listings, photos, videos, stories and comments about their community, and business owners to share coupons, publicize their services and attract new customers (the first portal is at [www.pilsenportal.org](http://www.pilsenportal.org)).

Because these sites encourage all organizations and residents to post material and comment on it, they are likely to attract substantially more unique visitors than existing websites created by single organizations in the neighborhoods. Those sites, in Pilsen, Englewood and Auburn Gresham, already attract from 3,000 to 6,000 unique visitors per quarter. In its first four months the Pilsen portal has already attracted 4,400 hits from 3,000 unique visitors.

#### 4.2 EXPAND YOUTH PROGRAMS THROUGH DIGITAL YOUTH NETWORKS IN SCHOOLS AND YOU MEDIA AT LIBRARIES

During our planning meetings youth were seen as a starting point to support the creation of a culture of technology. And our communities have strong local programs that already work with youth using digital media. Our goal is to strengthen and expand these programs including the Pros Arts Studio video, photo and website training in Pilsen, the Batey Urbano youth media center, Spoken Word Academy of Chicago and Westside Writing Project in Humboldt Park, and the innovative digital media work done through Gage Park and Curie High Schools in Chicago Lawn, while connecting youth to new opportunities as well.

**Digital Youth Network**— In each of our communities, youth are increasingly the teachers of technology. To build on this strength and help youth be the creators as well as educated consumers of content, we will develop a Digital Youth Network.

We will tap into the University of Chicago’s Urban Education Institute for its expertise in developing this model. This innovative program engages youth in the creation of content— providing both access and skills training. Instructors have experience working with local youth on spoken word, written, video, multimedia and social networking content, and will know how to use the latest software or techniques to showcase student work in a variety of online venues.

Each of our communities will identify one or two pilot schools that will develop digital youth networks, identify youth mentors and guide the development of an after-school program. Potential schools for the pilots include:

- Orozco Community Academy, Pilsen
- Perspectives Charter High School and Middle School Calumet Campus, and Olgesby Elementary, Auburn Gresham
- Gage Park and Marquette High Schools, Chicago Lawn
- Pedro Albizu Campos, El Cuatro Año, Roberto Clemente, and Orr High Schools, Humboldt Park
- Lindbloom High School, Miles Davis and Nicholson Elementary Schools, Englewood

**Digital Summer Jobs**— Building on the after-school program model and our communities’ experience providing summer youth employment, we will work with local youth-serving organizations, the City of Chicago and business partners to develop an eight-week paid summer job program. It will expose youth from the Digital Youth Network to employment opportunities in the technology industry and enhance their resumes and skill sets.

**YouMedia**— Based on groundbreaking research that found that youth tend to use computers to socialize with friends, tinker with digital media, and “geek out” in online groups, the Chicago Public Library founded YouMedia to help young people further explore these core interests. Funded in part by the MacArthur Foundation, the program is now available only downtown at the Harold Washington Library, but should be expanded to neighborhood libraries, such as Rudy Lozano in Pilsen, Thurgood Marshall in Auburn Gresham and the West Humboldt Park branch currently under construction.

#### 4.3 SUPPORT EXPANDED INTERNET AND INFORMATION ACCESS AT LOCAL PUBLIC LIBRARIES

As noted above, our communities are fortunate to have a network of local libraries that provide important public access to the Internet. In addition to supporting the expansion of the YouMedia centers, our communities also support the additional investment of hardware, software, and staffing to expand the information resources of our public libraries in our communities.



## STRATEGY 5

# Help existing businesses grow and attract new businesses

Access to technology by small businesses may be the most overlooked barrier to technology adoption. We will help local firms use digital tools to support economic growth, connect with new customers, and create jobs, particularly within the commercial corridors.

### 5.1 ESTABLISH BUSINESS RESOURCE CENTERS

Business development organizations provide direct resources and trainings to small- and mid-size businesses in their areas. By building the technology capacity and services of these local organizations, they will be better equipped to help local businesses use technology to better compete in the local and global marketplace.

The following organizations will serve as Business Resource Centers in the Smart Communities:

- Eighteenth Street Development Corporation and Illinois Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, Pilsen
- Special Service Area #32, Auburn Gresham
- 63<sup>rd</sup> Street Growth Commission and Special Service Areas #2 and #3, Chicago Lawn
- Teamwork Englewood, Englewood
- West Humboldt Park Development Council and Division Street Business Development Association, Humboldt Park

Each of our communities will have a fully-equipped computer resource center — with new hardware, software and presentation equipment — to conduct group training, assessments and one-on-one coaching designed to meet the needs of small businesses. For business owners unable to come to a resource center, we'll bring the resource center to them by having mobile training and “webinar” capabilities.

The business resource centers will benefit from access to curriculum developers and business coaches to bring their staff up-to-date on the cutting-edge business uses of technology. In turn, they will be able to reach out to local businesses, assess their technology capacity and help them build technology into their small business plans. Such plans will help get businesses develop consumer-oriented websites, use accounting and other business software, and take advantage of other business-to-business online commerce opportunities.

### 5.2 BUILD THE CAPACITY OF LOCAL MINORITY- AND WOMEN-OWNED FIRMS TO PROVIDE TECHNOLOGY SUPPORT

As technology moves into people's homes and businesses, there will be an even greater need for technical support. There is an opportunity to build the capacity and demand for minority- and women-owned businesses to meet the demand for affordable technical support in our communities. By aggregating demand of local residents, nonprofit organizations, and small businesses, local tech support firms can thrive in our communities.

These firms could in turn provide internship opportunities for local youth (see Project 4.2) and entry-level jobs to residents graduating from technology certification programs (see Project 2.4). Opportunities for vendors to build out broadband connections in our communities should also include local M/WBE firms. We will work across the five Smart Communities to identify these firms, help them develop business plans to support this model and seek to generate and aggregate demand and clients for them.

### 5.3 USE TECHNOLOGY AS AN ENGINE FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

If our five Smart Communities are to be competitive in the 21<sup>st</sup> century economy, they must be able to expand and attract new “high bandwidth” industries such as advertising, planning firms, biotech firms and digital media companies.

We will work with LISC/MetroEDGE, an urban market research firm affiliated with LISC, to identify these potential business growth areas in our communities. Armed with this information we will increase the skill levels of our workforce; expand broadband availability; initiate a business expansion and recruitment plan that capitalizes on “high bandwidth” growth opportunities; develop our local corridors and market our communities at industry and trade fairs to attract new “smart” businesses to locate in our five communities.

# Next: Launch Projects to Reach Goals

Smart Communities will achieve digital excellence when residents, businesses and institutions in the five neighborhoods have high-speed Internet access, up-to-date hardware and software, a need or interest that is met by technology, and familiarity with and knowledge of technology. The projects outlined above are a roadmap to reach that interrelated set of goals.

This plan is ambitious, but is also very much designed to be implemented. All of the projects in this plan are consistent with the years of planning and implementation that has taken place in each of our communities through the New Communities Program.

The Smart Communities Master Plan provides a platform to advance digital participation and innovation across these five communities. With support to bring these projects to life, LISC/Chicago, the City of Chicago, and the NCP lead agencies and their partners are prepared to quickly launch programs that will show results. LISC/Chicago will use its proven NCP implementation model, providing a pool of financial and technical resources to support projects led by the lead agencies and their partners.

Early investment in these demonstration communities has already leveraged significant results. LISC/Chicago, the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity, The Chicago Community Trust and the MacArthur Foundation provided more than \$800,000 in seed capital to support planning, staffing and early implementation of the Smart Communities plans. In return, our five communities have completed local plans, launched early action projects, were granted more than \$1 million in Microsoft software grants, and have received print, Internet and television coverage of this groundbreaking work.

Technology planning was well underway in mid-2009 when the U.S. Department of Commerce announced that it would distribute substantial funding nationwide through a new Broadband Technology Opportunities Program (BTOP) funded by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. Through the digital excellence partnership between the City of Chicago and LISC/Chicago and its neighborhood partners,

the Smart Communities are the focus of the City's BTOP application under the category of Sustainable Broadband Adoption.

If the proposal is funded, many of the programs in this Master Plan can be implemented starting in 2010. If it isn't, our community leaders will work with LISC and the City of Chicago to apply for subsequent rounds for BTOP funding. Although securing BTOP funding would advance this plan, the full breadth of its vision goes well beyond this federal program. Therefore, we will seek additional support from other foundations and corporations for this plan. New investment in these projects will not only begin the process of digital transformation in these five communities. It will also be the first stage of pilot programming to learn how best to seed digital excellence throughout Chicago.



# Leadership

## SOUTHWEST PARTNERS

Three communities worked together to develop a shared program serving their neighborhoods.

### Auburn Gresham

The Greater Auburn-Gresham Development Corp. (GADC) was formed in 2001 to support and coordinate the development and investment coming into the neighborhood. GADC works closely with local nonprofits and elected officials on programs from a major recycling initiative to commercial corridor revitalization and school improvement.

### Chicago Lawn

The Greater Southwest Development Corp. (GSDC) was founded in 1974 and has been responsible for \$500 million invested or retained in the neighborhood, including retail, factory, senior housing developments, single family rehabs and foreclosure prevention work. The Southwest Organizing Project (SWOP) is a 29-member institutional-based organizing project founded in 1996, which works with faith institutions, public schools and service organizations including the GSDC. SWOP's current work includes organizing around housing issues, immigrant rights, violence reduction and local school reform.

### Englewood

Teamwork Englewood was formed in 2003 to serve as a vehicle for bringing together residents, organizations, churches and businesses in the community. Teamwork Englewood has been instrumental in advancing projects ranging from urban agriculture to prisoner re-entry and healthy lifestyles.

## Southwest Smart Communities Partners

- Piotr Korzynski, Greater Southwest Development Corp.
- David McDowell, Southwest Organizing Project
- Johnnie Muhammad, Teamwork Englewood
- Carlos Nelson, Greater Auburn-Gresham Development Corp.
- Marvin Parks, Southwest Smart Communities Partners
- Norma Sanders, Southwest Smart Communities Partners
- Ernest Sanders, Greater Auburn-Gresham Development Corp.
- Donna Stites, Greater Southwest Development Corp.
- Rodney Walker, Teamwork Englewood
- Veronica Zapata, Inner City Muslim Action Network (IMAN)

## HUMBOLDT PARK

Bickerdike Redevelopment Corporation (BRC) has been an anchor institution in Humboldt Park for more than 40 years. Bickerdike's mission is "the redevelopment of the West Town, Humboldt Park, Logan Square and Hermosa communities for the benefit of and control by the lower- and moderate-income residents of these areas." Bickerdike works closely with the Humboldt Park NCP Task Force coordinating the work of 60 neighborhood organizations.

## Humboldt Park Smart Communities Committee

- Joy Aruguete, Bickerdike Redevelopment Corporation
- Juana Ballesteros, Greater Humboldt Park Community of Wellness
- Raul Echeverria, Puerto Rican Cultural Center
- Katie Ediger, Greater Humboldt Park Community of Wellness
- Carolina Gaete, Blocks Together

- Bill Howard, West Humboldt Park Development Council
- Frank Latin, Westside Writing Project
- Alejandro Molina, Puerto Rican Cultural Center
- Kenny Martin Ocasio, Youth Service Project
- Tom Otto, West Humboldt Park Development Council
- Miguel Palacio, Association House of Chicago
- Christy Prael, Bickerdike Redevelopment Corporation
- Stephanie Sommers, Association House of Chicago
- Dan Valliere, Chicago Commons

## PILSEN

In 1990, six neighborhood parishes came together to found The Resurrection Project (TRP), which got its start fighting crime and blight. Over the past two decades, TRP has developed affordable housing, closed more than 800 mortgage loans and leveraged more than \$146 million in community reinvestment. TRP convened more than a dozen community groups as the Pilsen Planning Committee to develop and implement the neighborhood's 2005 quality-of-life plan.

## Pilsen Planning Group

- David Betlejewski, 18<sup>th</sup> Street Development Corp.
- Maria Codina, Arturo Velasquez West Side Technical Institute
- Oscar De La Torre, Gads Hill
- Tom Dubois, Instituto del Progreso Latino
- Mario Gonzalez, Pilsen Neighbors
- Jaime Guzman, The Resurrection Project
- Alheli Herrera, Federacion de Clubes Michoacanos
- Benny Morten, St. Ann Catholic School

- Alvaro Obregon, The Resurrection Project
- Gerardo Rodriguez, Illinois Hispanic Chamber of Commerce
- Elvia Rodriguez, Pros Arts Studios
- Vicente Sanchez, 25<sup>th</sup> Ward Public Service Office

#### LISC/CHICAGO

- Susana Vasquez, Director, New Communities Program
- Gordon Walek, Communications Manager

#### CITY OF CHICAGO

- Hardik Bhatt, Chief Information Officer, Department of Innovation and Technology
- Danielle DuMerer, Project Manager, Department of Innovation and Technology
- Matthew Guilford, Program Manager, Digital Excellence and Innovation, Department of Innovation and Technology
- Mayor's Office

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#### PROGRAM AND PLANNING SUPPORT

- The Chicago Community Trust
- City of Chicago
- John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation
- LISC/Chicago
- Microsoft Corporation
- State of Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity

#### ABOUT THE NEW COMMUNITIES PROGRAM

The New Communities Program (NCP) is a long-term initiative by LISC/Chicago to support comprehensive community development in 16 Chicago neighborhoods. The nation's largest demonstration of comprehensive community development, NCP has delivered substantial and visible neighborhood improvements across the city thanks to a 10-year funding commitment from the MacArthur Foundation. LISC/Chicago has invested more than \$50 million in grants and loans in the NCP neighborhoods, supporting more than 500 different projects ranging from healthy-lifestyle initiatives and youth sports leagues to retail and affordable housing development. Thousands of residents and hundreds of community organizations have been involved through NCP.

The NCP model is that each effort is led by a neighborhood-based lead agency that coordinates programs among other local organizations and citywide support groups. Lead agencies are encouraged to forge partnerships with other nonprofit groups, businesses, government and residents to address issues such as affordable housing, prisoner re-entry, cultural programming, education reform, community marketing and open space. Smart Communities builds upon the NCP platform and on the quality-of-life plans prepared by each community. The plans have been steered by local lead agencies that have a resume of "getting it done" and grassroots connections to the communities they serve. It incorporates project ideas from those plans and identifies new tools and techniques to implement long-standing community development goals.

#### ABOUT THE DIGITAL EXCELLENCE INITIATIVE

The Digital Excellence Initiative aims to make Chicago a global leader in the application of technology to increasing economic competitiveness, strengthening communities and improving lives. Guided by the work of the Mayor's Advisory Council on Closing the Digital Divide, the initiative fosters deployment of broadband infrastructure, public access to technology and new insights into digital participation and needs. The initiative is managed by the City of Chicago Department of Innovation and Technology and is supported by a range of private sector, non-profit and governmental partners.

The 2007 *City That Networks* report and the 2009 *Digital Excellence in Chicago* study are available at [www.cityofchicago.org/digitalexcellence](http://www.cityofchicago.org/digitalexcellence)

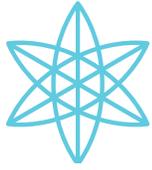
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# Smart Communities

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