



Smart Communities  
CHICAGO DIGITAL EXCELLENCE INITIATIVE

# Connecting Our Communities

**SOUTHWEST  
SMART COMMUNITIES PLAN**

MARCH 2010







# Why We Need Smart Communities

Digital technology is transforming our commerce, culture and community. It provides businesses with efficiency, advertising, new markets and new products, and citizens with real-time communications and information about everything from social networks to the daily news. With digital technology, students can learn in new and exciting ways and seniors can remain connected to a fast-paced world.

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. This plan is a roadmap for building tech-savvy communities for the Southwest Smart Communities Partners, comprising three Chicago neighborhoods — Auburn Gresham, Chicago Lawn and Englewood. It is also a collaborative effort, bringing together representatives from community-based organizations in the three neighborhoods and more than 100 residents from the communities.

The projects we outline in our plan will be most effective when they work in conjunction with each other. Outreach gets neighbors involved in trainings to use digital technology to improve their daily lives. Students use broadband technology in new digital media labs in school. Local entrepreneurs visit business centers where they can learn more about using software to become more efficient — and more profitable.

These programs and projects 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 values of our neighborhoods on the Southwest Side, the places 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.



# The Southwest Smart Communities Partners

The Southwest Smart Communities Partners (SSCP) represents three of five digitally underserved neighborhoods in Chicago that are participating in the Smart Communities program, which aspires to enable full participation in meaningful digital activities by households, businesses and institutions to increase local knowledge, expand economic and educational opportunities, and enhance connections among residents and businesses. The program, which includes Auburn Gresham, Chicago Lawn, Englewood, Humboldt Park and Pilsen (Lower West Side), is part of the City of Chicago's Digital Excellence Initiative and is administered by the Local Initiatives Support Corporation/Chicago. Each of the five communities is part of the New Communities Program, a long-term initiative by LISC/Chicago to support comprehensive community development in 16 Chicago neighborhoods.

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](#). The Advisory Council's vision is that Internet access, hardware, software, education and mind-set changes will lead to digital transformation. Smart Communities will develop a series of pilot projects to "test how best to convert digital excellence into personal and community transformation."

In its report, the Advisory Council identified digital excellence drivers that are necessary for

everyone in a community to fully participate in the era of information technology. Southwest Smart Communities Partners began our work of determining how to foster digital excellence in our communities by addressing these five drivers:

- **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 makes technology relevant and useful to a broad array of users and improves information flows into and out of neighborhoods.

The Southwest Smart Communities Plan builds upon these drivers and the quality-of-life plans prepared by each of our NCP communities.



### NEIGHBORHOODS AND LEAD AGENCIES

Auburn Gresham, Chicago Lawn and Englewood are contiguous neighborhoods, each with their own history, assets and challenges, but sharing a need for increased investment and opportunities for residents and local businesses. Working together in the SSCP provides us with an excellent opportunity to learn how to link 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.

Each of our three neighborhoods is represented by local organizations that have a record of organizing residents and providing comprehensive community development.

**Auburn Gresham** is a predominately African-American, moderate-income community that has seen a rebound in the late 1990s after two decades of residential flight and a few years of commercial disinvestment along the 79<sup>th</sup> Street retail strip. New facilities, programs, housing and businesses have been opened with efforts of a new alderman, an alliance of community organizations, and investment from the city.

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 community planning.

**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. Today, African-Americans and people of Mexican and Arab descent are purchasing homes in the area, becoming a part of existing institutions, and supporting new types of organizations and businesses.

Greater Southwest Development Corporation (GSDC) is a mature, financially solid organization with a history of successfully positioning our community to compete for investment and maintain a mixed-income economy. GSDC launched our community's first Center for Working Families and spurred the investment of over a half billion dollars in local commercial, industrial and housing development.

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. GSDC and SWOP co-lead the NCP process in Chicago Lawn.

**Englewood**, once home to the city's second busiest shopping district at the transit-served corner of 63<sup>rd</sup> and Halsted streets, in recent decades has struggled to reverse a long decline in population and economic health. New development in this largely African-American community has begun to breathe life into the neighborhood and large public investments suggest a stronger future.

Teamwork Englewood was formed in 2003 to serve as a vehicle for bringing together residents, organizations, churches and businesses in the community. As the lead NCP agency in Englewood, Teamwork Englewood organizes diverse representatives of the community to participate in a collaborative and comprehensive approach to community development.

### 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

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%

**TABLE 1: WHY RESIDENTS DON'T USE BROADBAND INTERNET**

neighborhoods across the city whose residents are older, Latino, African-American, low-income or less educated.

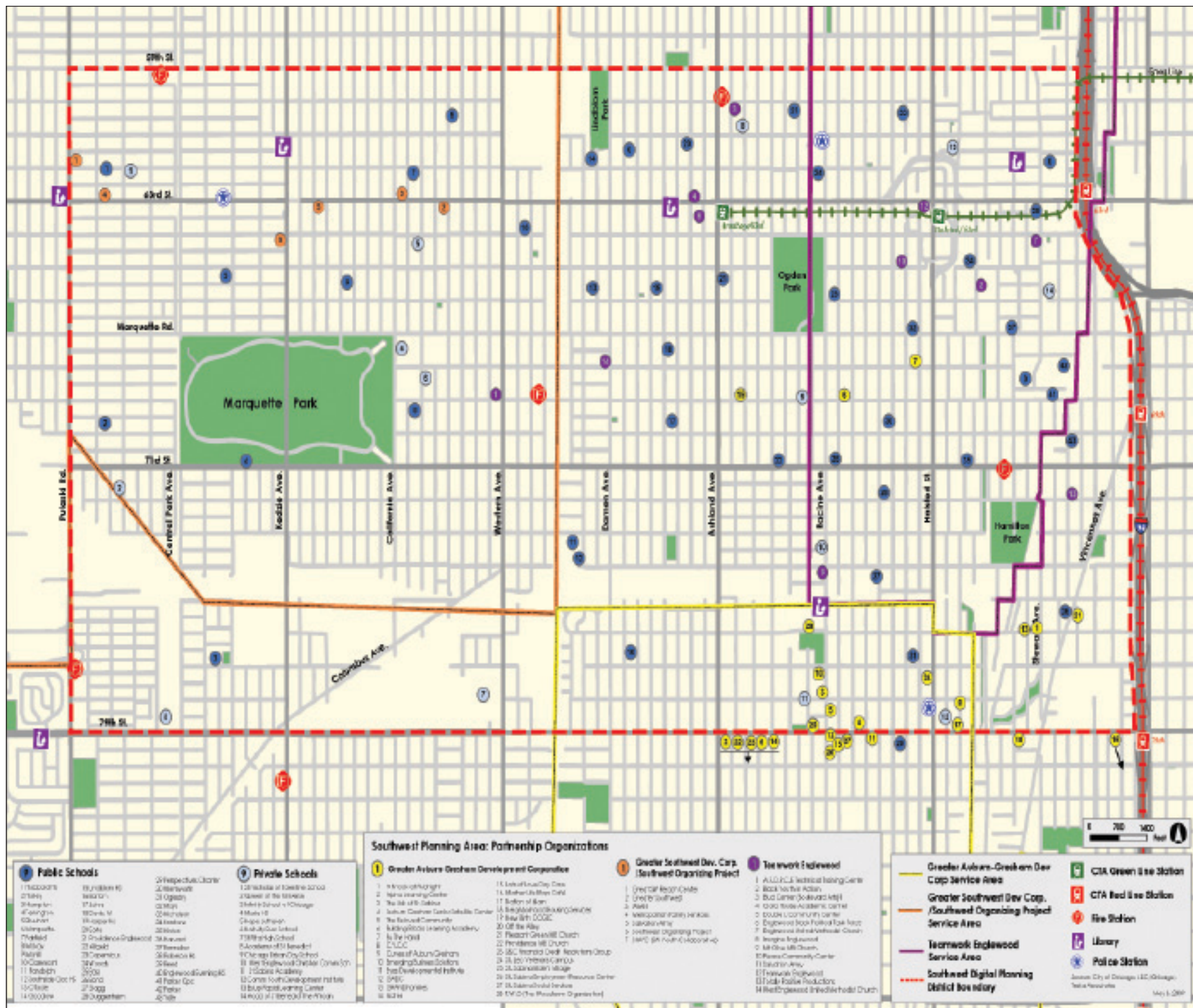
A survey of residents identified three primary barriers to regular broadband use:

- cost
- lack of interest
- difficulty of use

We learned from the survey and follow-up outreach meetings that a concerted effort will be needed to bring technology tools and benefits to our community residents. While lower-cost is a factor, we have learned from experience that access is not enough. We need to reach people individually, through their local affiliations and block groups and prove the tangible benefits of technology.

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 another tool in the ongoing development of our communities.











# A Bottom-Up Planning Process

Community planning for the Southwest Smart Communities Partners has been a process that included Smart Communities design meetings, SSCP steering committee framing, sustained outreach, and a series of public meetings that brought together more than 130 representatives from the three neighborhoods. Lead agency staff and volunteers targeted several underserved populations to bring them into the planning process, including youth, seniors, people with criminal records and other hard-to-reach populations. The resulting vision and work plan are truly collaborative, using the ideas, hopes, and insights of our local residents, business owners, nonprofits, schools, libraries and other institutions.

The process began with representatives of all Smart Communities lead agencies, City agencies, and private-sector technology firms participating in several meetings in February and March of 2009 to discuss program opportunities and share technical information. These meetings were used to develop draft vision statements and goals, identify key constituencies, define potential priority corridors for broadband access, and brainstorm opportunities for projects that would meet the vision and goals. The SSCP Steering Committee also met during the spring to focus the five drivers of digital excellence for the district's three communities, identify key partners in our communities, plan for a series of public meetings, and create a vision statement for the district.

On April 16 and 18, 2009, SSCP held two public workshops at the Perspectives Charter Schools Calumet Campus in Auburn Gresham, and more

than a hundred people representing a broad swath of residents and organizations from all three Southwest Side Chicago neighborhoods participated. After a presentation of the draft vision and goals, the audience self-selected into hour-long break-out sessions to discuss the digital needs and program possibilities for key local constituencies: youth, disconnected populations such as people with criminal records and people with disabilities, seniors, local businesses, employees and Spanish speakers.

On May 14, a public workshop at Kennedy-King College in Englewood offered more than 30 participants the opportunity to evaluate and add to the list of ideas created from the April meetings. For this workshop, participants also self-selected into hour-long breakout sessions on key topics. The groups were organized by the five drivers for digital excellence: hardware and software, access, education and training, tech support, and

mindset and content. The input from this meeting shaped the list of projects listed below.

To augment the findings of the three public meetings, SSCP staff have reached out to local businesses, schools, libraries and other community stakeholders that have an interest in technology, both for their own uses and as providers to local residents. These one-on-one meetings in each of our three neighborhoods added to our understanding of the communities' assets and needs and laid the groundwork for partnerships when planning leads to projects.

# Strategies and Projects

This plan proposes a set of programs and projects around five strategies to build the digital future of the Southwest Smart Communities Partners. Our community vision provides a strong framework for the technology strategies and projects of the partnership between our three neighborhoods.

*As Smart Communities, we envision using technology to connect these three neighborhoods and reduce the physical and psychological barriers that have hampered their cooperation and slowed their collective progress. We will overcome racial and cultural barriers to using technology in our daily lives. We also envision using technology to address common challenges across the Southwest Smart Communities Partners: stimulating economic development and continuing to revitalize our neighborhoods.*

*As this plan unfolds, residents of the Southwest Smart Communities Partners will enjoy significantly greater public and private access to the Internet in digitally and socially linked communities. Public kiosks, Internet cafés and public web access within local small businesses will make digital technology visible and readily available. A Southwest regional web portal will offer information about community events and job openings and will host a community forum. Youth will create digital arts and media, refurbish computers for home use and train their elders in technology. Small business owners will use electronic bookkeeping and inventory management, and adults will have greater opportunities to learn technology skills and apply them as they build their careers.*

## STRATEGY 1

### Build Awareness of the Power of Digital Technologies

In order for digital technology to help revitalize our communities, we need to change local mindsets and expectations that stem in part from racial, cultural and socio-economic barriers. We 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.

As important, the grassroots, personalized connection of the campaign will provide the local and citywide agencies working on this plan on the Southwest Side with information and perspective on the needs, strengths and challenges of local residents and institutions around adoption of digital technology.

#### 1.1 COMMUNITY TECHNOLOGY ASSESSMENT

To build upon outreach conducted during our planning process and refine the projects proposed, SSCP will determine the digital assets and needs of our three communities with an in-depth IT assessment of existing computer centers, businesses, nonprofits and public facilities. The

information will be combined with survey results of the attitudes about and usage of technology in our communities by residents. With detailed, accurate information, tech providers will have a better market model to make decisions about investment in technology, and SSCP projects will be crafted to match local conditions.

This assessment, which has already begun by SSCP staff, will result in the final project baseline. Additional mapping will be completed around technology in specific program areas, as a way to determine any additional and/or refined details that will impact the other strategies in this plan. For example, more details are needed to develop a collaborative program around health and



wellness options and an understanding of technology resources necessary to promote health and vitality in the Southwest communities.

## 1.2 OUTREACH CAMPAIGN

Because technology has not been a part of daily life for many residents of the communities, SSCP must go beyond simply “announcing” the new programs and projects outlined below. We will conduct door-to-door campaigns focused on targeted populations and areas with linkages in places that can be brought into the fold, such as block clubs, and hold forums to educate the community and create workshops that are relevant to targeted communities. This outreach campaign will communicate how “going digital” can change cultural expectations and show the benefits of technology in personal life and the relevance of technology to targeted populations and communities.

Unlike conventional top-down advertising campaigns, our campaign will be led by local organizations that have strong experience in each of our communities. Residents will be familiar with the sponsoring organizations and may have benefited from their programs or services in the past. The campaign will also provide job opportunities. A new tech organizer will target hard-to-reach populations and use tech tools to engage a new generation comfortable with blogging, social networks and similar tools.

The goal is not just to let our residents know about new tech programs, but to listen to community members, determine their challenges, and provide that feedback back to local providers, City agencies, and external resources. Our form of organizing has always been two-way; tech-

nology tools just provide another way to communicate. The process of tech outreach will provide another avenue to fulfill the community development plans of our neighborhoods.

As interested individuals become proficient, they will bring along their peers, family members, grandparents and others who would be much harder to reach through a traditional advertising or promotion campaign. These activities will have the added benefit of providing organizing and community engagement as a team-building community structure, and, as is the case with all organizing projects, also provide input from the community to SSCP and its partners.

## 1.3 LOCAL ADOPTION MARKETING CAMPAIGN

To supplement outreach, a broad-based marketing campaign will reach people both online and through traditional means to encourage participation in the trainings, workshops, portals and other program elements. The goal is to connect with everyone in the community, especially those populations that are hard-to-reach. 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.

This marketing will be tailored specifically to reach our residents. For example, the Greater Auburn-Gresham Development Corp. 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. In Chicago Lawn, where Spanish is spoken by many residents, Spanish-language media and local radio stations will be targeted.

## STRATEGY 2

# Expand Digital Education and Training for Individuals, Families and Businesses

We will work to educate our neighbors about existing hardware and software in comprehensive, intergenerational and age-appropriate ways, growing our community technology centers from primary access points into training sites that draw learners with quality programming and top-of-the-line hardware and software, including items that may be out of reach for most households (scanners, high-quality printers, etc.). We will find and support affordable, locally-based technical support providers and develop strategies to ensure our community can sustain its use of technology. We will create a coordinated suite of software consisting of existing and new educational training for adults and teens.

## 2.1 FAMILYNET CENTERS

We will create new FamilyNet Centers, where all residents — regardless of age or experience — are able to learn about technology in an atmosphere that is family friendly and prepared to provide assistance to a wide range of needs. Based on the framework of existing Centers for

Working Families (CWF), which offer a variety of employment, financial education, and other services, the sites will provide the opportunity to learn about technology for a wide range of users: a parent who wants to take adult-education workshops but needs child care, a senior who is just learning about computers, a teen who needs to type out a term paper. The FamilyNet Centers will offer access to programs listed below such as Everyday Digital and Civic 2.0 (see Strategy 2.3), but also provide hands-on training sessions in specific skills and certifications.

Equipped with 10 or more modern computer workstations for adults and children (plus two kid-friendly workstations) and high-speed Internet connections, new FamilyNet Centers will become central points of digital access and learning in our communities. By adding new computer capacity, higher broadband speeds, trained staff, and expanded weekday and weekend hours, to the Centers for Working Families, FamilyNet Centers will be able to serve more than 5,000 additional individuals per year across the five neighborhoods.

In the Southwest Partners area, sites to locate FamilyNet Centers are St. Sabina's Employment Resource Center in Auburn Gresham, Southwest REACH in Chicago Lawn, and Kennedy-King College in Englewood.

## 2.2 SUPPORT PROGRAM FOR COMMUNITY TECHNOLOGY CENTERS

Our communities are currently served by a collection of community technology centers (CTCs) operated by nonprofit community-based organizations. Many of these sites are currently underfunded but able to handle more capacity

if provided with state-of-the-art equipment, curriculum and outreach support. To site a few examples, IMAN center (Chicago Lawn) during 2009 served over five hundred individuals in 11 computer literacy courses, including ICDI Computer Fundamentals taught in English and Spanish. Without additional support, plans are to reduce computer courses to eight. With support to increase its current capacity, A Knock at Midnight (Englewood) estimates it could immediately double the three hundred plus students participating each year in their computer and workforce courses.

Based on findings of the community assessment, we will provide support to leverage existing programs and create others where a need is being unmet. A longer-term goal is to create a sustainable Southwest Community Technology Center that is conveniently located for all three neighborhoods. In conjunction with the FamilyNet Centers, a more robust selection of CTCs will provide our communities with a strong infrastructure of public locations for youth, teen and adult training programs.

## 2.3 TRAINING DESIGNED FOR OUR COMMUNITIES

The Southwest Smart Communities Partners views learning about the possibilities and capacities of information technology as a process that cannot be limited to one age group or population. Our goals for digital excellence include education of our youth and adult residents; training that meets the needs of employees, jobseekers, and employers, and technical support to ensure computers remain operational and well-used.

**Everyday Digital** — Based on assessment of workshops, courses, and other technology programs for adults and teens currently available, we will expand and enhance digital education courses to help residents become comfortable with and proficient in using technology in their everyday lives.

General computer education should include recognition of the importance of changing attitudes, including addressing a lack of confidence about use and the perception that technology is too expensive. This need was especially noted within the Spanish-speaking focus groups in the public workshops. Specific topics might include:

- Internet security that reduces risk on bank transactions, anti-virus and e-mailing
- Secure online bill payment
- Computer productivity in the household
- Supervision of Internet use by children
- Use of Skype for long-distance calls
- Training that reduces fear of technology

**Civic 2.0** — Technology today offers many opportunities for our residents to increase their civic engagement. To connect our residents to these digital tools, we will offer "Civic 2.0" courses designed for community leaders, taught by experienced community organizers with web and social-networking skills. 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); CLEAR path, the Chicago Police Department's safety information database; City



# Southwest Smart Communities Initiative

City of Chicago LISC/Chicago New Communities Program

## Strategies Map

### Southwest Planning Area: Partnership Organizations

#### 1 Greater Auburn-Gresham Development Corporation

- 1 A Knock at Midnight
- 2 Alpha Learning Center
- 3 The Ark of St. Sabina
- 4 Auburn Gresham Senior Satellite Center
- 5 The Beloved Community
- 6 Building Blocks Learning Academy
- 7 By The Hand
- 8 C.Y.C.C.
- 9 Curves of Auburn Gresham
- 10 Emerging Business Solutions
- 11 Evas Developmental Institute
- 12 GADC
- 13 GRANDFamilies
- 14 Kidtek
- 15 Lots of Love Day Care
- 16 Mother LifeWay Cafe
- 17 Nation of Islam
- 18 Neighborhood Housing Services
- 19 New 8th COGIC
- 20 Off the Alley
- 21 Pleasant Green MB Church
- 22 Providence MB Church
- 23 S&C Financial Credit Resolutions Group
- 24 St. Leo Veterans Campus
- 25 St. Sabina Elder's Village
- 26 St. Sabina Employment Resource Center
- 27 St. Sabina Social Services
- 28 T.W.O. (The Woodlawn Organization)

#### 1 Greater Southwest Dev. Corp. /Southwest Organizing Project

- 1 Great SW Reach Center
- 2 GSDC & SWCP
- 3 IMAN
- 4 Metropolitan Family Services
- 5 Salvation Army
- 6 Southwest Youth Collaborative

#### 1 Teamwork Englewood

- 1 A.F.O.R.C.E Technical Training Center
- 2 Black Youth in Action
- 3 Bud Center (Boulevard Arts)?
- 4 Casa House Academic Center
- 5 Double L Community Center
- 6 Englewood Black Political Task Force
- 7 Englewood United Methodist Church
- 8 Imagine Englewood
- 9 Mt Olive MB Church
- 10 Peace Community Center
- 11 Salvation Army
- 12 Teamwork Englewood
- 13 Totally Positive Productions
- 14 West Englewood United Methodist Church



59th St.

Fire Station E88

Greater Southwest FamilyNet Center

Chicago Lawn Library

Southwest Senior Center

Marshall Elementary School

Goodlow Elementary School

Anderson Community Academy

West Englewood Library

Harper High School

Englewood Neighborhood Health Center

Englewood Senior Center

Chicago Urban League

Hamilton Park

St. Sabina Employment Resource Center

Perspectives Charter School

Simeon Career Academy

Morgan Elementary School

21 Ward Yard

Fire Station E73

Gresham Elementary School

Cook School

New Pisgah Haven Homes

St. Sabina Employment Resource Center

Police Station District 6

Oglesby School

Auburn-Gresham Senior Satellite Center

King Park

GADC & Business Outreach

St. Sabina FamilyNet Center

FIBER TO THE PREMISES (FTTP) AND SMART GRID

Ashland Ave.

Damen Ave.

Western Ave.

Marquette Rd.

63rd St.

Police Station District 8

Lawn Terrace Senior Building

West Lawn Library

Eberhart School

Marquette Elementary School

Churchview Independent Living

IMAN Center

Fairfield Academy

Arab American Action Network

Chicago Lawn Library

Southwest Senior Center

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Eberhart School

Marquette Elementary School

of Chicago web services; locating your city, state and federal representatives online, and local portals and organization websites.

**Digital Business Support** — To support economic growth in our communities, SSCP will emphasize the return on investment of going digital to improve competitiveness and profitability to local small businesses, particularly along the main commercial thoroughfares, 63<sup>rd</sup>, 79<sup>th</sup> and Halsted streets. Existing planning and support from the City of Chicago Department of Community Development in its Special Service Area (SSA) program can be leveraged in this work for 63<sup>rd</sup> Street (SSA #3) and 79<sup>th</sup> Street (SSA #32). Outreach will be localized by neighborhood for best results.

With trainings and tools tailored to the needs of local firms, the Digital Business Support Program will provide a technological edge to the drivers of our local economies — small firms that are often unaware of or unable to adopt technological advances to improve their bottom line, and larger firms that increasingly require high-speed connections for online communication and software. Business trainers will teach courses in business software, accounting software, databases, video conferencing, servers, networks, secure Wi-Fi routers and broadband-based telephone services. Training will take place at enhanced Business Resource Centers, on site at a small business, or by using technology to provide “webinars.” This program could also support business entrepreneurship opportunities for youth through a teen digital network.

**Employee Trainings** — Employment-focused training for residents will include coursework both for those looking to advance within their company and for job-seekers who could be connected with a job opportunity at the end of the training. Programs will reach out to underserved populations who need training, including those aged 26-30 who missed computer education in high schools (see Section E, below).

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 Kennedy-King College.

**Targeted Trainings for Disconnected Populations** — Residents who have a criminal record, have a disability, are seniors, have limited or no English, are undocumented, are Section 8 voucher holders, or are otherwise disconnected from the wider society are prime candidates for the communication and integration benefits of technology. Unfortunately, these groups can also be the most likely to be unfamiliar with digital technology.

We will create programs to provide disconnected populations with digital education that both meets their specific needs and recognizes the larger gap in their knowledge. For example, the Civic 2.0 and Everyday Digital classes (referenced above) will make sure all teaching materials are available in Spanish and that bilingual instructors are available as needed in our communities.

## RETURNING TO THE COMMUNITY

The Southwest Smart Communities Partners will offer orientation for soon-to-be released offenders about the location and content of technical and education training programs in their neighborhoods, linked to employment options at graduation. One program site at Kennedy-King College in Englewood can house a digital re-entry program that will serve our communities. The program may be built from existing programming for people with criminal records in our communities, including IMAN and Ceasefire in Chicago Lawn and Side Hustle in Englewood.

## SURFING SENIORS

Surfing Seniors program is another example of how many aspects of this plan can work in conjunction to target a specific population. To help seniors connect to social, recreational, and employment opportunities through the Internet, Surfing Seniors will provide multi-faceted programming. Options include adding computers and Wi-Fi in senior buildings, bringing mobile computer labs to senior housing, targeting seniors for affordable computers in their own residences, creating senior-specific content and developing relationships through cross-generational youth/seniors engagement and senior/senior collaborative mentoring.



## 2.4 YOUTH PROGRAMS

The future of education for youth includes both learning about *using* software and digital resources, and learning *with* software and digital resources. Tech education for youth in our communities must be incorporated into the curriculum at Chicago Public Schools (CPS), and our children's schools must have the resources to support a digital education.

**Digital Youth Network** — Our communities have many strong local programs that already work with youth using digital media. Our goal is to strengthen and expand these programs, including the innovative digital media work done through Gage Park and Curie High Schools in Chicago Lawn, while connecting youth to new opportunities as well. We will work with CPS to ensure that there is coursework available for youth to be trained in the creation and integration of the digital arts as part of their education.

We will develop a Digital Youth Network and tap into the University of Chicago's Urban Education Institute, which works with local youth on spoken word, written, video, multimedia and social networking content, and how to use the latest software or techniques to showcase student work in a variety of online venues. Primary locations to add or expand these efforts include:

- Perspectives Charter High School and Middle School, Calumet Campus, and Olgesby Elementary in Auburn Gresham
- Gage Park High School and Marquette Elementary School in Chicago Lawn
- Lindbloom High School, Miles Davis and Nicholson Elementary schools in Englewood

## Out-of-School Time and Summer

**Employment** — Opportunities for tech education starting in elementary school will be augmented with educational opportunities and resources in new and existing after-school programs, community technology centers, public libraries, etc. to give students the broadest possible range of opportunities to learn about and use digital technology.

For example, 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 that exposes youth from the Digital Youth Network to employment opportunities in the technology industry and builds their resume and skill set.

## STRATEGY 3

# Expand Access to Technology and the Internet at Home and in the Community

Plans to increase use of digital technology in our communities start but do not end with access to high-speed broadband. Each of our communities has an array of public access points through local libraries, community technology centers, and Centers for Working Families. During our community meetings, however, residents shared challenges to public access such as inconvenient

hours and locations, limited software applications, time limits, and lack of childcare. The best roll-out of new broadband access in our communities will address these needs.

## 3.1 EXPANDED BROADBAND AT PUBLIC COMPUTING SITES AND KEY LOCAL FIRMS

As broadband is added to our homes, schools, libraries and businesses, we need to ensure that local residents and organizations have a say in where and how new access opportunities are added.

**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:

- Kennedy-King College in Englewood
- Chicago Public Schools, such as Marquette Elementary School and Gage Park High School in Chicago Lawn, TEAM Englewood Community Academy and Urban Prep Charter Academy for Young Men in Englewood, and Perspectives Charter School in Auburn Gresham
- Chicago Public Library branches, such as Chicago Lawn, Coleman, Gage Park, West Lawn and Woodson Regional in Chicago Lawn, West Englewood in Englewood, and Thurgood Marshall in Auburn Gresham. In addition to supporting the expansion of the YouMedia

program (see Strategy 4.3), our communities also support seeing additional investment of hardware, software, and staffing to expand the information resources of our public libraries.

**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-level or 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

**Wi-Fi for Public Access** — We envision a network of high-speed wireless transmitters that tap into the public-sector hubs to allow free or low-cost 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 Chicago Lawn, where a commercial corridor along 63<sup>rd</sup> Street (from Oakley to Central Park avenues) will be served by a series of Wi-Fi access points connected to fiber.

### 3.2 TECH KIOSKS

With tech kiosks in public places, businesses can draw more customers and residents can use Wi-Fi and Bluetooth devices outside of home or a CTC. Kiosks will potentially provide general Internet access and will be hardwired to online resources and applications, such as the Southwest community portal, which will offer community information, employment resources and other information (see Strategy 4.2).



Possible sites for kiosks include organizations or institutions along the 63<sup>rd</sup>, Halsted, and 79<sup>th</sup> Street commercial corridors. A grant-funded project, originating from Gage Park High School, would celebrate the march of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. in the community in 1966 through an interactive, permanent and outdoor kiosk or kiosks to be placed in the Marquette Park area.

### 3.3 SMART BUILDINGS

The Smart Communities lead agencies and close partners in our neighborhoods own and manage affordable housing across the three communities. In Auburn Gresham, approximately 300 units in senior housing are run by local community

development corporations (CDCs), with two more senior buildings and several affordable two-flats in the development pipeline. In Chicago Lawn, the Greater Southwest Development Corp. manages three senior buildings with a total of more than 250 units. In Englewood, local CDCs manage a dozen senior buildings with more than 800 units, with another senior building and an affordable three-flat currently in development.

Working with lead agencies and partners, we have an excellent opportunity to bring broadband access and information technology into the lives of those living in affordable housing. 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.

### 3.4 AFFORDABLE COMPUTER CAMPAIGN

To reboot our communities as high-technology zones, we will create an affordable computer campaign that provides hardware to residents at prices that allow for deep saturation of usage. We will pilot programs that explore the best practice for refurbishment of used computers from businesses and other donors. This model is notable for its social benefit, as it can provide training and job opportunities for people with criminal records and for youth. We will also investigate relationships with vendors to buy affordable computers in bulk orders.

Various price points to buy a discounted computer can be determined by a sliding scale and by targeting high-priority populations (e.g. families using a Section 8 voucher for housing, seniors, families with an incarcerated parent). We will also 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 technology 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 300 computers in the Southwest neighborhoods.

An innovative pilot incentive program could provide 150 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 include research actions requiring use of online data, web-based mapping and civic-oriented social networking. Incentives could 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.

### 3.5 AFFORDABLE SOFTWARE CAMPAIGN

Our families and computer centers need access to software that meets multiple ways of learning, is interactive and self-paced. We will research and purchase software that is up-to-date, ready-to-use and appropriate for community needs. One option is to develop programs to support retailers to sell software wholesale to our residents. We will also explore unused, underutilized software licenses and community-wide open source software.

Microsoft has been an early leader by providing software grants to dozens of community-based organizations across the five Smart Communities in 2009, valued at approximately \$1.1 million across the Smart Communities. We are confident that other foundation and private sector partners will see the value in providing new equipment, software and training to our nonprofit partners

who connect thousands of residents daily to education, jobs, services and businesses.

### 3.6 HARDWARE, SOFTWARE AND TRAINING TO LOCAL ORGANIZATIONS

The Smart Communities program will help local lead agencies and partners install needed equipment to take full advantage of broadband technologies to better serve residents and manage their organizations. Computers will be needed at the new FamilyNet Centers for use by participants in classes and workshops and for drop-in users during open-computer times, and to support heavier use of the Internet and high-bandwidth tools, additional equipment and laptops and appropriate software should be deployed at lead agencies, other partner organizations and existing community technology centers.

### 3.7 COMMUNITY TECH SUPPORT AND LOCAL BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

New computers cannot be a transformative force in our communities when they are not operational. We will build or find suitable locations for local Community Tech Support with a sustainable business model that will answer technology questions and diagnose and repair computers at an affordable price for residents, local firms, and community-based organizations. Community Tech Support will also provide house calls when necessary (e.g. to disconnected populations who cannot easily leave their homes). By having the software and hardware on hand, necessary computer repairs could be completed on site, keeping the money in the community.

Providing tech support within the community will be a source of local jobs, both as employment within the resource itself and as a training program in IT.

## STRATEGY 4

# Generate Local Content and Improve Access to Neighborhood News and Resources

Technology has the ability to reinforce place-based strategies, overcome barriers and bring people together. Community portals can be a bridge across the population, while use of technology can engage youth that previously were disconnected from traditional teaching methods and formal education programs.

### 4.1 LEVERAGED SOCIAL NETWORKS

Existing social network sites are resources that, with organization and outreach, can be utilized to be targeted within our communities to connect people within neighborhoods and build bridges across neighborhoods. We will use the community assessment to expand and enhance usage of these sites to create networks for the Southwest Side based on sports and other interests to connect youth and adults across geographic barriers. Building upon current usage, we will connect family members in other households and friends with text messaging, microblogs, and other technologies.

### 4.2 COMMUNITY WEB PORTAL

Based on needs and interest of the community assessment, we will create an interactive, dynamic Southwest Digital Community Portal as a website that will become the place to go for local information, creating an “electronic billboard” of what is happening in the community and support local economic transactions. This site will include website hosting for local businesses and CBOs, as well as links to community social networking throughout the Web.

The Community Web Portal will create robust content that is targeted to the needs and interests of local residents. Content may be created by local residents, businesses, agencies, schools, etc. with a minimum or more direction from webmasters.

Ideas for content include:

- Local news of the day/week, blogs, entertainment
- Information about local events, classes, and meetings
- Notices for youth about scholarship opportunities and summer jobs, mentors, and wage information
- Local social networking designed for seniors, as well as information of interest, such as health care leads on low-cost prescriptions and local provider information that is generated by residents themselves
- For students or those without much work experience: access to templates or a worksheet on how to represent work/life experience on a resume.
- Economic opportunities, including an “Angie’s List” for local businesses
- Marketing for businesses and other institutions in the communities; this would be tied to the Local Affinity Marketing Card

A portion of the Southwest community site will be dedicated space where all community residents can learn about local health/wellness options, such as low cost treatment opportunities, locally scheduled health fairs/events, and both preventative and health resources around health issues in our communities. While a large amount of general health information already resides on the Internet, a trusted, accurate, local and culturally sensitive resource on our community portal will bolster the relevance to our Southwest residents. Having our available health services and preventative programs mapped and available on the portal will increase the likelihood of our residents taking advantage of the available resources in their own community. The portal then becomes yet another valuable tool in the community health arsenal as we work to overcome documented health disparities throughout, Auburn Gresham, Chicago Lawn and Englewood.

### 4.3 YOUNUMEDIA

Based on groundbreaking research that found that youth tend to use computers to hang out with friends, tinker with digital media, and “geek out” in online groups, the Chicago Public Library founded YouMedia to help youth further explore these core interests. Funded in part by the MacArthur Foundation, the program is now available only downtown at the Harold Washington Library Center, but should be expanded to neighborhood libraries such as Thurgood Marshall in Auburn Gresham.

## 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 and create jobs, particularly within the commercial corridors that are slated for broadband fiber. Greater education skills and higher levels of broadband availability in our commercial and industrial corridors will be significant points of attraction for existing businesses to expand and to 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 the potential business growth areas in our communities that could benefit from an increasingly technology connected and trained workforce and market the potential of our communities for future business investment.

### 5.1 BUSINESS RESOURCE CENTERS

Each of our communities should have a fully-equipped computer resource center with new hardware, software and presentation equipment to meet the needs of small businesses. The services outlined for Digital Business Connection (see Strategy 2.3.B) — group trainings, assessments and one-on-one coaching — will be

handled by Business Resource Centers. The following organizations will serve as Business Resource Centers in our Smart Communities:

- Special Service Area #32 in Auburn Gresham
- 63<sup>rd</sup> Street Growth Commission and Special Service Areas #2 and #3 in Chicago Lawn
- A Business Resource Center will be created at the Teamwork Englewood site in Englewood

Mobile training and “webinar” capabilities will also allow business owners unable to come to the resource centers to be served. By adding digital technology to existing business support, the Business Resource Centers will reach out to local businesses, assess their technology capacity and help local businesses build technology plans into their small business plans.

### 5.2 LOCAL AFFINITY MARKETING

A Local Affinity Marketing program will provide residents in our communities with affinity cards similar to those available through the major supermarkets, which can be used by consumers to access special offers and sales. Local merchants would be able to opt into this type of a program as a way to better understand their customers and show a commitment to the community. Our program will create a platform that allows a number of local businesses to share the system, thereby lowering cost of entry and also widening the database of information (with individual records kept private).

A concurrent program will create site advertising and special discounts specifically aimed at local residents to promote local businesses to the community. A local shoe store could send a mailer for a back-to-school sale to a list of anyone who bought children’s clothing or toys at local

stores, for example, and a resident who regularly purchases dinner at a local restaurant could be offered a discount on the lunch special via email. Together, the elements of the Local Affinity campaign would drive economic growth both by making shopping locally more attractive for consumers and by helping local firms understand their markets more completely.



# Conclusion

The participants in the planning process for the Southwest Smart Communities Partners are excited by the possibilities that 21st century information technology holds for everything from education and employment to reductions in violence, and are aware of the dire consequences of falling further behind as technology irrevocably changes the traditional infrastructure of communication, community and commerce.

The possibilities and plans outlined above are a blueprint to achieve digital excellence in our specific neighborhoods — to bring to a close any digital divide that exists between our residents and the rest of Chicago and to provide a new set of tools to improve the quality of life on the Southwest Side. This plan is ambitious, but it 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 our community through the New Communities Program.

Planning for the Southwest Smart Communities Partners 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 (BTO P) funded by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act.

Through the digital excellence partnership between the City of Chicago and LISC/Chicago, SSCP and the other Smart Communities were the focus of the City's BTO P application under the category of Sustainable Broadband Adoption. It

was announced in March that the program would receive \$7.07 million in federal Recovery Act funds. The grant will provide computers and training to more than 11,000 Chicago residents and 500 small businesses and nonprofits in Humboldt Park, Pilsen, Auburn Gresham, Chicago Lawn and Englewood, with the hope of helping thousands of Chicago residents and businesses emerge from the recession stronger than before.

Although securing BTO P funding is a huge step forward in executing this plan, the full breadth of our vision includes projects that will not be supported by the federal program. In addition to the BTO P funding, the Southwest Smart Communities Partners will seek support from other foundations and corporations for this plan. We believe that we will be successful in raising the necessary funds because the plan is based on strong community input, sound approaches and realistic goals.

We appreciate the support from The Chicago Community Trust, the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, the State of Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic

Opportunity, Microsoft, the City of Chicago and LISC/Chicago for the resources and technical assistance to develop this plan.



# Leadership

## **SOUTHWEST SMART COMMUNITIES PARTNERS STEERING COMMITTEE**

- 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)

## **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 & Technology
- Mayor's Office

## **SCRIBES AND PLANNERS**

- Patrick Barry, Chief Scribe
- Scott Goldstein, Teska Associates, Inc.
- Carl Vogel, Scribe

## **PROGRAM AND PLANNING SUPPORT**

- 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 be 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 non-profit 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)

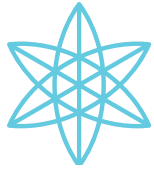
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