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NEWS AND ARTICLES

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A Cleanslate for Cottage Grove corridor

By John McCarron

There's something new in the air along Cottage Grove Avenue and it sounds a lot like "Good morning!" That greeting, along with the sweep of brooms and the scrape of shovels, is the sound of a gathering retail revival.

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"Good morning!" is how interns from Cleanslate Chicago greet passersby—each a passerby—as they remove litter and grit from the sidewalks in front of the few stores that have survived along this troubled shopping strip.



Clean streets and friendly smiles are equal parts of the Cleanslate formula.

[View a larger version of this image.](#)

"It's a dual strategy of redevelopment and job creation," explained Bernita Gabriel, NCP Director of the Quality of Life Communities Development Corp., at a press conference Feb. 15 to launch the Cleanslate program along Cottage Grove Avenue.

Revitalizing this historic boulevard, especially its retail intersections at Cottage Grove and 47th Streets, is a central strategy in QCDC's quality-of-life plan. For housing rehab and construction there are precious few places on South Side to buy competitively priced groceries, household goods or clothing.

According to MetroEdge, an urban research firm, residents here spend \$450 million a year outside the neighborhood for lack of stores close to home. So the city is laying plans

for a major revitalization, and portions of the corridor have been designated a tax-increment district or TIF, district. QCDC, meanwhile, is busy recruiting retailers.

Bringing people back

But it's not just stores people want, according to a recent survey. "We asked 'What brings you back?'" said Chinwe Onyeagoro, special consultant to QCDC for community

development, "and people said there needs to be more cleanliness."



Cleanslate interns will tidy up streets and parkways along Drexel Blvd. and Cottage Grove Ave.

<http://www.newcommunities.org>

With Cleanslate, Cottage Grove's cleanliness ... and a whole lot more respect it is a model NCP project together new partners and simultaneously accomplishing other objectives. Chicago is a neighborhood beautification business that employs young adults recovering from prior scrapes with or without substance abuse or other barriers to mainstream employment.

Already a part of the NCP effort in Gresham, Cleanslate sprang from the Program, a job readiness effort underwritten by JP Morgan Chase and other area firms and philanthropists. The expansion to Quad Communities, a civic coalition of neighborhoods like Quad Community, will reap maximum benefit from the transformation of the city's public

Another key partner is the city's Department of Streets and Sanitation. Deputy commissioner Bobby Richardson joined the outdoor press conference at 47th and Cottage Grove and helped explain how it will work.

Cleanup and more

Five days a week, from 7:45 a.m. to 12:45 p.m., Cleanslate will deploy 8 to 10 interns—local residents—to clean sidewalks and vacant lots, shovel snow in winter and maintain parkway gardens in the summer.

They'll work along both Cottage Grove and Drexel Boulevards, from 35th to 47th Streets. Pay is \$180 per week, but interns also must undergo training in job skills from interviewing techniques to dress-for-success.

And one other thing: Every day, while cleaning the neighborhood, interns will cheerily greet at least 100 persons every morning!"

Since last June's launch in Aubur

