

NEW

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POLICE AND NEIGHBORS FIND COMMON GROUND

By Beatriz Ponce de León

Hanging out in Little Village, sometimes with gang bangers, but mostly with guys just like himself—teens with lots of time and no place to go—Orlando Hernandez started getting into trouble and feeling “*enojo*” (anger) toward the police. “They were always around picking us up or chasing us away, and sometimes disrespecting us,” he said. “You always see them and they become the enemy.”

Animosity toward those who “serve and protect” is not uncommon among youth and men of color, especially in neighborhoods where police have been accused of racial profiling or responding slowly to residents’ calls. There is distrust, as well, from immigrants who remember corrupt police back home or are afraid of being deported.

That tension is something the Chicago Police Department (CPD) and several New Communities Program (NCP) groups are fighting to change. “We can’t do our job without assistance from the community. Without them, we’ll fail,” said CPD Deputy Supt. Charles Williams. “We need to know what residents’ concerns are by interacting with them.”

Two projects in the 10th Police District have provided that interaction. Little Village Community Development Corp. (LVCDC)



10th District Cmdr. Beatriz Cuello (right) chats with residents before an evening roll call on a street where a homicide had recently taken place in Little Village.

PHOTO BY GUY FERGUSON/INPHOTOS

organized four trainings for police and residents to talk about reducing violence and crime. Lawndale Christian Development Corp. (LCDC) launched a nine-month “Careers in Law Enforcement Exposure Series” to raise awareness of police job opportunities and prepare more women and people of color to pass the police entrance exam.

Challenging stereotypes

The first Little Village workshop on March 5 started out with police on one side of the room and residents on the other. “You could cut the tension down the middle,” recalled Alicia Gonzalez, former NCP organizer at LVCDC. But by lunchtime,

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QUAD COMMUNITIES AREA GAINS ROOFTOPS, SEEKS RETAIL

By Ed Finkel

Thirty real estate and community development experts toured the Quad Communities on July 28 and discussed strategies for attracting retail stores to serve an expected influx of 10,000 new residents over the next five years.

Organized by the Urban Land Institute’s Chicago District Council and LISC/Chicago, the meeting was hosted by 4th Ward Ald. Toni Preckwinkle and the Quad Communities Development Corp. (QCDC).

QCDC was looking for practical advice, said Chinwe Onyegoro, a consultant to the group.

The area has more than 3,600 rental and for-sale housing units planned or under construction, yet its retail environment hasn’t kept pace. “We understand that the philosophy of, ‘If you wait, it will come,’ isn’t going to work,” she said.

After a bus tour led by architect Susan Campbell of Campbell Tiu Campbell, the group offered ideas—along with warnings of a difficult road ahead. Kevin Augustyn of Opus North Corp. said location and transportation are positives, but that it might take a while to lure retail. “Look at how long it took to get a retailer in the South Loop,” he said.

Peter Levavi of Brinshore Development LLC urged community leaders to sit down with developers and collaboratively design projects. “The most important thing a community can do is to set the table” by seeding new projects. “National retailers won’t come until pressure from the south Loop continues [southward],” he said. “[But] when it hits here... they’ll be knocking down the doors.”

James Wilson of the Chicago Department of Planning and Development suggested Wicker Park and Bucktown as models. Those areas started with specialty shops and now are attracting national retailers. But Les Pollock of the planning firm Camiros, Ltd. said the Quad area doesn’t have as much cheap rental space as those communities had.

It will need to build on vacant land. “Mixed-use is the way to go,” advised Pollock. “You already know you can sell housing, (so) you’re going to have to subsidize that retail.”

Joel Bookman, interim director of the New Communities Program, suggested buying up property near 47th and Cottage Grove and attracting developers and retailers with heavy subsidies. “I would control this corner,” he said. “Make something visible. Then development will emanate.”

Soliciting small shops is important, said Fred Bonner of Bonheur Development, while larger stores should “do something creative. It’s not going to be a huge site with a parking lot. We are in an urban area. Let’s not look at us as cookie-cutter.”

Creating a distinctive identity for the largely African-American neighborhood is crucial, the group agreed, because race still plays a role in retail location decisions. Campbell said South and West Side neighborhoods with higher incomes have struggled to attract retailers.

The group concluded that a bit of risk will be necessary—but worth it. “If you build it for them... the rest will fall into place,” said Steven McCullough of Bethel New Life Inc.

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Ald. Toni Preckwinkle (center-facing camera) and others toured the 300-unit Lake Park Crescent development.

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