Chicago Rehab Network Winter Newsletter

Dear Rachel,

For the past 35 years, the Chicago Rehab Network has made its mission to build strong neighborhoods. With stable housing comes decreased mobility for families and children, increased spending power, and an open path towards economic success. This success creates a legacy worth carrying on.

In this time of severity in local communities - the parallels in our founding 35 ago are uncanny: evidenced by a lack of credit and deteriorating conditions of homes, schools and commerce. It is good to know there exists a reservoir of experience and knowledge in the maturing field of community development that is

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Member & Resident Workshop
April 13, 2013

dedicated to neighborhood assets in ways that leverage economies and jobs locally. We want to use this legacy moment to profile what is working: your success and innovations.

And in this time, as before, we see signs of change and revitalization - there is new leadership emerging in neighborhoods, in government, and in the corporate sector that understands that housing is foundational to all that matters not only in our local communities but for the vitality of the region.

Our 35-year legacy has been in an unwavering commitment to affordable neighborhoods. Your commitment to CRN is an investment in community development and our local partners who get the job done on a daily basis. They are the entrepreneurs in neighborhoods and local commerce-the keepers of the American dream for people of all backgrounds, creeds and income levels.

Sincerely,

Kevin Jackson
Executive Director

10am-1pm
Egan Urban Center
DePaul University
1 E Jackson, Suite C-103/C-104

In the News

Mayor announces new opportunity areas
Mayor Emanuel announced nearly $3 billion in public and private funds to rebuild communities in seven "opportunity areas" across Chicago.

Can Chicago end homelessness?
Tribune reporter Deborah Shelton takes a serious look at those living on the fringes of society.

CRN's Response
Executive Director Kevin Jackson penned a letter to the editor of the Tribune responding to Shelton's article, pointing out the effectiveness of community-based organizations.

Chicago: A tale of two cities
Crain's Greg Hinz details the spectacular prosperity of the Loop. But does it come at the expense of Chicago's neighborhoods?

Deadly Sequestration
The ax coming down on federal spending will cause 4,500 fewer Illinois families to receive housing.

A new family joins the Habitat community

The Florez' journey started two years ago, and today they can call themselves an official Habitat family.

A blue house comfortably nestled just around the corner of a winding street in Park Forest-that's what it is to most passersby; but to the Florez

CRN's Membership Body Convenes for Winter Meeting

On March 14, CRN members met at La Casa Student Housing to discuss the state of their communities, and the outlook for the future.

What is the state of your community? This was the question posed by Chicago Rehab Network's Vice President Guacolda Reyes (of the Resurrection Project), that kicked off the gathering. We had heard the state of the union last month and the state of the state last week, so CRN asked its members the state of community as a way of reminding all of us that bottom-up approaches are part of the solution. More importantly is the recognition that effective recoveries, like effective development, address local realities and concerns as well as the big picture. The concerns are real and resonate across all regions of the city–concerns about safety, about children and seniors remaining in their neighborhoods. There was the reality of the growing need for supportive services and places that provide basic shelter. Report after report stated how finding affordable housing seemed elusive as ever.

The challenges seemed to be compounding, but "there is hope out there because of your efforts," Reyes said to conclude the updates.

family, it is an answer to their prayers.

Kelli Florez, along with her husband Ramone Sr. and their five children (Ramone Jr., 7; Alejandro, 5; Joshua, 4; Eli, 2; Gabriel, 2), are now living in the house of their dreams due to a great deal of hard work; and it all began with hopes, dreams and prayers.

About two years ago, Kelli first convinced her husband to go to a Habitat for Humanity meeting with her, on the day of their oldest son's 5th birthday.

According to Homes for a Changing Region (a project of the Metropolitan Mayors Caucus), "It is critical to get residents into vacant homes. While we recognize that down payment requirements are going back to their traditional 20% level, we also note that the prices of foreclosed homes are far lower than they were four or five years ago. Moderate and middle income families should be in a position to buy such homes."

Habitat's form of a down payment is $1,500 and sweat equity (400 hours for singles and 500 for a couple), and they are ensured to have monthly payments of no more than 30% of the gross monthly income.

Kelli explains her family's journey with Habitat as her son Joshua sneaks down the stairs from his nap. They sit in their family room-a big open space with a fireplace, red leather couches and walls adorned with a family collage and canvas paintings by Ramone Sr.

Kelli describes how hard it was in their old place, being pregnant in a cold apartment that was only about the size of their living room now. Two days before she gave birth, she found out there was a raccoon in their roof. The Florez' old place was not kept up and did not suit the family's needs.

This discussion led into three presentations, beginning with Pat Abrams of The Renaissance Collaborative. Abrams reminded everyone that the first Five Year plan was called the Affordable Housing and Community Jobs Campaign – underscoring the hope that with investment in housing, local economic activity is also generated. This demonstrates that the challenges in community development are not simply a housing or jobs dichotomy – it is not an "either/or" false choice; but rather, the ability to match supply and demand is relevant in all neighborhoods. It is no surprise that communities with the highest housing instability frequently show educational instability as well. There is a housing platform that makes a difference in any neighborhood and for any household. CRN is meeting to prepare for the next five year plan.

Professor Janet Smith of UIC gave A Tale of Two Cities presentation, explaining that while the Chicago Loop is roaring, other areas are presenting much more difficult scenarios. The fact that 44 percent of Cook County homeowners have mortgages under water highlights this dichotomy. Incomes are significantly off their peak and population declines in certain communities make recovery even more needed and at the same time quite difficult. In addition, there are around 17,000 homeless kids in CPS, which led into Julie Dworkin's (CCH) presentation on the Chicago Plan to End Homelessness. Dworkin noted that the mayor's office is engaged in the plan, and that the goal is as follows: to create and maintain stable and affordable housing for households who are experiencing or at risk of homelessness.

Everyone recognized the work ahead was so very relevant to the city's future.

Save the date

Beating Back Bed Bugs
April 10
77 W Jackson, 12th Floor

The Bethel Learning Exchange
April 17
11:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. at Spencer Elementary, 214 N. Lavergne Ave.

2013 Illinois Conference on Affordable Housing
April 23rd and 24th
UIC Forum, 725 W. Roosevelt Rd.

"I love to tell people this story. Our pastor [at House of Triumph Church] one day said, 'Someone is going to get a house,'" Kelli said, "Our old place was so small with five kids."

She continued, "Before we got into the program, we started praying. When we pulled up to the house, we got everything we prayed for-a blue house, big yard, fireplace, clothesline, and a window above the kitchen sink."

Four years ago, Kelli made a dream book with some of her co-workers at Mary Kay Cosmetics, where she has been a beauty consultant for five years. She took a picture of a kitchen out of a magazine, and she got everything she wanted from that kitchen in her new home.

There were about 75 people at that first Habitat meeting that Kelli and Ramone attended, and 3 or 4 would get into the Habitat program.

"I was hopeful," Kelli said.

She and her husband turned their paperwork in that February. And about two months later Habitat called requesting more information. There were a few confirmations before their application went through to the board of directors.

Kelli had the twins Eli and Gabriel in March, and in June the Florez officially became a Habitat family.

Kelli started working in July, three days a week, while her husband was working 12 hours a day at his job as a repair processor.

The work served as an exciting learning experience for Kelli, who was doing most of the work at the time, along with the help of family and friends. Doug Long, Kelli's supervisor and foreman, taught Kelli how to use power tools and build walls for houses. She now knows a great deal more about

Healthy Communities: Chicago Regional Summit
June 12 -13
9 a.m. to 4 p.m. at the Federal Reserve Bank of Chicago, 230 S. LaSalle St.

In-depth Reports

National Low Income Housing Coalition:America's affordable housing shortage

The Committee on Housing and Real Estate met in March to evaluate 2012 progress towards the City's housing goals. Read our CRN report here: Analysis of the 4th Quarter 2012 Housing Report

Housing America's Future: New Directions for National Policy

We are Apartments
The National Apartment Association (NAA) and the National Multi Housing Council (NMHC) have partnered on behalf of America's apartment industry. Check out their interactive reports on the Chicago and Illinois renters markets.

Affordable Requirements Ordinance
As discussed in CRN analysis of DHED report-inclusionary housing strategies like the downtown density bonus are anticipated to see an increase in applications with the returning real estate market in the Loop. Earlier this month the city announced another commitment to the City's Affordable Housing Opportunity Fund.

Hope and sustenance for West Humboldt Park

Newest CRN member opens first sit-down restaurant in the area in 15 years–with a healthy catch

Along a neglected stretch of Chicago Avenue on the city's West Side, one unassuming storefront teams with activity. Inside, exposed brick walls, stainless steel amenities and shining white tables contrast with the dull grey of winter outside. Staff dressed in sharp black bustle about the newly renovated space, setting out trays of food for the grand opening luncheon about to begin.

This wasn't a ribbon cutting for a convenience store or a fast food chain–the neighborhood has plenty of these. Turkey Chop, by Atlanta restaurateur Quinten Love, made a bit of history Feb. 4 as the first sit-down restaurant to open its

what it takes to build a home.

"It makes me feel good to even talk about it," Kelli said.

"Doug treated me like I was his daughter. He empowered me. He's very good and patient," she continued.

The Florez needed to put 500 hours of work into houses before they could get into their home. This is called "sweat equity." They worked on five other homes besides their own, some of which were just down the road.

Kelli and her family first saw their home in May of 2012. In order to claim a home, a family must have half of their hours complete.

Kelli describes the day they claimed their home as "an awesome, awesome day."

"The boys have a lot more independence. They take the bus to school and have their own rooms," Kelli said.

Ramone and Alejandro, the two oldest, go to Arcadia Elementary in the Matteson school district. They get homework packets on Friday that are due the following Thursday. The boys each have required reading every day. Kelli says that her family has designated Friday night as the Florez family movie night.

The Florez have been in their home since November of 2012.

"We've had so many people bless us," Kelli said.

They had help from family and friends, and received tile for their home that was donated to Habitat.

"The house was a gift itself," Kelli said, noting that

doors in West Humboldt Park in more than 15 years.

That isn't the only notable aspect of the project, though. In struggling West Humboldt Park, the new restaurant stands as a beacon of hope both in providing an economic catalyst for redevelopment, as well as alleviating the neighborhood's status as a food desert.

"If you're trying to change a [common] perception, you've got to look externally with the environment and I wanted to have something the neighborhood would be proud of and give people a chance to sit down and have something good to eat," said Chet Jackson, executive director of the West Humboldt Park Development Council, who managed the project from inception to birth.

"It'll be a healthy soul food restaurant and it doesn't serve pork or beef," Jackson added. "So it's a traditional menu but also has vegan and vegetarian options, which is unique to the area." There will even be a farmers market and cooking demonstrations in the future.

It's clear that without key community organizations, Turkey Chop would not have been possible as a force of the free market. Yet Jackson, a self-described socially responsible entrepreneur, said the restaurant will be profitable and self-sustaining, possibly even drawing new developments to the area. The story is a perfect poster child for what community-based nonprofits, when working together and combining resources, can accomplish.

WHPDC is the Chicago Rehab Network's newest member, and Jackson stressed the importance of having a connection with other nonprofits and being a part of a network in order to accomplish such goals in community development.

"I felt strategically it would be good for us to be part of the network, especially on the policy side,"

she and her family were able to pick their cabinet and counter top colors.

The Florez still want to do work with Habitat even though their hours have been completed.
Kelli said, "Here, we're happy and confident in our house. We have pride and appreciation for our home."

A Look Back:

Digging through Network Builder archives

To celebrate the Rehab Network's 35 year anniversary, we took a look back at some of the issues we'd been focusing on throughout our history–and were surprised to see how many of these issues are still relevant today.

Cabrini-Green

The redevelopment of Cabrini-Green has been over a decade in the making. In 1999, CRN sat down with the team selected to redevelop the first portion, Halsted North. In 2012, the final tower came down.See how the CHA's re-calibrated Plan for Transformation is coming along.

Energy Efficiency

Back in 1997, agencies like the Illinois Department of Commerce and Community Affairs began to catch on to the then-nascent "green" movement, creating energy efficiency programs to save low-income renters money on utility bills. Today, green is all the rage. Hispanic Housing Development Corp. announced a $7 million renewable energy initiative in 2012 aimed at adding solar panels and other green features to 13 housing projects across the city, making housing even more affordable.

Crash & Recovery

Nearly six years after the peak and subsequent burst of the housing bubble, most experts understand the main causes for the market collapse. A decade before the crash, CRN was raising the alarm that easy credit and low interest rates were not a sustainable answer to higher homeownership rates–jobs and higher incomes were. Will we learn from these mistakes, though?

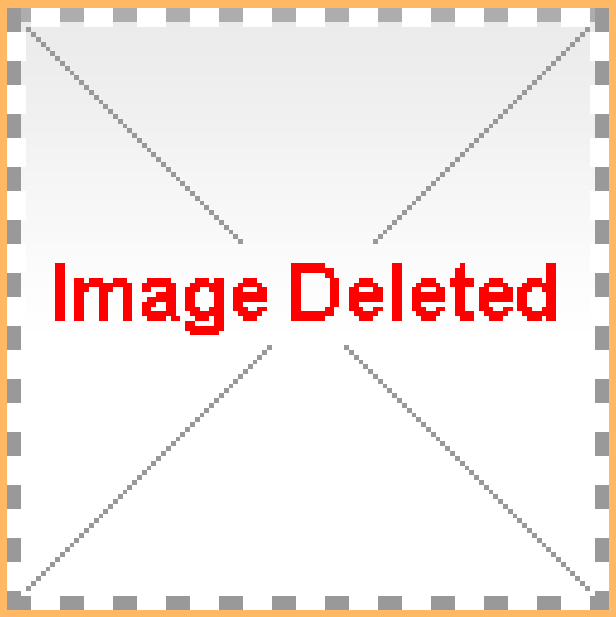
Gentrification

Gentrification is never-ending. New buildings and rising rents create jobs and beautify the city; but they also displace working families and segregate communities. In 1994, urban planners and developers in Chicago debated the gentrification of Lincoln Park, the South Loop and Wicker Park. Today, these neighborhoods contain some of the

Jackson said. "Resources are limited; if you have a healthy and robust network and you have that to tap into, it's much easier to succeed."

Jackson's mission of being a socially responsible entrepreneur means he doesn't just count making money for the business as a success--it has to have a positive impact on the neighborhood.

"We believe when you open a business in a neighborhood without much traction, and people see that a business is coming in and is viable, it makes it more likely than not that another business will come on board," said Lycrecia Parks, senior loan officer at CCLF who oversaw the process for WHPDC. "They bring in more traffic, so that spurs other development, and we've already seen that happening." Thus the virtuous cycle begins.



West Humboldt Park sorely needs the investment. According to CRN's "Building our Future Chicago" toolkit, the median income of the area dropped from $29,404 in 2000 to $23,663 in 2009 even as median rent shot up 35.2% from $657 to $888 over the same period.

With unemployment high in the neighborhood and full-time jobs scarce, Jackson pointed out that more development in the area will bring in more training for local residents to start career paths, not get stuck in entry-level positions. The neighborhood has just been given the OK to proceed with Special Service Area (SSA) designation by the city.

As more guests began to arrive and filled the space with chatter and laughter, a sense of accomplishment set in. The group included members of nonprofits, local faith organizations,

city's wealthiest properties. In 2013, it is now Bronzeville that is experiencing this trend. In the past, CRN has advanced public policy to mitigate the negative impact of gentrification.

THE NETWORK BUILDER

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Racism and Housing, Chicago Style!

So You Want to Displace a Community? Some Tips From the Field

by Bob Brehm

Bob Brehm is the Executive Director of Bickerdike Redevelopment Corporation

Race. It's a classic four letter word. No really, it's true. I know because I looked it up in my "Spellcheck."

Just like "s—t" and "f—k," it's a word not uttered by polite people in mixed company. That group includes politicians, real estate developers and liberal observers of the death and life of Chicago neighborhoods.

Mention "r—e" as a motivator to any of these types and you get an intuitibly defensive reaction. What was it that some British writer said? Something about when people are confronted with something they don't want to hear, don't trust them if they protest too much.

But there's no denying it. R—e is a major factor in all policies that affect our communities housing, work, schools, safety, recreation, and just about anything else that affects the quality of our lives. And it is particularly apparent in the development — both the undoing and rebuilding — of our communities.

Urban Removal

Just try to find a Jewel super-

HUD Secretary Cisneros speaks at the announcement of the Urban Developers Master's Degree Program: a joint project of CRN and Spertus College. He is flanked by CRN Board members and Executive Director, David Hunt, UDP faculty, and corporate supporters.

market in a minority neighborhood. Not that they treated their neighbors very well when they were around. (Which is more racist — to overcharge non-white customers, or to leave their neighborhoods?)

There is still one Jewel in West Town. It serves as an anchor for the West Town Center shopping center. It was developed in the early 1980s on the former site of about nine hundred units of very old but also decent and affordable housing, a factory employing a few hundred mostly minority people, and an abandoned Walbaldt's store. It was built with the considerable support of Jane Byrne and Dan Rostenkowski. This support translated into deep subsidies for the developer and indirectly for Jewel, including CDBG grants and federal Urban Removal funds.

(No, "Removal" is okay. I was called Spellcheck again. If you're not convinced, ask me sometime about the frequent fires and building inspections that ravaged the area while the residents fought the designation of their homes as "slum and blighted" — a requirement for the city to qualify the project for Urban Removal funding.)

So the politicians and developers want the land from under our homes and jobs. Race is a key factor in selecting sites for these pet projects. Anyone remember a white neighborhood being considered for a new stadium? On the north side, area residents almost blocked the installation of lights in Wrigley Field. Can you imagine a proposal for a new stadium there?

Mostly minorities lose their jobs for projects like West Town Center or the rampant conversion of industrial space into trendy lofts. Can you imagine a major employer of white people being told to pack up and leave against their wishes?

Continued on page 6.

other business leaders and even 27th Ward Ald. Walter Burnett, Jr. There was a feeling that this would not be the last time the crowd would be meeting for such an event.

The opening of one restaurant may seem like a small accomplishment to some, but every drop in a bucket takes us one step closer to filling it up. And in an area that has long been accustomed to businesses packing up shop, Turkey Chop stands as a symbol of community development, networking and grass-roots organizing done right.

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