



**From the Ground Up:  
The Logan Square Neighborhood  
Association's Approach to  
Building Community Capacity**

**Prepared for  
The John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur  
Foundation  
&  
The Logan Square Neighborhood  
Association**

Prepared by  
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Research for Action  
&  
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Logan Square Neighborhood Association

February 2003

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*Research for Action (RFA) is a non-profit organization engaged in education research and reform. Founded in 1992, RFA works with educators, students, parents, and community members to improve educational opportunities and outcomes for all students. RFA work falls along a continuum of highly participatory research and evaluation to more traditional policy studies.*

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## Preface: Reflections on a Collaborative Research Project

*(Note: This reflective note was written by Sukey Blanc and Joanna Brown. Sukey is the team leader for the Research for Action (RFA) team that worked with the Logan Square Neighborhood Association (LSNA). She has been involved with this project since the winter of 1999. Joanna Brown is the education organizer at LSNA who coordinated LSNA's participation in the project.)*

### Introduction

**Sukey:** I first learned about LSNA in the winter of 1999 from a colleague who told me that LSNA, a multi-issue community organization in Chicago, needed a research group to document their work. She thought that the styles and interests of RFA and LSNA would mesh well together.

Research for Action has a history of, and a commitment to engaging in collaborative, participatory research. By collaborative, participatory research, I mean an approach in which professional researchers and the organization or people being studied jointly construct the research questions, identify appropriate research activities, and work together to interpret and present findings.

During our first phone conversation with LSNA, Nancy Aardema (LSNA's executive director) and Joanna Brown (the lead education organizer) were clear that the research needed to be a collaborative effort between LSNA and the documenter they selected. The MacArthur Foundation, which funded the project, wanted the research to meet the needs of the community as well as those of the foundation. LSNA's organizational ethos also steered it toward a collaborative approach.

Much has been written about the value of collaboration and participatory research. Less has been written about the processes involved and the challenges that may arise. I hope that this joint reflection on our process, the benefits for both organizations, and the challenges we encountered will help others who undertake a similar task.

Special thanks to my friend and co-author, Matthew Goldwasser. Matthew joined this project in the winter of 2001. Like me, he is committed to doing collaborative, participatory research. He is also interested in sharing what we have all learned from this experience and therefore spurred Joanna and me to produce this reflective piece. Matthew himself has worked very closely with LSNA's housing leaders, shared their fears and their joys, read their writings, and engaged in extensive dialogue with them about earlier drafts of this report.

### Developing a Collaborative Relationship

**Sukey:** During our first conversation, I found out that Joanna, who was also working on her doctorate, would be playing a central role in the research. Joanna has been a key liaison for RFA—setting up interviews with people who could help us understand LSNA's foundations and introducing us to everyone as friends of the organization. She has also been involved in every aspect of the project, including working on data analysis and writing.

Others at LSNA have also been consistently friendly and welcoming. It was especially helpful to me that everyone had faith that I could communicate in Spanish, even though my Spanish is far from fluent. Whenever I was in Logan Square, I found myself switching into Spanish, or a combination of Spanish and English, and that was definitely one of the things that made me feel like part of the LSNA community.

### Benefits of Collaboration

**Joanna:** The RFA/LSNA research collaboration was useful to LSNA in a variety of ways. There were a number of things which we, at LSNA, would probably not have done on our own, but which we did do because of our work with RFA.

First, RFA provided some funding for community-based research which made it possible to re-survey the neighborhood about the community learning centers. We were already familiar with this kind of community-based research, as parents had surveyed each school's neighborhood before establishing a community center. But Sukey asked us about what questions we would like to have answered, and encouraged us to do follow-up

surveys about the community centers. The information we gathered from these surveys has helped us to keep our centers fresh and to resist the bureaucratization that creeps in as institutions become routinized.

Second, because RFA staff made it clear that they were interested in using the voices of LSNA leaders in their report, LSNA people were prompted to collaborate in a variety of ways, from befriending and educating Sukey and Matthew about LSNA to writing reports on housing meetings and poems about marches.

Third, we ended up with some concrete products that can be used both inside and outside the organization. An outstanding example is the "Real Conditions" booklet written by parent mentors at Mozart School. RFA paid for the writing workshop and the booklets as part of the process of collecting first-person materials for the report. The writers have read their work at school potluck dinners and assemblies. The book has also been used in ESL classes and to help funders and other outsiders understand LSNA's work.

The intermediate products of the research were probably the most useful to the organization – an article that Sukey wrote for our newsletter, the women's writing project, and the Education Indicators project report on LSNA (a collaboration between RFA and the Cross City Campaign for Urban Education), with its many pictures. It would be useful to mine long research reports for shorter segments that could help publicize the organization.

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**Joanna:** As with any documentation of an organization, this one began at a certain point in LSNA's history. RFA's willingness to collaborate with us in thinking through the research enabled the RFA team to learn more about and take into consideration the organization's history and the participants' memories. By working closely with LSNA, RFA researchers were able to frame the questions and the report in a way that made sense to us. Because they were open to our perspective and viewed us as colleagues, we were able to help the researchers focus on and adjust the context in which they saw our work, even as they brought a fresh and independent analysis of LSNA's work.

**Sukey:** Each partner brought perspectives which challenged the other's way of interpreting LSNA and its work. Creating a sense of shared meaning between RFA and LSNA has been a process of dialogue and struggle. There was always good will and trust, but the researchers often did not see things in the same way that people inside the organization did. It seems like every time we presented data and our analysis to them, they said, "Well, no. Here's a different way of looking at it." That definitely enriched our understanding.

After we completed our first round of data collection, Joanna visited us in Philadelphia. Our conversation was pretty intense. We kept asking questions like whether LSNA was confronting the culture of the schools. Meanwhile, Joanna was pushing us to have a better understanding of LSNA's approach to relationship-building. When I think about it, we were dealing at that very first meeting with issues that we've continued to deal with. We've talked a lot about issues of power and power inequities, even though we didn't always refer to it that way.

**Joanna:** We were able to help shape the frame through which RFA examined our work. Take Sukey's appropriate and challenging question: "Is LSNA confronting the culture of the schools?" It is not that the question was wrong – LSNA needs always to challenge itself on this question – but our conversations shifted the framework within which that question was asked. We were able to bring to this discussion an historical perspective of how far the schools had moved since LSNA began organizing with parents. When RFA arrived on the scene, LSNA was already far into a process of transformation which had shifted, though not revolutionized, the power relationships within the school and increased the amount of social trust.

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**Joanna:** Because of RFA's commitment to collaborative research, RFA staff insisted on discussing drafts of the report in feedback sessions with a variety of people, from school staff to parents and LSNA housing and education leaders. This led to interesting and lively discussions about LSNA's work with a diverse group of

LSNA leaders and staff who normally would not meet for that purpose. These sessions gave leaders a chance to reflect on their work and how it may be perceived by a broader intellectual community. Having a written document to react to provided a focus for the relatively abstract discussion.

## **Challenges of Collaboration**

**Sukey:** One of the things that I've learned is how hard it is to do participatory research. When I wrote the proposal, I had hoped that the community survey process would lead to community research teams whose questions and findings would intersect with the questions and findings of the outside researchers. What I found was that it was a lot harder than I had anticipated to combine the work of the two organizations – the research approach of outsiders and the inside voice and knowledge of people in the community. Nevertheless, it remained a disappointment to me that the community survey process couldn't be integrated into the final report in the way that I had envisioned.

**Joanna:** I think the limits to our collaborative research which Sukey refers to had more to do with the time demands on the staff of our organization than anything else. Everyone is always extremely busy. I was the point person for the collaborative research, was never freed up from other responsibilities to work on research, and was always overextended. Since this will usually be the case with community organizing staff, it is often helpful to have research staff develop the research plan and materials (such as survey instruments) and then ask organization members to implement them.

It is in the nature of community organizing that the practical and immediate demands of our work tend to push aside and overtake the longer-term or more abstract demands. We are very glad that we now have a final product that tells LSNA's story, but at any particular moment during the research process, data collection usually seemed less urgent than the next issue or meeting.

**Sukey:** Part of the difficulty of collaborating came from the geographic distance between Chicago and RFA's home base in Philadelphia.

**Joanna:** Because of the different time frames that researchers and organizing staff operate under, I would agree with Sukey that it is important to have a local researcher (in addition to someone on staff who is collaborating) to provide structure for the data collection on a day-to-day or week-to-week basis.

## **Concluding Comments**

**Sukey:** When I think back on the first Congress that I went to, I remember feeling that the event was grounded in people's real lives. It was smaller than the other Congresses I have attended, with about 200 people, and it had an arts emphasis. It felt to me like people in LSNA were engaged in creating a new kind of community. When we met with LSNA to give feedback about the early stages of the affordable housing campaign, we had a similar impression. We could tell that people on the housing committees really cared about each other. The issues were important, but the caring that they had for each other was at least as important.

I think that the biggest thing I learned from this project was thinking about how change looks from the inside, from the perspective of people who are creating that change. Even though I started out with a commitment to collaborative and participatory research, I started out thinking more like a social scientist, assuming that my writing would emphasize the social and economic structures that shape the Logan Square community. Instead, I found that individuals' stories and their growing sense of ability to take control of their lives seemed to be the central theme of this work.

My hope is that foundations will gain some new ideas from this report about how community organizing can function to build community capacity. Much of what we talk about in the report involves building trust within and across groups, but you can't build trust in poor communities without confronting power inequities. Capacity building thus involves both creating community and addressing power issues.

LSNA's work over time shows us the challenges of combining relationship-building in a diverse community with addressing issues of power. Nonetheless, it looks to us like LSNA has managed to fulfill both, as we have seen in their work on school reform and affordable housing. I hope that this report gives others some models of how community organizing can both confront power issues and also create community.

**Joanna:** Collaborative research can take many forms, but in general, whether it be writing and research by community members or discussion and debate over research questions and theoretical framework, research can only benefit from collaboration and respect between researchers and subjects.

Sukey and Matthew took collaboration seriously. And people knew that. They became part of the LSNA family, free to walk in and out of meetings and events without causing a stir. They saw things from the “inside” and saw processes, relationships and strategies develop. I feel that they gave us several years out of their work lives, and thank them for their commitment to telling our story.

## Executive Summary

### Introduction

This report presents a study of the evolution, implementation, and results of the work of the Logan Square Neighborhood Association (LSNA), funded by the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation. LSNA, one of the grantees under the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation's Building Community Capacity program, has a 40-year history of mobilizing neighborhood residents to maintain and improve the quality of community life and to bring additional resources and services into the neighborhood. LSNA's work is guided by its Holistic Plan, which includes improving local public schools, developing youth leadership, enhancing neighborhood safety, maintaining affordable housing, and economic revitalization.

### Overview of the Study

Between May 1999 and July 2002, Research for Action (RFA), an independent, Philadelphia-based nonprofit, worked in collaboration with LSNA on this documentation project. Over the course of three years, the RFA research team worked with LSNA staff and leaders to collect and analyze data about LSNA's internal processes, its strategies for neighborhood change, and the impact of engaging with LSNA on participants, especially in the areas of education and housing.

### Overview of LSNA

LSNA, an organization with a staff of 18 in 2002 and a yearly budget of approximately \$1,000,000, has remained flexible and intimately connected to the community. According to both staff and community leaders, during the past 13 years, LSNA has transformed from an organization made up primarily of white homeowners to a racially, ethnically, and economically integrated organization (reflecting the demographics of the neighborhood). Since 1990, LSNA has developed strong school/community partnerships, created a nationally-recognized affordable homeownership program, and built citywide visibility as a dynamic, community-based organization. Today, as low-income Logan Square residents face the possibility of displacement due to gentrification, LSNA is fighting to maintain the quality and diversity of community life it has helped to create.

LSNA's executive director of thirteen years, Nancy Aardema, strongly believes that the organization's

success has been based on building ongoing relationships of personal trust among individuals and organizations. During these years, the organization has looked hard for ways to nurture numerous and varied types of new social relationships within the Logan Square neighborhood. According to Aardema, these relationships become the foundation for strong neighborhood-based leadership and the capacity to challenge power inequities and bring about social change.

Relationship building is central to all of LSNA's work. As the organization strives to maintain Logan Square as a neighborhood that is diverse economically, as well as ethnically, linguistically, and racially, Aardema believes that the campaign for affordable housing is worth undertaking only if it fosters creative, meaningful relationships. As Nancy says,

*[Any campaign] has to be worthy of our time, both in terms of victory and building relationships. So part of our organizing is always relationship building and making it worth staying in the community because it's deeper than a house. It's about relationships and creativity.*

LSNA's successes in bringing together diverse members of the Logan Square community, mobilizing community members to address shared needs, and accessing outside resources all make it a valuable context for examining how a community organization builds community capacity by creating new sets of relationships, which in turn increase community well-being.

### Community Change and Displacement In Logan Square

Logan Square covers 3.6 square miles located north and west of Chicago's vibrant downtown. Between 1970 and 1990, the demographics of Logan Square shifted from a majority of residents of Eastern European ancestry to a majority population of first and second generation immigrants from Latin America. Today, Logan Square's population of 83,000 remains a heterogeneous mix of Mexicans, Puerto Ricans, other Latin Americans, recent Polish immigrants, established white residents, and African Americans.

While the neighborhood is racially and ethnically diverse, its potential for maintaining economic diversity is threatened as real estate values and taxes rise, development escalates, and market forces encourage the conversion of affordable housing units into condominiums or luxury townhouses. Since the

early 1990s, poor and working class families have had increasingly fewer options for living in Logan Square. Many middle class professionals, both Anglo and Latino, are long-term residents of Logan Square and contribute to the creative mix that makes up LSNA. In contrast, LSNA members often perceive wealthy newcomers as oblivious or scornful of their poorer neighbors who have helped to build the community as they raised families, made friends, and worked to improve neighborhood institutions.

An activist priest in the neighborhood describes the sense of loss experienced by working class residents who no longer feel at home in their own neighborhood.

*When the community begins to change, it is not just the houses. Suddenly "we" need more green space, more play space. Each time they go and tear something down, they say drug dealers lived there. There's a feeling that now "we" deserve a park more than [someone] deserves a home. When the neighborhood begins to change, then the meaning of the neighborhood begins to change. (Father Mike, Catholic priest and housing activist)*

In the fall of 2001, an organizer for LSNA's Parent Mentor program, which trains parents to work in Logan Square schools alongside the classroom teachers, vividly described the heartlessness of incoming developers and the impact that displacement is having on her school and community.

*I had 6 parent mentors living in one apartment building (it was a 17 unit building) and they got a 30 day notice and they were offered \$2000 to be out in 5 days. These people started construction even before the 30 days were up. There were no permits issued, nothing. They were just told to leave. And not one of those families came back to Brentano. So we lost 17. I lost all those parent mentors. I lost a few friends. The fact they were able to do this; they weren't issued any permits and when they were, they were back-dated. I look at the parent mentors we lost, the children we have lost from the school, the rental units we lost, and the lack of aldermen caring about those people, and even back-dating the permits! That all ties into what we're up against.*

As existing neighborhood bonds are threatened, LSNA struggles to stabilize the diverse community that it has helped to create.

## **Democratic Participation in Setting the Agenda for LSNA**

All of LSNA's activities are guided by its Holistic Plan, which is revised annually. The initial version of the Holistic Plan, completed in 1994, presented a positive vision of the community and provided a

roadmap for all the different activities that started springing up when Aardema became Executive Director. One of the original writers of the plan told us,

*As we continued to get victories in different areas, we just began to realize that we couldn't be everything at once...So what we did was, we brought the community together...We finally realized that we were just running all different places at the same time. And we needed some kind of filter.*

Thirty-four local schools churches, businesses, block clubs, social service agencies—with seniors and youth, parents and teachers, pastors and residents—worked together for over two years in small committees and large groups to set forth a specific agenda for building a healthier and more stable neighborhood. Committees were formed for different issue areas. Each year a "Core Committee," appointed by LSNA's elected Executive Board and leaders from each issue committee, engages in a process of brainstorming, visioning, and reflection that leads to an annual revision of the Holistic Plan. At the annual May Congress, the newly-revised Holistic Plan is presented and ratified by LSNA's Board (composed of representatives of LSNA's issue committees and representatives from almost 50 local organizations) and membership.

The elaborate process of holistic planning creates a well-defined democratic process which engages people in a civic arena in ways that many have not previously experienced. It teaches members new skills and provides a model which is replicated in other arenas within the organization. For example, as a Logan Square minister told us,

*LSNA has been very active in [making schools] a center of community, not just a place where kids and a group of professionals descend...It is not just a place where you can depend on kids to receive an education, but also the place where you participate in the governance and deciding what goes on there and building it up and helping it grow.*

## **Findings about LSNA's Organizing Work in Schools and Housing**

**FINDING ONE:** LSNA's robust school/community partnerships grew out of a sustained, successful campaign against school overcrowding in Logan Square.

During the period that LSNA was writing its first Holistic Plan, it was also leading a campaign against overcrowding in Logan Square schools. A parent and a former president of LSNA explained the hard

work of organizing that enabled LSNA parents to win new school facilities for their neighborhood in the early 1990s:

*There were many meetings with parents to prepare for going down to the Board of Education. What was funny was that no one would commit in a large group. But we went around and got individual commitments. We had many, many meetings. It was a year and a half of meetings. And then we finally all came together in one big room. You could feel the tension in the room. And once we started the meeting it was like, "Well, you know, so and so, you said that if so and so supported it, you will support it," and we would call on the names, "Well, are you here in support?" It was empowering because you finally beat this huge Board of Ed.*

Over several years, the campaign resulted in five new annexes and two new middle schools. Just as importantly, the campaign both demonstrated LSNA's power as a community organization and built a foundation of mutual trust and respect among the principals, teachers, parent leaders and LSNA staff who had been involved in the campaign and witnessed the results.

**FINDING TWO:** LSNA's school-based programs have been successful in helping hundreds of low-income parents take leadership roles in their families, their schools, and their communities.

LSNA's Parent Mentor program, which trains low-income parents, often Latinas, to work alongside teachers in Logan Square classrooms, was initiated by one of the principals who participated in the campaign against overcrowding and who helped write the first Holistic Plan. Over 900 parents have graduated from the Parent Mentor program and have gone on to attain their G.E.D.'s, seek employment, and become active in the schools and the community.

Isabel, who is now a parent organizer for the program told us,

*The program is great because it changes a lot of people's lives. Not only for myself, but when other mothers first get into the program, their self-esteem and everything is so low. When they first started, they were like really quiet; they would keep to themselves. And now you can't get them to shut up sometimes. I mean you see the complete difference, they really change their life. They are more outgoing. They are willing to do more for their kids. It's like night and day, they're so different.*

The first group of parent mentor graduates initiated LSNA's first Community Learning Center. Since then, parent mentor graduates have started five other Community Learning Centers, organized block clubs,

and also initiated a health committee and an immigration committee within LSNA. The six community-controlled Community Learning Centers in Logan Square schools provide G.E.D. classes, ESL classes, and cultural and recreational activities for 1,400 adults and children every week. Parent mentor graduates and other community members also attend college classes leading to certification as bilingual teachers. Participants in and graduates of LSNA's programs make up the backbone of community involvement in local schools, leading activities like principal selection, Local School Councils, and bilingual oversight committees.

**FINDING THREE:** Relationships established through LSNA's school-community partnerships have led to substantial improvements in Logan Square schools.

Through parent participation in LSNA's work in their children's schools, parents begin to develop trusting relationships with each other and with school staff. These relationships lead to increased parent engagement in the life of schools.

As parents work closely with teachers, they develop a better understanding of what actually happens in the classroom and begin to develop their own educational aspirations. According to LSNA organizers, school staff, and parents, when parents become more familiar with what is happening in classrooms, they become more engaged with their children's homework, reading to their children, and participation in activities like Family Math and Family Literacy. The presence of parents in the schools also creates new kinds of relationships between adults and children in classrooms, leading to greater engagement by students in their classes. Teachers and parents tell many stories of children developing new interest in school because of parent mentors in their classrooms, seeing their own parent in the school, or having the parent pay more attention to their children's schoolwork and learning. One parent mentor told us a common variation on this theme.

*To me, being a parent mentor means being able to communicate with the students as well as the teachers. And when you're able to share some of the things that you know about the subjects, it seems to bring out a lot of good in a kid. I've noticed that in certain classrooms that I go to, the kids, they want to participate even more, even the ones that weren't even really doing well. The teachers notice how well they're making progress because they're interested, and I keep their interest going.*

Since 1996, all LSNA elementary schools have experienced significant increases in student achievement, even while the demographics remained constant. For example, from 1996 to 2001, the percentage of students at one school reading at, or above, the national norm on the yearly Iowa Test of Basic Skills rose from 17.5% to 29.3%. In math, the scores rose from 19.5% to 31.4%. Even more dramatic are the gains which occurred in the movement of student scores from the lowest to second lowest quartiles, a telling change because parent mentors usually work with the students who are most behind. These increases in test scores compare favorably with citywide averages, especially given the relatively higher rate of poverty and higher numbers of non-English speaking students in Logan Square schools.

**FINDING FOUR:** During the three years of the documentation study, LSNA was able to develop a coherent and sustained organizing campaign for affordable housing.

As part of a citywide Balanced Development Coalition, LSNA asks elected officials to endorse a platform that would require all developers to set aside 30% of new housing units as affordable housing. Although few low- and moderate-income residents in Logan Square would benefit directly from the set-asides, LSNA supports this platform in the context of a broader campaign which includes new affordable homeownership programs, support for rental subsidies, property tax abatements, and advocacy for public housing residents. Participation in the citywide Balanced Development Coalition is a way for LSNA to strategize with people from across the city and produce public actions that challenge public officials and private developers to take a stance against rampant displacement.

Many other efforts by LSNA helped move this campaign forward between 1999 and 2002. These included: meeting with city officials to convince them to continue providing funds to subsidy rents for low-income families; holding public meetings to successfully block several undesirable zoning changes in Logan Square; bringing 500 community members together for a Housing Summit; and staging a mock funeral procession of several hundred people for lost housing in Logan Square.

In May 2002, we observed over 1,000 people at LSNA's 40th Annual Congress loudly respond "Yes" to a speaker asking if they wanted to keep living in Logan Square and if they wanted to keep working for affordable rents. At the same event, school district

administrators and state politicians publicly supported the need for affordable housing in Logan Square and the citywide balanced development platform. Most striking, LSNA's newest alderman spoke about affordable housing on behalf of his fellow aldermen, promising to work closely with LSNA to ensure affordable housing in the neighborhood. This event contrasted sharply with the initial phase of the affordable housing campaign which RFA had observed three years earlier at the onset of our documentation project.

**FINDING FIVE:** During the course of this study, a group of grassroots housing leaders emerged and coalesced to coordinate LSNA's affordable housing campaign.

Many of the current leaders of the affordable housing campaign had originally approached LSNA to address their own immediate housing needs. As they developed relationships with LSNA staff and leaders, many newcomers to the organization began to connect their individual issues to a community-wide vision for affordable housing.

One example was Dawn, a recently separated mother who faced being forced out of Logan Square due to rising rents, but was able to qualify for a rental subsidy with LSNA's help. Drawing on her anger over the injustice of unfair housing costs and policies, Dawn now speaks out for others who are struggling to find and keep affordable rents. Dawn told us,

*When I first became involved with LSNA, I was a single mom and was suddenly going to have to pay the rent on my own. I was the last person to receive [the subsidy from the Low Income Housing Trust Fund] because the funds were used up. Knowing how much it would help me and other people who were in need of it, I agreed to work to keep the fund going. There is a subtle "class" intimidation out there that says, "If you're on a subsidy, you have no right to speak for yourself." Keeping involved was easy because [the housing organizer] treated me as her equal and we learned from each other.*

Another housing leader, Roxanne, once homeless and a former resident of public housing, was able to buy half of a two-flat home for herself and her children through LSNA's affordable homeownership. Roxanne now faces rising taxes and pressures from developers and is fighting to maintain her house and her identity as a homeowner. She sees this as part of a larger struggle for the community as she knows it,

*It's not about me trying to save my house. It's about the numbers, about the energy. It's about unity, about bringing people together. It's about*

*people just being able to be—and not [having to] defend themselves.*

In addition to community members like Dawn and Roxanne, LSNA has other leaders who bring a strong sense of social justice along with institutional connections. For example, Father Mike is a Catholic priest who deliberately chose a parish in Logan Square because part of his mission included wanting to fight for affordable housing and social justice for low-income and minority citizens. As Father Mike told us, he takes a strong moral stand against displacement and encourages others in the community to take public action: *“Because of my role as a leader and a religious leader in the community, I am very much a person of action.”*

**FINDING SIX:** LSNA’s advocacy and organizing work on the issue of affordable housing is embedded in a multi-pronged approach that includes programs and services for renters and homeowners.

In 1994, LSNA and local banks lobbied state policy makers to modify the existing affordable homeownership program to make it accessible to people who could not buy an entire building. Forty-five families bought houses through this program. Approximately 50 more families bought houses through similar programs, and 16 have enrolled in a new plan to buy apartments in a cooperatively-owned building. The neighborhood banks continue to work together to hold housing fairs and provide seminars on homeownership issues. LSNA’s housing counselor estimates that, during the period of our research, hundreds of people have participated in counseling, workshops, and fairs about home equity conversions, default/foreclosures, pre-purchase concerns, and challenging tax assessments. In addition, LSNA has conducted outreach to hundreds of renters and has attained rental subsidies for 64 units by enrolling landlords in Chicago's Low Income Housing Trust Fund which provides rental subsidies to qualified landlords and tenants.

## **Recommendations for Building Community Capacity**

Based upon our study of LSNA, Research for Action offers the following straightforward recommendations to community organizations and funders who would like to learn from the example of LSNA. While these recommendations may appear simple, they constitute a complex set of guidelines for building a community in which people both care about each other and are able to act on their own behalf.

1. Foster strong interpersonal relationships and trust among individuals,
2. Develop grassroots leadership,
3. Integrate long-term strategies to build power and change policy with short-term strategies that provide skills and resources to community members,
4. Maintain a vision based on the needs and dreams of community members.

## **Concluding Comments**

As RFA completes our study of LSNA, we have several remaining questions about the future direction of the organization’s work. First, we wonder whether the organizational culture and values fostered by the current Executive Director are embedded deeply enough to outlast her tenure at the organization. Second, we wonder if LSNA’s growing involvement in the arena of citywide policy advocacy and organizing will alter its current approaches to relationship building, leadership development, and democratic participation on the neighborhood level. Finally, we wonder how LSNA will change as the Logan Square neighborhood itself continues to change.

These questions merely underscore the vitality and dynamism that LSNA embodies in its approach to building community capacity. LSNA’s successful approach to building community capacity is evidenced by its ability to integrate multiple voices, to draw on many skill-sets in the neighborhood, and to access many different types of resources. The organization’s program and strategies are deeply connected to the lives and realities of low- and moderate-income Logan Square residents, who describe profound changes in their self-esteem and self-confidence resulting from their involvement with LSNA. Finally, LSNA is composed of individuals who care about each other and who respond thoughtfully to shifting pressures and opportunities in the external environment.

# *I DOCUMENTING THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE LOGAN SQUARE NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION*

## **Building Community Capacity and Grassroots Community Organizing**

Logan Square Neighborhood Association (LSNA), one of the grantees under the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation's Building Community Capacity program, is a forty-year community organization with a long history of mobilizing neighborhood residents to maintain and improve the quality of community life and to bring additional resources and services into the Logan Square neighborhood. Since May 1999, Research for Action (RFA), an independent Philadelphia-based nonprofit, and LSNA have been working together to document LSNA's approach, activities, and the results of LSNA's organizing through qualitative, collaborative research. The focus of this study is on LSNA's work since 1989 when its current director, Nancy Aardema, took over, with an emphasis on the years 1999-2002, when Research for Action conducted its research. This report documents LSNA's approach and achievements in linking community organizing to the building of community capacity, tracing the similarities and differences in LSNA's methods, strategies, and successes in two different issue areas—education and housing.

Currently, LSNA has an annual budget of over one million dollars and an office-based staff of eighteen. Logan Square is a mixed income community with a large low-income Latino population. LSNA defines itself as an inclusive community-based organization with a commitment to organizing low- and moderate-income neighborhood residents. RFA's analysis shows that LSNA prioritizes the needs of these residents, many of them first or second-generation immigrants from Latin America. At the same time, the organization has an inclusive definition of "the community," and the membership includes a wide range of individuals and organizations: principals and parents; Latinos, Anglos, and African Americans; English and Spanish speakers; landlords and tenants;

as well as churches, block clubs, social service agencies, and several community banks.

Like other initiatives committed to building capacity in low-income communities, LSNA has the goal of increasing the community's "ability to mobilize and use the resources of its members, along with outside resources, to foster individual growth and community development" (MacArthur, 1999). LSNA's approach is based on mobilizing and empowering community residents who have previously been excluded from positions of power. We believe that LSNA's approach has the potential to provide valuable lessons for funders and community organizers about relationships between the development and exercise of individuals' capacities, on one hand, and achieving outcomes which benefit an entire community, on the other hand. LSNA sees a direct link between the building of civic engagement and leadership among the poorest residents of Logan Square and the community's ability to develop programs and obtain resources which will support economic revitalization.

LSNA's work is guided by its Holistic Plan. This is essentially a detailed and continually evolving mission statement, which includes a series of objectives with which to assess its effectiveness each year. The Holistic Plan sets goals for key areas of action, such as improving local public schools, developing youth leadership, enhancing neighborhood safety, maintaining affordable housing, and revitalizing the local economy.

LSNA's executive director of thirteen years, Nancy Aardema, strongly believes that the organization is successful because it bases its work on building relationships of personal trust among individuals and organizations in order to act on community goals. During the past thirteen years, the organization has looked hard for ways to nurture diverse new social

relationships within the Logan Square neighborhood. According to Aardema, LSNA draws on these relationships in developing a strong base of leaders from the neighborhood who can speak for the community and work effectively for social change.

LSNA's focus on relationship building makes it an especially appropriate site for exploring how low-income communities build their own capacity, an issue in which the John D. and Catherine C. MacArthur Foundation, other foundations, and policy makers on the federal, state, and city levels, as well as private businesses and scholars, are increasingly interested. Community capacity can undoubtedly be enhanced through external policies and resources, such as a regional transportation policy, tax policies that support urban business development, and subsidies for low-income housing. However, as necessary as these may be, they are not sufficient for creating healthy urban communities. Individuals and institutions in neighborhoods with high concentrations of poverty also need to be able to work together to secure and utilize resources. This priority is reflected in the goal of the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation: "*The Foundation is committed to building the capacity of communities and helping them gain the ability to solve their own problems*" ([www.macfound.org](http://www.macfound.org)).

RFA's research suggests that the creation of trust among community residents, between residents and institutions, and among community institutions has been key to LSNA's successes in identifying and solving problems in Logan Square. RFA has been able to observe the ways in which LSNA's approach to relationship building intersects with issues of changing power and policy in the arenas of education and housing. Because LSNA's work in schools and in housing are in different phases of an organizing campaign, we have also had the opportunity to observe different phases of the relationship building work.

LSNA's current work in schools demonstrates its approach to relationship building in a context in which it has already developed substantial power through a sustained organizing campaign. In observing LSNA's work with schools, we saw stable, active communities of parents and teachers that grew out of ten years of leadership development and community-initiated programming in the schools. LSNA's schools show consistent gains in test scores. These gains compare favorably with citywide gains, even though public school students in Logan Square

are among the poorest in the city and are among the least likely to speak English.

LSNA's school/community partnerships, which many observers describe as an important contributor to school improvement in the neighborhood, are based on relationships of mutual respect that began developing over ten years ago as the community mounted a sustained and successful campaign against overcrowding. The success of this campaign stemmed from mobilizing the community, collaborating with principals and teachers in local schools, and developing relationships with public officials in order to hold them accountable to community needs. The successful school/community partnerships that now exist in Logan Square are based on the power of LSNA as a community organization.

LSNA's successful involvement with local schools developed, in part, because LSNA was able to take advantage of statewide legislation passed in 1988, which provided substantial power to parents and community members through the creation of elected Local School Councils (LSCs). LSNA was very active in recruiting and campaigning for the election of LSNA parents and other community residents to the LSCs. The power which LSNA gained from this organizing effort underlies its current success in implementing school-based programs.

In contrast to observing a set of school-based relationships that are the *outcomes* of a sustained organizing campaign, our observations of LSNA's housing work shows relationship building underway as it is central to the *process* of developing a campaign. As part of this campaign, we saw the slow process of relationship building among organizers and community members as well as the evolution of strategies for developing the community's power and holding public officials accountable to the interests of low- and moderate-income people. As this campaign evolves, it draws together people whose concerns range from very localized, block-level issues, to neighborhood-wide, and citywide issues. In its struggles at all these levels, LSNA is working to develop both relationships and accountability among elected officials, administrators in city government, and private development and financial interests.

In earlier phases of its housing work, LSNA was able to use legislative and judicial tools such as the Community Reinvestment Act and the Chicago Housing Court as levers for developing community power to address the needs of renters and families interested in becoming homeowners. Currently, as

one part of the affordable housing campaign, LSNA is working to change citywide policy to slow down private housing development and maintain affordable housing units. In this campaign, LSNA is faced with the challenges of creating strong relationships within the neighborhood at the same time that it must counter citywide political and economic forces pushing many low- and middle-income residents out of Logan Square. From the perspective of members and leaders within the LSNA, the hard work they have done creating social ties and responsive institutions locally can easily be undone by economic and political forces originating at the city or state levels.

The issue of residential displacement of low- and moderate-income community members frames a new set of issues for those who are interested in building the capacity of urban communities. Even if capacity is developed around one set of institutions, for example, the capacity of the type that we will discuss in our chapter on schools in Logan Square, low- and moderate-income communities always face the potential of destabilization and/or disinvestment by business interests, developers, and their political allies. The threat of displacement in Logan Square helps us realize that although low- and moderate-income urban residents often need to develop new forms of social trust, they may already have, in addition, existing bonds that are threatened by forces from outside their communities. Countering these threats requires not only trust and skill, but also the development of power and public accountability.

As a neighborhood priest in Logan Square told us in discussing gentrification,

*When the community begins to change, it is not just the houses. Suddenly we need more green space, more play space. Each time they go and tear something down, they say drug dealers lived there. There's a feeling that now we deserve a park more than [someone] deserves a home. When the neighborhood begins to change, then the meaning of the neighborhood begins to change. (Father Mike, Catholic priest and housing activist)*

A neighborhood housing leader, Roxanne Tyler,<sup>1</sup> also vividly described the social ruptures that occur during the process of gentrification. According to Roxanne,

*Wherever you [once] lived, you had people and friends and support and [now] you have to move out to the suburbs, you might as well move to another country because you're that far away.*

Even when lower-income neighborhood residents may benefit from increasing property values, according to Roxanne, they are often critical of the lack of respect for the existing community among affluent newcomers.

*One [condo owner] said to me in a meeting, "just think of all the money you're going to make." And I just looked at him and said, "You know I don't want to make any money. I just want to live. I just want to live with my kids in my house... I think you have a right to profit, but when you come into my neighborhood, you're supposed to respect me, and you don't respect me when you come in here doing what you're doing. First and foremost, it's people like us who have stabilized this community so you felt safe enough to come in.*

Until recently, discussions of urban poverty have largely focused on the need to bring additional resources into urban neighborhoods. However, as some American cities attract new investment, new jobs, and younger, more affluent residents, community capacity also becomes an issue of community identity and distribution of the power to allocate and access resources as well as the existence of material resources themselves. LSNA draws on a rich history of community organizing as it faces the challenge of maintaining a diverse, multi-income community in the face of new wealth coming into the neighborhood. While the threat of displacement makes the rupture of existing social relationships particularly vivid in Logan Square, LSNA's approach provides more general lessons about how low- and moderate-income residents can go about building and maintaining a vital urban community.

To a large extent, capacity building efforts to date in low-income communities nationwide have concentrated on Community Development Corporations (CDCs) and Comprehensive Community Initiatives (CCIs), with organizations like the Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC) and the Enterprise Foundation acting as funding intermediaries (Keating and Krumholtz, 1999). CDCs (neighborhood-based, non-profit business ventures) and especially CCIs (long-term efforts to coordinate planning and funding among a wide range of community organizations and agencies in low-income neighborhoods) require robust community leadership, as well as technical expertise and access to funding. However, CDCs and CCIs tend to prioritize the development of technical expertise and the formal involvement of institutional leaders, rather than mobilizing low-income community residents to identify and address their own needs (Hess, 1999; Keating and Krumholtz, 1999; Stoeker, 1999).

<sup>1</sup>Throughout this report, all names used are pseudonyms with the exception of public officials and LSNA staff.

In contrast to CDCs and CCIs, grassroots community organizers base their work on the premise that poor and working class people can, and must, mobilize and build power to address their own needs and concerns (Alinsky, 1971; Delgado, 1986). In addition, contemporary community organizing often incorporates insights derived from feminist thought, including the importance of focusing on interpersonal relationships and dynamics and the connections between personal and political issues (Gittell et al., 2001; O'Donnell and Schumer, 1996).

Styles of community organizing vary across organizations and individuals, but current community organizing groups share a commitment to building leadership among their members, mobilizing their constituencies, and developing mutually beneficial relationships with elected officials and others in more traditional positions of power (Gold, Simon and Blanc, 2002). In addition, grassroots community organizations traditionally work hard with neighborhood leaders to identify winnable issues, build strategic alliances, and maintain long-term campaigns for attaining the community's strategic

goals. The examples of LSNA and other community-based groups around the country suggest that approaches to leadership and community mobilization that characterize grassroots organizing can be useful to organizations that also have characteristics of CDCs and CCIs, even though there is some debate about whether the organizational structures and philosophies of community organizing and community development are compatible (e.g., Hess 1999; Stoecker 1999).

This study of the work of LSNA provides an opportunity to observe the processes of community capacity building within a specific context. Our aim is to represent and give voice to the attempts of one experienced community-based organization to mediate larger economic and political forces and play a significant role in shaping the future of its neighborhood. In the report, we have also tried to capture the complexity of the work of LSNA to make clear that none of this work happens without considerable difficulty involving challenges from external obstacles and the need to deal with internal differences in point of view.

## Overview of Research and Findings

RFA's research about building community capacity in Logan Square, conducted between May 1999 and January 2002, documents the ways that LSNA's organizational structure brings together numerous groups and interests within the Logan Square neighborhood. In addition, case studies of LSNA's work with schools and housing demonstrate how the organization's relational approach to community organizing plays out in two different issue areas. The two areas of focused research, schools and housing, were chosen in conjunction with LSNA organizers who were interested in documenting both LSNA's extensive impact on school improvement and the nascent campaign to maintain affordable housing in the community. In this work, we have looked carefully at the structures and processes that LSNA uses to strengthen the Logan Square community. In addition, we look at the ways that the Logan Square community and LSNA interact with broader social, economic, and political forces that impact the organization's ability to build internal community capacity.

RFA's research about LSNA has been guided by the following questions, developed in conjunction with LSNA staff members:

1. What is LSNA's approach to organizing? What are its key elements and how has it evolved? How does this strategy work in different issue areas, particularly education and housing? What factors have influenced how the strategy evolved?
2. What kinds of social relations are being built through LSNA's organizing efforts? How does LSNA create a shared sense of community? How have communities evolved in and around LSNA schools and community centers?
3. In addition to an enhanced sense of community, what other results do we see from LSNA's work? How does involvement with LSNA change individuals' expectations for themselves and their children? What are other concrete results of campaigns around education and housing?
4. What are the local, city and statewide contexts for LSNA's work? Who are the key people and what are the organizations which initiate, maintain, and support LSNA's efforts? How does LSNA fit into the larger socio-economic context of Logan Square?
5. What obstacles does LSNA encounter in its organizing efforts? How does LSNA address possible conflicts between program development and organizing? How does it negotiate tensions between mobilizing community residents and working with funders or established institutions? How does it address differences in the organizational cultures of a community organization and established institutions like schools?

LSNA's noteworthy accomplishments in the realm of building community capacity include:

1. Building strong, collaborative relationships among individuals and groups within Logan Square that cross over a wide range of economic, ethnic, and institutional interests.
2. Accessing over a million dollars each year in resources from institutions and organizations outside of Logan Square, including funding for school-based programs, mortgages for moderate-income families, and subsidies for low-income renters.
3. Mobilizing local residents and businesses in order to make local, citywide, and statewide institutions more responsive to the needs of low- and moderate-income Logan Square residents in areas such as housing, education, health care, and immigrant rights.

## Lenses for Understanding the Process of Capacity Building

In order to understand how LSNA accomplishes these capacity-building activities, we look at LSNA's activities through four different lenses: relationship building, leadership development, democratic participation, and building power and changing policy. LSNA's approach to dealing with community issues is indeed multi-dimensional. The four lenses provide a framework for describing and analyzing LSNA's philosophy and practice without prioritizing one dimension of its approach. We believe that these lenses can be used to look at both aspects of LSNA's work that relate to the internal dynamics of the Logan Square neighborhood and those which relate to broader social, economic and political forces and institutions.

This framework allows us to see that a certain aspect of LSNA's approach may be particularly important to the organization's work on a given issue at a particular moment in time. Additionally, the framework helps us to examine LSNA as a whole. Looking through the various lenses permits us to view and understand that LSNA's strength grows out of its ability to simultaneously build relationships, develop leaders, encourage democratic participation, and build power to change policies in ways that will support a strong, diverse, urban neighborhood.

As a conceptual framework, we see these four lenses corresponding well with the thinking of the Aspen Institute. In a 1996 paper entitled "Measuring Community Capacity Building," the Institute identified eight outcomes. These include: growing diverse, inclusive citizenship participation; expanding a leadership base; strengthening individual skills; developing a widely shared vision; forming a strategic community agenda (including a plan); evidencing consistent, tangible progress toward goals; producing more effective community organizations and institutions; and better resource utilization by the community. We see evidence of all eight of these outcomes when we look at LSNA's work over the course of our fieldwork through the four lenses we have defined.

### Looking through the Lens of Relationship Building

Using the lens of relationship building, we see that LSNA has been able to develop a campaign for affordable housing based on relationships and common interests among low- and moderate-income

renters, homeowners, and public housing residents, as well as community banks in Logan Square, even though this campaign challenges the interests of powerful real estate developers and some middle class and more affluent newcomers to the neighborhood.

The creation of new relationships is fundamental to all processes of community change. Relationships create new forms of friendship and support within the neighborhood. Relationship building, sometimes referred to as the creation of "social capital," leads to networks of mutual obligation and trust, both interpersonal and inter-group, relationships which can be called on to leverage resources for addressing community concerns.

LSNA builds relationships gradually and deliberately. One key component of relationship building takes place as LSNA organizers meet individually with community members in their homes, schools, churches, and the LSNA offices. At these meetings, organizers and community members discuss their lives, their community and what is happening to and around them. These "one-on-ones" are key to developing new community leaders. In LSNA's Parent Mentor program, parents also work together in groups to identify their concerns, goals, and dreams, as well as the strengths they bring to their families, schools, and community. Whether relationship building begins with individual conversations or in group discussions, it takes time to learn about individuals' goals for both personal growth and neighborhood improvement.

Like many other community organizing groups, LSNA brings people together who might not otherwise associate with each other, either because of cultural and language barriers (e.g., Latinos and African Americans) or because of their different roles and positions, such as teacher and parents or renters and homeowners. Given LSNA's goals of functioning democratically and representing a diverse community, relationship building across differences in race, ethnicity, income, and status is essential.

Relationship building also extends outside of the neighborhood and involves developing connections with funding sources, elected officials, and community groups in other neighborhoods. As we show in the following chapters, in its work with schools, LSNA has developed an extensive network

of relationships with school administrators, politicians, and foundations inside and outside of Chicago. In its current housing campaign, LSNA is developing a new set of relationships with public officials and policy makers. Also of great significance in the housing campaign is LSNA's building of alliances with other grassroots community organizations interested in working collaboratively for affordable housing in many parts of the city.

## Looking through the Lens of Leadership Development

LSNA's leadership is diverse and represents the broad spectrum of community residents, including both lower-income, often Spanish-speaking individuals and higher-income professionals (bankers, lawyers, teachers, etc.). In recent years, the proportion of lower-income leaders has increased. With the guidance of LSNA's executive director, Nancy Aardema, the organization works to maintain a culture of mutual respect and shared authority among people with different education and employment histories, priorities, and beliefs about their right and capacity to exert influence.

Different aspects of LSNA's work may involve different degrees of interaction and collaboration among individuals of different ethnicity and income-level or social class. The groups of LSNA members and leaders working on targeted projects, such as the Parent Mentor program or Community Centers in schools, may be relatively homogeneous, whereas the governance of LSNA and its subcommittees is likely to be more multi-class. It is in these situations that Nancy exercises her interpersonal skills—encouraging the participation of those with less experience in the public forums and modeling an attitude of equal respect for all—to help maintain a truly democratic environment and process.

Much of what leadership means in LSNA reflects the literature on community organizing, including the tradition of Alinsky-style organizing, with its historical roots in Chicago<sup>2</sup> and its emphasis on the idea that poor and working class people can, and must, provide leadership to a grassroots movement to address the needs and concerns of their own communities. Leadership in LSNA also incorporates contemporary thought on collaborative leadership which stresses the value of broadly-based and

distributed leadership within an organization, rather than the value of a smaller, stronger leadership group.<sup>3</sup>

In our research protocols, we asked LSNA members directly what the term “leadership” meant to them and how one becomes a leader in LSNA. Community members and LSNA organizers describe a gradual process of leadership development that helps people to clarify their own beliefs and become comfortable with expressing their views in ways that link their own experiences to those of the people they represent. LSNA members said that leadership development encourages individuals, especially women, to challenge traditional power relationships in their own lives. Leadership development helps community residents to sharpen their skills for civic engagement through opportunities to speak publicly, lead meetings, interview public officials, and negotiate with those in positions of power. While leadership development has to do with enhancing the scope and nature of the work performed, it also has to do with the way an individual becomes accountable in public to others. As leaders develop a stronger sense of connection with their community, their willingness to be publicly accountable begins to unfold.

One important way that grassroots leaders develop is through becoming involved in the organization from the bottom up, in arenas like the Parent Mentor program, which pays parents small stipends to participate in leadership training and work in Logan Square classrooms. This program, which is designed to attract community members, places them in a program which trains them to become engaged in a public institution, and develops a large base of support composed primarily of women who would not otherwise be active in their community. In the area of housing, community members have been recruited to become leaders through their involvement with the Low Income Housing Trust Fund, a program which provides rental subsidies to low-income renters. LSNA's affordable rent committee actively mobilized community residents to advocate for the maintenance and expansion of this Fund.

<sup>2</sup> See Saul Alinsky, *Rules for Radicals*, Vintage Books, New York, 1971; Robert Fisher, *Let the People Decide*, Neighborhood Organizing in America, updated edition, Twayne Publishers, New York, 1994.

<sup>3</sup> See David Chrislip and Carl Larsen, *Collaborative Leadership*, Jossey-Bass Inc., San Francisco, 1994; Max DePree, *Leadership is an Art*, Dell Publishing Group, New York, 1989; *Leading Without Power*, Shepard Foundation, Holland Michigan, 1997; Francis Moore Lappe and Paul DuBois, *The Quickening of America*, Jossey-Bass, San Francisco, 1994.

## Looking through the Lens of Democratic Participation

LSNA embodies more than one avenue for democratic participation. LSNA's power to change policy depends on its ability to mobilize the community to apply pressure on elected officials and others in power, whether through lobbying efforts or through more activist forms of organization, such as large-scale demonstrations. In addition, LSNA also encourages community members to participate in internal democratic processes which bring community members together to make shared decisions about community needs, strategies, and priorities. Democratic participation in the annual process of publicly evaluating and revising LSNA's Holistic Plan is key to debating and articulating a shared vision for Logan Square.

Logan Square is far from a unitary community, and LSNA includes many of the neighborhood's different social, economic, ethnic, national, and political groupings. While many people move in and out of the organization, there is a core who strongly identify with LSNA and with the Logan Square neighborhood and who provide stability to LSNA. Through the relationships developed and through the process of discussion and dialogue, LSNA provides a vehicle for identifying shared interests and creating a sense of community, thus bringing together people who might otherwise see themselves as having little in common. The process in LSNA can be characterized as highly interpersonal, relationship-oriented, trust-based, and situated within a democratic structure.

It is important to underscore that many of LSNA's members and leaders do not have prior experience with holding positions of power or being able to control the conditions of their lives. For these individuals, democratic participation is an expression of their emerging sense of political and social entitlement. Our final lens, building power and influencing policies, grows out of this sense of entitlement, made visible in democratic participation.

## Looking through the Lens of Building Power and Changing Policy

People who have been excluded from power can gain power by participating in public dialogue, developing shared visions and strategies, community mobilization, and gaining recognition and response from public and private officials. Methods of organizing for power include operating through formal political channels (e.g., petitions, meetings

with elected and city officials) as well as grassroots actions that galvanize people's outrage and sense of injustice in public protest. LSNA's sustained campaigns over time, its clear organizational identity, and its success in gaining political recognition for its agendas in education and affordable housing are all evidence of the community power that LSNA is using to make Logan Square schools into responsive, high quality institutions and to ensure the future of Logan Square as a stable, economically diverse neighborhood.

While community power is crucial to LSNA's work in the areas of both housing and schools, the role community power plays in these two arenas is somewhat different. In its work with schools, community power is critical because it allows LSNA to enter into school/community partnerships, based on relationships of trust and mutual respect. In contrast, in its work to maintain affordable housing, community power is critical to LSNA in order to challenge the interests of established power and money that currently dominate the real estate market, both in Logan Square and more broadly in Chicago.

In part this contrast is due to the different impacts of policies that shape schools and housing in Chicago. In the area of education, LSNA was able to take advantage of IL85-1418, a 1988 state law which decentralized the Chicago school system, giving substantial power to Local School Councils (LSCs), a majority of whose members are elected parent representatives. The 1988 education law, which was enacted in response to grassroots organizing by a broad citywide coalition of community organizations, parent and education policy groups, and corporations, establishes the power of LSC to hire and fire principals and make key budget decisions. The implementation of this legislation, which was supported by a simultaneous interest on the part of foundations, provided an important opening to create partnerships with neighborhood schools, develop schools as centers of community, and build new community leadership for LSNA's work in other issue areas. As we show in our case study of LSNA's work with schools, LSNA's success in this work is based on its power to mobilize community members, the specific policy context affecting Chicago schools has also provided avenues for LSNA to develop and maintain its power as a community group.

In contrast, the area of affordable housing offers few existing policy levers for community activism. An important focus of LSNA's current housing work

involves mobilizing its local constituency to develop a citywide coalition with enough power to counterbalance market-driven development policies. In the current environment, local aldermen hold enormous power to support or deny zoning changes that builders need to establish new housing developments in their wards; the aldermen are extremely responsive to campaign contributions and political pressures applied by powerful real estate developers. The lack of a robust public policy

supporting affordable housing in Chicago is particularly problematic for neighborhoods like Logan Square, where many low- and moderate-income community members have already been forced to leave by increases in housing costs. As we show in our case study of housing, LSNA's housing work is proceeding on many fronts, but a major thrust of the affordable housing campaign is building the power of low- and moderate-income communities to challenge existing housing policies.

## Summary of Chapter I

LSNA's goals are to build the strength of its community and to gain and maintain resources and policy changes that will support the diverse families of Logan Square. Some political theorists (e.g., Gaventa 1980; Lukes 1974) argue that low-income or minority communities that are shut out of traditional decision-making processes need opportunities to envision their own political agendas and often must mobilize outside of the traditional political system.

In our observations of LSNA, we have seen a well-developed partnership with schools and an evolving campaign for affordable housing. In both arenas, LSNA's ability to gain attention for community issues and get a seat at the table is the result of its capacity to develop relationships and leaders, to identify community needs through broad participation in the organization, and to develop strategic plans for constructive, collective action.

## Outline of the Report

Chapter II provides an historic overview of LSNA and an analysis of its current structure and overall processes. Chapters III and IV are analytic case studies which look at LSNA's work in the areas of reforming schools and organizing for affordable housing through the lenses of relationship building, leadership development, democratic participation, and building power and changing policy. Chapter V,

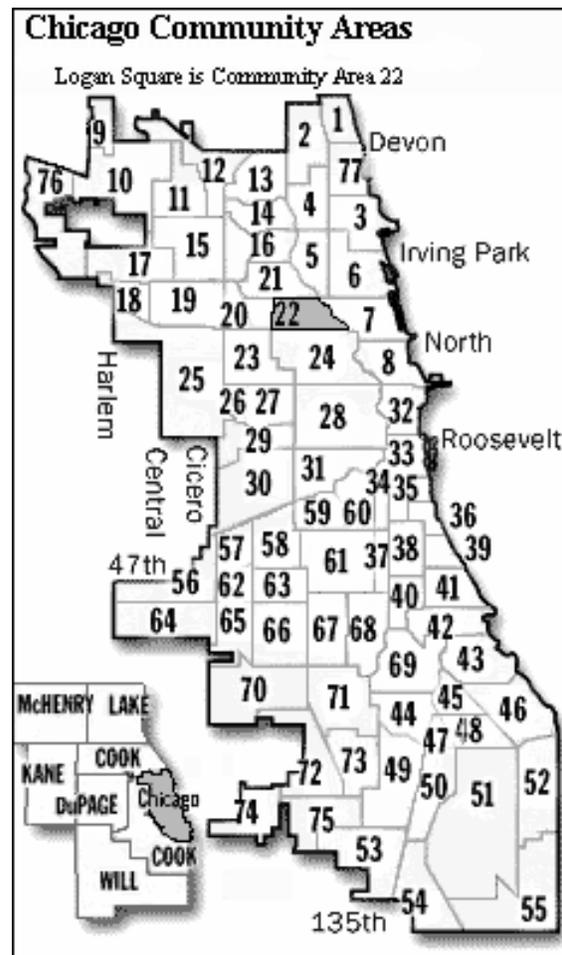
the concluding chapter, presents an overall analysis of how these processes are realized differently in LSNA's work with schools and housing. We also consider what foundations and other community organizations can learn from LSNA's approach to community change. In the appendices, we present detailed information about the project's research methods and activities.

## *II LOGAN SQUARE AND THE EVOLUTION OF THE LOGAN SQUARE NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION*

### **Portrait of Logan Square**

Located on the northwest side of Chicago, Logan Square, Chicago Community Area 22, is a neighborhood of roughly 83,000 inhabitants. Logan Square's political boundaries include portions of the 26<sup>th</sup>, 31<sup>st</sup>, 35<sup>th</sup>, and with recent redistricting, 1<sup>st</sup> Wards. According to 2000 census data, 66% of the population is Latino, 27% is non-Latino whites, 5% is non-Latino African Americans, 1.5 % Asian and Pacific Islander, and .19% Native American (Census 2000 at [www.suntimes.com](http://www.suntimes.com)). The community area includes a wide range of housing stock and economic groups. Household income census data available at the time of this writing shows that in 2000 Logan Square, the median household income was \$36,245. Seventeen percent of the total population received public assistance in the form of Aid for Dependent Children, Medicaid, or other forms of assistance.

From outward appearances, Chicago looks to non-residents like a thriving multicultural city but it is in fact among the most segregated of American cities and can be mapped out as a series of neighborhood pockets divided by race and social class. Logan Square is one of the very few Chicago neighborhoods that is both multi-racial and multi-class and has been for decades. LSNA has been successful in bringing into its membership Anglos, Latinos, and African Americans, young people as well as seniors. LSNA's membership includes some people who live in the historic greystone mansions along Logan Boulevard and others who live in Lathrop Homes, the public housing units just across the river in the adjacent neighborhood of Lakeview. Members of the Logan Square Neighborhood Association are wrestling with how to find a way to preserve the economic and multicultural diversity that is still a part of their neighborhood even as the surge of townhouse construction and condo conversion continues to roll through their community.



Source: <http://cgi.chicago.tribune.com>

## Historical Overview

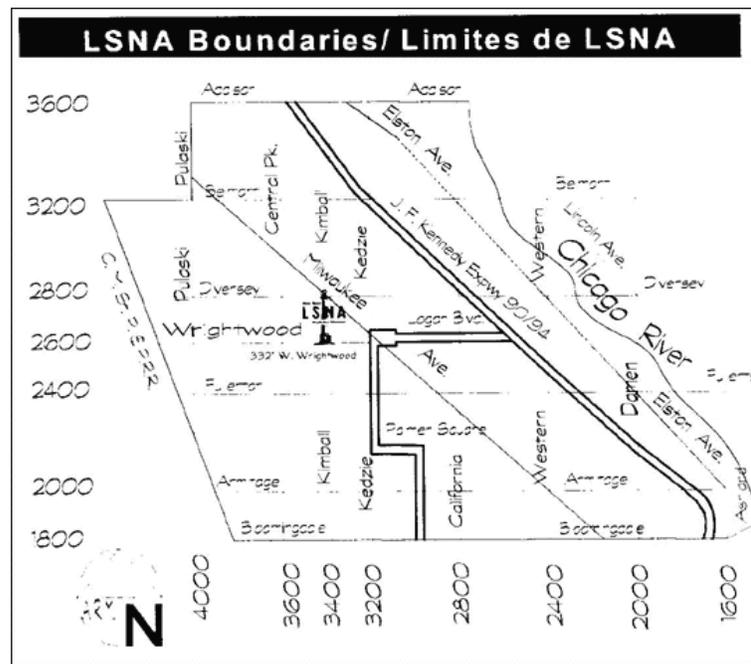
Logan Square Neighborhood Association is a well-established community organization that was started in the early 1960s by a group of local churches, businesses, and homeowners to address neighborhood concerns arising from rapid suburbanization and deindustrialization in the Chicago metropolitan area. Around the time of LSNA's formation, longtime residents of Logan Square, primarily working-class families of European descent, were leaving Logan Square and new residents were moving into the area, many of them Cuban and Puerto Rican families coming from poorer neighborhoods. Although residents organized in the 1960s to fight community deterioration when long-term residents and businesses began to leave, incoming Latino families moving into Logan Square in the 1970s perceived *“living in Logan Square...as a measure of social prosperity and achievement”* (Padilla, 1993:134).

Padilla's valuable study of Puerto Ricans in Logan Square portrays Logan Square as a place of "second settlement" that attracted many upwardly mobile Latinos who viewed the neighborhood as a *“serene and tranquil neighborhood, a place with safe streets and good public schools”* during the 1970s. To meet the growing demand of Latinos for food and other specialty items, Latino businessmen developed the commercial streets into a Latino-dominated shopping area that included Puerto Rican, Mexican American,

and Cuban food stores, restaurants, and jewelry stores. In addition, Latino professionals established other small businesses such as travel agencies, law firms, realtors, and accountants to meet the special needs of the immigrant community. Beginning in the 1980s, several non-profit organizations, including Aspira, the Boys and Girls Club, and Hispanic Housing, also focused on the educational and housing needs of Latinos in Logan Square.

In addition to several active commercial strips and community banks, the attractive housing stock, good public transportation, and geographical accessibility from the neighborhood to downtown Chicago and O'Hare airport have continued to attract middle-class professionals of all races since the 1970s. Thus, the neighborhood did not face the degree of financial disinvestments and racial segregation common to many low-income Latino and African American neighborhoods.

Since its inception in 1962, Logan Square Neighborhood Association has worked to maintain the financial stability of the neighborhood and has grappled with how to position itself relative to the differing interests of working-class and middle-class constituencies within the neighborhood's geographic boundaries. LSNA's membership has consistently included community residents who represent the interests of a range of economic and ethnic groups.



Source: LSNA Holistic Plan-2002

## The Current Chicago Context

### LSNA and Chicago Public Schools

In 1988, Illinois enacted legislation that mandated local community control of Chicago public schools. It is possible to analyze the 1988 reform as meeting a wide variety of agendas. For business interests, the reform was seen as a means of fixing schools, a necessity for attracting investment, supporting the development of up-scale neighborhoods, and promoting Chicago as a global city. The school reformers saw decentralization of school control as a vital strategy to democratize control of schools and promote innovation. Some social justice activists saw it as an opportunity for grassroots organizing and grassroots community power.

Shipp (1997) argues that the decentralization plan was primarily a business initiative to reform the schools in the interest of larger development plans. Business interests promoted a decentralized management style popular with major corporations to increase innovation and efficiency by reducing bureaucracy. On the other hand, Designs for Change, one of the architects of the plan, saw the reform as a grassroots strategy to democratize schools and give more power to parents and communities. Prior to 1988, a series of teachers' strikes led to widespread public protests and grassroots mobilization for improvements in public education. Mayor Harold Washington initiated an Education Summit (actually taking place after his death), which brought the school reformers together with the business interests to fashion the outlines of the 1988 reform.

For Washington, the school reform fit with his plan for economic development that focused on keeping industries in the communities and promoting development in neighborhoods as well as downtown. It also fit with the politics of the Washington administration, which was rooted in grassroots community support and an effort to break from Democratic machine politics. Local school organizing was a piece of that strategy.

The decentralization of schools ushered in the creation of eleven member Local School Councils (LSCs) at each school, charged with hiring the principal and helping to make policy for that school. During the late 1980s and early 1990s, community groups across Chicago worked to make the reform a success by recruiting and training parent and community members to run as candidates in LSC elections. Under Chicago law, LSCs have the power

to hire and fire principals and approve the use of discretionary funds (i.e., state and federal funds for low-income children and bilingual education), budgets, and yearly school improvement plans. This reform also brought an increase in the amount of discretionary funds schools controlled (on average approximately half a million dollars per elementary school). LSNA was one of many Chicago community organizations that saw opportunities for community involvement and improved schooling in this new system, and its strategies have been very successful in creating innovative programs and real educational improvements. The legislation gave LSNA an opportunity to play a larger role in its neighborhood schools, within a system that was notorious for resisting change.

When LSNA began to organize parents in the late 1980s, most public schools in Logan Square were composed of over 95 percent low-income and 90 percent Latino children. Middle-class professionals of all ethnic and racial groups were still drawn to parts of Logan Square, but in general they either didn't have children or didn't utilize the public schools. Student annual mobility rates (the proportion of students who move in and out of a particular school within a particular year) in Logan Square schools ranged from 30-75% annually. Standardized test scores were low, with the majority of students scoring in the bottom quartiles in both math and reading on the Iowa Test of Basic Skills.

LSNA's work in reshaping neighborhood schools to better meet the needs of the community evolves from its overall commitment to community organizing and creating connections among individuals and institutions in the neighborhood. A central theme of LSNA's commitment to schools, as stated in the Holistic Plan, is that "strong communities need strong schools." Currently nine neighborhood schools collaborate with the community through their membership in LSNA.

LSNA's first Parent Mentor programs and Community Learning Centers were established in 1995, and have been expanded since. As we show in the case study of LSNA's education organizing, these programs have facilitated new types of social relationships among parents and between parents and education professionals, as well as supporting leadership development and democratic participation in the community. In addition, schools that are engaged in partnerships with LSNA show steady

increases in student achievement, which are attributed by many to the presence of parents in the schools and classrooms.

In 1995, the state legislature partially reversed the decentralization reform, moving toward recentralization by providing new powers to the Board of Education to unseat elected local school councils. This second reform was viewed by some in the education reform community as an attack on working-class communities and grassroots school reform (Lipman, 2002). In spite of these concerns, LSNA’s work in schools—including its programs, leadership development, and relationships with the Board of Education, principals, and other administrators—has continued to flourish.

### Citywide Development Policies: The Impact on Housing in Logan Square

Today, Logan Square faces a major socio-economic transition; as the area becomes increasingly popular with real estate development and upper-income condominium owners, lower-income working people experience a real threat to their ability to continue living in the neighborhood. This trend began in the 1980s, as realtors and some neighborhood activists began promoting Logan Square's attractive housing stock and convenience to downtown Chicago. The trend has intensified in the past decade, with increasing impact in the last three to four years; as development has increased throughout the city, neighborhoods just to the east of Logan Square such as Wicker Park and Bucktown became much in demand and development began spilling over into Logan Square.

According to many analysts, the displacement of working class residents from Chicago's former mixed-use and industrial neighborhoods stems directly from urban development policies pursued since 1973 (e.g., Rast, 1999; Squires et al., 1987; Lipman, forthcoming). It was in 1973 that the Commercial Club initiated its Chicago 21 Plan. This plan, developed by Chicago's top business, financial, philanthropic, and civic leaders, created a vision which would transform Chicago into a 21st century global city. The plan for growth focused on rebuilding Chicago's Loop as a tourist and convention center. It also included plans to convert the surrounding ring of formerly industrial neighborhoods to upscale residential areas. These areas would appeal to professionals who would provide labor for the new information economy, but

former residents of the industrial neighborhoods would be displaced.

Since the 1980s, Chicago has been following a national trend in changes in housing stock. With the loss of industry and manufacturing jobs, cities have become more polarized into wealthy and low-income groups. Residential neighborhoods have also become more segregated (Abu-Lughod, 1999; Castells, 1987; Sassen, 1991). Highly paid professionals cluster in attractive, gentrifying central cities, a trend which is reflected in the boom in construction in downtown Chicago over the past decade. New luxury townhouses, spacious lofts, and condominiums are evident in many parts of the city. On the other hand, low-paid, casual, or part-time workers, typically African American, Latino, or other immigrants disperse to impoverished outlying city neighborhoods or inner-ring suburbs. In addition to the shortage of rental units and affordable housing, much public housing (including that notorious symbol of Chicago’s urban poverty, the Cabrini Green high rises) has been torn down. Poor and working-class families increasingly are forced to double up with relatives or to move further and further out of the central city.

### Rental Properties in Chicago

Despite rapid home construction, 56% of Chicago residents are renters. Unfortunately, the number of rental units has declined in the face of a population increase. Between 1990 and 1999, the population of Chicago grew by close to 8% while the number of rental units declined by more than 50,000 over that same time period (Metropolitan Planning Council, 2001). Much of the Chicago 21's original plan has been realized since 1973 and there is a dearth of both rental and sale properties that are affordable to the average Chicago resident. The Metropolitan Planning Council reported that the region’s rental vacancy rate currently is at 4.2%, well below the 6% mark for what defines a tight market as set by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.

Logan Square		
Year	Rent	Housing Value
1980	\$ 216	\$ 30,500
1990	\$ 426	\$ 71, 660
2000	\$ 639	\$ 176,024

Source: Local Community Fact Book, Chicago Metropolitan Area, 1990. 2000 Census of Population and Housing

The rental market is especially tight for low- and moderate-income families. According to the Metropolitan Planning Council, a family of four in need of a three-bedroom apartment in Chicago would have to make at least \$19 per hour to afford the fair market price.<sup>4</sup> Based on 1999 estimates, about one-third of Chicagoans paid more than 50 percent of their income for rent.<sup>5</sup>

The Metropolitan Planning Council<sup>6</sup> also reports that there is a current deficit of 150,000 rental units for families earning under 30% of the median income; which is approximately \$20,000 for a family of four in Chicago. The tight rental market is forcing rents up at a rate of twice the consumer price index and three times the rate in some areas such as the north side of Chicago. The lack of housing is aggravated by the fact that the Chicago Housing Authority Transformation Plan, initiated in 1999, has produced a net loss of 13,000 units of public housing, forcing more families to compete in the current rental market.

### **Home Ownership in Chicago and Logan Square**

Times are not easy these days for prospective homebuyers either. The Chicago Association of Realtors<sup>7</sup> reports that since 1996, the sales of condominiums and townhouses have increased 58% and the median cost is over \$200,000. At current prices, Chicago residents who earn less than \$40,000 a year are automatically excluded from owning a new home.

Within Logan Square, housing prices exceed the city average. During the second quarter of 2001, the median purchase price of homes sold was \$241,000 for a single detached home and \$209,000 for a single family home. The median price for a single attached (type 2) home, typically a condominium, was \$221,000. From 2000-2001, purchase prices increased by 11% for single attached homes, 15% for single detached homes, and 47% for condos.

Logan Square housing prices rose faster than the city average in part because of its proximity to downtown by expressway and public transportation. Its tree-lined streets, parks, and small shops all combine to attract professionals who want the urban experience

and are unable to afford homes in more exclusive neighborhoods closer to Lake Michigan and the center of Chicago.

### **Displacement in Logan Square and LSNA's Response**

In a survey of over 400 Logan Square residents conducted in 1999-2000 by LSNA as part of this research project, 64% reported that their rents had increased and 68% of homeowners said that their real estate taxes had increased. Sixty-six percent said that houses had now become too expensive for them to buy, and almost half the people surveyed knew someone who had to move out of the neighborhood because of increased housing costs.

In spite of pressures from developers and other commercial interests, LSNA feels that displacement is not inevitable. It can be countered by policies that balance development with the maintenance of affordable housing.

While not anti-development, LSNA has taken a public position through its Holistic Plan that calls for actions "to preserve existing housing stock, increase the number of affordable units for rental and homeownership, preserve density, increase local ownership of multi-unit buildings, businesses, and homes and preserve the historic character of the community by constructing new structures that fit with the old." In addition, the Holistic Plan calls for increasing subsidies for low-income renters and involving public housing residents in the decision-making processes about renovations in their buildings. The effort of LSNA to support balanced development is a vital example of how a community is working to access resources, create responsive institutions, and change policy in order to maintain a mixed-income community where working class people are welcomed.

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<sup>4</sup> As of October 2001, fair market rent rates in Chicago, as calculated by the U.S. Office of Housing and Urban Development in 2001 were: \$581 for a studio, \$661 for a one bedroom, \$788 for a 2 bedroom, \$985 for a 3 bedroom and \$1102 for a 4 bedroom

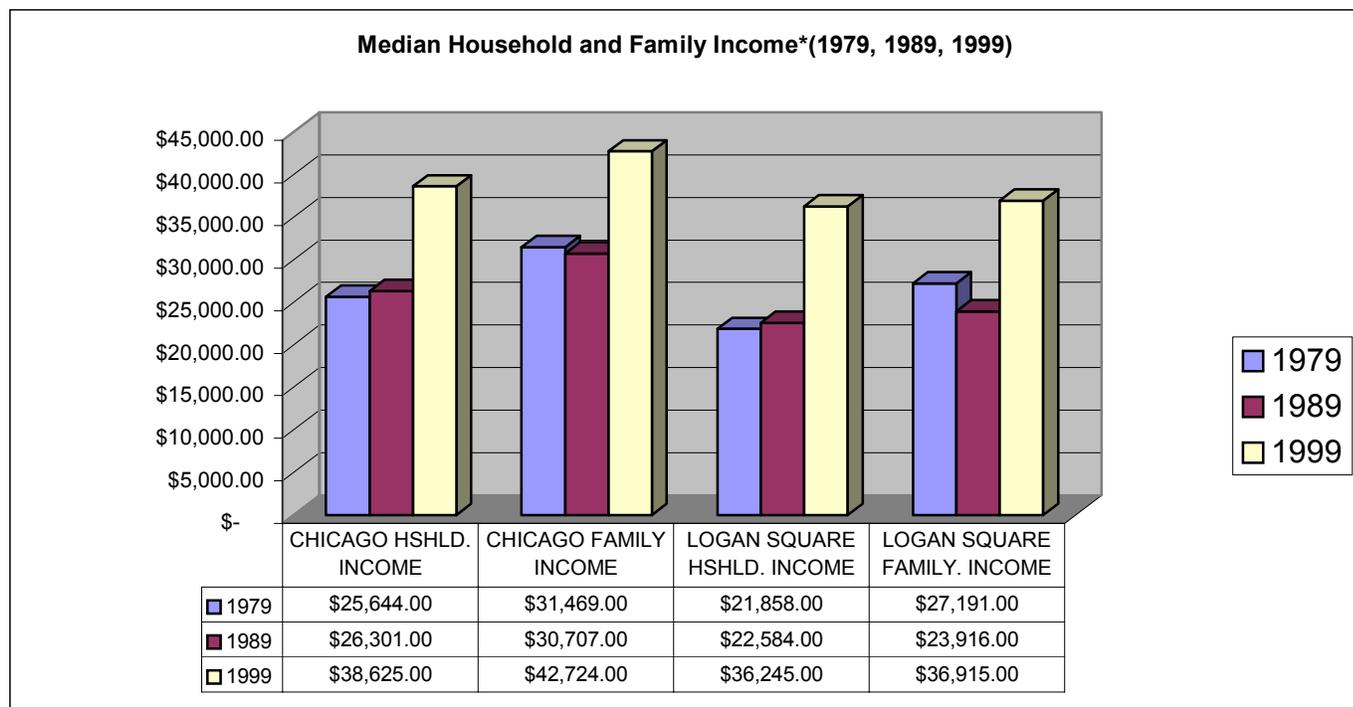
([www.metroplanning.org/objectDetail.asp?objectID=377&keyword=fair+market+rent](http://www.metroplanning.org/objectDetail.asp?objectID=377&keyword=fair+market+rent))

<sup>5</sup> Ibid

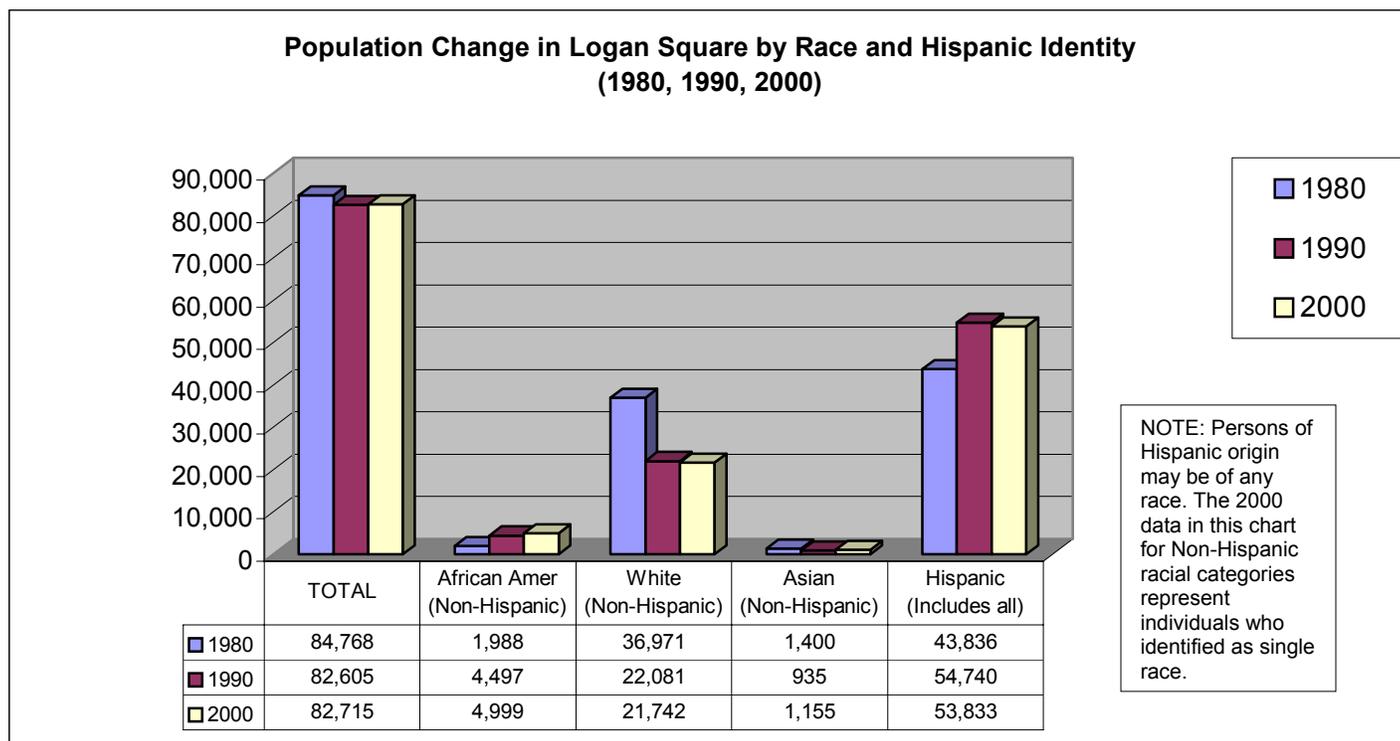
<sup>6</sup> Metropolitan Planning Council. "Providing rental housing in the Chicago region: challenges and issues."

[www.metroplanning.org/resources/90section3.asp?objectID=90](http://www.metroplanning.org/resources/90section3.asp?objectID=90) 2001.

<sup>7</sup> The Chicago Association of Realtors. [www.chicagobusiness.com/cgi-bin/redirect.pl?mpid-www.realtor.com/](http://www.chicagobusiness.com/cgi-bin/redirect.pl?mpid-www.realtor.com/) 2001.



\* Household income is the combined total income of the householder and all other persons who reside in the household. Family income excludes the income of non-related persons living in the household.



Source: 2000 Census of Population and Housing, Local Community Fact Book, Chicago Metropolitan, 1990. <http://www.suntimes.com/census>

## LSNA Today

### LSNA and its Executive Director

Since 1989, LSNA has increasingly come to address the needs and interests of low- and moderate-income families, many of them immigrants from Latin America, while it also works to develop relationships that unite different segments of the community, including public housing residents, renters, homeowners, local businesses, churches, social service agencies, and other local institutions.

Many LSNA leaders and partners attribute the success of LSNA in bringing together different constituencies to Executive Director, Nancy Aardema's emphasis on building relationships and her leadership style. Nancy came to LSNA in 1989 and became Executive Director a year later. During the three years RFA conducted its research in Logan Square, we encountered universal respect for Nancy. One former president of LSNA, provided us with a detailed explanation of the change in the organization as Nancy put her imprint on LSNA.

*When I got involved [in LSNA] we were more in the business of holding government accountable and using tactics of confrontation....I think that Nancy has really adopted a different style, a much more cooperative style.*

*When I first moved in [in the early 1980s], you either sort of liked LSNA or you didn't like it. And I think we were kind of seen as kind of just an angry bunch of rowdy radicals. But since that time, our reputation's changed and a lot of people have grown to appreciate the organization.*

*When I first got involved there were very few Spanish-speaking people on the board or even involved with LSNA. And she has really cultivated leaders from Spanish-speaking people who live in the neighborhood and brought them into LSNA. I wouldn't say at the exclusion of other people, but just to reflect their weight of the population. Just as we diversify our activities, we're reaching out to more people and more people appreciate what we're doing.*

### The Development of LSNA's Holistic Plan

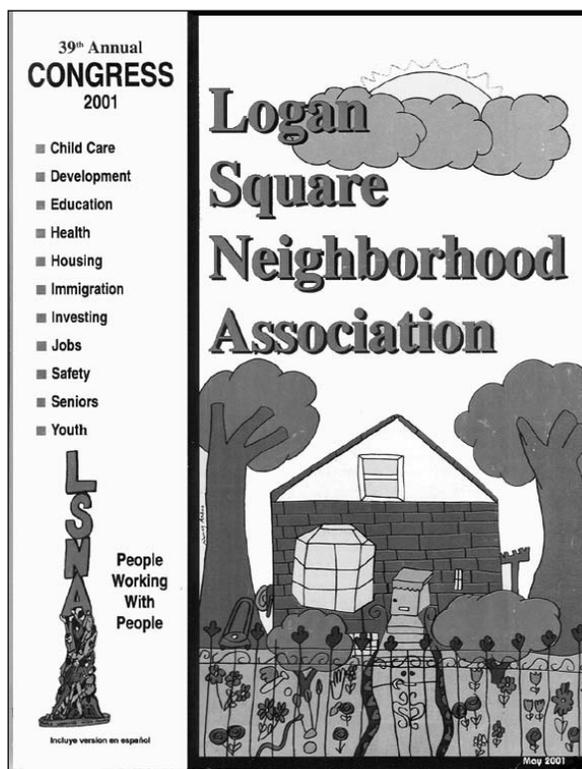
After several years as director of LSNA, Nancy initiated a process that led the community to develop a "Holistic Plan" to guide the many new activities—including education organizing, youth organizing, block clubs, and innovative home ownership programs—that had emerged in the previous few years. Completed in 1994, the Holistic Plan presented a positive vision of the community and brought together the various people who had become

involved in LSNA since Aardema began working as Executive Director. Although LSNA had been a multi-issue organizing group since the early 1960s, the Holistic Plan was its first comprehensive long-term plan to rebuild Logan Square. "We decided it's time to envision the community we want to live in and then build it," said the chair of LSNA's Holistic Committee. "We want to build on our many strengths, rather than just react to problems" (LSNA press release, May 5, 1994).

As one past president told us,

*It was a gradual thing. It was a process. As we continued to get victories in different areas, we just began to realize that we couldn't be everything at once...So what we did was, we brought the community together...We finally realized that we were just running all different places at the same time. And we needed some kind of filter.*

Thirty-four local schools, churches, block clubs, social service agencies—involving seniors and youth, parents and pastors, teachers, residents, and businesses—worked together for over two years in small committees and large groups to set forth a specific agenda for building a healthier and more stable neighborhood. The first Holistic Plan included eight resolutions relating to education, housing,

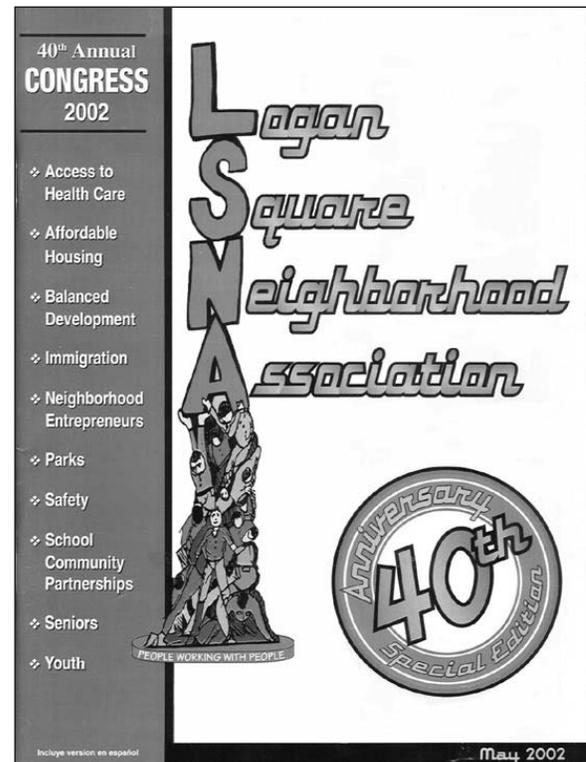


safety, and jobs. Since 1994, the Holistic Plan, which is revised annually, has functioned as a roadmap and a unifying vision for the organization.

Each year at the annual May Congress, the newly revised Holistic Plan is presented and ratified by the LSNA membership. Early in the fall, the Executive Board appoints a "Core Committee," which includes LSNA leaders, staff, and other community members, who begin the process of the yearly evaluation of the Holistic Plan. At an October meeting the Core Committee and representatives of each of LSNA's issue committees start a process of brainstorming, visioning, and reflection. During the winter and early spring, issue committees continue their organizing work, but also reflect on what is working and what isn't, make suggestions for new strategies, and write new resolutions. In addition, during this time, groups of leaders may decide to present resolutions that establish new issue committees. In March, the Core Committee meets again, refines the resolutions, and ensures that the organization is presenting a consistent vision for change.

This elaborate process creates a well-defined democratic arena in which people with different types of skills and goals are able to participate. Parents have an opportunity to participate in the education committee and also dialogue with principals. Low-income renters participate in the affordable housing committee, the banks continue their work in a committee known as the Reinvestment Coalition, started a decade ago to solicit the involvement of local banks, and all of this work is integrated through the Core Committee.

In addition to providing a vision for the community, the Plan enhances visibility, as LSNA interacts with



agencies, administrators, funders, and the Chicago media. A former LSNA president, subsequently director of the neighborhood Y, describes the value of the Holistic Plan.

*The Holistic Plan forces us to interact with each other...And we come up with very creative solutions and look at how we can best utilize our resources. It also has the influence to [get] the attention of the mayor or president of the Board of Education. We will have their support because they know we're all working together. And that has a lot of credibility with funders, too.*

## Negotiating Different Agendas and Competing Interests

Despite the respect Nancy Aardema receives, LSNA's views are not universally supported in the neighborhood. While LSNA's work in improving schools and enhancing social services is widely appreciated, its positions on housing and economic development are contested by several of the local aldermen, as well as by small groups of businessmen affiliated with local politicians. In addition, we have spoken with individual homeowners and members of other neighborhood groups who state that LSNA's current emphasis on the importance of affordable housing is not in the interests of homeowners who can benefit from rising property values. Even among those who agree with LSNA's current campaign for greater public control of development, there are differences of viewpoint. For example, there is sometimes tension between LSNA's focus on the need for affordable housing for low-income residents and middle-class groups who oppose development because it would undermine the traditional aesthetics and architecture of the neighborhood.

In spite of these differences, LSNA is widely recognized as a strong voice for the community. One of the skills Aardema brings as Executive Director is her ability to listen seriously to the various concerns of individuals and groups of people and then find places for them to play a meaningful part within LSNA. At the same time she has pursued a sustained effort to encourage those members of the community whose voices are rarely heard to assume more prominent positions in the leadership of LSNA. Some people who were once more vocal within LSNA have gone elsewhere to express their views and pursue their agendas. Not everyone in Logan Square sees LSNA as its main voice, and those who wish for more political advocacy have joined or

founded other organizations (e.g., Progressive Logan Square). It is important to keep in mind that Logan Square has a population of over 83,000 residents, so the notion of "neighborhood" is somewhat simplistic. There are tensions and problems associated with representing that many people and their multiple interests and agendas. The fact that over the past 13 years LSNA has been working to promote inclusion and engage as many segments of the population as it can helps the organization to adapt to changing conditions, demographics and issues facing the neighborhood.

In addition to 47 organizations that are currently represented on the board of LSNA, hundreds of other local organizations and individuals support LSNA through grassroots fundraising efforts which strengthen the organization financially and bolster its legitimacy by connecting it to a web of businesses, organizations, and individuals. The structure of the Holistic Plan allows individuals multiple entry points for their particular concerns and skills and opens up extensive arenas for democratic participation in the annual process of evaluating and revising the Plan. Today, LSNA's membership (and its Board) consists of individuals and organizations who advocate a highly participatory democratic process, a change from the pre-Aardema years when strong individuals held major sway without necessarily representing large numbers of other community members.

In May 1999, when RFA began its research, the LSNA board was made up of representatives of seven issue committees and 47 local organizations, including churches, social service agencies, schools, businesses, and block clubs. In addition to the general board, which meets quarterly, an executive board is nominated and elected every May.

## Managing Differences within LSNA

RFA's observations indicate that because of LSNA's broad range of members, there are often differing interests or opinions among LSNA members or committees that represent different perspectives. For example, at one Core Committee meeting, an organizer working with the affordable rental committee argued that the Holistic Plan should call for required "set-asides" (a certain percentage of affordable housing) in all new development in Logan Square. A member of the Reinvestment Coalition, representing banks within Logan Square, questioned whether LSNA could establish a motivation for developers to respect the set-aside rule. In what could have been a tense exchange, their dialogue instead took place with good humor and the issue was resolved through an agreement that the Holistic Plan was establishing shared goals for the organization, even if all the strategies for reaching them had not been hammered out. By the following year, the organization had decided to support set-asides as part of the Holistic Plan. In the following chapter on LSNA's work in schools, we present another example of how LSNA dealt with differences between members with different roles and points of view. That example concerns the development of a campaign, initiated by parents, to encourage teachers to treat children with greater respect.

### Working-Class Leadership

Working-class community members, especially women, talk often about being supported and encouraged to take on active leadership roles. The first president elected after Aardema became director of LSNA explained to us that as a working-class woman who felt she had never been listened to before, she appreciated the newfound power she experienced from being encouraged to become president of the organization.

*I was afraid to do it, but Nancy encouraged me. She coached me, she helped me figure out what was going to happen at the meetings, and finally I learned that I could do it on my own.*

Throughout the three-year period of our research, we have seen this dynamic repeated as new leaders and officers of LSNA emerge. When RFA first began its research, many of LSNA's strongest leaders had taken staff positions in the LSNA school-based programs, and the organizers expressed some concern about whether the organization would be able to continue to recruit the officers it needed to lead the organization. However, the leadership group has

continued to regenerate itself. The new leadership group is diverse in terms of race, ethnicity, gender, and class. A majority of new officers each year are low-to-moderate income Latinas, many of whom first become involved with LSNA through its school-based programs. At the time of publication, the leadership group expanded to include three Latino men.<sup>8</sup>

RFA has not been able to determine the socio-economic background of all board members, but an analysis of those whom we met during our first year of research indicated an interesting mix of social and economic backgrounds and suggested the richness of the social network that LSNA has created. In 1999, three LSNA board members were Latino or African American parents without extensive formal education. Another was a Latina parent who became a professional organizer after her experience with LSNA. Three other board members (two white and one Latino) were professionals who worked in local institutions and who also lived in Logan Square. Finally three board members (two white and one Latino) whom we met were professionals who live in the neighborhood, but work elsewhere.

The executive board at the time we began our research in 1999 consisted of two Latina women, two Latino men, one white man, and one African American man. Of these, one woman opened up a home daycare center through LSNA's small business incubator, two officers had gotten involved through their work as parents and community members in LSNA schools, one officer was an employee at an LSNA school, one was a high school student, one was a compliance officer at a local bank and another one was the operations manager for a local high school. Since the first year of RFA's research, LSNA has successfully recruited new board members and officers, continuing to draw on many different sectors of the Logan Square community.

<sup>8</sup> The staff, like the Board and the officers, reflect the predominantly Latino make-up of Logan Square. The Executive Director and several of the full-time organizers are white (although Spanish speaking) but virtually all of the approximately 15 person office-based staff members are Latino.

## Contributions to the Study of Community Capacity Building

While Logan Square may not be a "typical" low-income community because of the economic diversity it encompasses, an analysis of the strengths and challenges of LSNA's capacity building efforts in Logan Square provides valuable insights that can inform capacity building efforts in other low-income neighborhoods.

By using four lenses to look at LSNA's approach—relationship building, leadership development, democratic participation, and building power and changing policy—RFA aims to elucidate the features of LSNA's work which contribute to an understanding of how to develop the capacity of low-income and under-served communities.

Hess (Hess, 1999) has provided a useful analysis of community-capacity building which identifies three major types of practices. These three types are: community organizing, which focuses on political mobilization; community building, which focuses on

developing a vision and identifying resources within the community; and community development, which focuses on providing the technical expertise necessary to mediate between community needs and outside funders. A corollary of this analysis is that communities must both look inward at their strengths (as advocated by Kretzmann and McKnight, 1993) and look outward in order to access resources and challenge problematic policies and power dynamics.

The four lenses of relationship building, leadership development, democratic participation, building power and changing policy provide a way of looking at LSNA's work that captures the complexity of the process of building community capacity. In addition, the four lenses that we have identified help us look at the endeavor of building community capacity as a way of building on existing social and organizational strengths in order to create new forms of social action and community involvement

# III *LSNA—BUILDING COMMUNITY CAPACITY THROUGH SCHOOL / COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS*

## Introduction

*I arrive with the LSNA education organizer to interview the outreach team about the new community survey they are doing for Monroe School Community Learning Center. Six Latinas are sitting in the school's teachers' lounge. The organizer told me that the mothers had taken it upon themselves to move into the teachers' lounge, which she perceived as their sense of ownership of the school. When I arrive, each woman has an orange folder in front of her, and they're looking intently at maps that are blocked off with colored markers to show the different parts of the neighborhood. They're engaged in animated discussion about who should go where.*

*We start the focus group, and they agree that everyone on the outreach committee participated in the Community Learning Center last year. Margarita works in the Center. Marisol is on the student council for the Center. Everyone has taken GED or English classes. Someone else jokes, "This is the organization of the Monroe School." Three of the women were parent mentors. Latitia helped recruit parents to run in the most recent Local School Council election and is also the president of the bilingual committee. (RFA researcher's fieldnotes, fall 2000)*

As this vignette suggests, parents in Logan Square demonstrate a sense of engagement and ownership unusual in urban schools. In this chapter, we begin with an overview of LSNA's approach to school/community collaboration, provide an analysis of how this collaboration developed, and then discuss LSNA's work in schools through the four lenses of relationship building, leadership development, democratic participation and building power and changing policy.

LSNA's close collaboration with local schools began in the early 1990s when LSNA's Education Committee spearheaded a community effort to end school overcrowding. For years, before LSNA's involvement, individual schools in Logan Square had been negotiating with the Chicago Board of Education to end severe overcrowding. During the early 1990s,

LSNA played a crucial role in bringing together schools from across the neighborhood to address this common problem. Local School Councils and principals signed on to this campaign, joining the LSNA Education Committee, and schools became members of LSNA. With this campaign, LSNA shifted its strategy from organizing only parents to forming a coalition that also included school staff. Over several years, the campaign resulted in five new annexes and two new middle schools. Just as importantly, the campaign both demonstrated LSNA's power as a community organization and built a foundation of mutual trust and respect among the principals, teachers, parent leaders, and LSNA staff who had been involved in the campaign and witnessed the results. The campaign also established a basic vision for LSNA's education work.

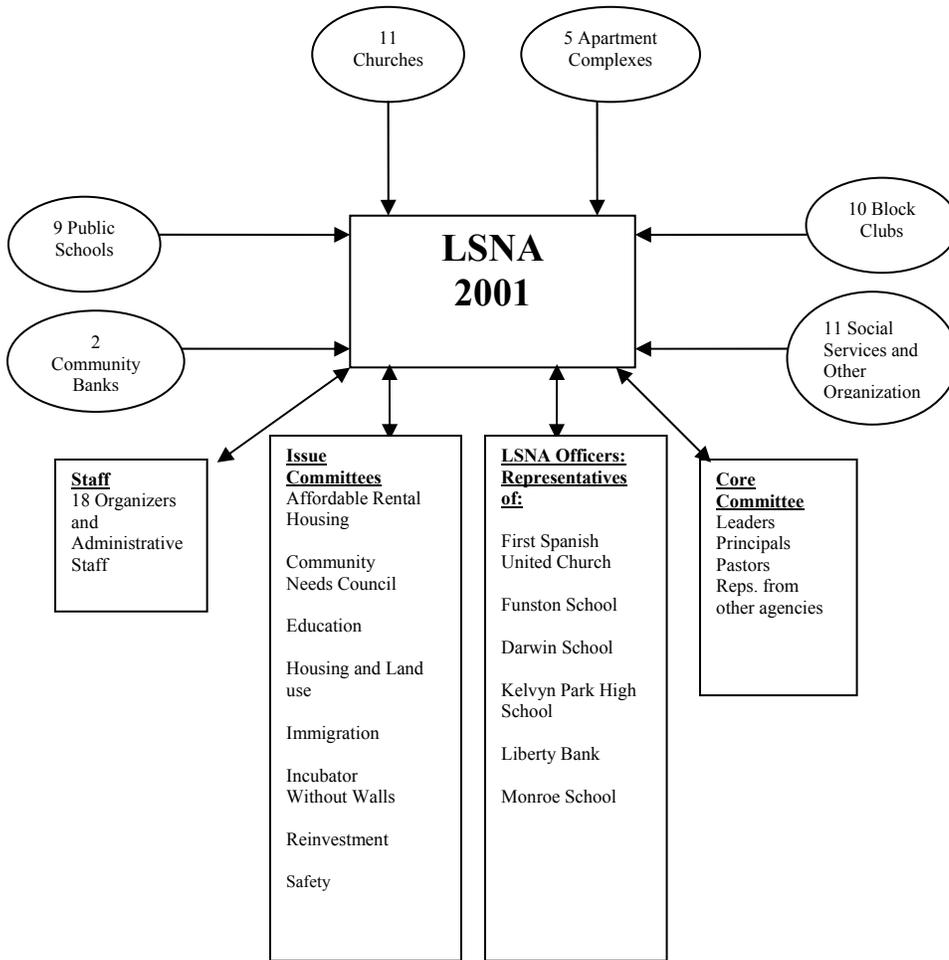
Joanna Brown, who organized the campaign for the annexes, notes:

*By the end of the overcrowding campaign, the entire coalition—principals, parents, and teachers—were speaking with one voice on the need, not only to build the annexes, but to use them in the evening as community centers to serve neighborhood needs. This was a fairly radical demand, as virtually all Chicago public schools up to that point closed their doors by 4 p.m. The coalition also began to talk about how to involve parents more fully in the schools.*

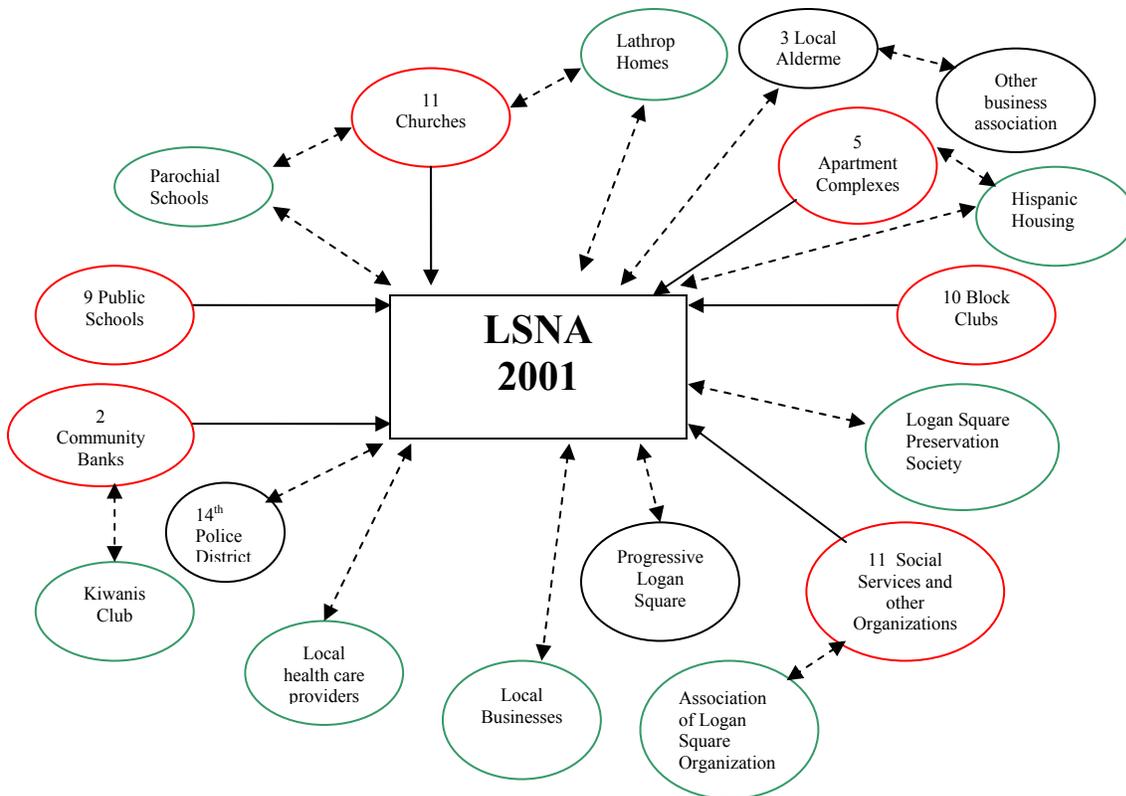
Since then, LSNA has deepened and built on this collaboration as it has worked to make the schools centers of community. Two principals, Sally Acker of Funston School and James Menconi of Monroe School, worked with parent leaders and others to write LSNA's first Holistic Plan in 1994, with its three education resolutions: 1) make schools centers of community life through Community Learning Centers, 2) develop school/community partnerships with parents as leaders, and 3) develop the Parent Teacher Mentor Program to help parents develop their skills, assist teachers, and build strong relationships in the community.

<sup>9</sup>To preserve confidentiality, people's real names are not used in this report. An exception is where we are quoting directly from other public documents.

## LSNA Member Organizations and Committees



## LSNA's Web of Neighborhood Relations



—▶ Shows organizational membership in LSNA  
 ◄--- Show other relationships

Today, LSNA runs Community Learning Centers in six schools, with 1,400 families participating in classes weekly. LSNA runs parent mentor programs in seven schools, and more than 900 parents (mostly mothers) have graduated from the program since it began in 1995. Both of these programs are run in a complex partnership with the schools. These programs involve shared financial and administrative management and shared space, all of which are negotiated school by school. In Joanna's words, *"These collaborations are built on trust, but, fraught as they are with potential conflicts, require constant care and feeding."* The collaborations are also supported by the fact that LSNA is the lead fundraiser, putting an average of \$100,000 to \$125,000 into each school yearly, mostly in the form of stipends and salaries to parents and other neighborhood residents working in the schools.

With these programs, LSNA has increased the quality of programming and services available to children and families in Logan Square. These programs impact the educational experience and achievement of Logan Square children and bring significant financial resources into the schools and the neighborhood. The partnership between LSNA and the schools has extended broadly into partnerships between schools and the community, evidenced by collaborations which range from local banks' home-ownership programs for teachers in Logan Square schools to intergenerational projects between Logan Square middle schools and nearby senior centers.

In 2000, LSNA was selected from 187 Chicago-area organizations as winner of the Chicago Community Trust's Award of Excellence for Outstanding Community Service. LSNA's vision of its accomplishments was articulated in its successful nomination proposal:

*People in Logan Square—parents, principals, teachers, students, neighbors—think differently about education today than they did a decade ago. Parents are welcome in the schools; they are seen as essential to education, not only in their homes, but also in the classrooms. Schools no longer are seen as isolated and gated institutions but as centers of their mini-communities. The chasm between school and home is bridged, as children see their mother and her friends working and studying in the school. The community is seen as a resource for education. Logan Square Neighborhood Association has been an essential and welcomed partner in forging this collaborative.*

Since 1996, all LSNA elementary schools have experienced significant increases in student achievement, even while the demographics have remained

constant. For example, from 1996 to 2001, the percentage of students at one school reading at or above the national norm on the yearly Iowa Test of Basic Skills rose from 17.5% to 29.3%. In math, the percentage rose from 19.5% to 31.4%. Even more telling are the dramatic shifts in student scores from the lowest to second lowest quartiles. This is noteworthy because parent mentors usually work with the students who are most behind. Other LSNA schools showed similar increases over the same time period. These increases in test scores compare favorably with citywide averages, especially taking into account the relatively higher rate of poverty and higher numbers of non-English speaking students in Logan Square schools.<sup>10</sup>

Principal interviews and parent interviews and focus groups attribute a significant portion of these gains to the regular presence of parents in classrooms through LSNA's Parent Teacher Mentor Program. Teachers, parents, and principals articulate the belief that parent mentors play an important role in improving the climate for learning in classrooms by giving help to individuals and small groups, keeping students on task, and developing close relationships with students. One major impact of the Parent Teacher Mentor Program is that it lowers the student/teacher ratio and gives individual help to some of the children most in need. The following comments, which are typical of those that we heard from teachers and parents, illustrate why the parent mentor program appears to be impacting student achievement, especially for those at the lowest achievement levels.

*My parent mentor takes my kids who would be the lowest readers out. Works with them one-on-one (teacher)*

*We all can use an extra set of hands... [Now] these kids get the help they need (teacher)*

*The teachers notice how well the students are making progress because they're interested, and I keep the students' interest going (parent).*

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<sup>10</sup> An analysis conducted by RFA in May 2001 of test score data (available from the Chicago Public Schools website) showed that 7 elementary schools affiliated with the Logan Square Neighborhood Association had an average increase in students scoring above the bottom quartile in reading on the Iowa Test of Basic Skills that was greater than the citywide average between 1991 and 2000. In Logan Square, the percent of students in the top three national quartiles increased from 41% to 65%. Citywide, the percent of students scoring in the top three quartiles nationally started higher, at 51%, but increased only 20 points to 71%. The average percent of low-income students in the seven Logan Square schools was 93% in comparison to a district-wide average of 84% low-income. The percent of students with limited English proficiency in Logan Square was 31% in comparison to 16% district-wide.

## The Interdependence of Schools and Communities

*LSNA has been very active in [making schools] a center of community, not just a place where kids and a group of professionals descend...It is not just a place where you can depend on kids to receive an education, but also the place where you participate in the governance and deciding what goes on there and building it up and helping it grow. (Logan Square minister, spring 2000)*

*When I came into the school for the first time, it was important for me to understand what was happening, but I was one of those people who were very timid. After three or four years, I got more involved. I don't understand it all yet, but I know the importance of getting involved. I'm new here, but I'm happy to be part of the Local School Council and president of one of the school committees. (Parent Leader, fall 2000)*

Parents, teachers, principals, and community members helped to make education one of the major issues in LSNA's first Holistic Plan, which was written in 1995. Working for two years, these different constituencies built on relationships they had developed in the campaign against overcrowding and wrote three education resolutions, which focused on the interdependence of the schools and the community. In its first Holistic Plan,<sup>11</sup> LSNA resolved to:

1. Develop schools as community centers because "the health of any community is dependent on the availability of common space for interaction, education, service provision, recreation, culture and arts."
2. Train parents to work in the classrooms of LSNA schools because "children learn better when their parents are actively involved in their education."
3. Support community controlled education because the "health of any community is dependent on the quality of education provided to its residents."

This resolution included support for training for LSC members and a program developed by local banks and LSNA to help Logan Square teachers buy homes in the neighborhood.

Following the adoption of the first Holistic Plan, LSNA received foundation funding to pilot the first Parent Teacher Mentor Program. Local School Council members and other parents worked with LSNA to bring the Parent Teacher Mentor Program into their schools and then to keep their schools open

after regular school hours for Community Learning Centers. In addition to working directly with parents, LSNA has continued to involve principals and teachers in LSNA activities such as quarterly principal meetings, the neighborhood-wide Education Committee, and the LSNA Core Committee.

LSNA's recognition of the interconnections between school and community and the importance of school/community collaboration is well illustrated by its two largest programs. Partnering with the Funston School and a technical assistance consultant (Community Organizing for Family Issues), LSNA developed a program with far-reaching effects—the Parent Teacher Mentor Program, which pays parents a small stipend to attend leadership training and then participate in a minimum of 100 hours of training as they work with children in classrooms. As parent mentors, mothers (and occasionally fathers) increase their understanding of the current culture and expectations of the schools. They take on new roles such as tutoring, reading to children, or coordinating literacy programs. They also learn that the skills honed by "just" being a good parent translate into leadership skills in the larger community.

LSNA's Community Learning Centers are another major example of school/community collaboration in Logan Square. LSNA and the schools had agreed that the new school annexes would be open for community activities. The first Community Learning Center was created by the first group of graduates from Funston's pilot Parent Teacher Mentor Program. The women developed a community survey and began knocking on doors to find out what the neighborhood wanted in a community center. They then advocated with citywide providers to get the desired programs. Since then, Funston's Community Learning Center and five others, which collectively serve over 1,400 children and adults a week, continue to be guided by the vision and energy of neighborhood residents.

<sup>11</sup> This information is based on a press release for the 32nd Annual Congress, May 1994.

## Using the Four Lenses

Looking at LSNA's work through the four lenses of relationship building, leadership development, democratic participation, and building power and changing policy helps us to understand how LSNA has been able to use and maintain community power to create strong, respectful partnerships between the schools and the community. Because LSNA parents, principals, and teachers are all members of a powerful community organization, the campaigns and programs they create are based on parent/professional relationships that are different from those traditionally found in urban schools.

This chapter begins with an examination of LSNA's education work through the lens of building power and changing policy. We begin with this lens for a particular reason. Fundamentally it is because LSNA had a well-developed approach in this area when RFA arrived in 1999 to begin field work. LSNA's power in the arena of education comes from its strength in sustaining campaigns over time and drawing political attention to its education agenda. LSNA's successful campaign to alleviate school overcrowding, which involved gaining political recognition and winning new buildings for neighborhood schools, is one illustration of its power. LSNA's power in the realm of education continues to build as LSNA leaders and members take active roles in their Local School Councils, create school-based programs that are controlled by the community, and successfully advocate for city, state, and national funding for these programs. Within the organization, LSNA's support for grassroots leaders and democratic structures help parents and community members articulate their concerns about schools to principals and teachers.

Second, the report examines LSNA's education work through the lens of relationship building. LSNA has worked hard to successfully build relationships among parents, between parents and teachers, among principals, and between schools and other organizations in the neighborhood. In addition, LSNA plays a critical role by building relationships which connect Logan Square schools to funders and other organizations outside the neighborhood and city.

The chapter looks next at LSNA through the lens of leadership development. In this section, we discuss the leadership opportunities created by the education organizing work of LSNA and the ways in which LSNA identifies and trains parents and community members to take on leadership roles. We end by

using the lens of democratic participation to explore democratic processes in LSNA's education work, both in the schools and in the internal processes of LSNA.

### Building Power and Changing Policy

Community power is critical to LSNA's ability to enter into school/community collaborations as a partner, based on relationships of trust and mutual respect. Sustained campaigns and public recognition of LSNA's education work are both evidence of LSNA's power as a community organization.

#### Sustained Campaigns

*After years of meetings with the Board of Education, they finally bought the old Ames property for a new middle school. But that wasn't the end of it. One morning, we got a phone call from one of our leaders saying that the Board of Ed was closing a deal on the sale of the property to a private developer that afternoon. Immediately, the Education Committee and the parent mentors were on the phone to the parents who had been working on the campaign. Two hours later, hundreds of community people were picketing. Later that day, we found out that they had cancelled the deal. Finally, in 1997, after six years of organizing, ground was broken for the Ames Middle School. (Narrative told to RFA researcher by a group of LSNA leaders, May 1999)*

LSNA's ability to sustain campaigns over time is one important measure of a strong community base, which contributes to effective school/community collaborations. LSNA's campaign against overcrowding began in the early 1990s and continued for over five years. During our fieldwork, RFA heard many stories of the abysmal conditions in Logan Square schools during those years: 45 children in a classroom; classes meeting in the nurse's office or on the stage and auditorium floor; art and music classes cancelled because the space was needed for regular classroom instruction. During the first phase of the campaign against overcrowding, parents from three elementary schools proved that they could work together to identify a mutually acceptable location for a new middle school.

The first victory spurred parents from five elementary schools to work with LSNA and push for additional space. Together, parents from these schools spent another year and a half preparing to appeal to the Board of Education. They developed a multi-step campaign that began with meeting individually with members of the Board of Education to educate them

about the need for new schools. At these meetings, LSNA parents convinced each member of the Board of Education to commit him or herself to supporting new facilities for Logan Square schools. A later step of the campaign was to bring hundreds of Logan Square parents to a Board of Education meeting where the individual members of the Board of Education were asked to publicly affirm the commitments that they had previously made privately. The ability to develop strategies for sustained, multi-step campaigns is an essential element of building power for community groups.

A parent, LSC chair, and former president of LSNA explained how LSNA parents were able to win new buildings for their neighborhood:

*There were many meetings with parents to prepare for going down to the Board of Education. What was funny was that no one would commit in a large group. But we went around and got individual commitments. We had many, many meetings. It was a year and a half of meetings. And then we finally all came together in one big room. You could feel the tension in the room. And once we started the meeting it was like, "Well, you know, so and so, you said that if so and so supported it, you will support it," and we would call on the names, "Well, are you here in support?" It was empowering because you finally beat this huge Board of Ed.*

After the additions were completed, LSNA began another round of organizing, this time to win construction of the new Ames Middle School and then a role in the selection of its principal. In the words of community organizers, they "*gained a seat at the table*" for principal selection. Although LSCs have the right and the obligation to hire the principal for an existing school, the CEO of the Chicago Public Schools, Paul Vallas, had insisted on choosing the principal for the new middle school. To convince Vallas of the value of community input, parent mentors and LSC members from two of Ames feeder schools, Mozart and Funston, visited his office to share with him the important work that LSNA was doing in the Logan Square schools. A few days later, Paul Vallas came to Logan Square for a meeting about LSNA's school-based Community Learning Centers.

According to LSNA's Executive Director,

*If you don't have power, you're not going to have a meeting with Paul Vallas. We told him he needed to come to the neighborhood and get a sense of how parents, teachers, principals, and pastors were working together. He was trying to change the standards for the Chicago Public Schools then, and LSNA's president at the time told him, "We need*

*you, but you also need us." He needed the parents; he needed the principals; he needed the teachers. He got the point. At the end of the meeting, Vallas came and said, "We want to see your top education leaders." That was when he said we could form the committee for the principal selection.*

A committee made up of local principals and LSC members selected as principal a local bilingual education coordinator who had been a leader in the fight against overcrowding, had helped to organize the first Parent Mentor program, was at that time LSNA's vice president, and had expressed a strong commitment to making Ames "a community-centered school." Vallas accepted the selection.

These examples show that LSNA has strong community leaders who can sustain campaigns over the time it takes to develop power and "gain a seat at the table." The fact that LSNA was able to exert such an influence on Chicago Public Schools' policy-makers won appreciation of LSNA's power, and enabled LSNA to enter into school/community collaborations as a respected partner.

In the spring of 2000, LSNA's Education Committee, composed of parent representatives from each of its member schools, began to discuss an issue which they termed "respect for children." After years of classroom-based collaboration between parents and teachers, parent mentors began to act on their concern that too many Logan Square teachers were using negative, rather than positive, approaches to discipline. During the fall of 2000, parents on the Committee met individually with several principals. They also asked to meet as a group with the LSNA principals to discuss the issue, although they were nervous and cautious because they felt the issue was sensitive. As one of the Committee members explained,

*We are trying to do something about the respect of teachers for children, and on both sides. We don't want to pick out certain teachers. We don't want to get into arguments. We simply want to say that this is a serious problem.*

### **Public Recognition of LSNA's Agenda**

LSNA has received much public recognition for its education work from political leaders, funders, and the media. Evidence of LSNA's political recognition in the arena of education includes:

1. LSNA's ongoing relationships with city and state politicians, school district administrators, and national congressmen. Politicians and administrators such as Paul Vallas (former CEO of Chicago Public Schools), State Senator

Miguel del Valle, and many aldermen have met over the years with LSNA leaders and have supported policies to open up public schools to community groups. LSNA's positive relationship with the top administration of Chicago Public Schools is continuing with the current CEO, Arne Duncan, who has made Community Learning Centers one of his priorities and speaks of LSNA as a model. Despite ongoing differences with local aldermen in other issue areas such as housing, these aldermen promote LSNA's work with schools and attend LSNA's public events about public education.

2. LSNA's campaign for state funding for community centers in schools. In the spring of 1999, LSNA's two state senators, Miguel del Valle and Lisa Madigan, and state representative William Delgado publicly recognized the work of LSNA and used it as a model for a bill to provide statewide funding for after-school programs for children and families. LSNA mobilized community members, school leaders, and Community Learning Center students for a letter-writing campaign and testimony before the State Legislature. Although the Senate Rules Committee killed the bill, LSNA did succeed in receiving state money to provide partial funding for its Community Learning Centers for a year.
3. An LSNA leader was invited to testify before then-President Clinton and Vice President Gore about the value of after-school programming. Subsequently, the Federal government has recognized LSNA's approach to school/community collaboration by awarding a three-year (2001-2004) 21<sup>st</sup> Century grant to fund the Community Learning Centers.

Other examples of public recognition during the period of this research include the Chicago Community Trust's 2001 James Brown Award for Outstanding Community Service to LSNA, extensive radio and television coverage of LSNA's Parent Teacher Mentor Program, and LSNA's hosting a site visit from a national consortium of education funders. Funding is also evidence of public respect for LSNA's ability to create school/community partnerships. LSNA's education organizing and school-based programs are funded through many sources, including: the John T. and Catherine D. John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation; the Chicago Board of Education; the Chicago Department of Human Services; the Chicago Annenberg Challenge (a major school reform

initiative that supported LSNA as an external partner to five Logan Square schools); the Polk Brothers Foundation and several other smaller Chicago foundations; the Illinois State Board of Education; the Illinois Department of Commerce and Community Affairs; the Illinois Community College Board; and the U.S. Department of Education's 21<sup>st</sup> Century and Title VII career ladder grant. These multiple sources of funding enhance LSNA's power within school/community collaborations.

LSNA's sustained campaigns, successful programs, and the public recognition granted its work in schools have all contributed to building power for LSNA in the sphere of education. This power has made possible LSNA's collaborative partnerships with the schools and motivated school personnel to become active members of LSNA and the Logan Square community.

## Building Relationships

LSNA serves its goal of linking schools and communities by developing webs of relationships among parents, between parents and school staff, among schools, between school staff and LSNA, and among schools and other institutions in the community.

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## Creating Schools as Centers of Community

*(an excerpt from "The Whisper of Revolution: Logan Square Schools as Centers of Change")*

School leaders were among the creators of LSNA's first Holistic Plan. *"One of the things we really wanted to encourage was more parent involvement in the schools,"* explained Rita Riveron, LSC president at Mozart school.

*There were always the same four or five of us volunteering for everything. We felt that to really improve the school we were going to need to get other parents involved. So increased parent involvement was one of the resolutions of LSNA's Holistic Plan and we set about finding ways to achieve this.*

Another resolution of the Holistic Plan came from LSNA's and the school's fight for the school annexes. In a neighborhood with very few public spaces, it seemed a crime that the schools sat empty 75% of the time. So when the annexes were built, it was with the idea that they would become community centers outside of regular school hours. This idea was also incorporated into the Holistic Plan and was met so enthusiastically that even schools that didn't have the new annexes, such as Brentano, were on board for creating new community centers.

In the spring of 1995, in cooperation with COFI (Community Organizing Around Family Issues), LSNA trained the first forty parents as mentors at Mozart and Funston Elementary Schools in preparation for working in classrooms with the students. During the training, parents were asked to think of themselves as leaders and to set personal and school/community goals. This first group had a very hard time even thinking of goals for themselves. As Maria Montesinos, a Mozart parent said,

*I am not used to thinking of myself. Others, yes, but not myself. But the training and follow-up we had was good. It really forced us to think about ourselves, why thinking of goals for ourselves helps other people."*

Many of the parent mentors had set personal goals around obtaining their GEDs or learning English. However, they were finding it very difficult to achieve their goals. Places that offered GED classes were too far to walk to or entailed complicated public transportation routes; childcare wasn't offered, or was an additional charge, or had a mile-long waiting list. A group of seven Funston parent mentors dreamed of having adult education classes right in their school, with convenient hours and free childcare. The Logan Square Neighborhood Association was right there with them. Coming from a community organizing rather than a social service perspective, they realized that in order to create a successful community center with programs that people really wanted to attend, they had to find out what people in the neighborhood really wanted. They began knocking on people's doors. They talked to people about their goals, their needs, and their obstacles. They learned a lot about the neighborhood and the people who shaped it. *"It was a life-changing experience for me,"* says Funston parent and community center coordinator Ada Ayala.

*I thought I had a lot of problems! But I talked to people who have so many more problems and needs than I do. This experience motivated me to learn more, to achieve my goals, and in doing so enabled me to help others better. I wanted to be able to tell them, 'yes, there is help for you.'*

Ayala and the other parents were true to their goals. After talking to about 700 people in the neighborhood and in the school, they set out to find free programs that would address the top priorities named in the survey: GED classes in English and Spanish, English as a Second Language classes, and affordable childcare. Another concern that was brought out in the interviews and surveys was the need for security in and around the building so people would feel secure going there at night. The group had a shoestring budget for security and childcare but did not have money for classes. They negotiated with Malcolm X College for over six months and finally managed to bring in the classes for free.

Since the success of the Funston Community Center, LSNA has worked with three other schools (Brentano, Monroe, and Mozart) to open Community Learning Centers using the same model of parent mentor graduates going out into the community, doing

surveys and interviews and forming a set of priority programs based on the interview findings. As each new center opens, it becomes part of a network that helps the Center tackle issues that go beyond one single community center, like funding.

*This narrative is excerpted from "The Whisper of Revolution: Logan Square Schools as Centers of Change" and was written by Susan Adler Yanun (PRAGmatics, Fall 1999, pp.7-10). Since the article was completed, the Ames Middle School has built on the model of the other centers to develop a curriculum project in which parent mentors worked with students and teachers to develop, implement, and analyze a community survey. This project led to the opening of the Ames Community Learning Center in September 2001. At the Schneider School, parent mentors and community members developed a center which opened in January 2002.*

The importance of building relationships is especially evident as parents begin to develop trusting relationships with each other and with school staff. These relationships lead to increased parent engagement in the life of schools, which often leads to involvement with other community issues through participation in LSNA. Trust is also evident in the relationships that school principals in Logan Square have developed with LSNA and with each other through LSNA's principals group meetings. In this section, we begin by looking at new relationships of trust developed among community members as they become involved with the Parent Teacher Mentor Program and the Community Learning Centers. We then look at enhanced levels of communication between parents and teachers. We conclude by looking at new networks that link LSNA schools to each other and to other organizations in the neighborhood and city.

Building on the relationships developed during the campaign against overcrowding, LSNA organizers have also continued to bring LSNA principals together for quarterly meetings. These meetings provide an unusual opportunity for principals to share problems and strategies with each other, as well as providing a forum for developing new initiatives. According to one principal, *"There's a level of trust that we can be honest. ... We realize we're all in the same boat."* Another explains,

*We talk about what was successful, what wasn't successful from a previous year. And then maybe we talk about some new ideas, some new initiatives that are coming out. ... We didn't do this before LSNA got us together.*

This group provides an opportunity for principals to collaborate on implementing their schools' Parent

Teacher Mentor Programs and Community Learning Centers.

One initiative endorsed by the principals' group is a yearly neighborhood-wide reading celebration, which serves as a year-end culmination to the Links to Literacy campaigns used in the schools. Links to Literacy encourages students across all the LSNA schools to read more and LSNA has brought together the Links' coordinators from 12 schools and the local library to exchange ideas and plan a joint outdoor celebration as a reward for the best 600 readers. Students in the participating schools read more than 150,000 books last year.

In addition to valuing the partnership among schools that is promoted by LSNA, principals also value the support of LSNA itself. As one principal told us,

*It was absolutely mandatory that they were there for us because we could not possibly have done [these programs] on our own....Having someone who functions outside the system actually helps bring resources.*

As the schools became more involved with LSNA through developing the Holistic Plan, developing new school/community programs, and participating in other LSNA organizational activities, other community institutions also became interested in supporting the schools. One major connection has been with community banks, which decided that they wanted to identify a way that their programs could also enhance the Logan Square schools. Out of this, a special homeownership program for teachers was developed, which facilitated homeownership in Logan Square for teachers in the schools. Pastors also supported the schools through working with parent mentors on creating and implementing a Character Education program in the public schools. The YMCA and the local park also work with the Ames Middle School and the Ames Community Center to coordinate recreation, social services, and cultural activities. Like the relationships between the banks and the schools, the relationships between other organizations and the schools were mediated through shared participation in LSNA.

### **New Relationships among Community Members**

Both parent mentors and school staff have described the dramatic personal transformation and newfound sense of trust and sense of connection for parents who participate in parent mentor training or do outreach for community centers (*for the story of how LSNA started these programs, please see the box "Creating Schools as Centers of Community" on 30*). The programs create "bonding social capital"

(relationships of trust among people who are similar in terms of race, class, ethnicity, or social roles).

Typically the parents most involved in LSNA's programs are low-income women who have not been actively involved in their children's schools, in neighborhood organizations, or in the formal job market. Over and over, in interviews, focus groups, and public presentations, we heard stories of social isolation and lack of personal direction, as exemplified in the words of Isabel, a Puerto Rican who grew up on the mainland and attended college for a time.

*I used to be one of those moms who just dropped their kids off at the school, but the first week we had the Parent Mentor training program it opened my eyes a lot, because you are so used to thinking about your kids, the house and everybody else, that you are never thinking about yourself.*

Many of the parent mentor participants are either recent immigrants who don't speak English or women who have limited social contacts outside of their kinship networks. U.S.-born women, as well as immigrants from Latin America, vividly described how they learned new ways of connecting with other adults as well as with their own children through their participation in the Parent Teacher Mentor Program. Isabel, who is now a parent organizer for the program, told us,

*The program is great because it changes a lot of people's lives. Not only for myself, but when other mothers first get into the program, their self-esteem and everything is so low. When they first started, they were like really quiet; they would keep to themselves. And now you can't get them to shut up sometimes. I mean you see the complete difference, they really change their life. They are more outgoing. They are willing to do more for their kids. It's like night and day, they're so different.*

Another mother described a similar experience of connection with the larger community while working with students, teachers, and other parents on outreach for the new Ames Community Learning Center.

*The Community Center has made us. I have been married for 15 years and I had never had a job. In the beginning, I had some problems with my husband because he didn't want me to go out. And I told him, really—what I need is to go out, to know, to talk. And here I learned to talk because before my world was my daughter and my husband. And now I feel different. I'm a different person.*

## Shy No More

I remember a child that started in first grade. This child did not know how to write his name so they assigned him to me. I worked with him for three months. Within those three months this child learned how to write and read. The teacher told me that this was a miracle. Working with students has been very rewarding for me. It has also helped me help my son in his schoolwork.

What have all these experiences done for me? Well, let me tell you. I was a very shy person. I was afraid to talk to other people. I was always in the house. I did not go anywhere but to take my son to school. Becoming a Parent Mentor has helped me to socialize with other people. It has helped me to become involved with the school and with the community. It has helped me build up my self-esteem. I was able to go to school and study to get my G.E.D. Now I am studying Bilingual Education. Before, I didn't have the courage to do any of these things.

## Ya no soy tímida

Recuerdo a un alumno que iniciaba el primer grado. Como no sabía escribir su nombre me lo asignaron a mí. Trabajé con él durante tres meses y en ese tiempo aprendí a leer y escribir. La maestra me dijo que era un milagro. Para mí ha sido muy grato trabajar con los estudiantes. Me siento muy especial cuando me brindan su confianza. Además, el trabajo me ha preparado para ayudarle a mi hijo con sus tareas, lo cual ha significado mucho para él.

Quiero contarles lo que estas experiencias me han brindado. Yo antes era una persona muy tímida. Tenía miedo de hablar con la gente y me quedaba siempre en mi casa. No salía más que para llevar a mi hijo a la escuela. El trabajo como Padre Mentor me ha ayudado a tener una vida social y conocer a otra gente. Me ha ayudado a involucrarme en la escuela y en la comunidad. Me ha ayudado a mejorar mi autoestima. Fui a la escuela y estudié para sacar mi preparatoria. Ahora estoy estudiando educación bilingüe. Antes no tenía el valor para hacer todas estas cosas.

Conchita Perez

The coordinator of the Funston Community Center also described the creation of new relationships among parents:

*The fact that parents have more roles in the school is important. We communicate a lot among ourselves. The parents know and support one another more. So, for example, if one parent cannot pick up her child, then that parent calls another parent to do it and it is done. I have also seen parents wanting to work for other parents. They are more interested in the Center and how*

*everyone is developing their skills...When the Center first started, I thought it will not last because the community was not going to respond. And I was wrong. We have seen an overwhelming response from the community.*

## Enhanced Communication between Parents, Teachers, and Students

Improved relationships between parents and teachers, known as “bridging social capital,”<sup>12</sup> are another result of school/community partnerships in Logan Square classrooms. This evolving sense of trust is critical for schools in low-income communities and communities of color where parents and school staff tend to blame each other for children's lack of progress.

The presence of parents in the schools also creates new kinds of relationships between adults and children in classrooms, contributing to more constructive student engagement with their classes and subject matter. According to one parent,

*To me being a parent mentor means being able to communicate with the students as well as the teachers. And when you're able to share some of the things that you know about the subjects, it seems to bring out a lot of good in a kid. I've noticed that in certain classrooms that I go to, the kids, they want to participate even more, even the ones that weren't even really doing well. The teachers notice how well they're making progress because they're interested, and I keep their interest going.*

As parents work closely with teachers, they develop an understanding of what actually happens in the classrooms and learn how they can help their own children.

This leads to increased parent involvement with homework, in reading to their children, and in leading activities such as Family Math and Family Literacy. Having parents in the classrooms through the Parent Teacher Mentor Program also creates a more intimate environment for students, which is reflected in a decrease in discipline referrals.

Parent mentors universally attest that working directly with teachers helps them understand how important it is to support the teachers and help their own children meet the requirements for success in school. As one parent said,

*Being here has helped me work more with my children. I pay attention to the work that is*

<sup>12</sup>“Bridging social capital” refers to the networks of trust and mutual obligation that exist across differing groups, be they linguistic, social class, or status, as with teachers and parents.

*assigned to them. I know how they work and how to help them improve."*

During focus groups conducted during the Winter of 2002, parents told us that the skills that they learned by watching teachers translated immediately into skills that they could use with their own children, such as asking questions, playing more games, and becoming more patient.

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### **"Este trabajo es para tí"**

En mi vida han pasado muchas cosas, pero hubo un acontecimiento que ha sido muy importante para mí. Ocurrió en octubre de 1999 cuando mi niño llegó a mi hogar con una aplicación para el programa de Padres Mentores. Yo pensaba que era incapáz de realizar este tipo de trabajo, pero mi hijo me dijo, "Mami, este trabajo es para tí." Bueno, pues me decidí a tomarlo y en noviembre del mismo año commencé a trabajar como Padre Mentor en la Escuela Mozart. En ese momento comprendí que nada es imposible cuando estamos dispuestos a lograrlo. Ahora me siento realizada como madre, como ser humano...He vivido muchas experiencias en el salón de clases, pero sobre todo la confianza que los niños me han demostrado me llena de mucha satisfacción...Eso me llena de orgullo porque veo qui mi esfuerzo está dando fruto.

### **"This Job Is for You"**

Many things have happened in my life, but there one event has been very important for me. It happened in October 1999, when my child arrived from school with an application for the Parent Mentor program. I thought that I was incapable of carrying out a job like that, but my son said to me, "Mami, this job is for you." So I decided to go ahead and take it, and in November of that same year I began working as a Parent Mentor at Mozart School. That is when I learned that nothing is impossible when we are determined to achieve it. Now I feel fulfilled as a mother and as a human being...I have had many experiences in the classroom. The thing that gives me the most satisfaction is the trust that the children place in me...That makes me very proud because I see that my efforts are bearing fruit.

Marisol Torres

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Parents' respect for teachers increases as they see the challenges of teaching in the overcrowded Chicago schools. According to one parent mentor,

*At first I was so nervous and did not really trust the teachers, but all that changed once I worked in the classroom. Now we trust each other. At first, I thought that teachers did not do their work or that they really did not want to work with children. Once I started to work here, I have learned that the*

*teachers work a lot and that with so many children in the classroom it is very difficult to work alone.*

From the teachers' perspective, parents become valued partners in the classrooms. As one teacher says,

*At this school, we have seen [the Parent Teacher Mentor Program] work very well. Those teachers who have parents in the classroom do not get tired of praising them. They really see them as essential to their teaching...And believe me, teachers who have parent mentors in their classes see them as more than a mentee. They see them as partners and friends.*

One teacher explained,

*Before, parents were seen as disciplinarians at home and teachers were the educators at the school. Now parents are seen as partners in educating the children in the school and in the home.*

According to another teacher, "When I came here [7 years ago], I don't remember seeing that many parents in the programs. Now it's parents everywhere."

According to some parents, as teachers become accustomed to having parents in the school as parent mentors, the overall respect for parents increases.

According to one,

*Now teachers have a need for parents in their classrooms. Before teachers did not want a parent in their room working with them. Maybe teachers thought the parents did not have the ability to work in the classroom and now they have seen that parents can.*

The LSNA Education Committee's "Respect for Children" campaign, (previously mentioned in this chapter's sub-section on sustained campaigns), shows that LSNA is continuing to work with teachers and schools to fully develop a culture that respects the class, language, and cultural attributes of students in urban schools in low-income neighborhoods.

LSNA's Lead Education Organizer, Joanna Brown, wrote the following narrative that tells what happened when the parents on LSNA's Education Committee met with principals during the winter of 2001,

*One by one the principals responded to the question: "What do you do if you find out a teacher is speaking inappropriately to students?" The committee felt the meeting was useful, although one principal called LSNA and said, "We need to find better answers." One concrete suggestion that came out of the discussion was a joint parent/teacher professional development session on creating a positive climate for learning.*

*Eighty people, about half teachers and half parents, attended the Saturday morning workshop at a local hotel. After being served a lovely breakfast, they were asked to leave the room. When they returned, the tables had been pushed to the wall and they couldn't find their belongings. "Hurry up, hurry up, you're late," yelled presenter Elena Diaz, a Mexican educator and actress. A principal who attended described how some teachers, insulted, were ready to walk out, until they realized they were being asked to experience being a second grader on a day their teacher is frustrated about something.*

*In the fall of 2002, the Education Committee hired Elena to work with both parents and teachers about issues of positive discipline and teaching and learning. She has conducted workshops that opened discussion of school climate and the classroom physical environment; teachers began to communicate their deep frustrations but gradually began to give each other support; mothers practiced dramatized reading, learned to become more sensitive to the impact of their voices and body language on children.*

*One group of six mothers with whom Elena worked developed a skit called "Supermama," which they then performed for other mothers in the Bilingual Committee meetings of neighborhood schools. The heroine is busy cooking, cleaning, ironing and generally taking care of her husband and children. The teacher calls her in for a meeting because her child is not doing his homework. As responsibilities pile up, she becomes more and more frustrated, until in comes....Supermama! There is song and a dance and then the audience tries to help the mother with their suggestions – she must teach her children to help, her husband should help, she needs time and space for herself, a vacation.... It ends on a positive note.*

In this document Joanna reflected,

*We are trying to build respect through practice. In a sense, all our work is about "respect." As teachers and parents work together, they learn to respect each other. We—and I mean all of us, organizers, teachers, parents, principals—are working to change the culture of urban schools, to value families and what they know, making school a more and more positive, affirming experience for the children. This is not a quick or simple task. It means no less than changing the paradigm of schooling.*

### **New Networks Developed**

As LSNA works to change the culture of schools, it also has fostered the growth of a network that links the local schools to each other and to other local and citywide organizations. Relationships among the participating schools make possible the ongoing creation and implementation of LSNA's school-based programs on a neighborhood-wide basis. For

example, lead teachers in charge of the Parent Mentor program in each of the seven schools have met monthly with LSNA since 1996.

### **Leadership Development**

Opportunities for leadership and leadership development characterize all aspects of LSNA's work in schools. One aspect of leadership development in LSNA consists of the extensive opportunities for individual and family empowerment within LSNA's programs. A second aspect of leadership development is LSNA's work in identifying and training parents and community members to take on leadership roles within the schools and LSNA.

At a meeting held in the fall of 2000, Research for Action asked members of the LSNA Education Committee how they saw the connection between personal empowerment and community change. According to one mother, who is now on Local School Councils in three schools which her children attend:

*When we get parents participating, it increases their self-esteem. They were very timid. Now they have more self-confidence after participating in the programs. They come out of the programs with much more self-esteem. Many of the people who were in the parent mentor program, they didn't leave their houses and now, they're ahead of me, they're driving.*

Another mother who now works on LSNA's outreach committee told us,

*There are people who are working in the office on the issue of real estate taxes. They're dealing with the taxes, and they're working on outreach. All this came out of the parent mentor program. And it started with the schools, but it moved. Change for the children. Personal change. Change for all. But it all came from the parent mentor program.*

A third agreed:

*When I became a parent mentor many years ago, I was one of those people who were very shy, but after 3 or 4 years, it ended up that I am doing many more things. For me it was a very large experience, to participate in the school. I am still a baby in LSNA, but the most important thing is to get involved. I am learning a lot from my own experience. I'm not only involved in LSNA, I'm involved in the school: in the council... as president of a committee...and I like it.*

### **Individual and Family Empowerment**

All parent mentors set personal goals for themselves as part of their participation in the program. Often these include getting a GED, learning English, getting a job, or attending college. Most of the 840

parent mentor graduates over the years have gone on to job training programs, adult education classes, volunteer activities, or leadership roles in the school. Most of the teaching assistants and other para-professionals hired in LSNA schools in the past several years have been parent mentor graduates. As discussed above, parents consistently tell a story of personal transformation through their involvement in the Parent Teacher Mentor Program.

As the teacher who coordinated the program at one school explained,

*The parent organizer does all things to have well-informed parents in the school. She works with them in all areas—political, emotional, economic."*

The assistant principal at the same school commented, "I just can't tell you what a difference it has made in the lives of our parents."

LSNA's Community Learning Centers create a safe and accessible environment for entire families to participate in educational and recreational programs. The centers offer a variety of programs determined locally, including homework assistance, adult education, cultural programming, and family counseling, after school and in the evenings. The first center to open, Funston, graduates approximately fifty Spanish GED students a year. LSNA has the highest graduation rate for Spanish GED of all off-campus programs run by the Chicago City Colleges.

In 2000, LSNA also partnered with Chicago State University to offer full scholarships and a bilingual teacher certification program for forty-five parent mentors, teacher aides, and other Logan Square community members. Classes are held in one of LSNA's community centers, and the program was funded by a grant proposal written jointly by LSNA and Chicago State.

*We went looking for a program like this because so many of the parent mentors just did not want to leave the schools. They had the teaching bug. So many had stories of how they had changed some child's life, gotten them interested in school for the first time, taught them to read. They didn't want to go back home, or to a factory, to a clerical job, or to clean houses. They wanted to teach. They decided to call their program, 'Nueva Generacion,' or New Generation. They bonded closely as a cohort. It's a difficult program, and everyone has busy lives, but they don't let each other drop out.. Two and a half years into the program, 41 of the students are still enrolled, a remarkable retention rate. [Joanna Brown, 2002]*

This is an important extension of LSNA's work with parents, many of whom see the bilingual teacher certification program as an opportunity to extend their skills, interests, and commitment to improving the educational experience of Latino children that they first identified when they were parent mentors. LSNA is looking for ways to start a second cohort and to promote this as a successful model for teacher preparation that would provide committed teachers for low-income neighborhoods.

<b>Number of Parent Mentors, Spring 2001: n=114</b>
75% of parent mentors are immigrants
44% have GEDs or high school degrees (US or foreign)
23% are in ESL classes
22% are in GED classes
10% are enrolled in college classes

### **Leadership Roles in the School**

Often the first leadership role that parents take on in the school is around safety issues. Parents in all the schools have formed patrols to ensure safety around the perimeter of the schools. Parent mentors have been a major source for volunteers for the schools' safety patrols and played important roles in organizing many of them. Other safety issues that parents have taken on include getting rid of prostitution around one school, closing down drug houses near schools, organizing neighbors to stay outside while children are going to and from school, and organizing campaigns for traffic safety.

Parent mentor graduates commonly take leadership roles on LSCs and other legally-mandated committees such as the bilingual and principal selection committees. LSNA is active in recruiting and training parents for LSCs; LSNA schools typically have full slates or contested elections and high levels of voter turnout compared with the turnout at many other schools in Chicago. For example, in the last two elections one LSNA school had the highest number of LSC contestants in its region. Parent mentor graduates have been instrumental in conducting community surveys to help get new community centers started. They also staff community centers and participate on the governing bodies of LSNA's six school-based community centers. In addition, parent mentor graduates and other LSNA leaders coordinate many literacy activities at their schools, including reading with children, conducting library card drives, and

creating lending libraries for parents. Principals and parent organizers consistently report that parent mentors and parent mentor graduates form the majority of active parents in their schools.

As parents become involved in their schools, they seek out new ways to remain active and build their leadership skills. An organizer's written reports tell how this happened at one school.

*At Mozart, the parents who surveyed residents for the Community Learning Center planning process came back from door-knocking excited, energized, frustrated, and with many stories to tell. Angry homeowners had complained of dirty alleys, disorderly empty lots, and unruly teens. Old ladies had invited them in for tea and unburdened themselves of their life stories. Strangers had offered to share their knowledge in the community center. Out of many such demands for reconnection, the idea of block organizing was reborn. (Joanna Brown, LSNA report to MacArthur, 1999)*

*About ten women who participated in the CLC survey developed into a paid block club organizing team which still exists, though new members have been added as old ones got jobs or moved. This "Outreach Team" spent the first two years organizing block clubs and working on block issues (safety, rats) in the Mozart area. More recently, they have worked for LSNA on a variety of issues more widely in the neighborhood—passing out flyers for real estate tax workshops and zoning meetings, collecting 5,000 signatures on a petition for an immigration amnesty and 2,200 signatures for a campaign to expand family health insurance to low-income families. Most recently, they have become an expert team in signing up uninsured families for state-provided children's health insurance and low-cost non-profit clinics. (Joanna Brown, manuscript for the MacArthur Documentation Project, 2001)*

LSNA's involvement in neighborhood schools provides an important setting for the growth of community leaders. During the period of RFA's research, we have observed a new set of education leaders, following in the footsteps of a former generation of parent leaders who led the struggle for new buildings and brought the Parent Teacher Mentor Programs and Community Learning Centers to their schools. Many of the earlier education leaders are still involved with LSNA, but now have staff positions with LSNA or other community organizations.

Mildred Reyes, a key leader in the fight for Ames School and now an LSNA health organizer, described her evolution as a leader in the Mozart School. She began coming into the school because she wanted to

help with her daughter, who was in a special education class. The LSC president, who was also the chair of LSNA's Education Committee, "saw me there everyday and pulled me into more activities," she explained. "I ran for the LSC because I wanted more money for special education. We had to fight for it." Mildred worked with LSNA leaders and organizers to develop her skills in chairing meetings, speaking in public, analyzing school budgets, and advocating for special education services. She told us, "We brought in a nurse and three therapists. I also learned that the teachers have to take workshops in Special Ed."

Mildred continued her involvement, working closely with the principal, other parents, and the school/community coordinator on a wide range of activities, including instituting the Parent Teacher Mentor Program, securing funding for a lending library for parents, doing outreach for a community center, and continuing to advocate for students. Like many other parents who are active in their schools, Mildred has also become a leader within LSNA.

Rose Becerra, a participant in Brentano school's first parent mentor program in 1996, ran the Brentano parent mentor program and is now an LSNA housing organizer. She describes how her involvement with the parent mentors motivated her to organize around housing issues.

*The one [story] that makes me feel really bad, and it might not mean anything [but] I had 6 parent mentors living in one apartment building (it was a 17 unit building) and they got a 30 day notice and they were offered \$2000 to be out in 5 days. These people started construction even before the 30 days were up. There were no permits issued, nothing. They were just told to leave. And not one of those families came back to Brentano. So we lost 17. I lost all those parent mentors. I lost a few friends. The fact they were able to do this; they weren't issued any permits and when they were they were back-dated. To me, I look at the parent mentors we lost, the children we have lost from the school, the rental units we lost, and the lack of aldermen caring about those people; and even back-dating the permits! That all ties into what we're up against.*

## Democratic Participation

Because building power, creating relationships, and developing leadership are central to the organization, LSNA's school-based programs are very different than those of traditional social-service agencies within schools. Structures and processes for democratic participation are essential for ensuring that LSNA's school-based programs are responsive to

the needs of the community. In addition, the democratic structures and processes within LSNA allow parent leaders who emerge through LSNA's work in schools to have input into the direction of the organization as a whole.

As spelled out in our overview of LSNA, organizational priorities are identified by issue committees, the Executive Board, and the Core Committee. Leadership by low- and moderate-income residents, as well as involvement of middle-class community residents and professionals who work in local institutions, is evident on all of these key governing bodies. Parents from LSNA schools play strong leadership roles in all of these arenas. The democratic structures within LSNA provide vital opportunities for discussions of differences, as well as development of collaborative relationships and shared agendas, across the different groups which make up Logan Square. One illustration of this kind of democratic participation within LSNA is the previously described situation in which parents on the LSNA education committee identified "respect for children" in LSNA schools as an ongoing concern. Reaching out to teachers and principals, the committee implemented a campaign to keep exploring this and other challenging issues related to teaching and learning in Logan Square schools.

Community advisory boards established for LSNA's community centers are also important democratic structures that mediate the different interests of parents, classroom teachers, and school principals. Each advisory board includes community center teachers, community center students, and other community representatives. It also includes classroom teachers and the school principal. At the time that RFA began our research, LSNA organizers expressed concern that community centers were losing their vitality and connection to neighborhood needs due to school staff's hesitation to share space with community members. Rather than develop new programs in response to articulated concerns, the regular school staff would have been content to continue to offer classes like GED and ESL that had already been very successful.

During this period, LSNA, as part of the participatory research for this study, conducted new surveys of community needs, trained community center staff in organizing techniques to encourage leadership

development among community members, and trained the advisory boards in how to develop relationships with the daytime staff. By the end of RFA's research, community members on the advisory boards were using survey data to advocate for new programming, including children's activities and cultural activities. Community members on the advisory boards have successfully advocated for community needs and new programs while maintaining and strengthening their relationships with school staff. For example, community center boards have asked for more activities for the community, but have also initiated special events to recognize and thank regular classroom teachers for sharing their rooms and resources with the evening students.

LSNA's democratic processes and structures also create arenas in which low-income parents in LSNA schools are able to identify and act on community issues which have not been previously identified by the organization, and which may not have been identified by more middle-class members of the Logan Square community. During the past two years, former parent mentors, with the support of organizers, initiated two new committees and issue areas within the Holistic Plan: immigration and health care. When a group of former parent mentors expressed an interest in immigrant rights, the organizer encouraged them to meet with local pastors and arranged to provide information and workshops about immigrant rights and upcoming changes in immigration law to their congregations. Based on the success of this effort, the same group of women wrote and presented a proposal to the Core Committee for a new immigration committee; the immigration resolution was approved for inclusion in the Holistic Plan. Similarly, the following year, through opportunities identified by an LSNA organizer, LSNA's Outreach Team, composed of current and former parent mentors, began working with a statewide campaign for increasing health care to the uninsured and then wrote and presented a health care resolution to the Core Committee.

## Summary of Chapter III

In this chapter, we have examined how LSNA's relational approach to grassroots organizing plays out and builds community capacity in the organization's work with schools. Beginning with the lens of power and policy, we demonstrated that LSNA mobilized the community in a sustained and successful campaign for new school facilities. Based on the power LSNA demonstrated during the campaign against overcrowding and on the relationships built with schools during the same campaign, LSNA was able to develop a school/community partnership based on mutual trust and respect.

Using the lens of relationship building, we looked at the relationships developed through the school/community partnership and the programs developed through this partnership. LSNA's parent mentor program and Community Learning Centers foster new relationships of trust among community members and between parents and school staff. Looking at leadership development, we see that parents, especially mothers, who are involved with LSNA programs, make a strong connection between personal empowerment and community leadership.

The democratic processes and structures of LSNA are key to maintaining relationships across different constituencies within Logan Square and maintaining the organization's ability to focus on the needs of low- and moderate-income community members, while creating relationships that cross over boundaries of class and status.

The relationship between LSNA's work in schools and its evolving campaign to maintain affordable housing in the neighborhood is particularly important to understand. Through its school/community partnerships, LSNA developed programs that reach out to poor and moderate-income residents of Logan Square, groups who feel that they are being pushed out of the neighborhood. LSNA's school/community partnership has produced a strong base of leaders from the same constituency. At the same time, the success of its programs has built LSNA's visibility and legitimacy within the neighborhood and the city. Together, these factors provide a strong commitment within LSNA to support affordable housing.

# *IV LSNA—BUILDING COMMUNITY CAPACITY THROUGH A SUSTAINED CAMPAIGN FOR AFFORDABLE HOUSING*

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## **Introduction**

*As LSNA celebrates its 40th anniversary, the organization confronts the challenge of maintaining affordable housing in the midst of the rising tide of gentrification. (LSNA Holistic Plan, 2002)*

LSNA's 2002 Holistic Plan addresses the need for affordable rental housing, the need for affordable home ownership, the importance of working across Chicago to respond to displacement brought about through gentrification, and the right of current public housing residents to be involved in planning the rehabilitation of their homes.

These are difficult issues, as over time so many neighborhoods in Chicago have “turned over,” much of their earlier character and characteristics washed away by gentrification.

In our three and a half years of research, RFA observed LSNA's hard work associated with developing new grassroots leaders and clarifying its vision and strategy for an affordable housing campaign. During this period, new leaders came to LSNA from a variety of personal and political entry points. Some of the housing leaders who we identified during the course of our research were:

1. Roxanne Tyler, once homeless and formerly a resident of Lathrop Homes, a public housing project run by the Chicago Housing Authority. Roxanne met Nancy Aardema (through her church). She was able to take advantage of LSNA's affordable homeownership program to buy half of a two-flat home for herself and her children. Roxanne is now fighting to keep her house and her identity as a homeowner within a neighborhood where up-scale condos are quickly becoming a norm.

2. Dawn Houston, a recently separated mother who faced being forced out of Logan Square due to rising rents but who was able to qualify for the Low Income Housing Trust Fund. Drawing on her anger over the injustice of unfair housing costs and policies, she now speaks out for others who are struggling to find and keep affordable rents.
3. Lesszest Page, a long-time resident of Lathrop Homes who emerged as a leader and began organizing tenants at Lathrop. Lesszest describes the hard work required on the part of both organizers and public housing residents for residents to believe that they have a right to define their own needs and interests. She describes her role as being a mother-figure and friend to the other residents, as she seeks the spark that will encourage their confidence to get involved and speak out.
4. Father Mike Herman, a Catholic priest who deliberately chose a parish in Logan Square because his personal mission included fighting for affordable housing and social justice for low-income and minority citizens.

The stories of these leaders, and others, which we will tell in this chapter, highlight the work LSNA does in developing community leadership and helping individuals connect their experiences to the issues and needs of the broader community. As a new group of leaders emerged, the organization began to connect specific individual issues into a community-wide vision for affordable housing. At the same time, LSNA, as part of the Balanced Development Coalition, a coalition of seven neighborhood and citywide groups, has articulated a position calling for balanced development for all of

Chicago. Initially the Coalition included downtown groups that supported policy changes for affordable housing but were not engaged in community organizing. LSNA has worked successfully to ensure that the coalition's membership consists of community-based organizations representing constituents who will turn out for public actions.

Over RFA's three years of research, we observed a shift in the emphasis of LSNA's affordable housing campaign from opposing "gentrification" to supporting "balanced development." An organization's stated platform may signal how that organization is positioning itself in political and policy spheres and whether the group is open to discussion about public or private development.

In order to understand the implications of the shift in LSNA's housing campaign, it may be useful to clarify the meaning of key terms as they are used here. "Gentrification" refers to a process of neighborhood change that involves an influx of higher-income residents accompanied by an increase in real estate values and the displacement of lower-income residents. However, development and the introduction of new resources can occur in a neighborhood without displacement of current residents. For example, new residents with higher incomes may buy and upgrade vacant buildings, and new businesses can help to enhance or "revitalize" commercial sections.

By supporting "balanced development," LSNA can support neighborhood improvement and still oppose gentrification (displacement). LSNA's simultaneous opposition to gentrification and support for balanced development indicate that although the organization is fighting the displacement of low-income community residents, it is open to negotiation about selective development projects.

The balanced development platform, which LSNA is currently asking elected officials to endorse, would require 30% of units in all new development, rehabs, and condominiums to be set aside as affordable units, with up to 50% of the set-asides being made available as affordable rental properties for individuals earning 50% or less of the area median income. (See appendices for a copy of the platform.) Through conducting fieldwork as this balanced development position was evolving, RFA was able to document

how this community organization negotiated a relatively unified position around a contentious and difficult issue.

According to our interviewees, the major opposition to the balanced development position came from two quarters. On the one hand, some people within LSNA raised questions about whether stopping development would make the neighborhood undesirable. On the other hand, some opposed all development on the grounds that it would destroy the architectural and historical quality of the neighborhood. According to these interviewees and from our observations, as the years progressed, most people in Logan Square and in LSNA came to see some development as inevitable. At the same time, people became more articulate about the need to stop displacement. According to recently conducted interviews with LSNA staff, leaders in the organization realize that there is little in the balanced development platform that will help them directly because of the small number of so-called affordable units and the income ceiling for these units. However, they see this policy's value in the context of a broader campaign which includes new affordable home ownership programs, support for rental subsidies, tax abatements, and advocacy for public housing residents. Participation in the citywide Balanced Development Coalition is a way to strategize and produce public actions that challenge public officials and private developers to take a stance against rampant displacement.

In addition to helping to form the Balanced Development Coalition, during the past three years of research, LSNA leaders have:

1. won an additional \$500,000 in direct assistance for rental subsidies for low income families,
2. stopped the development of an unwanted Burger King in the neighborhood,
3. worked with residents of the public housing project Lathrop Homes to create a committee to play a proactive role in decisions affecting that Chicago Housing Authority property, and
4. organized a Housing Summit that attracted over 500 people.

# LSNA's Strategies for Supporting Neighborhood Stability

## Introduction

LSNA's current work, which builds on 40 years of work on housing issues, has strengthened the neighborhood as a whole and increased housing options for low- and moderate-income families.

1. Resources in the form of private and public funding for home improvements and home ownership. In 1994, LSNA partnered with neighborhood banks to develop an innovative homeownership program through which 45 low- and moderate-income families have been able to buy homes. In the past year, LSNA has collaborated with funders, with the Bickerdike Community Development Corporation, and with Chicago Mutual Housing to create a housing cooperative which has already enrolled sixteen families who are currently looking for an appropriate building to buy.
2. Transformation of rundown apartment buildings into attractive, well-maintained subsidized housing. In the 1970s and 1980s, LSNA collaborated with Hispanic Housing, Bickerdike, and other development groups to convert hundreds of units to nonprofit housing and to ensure that qualified residents were allowed to stay in them.
3. Winning access to rental subsidies which assist low-income renters. In the past two years, LSNA has attained rental subsidies for 64 units by enrolling landlords in Chicago's Low Income Housing Trust Fund (LIHTF), which provides rental subsidies to qualified landlords, who pass the savings on to qualified tenants.
4. Offering counseling and workshops. During the period of our research, hundreds of people have participated in counseling, workshops, and fairs about home equity conversion mortgages, default/foreclosures, rental or pre-purchase concerns, and the process of challenging tax assessments.

According to one local activist who has been involved with LSNA for over 20 years, LSNA's housing work over that time can be divided into four phases. The work evolved as the organization responded to changes within the neighborhood.

## Early to Late 1970s—Housing Development

In its earliest years, LSNA promoted community capacity by working with local banks to provide loans for home improvements and partnering with other organizations to attain state and federal funding for converting several large, rundown apartment buildings into subsidized housing. According to Paul Gilroy, a community bank representative, *"I don't know that you would say it [Logan Square] was a real choice area in the 1960s and maybe the early seventies."* At this time, the majority of LSNA's members were white homeowners, although the organization worked closely with social service agencies and churches to address the concerns of the growing Latino population. Looking back over this period, one community leader told us, *"In a lot of ways what the organization has been doing has been self-defeating, because we've been improving the neighborhood so much,"* (as the neighborhood improved concomitant with increases in rental and home purchase prices, some housing became less affordable for low-income residents).

While LSNA was working to improve housing options for low- and middle-income renters and homeowners, "urban pioneers" (mainly young white professionals) also showed an increasing interest in rehabilitating the graystone mansions lining Logan Square's boulevards. During this period, LSNA's efforts were aligned with the efforts of other constituencies—such as the city, historic preservationists, and developers—who were trying to improve the quality of the housing stock in Logan Square.

Between 1970 and 1980, the parts of Logan Square outside the boulevard areas completed a transition, started during the 1960s, from a largely White/Eastern European, working-class neighborhood to a predominantly Latino neighborhood (Padilla, 1993). As of 1970, about 17% of Logan Square residents were Latino (U.S. Census, 1970). By 1980, 66% of Logan Square's population was Latino—of Puerto Rican, Mexican or Cuban descent—a figure that has stayed fairly constant over the subsequent 20 years. Thus, the improvement of the housing stock and rehabilitation of some of the most expensive and historic homes in the neighborhood happened during the same ten-year period in which neighborhood

demographics shifted from a majority white to a majority Latino community.

### **Late 1970s to mid-1980s—Tenant Issues**

During this next period, LSNA debated how to position itself in relation to groups who were working to make Logan Square more attractive to outsiders. After an internal struggle, the organization distanced itself from efforts that it believed would lead to displacement of current neighborhood residents and focused on organizing tenants. During this period, LSNA pressured inspectors to survey buildings in poor condition and used evidence from inspection in testimony against the landlords. LSNA urged the Chicago Housing Authority (CHA) to develop and maintain buildings—including scattered-site housing—so that low-income residents could find decent, affordable housing. In response to pressure from LSNA and other neighborhood organizations, some “slum” buildings were demolished and some new affordable houses erected. LSNA continued to focus on upgrading the housing and rental stock in the area, but also started to organize to ensure that current tenants had access to the new and upgraded buildings, whether they were commercial or managed by nonprofit development corporations.

In 1980, efforts to maintain Logan Square's historic architecture were also furthered by the creation of the Logan Square Historic Preservation Society. In 1985, the Preservation Society was successful in its efforts to have the Federal government designate the boulevards as a historic district. This eventually led to increases in housing values on the boulevards as low-interest historic preservation loans, not available to other Logan Square residents, became available for renovation to homeowners along the boulevard.

### **1980s to 1990s—Creative Approaches to Homeownership**

A large part of LSNA's agenda in the next period moved toward helping low- and moderate-income people to buy homes. LSNA conducted research about the lending patterns of local banks, held community meetings, and asked banks to work with them to support affordable homeownership. Results of these efforts included: a long-term partnership with Liberty Bank; the creation of the Reinvestment Coalition (an LSNA subcommittee composed of representatives of local banks); and an innovative homeownership program through which several families could pool their resources and receive

mortgages to purchase two-to-four flat buildings. Teaming up with the Illinois Housing Development Authority and the Federal Home Loan Bank, LSNA and Liberty Bank worked together for eighteen months until the first jointly-held mortgages for multiple families became available. Because the plan required changes in state lending laws, both LSNA and Liberty Bank advocated for the necessary policy changes by the Illinois Housing Development Authority. Ultimately they were able to assist families through low interest rates, no points, and assistance with closing cost. Modeled after LSNA's initial work, the Greater West Side Homeownership, a similar program covering a larger geographical area, has helped low-income families in other parts of Chicago purchase homes.

Approximately one dozen banks represented in the Reinvestment Coalition also supported an innovative homeownership program for teachers who work in the neighborhood, offering subsidies or low-interest mortgages to encourage teachers to purchase homes in Logan Square. From 1997 to 1999, when the program was adopted citywide by the Chicago Board of Education, the LSNA teacher homeownership program helped fifteen teachers take advantage of the options provided by the banks to move into the neighborhood. Living in the neighborhood has helped to reduce the teachers' commute times and increase their interaction with the local community. The Reinvestment Coalition continues to hold housing fairs and provide seminars on tenant and housing issues. LSNA's housing counselor, Esteban Flores, estimates that LSNA staff have worked with members of the Reinvestment Coalition to counsel thousands of people on housing issues.

### **Current—Multiple Approaches to Affordable Housing**

LSNA has maintained a focus on helping make homeownership and rental units affordable in Logan Square. By the late 1990s, LSNA also began developing new strategies to maintain affordable housing in the face of the increasing presence of developers, the conversion of rental properties into condominiums, and rapidly rising housing prices, rents, and property taxes. While LSNA's creative homeownership programs had been successful in expanding the number of low-income people who became homeowners, LSNA's staff, leaders, and member organizations realized that they needed a new strategy to produce a group of leaders that would mobilize against the rapid gentrification of the community. In 1999, shortly before RFA began its

research, LSNA hired a new housing organizer with the explicit goal of developing grassroots leadership for a community-wide campaign for affordable housing in Logan Square.

Today, LSNA is organizing on many fronts. It has developed community leaders who have formed a Housing Committee, with subcommittees to work on issues such as land use and zoning, affordable rents, public housing, and reinvestment.

LSNA's community leaders bring with them their own experiences of struggling to remain in a neighborhood they care about, their anger at being disrespected and deceived by public officials and housing developers, and a desire to work for social justice.

## Using the Four Lenses

Looking through the four lenses of relationship building, leadership development, democratic participation, and building power and changing policy, we see that LSNA is gaining momentum in its campaign to maintain affordable housing in Logan Square. LSNA is successfully cultivating a new generation of activists and leaders in the arena of housing; it is building on its long-term relationships with neighborhood churches, banks, schools, and social service agencies to develop a broad-based campaign for affordable housing; and it is integrating local, neighborhood-based efforts into a citywide campaign to change Chicago's development policies.

The next section examines LSNA's work through the lens of relationship building. We have seen LSNA develop a new set of relationships with community members who have become leaders in the campaign for affordable housing. We have also observed the importance (to its housing work) of LSNA's longstanding relationship with local banks and churches. The following section examines LSNA through the lens of leadership development. In this section, we explore how individuals take on leadership roles within the housing campaign and within the organization. We see how individuals' commitments to public action and the public good are key aspects of leadership, and how these commitments developed in particular through LSNA's work with the Low Income Housing Trust Fund. The lens of democratic participation shows us how different constituencies within LSNA have come together to develop a shared agenda and vision in spite of their differing interests. Finally, through the lens of building power and changing policies we see how LSNA has mounted a vigorous and sustained housing campaign and how, as a result, the organization's position on balanced development is slowly gaining attention and legitimacy within policy circles.

### Building Relationships

In this section we discuss the evolving relationships between organizers and community members, as well as the building of relationships with different groups and institutions in Logan Square around housing issues.

#### Building Relationships between Organizers and Community Members

In the late 1990s, LSNA's housing organizer, who had initiated and implemented LSNA's successful

homeownership program, left LSNA. The organization took this as an opportunity to initiate a new approach to housing organizing, with an explicit focus on identifying community members who would be able to take leadership roles in a new campaign for affordable housing. The first step in this process was to begin talking with community members about their concerns and their perceptions of the problems facing the neighborhood. The new organizer, Andrea Friedman, found that people involved with LSNA through its school reform work were very aware of issues related to housing. As she began to do door-to-door outreach, Andrea found that people were quite welcoming and brought her into their homes. As Andrea described these initial contacts:

*A lot of people did see that there were issues with housing. For many of them, they were kind of diffuse and not immediate. Or they were affecting someone in their extended family, but they figured that they could deal with the issue. I think that it [the conversation] was important because it put the issue higher up on their list of things to notice, just the fact that I was there, talking about it. I think that it's crucial for this kind of campaign to have different layers and degrees of support from the community. So just having people more aware of, sympathetic, or having more information on the issue, having thought about it, even if just in conversation, is going to help and make them more likely to come out for an action.*

As she built relationships, Andrea began working more closely with people whom she identified as potential leaders. One example is Dawn Houston, who first heard about LSNA at a critical time in her life. According to Dawn,

*When I first became involved with LSNA, I was a single mom and was suddenly going to have to pay the rent on my own. A family friend gave me Andrea's phone number and she told me about the LIHTF.<sup>13</sup>*

After Andrea helped Dawn obtain a subsidy, Andrea and Dawn developed an ongoing relationship of trust and reciprocity. As Dawn explains,

*I was the last person to receive money from it [LIHTF] because the funds were used up. Knowing how much it would help me and that other people were in need of it, I agreed to work to keep the fund going. I also did it because there is a subtle "class" intimidation out there that says, "if you're on a subsidy, you have no right to speak for yourself." Keeping involved was easy because*

<sup>13</sup> LIHTF, Low Income Housing Trust Fund, is a city program which provides rental subsidies to qualified landlords who rent at a reduced rate to qualified low-income tenants.

*Andrea treated me as her equal and we learned from each other.*

Across the board, LSNA housing activists have told us about the impact of being in a relationship with organizers who listen to them and take their concerns seriously.

Roxanne Tyler is a former public housing resident who was able to purchase her own home through LSNA's affordable homeownership program, she is currently a leader in LSNA's land use and zoning committee. Like Dawn, Roxanne described a sense of interest and respect from Nancy Aardema and Liala Buekema,<sup>14</sup> the pastor of her church.

*Whatever the issues in the community were at the time, we'd meet on a pretty regular basis, trying to talk about those things, trying to figure out what we wanted. And that process started out in a nice way in which we did lots of interviews. I think Nancy interviewed us and it was just so outrageous to me. "Why do you want to know what I want? Oh my gosh, someone wants to know what I want!" Just asking those sorts of questions—"what do you want for yourself here? How do you see yourself here? What are the problems here for you?" And she did that with a lot of people in our church...I never felt pressured; I felt they were engaged with me personally.*

LSNA's approach to building relationships between organizers and community members is especially important in its work with Lathrop Homes, a Chicago Housing Authority project adjacent to Logan Square proper that houses roughly 2,000 residents.

Technically speaking, Lathrop Homes is not within the geographic boundaries of Logan Square. However LSNA staff and many leaders have felt it very important to make an intensive effort to include Lathrop residents in LSNA and develop leaders at Lathrop. Nancy Aardema first began reaching out to Lathrop about ten years ago, when it became clear to her that addressing the issues and needs of Lathrop is consistent with, and in fact called for by, LSNA's mission.

Lathrop residents are in some ways similar to and in some ways different from the lower-income sector of Logan Square's population. While low-income Logan Square residents are primarily Latino, Lathrop is almost exclusively African American. Because of the experience of living in public housing, Lathrop residents have possibly a more extreme sense of disempowerment and lack of influence over the circumstances of their lives. Yet low-income

residents of Logan Square and those from Lathrop share a vulnerability to displacement as development continues in the area and housing costs rise. At the time our research began, Lathrop residents were at risk of losing their homes due to a planned citywide program for renovation of public housing which would make 75% of units unavailable to current residents.

LSNA currently has an organizer, Lesszest George, who works with residents of Lathrop and has lived there most of her life. Before she became an LSNA staff member, LSNA organizers worked hard to develop a relationship with Lesszest, and she is now continuing that process of bringing in new people.

As Lesszest explains, it is difficult to recruit active members at Lathrop because so many people there feel powerless and passive, without experience or validation in asserting their needs and rights.

*I'll be totally honest with you. It's hard. Let me make something clear. I can get a lot of people out to housing meetings but it doesn't mean, because I have a room full of people, that they all feel they have the right. Yes, they want to change it, but they don't feel just then that they have the right. So, just because they come out to the meeting, you still have to work on them because every now and then that's a comfort zone. The system has made that comfort zone where they'll say, "I'll just sit and let my life be dictated to me." And so anytime you have to step outside of that you're afraid.*

Lesszest described the time it takes to actually reach people.

*You can't ask them "what do you want to do in life?" That's not the approach you can give them. You sit there and talk to them and out of that one-on-one you hear what they want. And then you start to rock, cradle what they want to do. Show them.*

She gave us an example of a parent mentor she had been working with for a year and a half who lacked the self-confidence to become involved in activities outside her home until Lesszest encouraged her to teach a sewing class at the new community center. Lesszest was helping to establish near Lathrop Homes. Lesszest told us,

So we're going to open up a sewing class that she can run. And, you know, it's like a dream for her ...that's something that she loves. And when you find something that they love to do, you don't have any more worries, because this is what they want to do. I don't have to worry about her coming to work every day...And once you start doing things like that, once they start believing in the organization or

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<sup>14</sup> While she is currently an LSNA staff member, Liala once was the pastor of the Church of the Good News whose community included Lathrop Homes.

what have you because they see you're trying to get help them get focused on the right track; someplace they couldn't get to [on their own]...

### **Building Relationships across Groups and Organizations**

At the same time that LSNA works to build relationships with individuals it also works to build relationships across constituencies. For example, both renters and homeowners are represented on LSNA's housing subcommittees. Meetings are conducted and official documents are translated into Spanish and English. LSNA also builds relationships with other organizations and institutions.

LSNA's relationship with Lathrop is a good example of the potential and challenges in building relationships that cross over traditional boundaries. LSNA and Lathrop have worked together to attain some important victories, including attracting well-paying jobs to an industrial site adjacent to Lathrop Homes and insuring that the voices of public housing residents are heard in the process of Chicago Housing Authority's planning for renovations of their homes. LSNA organizers consistently maintain relationships with the residents of Lathrop Homes and LSNA leaders include the needs and rights of public housing residents as part of the wide set of issues that form the broad organizational agenda around housing.

The involvement of Marc Joffe, an Anglo property owner, and others like him, provides another example of a cross-group relationship. A local business person and lifetime Logan Square resident, Marc Joffe has developed a relationship with LSNA as well as with other local groups like the Historic Preservation Society, which are much less likely than LSNA to advocate on behalf of low-income Logan Square residents. Marc, like many other middle-class Logan Square residents, opposed zoning changes which he believed would undermine the aesthetic and historical character of the neighborhood. Before his involvement with LSNA, Marc helped to form a group of neighbors opposed to building a series of condos on a parcel of land near his house, which was also near the LSNA office. When LSNA heard about this organizing effort, they also became involved. In Marc's words,

*We had people from the preservation sector, and for lack of a better term, we had people from the right wing of development and also the lot that wanted to see affordable housing. My personal feeling is that there is room for all of that here.*

In Marc's view, LSNA does not only represent Latinos or poor people, it represents the welfare of

the neighborhood. Since his initial contacts with LSNA, Marc and other middle class homeowners who work with him have been building relationships with LSNA based on shared interests. Now Marc offers his expertise to educate other LSNA members about zoning ordinances.

An example of relationship building across organizations is the one between LSNA and the local community banks, Liberty Bank and Community Savings Bank. According to bank officer Paul Gilroy, small banks like Liberty and Community Savings survive because of their attention to their customers. They invest in the community and, because they cannot offer a diversity of services which would compete with the big banks, they emphasize personal service. In turn, they are rewarded by the loyalty of their clients.

As Community Reinvestment Compliance Officers at Liberty Bank and Community Savings, Paul Gilroy and Nelson Bridges help to support community development officers and have had relationships with LSNA throughout their tenure in their current jobs. Their relationships with LSNA go well beyond that required by their jobs; both Paul Gilroy and Nelson Bridges served on the LSNA Reinvestment Committee, participated as elected LSNA officers, have developed new collaborative projects (such as the current plan for cooperative home ownership), and participate in strategic planning through LSNA's Core Committee and planning process.

Over the years, LSNA has also cultivated relationships with the local churches and religious groups throughout Logan Square, frequently building relationships through participation in shared worship and social exchanges. In the past, the churches played leadership roles in LSNA's housing work, especially during the years when the organization focused on tenant organizing. Currently, nine churches are organizational members of LSNA. We observed local pastors participating as Core Committee members, officiating at annual Congresses, and providing space for large LSNA meetings. We also observed in depth LSNA's unfolding relationship with one of the local Catholic parishes, through its connection with the pastor of St. Sylvester's, Father Mike Herman.

Father Mike told us he came to Logan Square in large part because he wanted to fight for affordable housing, an approach he believes is consistent with the views of the Catholic Church. Father Mike offers much to LSNA's work on affordable housing. Though an Anglo, he is fluent in Spanish and

conducts mass in both languages. He is much loved in his parish and is passionate about both Chicago and his role as a moral leader in his community.

Father Mike's position as a priest gives a sense of moral authority to his stance on the issue of affordable development. What he also brings to the work of LSNA is an established constituency—his congregation. Speaking out on issues of justice, fairness, and community are well within his charge as a parish priest, and he has the backing of Cardinal Francis George, the Archbishop of Chicago, (who has made public statements calling for fair and affordable housing for the poor). Additionally, as Father Mike puts it:

*...because of my role as a leader and a religious leader in the community, I am very much a person of action....whenever there is an action, I really try to be there.*

Like other professionals who have taken leadership roles in LSNA, Father Mike has learned that there are times when he needs to step back. He has recognized how hard it is for low-income people to take leadership within their own community:

*You know when you're fighting to feed your family and to keep your kids off the streets you don't have as much energy to fight to get the street paved in front of your house or to make sure, even to know who to talk to about [it]. I think LSNA has helped tremendously by training local leaders but it's a slow process. The housing committee is a slow process. ...*

At times during our research, Father Mike was frustrated by the pace of LSNA's style of community organizing and by the local politicians' lack of responsiveness.

*I've been to meetings with the community and I hold back and I hold back and finally I speak up because I see what politicians can do to people who don't. [In our community] they take people at their word and [the politician's] word is, "Well, we're doing all we can. There's really no money available." Well, I know that's not true. I know that the money goes where they want it to go and we have to hold people accountable to that. That's why we stuck to LSNA.*

While Father Mike is committed to the work LSNA is doing, he also fears that it is not proceeding quickly enough to avert a crisis for his parishioners and other community members.

*I get frustrated with LSNA because sometimes it's a slow, unmoving process because they're working with community leaders. But that's also where I develop my respect for them because they work so hard to develop community leaders. But the*

*politicians also know how they can play off of that. They know that the pace of [leadership] development doesn't correspond with the pace of other developments, and that's why I think it is a crisis situation.*

## **Benefits of Relationship Building and Challenges Faced**

The work of relationship building has both advantages and challenges. Among the advantages are authentic grassroots leaders who come from the neighborhood, so when they speak they truly represent their community and its experiences. They can speak with a combination of knowledge, passion, and moral courage. In terms of housing issues, one of the challenges is that LSNA's adversaries, the developers and their lawyers and political allies, do not need grassroots support. Opponents of affordable housing are already well-educated, well-spoken and are powerful players at the table. They don't need to represent a constituency. Because the methods LSNA employs to build relationships require lots of work and time, by the time enough leaders are ready to assert themselves and to represent the community in substantive ways, the neighborhood or significant portions of it may have already irreversibly changed.

## **Leadership Development**

The ways in which LSNA operationalizes leadership and fosters leadership development are intimately linked to its goal of building capacity, first through enhancing the capacity of individuals and later through what those emergent leaders offer to the larger community. LSNA's leadership training helps community members to develop their own perspectives and become comfortable expressing their experiences and beliefs in ways that resonate with the people they represent.

As leaders begin to feel a connection between their own experiences and needs and those of the community they become more willing to be held publicly accountable to those of the people they represent.

For example, housing leader Roxanne Tyler described her own efforts to organize her neighbors and what it meant to shoulder some leadership responsibility.

*...I'm really a naïve person a lot of times. When I first moved in here I thought, "Oh, let's just have everyone come over to the house, sit and we'll talk." Because I'm thinking that I'm still in Lathrop and I can do that with my friends there. ...So I was thinking, let's get some people together. Let's do a block club kind of thing. Let's get*

*organized. And there were people saying, “Yeah that sounds great, but I don’t want to meet every month.” And I’m kind of, you know, I don’t either because I work full-time. I’ve got three kids. I want to go to school. I’m involved with my church. I’m involved with my community. One more meeting, how do you do it? But when these issues come up it seems that it’s the only thing to do, the only thing you can do.*

When we asked Dawn Houston, how someone becomes a leader, she explained that becoming a leader means taking on responsibility for the community’s needs.

*You take responsibility for your life and become an example for others. By doing this, we acknowledge our responsibility, first to ourselves and then to the community. Because if I had just sat there and said, “Okay I have the subsidy. I don’t need to call you anymore” and just worried about myself, that’s not a leader. You have to think of other people and what’s going on. Because it does affect you too, what’s going on around you. I can take the subsidy and then next year have to move because the rents go up again. LSNA is not going to solve our problems for us. We have to do it ourselves. ...You have to solve your problems yourself, but they give us support and teach us how to strategize better.*

Andrea, LSNA's housing organizer during most of our research, described how she has worked with the community to develop a housing campaign. Her community outreach has involved trying to identify issues that reach to the heart of the community and people who were willing to make commitments to work on them. She had had a series of one-on-ones and community meetings dealing with issues such as predatory lending and another set of meetings with landlords who were interested in maintaining low-income tenants. The strategy that really took off was an opportunity for LSNA to introduce community members to the Low Income Housing Trust Fund (LIHTF) that the city established to help subsidize rents.

The city began to market the LIHTF at the same time that LSNA was preparing to conduct a survey of its own to determine the extent of community members’ interest in more general housing issues (e.g., home-ownership, tenant rights). The announcement of the LIHTF gave LSNA organizers the opportunity to advertise the LIHTF while they conducted their surveys. This sparked people’s interest; neighborhood residents who needed assistance could turn to LSNA as a broker for information on how to apply to the city for the LIHTF. Because of the bureaucratic nature of the application process, many of these people who needed help, even if they were really

desperate, would not have applied directly through the Department of Housing.

When asked to look back at her tenure as the housing organizer and to tell us whether there was one story of relationship building that evolved into leadership development, Andrea immediately cited Dawn, who became involved as a leader when the city planned to end its rental subsidies. As the following quote from Andrea shows, Dawn was angry, she had a strong sense that injustice was occurring, and she was willing to make a commitment to work on affordable rental housing as a community issue, in spite of the fact that she still had to find a place to live herself.

*I invited [Dawn] to dinner and sat her down and said, “I know you’re really mad about this. I know this really matters to you. What are you going to do about it?” And we sort of talked through how much it meant to her until she came to a point. I was like propositioning her. It was like, “Okay, is this for real or are you just here?” And she said yes, it was a commitment; which doesn’t mean that it was an easy thing. I think she still struggles with it. ...She was really the first leader that wasn’t formerly an LSNA leader who was there to form a committee.*

*And I don’t think she ever imagined before that she would need a rental subsidy, and so that distinguished her from the other people who didn’t know that they would need a rental subsidy but who were always struggling, for whom that’s kind of what life is like. If it’s not one thing it’s another.*

*And [for Dawn] the injustice of it really struck her and that was distinguishing. When life is just hard, it’s hard to feel angry about, especially with the housing stuff. If they have issues with housing, they probably have issues with many other things and it’s really hard for them to find the energy to be thinking beyond day-to-day and want to organize. But Dawn was struck by the injustice of it and even though it looked liked for months that the subsidy wouldn’t be available to her, in spite of the fact that she needed it and because she didn’t have an apartment. [And in spite of the fact] that she had to look for an apartment that would take it, which meant selling two things to the landlord—herself and the LIHTF. In spite of that, she made a commitment to work on the issue.*

Again, Andrea Friedman recalls how people who came to LSNA to get help arranging for subsidies got involved in a larger way in the organization.

*[With] a lot of intense work and talking to each person who wanted or said they wanted the help, whether they qualified [for a subsidy] or not, or were asking for themselves or for someone else, we were able to build a committee [for affordable housing]. It was people being sent to us through other leaders. We did a lot of flyering and letting other people know. So that’s how the “real”*

*committee was born. The people who were going to work on the issue and most of them are still working on the issue [one year later]. That's when you start going into the phase of democratic participation, because it wasn't LSNA and me telling people this is a problem and we need to do something about it. Then it was them saying, "This is a problem and this is what we want to do about it." So that's where it shifted.*

Leadership development can also be understood through stories about the ways individuals offer their time and their passions. It is apparent in leaders' growing ability to help improve conditions in the neighborhood.

### A Case Study of Leadership Development: Rose's Story

Rose Becerra is one of many LSNA members who came into leadership positions via her involvement as a parent. She began her association with LSNA as a parent mentor in her children's school. After that proved to be a good experience, she started receiving leadership training from LSNA staff who saw potential in her. The next year she was hired by LSNA to coordinate the Parent Mentors program at Brentano School.

In the summer of 2000, her responsibilities with the parent mentor program involved spending a lot less time in the school and she still wanted to be more involved with her community. Nancy Aardema noticed this and suggested that Rose do some surveying in her neighborhood, talking with her neighbors to learn what concerned them.

*Because I had some experience working for the city and canvassing for [then Mayor] Jane Byrne, I thought, okay I can do this. ...[But] I knew that I couldn't go out there, just door-knocking, asking how they're doing. I had to have an issue."*

What she picked was housing, and what she discovered was that newer residents welcomed the influx of condos, believing that this would clean up the neighborhood and get rid of the "riff-raff," while the older, longtime residents anticipated displacement, felt that their alderman didn't care about them, and said that they were waiting until they could sell and relocate to Florida.

A couple of times I had my daughters with me and a few of the older people told my daughters, "Don't get too comfortable in this community because it might not be here in 5 years." And my daughters just looked at me and [I told them], "Don't worry about it. We're going to stay. We'll find a way to stay." ...When the older residents told my kids that, it was so weird. The way they were living was so different. One was here for the investment; they're leaving as soon as they can make their bucks. The older residents were fed up. They felt powerless. They had worked on several issues where the alderman had

supported development instead of the community. So they felt, "This is it; we're out of here."

Throughout the year Rose continued to work on housing, serving on sub-committees, going door-to-door in her neighborhood, and helping out where she could, but she also admitted to us that she didn't feel completely engaged. Then something occurred that in retrospect struck her as a turning point. She told us about a young woman who had come to LSNA to do a school project on gentrification; a photo essay along with a series of interviews. Rose served as her guide, showing which houses had been turned into condos and which ones were slated to go. She helped her identify ninety percent of the houses that the student eventually documented. Rose recalls going to her home to help with the final selection of photos for the report.

*I was sitting there for an hour and I was exhausted to see the homes that had been torn down. A single family home and then there's this big unit. [After] she had finished I asked her how she felt and I heard cracking in her voice. She's from Portland and she's not even from here.*

It was partially this experience that enabled Rose to take her commitment to housing organizing to a new level. As Rose tells the story, she was subsequently deeply moved by the implications of a seemingly small and mundane detail.

*The next morning as I'm walking to school, I'm actually walking the path of most of her pictures and I was right in front of one of these sites that is all brick. And in the middle of an empty lot is a frying pan, and I think it was even dirty. And [I realized] this was someone's kitchen and now they're gone. Where are they? And I almost started crying. That's when I told Nancy, I said, "I've been doing housing for a year and you had my head in it. I knew I had to do it because it was my job but now you have my heart. Now I can do it because I feel it." And it took something so, to me, so powerful to see those pictures and the stories she was telling. And I just didn't get it. I didn't get it until I saw it right there. Like there's a hole there. That's when I told Nancy, "Now you have me. Now I'm pissed. What do we do?"*

Rose's story is illustrative of the kinds of stories we heard from other LSNA members about becoming leaders and then organizers. Like so many others, she bears a strong commitment to her community. She moved to Logan Square from a nearby neighborhood and has lived there for eight years. The rent is higher but her children were already attending the local school in the neighborhood. She liked the fact that now she lives closer to the school and is in a diverse community that is more open and pedestrian-friendly than where she previously lived. During those eight years she overcame a sense of depression, found regular meaningful work, organized at her children's school

to provide additional services for parents, as well as for the elementary school children. As she got more deeply involved in organizing work around housing issues, she drew from all facets of her life experiences to relate to and help mentor and train others. While now she is a full-time LSNA staff member, she still relates to what it means to be a community leader. Her remarks about leadership (typical of findings from interviews with other leaders) are infused with awareness of the demands of her role—balancing her own issues and concerns with those of the organization.

*It was a lot easier as a leader [than a staff member] because you were able to give out more. ...When I was a leader I could say things about our politicians that maybe an employee shouldn't say. I could go argue for or against issues that as a staff I can't. As an organizer, I have to find those people who have the potential to say what they feel and mentor them but also be careful not to relate my personal feelings and my personal issues because it's not about Rose. It's about what the community wants. It's about bringing leadership out of these people. Maybe I can tell a few of my stories but I can't tell them how I feel about the alderman or what I wish the alderman would do. That's something, as leaders, they will have to find out for themselves and then they have to make their own opinions.*

## Democratic Participation

Participation in broad democratic processes, whether oriented towards advocating for legislation or towards direct action, is key to LSNA's ability to support affordable housing within Logan Square. In addition, internal democratic processes within the organization have been essential to bringing LSNA's diverse constituencies into a shared vision of the importance of affordable housing and balanced development within Logan Square.

Democratic participation takes many forms. One impressive example is hundreds of people turning out on a weeknight to show their support for the need for affordable housing. Another is the time-consuming and frequently laborious work of subcommittees, where diverse groups of people come together to negotiate positions and struggle with how to include those who are most disadvantaged. Democratic participation is also illustrated by those who show up to community meetings in support of building proposals by Bickerdike (a neighborhood community development corporation), lending LSNA's name to Bickerdike's plan to rehab and refurbish affordable units in Logan Square. It is evident in the time individuals spend at block clubs, in trying to arrange

meetings with developers, and writing letters to the alderman and the newspaper. In short, in LSNA, democratic participation is represented by a diverse range of activities. All of these take place without any guaranteed pay-off or sure victory. In the following section, we discuss in some depth the evolution of one democratic process we were able to observe through several stages during the spring of 2001.

## A Case Study of Democratic Participation: The Housing Summit

In April of 2001, LSNA hosted a housing summit where issues of zoning, affordability, and displacement were discussed. Organizing a housing summit was a new initiative for LSNA. While issues of housing have been represented for many years in the Holistic Plan and at the annual Congresses, LSNA had never devoted time and resources to such a large public gathering around affordable housing.

### Activities Prior to the Housing Summit

Earlier in the year, LSNA, together with WestTown Leadership United and Bickerdike, had collected signatures in favor of a county ordinance to provide tax relief to longtime homeowners. State Senator Miguel Del Valle drafted an early version of the plan. His State district includes Logan Square, and Senator Del Valle is a longtime friend and ally of LSNA. The spirit and language of this initial bill was picked up by County Commissioner Roberto Maldonado and introduced to the Cooke County Board of Commissioners as a proposed ordinance.

In March of 2001, Maldonado held a press conference at the home of Idida Perez, a former LSNA president and the current executive director for West Town Leadership United. In front of local residents, television cameras and the print media, Maldonado made his announcement of the proposed ordinance, confident that he could obtain the necessary votes on the Country Board to pass it. He also invited Idida and several other homeowners there to tell their stories of how their property tax dramatically increased in the wake of their neighborhood being discovered as a "hot" new location for homebuyers.

The success associated with this victory (it ultimately passed the Board), kept tens of thousands of dollars from leaving the neighborhood, helped keep momentum for LSNA housing committees, and, at least in the Spanish language media, kept LSNA's name linked with the fight for affordable housing. The aim of the housing summit was to bring even more attention to the issue.

The summit was planned by the LSNA housing subcommittees including: land-use and zoning, affordable rents, affordable homes and co-ops. Each subcommittee went to work on specific tasks

over a period of months. The affordable rents subcommittee was deeply involved with the Low-Income Housing Trust Fund (LIHTF). Their work included finding landlords willing to participate, and tenants who qualified and had registered with the city, and educating everyone about how the process worked. Their work also included attempts (largely unsuccessful) to appeal to local aldermen for their support in keeping and expanding affordable rental options for residents. The Reinvestment Coalition counseled people on mortgages and foreclosures. The subcommittee on affordable homes and co-ops researched what it would take to enroll a group of families as partners in a co-op building and began the process of qualifying these individuals with banks for that purpose. They also explored buildings as potential sites and submitted grant applications for additional support.

During this time, the organizer at Lathrop (Lesszest) was meeting with residents to keep them informed about the Housing Authority's plans for their building and to encourage them to be involved.

### The Summit Planning Meeting

By the time the March 2001 planning meeting for the summit convened, the subcommittees had already done the bulk of the conceptual work. They were ready to share the results of their research in workshops. RFA researchers attended this planning meeting. The representatives from the committees agreed that the purpose of the summit would be to educate community members and seek some confirmation from participants that they were concerned with these issues and felt that they were worth fighting for. The first half of the summit would be devoted to various workshops run by members of the subcommittees. The second half would convene all the attendees for a community speak-out. There was some animated discussion over which politicians and public officials to invite and which ones would be invited to speak and on what topics. In the end, none attended the summit.

The deliberations by the planning committee took on an interesting dimension when Nancy Aardema suggested that she wanted to *"take one more stab at re-inviting Lathrop,"* to include them in the summit and then to have a workshop on public housing. None of the members of the public housing committee were in attendance that evening and their work had not been mentioned in the plans for the summit until this point.

In the absence of Lathrop residents, Nancy and Liala Buekema were acting as Lathrop's advocates. According to RFA field notes, the energy in the room altered at this point and got quieter; people were not quite at ease or as animated as they had previously been. Lathrop's site, right along the Chicago river, could potentially become a very attractive property for developers. Nancy and Liala talked about the threat of development to Lathrop and what it would mean to Logan Square if Lathrop were taken over by developers. *"If Lathrop is*

*taken over by developers, it is only a matter of time until they come west [to Logan Square]."* Housing leader and member of the affordable rent subcommittee, Dawn Houston, wondered out loud, if that happened to Lathrop, would there be any diversity left.

Some members raised questions about how engaged Lathrop people had been in the past with LSNA and its issues. Some felt that the concerns of public housing residents were not a central priority for the work of LSNA. Nancy reminded people that Lathrop helped lead the fight to get job training and jobs for fifty neighborhood residents at the Cosco store that was built close to Lathrop. *"It was hard work and they did that for Logan Square, not for just themselves,"* Nancy offered. Further, she argued, *"Logan Square is their only hope, I really believe that. Logan Square needs to know that Lathrop is a part of us."*

To the outside researchers, what was compelling about this particular moment was that it seemed to illustrate two important themes about how LSNA functions. First, it showed the pivotal role that a good organizer can play in pushing a group to expand its thinking, and second, how, even in the midst of focused planning for an event, members took the time to reflect upon the fundamental issue of what it truly means to be an inclusive community and to look out for those not represented in the room.

### The Summit Itself

The housing summit was held on April 5<sup>th</sup> at Ames Middle School and was attended by over 350 residents, an impressive number to turn out on a weeknight. Each subcommittee, including the public housing committee, facilitated workshops. There was media coverage by Spanish language TV and newspapers, but not by the Anglo media. Among those in attendance were a number of people from Lathrop as well as homeowners, renters and even a few landlords. Missing seemed to be representatives from the more affluent sectors of Logan Square.

Housing subcommittee members Fred Souchet,<sup>15</sup> Roxanne Tyler, and Marc Jaffe were among the handful of individuals who had been pre-selected to speak out on why they liked living in Logan Square. All of the speakers' statements included the idea that they valued diversity. Father Mike roused the crowd with his speech on having to talk back to politicians and developers, on needing to become less timid and more active in a campaign to resist gentrification. His speech was met with enthusiastic applause. The event ended with a group of children parading into the room with art posters they had made while in childcare during the summit, which showed their feelings about housing. They marched around the room accompanied by rhythmic clapping. Despite the scripted dimension of the summit (a technique used in many public events among many community-

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<sup>15</sup> He felt strongly that his real name ought to be included. At the 2002 Congress, Fred was elected the next LSNA president.

based organizations), the theatrical aspects of sharing prepared statements kept the proceedings moving and added an air of drama to the public gathering.

LSNA looked upon the event as a success. They saw success in the numbers of people who turned out for it and in the fact that local lenders who attended and had not been interested in funding co-op housing left talking about the idea of co-ops. They saw success in people getting deeply engaged with the issues, and with each other, and with the organizing work that planted additional seeds of awareness and social action.

## **Building Power and Changing Policy**

In this section, we trace several threads of organizing which we observed over the past three years (mobilizing around property taxes, around rental properties, around homeownership, and around zoning) in order to understand how they have been woven together into a coherent and sustained campaign for balanced development in Logan Square. LSNA's power to impact affordable housing has been built in many different ways, including working closely with elected officials to craft legislation, partnering with banks and funding agencies on innovative homeownership programs, developing citywide policy coalitions, and engaging in public protest.

Providing community members with concrete services and resources, such as helping homeowners challenge assessments and apply for rental subsidies, helps to create credibility for LSNA and provides a base for organizing for policy changes in these arenas. These programs and smaller "wins" help to give momentum to LSNA's larger campaign for affordable housing.

By the end of our three years of data collection, we have seen substantial change in LSNA's approach to housing organizing, including its participation in a citywide Balanced Development Coalition and adoption of the balanced development platform. We have also seen slowly growing acknowledgement by local politicians that affordable housing is a vital issue for Logan Square and the beginning of verbal commitments by local politicians to balanced development policies.

### **Building Power through the Zoning Committee**

The issue of zoning, which is key to a campaign for balanced development and affordable housing, has been challenging for several reasons. The committee itself struggled early on as individuals wrestled with competing and conflicting agendas. Some members of the Zoning Committee who got involved because

of their opposition to new development (due to concerns for maintaining architectural and historical integrity) dropped out when the committee moved towards supporting a policy of some form of balanced development in exchange for affordable housing. Within LSNA, there are some middle-class homeowners who value living in an economically and culturally diverse neighborhood and accept the trade-offs associated with that. Others worry that the value of housing will bottom out if Logan Square becomes a site for balanced development. This is, in part, why LSNA is pushing for a citywide policy affecting all neighborhoods to create a level playing field. Changing zoning policy requires the strength to take on the existing political culture and power structure of Chicago. Thus, LSNA has had to work to create organizational reasons and rationales for supporting or opposing different types of development and zoning. At the same time, it has had to develop the strength and credibility to challenge the political structure within the neighborhood and the city as a whole.

One example of a successful struggle to control development locally occurred around the Burger King's attempt to locate in the neighborhood. Fred Souchet, the chair of LSNA's Land Use and Zoning subcommittee recalls how he heard that one of the local landlords next to where he lived had struck a deal with Burger King. Many neighbors thought that locating a fast food outlet in the neighborhood would bring problems, attract undesirable outsiders, and take revenue out of the neighborhood. Fred Souchet recalled how a flyer was circulated by Alderman Colom inviting residents within a certain distance of the building to a meeting to hear about the proposed zoning change. Fred and other leaders made four thousand copies of the flyer. According to Fred, a tidal wave of community residents descended on the meeting.

In the public hearing, Fred stood up and opposed the deal and others, in a voice vote, supported his objections. Alderman Colom, who had initially been in favor of the arrangement, found herself surrounded by so many of her constituents opposing the change that she reversed herself, sided with the residents, and denied the re-zoning. A second successful campaign against a zoning change was led by Marc Jaffe, who organized opposition to a proposed zoning change on a property near his house from "R3" which allows only single family homes to "R5" which would allow about 20 units.

The response we heard from LSNA leaders over and over again was not that they opposed development of any kind but rather resented having the neighborhood's needs ignored and being closed out of the decision-making process. They felt that politicians and developers seemed intent on welcoming the new money associated with development and cared little, if at all, for preserving the quality of life of existing residents. Father Mike captured these sentiments in remarks he made to residents who attended a workshop on affordable housing at the housing summit.

*Because of the shortage of apartments, everyone is competing with each other for the same apartments. Families are forced to move in together. We have to do something. I don't want this city to turn into a place only rich people can live in. If we don't make it happen here, it'll move across the city. It's already happened in Lincoln Park, in Lakeside, in Wicker Park, in Bucktown. We're next. ...Let's have a change. We're not opposed to change, but it isn't just run everyone out. Let the politicians and developers and realtors know there is another opinion. Those people [developers and realtors] don't stay home. They go to meetings. They write letters. They are well spoken. They let people know what they want. We have to speak so people can hear us!*

### **Negotiating Tensions with Politicians and City Officials**

In contrast to enjoying good relationships with local banks and other community organizations around the city, LSNA's relationships with local politicians and developers have been more difficult. LSNA has developed good relationships with public officials and administrators around its work with schools. Relationships have also been good with Commissioner Maldonado, and certain state officials, but some of the relationships around housing issues particularly with local aldermen are more difficult.

Part of the challenge is due to political boundaries, which during most of our research included three different wards, the 35<sup>th</sup>, 26<sup>th</sup>, and 31<sup>st</sup>; thus Logan Square is represented by 3 different aldermen. It is also because, in Chicago, local aldermen are key figures in a political machine, that gives aldermen considerable local power. Whatever happens in a ward happens with the alderman's consent. Because the alderman is the conduit to city services (e.g., zoning changes, street repairs and sanitation, building inspection, police), he or she can make life easier or harder for their constituents, and often ward politics operate on a quid pro quo basis. While local aldermen were supportive of LSNA's work with schools,

they were unresponsive at best, and hostile at worst, to much of LSNA's work on affordable housing, perceiving it as detrimental to their personal interests and the interests of the neighborhood. Complicating matters is a long tradition in Chicago of local politicians receiving campaign contributions from developers. By the end of our research, while more public dialogue was occurring between local public officials and LSNA about affordable housing, it remains unclear what the impact of that dialogue will be.

Alderman Vilma Colom of the 35th ward was repeatedly cited in our interviews as a politician who is indifferent or even adversarial to the concerns of particular constituents, many of whom happen to be affiliated with LSNA. She informed us that she was elected to bring business to her ward and that inviting development is one way to stimulate businesses. While she respects LSNA for its work in schools, as she told us in an interview in the July 2001, she has a different opinion about LSNA's work on housing. She seemed unaware of LSNA's history of work on homeownership and its current collaborative work with Bickerdike and Chicago Mutual Housing on developing coops.

*One day they're good; one day they're not. ... LSNA is good at organizing. They're good at education. But they can't be all things to all people. They're not so good at housing. They should stick to their expertise, which is education. They don't understand housing. Bickerdike does, Hispanic Housing does... [LSNA] can't be all things to all people. It's good to be an expert. They should stay there.*

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## Eleven Plus One

Eleven, Eleven, eleven plus one  
 Gathering in the Aldermans office.  
 Ward night, Ward night three! two! one!  
 Will her words and ours entice,  
 A relationship that will sustain?  
 Sustain a life that all can thrive,  
 We ask the questions, you make us dizzy.  
 As your mouth opens, the fog sets in.  
 We are also unable to breath freely,  
 You entertain our children with toxic tools.  
 We were fighting the urge to give in to the fog,  
 However it was difficult, due to the smog.  
 Which was created by words of hope,  
 Followed by the run-around blues.  
 Where do we go from here?  
 We ask the question again and again.  
 The answer's the same, "We go in"

As a side note:

The Alderman has an office the size of a large closet and it is full to capacity with a desk and two chairs and another cabinet, I don't know what else, but it is crowded. This being said, when eleven people come to see you in an office so small, comfort is an issue to all. We did ask if you would meet us in the waiting area, which was also not capable to handle the eleven of us, but it certainly was more so than the office. Without a moment's thought you quickly raised your hand and said in a voice of absolute decision "NO-in here." Your concern was duly noted and the compassion obvious in all your doings and undoings, very clear.

Letitia Lehmann 12-6-01

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In many cases aldermen were accused of deliberately attempting to thwart organizers' and leaders' efforts to slow development by keeping them mired in paperwork and red tape, withholding information or access to key meetings or information, or even making personal life difficult for active and visible leaders. In the summer of 2001, Father Mike summed up his frustration with the lack of responsiveness of two local aldermen.

*Our experience has been, you have a good alderman and there's some success. In our case, you have a non-cooperative alderperson and you have zero success. We're pretty much battling zero in terms of affordable units and new developments. Zero! I mean that's horrendous for the amount of work that we have put into this project, to have absolutely zero success, to the point where developers don't even feel they have to come to anything that we have. We have public meetings and they just send people outside to, you know, cause problems. Oh, my god, it's just a negative environment. [26th ward Alderman] Billy Ocasio, who's a little better than Vilma Colom, who has all*

*these public meetings and then turns around and makes the decisions anyway. At least he appears to be going along with it but for all intents and purposes his intent is to do the same, he's just seeming more cooperative in the process. In some sense it's better because there's an indication that he wants to look like he supports us, so you can play with that.*

We heard stories of various leaders' experiences of harassment. Shortly after certain public events where LSNA brought attention to the housing conditions in Logan Square, the windows of their homes were broken or trash was dumped in their yards and then building inspectors appeared suddenly looking for violations. We heard variations of this story from several different sources. We also heard stories of an occasion when community members turned out for a public hearing on developers' plans, Alderman Ocasio called for a community vote, and the plans for development were voted down. Not liking this result, Ocasio held another meeting, this time outside his ward, got the votes he wanted at this meeting, and then declared his support to the developer.

In addition to hearing about frustration with aldermen, we heard about experiences of disrespect for the community on the part of other city officials. Even if the community is merely asking to be part of planning process, it is systematically excluded. Roxanne Tyler sent the RFA research team copies of her expository writings from meetings and events she attended to provide data about events that RFA could not attend, but which LSNA thought were important. In one of these "dispatches," Roxanne recalls a rescheduled meeting with deputy commissioner of the Chicago Department of Housing.

*O.K., I admit I wasn't really optimistic about this meeting. I honestly didn't think this Monocchio person was going to show. Can you blame me? He showed up at the last meeting 70 minutes late, apologetic at first, "you know downtown traffic." ...This is not an uncommon scenario.*

*It almost seems that it makes no difference if the guest shows up or not, which has certainly been the case when it comes to the developers. They have yet to reveal themselves to the committees that represent the community. ...Why is the Department of Housing using words like "partnership" with developers and not speaking in terms of partnership with the community? Why is the Department of Housing speaking about tax breaks and incentives with developers and not speaking about these things with residents of the community who have worked hard and supported the community in almost warlike conditions?*

*All we want is a plan and no one seems to be able to commit to a plan that will support both*

*developer and community. That, my friend, is where partnership needs to lie. We can all be part of the building of community.*

### **Increasing Visibility through Public Action**

Perhaps because of their experiences with their local officials and the seeming indifference shown by developers to meeting with neighborhood residents, LSNA has also exercised its power in non-formal channels to bring attention to the issue of affordable housing. Beginning in the summer of 2001, LSNA has started to organize public “actions” designed to illustrate the circumstances people face today and educate the population through the use of street theater and public demonstration. One of their early actions occurred during the Taste of Logan Square, a well-attended annual summer event sponsored by Alderman Colom in which local restaurateurs and other food vendors set up booths near the center circle of the neighborhood. Members of LSNA staged a mock funeral procession for lost housing. Several hundred marched along the sidewalk outside of the Taste’s boundaries, complete with theatrical coffins and signs of the properties lost to development. As Father Mike recalled it, the event was a success in spite of the alderman's hostility to it.

*The action here went pretty well; 300 people for the funeral procession. There was a big flurry right before it happened in terms of people finding out. I really insisted that we call the police. Of course, as soon as the police were called, the alderman was notified. As soon as the alderman found out, I'm sure she had a few choice words for the police and then they were told not to give us assistance. Then there was the whole thing of “no, you can't do the march.” I said, “well, we're walking on public sidewalks. Yes we can.” We didn't back down. We're not really requiring a permit. We're not closing streets. We're just going to cross. We're just asking for assistance to cross the street because we're going to have a large number of people. ...Then we're told we have to walk on a certain side of the street.*

Father Mike went on to describe how the impact of the Funeral Procession brought much needed energy to local leaders.

*[It] was a good feel for the community. I think it was very beneficial especially for the people who have been on these committees and really fighting this and have been so frustrated. Just the public nature of it, the number of people who turned out, the press, were all things very positive; especially for the community leaders who had been working on this.*

LSNA has helped organize and facilitate other citywide public actions with representatives of the

Balanced Development Coalition. One was a theatrical play about displacement, high rents, and uncaring landlords that was performed in front of the Civic Center in downtown Chicago. Another took place around the winter holidays; carolers had written Christmas carols to reflect the theme of affordable housing (e.g., “I'm dreaming of a home I can afford...”).

At the time of this writing, the Coalition is working on strategies to gain regional attention and win a meeting with the mayor, where they plan to demand a citywide policy defining balanced development (i.e., 30 percent set-asides).

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### **The Death of Housing for Working Families**

On the 27th of July over 300 area residents joined together to protest the lack of housing for working families available in Logan Square. Rather than a traditional street protest, a mock funeral procession was held to mourn “The Death of Affordable Housing.” The following words were written by Letitia Lehmann, an LSNA leader who also wore black that evening.

July 27<sup>th</sup>  
was a powerful statement  
on many levels of consciousness.  
We are united.  
We are committed.  
We understand the need to save  
a place for all to live  
in the community.  
...  
Thank you to the person who made the flyers,  
translated  
made phone calls  
knocked on doors  
walked  
talked  
figured out their responsibility  
to make sure that night was a success.

Letitia Lehmann

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## La muerte de viviendas para familias trabajadoras

El 27 de Julio más de 300 residentes del area se unieron para protestar la falta de viviendas para familias trabajadoras en Logan Square. En vez de una protesta callejera tradicional, el simulacro de una procesión funeral se llevó a cabo para hacerle duelo a "la muerte de la vivienda módica." Las siguientes palabras fueron escritas por Letitia Lehmann, una líder de LSNA que también vistió de negro esa noche.

El 27 de Julio  
fue una declaración poderosa  
a muchos niveles de consciencia  
Estamos unidos.  
Estamos comprometidos.  
Entendemos la necesidad de salvar  
un lugar para vivir todos en comunidad.

...

Gracias a la persona que hizo el volante  
la que tradujo  
hizo llamadas  
tocó puertas  
caminó  
habló  
entendió su responsabilidad  
para asegurarse que esa noche fuera un éxito.

Letitia Lehmann

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## Directions for the Future

LSNA's 2002 Annual Congress, with over 1,000 people in attendance, had a clear and activist focus on the need for affordable housing. LSNA's Teatro Libre (Free Theater) vividly enacted the various resolutions of LSNA's Holistic Plan and all that would be lost if current community members are forced to leave, LSNA's work on health care, youth involvement in the community, safety, and parent involvement in the schools. Equally striking was the array of institutional and public support for affordable housing.

LSNA's newest alderman (elected from the 1<sup>st</sup> ward in which parts of Logan Square were recently placed as a result of a new ward map), Jesse Granato, spoke on behalf of his fellow aldermen, promising to work closely with LSNA to ensure affordable housing in the neighborhood. In contrast to many previous statements by local aldermen, Granato spoke about the issue of increasing taxes and rents as major problems for working people in Chicago. Several Chicago Public School administrators spoke about the negative consequences of displacement for their schools, the stability of their student populations, and the maintenance of school/community relationships.

State Representative William Delgado announced his support for LSNA's Balanced Development Platform, which calls for a city ordinance stating that "developers who are building new housing, doing substantial rehab or condominium conversions must set aside 30% of those units for affordable housing." Many others, including Congressman Luis Gutierrez and representatives of other Chicago neighborhoods, congratulated LSNA or sent their support for LSNA's struggle for affordable housing.

The Balanced Development Coalition's campaign for 30% set-asides of affordable units is still in the early stages; a victory on this issue will not solve the housing problems for Chicago's low-income residents, especially the homeless or those who currently live in public housing. Nevertheless, LSNA's 2002 Congress is evidence of a community's capacity to develop leadership, mobilize people around a shared problem, and develop a community agenda to set out on the policy table. Three years earlier, when RFA began its research and LSNA's housing campaign was just beginning, such an event would have not been possible.

As Roxanne told us,

*It's about the numbers, about the energy. It's about unity, about bringing people together. It's not about me trying to save my house. It's about people just being able to be and not [have to] defend themselves.*

## Summary of Chapter IV

In this chapter, we have examined how LSNA's relational approach to grassroots organizing plays out and builds community capacity in the organization's work with housing. Beginning with the lens of relationship building, we demonstrated that LSNA organizers listen carefully and respectfully to community members in order to understand their concerns, commitments, and values related to personal goals and community issues. For many people who eventually become leaders, the relationship with an organizer is a unique opportunity to probe and define who they are as individuals, as well as who they are as members of a community. Often these relationships begin around LSNA's programs, such as the affordable homeownership program or assistance in gaining rental subsidies. One-on-one relationships may not seem essential to LSNA's goal of maintaining neighborhood stability and diversity through affordable housing, but they are the basic building blocks of community capacity. Relationship building between organizers and the mainly African American residents of Lathrop Homes, has been just as important as the relationship building that has taken place with leaders who live in the heart of Logan Square, and are mainly Latino or Anglo homeowners and renters.

Relationships of trust across racial and economic groups are hard to build, but are as important as relationships between individuals in realizing LSNA's vision of a diverse community. In addition, LSNA's efforts to maintain affordable housing in Logan Square continue to gain both resources and legitimacy from long-term relationships with neighborhood banks, churches, and other agencies.

Based on LSNA's ongoing success in building relationships, it has been able to nurture a strong, new generation of leaders for its housing subcommittees. Using the lens of leadership development, during the course of our fieldwork we saw these new leaders become willing to take responsibility for acting on their beliefs and speaking out about the problems that gentrification is bringing to their community. Looking at democratic participation, we saw that LSNA's Housing Summit brought about a public dialogue about the diverse housing needs of the Logan Square community, including the importance of supporting public housing residents whose homes were threatened.

Having the time and space to develop an agenda for change is essential for organizational development

and underlies LSNA's ability to support the community. From the perspective of building power and changing policy, LSNA has been able to draw on its efforts in relationships, leadership development, and democratic participation to develop and implement a campaign that has the potential to challenge current policies that are disrupting the existing community.

We saw the balanced development campaign grow out of LSNA's experiences with zoning changes and redevelopment that accelerated displacement. As realists, LSNA recognized that development was not going away but winning some affordable housing in exchange seemed possible. In addition, LSNA's success in negotiating issues and identity among a citywide coalition speaks both to its skills in relationship building and its innovative use of those skills to build power toward effecting policy changes.

LSNA's success in developing school/community partnerships has also been important in building the community's capacity to mount a campaign for balanced development. LSNA has developed credibility and visibility within the neighborhood and the city because of its school-based programs and has developed strong, community-based leadership through these same programs.

LSNA's work in building relationships and developing leaders has been so effective and fundamental to their community organizing strategy because through these means LSNA is truly building a community, not just of housing, schools and businesses, but of people who care for and feel responsible for each other. As we heard time and again in interviews, people felt that through becoming involved with LSNA and its programs, their lives gained new purpose and value; they were no longer isolated, but were instead part of a community with a shared sense of moral, social, and often religious purpose. The fact that LSNA offers Logan Square residents the opportunity to participate in this kind of community is one of the organization's greatest strengths, and helps to sustain its work in the face of the massive power differentials it confronts on so many issues. As LSNA's executive director, Nancy Aardema put it,

*It [the work] has to be worthy of our time, both in terms of victory and building relationships. So part of our organizing is always relationship building and making it worth staying in the community, because it's deeper than a house.*

---

## Celebration

I am a Logan square resident!

I am a Logan square resident!

A Logan square resident am I!

Do you like arroz con gandules?

Do you like arroz con gandules?

Yes, we like arroz con gandules,

Y Lechon y pan.

Why the celebration? Why the celebration?

for unto us a family was bestowed.

A family with room to spare and people who care.

A family where we look in the eyes of each other,

and know from where we have come.

We also know who will stand with us when we reach our destination.

This is why we celebrate! We celebrate with pride.

We made it through another year! the promise of the future is clear.

We were one. We are one. We will be one.

The music rings loud, the crowd is full of goodies.

Santa appears his lap is clear, from his busy job he yells

“hi” through the crowd.

He knows my name and my face and by his gesture of acknowledgement, I feel real in that moment.

Logan Square Neighborhood Association.

Thanks for the opportunity to celebrate the true gift of who we are to each other.

I LOVE ARROZ CON GANDULES Y LECHON Y PAN!

I LOVE MI AMIGOS Y MI FAMILIA!

FELIZ NAVIDAD!!!!!!!

Letitia Lehmann 12/06/01

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# V *CONCLUDING COMMENTS AND LESSONS LEARNED*

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## **Introduction**

The preceding case studies of schools and housing show how LSNA is building community capacity by increasing the community's ability to access internal and external resources and generate more responsive actions from local and citywide institutions. Of particular significance is the approach that LSNA takes to creating cross-group relationships. LSNA is committed to meeting the needs of individuals and families in the community through its programs supporting education, jobs, housing, and other pressing needs. Many people benefit from LSNA's programs without further involvement in the organization. However, all participants are invited to

become involved in LSNA's broader project of community improvement through the interconnected arenas of: leadership development, democratic participation, and building power and changing policy. Because LSNA's programs and campaigns draw together multiple sectors of the community, they gain legitimacy inside and outside the community and pull together both grassroots commitment and technical expertise. As important as LSNA's ability to increase resources available within Logan Square is its ability to create a culture that supports community improvement.

## Contributions to Community Capacity Building

The two analytic case studies offered detailed examples of how looking through different lenses allowed us to see the ways in which LSNA strengthens and expands its community capacities. In terms of relationship building, many people who have been typically ignored and/or silenced as citizens have found a welcome resource in their relationships to LSNA. LSNA helped individuals and groups name their concerns and desires and take action towards addressing them. Neighborhood organizations such as the YMCA, churches and Bickerdike (CDC), as well as local banks, businesses, and even public officials have found an ally in LSNA, using their relationship with LSNA to further their work and build connections between and across individuals, groups, and institutions. LSNA's ability to broker these kinds of connections contributes to a fluid and dynamic definition of what it means to play an active and activist role in the affairs of Logan Square. LSNA plays an activist role because it is committed to change, be it social, educational, and/or economic, and because it marshals its resources to work towards creating change and improving the conditions and life chances for residents and citizens.

Through the cultivation of many of the above relationships, LSNA has identified, trained, supported, and ultimately re-generated a vibrant flow of community leaders. In the spirit of true community organizing, leaders in LSNA emerge

from the grassroots and bring with them their passions, life experiences, and authentic voices to the work of defining and attending to problems facing their community.

LSNA recognizes that while building relationships and developing leaders are necessary dimensions of community capacity building, they are insufficient in and of themselves. Leaders need campaigns and strategies; it is through democratic participation, exercised both internally within LSNA and in wider social and political spheres of influence, that community capacities are maintained and strengthened. An organization needs a mission that focuses the skills and energies of individuals and groups. LSNA's Holistic Plan serves that purpose.

Finally, the interlocking efforts of relationship building, leadership development and democratic participation come together and find expression and relevance in the building of power and the changing of policies. LSNA members employ their skills and demonstrate the scope of their capacities in the exercise of power and its impact on changing policy. Examples from our case studies illustrated this in terms of the work to reduce school overcrowding and make schools centers of community life, as well as the many public actions that heightened community awareness around the need for affordable housing policies.

## Strategic Implications for Other Organizations

LSNA's approach, grounded in the traditions of community organizing, has much to offer to other organizations and individuals committed to capacity building in low-income urban communities. The community organizing approach contrasts with many other capacity-building efforts because of its commitment to mobilizing and energizing low- and moderate-income community members. Community capacity building has found its way onto the national agenda of many foundations and funding sources. As these organizations continue to support research and programs in this area, we believe that LSNA's work is a reminder of how important it is to remain open and supportive of an approach to community organizing that trusts local residents to define their own issues and take action on them. LSNA is working specifically in the context of a mixed-income neighborhood facing displacement of its poorest residents, but its work also has lessons to offer community-building efforts in other contexts. We believe that LSNA's work of building community capacity offers a valuable model for community organizations and the funders who support them.

This research also raises questions about the work and future of a group like LSNA. As the organization, the community, and the city as a whole change, it is valuable to step back and ask "What aspects of LSNA's work can continue? What parts must change? What parts must be given up?"

### Recommendations

**Recommendation One: Building interpersonal relationships and trust is important for organizations that want to identify and incorporate the range of resources and constituencies available within their communities.** Constituencies may include businesses or professionals, cultural organizations, churches or other social groups. Sometimes resources and constituencies are located in non-formal settings and with individuals and groups not clearly affiliated with a specific organization. Incorporating multiple voices and agendas requires both trust and democratic organizational processes such as the Holistic Planning process.

**Recommendation Two: Developing leadership and democratic participation among low- and moderate-income neighborhood residents is a valuable way to develop individuals' sense of**

**worth and self-confidence.** Traditionally, a majority of the programs offered to help low-income people develop "self-efficacy" focus on the building of individual skills. However, LSNA's work shows that involvement in actions to challenge power inequities in interpersonal relationships, in institutions, and in the political realm makes a powerful contribution to people's self-efficacy. This, in turn, contributes to developing leaders and increasing democratic participation.

**Recommendation Three: Community organizations need to develop strategies for addressing public policies that shape their communities. It is important to integrate long-term strategies to build power and change policies with short-term strategies that provide skills and resources to community members.** As community organizations develop leadership and community vision, they also need to help the community locate itself within larger social, political, and economic contexts. The successful development of self-efficacy leads citizens to create their own social and political agendas and take action on them. Community organizations have an important role to play in connecting local initiatives to broader campaigns for change. LSNA has been effective in meeting immediate needs of community residents while also developing campaigns to work for policy change.

**Recommendation Four: Community organizations need to maintain a vision based on the needs and dreams of community members.** LSNA's Holistic Plan provides a strong example of how a clear vision can help guide an organization. Community organizations need to be cognizant of changing political and economic landscapes. For example, they need to be aware of how people in their communities can take advantage of changing workforce needs. However, too often community organizations are driven by the agendas of funders or single constituencies within a community and lose sight of the needs and visions of the community as a whole. Balancing awareness of development opportunities, relationships with funders, the emphases of various issue-oriented groups, and fidelity to overarching community needs requires sophisticated knowledge, as well as well-honed communication and negotiation skills.

## Issues for the Future of LSNA

1. If an Executive Director plays as strong a role as Nancy Aardema in nurturing a sense of trust and mentoring leaders, what happens when that person leaves the organization? Is the organizational culture strong enough to reproduce itself in Nancy's absence? Do the trust, risk-taking, and creativity we have observed in LSNA rely too heavily on an individual personality and leadership style, or do they represent an organizing approach that other people can learn. If so, the sense of vitality and commitment present in LSNA can be maintained and can be developed in other settings.
2. As LSNA moves deeper into the arena of citywide advocacy and organizing, how will it find ways to maintain its commitment to its core practices of relationship building, leadership development, democratic participation and building power and changing policies? How will the larger sphere of influence affect these practices as LSNA positions itself relative to citywide politics around race and class? Working within one neighborhood, LSNA has been able to create a sense of shared purpose that grows from trust and the development of one-on-one relationships. Will this sense of trust, especially as it relates to longstanding racial divisions within Chicago, be maintained as LSNA makes trade-offs and compromises in order to negotiate successfully with powerful political and economic forces?
3. As a community faced with the realities of development and change, how can LSNA work to maintain the diversity and respect for difference that is a character of Logan Square in the face of market forces? Even if the balanced development policy is adopted by the city and implemented, most low-income residents of Logan Square would still be at risk of displacement. Can LSNA play a significant role in preserving the essential spirit and character of the neighborhood while at the same time working to negotiate trade-offs with outsider developers?

## Summation

In LSNA, we see an organization that knits together multiple constituencies within a large neighborhood which is both economically and socially diverse. In this report, we have looked at how low- and moderate-income parents, renters, and homeowners, Anglos, Latinos, African Americans, principals, teachers, and pastors work together to develop and enact a shared vision of community change. Diversity is valued and necessary in LSNA and allows the organization to develop a vision that goes beyond the self-interest or worldview of any specific group.

Although it is multi-class, LSNA does not attempt to bring together all the different economic interests in Logan Square. More important is the fact that it brings low-income and working class residents together with the representatives of neighborhood institutions. Because of LSNA's commitment to mentoring and building relationships, people learn from each other, develop new skills and take on new roles. In spite of the power differences that still characterize the institutions LSNA works with, the

organization's leaders articulate a sense of community and a belief in shared goals that is quite different from the ethnic, racial, and class fragmentation that is more common in American society.

During RFA's research process, the processes of relationship building and personal transformation and the fear and anger related to community displacement were perhaps the themes most prominent in our interviews with leaders and organizers. However, the political processes of strategic planning, development of alliances within and across the city, and considering public policy and economic realities are also key aspects of LSNA's work. LSNA focuses intensely on issues of immediate concern to neighborhood residents, but is only able to deliver resources or build power to the extent that its leaders and organizers are able to engage with a changing economic and political context.

*APPENDICES*

## Appendix I: Balanced Development Platform

We, the undersigned, agree to support a city ordinance for BALANCED DEVELOPMENT, stating that developers who are building new housing, doing substantial rehab or condominium conversions must set aside 30% of those units for affordable housing.

- A developer will know upfront that the set-aside will be required
- The developer may use less expensive finishes in the set-aside units to save on costs.
- Set-aside units must meet all Chicago codes regarding floor area standards and must have a similar number of bedrooms as the non set-aside units.
- Up to 50% of the set-aside units should be available for purchase by a qualified not-for-profit developer or public agency to operate as affordable rental.
- The remaining 50% or more of the units will be available for qualified low- and moderate-income purchasers in the community.
- Set-aside rental units must be affordable to individuals at or below 50% of the area median income (currently \$32,250 for the Chicago area) with rent at 30% of monthly income. This means the rents in set-aside units must be lower than \$850.00 per month.
- All for-sale units will be sold for under \$160,000 per unit. Our goal is family size units for around \$100,000. The price will be determined by the overall market in the community and the market rate prices in the development the set-asides are in.
- The purchasing family will receive a subsidy of up to \$40,000 (based on family size and family income).
- The family must commit to remain in the for-sale unit for at least ten years to qualify for the subsidy.

Organization \_\_\_\_\_

Official Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix II: Research Methodology

This project was undertaken as a collaboration between LSNA and RFA, with the dual goals of helping LSNA's ongoing work and building general knowledge about the process of building community capacity. In our collaborative research effort, LSNA and RFA focused on the centrality of relationship building and the creation of community within LSNA. In addition, the research included comparative case studies of the implementation and outcomes of LSNA's approach in two different areas of work: its school-based programs and its campaign for affordable housing.

Over the course of three years, the RFA research team collected and analyzed data about LSNA's internal processes, its strategies for neighborhood change, and its impact on participants through:

1. More than 150 interviews with LSNA staff, leaders, and others familiar with LSNA's work in the areas of housing and schools,
2. More than 30 observations of LSNA events including LSNA Annual Congresses, internal planning meetings, community forums, and school-based activities,

3. Analysis of documents such as student achievement data, LSNA budgets, and newspaper archives, and
4. Research and writing conducted by LSNA leaders including community surveys, personal reflections, and observations of public events.

A key component of the project was close collaboration with LSNA staff and leaders. As part of the planning process, RFA team members; LSNA Executive Director, Nancy Aardema; and LSNA's lead education organizer, Joanna Brown, identified guiding questions for the project. In preparation for the full proposal to the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, other organizational leaders helped to refine these questions, as well as helping to identify appropriate data sources. In addition, during the preparation of the full research proposal, LSNA education staff and leaders proposed to conduct community surveys as part of the research project. Throughout the course of the project, RFA staff met with organizational leaders and staff to discuss and refine emerge findings, to identify forums for input by LSNA, and to engage in dialogue about drafts of the document. Research activities are delineated in detail in Appendices III and IV.

## Appendix III: Documentation Project Activities

		<b>Major Focus of RFA Data Collection</b>	<b>LSNA Research/Writing</b>	<b>Analytic &amp; Feedback Sessions</b>	<b>Written Products</b>
1999	Spring	Round #1 of data collection about schools			Planning grant proposal
	Summer			Joint analytic meeting in Philadelphia	
	Fall	Round #1 of data collection about organization			Full documentation project proposal
2000	Winter				Memo about organizational approaches
	Spring	Round #2 of data collection about schools			
	Summer	Round # 1 data collection about housing	Joanna submits analytic memo about schools	Joint analytic meeting in Philadelphia	
	Fall	Round #3 of data collection about schools	1 <sup>st</sup> Community Center Survey, LSNA leader provides analysis of trends in LSNA housing work	Discussion with leaders about emerging themes in schools, Discussion with parents about community center survey process	First draft of memo with findings about LSNA's work in schools

		<b>Major Focus of RFA Data Collection RFA Data Collection</b>	<b>LSNA Research/Writing</b>	<b>Analytic &amp; Feedback Sessions</b>	<b>Written Products</b>
2001	Winter		Joanna submits observations and analysis for school chapter		Draft memo about 1 <sup>st</sup> community center survey process, Complete evaluation of Ames Community Learning Center
	Spring	Round #2 of data collection about housing Round #4 of data collection about schools	Writing workshop for parent mentor graduates	Develop outline for report on schools, Discuss process of feedback for community centers	Revised draft about LSNA's work with schools
	Summer		Community center surveys #2 and #3 completed	Education leaders review and discuss school chapter, Discussion with housing leaders about emerging findings	Memo about emerging findings about housing
	Fall		Writing by housing activists		Parent mentor writing published in Real Conditions

		<b>Major Focus of RFA Data Collection</b>	<b>LSNA Research/Writing</b>	<b>Analytic &amp; Feedback Sessions</b>	<b>Written Products</b>
2002	Winter	Round #3 of data collection about housing	Writing by housing activists		Data about LSNA's work with schools included in Cross City publications
	Spring			Housing leaders review and discuss housing chapter	
	Summer			Complete report reviewed by LSNA staff	Complete report drafted
	Fall		Joanna completes reflections on documentation project	Complete report reviewed again by LSNA staff	Report and executive summary finalized by RFA

## Appendix IV: Data Collection by RFA

A total of 123 formal interviews of individuals were conducted by Research for Action. 9 focus group interviews with a total of 38 participants were conducted by Research for Action. In these formal interview activities, 110 different people were interviewed. 9 participated in formal interviews 2 or 3 times over the years. A total of 36 discrete activities were formally observed. In addition to these formal interviews and observations, RFA staff participated in numerous informal interviews and observations, which are also written up in fieldnotes.

		<b>Other Activities Observed</b>	<b>Other Interviews</b>	<b>Housing Interviews</b>	<b>Housing Activities Observed</b>	<b>School Interviews</b>	<b>Education Activities Observed</b>
1999	Spring	Annual Congress	LSNA outgoing president, LSNA assistant treasurer, Youth organizer, Block club organizer			Community Center Coordinators and staff (5), Education Organizers (3)	Parent-teacher lunch, Links to Literacy
	Fall	Neighborhood tour, Training of outreach workers, Logan Square soccer league, Neighborhood church service, Core Committee meeting (2 Core Committee meetings lead up to Annual Congress)	Writers of Holistic Plan and other longtime activists (8) Block captain and her husband (2) LSNA youth activists (2)	Housing Staff (2)	Neighborhood meeting about development	Local school council chair (1), Principal (1), Teachers (2)	Grantmakers for Education meeting at Monroe School, Tour Ames middle school, Meeting between Community Center Coordinators and public health students, professional development for teachers in LS schools.

		<b>Other Observations</b>	<b>Other Interviews</b>	<b>Housing Interviews</b>	<b>Housing Observations</b>	<b>School Interviews</b>	<b>Education Observations</b>
2000	Spring	Annual Congress				Parent focus groups (12) Individual parent mentors (4), Principals (4), Teachers (5), Others familiar with LSNA's work in schools (3), LSNA staff in schools (3)	Parent mentors in classrooms (3), Community center activities (1)
	Summer		LSNA block organizer	Neighborhood housing activists (2)	LSNA committee meeting (1), Neighborhood zoning meetings (2)		
	Fall					Teachers (3), Administrators (2), Evening teachers (2), past LSC president (1), LSNA staff in schools (1)	Community center classes (2), Awards ceremony, LSC election, Bilingual committee meeting

		<b>Other Observations</b>	<b>Other Interviews</b>	<b>Housing Interviews</b>	<b>Housing Observations</b>	<b>School Interviews</b>	<b>Education Observations</b>
2001	Spring	Core Committee, Annual Congress		Housing leaders (6), Staff (4), Other neighborhood activists (2)	Planning meeting for Housing Summit, Press conference about tax abatement, Housing Summit, tour of changes in housing	Parent leaders (2), Student focus groups (7), Teacher focus groups (7), Parent mentors (5), Community center coordinator (1), LSNA organizer (1)	Classroom, Local School Council meeting
	Fall		Local alderman	Housing staff (2), Others familiar with LSNA's housing work (2), Housing leaders (2)			
	Winter			Parents on LSNA's school-based housing committee (2)		Parent mentors focus groups (12)	Activities leading up to parent mentor meeting about literacy, presentation about literacy activities
2002	Spring	Annual Congress					

## Appendix V: Sample Research Instruments

### Sample 1: Interview with School Administrators.

#### A. Background

1. Name, position, gender, race/ethnicity
2. Brief Professional history (e.g. yrs as adm./teacher, yrs at this school, etc.)

#### B. Roles/organizational issues:

1. Tell us what you know about Name of partner organization?
2. What are your sources of information?
3. What is the work that Name of organizing group is doing at your school?
4. What was your motivation or rationale for working with Name of organizing group?
5. What is the perception of Name of organizing group among teachers and other school staff? Has it changed over time?

#### C. Perceptions of Strengths/Problems/Challenges:

6. How would you describe the strengths of your school?
7. What are the most pressing problems facing your school?
8. Given the pressing issues you have identified, how would you assess the significance of the issue(s) that Name of organizing group is focusing on?

#### D. View of Relationships among parents/community/schools:

9. How would you characterize home-community-school relations at your school?
10. Has the relationship changed over the past several years? If yes, what is the evidence of the change?
11. How do you assess the work of Name of organizing group in making a difference in the relationship?
12. Are the roles of parents at your school changing? If so, how, i.e. what do they do now that they did not do previously?

**E. Indicators/measures/changes:**

13. What other changes would you attribute to the efforts of Name of organizing group? If not mentioned, prompt for changes in the following areas.

-Students

-Schools

-School district

-Neighborhood

-Community members

-Relationships/how people at various levels relate to each other?

14. From your perspective, what are credible measures that the work of Name of organizing group has made a difference?

**F. Challenges/Barriers:**

15. What do you see as the challenges or barriers to Name of organizing group having an impact on education in your school?

## Sample 2: Interview with Context People

### A. Role/Organizational Issues:

1. What is your title, role and responsibilities in *Name of Organization* (the organization this person is associated with)?
2. Tell me a little about your organization – what is its mission or goals and how does it carry out its mission/goals?
3. How do you know about the work of AOP?

### B. Perceptions of Strengths/Problems/Challenges of education/organizational strength:

4. What would you consider to be the strengths of the local schools/school district?
5. How would you describe the most pressing problems of the schools/school district in this City/neighborhood?
6. What are the most important challenges for this city/neighborhood in addressing the problems of the local schools?

### C. Identification of issues/decision-making:

7. Given the issues you've identified as most pressing, how would you assess the significance of the education issues that AOP is working on?
8. Are you aware of how AOP identified the issues it is working on?

### D. Implementation/strategies:

9. How would you assess the approach of AOP to addressing education issues in this city/neighborhood? How effective is it?

### E. View of Relationships among home-community-schools

10. How would you describe home-community-school relations in this city/neighborhood? (Here, probe for specific examples of when people are together -- who participates, what happens, what are their roles?)

### F. Indicators/measures/changes:

11. What changes or impacts would you attribute to the efforts of AOP? (Let the informant volunteer a response. If not mentioned, prompt for changes in the following areas:

- Students
- Schools

-School district

-Parents

-Community members

-Neighborhood

-Home-School-Community relationships (how people relate to each other across levels)

12. From your perspective, what would be convincing evidence that the efforts of AOP or other community organizing groups in this city have made a difference/have contributed to improving education and the community?

13. Do you know if such evidence is being collected or how to locate information that would be useful in building that evidence? Are there other groups doing that?

**G. Resources:**

14. How would you characterize this city in terms of organizational strength and the synergy among organizations related to improving education?

15. What would it take to make a significant improvement in the education of children in this city/neighborhood?

### **Sample 3: Interview with Parents/Grandparents/Guardians**

#### **A. Background**

1. Name, position, gender, race/ethnicity (if focus group, use data sheet)
2. Children in the school, ages and grades, present, past, future
3. Brief Professional history (e.g. yrs as adm./teacher, yrs at this school, etc.)

#### **B. Roles/organizational issues:**

4. What is your involvement with *Name of Organizing Group*?
5. How did you learn about and get involved with *Name of Organizing Group*?
6. How are the issues that *Name of Organizing Group* is working on decided?

#### **C. Perceptions of Strengths/Problems/Challenges:**

7. How would you describe the strengths of your school?
8. What are the most pressing problems facing your school?
9. Given the pressing issues you have identified, how would you assess the significance of the issue(s) that *Name of Organizing Group* is focusing on?

#### **D. View of Relationships among parents/community/schools:**

10. How would you characterize home-community-school relations at your school?
11. Has the relationship changed over the past several years? If yes, what is the evidence of the change?
12. How do you assess the work of *Name of Organizing Group* in making a difference in the relationship?
13. Are the roles of parents at your school changing? If so, how, i.e. what do parents do now that they did not do previously?

#### **E. Indicators/measures/changes:**

14. Has the work of *Name of Organizing Group* influenced your sense of effectiveness in changing education at the school/ in the district?

15. Has participation in *Name of Organizing Group* changed you personally?

16. What other changes would you attribute to the efforts of *Name of Organizing Group*? If not mentioned, prompt for changes in the following areas.

-Students

-Neighborhood

-Relationships/how people at various levels relate to each other?

17. From your perspective, what are credible measures of the changes?

**F. Challenges/Barriers:**

18. What do you see as the challenges or barriers to *Name of Organizing Group* having an impact on education?

### **Sample 4a: Focus Group with Parent Mentors—January 2002**

(Explain that the purpose of this interview is to learn more about how parents in the parent mentor program think about education and how they help their own children in school)

1. Introductions: What is your name? What is the most important you have learned so far from participating in the parent mentor program?
  
2. I'd like to learn a little bit about people's history with school. How would you describe your own experience in grade school? How is this similar or different from what happens in the Monroe School?
  
3. a. Activity – Give everyone a pen and paper. Ask each person to make two lists of words. On the first list, write down words for your relations with this school before you were in the parent mentor program. On the second list, make a list of words for your relations with the school now that you are a parent mentor. Ask everyone to read their "before" list. Then ask everyone to read their "after" list. Then ask people to explain more about what they wrote. (probes: What kinds of communication did you have before with teachers? How do you communicate now? Why did you come into the school before? Now? How did you help your children before? How do you help now?)  
  
(b. Use this if needed and if there is time - Can you tell a story about something that happened between you and the school or a problem your child was having before you were a parent mentor and how you might handle that situation differently now?)
  
4. I'm sure that everyone one here knows that one of the important things that helps children is when they read at home. Most people read some things at least once in a while, like a lot of people read the Bible. I was wondering if there is any kind of reading that you did before you were a parent mentor? Is there any kind of reading that you or your children do now because you are more involved with school? (probe: go to the library, read over children's homework, do own homework, read other books)
  
5. Let's talk a little bit about attitudes. I wonder whether any one has a new expectations for yourselves now that you are in the parent mentor program? What about new expectations for your children's future
  
6. Is there anything else you would like to share about how the parent mentor program has helped you or your family?

### **Sample 4b: Focus Group with Parent Mentor Graduates**

(Explain that the purpose of this interview is to learn more about how graduates from the parent mentor program think about education and how they help their own children in school)

1. Introductions: What is your name? When were you in the parent mentor program? What kinds of things are you involved with now in the school?
  
2. I'd like to learn a little bit about people's history with school. How would you describe your own experience in grade school? How is this similar or different from what happens in the Monroe School?

3 a. Activity – Give everyone a pen and paper. Ask each person to make two lists of words. On the first list, write down words for your relations with this school a few years ago, before you were in the parent mentor program. On the second list, make a list of words for your relations with the school now that you are more involved. Ask everyone to read their "before" list. Then ask everyone to read their "after" list. Then ask people to explain more about what they wrote. (probes: What kinds of communication did you have before with teachers? How do you communicate now? Why did you come into the school before? Now? How did you help your children before? How do you help now?)

(b. Use this if needed and if there is time - Can you tell a story about something that happened between you and the school or a problem your child was having before you were working here and how you might handle that situation differently now?)

4. Probably everyone one here knows that one of the important things that helps children is when they read at home. Most people read some things at least once in a while, like a lot of people read the Bible. Sometimes people read letters. Other people read recipes. I was wondering if there is any kind of reading that you and your children do at home? ? (probe: go to the library, read over children's homework, do own homework, read other books). Has this changed at all now that you are more involved with school?

5. Let's talk a little bit about attitudes. What expectations do you have for yourself in terms of your education or work? What are your expectations for your children's education? Do you think your expectations are any different than they were before you were a parent mentor?

6. Is there anything else you would like to share about how the parent mentor program helped you or your family?

## Sample 5: Survey 2000 Logan Square Neighborhood Association (English)

James Monroe Community Learning Center

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Are you a Monroe School parent \_\_\_\_\_ student? \_\_\_\_\_ teacher? \_\_\_\_\_

Do you have children in a different school? Which? \_\_\_\_\_

Do you or your family participate in the Monroe Community Learning Center? \_\_\_\_\_

Which Classes? \_\_\_\_\_

1. Do you know about the Monroe Community Center?
2. What is your opinion about the Center?
3. What activities would you like to see in the Monroe Center?
4. What activities could you provide at the center?
5. What suggestions do you have for improving the Center?
6. Have you seen any changes for the better in the neighborhood?
7. Have you seen changes for the worst in the neighborhood? Which ones?
8. What changes would you like to see in the neighborhood, and what could you do to bring them about?
9. Have you been affected by changes in the housing situation? How? (rents gone up? Can't buy a home because prices are too high? Taxes went up? Do you know people who have had to move out of the neighborhood because of the prices?)
10. Are you interest in participating in a block club for the benefit of the community? (clean-ups, block parties?)
11. Do you know about Logan Square Neighborhood Association (LSNA)?
12. In which activities would you or your family participate in the Monroe Community Center?  
For adults: GED \_\_\_ ESL \_\_\_ Literacy \_\_\_\_\_  
cultural activities? \_\_\_\_\_ which?  
For children: Music \_\_\_ Dance \_\_\_ Art \_\_\_\_\_  
sports—basketball \_\_\_ volleyball \_\_\_ soccer \_\_\_ other \_\_\_\_\_  
homework and tutoring \_\_\_\_\_

Other activities:

Health: dentist \_\_\_ immunizations \_\_\_ doctor \_\_\_\_\_  
Information about the community \_\_\_\_\_  
Job training \_\_\_\_\_  
Information about immigration, citizenship \_\_\_\_\_  
Family activities \_\_\_\_\_ what kind \_\_\_\_\_  
Family counseling \_\_\_\_\_ Youth counseling \_\_\_\_\_  
Prevention of drugs, alcohol and AIDS \_\_\_\_\_  
Computer classes \_\_\_\_\_  
workshops (about what?) \_\_\_\_\_  
Other: \_\_\_\_\_

Are you willing to be contacted about activities? Yes (telephone #) \_\_\_\_\_ no \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of interviewer: \_\_\_\_\_ Date/time \_\_\_\_\_

## Sample 6: Interview Questions for LSNA Housing Activists

November 2001

### Introduction:

We came here because LSNA invited RFA to conduct some outside research on its organization, on how it approaches community organizing and specifically how it has been involved in issues around public education and housing. LSNA also wants us to give feedback on what we learn which we will intend to do after we have done the research, analyzed the findings and written up the results. We expect the first formal feedback around housing issues to be available some time in the early summer.

For the past 18 months, people from RFA have focusing on LSNA's work with the neighborhood schools. Now we are focusing our attention on housing. We're here because we want to talk with you about Logan Square as a place to live, LSNA as an organization, your involvement with them, and about housing issues you are facing in the neighborhood.

With your permission, we'd like to tape record our interview. We won't use your name if you don't want us to. You don't have to answer any question you don't feel like and, at any time, if you want us to turn off the tape so that you can talk "off-the-record" we'll do that too. The only people who will see the actual transcript of this interview will be staff at RFA. Okay? Do you have any questions? [wait time] Shall we begin?

- 1) How long have you lived in Logan Square? What brought you here?
  
- 2) How did you first get involved with LSNA? Can you remember your earliest days with LSNA and describe what they were like? At what point did you become a leader? At what point did you become an organizer?
  
- 3) What's the difference between leaders and organizers? What does leadership mean within LSNA? How does someone become a leader in LSNA?
  
- 4) How did you get involved in working on housing issues with LSNA? (How long have you been involved?) What has your experience with LSNA been like?
  
- 5) What are you working on now? What strategies are you using to get things done?
  
- 6) What are some of the challenges you've faced? With getting things done around housing? Working with others?
  
- 7) What are some of the successes—however small—you've experienced?
  
- 8) Who are your current Allies in your work around issues of Housing? Who are you trying to make allies, hoping to make allies? Are there any opponents? Who are they and why?
  
- 9) Is there anything that we forgot to ask you that we should have asked you about?

## **Sample 7: Interview protocol for other housing-related groups**

1. What are the current issues that (your organization) is working on?

Prompt for:

Zoning (residential versus commercial, “upzoning”) and development

Taxes (home-owner tax relief)

TIF

Affordable rents (Chicago low income housing Trust Fund)

Other?

2. What types of strategies is the organization using to work on these fronts?

Prompt for:

Informing public

Meetings

accountability sessions

workshops

letter-writing/calling campaigns

direct action

partnerships

3. Who do you consider your allies in this work?
4. Have you done any work in collaboration with LSNA?
5. What can you tell me about the Logan Square neighborhood?

## Sample 8: Housing Activist Update

November 2001

Update

1. What's been going on since this summer? When we left last time, LSNA was getting ready to do funeral procession at the Taste of Logan Square. What happened with that and what's been happening since?
  - a. Some things we've heard about: Nov. 1 demonstration; meetings with Brunell properties; working with city on Chicago Partnership for Affordable Neighborhoods; citywide coalition for balanced development; rescheduled meeting with Deputy Housing Commissioner Manaccio
2. Any more news on future of Lathrop?
3. How has the organizing at Lathrop been going? Are you getting any new help from residents? Any new people playing leadership roles? Has Ocassio taken any more interest in Lathrop?
4. Have the events from 9/11 had any impact on your work? (Foundation support? Economy cooling? Changing meanings of home and family? Changing role of the church?)
5. What do LSNA and/or Lathrop have in the works?

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## About the Authors

### Research for *Action*

**Suzanne Blanc, Ph.D.**, Senior Research Associate, has studied inter-ethnic relations in community organizations, schools, and neighborhood business strips. Sukey received a fellowship from the American Association of University Women for her dissertation research at Temple University on the identity formation of adolescent girls across race, ethnicity, and class. At RFA, Sukey is developing a framework for understanding the impact of curriculum reform on urban schools, teachers, and students.

**Matthew Goldwasser, Ph.D.**, Research Associate, joined us in February 2001. Matthew has worked in educational settings for over 25 years as a middle and high school teacher and administrator, a university professor, and a state evaluator. He has also worked with adjudicated, delinquent, and incarcerated youth in a variety of educational, mental health, and recreational settings. His doctoral research at the University of Colorado was a qualitative evaluation of the meaning of school restructuring via site-based management and the relationship between those who make the policies and those who implement them.

### The Logan Square Neighborhood Association

**Joanna Brown, M.A.**, is lead education organizer at Logan Square Neighborhood Association, where she worked in 1993-94 and again from 1997 to the present. She is also a doctoral candidate in anthropology at the University of Chicago and is writing her dissertation on the experiences of Latina mothers in Chicago public schools. Her master's thesis documented an experimental bilingual school in the Panamanian indigenous area of Kuna Yala. She has been working in Chicago neighborhoods as a writer and/or organizer since 1980.