


# Partnership **Update**

 news and information from *The Partnership for New Communities*

## **Opportunity Chicago selected for major new national workforce initiative**

***\$450,000 to support efforts for employers, public-housing residents***

**Opportunity Chicago**, a \$23 million collaborative of the Mayor's Office of Workforce Development, the Chicago Housing Authority, The Partnership for New Communities and other partners, has been recognized for its work to connect low-wage, low-skilled workers to more employment opportunities.

The local workforce initiative will receive a \$450,000 award from the recently launched **National Fund for Workforce Solutions**.

Opportunity Chicago is one of four regional partnerships from across the country selected in a highly competitive process for the initial round of grants from the Fund. A collaborative effort of the U.S. Labor Department, the Annie E. Casey, Ford and Hitachi Foundations and other funders, the National Fund for Workforce Solutions aims to raise

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*Partnership for New Communities Executive Director Maria Hibbs (second from right) joins Ford Foundation Program Officer Rick McGahey (left), U.S. Department of Labor Assistant Secretary Emily DeRocco and Council on Foundations President Steve Gunderson at the September 6 launch of the National Fund for Workforce Solutions at the Washington Press Club in Washington, D.C. Hibbs attended the launch on behalf of Opportunity Chicago's and various public and private partners.*

### **Polk Bros. Foundation Supports Opportunity Chicago**

The Partnership is pleased to announce a \$250,000 grant from the Polk Bros. Foundation for Opportunity Chicago, a public-private initiative to help prepare public-housing residents for work and improve the workforce system's ability to meet the needs of low-skilled job seekers.

The grant will be used to execute the initiative's two-phase employer engagement strategy, which includes the hiring of specialists in the healthcare and transportation, warehousing and logistics industries to prepare CHA residents for jobs in these fields. The project aims to engage 40 employers by the end of 2008.

The Polk Bros. Foundation's grant brings The Partnership to 58% of its \$15 million fundraising goal. For a list of our other funders, see p. 4.

**National Fund for Workforce Solutions (cont'd from pg. 1)**

\$50 million to strengthen and expand effective workforce initiatives around the country and place at least 50,000 people in jobs nationwide.

"The programs and initiatives that this fund supports will help people develop the skills they need to be economically successful, and that's good for American families, for the economy and for the nation as a whole," said Susan Berresford, president of the Ford Foundation. "The fund seeks to nurture these innovations and to build partnerships in the private and public sectors that reach people in need."

In Year 1 of Opportunity Chicago, more than 1,300 public-housing residents gained employment, exceeding the goal of 1,000 placements per year. In Year 2, the initiative is on track to deliver similar results by December 2007.

"We are pleased to partner with the National Fund for Workforce Solutions," said David Hanson, commissioner of the Mayor's Office of Workforce Development. "This affiliation will further enhance Chicago's existing workforce development system by enabling us to expand our reach to employers as well as job seekers. It also helps us create opportunities for public-housing residents who are transitioning to self-sufficiency."

By incorporating best practices, capitalizing on expertise through a group of expert advisers and engaging employers in program development, Opportunity Chicago is working to offer employment and career advancement opportunities for public-housing residents.

"Rebuilding public housing is not just about bricks and mortar. It's also about people – their neighborhood, their education and their work," said CHA Chief Executive Officer Sharon Gist Gilliam. "Through Opportunity Chicago residents receive the resources they need to find permanent jobs and take an active role in the Plan for Transformation."

Along with Opportunity Chicago, the Fund has made grants to workforce collaboratives in San Diego, Los Angeles and greater Washington, D.C.

**Partnership Update**

September 2007

The Partnership for New Communities is a funders collaborative bringing together business, civic and philanthropic leaders to invest in strategic economic development, community-building and employment-related initiatives to promote large-scale improvements in the neighborhoods most affected by public-housing transformation in Chicago.

*Partnership Update* is published regularly by The Partnership for New Communities to provide information on a variety of topics, including status reports on the CHA's Plan for Transformation, updates on The Partnership's activities and projects and highlights of relevant research findings.

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The Fund's founders maintain that high-quality workforce partnerships are critically needed because the nation faces a shortage of well-prepared workers. During the next 20 years, the American workforce is expected to grow by only half of its earlier pace, and the nation will see no growth in the number of native-born workers in their prime working years.

"Employers are struggling to find well trained workers, while many low-wage workers lack the skills or training they need to become financially secure," said Maria Hibbs, executive director of The Partnership for New Communities. "We have developed a strong employment initiative to address both of these pressing needs in Chicago."

For more information about the Fund, visit its website at [www.nfwsolutions.org](http://www.nfwsolutions.org).

## Connecting Opportunities: Cottage Grove “Parade of Retail”



**(Left) Two trolleys toured small businesses, planned development sites, and mixed-income housing in the Quad Communities. (Right) Antwan Henry, owner of boutique shoe salon Soul II Sole, gives advice and encouragement to prospective business owners.**

More than 40 lenders, developers and small business owners participated in The Partnership for New Communities' second Connecting Opportunities session on August 2 in Chicago's Bronzeville neighborhood.

The program began with breakfast and networking at the Bronzeville Coffee House, followed by a two-hour trolley tour that highlighted new residential and retail development in the Quad Communities of North Kenwood, Oakland, Douglas, and Grand Boulevard.

Two trolleys made the rounds to three new mixed-income developments – Lake Park Crescent, Oakwood Shores, and Jazz on the Boulevard. Staff from Quad Communities Development Corporation, The Partnership, and consulting firm O-H Community Partners served as guides. The trolleys also stopped at five small businesses that have already taken root in the Cottage Grove Corridor. The owners showcased their spaces and wares and answered questions about challenges and successes they've faced along the way.

“When I first told friends that I was planning on opening a business here, they thought I was crazy,” said Nicole Jones, owner of Sensual Steps Shoe Salon. “But two years later I'm doing fine. My advice is to buy now because in a couple years, you won't be able to afford it because of rising property values.”

Fourth Ward Alderman Tony Preckwinkle welcomed the group at Sensual Steps, expressing her support for small business development in the neighborhood. Earlier, Kandace Watkins of Troy Enterprises, partner in Mahogany Ventures told

business owners about the “The Shops and Lofts at Forty-Seven,” an \$87 million mixed-use development planned for 47<sup>th</sup> Street and Cottage Grove Avenue. After explaining some of the opportunities the new development would offer to new business owners, she took questions and encouraged local entrepreneurs to consider opening a store at The Shops and Lofts.

“I think there's a lot of opportunity for growth,” said Nadia Quarles, director of Business Diversity at the University of Chicago, who attended the session to find out how to partner with other businesses and developers on the South Side. “This area has changed a lot in the last three to four years, and apparently there's still more to come.”

As a thank-you for the small businesses that participated in the event, the Women's Business Development Center has arranged for each business owner to receive two hours of intense, individualized business counseling from the Cycle of Success Institute – a \$100 value.

Stay tuned for the next Connecting Opportunities session, coming soon.

**Connecting Opportunities** is a series of information and networking sessions designed to promote The Partnership's twin goals of workforce and economic development in Chicago's transforming neighborhoods. Sponsored by The Partnership and programmed with grantee and partner organizations, each session has a specific focus on a different topic and community area.

## MCIC Measures Income Diversity in Chicago

On July 21, Partnership grantee Metro Chicago Information Center (MCIC) offered a new method for describing and documenting community change. MCIC President Garth Taylor introduced a study of income diversity in Chicago's 77 neighborhoods at an event hosted by Harris Bank.

The study, *Income Diversity and the Context of Community Development*, presents income diversity as an important tool in measuring neighborhood development.

The research is the first to measure trends in the mix of low, moderate, and high-income households within neighborhoods over an extended period of time.

"Tracking income diversity is crucial to achieving the City's goal of a mix of incomes through the Plan for Transformation," said Partnership Executive Director Maria Hibbs, a panelist at the event. "To be effective, the City, the CHA, The Partnership, market actors and the communities themselves need data – evidence – to determine which strategies have the greatest impact in community development campaigns.

"Over time this work will help us and community leaders understand how and whether neighborhood redevelopment efforts are indeed



**MCIC President Garth Taylor describes the four types of neighborhood income diversity at a July 21 forum at Harris Bank.**

attracting a mix of incomes and identify why we may not be achieving that goal and what can be done about it."

Taylor discussed the four patterns of income diversity in neighborhoods during his presentation: emerging high-income (30% of neighborhoods), emerging low-income (24%), emerging bi-polarity (22%) and stable income diversity (24%).

For more information, visit MCIC's website at [www.mcic.org](http://www.mcic.org).

## The Partnership for New Communities

*Civic Leadership for Chicago's Neighborhoods*

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