

Terry Peterson
Partners in Transformation
Partnership for New Communities
October 19, 2005

Thank you Jonathan. Thank you everyone for being here.

The video you just saw was especially relevant to us today – not just because of the story it tells – which is really a story about changing communities and lives.

It was relevant because it was an example of what we can do with a little help from people like you.

The support of MacArthur and The Chicago Community Trust has given us the flexibility to put together a presentation like this – as well as to boost key social service programs and to deal with whatever comes up in the course of the Plan for Transformation.

This is a huge undertaking – and no one can possibly anticipate every bump in the road. We are very lucky to have partners who we can call – whether it's for resources or even just for advice.

That's what the Partnership for New Communities is all about.

Our board includes Chicago's top business and foundation executives – a network of some of the most important people in this city who have all committed their time and resources to helping the Plan for Transformation succeed.

Because of their support:

- Chicago Public School teachers will be buying homes in our new mixed income communities.
- Small-business owners will have technical support from the Women's Business Development Center as they help to create jobs for CHA residents.
- CHA residents seeking jobs will get the kind of screening from outside social services agencies that will help them get the skills they need for the jobs they want.
- Retail developers are getting marketing information about new CHA communities so they can figure out how best to invest in our neighborhoods.
- And CHA will get ongoing information about the changing characteristics of our communities to help shape all of our efforts going forward.

These – and other projects funded by the Partnership -- were not specifically contemplated when the Plan began six years ago. Our focus was bringing down unsafe building down and replacing or rehabbing 25,000 units.

At this point, six years into the plan, we're on track. Over 14,000 units have been completed. Over 4000 families have successfully relocated. Close to 40 mixed-income developments are in one stage or another.

Each month, families are moving into new units while others are building new lives in new neighborhoods.

And about 5000 CHA residents have found some kind of work – thanks to our partnership with the city and with the private sector.

So, the bricks and mortar piece of the plan is coming together nicely. The relocation process is also working well -- although it's been a challenge and we've learned a lot along the way and we have adapted where necessary.

The remaining challenge – and in many ways the largest challenge of all – is rebuilding lives.

Many CHA families and individuals have struggled with issues from lack of education to crime to domestic abuse to family breakdown.

Addressing those issues requires resources and community partners, outside expertise and a lot of hard work, patience and determination.

Today, we spend over \$20 million dollars per year linking CHA residents to social services. That may sound like a lot of money -- but not when you compare it to the social cost of inaction.

What is the social cost of generations denied an opportunity to find meaningful work, raise a family and enjoy a good quality of life?

What is the social cost of generations of young men trapped in a world of crime and violence and despair?

And let's turn it around.

How do you put a price on the experience of a child who can walk to school without fear of being confronted by a gang member or drug dealer?

How do you put a price on the experience of a single mother with two or three kids who finally has a mall nearby where she can shop and maybe one of her older children can work after school -- and where her younger kids have a park nearby where they can play in safety?

How do you put a price on a senior citizen who now lives in clean, well-maintained apartment with new utilities and a common area for socializing?

This is what I wake up thinking about every day. This is the vision the Mayor outlined when he first took responsibility for public housing back in 1999:

Healthy, mixed-income communities offering the same quality of life and access to opportunity that every other neighborhood in Chicago offers.

It's a miracle that we got the federal government to commit \$1.6 billion dollars over 10 years to fund this effort.

But it's even more amazing that we have private developers willing to spend billions more in our communities -- and we have a dozen other local agencies investing their limited dollars to build the parks, schools, libraries and police stations that anchor our communities.

But we still need more help -- mostly in the social services area. I'd love to tell you exactly what it will cost to help every CHA resident become economically self-sufficient -- but I can't -- and no one can.

Some people need two or three work experiences before they find the right fit. Others get it right the first time -- and some others continue to struggle despite our best efforts.

The one thing we can't do is give up. You can't ever give up on people.

CHA residents are part of Chicago -- they are our brothers and sisters -- our friends and relatives -- we go to church together -- our kids go to school together -- we work side-by-side -- and ultimately we all share in the blessings and the burdens of life in Chicago.

On their behalf, I just want to say how grateful we are for all you have done and all you will do in the months and years ahead to help the Plan for Transformation succeed.

I believe it will be an important part of the Mayor's legacy, an important part of Chicago's legacy, and an important part of America's legacy.

Thank you.