

NEO CANDO

In Practice

CREATING REGIONALLY COMPETITIVE
NEIGHBORHOODS OF CHOICE

The goal of the comprehensive community development work of Neighborhood Progress Incorporated (NPI), in partnership with six Cleveland community development corporations (CDCs), is to create regionally competitive neighborhoods of choice. In 2003, NPI was challenged by one of its funders to change the way it was conceptualizing successful neighborhood development. Prior to the challenge, success was measured by the number of new housing units created. However, NPI and neighborhood activists were noticing that in some cases, the total number of people leaving Cleveland neighborhoods outpaced the number that were being brought in through the new development projects. It wasn't enough to say "if we build it, they will come."

NPI chose six Cleveland CDCs through a competitive selection process for involvement in a strategic investment initiative. The initiative would create partnerships between NPI, CDCs, community advocates, and educational institutions in the Cleveland area. Each of the six CDCs would be required to create and develop an anchor project which could act in a catalytic manner to help retain current neighborhood residents, and to attract new ones. A team of professionals was brought together for each of the CDCs in order to assemble the land that would be needed for the anchor project site.

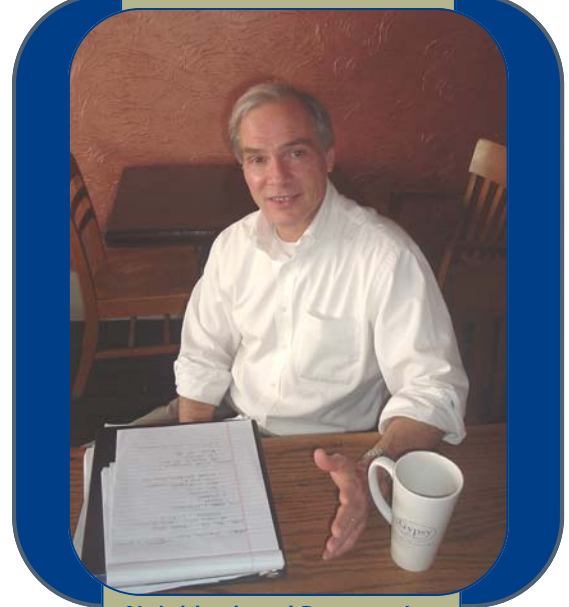
Frank Ford, Vice President for Research and Development at NPI, explained that the members of the land assembly team soon realized that in order to successfully attract new homeowners to the neighborhoods, effort would need to be made to address the "market bubble" surrounding the new development projects. Ford explained that prospective homebuyers would come to the site of the new housing developments, like what they saw in and around the development, and then get in their cars and drive through streets of boarded-up vacant and abandoned housing in the blocks surrounding the development. In order to bring in new homeowners, the land assembly team began planning to remove the blight in a defined geography around the anchor project sites, and within the neighborhood boundaries.

NEO CANDO has been utilized by the land assembly team in order to access information on properties which have been targeted for acquisition in and around the anchor project sites of the six Cleveland CDCs involved in the initiative. In the initial research and planning stages, the team uses NEO CANDO to find out the basic information about the property, such as sales transfer date, sales price, type of deed, market value, delinquent tax information, current owner, and other information. The properties can also be mapped which allows the planners to see a geography in its entirety with different information being mapped. NEO CANDO also acts as an early warning system for properties that have become vacant or are at risk of abandonment. Recently added data sources such as low-water usage, and foreclosure information help practitioners to locate properties that may be in need of assistance.

Stacy Pugh, Housing Director at Slavic Village Development, and a member of the Land Assembly Team, adds that information obtained through NEO CANDO, and compiled into a geographic map of parcels, allows the team to get a view of the conditions of specific parcels in the target area and the neighborhood. This helps the team to be able to target their effort on the parcels in greatest need of change.

As of May 2007, the land assembly teams have acquired sixty-three properties within the neighborhoods served by the six CDCs involved in the strategic investment initiative.

Frank Ford



Neighborhood Progress Inc.

Stacy Pugh



Slavic Village Development