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PUTTING THE 'CHIC' BACK IN CHICAGO ; IT'S HIP TO LIVE IN THE CITY AGAIN AS FORMERLY DESOLATE NEIGHBORHOODS ARE REBORN; [Chicagoland Final Edition]

Charles Leroux And Ron Grossman Tribune writers Charles Leroux and Ron Grossman have collaborated on many articles on the city's changing demographics. Chicago Tribune. Chicago, Ill.: Feb 5, 2006. pg. 10

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Abstract (Document Summary)

PHOTOS 6 GRAPHICS 2; A historic hotel is converted in Boston's Roxbury district. New construction rises from the dust in South Bronx. Public housing is gradually redeveloped in St. Louis. AP Photos of Roxbury Mass, South Bronx and St. Louis by Bizuayehu Tesfaye, Tina Fineberg and Tom Gannam Milton [Mizenberg], a longtime resident of North Kenwood/Oakland, was for years a one-man cleaning crew on his block. He stands alongside some of his sculpture that he has placed in a vacant lot near his home. The renaissance of North Kenwood/Oakland is due in large measure to these two women, Ald. [Toni Preckwinkle] and neighborhood organizer [SHIRLEY NEWSOME]. They are pictured at the intersection of 47th Street and Drexel Avenue. This unoccupied home at 4127 S. Berkeley Ave. has had no rehab, yet its sales price leaps with almost every sale. House this page: Illustration By David Plunkert. On the cover: Illustration by Jeffrey Decoster. (Magazine, Page 2)

Full Text (6192 words)

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FOR DECADES, THE AMERICAN DREAM has revolved around a ranch house on a spacious lot in the suburbs. Cities, once emblematic of the sophisticated good life, seemed dirty, crowded and dangerous. They were perceived as warehouses for the poor, dreary, dead-end places from whose mean streets anybody able to escape should. A lacework of expressways built with federal funds after World War II pointed the way out of the nation's metropolises. Government-insured mortgages enabled ex-GIs and their families to pioneer that route.

Now, though, there's a new mantra about city living. It's a reprised anthem from the Jazz Age, when the bright lights of the country's urban hubs drew the hip and high-spirited.

"It's chic to be urban," says Mark L. Joseph, a neighborhood- redevelopment specialist at the University of Chicago. Other sociologists have observed that people who, not so long ago, would have shuddered at the thought of city living-much less inner-city living-have become urban pioneers.

In Chicago, they are flocking to such areas as North Kenwood/ Oakland, long visually dominated by rubble-filled empty lots, the last remains of a community once home to the city's elite and afterward a victim of urban decay and failed urban renewal.

Now, the south-lakefront neighborhood is again a fashionable address. Shabby-looking, century-old row houses are being restored by a new generation of owners eager to plunk down hundreds of thousands of dollars for properties that could scarcely have been given away not long ago. They have voted with their feet-and wallets- for the stimulation of urban living

over the tranquility of suburbia.

"Ninety percent of the people who come through this sales center are not from the neighborhood," says David Chase, president and CEO of Thrush Companies, which is building a new residential community, Jazz on the Boulevard, in the heart of North Kenwood/Oakland- just one big-city neighborhood to become a "happening" place after long being a place where nothing was happening.

In "Comeback Cities," published in 2000, Paul S. Grogan and Tony Proscio made a wishful prediction that the nation's cities would again become vibrant, exciting communities. Some critics dismissed it as pie-in-the-sky thinking, but scarcely six years later, that vision can be seen in formerly moribund communities across the nation.

In St. Louis, the George L. Vaughn public housing project-where thousands of units in an area two miles in diameter dragged down the surrounding neighborhood-has been converted to a mixed-income residential development. In New York's South Bronx, where the local police station was formerly called "Fort Apache," brownstones are selling for half a million dollars. In Louisville, a new housing development known as Park DuValle has risen where there once stood a housing project so dreary it was dubbed "The Bricks." Crime in the neighborhood has dropped 82 percent.

In Boston, 300 vacant lots in Roxbury, a chronically devastated neighborhood south of downtown, have been transformed into attractive, affordable housing. "Ten years ago, absolutely no one would think that Roxbury would be facing gentrification," says Matt Thall, senior program director in the Boston office of Local Initiatives Support Organization, a private agency that supports community redevelopment efforts nationally.

Yet, nowhere has a community made a comeback with such seemingly miraculous speed as North Kenwood/Oakland, which is bounded by 35th and 47th Streets, Cottage Grove Avenue and the lakefront. It has become a textbook for neighborhood renewal nationwide, but Ald. Toni Preckwinkle, whose 4th Ward encompasses the community, cautions that those who lived through the transformation understand the story's nuances. It needs to be carefully digested, not speed-read.

"There was a lot of hard work before 'bingo,' " Preckwinkle says. All the right stuff combined at just the right time, notes the U. of C.'s Joseph, who proclaims North Kenwood/Oakland the "perfect storm" of neighborhood rebirth. Some key ingredients:

- * A location so attractive that it drew urban pioneers even before the neighborhood's negatives were dealt with.
- * A storehouse of vacant, city-owned land used as a financial lure to developers who had been reluctant to build in inner-city neighborhoods.
- * A pro-development representative in City Hall.
- * A An end to being a warehouse for the poorest of the poor, a burden imposed on inner-city neighborhoods by local and national housing policies over half a century.
- * An aggressive community organization able to motivate homeowners to demand upgrading of their neighborhood.
- * Local control over the community's destiny, a reversal of the long-imposed, top-down decision-making.
- * A major local institution to lend a helpful-but not controlling- hand; in this case, the University of Chicago.

Joseph thinks it's unlikely that the boomtown North Kenwood/ Oakland has become will be repeated with the same speed elsewhere. Still, he and other observers think much of what contributed to the neighborhood's rebirth is in place or about to sprout in longtime down-at-the-heels communities along and near the south lakefront.

BRONZEVILLE

The name of the original home of Chicago's African-American community evokes memories of a once-vibrant neighborhood where Joe Louis lived, Nat King Cole and Dinah Washington attended high school, and Louis Armstrong and Muddy Waters played. With North Kenwood/Oakland revitalized, neighboring Bronzeville, which long had aspired to return to its former glory, now is beginning to show real movement.

"This is one of the South Side communities going from a state of slumber to vitality," says Pat Dowell, sitting in her townhouse in a newly built development on Martin Luther King Drive. Like North Kenwood/Oakland, Bronzeville is blessed with a stock of spacious Victorian mansions ripe for renovation. Also like North Kenwood/ Oakland, the virtues of that historic trove were hidden behind a wall of public housing that stretched for two miles along State Street. Bronzeville, which is 15 minutes south of the Loop, is bordered by the Oakland neighborhood on the east, 51st Street on the south, 35th Street on the north and the Dan Ryan Expressway on the west.

In 2004, Dowell ran against Dorothy Tillman for alderman of the 3rd Ward, of which Bronzeville is the heart. Though she lost, Dowell got slightly more than a third of the vote, a good showing for a first-time candidate against a 20-year incumbent with

credentials in the black community dating back to the Civil Rights era.

Dowell's campaign focused on the need for development in a ward containing 6,000 mostly vacant city-owned lots. She accused Tillman of keeping a lid on development. Tillman countered that Dowell's push for development would lead to gentrification and, eventually, the displacement of black families.

"Pat Dowell came to that ward with the distinct purpose of taking that ward and turning it over to 'other' people," Tillman charged during the campaign, which echoed earlier battles in the neighboring 4th Ward between then Ald. Tim Evans and current Ald. Toni Preckwinkle.

Dowell, like Preckwinkle, is a U. of C. graduate, smart and committed to bringing new homeowners to the ward. Tillman, like Evans, had built strong political support among CHA residents. Evans lost his base when the CHA's Lakefront Properties were emptied. Third Ward CHA voters were scattered when the Robert Taylor Homes recently came down.

Despite the similarities between North Kenwood/Oakland and Bronzeville, Dowell, who had been a commissioner in the city's Department of Planning, points out a difference: "Here there is a greater ratio of privately owned land."

In her view, private development will open the door to change in the neighborhood, despite any politician's reluctance to do so. Developers are seizing on the privately held land, inevitably putting pressure on the city to release its stock of publicly held land.

WOODLAWN

This working-class African-American community, bordered by King Drive, Stony Island, 61st and 67th Streets, was plagued in the 1950s and '60s by drug-dealing gangs and an epidemic of arson fires that leveled a once-bustling shopping rialto along East 63rd Street. With about 3,000 vacant lots, it has the same kind of storehouse of vacant space that spurred redevelopment in North Kenwood/Oakland.

Located just to the south of the University of Chicago, it-again like North Kenwood/Oakland-had a tumultuous relationship with the school. Its formative community group, The Woodlawn Organization, honed its political savvy through years of battling the university. The community feared encroachment by the school, which in the '60s was acquiring land to form a kind of moat around its perimeter.

In an about-face, the university now is trying to be a good neighbor. In 2001, when the school began sending its security patrols into the community, a parade was held to welcome them.

Jack Crane is senior vice president at ShoreBank, which has supported reinvestment in South Side neighborhoods for more than 30 years. He says that 10 years ago the bank didn't do much lending in Woodlawn because the real estate market was so dead there was no way to set prices. "There just were no comps," Crane says of the sales figures used by the industry to set prices in a community. Now, he says, "there's still work to be done" in the western part of Woodlawn, "but from Cottage Grove east to Jackson Park, it's done."

SOUTH SHORE

South and east of Woodlawn is South Shore, a neighborhood of large brick-and-stone apartment buildings plus an enclave, The Highlands, of spacious, single-family houses on suburban-sized lots. The neighborhood has an attractive location near Jackson Park, the lakefront and the University of Chicago and boasts a 20-minute drive from downtown. Nonetheless, in the 1970s, parts of the community were declining so fast that its principal financial institution, then called South Shore Bank, asked regulators to let it move to a prospering neighborhood. Instead, it was taken over by a group interested in rebuilding the community and now is able to provide a base of redevelopment expertise as well as money.

Anne L. Arvia, president and CEO of ShoreBank, as it is now known, says rehabbing has upgraded residential units in South Shore to where "affordable housing is a problem. Some people now are looking farther south to Roseland and Auburn-Gresham, where rents are cheaper."

In North Side redevelopment, prosperity has moved from the shore westward. Though the future of the South Side's lakefront communities looks bright, inland the picture seems to be one of slower, more sporadic, less spectacular growth, but growth nonetheless.

ENGLEWOOD

One of most sprawling of the city's neighborhoods, Englewood spreads west of Woodlawn, between the Dan Ryan and Western Avenue, Garfield Boulevard and 75th Street. It is divided among several wards and thus lacks one of the key ingredients for successful redevelopment, a single strong voice in the city administration to articulate an agenda for the community.

Englewood once was home to the busiest shopping district in the city, outside of downtown. After several attempts to restore that vitality, a \$22 million retail shopping district is being planned along Halsted Street between 59th and 61st Streets.

Although it boasts convenient transit via the "L," Englewood lacks the marketing allure of a large park, a university or a waterfront location. "There's no lake effect," says ShoreBank's Crane. He does note, however, that the bank is making increasing numbers of rehab loans there and speculates that, for working-class families seeking to buy and upgrade a home, other neighborhoods, like North Kenwood/Oakland and Woodlawn, have become too expensive.

FIFTY YEARS AGO, the wrecking ball was the symbol of urban renewal, and decision-making at a distance was the order of the day. If a city's housing suffered from age and neglect, the bulldozer was the solution of choice. Swaths of rubble were left in its wake.

Alternately, massive housing projects were grafted onto neighborhoods and then parasitically devoured their hosts. In the nation's capital and at university seminar tables, it rarely occurred to planners to ask the people affected how they thought those policies were working.

In his book "Pyramids of Sacrifice," Boston University sociologist Peter Berger wrote of the failed urban renewal of the 1960s and '70s:

"Policymakers and theorists together constitute an elite vis-à-vis the great mass of people in society. Its members also like to see themselves as 'spokesmen' for the masses."

If those policymakers thought the "masses" needed modern transport, the better to flee to suburbia, superhighways were decreed, irrespective of the long, broad scars they left on city neighborhoods. If housing for the poor was on the agenda, the decision-making elite picked public-housing sites-not on the streets where they lived, but in less-favored communities already bearing more than their share of poverty's burdens.

Robert Moses was New York's czar of urban renewal in the 1950s and '60s. The fate of whole neighborhoods would be determined by a wave of his autocratic T-square. He once nicely summed up the mindset behind the era's take-no-prisoners approach to urban planning: "If the ends don't justify the means, what does?"

WHEN SHIRLEY NEWSOME moved into North Kenwood/Oakland in the 1980s, she could see the effects of a planning process that failed to test abstract theories against street-level reality. On three sides, the area was fenced in by CHA projects that screened it from the world beyond, like an inner-city version of the Great Wall of China.

Inside that brick and concrete perimeter, blight was pervasive. Fire hydrants were broken. When streetlights burned out, they weren't replaced. Skeletons of abandoned cars lay in the streets and weedy vacant lots became so numerous it seemed the prairie was reclaiming that part of the city. Broken glass covered sidewalks, yielding a deceptive sparkle. Street corners were taken over by young toughs who lounged menacingly as older residents cowered in their homes.

Newsome, 59, is a born organizer, a whirlwind of energy that she likely would have brought to any neighborhood. In North Kenwood/Oakland, she found a community in terror. "People were afraid to park in their garages because they feared the alleys," she says. "Yet, they didn't want to leave their cars on the street because they feared vandalism."

She urged homeowners to seek safety in numbers and band together. Although they could understand the value of such organizing, many of the old-timers told her, "We don't go out at night."

She recalls thinking about the neighborhood's paralysis and wondering: "How can people live with that kind of fear?"

The city had done little to stop the neighborhood's decline. "It certainly wasn't thinking about conserving raggedy old buildings or constructing on the empty lots in between," Newsome says.

One reason the city wasn't giving a lot of thought to the neighborhood as it circled the drain-other than bulldozing unsafe properties-was that residents seldom complained.

"It was cultural," Newsome says, explaining that an older generation of blacks had learned that passivity was the best survival strategy under the Jim Crow racism they had known in their native South.

"These folks had been taught fear by the white man in the South and then came here expecting a dreamlike existence," she says. They found instead that Chicago, like other Northern cities, had its own brand of segregation, with blacks relegated to neighborhoods no one else wanted.

Many of the remaining seniors in the community were trapped by having their savings tied up in buildings for which there were no buyers. "All they wanted to do was hang onto the little bit they had," Newsome says.

Eventually, she coaxed as many as 100 people to show up for meetings of what became the North Kenwood/Oakland

Conservation Community Council (CCC). That would be an impressive turnout for any neighborhood organization.

"People were sick of being called a poor community," Newsome says, pointing to the feeling of resentment that she played on to make foot soldiers out of seniors. Many who had lived in involuntary confinement in their homes became block representatives. They screwed up their courage to walk the streets and hand out informational flyers keeping neighbors abreast of CCC's activities. They visited the ill and greeted new mothers when they returned from the hospital.

The CCC embraced redevelopment as the surest path to salvation for the neighborhood and, especially, its homeowners. City officials were invited to community meetings to explain programs that would help finance repairing a roof or replacing a window.

With repeated small victories, residents began to feel they were building political muscle. In 1991, CCC scored its biggest triumph when it helped displace an entrenched ward political machine and elected an alderman whose vision for the neighborhood accorded with theirs. It was an unmistakable sign that a new era was coming to the community.

"Seniors don't make waves until you convince them that they can do things," Newsome says. "Then they're a force to be reckoned with."

In North Kenwood/Oakland, homeowners were incited by a rumor that outsiders were set to write the neighborhood's future, as in the past.

They told University of Chicago student Yan Dominic Searcy, who was working on his 1999 doctoral dissertation on South Side neighborhoods, that a private developer supposedly had flown over the community in the '80s and seen what now seems obvious: North Kenwood/Oakland was the only significant stretch of Chicago lakefront property not yet developed.

The aerial view also made clear that much of the land was a checkerboard of buildings and vacant lots. Those cleared lots, a developer's dream, were created when city bulldozers removed abandoned buildings that had become hazardous and sheltered crime. The developer saw spread beneath him a real-estate boom just itching to happen.

When residents heard that a developer was licking his chops over their community, they imagined pricey housing rising on the choicest part of the area, leaving the interior sections to whatever fate awaited. They remembered that, in lakefront neighborhoods to the immediate north, existing housing-good and bad-had been swept away to create two massive developments, Lake Meadows and Prairie Shores. Painfully aware of not having been consulted when local and federal housing planners ringed their neighborhood with giant high-rise projects, they worried that, once more, their destiny would be determined by outsiders.

"Chicago was a feudal fiefdom," says Ald. Preckwinkle, recalling how development decisions were made in the '80s, "and the king and court were downtown."

In 1983, Preckwinkle ran unsuccessfully for alderman. Her campaign highlighted the community's need to gain decision-making power, which would mark a break from the traditionalist stance of her main opponent, incumbent and City Council powerbroker Tim Evans.

Segregation had created dense concentrations of black people in public housing high-rises, which had gone from temporary way stations for the post-Depression impoverished to permanent shelving of the poor. Those buildings were a godsend for African-American politicians. In other parts of town, precinct captains would have to worry about getting their voters to the polls on Election Day. But in the 16-story CHA buildings along the lakefront, hundreds upon hundreds of voters were only an elevator ride away from voting machines in the lobbies.

In '83, for example, voters in the Lakefront Properties building at 3983 S. Lake Park Ave. gave 158 votes to Evans, 2 to Preckwinkle.

Given those numbers, it's not surprising that, when a campaign debate arose over what to do with the by-then vacated CHA buildings, Evans wanted them renovated and the residents-his voters-returned. Preckwinkle took the side of those who believed that, even if rehabbed, big-scale public housing would maintain the concentration of impoverished families, choking residential and commercial development.

When the projects emptied, Evans lost his voter base, and the strength of local pro-development groups grew. The latter campaigned for Preckwinkle partly because of her stance on limiting the number of public housing units in the ward.

In 1991, in her third try against Evans, Preckwinkle won by a narrow margin. Combined with the earlier destruction of the CHA high-rise projects, the election of a pro-development alderman signaled that the community could be reborn. Her vision was of a neighborhood once again middle-class but with room for a smaller number of former CHA residents in multi-income developments. "It's to make the poor like they used to be-people in the community who were poor," Newsome says.

NATIONALLY, THAT IDEA is at the core of the current best thinking on how to restore communities. One widely discussed

model is an inner-city redevelopment project in which a portion of the units would be subsidized rentals; another portion would be affordable units—that is, sold below market value—and a third portion would be sold at whatever the market will bear. In North Kenwood/Oakland, for instance, the 137-unit development, Jazz on the Boulevard, has set aside 30 subsidized units, 9 affordable ones, with the rest offered at full price.

Community groups there and elsewhere are anxious to steer a middle course between the extremes of North Side-style gentrification and a slide back into a poverty-dominated ghetto. The hope is to create an economically diverse community in which families can live over the generations, with grandparents renting affordable quarters close by the homes of their children and grandchildren. Blended into middle-class areas, the poor would be freed from the stigma of public housing.

"It also makes available role models—neighbors who've achieved success in mainstream society," Newsome says.

But as neighborhoods are reborn as mixed-income communities, a percentage of the poorest families who once lived there inevitably are scattered. Many become urban nomads keeping a step ahead of a moving frontier of redevelopment. Might this lead to some version of the European pattern, in which the more well-off live downtown while the poor live in impoverished suburbs?

Preckwinkle is conscious of the issue of what might happen to the poor in a redeveloping urban America. "The fear is that we are only exporting our problems," she says.

The newly found success of North Kenwood/Oakland seems to show that there's a critical ratio between the poor and the not-poor that is key to the revival of a community. Nobody knows exactly what that ratio is, but it's clear that a community in which poverty dominates is not a good thing, even for the poor themselves.

Rev. Finney of The Woodlawn Organization once said of Woodlawn's chances for rebirth: "We need middle-income families. The community cannot survive solely with low-income residents."

Harold Washington, the city's first black mayor and a backer of CHA residents, took a similar position. "No upwardly mobile group comes back to their origins," he said in 1985. "The Italians don't come back to the ghettos. The Jews don't go back to their ghettos. The black middle-class is not going to go back to the heart of the ghetto unless it is regentrified."

Referring to the overwhelming placement of CHA projects on the South Side, Newsome says, "The process [of dealing with the displaced poor] isn't fair because it was never fair. The only way to make it fair is for every neighborhood in the city to take its share of poor families."

UNTIL RECENTLY, Izora Davis' office was in a dark basement in one of two still-standing CHA high rises in North Kenwood/Oakland. Water from overhead pipes dripped onto the concrete floor and old steel file cabinets. For 20 years, Davis, as the court-appointed representative of those displaced from Lakefront Properties in 1985, has saved her correspondence with local and federal housing officials about who'd be allowed back into public housing and about her budget being cut. She also has saved all the court documents tracking those decades of struggle. She is eager to share all that paperwork and the life stories they represent, but no one is particularly interested anymore.

Even those who support her say too much time has passed, and the die of development has been cast. Though the original plan was to renovate Lakefront Properties and reopen 600 rent-subsidized units, after 10 years of CHA inaction, the high-rises were torn down. Davis' flock wandered off and the CHA lost track on purpose, some say—of many of them. Last February, the CHA wrote her demanding she pay \$1,500 a month rent for the space. She couldn't afford it and recently was locked out,

Recounting the tribulations of the displaced, Davis says: "It's like we're cattle and they expect us to move when they want us to. They have an image that we don't want to work, that we're not educated, that we don't have plans for better lives. They forget we're humans too."

about 15 years ago, the City of Chicago did an about-face on urban-renewal policies, a move dictated not so much by philosophical reflection but simple political realities. In 1989, Richard M. Daley won the mayoral election, but got just 7 percent of the black vote and resolved to court those voters as a hedge against future elections.

Half a century earlier, under the first Mayor Daley, the South Side had been used as a dumping ground for poor black people. Downtown business feared that white flight and rising crime would rob State Street of customers, and, in hopes of stemming racial change, huge public-housing projects were built on the South Side. A few voices were raised in protest, but at the time, inner-city neighborhoods didn't count in decision-makers' political calculus.

But they did by the time of the second Mayor Daley. City Hall took a closer look at communities like North Kenwood/Oakland and saw potential in what long had been the symbols of failure. As North Kenwood/Oakland declined, so many buildings were demolished that vacant lots represented a staggering 70 percent of the neighborhood. Much of that land had passed onto the public rolls through tax defaults.

In the eyes of a new generation of planners, those lots offered a tantalizing prospect for leveraging the neighborhood's rebuilding.

In 1992, the city designated North Kenwood/Oakland as a Community Conservation Area. That enabled the city to acquire still more land through eminent domain, and put control of that land in the community's hands.

"What empowered us," Preckwinkle says, "was that we had a lot of city-owned land to sell."

The community used some of that vacant land as bait to lure developers. In 1994, the neighborhood staged a Parade of Homes, a longtime device for showcasing new housing in suburbia, on the 4500 block of South Oakenwald Avenue.

Developers had been induced to take part by favorable land deals, not just for the lots highlighted by the parade, but others scattered throughout the neighborhood, sending ripples of rebirth out beyond that one block.

To attract middle-class buyers for new and refurbished housing, the neighborhood needed to meet their rock-bottom demands: decent schools and safe streets. Help came from an unlikely source: the University of Chicago, the institution that previously had written off North Kenwood/Oakland.

The U. of C. was the birthplace of the field of sociology and operated a pioneering settlement house in the Back of the Yards neighborhood. But in the 1950s, fearing its Hyde Park campus was threatened by rapid racial change, the university turned its back on nearby communities.

But in the 1990s, with the arrival of a new president, Don Michael Randel, the university reversed its stand. Having secured its own survival, it again reached out to neighboring communities, supplying brain power to plan their revival and earmarking university funds to realize those plans.

Now the university operates two charter schools in North Kenwood/ Oakland, and its security teams patrol the neighborhood at an annual cost of \$330,000.

Faculty and staff of the U. of C., one of city's largest employers, are encouraged to move into adjacent communities, including North Kenwood/Oakland, via a program offering \$7,500 interest-free loans, forgiven if they stay at least five years.

Another boost to the neighborhood's rebirth came in 1991 when its vanishing stock of gracious homes earned landmark status and, later, when the City Council designated the community a conservation area. That created a conservation committee made up of residents with the power to review proposed developments and reject any it feels is out of keeping with the goals or look of the neighborhood.

Developer Art Gurevich found out how seriously council members took their jobs when he presented plans for a graystone house on one of the area's empty lots.

"They really beat me and my partner up," says Gurevich, 44. "They threw out our proposal.

"I went around the neighborhood and photographed those old buildings," he recalls. "I studied the details-the textures, coarse and smooth stones, the gable roofs, the towers and turrets."

He revised his plan and won approval to build the first graystone in North Kenwood/Oakland in 80 years. Its scale and details closely mimic houses that dominated the local landscape in the 1880s.

CHICAGO IS NOW CREATING far more mixed-income housing than other cities-16,654 units are either built or projected. This makes areas like North Kenwood/Oakland closely watched test cases for a promising but unproven concept.

"As interesting as that community has been so far," the U. of C.'s Joseph says, "it may well be that the most exciting period is still ahead."

One thing researchers like Joseph will be studying is the assumption that poor people benefit from living next door to positive role models. They might well look at Milton Mizenberg's block.

For six years Mizenberg swept the litter from the gutter and sidewalk along his block on East 43rd Street, knowing he'd have to do it all over again next morning.

"I refused to let the bottles and cans stay in the street," he says of the responsibility he felt for the street where he and his wife Gloria had chosen to live as black working-class urban pioneers. But one day, dispirited after fighting such a long, seemingly endless battle all by himself, he threw down his broom and said, "Lord knows, a man can only take so much."

When the Mizenbergs first explored North Kenwood/Oakland in 1988, they saw old row houses and a house with a "For Sale" sign. It was a forlorn structure covered in ugly siding and cut into three apartments, but it was only \$30,000, and they

saw it not as it was but as it could be.

Having worked much of his life for contractors, Mizenberg threw himself with both skill and enthusiasm into rebuilding the place. He's also a sculptor and used his aesthetic sense to create unusual interior spaces painted in bright colors, like a Modernist painting in three dimensions.

Besides beautifying his own home, Mizenberg was determined to brighten a corner of his neighborhood. On two empty lots near his house, he created some wooden and plastic pipe sculptures that hint at inspirations ranging from Calder mobiles to Polynesian native art. He set up a sign proclaiming the site as the "Oakland Museum of Contemporary Art."

One day as he was working on one of the pieces, some kids slowly approached. "What are you doing?" they demanded.

"I'm a sculptor," he replied. "I'm giving this art to you. And it's your responsibility to take care of it."

In the years since, not a single work has been defaced.

"I believe that when you do something beautiful, people will respond," Mizenberg says. "Outside this community, I'm just Milton, but in my territory, I'm famous like Picasso. I'm Mizenberg, the great artist."

By his example-what academics call "modeling"-he has shown the value of taking responsibility for the place you make your home.

The day after Mizenberg threw down his broom in disgust, some neighbors came out with brooms and started sweeping. They continue the task to this day.

ONE SMALL SUCCESS does not an urban renaissance make. Yet from Mizenberg's street to others like it across the nation, the moral of his and his neighbors' saga is being put to the test. For half a century, affluent Americans and the less fortunate have been isolated from each other, inhabiting very different worlds. Locked up in inner-city neighborhoods and dreary projects, poor people haven't been able to see a route out of their plight in the example of striving and successful neighbors.

Prosperity, too, has come with a psychological side effect. Cities house a culture's art, music and drama and inspire its literature. They are magnets for the young, talented and ambitious- except in recent American history. A suburban-based middle class developed a pronounced phobia about cities, a not unreasonable reaction to the all-too-visible crime and violence of urban streets. Yet that also blinded suburban dwellers to the best that cities have to offer: a kaleidoscope of human textures, sometimes dissonant but often invigorating, not to be found in tidy cul-de-sac lanes and cookie-cutter shopping malls.

Now, the pendulum is swinging the other way. Once again, cities are a place people want to be. New residents sense the same excitement that the novelist Theodore Dreiser did when he first set foot in Chicago more than a century ago. He walked the streets for days, enthralled with the sounds and sights and smells of urban living.

"Cities, like individuals, can flare up with a great flare of hope," he wrote in a memoir. "They have that miracle, personality, which as in the case of the individual is always so fascinating and so arresting."

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MUCH APPRECIATED

Property values in North Kenwood/Oakland are soaring. This unoccupied home at 4127 S. Berkeley Ave. has had no rehab, yet its sales price leaps with almost every sale:

1997: \$52,000

2000: \$70,000

2001: \$160,000

2003: \$145,000 (April)

2003: \$375,000 (December)

SO WHERE ARE THE STORES?

It's a natural question for newcomers to North Kenwood/Oakland and similarly reborn inner-city neighborhoods across the country. Many of these urban pioneers come from places where groceries, hardware, books, gas-the sorts of goods and services that dot other city neighborhoods-are close at hand.

In North Kenwood-Oakland, there is a grocery store, the One Stop, but it's generally avoided by new arrivals, who see it as offering limited choices and serving older, poorer residents. New residents find it necessary to travel far beyond the neighborhood for food and other basics. Despite the explosive growth of residential development and the increased spending power it has brought, there's virtually no commercial presence within the community.

The Quad Communities Development Corporation, a non-profit group promoting development in four South Side neighborhoods, commissioned a study of buying power there. It showed that the Oakland part of the neighborhood has a per-square-mile buying power of \$105 million, a figure comparable to North Side neighborhoods blessed with ample shopping. Though crime is often cited as a reason for retailers to be wary, crime is markedly down in North Kenwood/Oakland.

The Quad Communities study analyzed how commercial spaces in the area were being used. Most spaces fell in the category "vacant." The second largest category was "beauty parlors, barber shops, manicurists, etc." But many destinations for everyday errand- running were missing.

Michael Porter, of Harvard Business School, and Mark Blaxill, of The Boston Consulting Group, estimated in a BCG white paper that, though largely ignored by retailers, inner-city spending power in the U.S. exceeds \$85 billion a year-more than Mexico's entire retail market. "Despite lower household incomes," they wrote, "inner-city areas concentrate more buying power into a square mile than many affluent suburbs do."

Chicago's South Side reflects that national pattern of retailer neglect. In a study titled "Chain Reaction: Income, Race, and Access to Chicago's Major Player Grocers," Mari Gallagher, a researcher for the non-profit research firm Metro Chicago Information Center, found that predominantly African-American areas are woefully underserved. "There are major land areas on Chicago's South Side without a single Jewel, Dominick's, Aldi or Cub Foods," she wrote.

Her study concluded that race, segregation, location and history all play roles in the lack of inner-city shopping opportunities, but the major determinant is level of income.

The view from within those inner city communities is that the irrational lack of self interest on the part of retailers must arise from the color of residents' skin rather than the contents of their bank accounts. Bernita Johnson Gabriel is director of Chicago's New Communities Program, which supports development in 16 Chicago neighborhoods. Having fought the battle for several years, she said that retailers who decide to come or not to come to a neighborhood based on color are looking at the wrong color. "It's time they learned our money is green."

-C.L. and R.G.

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[Illustration]

PHOTOS 6 GRAPHICS 2; Caption: PHOTO (color): A historic hotel is converted in Boston's Roxbury district. PHOTO (color): New construction rises from the dust in South Bronx. PHOTO (color): Public housing is gradually redeveloped in St. Louis. AP Photos of Roxbury Mass, South Bronx and St. Louis by Bizuayehu Tesfaye, Tina Fineberg and Tom Gannam PHOTO (color): Milton Mizenberg, a longtime resident of North Kenwood/Oakland, was for years a one-man cleaning crew on his block. He stands alongside some of his sculpture that he has placed in a vacant lot near his home. PHOTO (color): The renaissance of North Kenwood/Oakland is due in large measure to these two women, Ald. Toni Preckwinkle (left) and neighborhood organizer Shirley Newsome. They are pictured at the intersection of 47th Street and Drexel Avenue. Tribune photos by Jose M. Osorio. PHOTO (color): This unoccupied home at 4127 S. Berkeley Ave. has had no rehab, yet its sales price leaps with almost every sale. House this page: Tribune photo by Bill Hogan. GRAPHIC (color): Illustration By David Plunkert. GRAPHIC (color): On the cover: Illustration by Jeffrey Decoster. (Magazine, Page 2)