

Neighborhood Platform Progress Report

Issued by the Cleveland Neighborhood Development Coalition

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In 2001, the Cleveland Neighborhood Development Coalition (CNDC), in partnership with its 47 member community development organizations, joined together to identify priority areas and specific action steps for Cleveland's new mayor. The development of the Neighborhood Platform provided us with a simple and flexible tool to measure the performance of Cleveland's new mayor, Jane L. Campbell.

With the assistance of block clubs and more than 100 individuals who serve on CNDC's Organizer, Housing, Retail and Industrial committees, CNDC in August conducted an assessment of progress made on the Neighborhood Platform based on the decisions and actions taken by the Campbell Administration since they took office in January 2001.

The Campbell Administration has made some real progress in several critical areas including building & housing, parks & recreation and the technology & accessibility of City Hall. While we recognize the Mayor and her team have not had time to achieve their long-term vision and are facing some serious economic challenges and budgetary realities, we urge the Administration to redouble their efforts in other areas to help secure a strong future for our city.

While all of our Neighborhood Platform priorities remain important to us, tops on the wish list for CDCs are:

- Increased support for the Cleveland Industrial Retention Initiative to help the viability of manufacturers
- Increased community policing activities and better police visibility
- Inclusion of CDCs in Community Reinvestment Act agreements to maximize their benefits to Cleveland neighborhoods.

CNDC and our member CDCs stand ready to assist the Campbell Administration with great energy, creativity and tenacity in the coming years to achieve these and other goals to help build stronger neighborhoods for a better city.

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For more than two decades, Cleveland's community development industry has been on the front lines of Cleveland's renaissance by providing the know-how, vision and grassroots organizing that has resulted in the creation of jobs, housing and healthier neighborhoods citywide.

INCREASING PUBLIC INVESTMENT, STIMULATING PRIVATE INVESTMENT

The Campbell Administration deserves recognition for its performance in several critical areas in this category:

- **Establishment of a Department of Building and Housing:** In January, CDCs across the City applauded the Campbell Administration's swift action to create a separate Department of Building and Housing that we believe will increase the City's capacity to maintain housing stock and increase construction.
- **Creation of a Core Cities Fund:** The Administration this year created a Core Cities Fund with \$25 million available to tap for development projects. While not a dedicated revenue stream of \$10 million annually as called for in the Neighborhood Platform, Core Cities is an important initiative and a significant start. In implementation, we encourage the City to collaborate with CDCs in tailoring the Fund to ensure it can be leveraged as a useful neighborhood redevelopment tool, primarily for economic development purposes.
- **Protection from predatory lending and buying practices:** The Administration took positive action in implementing Flipping Task Force recommendations and opening a Department of Consumer Affairs to help provide a mechanism for processing complaints about unscrupulous predatory lending practices. We look forward to hearing back from the Department of Consumer Affairs to determine how CDCs can assist in their efforts, such as communicating to key representatives in the industry about available training.
- **Neighborhood protection from highway and traffic infrastructure projects:** The Administration deserves credit for the City's strong involvement and call for community input through the Innerbelt Scoping Committee.

We applaud the Administration's accomplishments in these areas and hope that additional progress can be made in some key development areas, specifically:

- **Strengthening support for the Cleveland Industrial Retention Initiative:** A stronger partnership with CIRC is needed to ensure the continued viability of this program that provides jobs for Cleveland residents. In our Neighborhood Platform, we recommended increasing the support for CIRC by 25 percent to be used not for staff, but rather for tangible activities that will help small businesses enhance their overall operations, such as the creation of a pool of funds to assist existing manufacturing companies improve efficiencies, improve labor force or assist with ISO certification.
- **Streamlining economic development loan and grant programs:** There's a reason why fewer and fewer companies are asking for the City's help: the process for obtaining City loans and grants is cumbersome. The problem is one

that the Campbell Administration inherited. The incentives are not high enough for companies involved to justify the unnecessarily long timelines, cumbersome processes and special requirements that are involved in the City's programs. We urge the City to study these issues and take seriously the complaints of businesses that have experienced the loan/grant process. This is one clear area in which a new committee needs to be established to determine how the programs could be streamlined and improved, and should include CDCs and business owners who have gone through the programs.

- **Increased involvement by the City in the development of Business Improvement Districts and Re-Store Cleveland:** The City must identify one person responsible for shep-

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INCREASING PUBLIC INVESTMENT, STIMULATING PRIVATE INVESTMENT *cont. from pg. 2*

herding neighborhoods through the BID process. Furthermore, the City must actively support the Re-Store Cleveland program in terms of resources and policy. In the past year, BIDS and Re-Store Cleveland activities have been moved forward without support or assistance from the City.

- **Investment in home repair programs:** Less money is available now for home repair programs than was available 18 months ago. The City must be creative in its management of and investment in such programs.

EDUCATION AND SAFETY

Increase police visibility and response times: CDCs have heard statistics which indicate that violent crime rates have decreased in the past year. We are pleased by those reports. However, community reports relative to police visibility and response times are not as encouraging. Based on the Organizer Committee's discussions with neighborhood block clubs, significant cuts have been made in community policing activities such as foot and bike patrols and are having a detrimental impact on police visibility and neighborhood safety (or, without statistics, at least the perception of it). We fully recognize the serious limitations on the City presented by the current financial situation. **However, we believe that the City must determine ways in which visibility might be increased and community policing activities be enhanced.**

Guarantee public accountability for expenditure of school bond revenues; keep residents informed:

- CNDC was asked to play a partnership role in the facilities planning process that we believe has resulted in improved community participation.
- The annual report issued in Spring 2003 from the Bond Accountability Commission was a long overdue report about the progress of the \$1.5 billion facilities project. Aside from that, communication has been lacking.
- We encourage the City to work with its partners at the School District and the Bond Accountability Commission to make progress reports more consistent to assure promises made during the Issue 14 campaign are kept.

INCREASING THE ROLE OF CDCS

- **In the coming months, we call upon the city to develop a strategy that allows more on-going CDC input regarding needs for private investment in neighborhood development projects, namely in monitoring and improving Community Reinvestment Act agreements.**

- CNDC believes CDCs add beneficial expertise, resources and community perspective in neighborhood development projects. Our Neighborhood Platform called for an increase to CDC operating grant programs by 50 percent last year. However,

due to the economic climate, the timing for such a request was not ideal nor did CNDC pursue it.

- In the coming year, the community development industry intends to foster discussions about the creation of a regional urban agenda. We hope that the City will agree to be a partner in our efforts through active participation in and support for our strategy.

INCREASING PARKS, RECREATION CENTERS, GREENSPACE AND PUBLIC ART

- **Creating accessible public space along the waterfront:** For more than a year, the City has led the comprehensive Lakefront Planning effort that has actively engaged hundreds -- including residents, diverse neighborhood and interest groups and other stakeholders -- in a public involvement process about improving lakefront access. Dozens of community meetings have garnered more than a thousand comments about how to connect Clevelanders with their lakefront. CNDC and our members are pleased that we could partner with the City and others on this overwhelmingly successful effort.
- **Increasing the number of parks, playgrounds and recreational opportunities; creating new neighborhood parks:** The City's Research, Planning and Development Division, unlike never before, has played an active role with the community in several successful playground planning projects, including projects in Ohio City and Tremont. These efforts to proactively engage the community with design and programming ensured the commu-

nity's wishes were reflected in the final design. We welcome more community-based efforts.

The City followed through on the recommendation for removal of the 20-year moratorium on creating parks in City neighborhoods, and we understand new parks are being planned. Our goal, however, is not simply to increase the inventory of parks, but also to take care of the parks we have. The Administration has indeed taken measures to ensure our current parks are maintained and used. We encourage the Administration to pursue the examples in Ohio City and Tremont, and take further efforts to improve parks from both service and community-building perspectives.

- **Connecting neighborhoods through off-road trail network:** The last stretch of the Lakefront Bike Path was completed in July of this year. We look forward to the extension of the Towpath Trail from Downtown connecting to the Lakefront and Ohio-Erie Canal bikeways.

TECHNOLOGY AND ACCESSIBILITY TO CITY HALL

- The Administration's efforts to upgrade technology have clearly improved the accessibility of City Hall to CDCs as well as the public. The increased availability of voice mail and e-mail are a welcome change, and the City's Web site is a significant improvement.
- Clearly, it will be critical to put even more information on-line to further improve communication and the ability to do personal and professional business with basic convenience. The obvious next step is to make more permitting applications available on-line coupled with efficient processing.
- Additionally, CDCs have long sought a computerized mechanism to track property. Such a tool would enable CDCs and realtors to look up past and present status of properties. The Administration should seriously consider implementing this technology soon.