

Choice Neighborhoods Project Proposals

Note: Attached is a description of the project proposals developed to date that you will be asked to rate during this meeting. If a project sponsor or potential funding source can't be identified the project may not be included in the final Choice Neighborhoods Plan. Every effort will be made to find secure sponsors for high priority projects.

Strategic Initiative – Income and Jobs

Project Ideas and Proposals

- Preston Street Employment Center – Engage business/property owners along Preston Street to identify a location for a business training center hub and opportunities for future business development. This effort could include working with RHA and other eligible partners to implement a comprehensive HUD Section 3 policy and promote strategic employment initiatives.
- Business Mentoring Program – This project involves training, coaching and other programs to help existing businesses grow and thrive, covering topics like marketing, bookkeeping, customer service, etc.
- Business Apprenticeship Project – Partner with RHA, Rockford School District, Rockford Park District, City of Rockford, Winnebago County, Crusader Clinic, independent contractors, law enforcement agencies, labor unions and YouthBuild to establish a viable apprenticeship program for youth and young adults.
- Building Trades Skills Development – RHA partnership with Union Contractors Association to work with Rockford Public Schools to target minority populations for participation in the building trades.
- Housekeeping and Maintenance Worker Training – This project would develop a employment pipeline for positions in Rockford area hotels (modeled after CARA program in Chicago) through Rock Valley College & private training classes.
- Institution Support Business Cooperative – This project idea would involve developing a new business designed to provide laundry and/or other support services to hospitals and other institutions (building upon a model currently operating in Cleveland, Ohio).
- Micro-Lending Program – This project would build upon similar programs that have operated around the country and in Rockford previously.
- West Side Grocery Store Development – This project involves attracting a grocer to meet the needs of Ellis Heights shoppers, possibly through the use of an appropriate public-private partnership structure.
- Work to Home Transit Links – This project involves working with the Rockford Transit Agency to develop more effective ways to connect residents without cars to work site and shopping.
- Urban Farming Project – Hire a farm manager to support urban agriculture initiatives on available land owned by the RHA.
- Ellis Heights Farmers Market – This project involves identifying a location for a regularly scheduled farmers market at a neighborhood location. Produce could come from neighborhood youth & other community gardens, urban farms, or other area farmers, and would include taking the steps needed to allow the use of SNAP to pay for produce.

- Neighborhood Youth Garden Project – Community garden rules would be changed to engage youth in urban agriculture and earn money by selling their produce.
- Ellis Heights Daycare Center – Establish a daycare center that meets the needs of working parents in terms of hours of operation, proximity to jobs and transit, etc.
- Ex-offender Employment Initiative – This program would include assistance in working to expunge minor criminal records to remove employment impediments and providing a positive re-entry program for parolees and others with prior criminal records returning to the community and seeking employment.

Strategic Initiative – Safe, Healthy Neighborhood

Project Ideas and Proposals

- Housing Demolition Project – Demolish deteriorated and vacant housing.
- Rental Maintenance Program/Housing Rehabilitation Partnership – This project is modeled on one operating in Springfield, IL and is designed to facilitate proper maintenance and improvements to Section 8 housing in Ellis Heights. Landlords would be responsible for purchasing materials for repairs, the RHA would undertake the required inspections and an organization such as YouthBuild would undertake the needed maintenance work.
- Ellis Heights/Fairgrounds Police Outpost – This project involves establishing a police substation in a vacant RHA unit at the Fairgrounds Valley Apartments or in a vacant City-owned building in the neighborhood.
- Home Maintenance Education Program/Renter Boot Camp – This project could involve single program or sequence of classes open to any interested resident to teach basic home maintenance skills, or more advanced home improvement training. (Lowe’s, Menards or other local retailers may be able to assist with classes on home repair and yard maintenance.) A component of this program would be a tenant education class that would focus on the responsibilities and property maintenance obligations of renters and landlords.
- Neighborhood Health Screening Project – Training so that neighborhood residents can assist with simple glucose reading tests, taking blood pressure, etc.
- Family Fitness Center – Build a community center designed to accommodate a broad range of athletic programs (basketball, track, swimming, volleyball, indoor soccer, etc.) and exercise facilities (weight training, cardio centers, exercise studios, etc.) for adults and children, with spectator seating, locker rooms, and concession/café facilities that provide healthy food.
- Healthy Eating Initiative (proposed) – Work with schools and faith-based organizations to teach how to prepare good tasting, healthy food, provide healthy food shopping tips, and advocate/lead by example (ensuring that pot-lucks and other gatherings have good-tasting, nutritious foods). Cooking classes could be held at churches, community resource centers and RHA sites. (School nutrition planners, University of Illinois Extension educators and Vegetarians in Motion could assist.)
- Neighborhood Boys & Girls Club – Establish a location for a Boys & Girls Club to serve Fairgrounds & Ellis Heights youth.

- Youth Neighborhood Improvement Corps – This organization could undertake small scale volunteer improvement projects or build upon the Junior Achievement model to create small business opportunities for neighborhood youth.
- Ellis Heights Block Club Creation/Block Club Association – This project establishing block clubs in all parts of the neighborhood and forming an umbrella group that could coordinate activities.
- Neighborhood Welcome Initiative – This project entails recruiting volunteers who would welcome new residents with an information packet that could include requirements for enrolling kids in school, Head Start and park district activities, brochures on the services provided at Crusader Clinic, Joyner Resource Center, etc., invitation to join the West Gateway Coalition, neighborhood block clubs, etc.
- Neighborhood Tool Lending/Rental Project – This project would include classes to provide instruction in care & use of tools, prior to use by participants.
- Life Skills Training – Classes would focus on skills like basic sewing/mending, cooking and other routine household activities.

Strategic Initiative – Education

Project Ideas and Proposals

- Walking School Bus – This project involves getting parent volunteers to be responsible for gathering and walking neighborhood children to school in a safe and timely manner.
- Important Papers Pouch– This project is designed to develop a way to help parents gather and store information (birth certificates, shot records, address information, etc.) needed for preschool, school and other activity applications.
- Family Literacy Initiative – This project focuses on educational activities (life skills, health, education, fitness) that require family members to work together. There would be an adult learning component and a learning component for children as well as intergenerational activities.
- Community Learning Center – Establish a facility in the Ellis Heights neighborhood that can be used by a broad range of community service providers and neighborhood organizations to improve health outcomes, provide education and training, etc.
- Lighted School House Initiative – Make use of space in Lewis Lemon and the Ellis Arts Academy for educational programming after school hours and in the evenings for educational programming (expansion of the programming now provided by the Rockford Park District and the YMCA).
- Youth Mentorship Program – This project envisions a coordinated mentorship initiatives that can be implemented by organizations serving neighborhood youth.