



## The Remaking of Emerson Park:

Neighborhood Revitalization, Community Activism and  
the Emerson Park Development Corporation, 1985-2002

By the students of UP 374: Neighborhood Planning, Spring 2002

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*We will bring it back to its full glory*

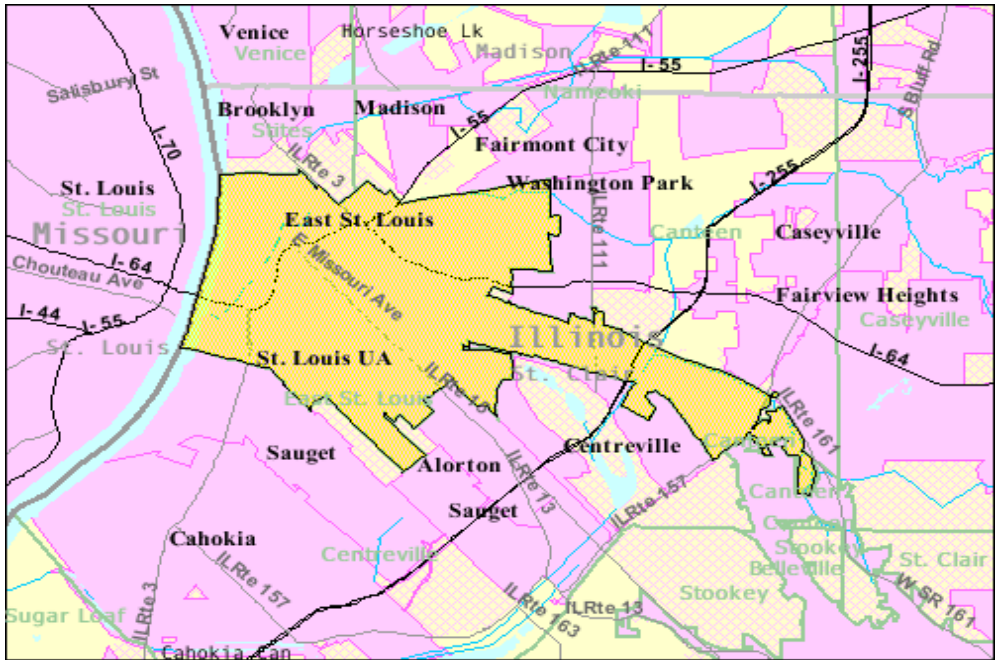
– Emerson Park resident

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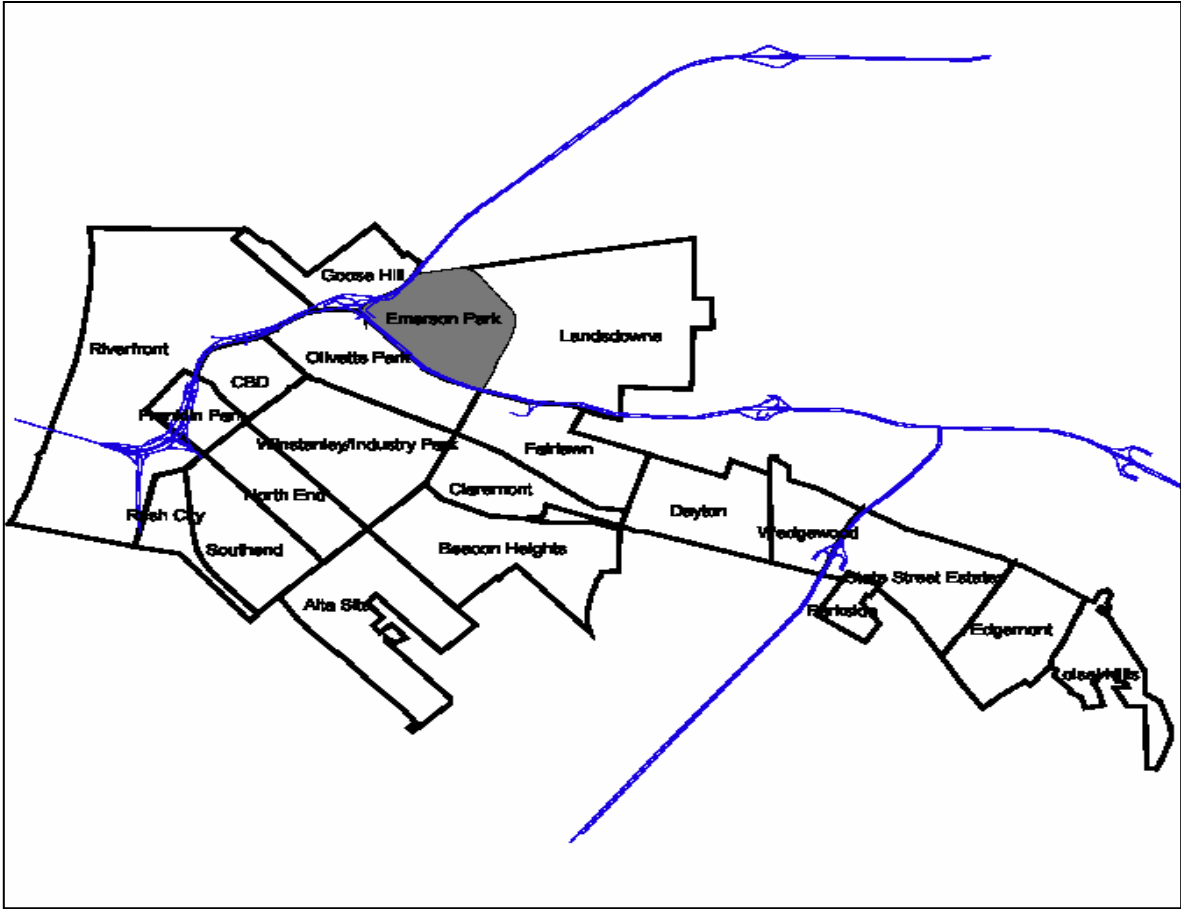
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East St. Louis City Boundaries, Courtesy American Fact Finder, 2000



East St.. Louis Neighborhood Map, Courtesy East St. Louis Action Research Project

## Introduction

East St. Louis has an especially rich social, political and cultural history. At the turn of the twentieth century, industrial growth and economic prosperity characterized the city. Located directly on the eastern bank of the Mississippi River in the state of Illinois, quickly became a prime location for railroads, stockyards, industrial and manufacturing plants and the home to many Lithuanian, German, Polish, Croatian, French, Bohemian and other Eastern European immigrants, Native Americans and African-American migrants particularly from the South. Across the river from the crowded urban center of St. Louis, Missouri, East St. Louis attracted residential development to house industrial employees.

After World War II, however, the once booming manufacturing companies closed their factories and left East St. Louis, taking employment and prosperity with them. The industrial jobs were an important source of income for middle-class and working-class residents alike, and the subsequent disappearance of retail and other local employment opportunities left those who stayed with few economic opportunities.

Today, many imagine East St. Louis as an impoverished and economically depressed African-American community. Less known are the stories of individuals who have dedicated countless hours toward neighborhood improvement and community revitalization. This document recognizes one such story. The remaking of the Emerson Park neighborhood in East St. Louis provides an alternative picture into the lives of people who have succeed in sustaining a community for their families and neighbors.

Emerson Park Development Corporation was established by a group of neighborhood men, women and youth, led by Ceola Davis of the Lessie Bates Davis Neighborhood House, in 1985. The original goal of EPDC was to enhance the quality of life in the 55-block neighborhood of Emerson Park by uniting residents around the causes of unemployment, environmental degradation and crime. With strategic community planning, creative urban design, on-going community organizing and accessible adult education, EPDC now has a remarkable list of accomplishments including housing rehabilitation, new housing construction, the start-up of HUD's Tomorrow's Builders YouthBuild Program, park renovation and the attainment of numerous awards and grants.

## **Birth of Emerson Park Development Corporation, 1985-1987**

### *Economic Restructuring in American cities*

The liberalization of national economies, automation of manufacturing and rapid advancements in communication and transportation technology have dramatically reshaped our cities and impacted the physical, social and economic health of many urban communities. Between 1947 and 1967, manufacturing employment in central cities declined by four percent in the U.S. as industrial jobs increased by ninety-four percent in the suburbs. As a result of these trends, East St. Louis lost over half its manufacturing jobs between 1950 and 1970 (Farley 2000, 286).

Industry moved out into suburban and rural areas for several reasons. Deindustrialization patterns coincided with the growth in demand for horizontal development plans, for example one-level factory complexes offered increased efficiency over urban multi-story factories. Suburban areas also offered cheaper land and more space. In addition, federally funded highways and interstates enabled industry to move out of the central city. These same highways facilitated the transportation of goods and services that made possible residential relocation away from urban areas.

Those who stayed in the cities increasingly had to rely on private vehicles to commute to work. Only a few U.S. cities have rapid-transit systems for urban to suburban commute patterns as well as between suburbs. For many low-wage workers, the growing geographic mismatch between affordable housing and employment put many inner-city residents at a disadvantage, particularly if they relied on public transportation. Only a half-century after the jobs started disappearing to surrounding communities did the residents of Emerson Park get their light rail system which connected the neighborhood to downtown St. Louis and the nearby suburban communities on the Illinois side.

### *Neighborhood Decline*

The declining economic base had dramatic impact on the physical landscape of the Emerson Park neighborhood. For example, during the 1980s Emerson Park lost approximately half its housing stock, with only 657 dwelling units left standing by 1990.<sup>1</sup> As a result of industrial turnover, many residents left East St. Louis to follow the jobs. At its peak, East St. Louis had a population of 82,285 in 1950. The 2000 census indicates that the population has continued to drop and now is 31,542. Similarly, Emerson Park's population dropped from 3,739 in 1960 to 1,658 in 1990.

The "flight" of the middle-class population, both white and black, shifted migration patterns away from East St. Louis and into the suburbs, to places such as Belleville and

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<sup>1</sup> EPDC estimates that 108 of the 861 vacant parcels became the side yards of the remaining families. Many families continue to voluntarily maintain these adjacent lots.

Granite City. Residents without the economic means to follow the jobs and business opportunities remained in East St. Louis. In addition, urban renewal and highway development disrupted many thriving African-American neighborhoods. For example, two federally funded highways, Interstate 55 to the north and Interstate 64 to the south, and two rail lines in Emerson Park create physical barriers separating the neighborhood from the rest of the city.

As people began to move out of East St. Louis, the racial composition of the city changed as well. In 1960, a majority of East St. Louis' population was white. In just a couple of decades the population of East St. Louis changed from predominately white to African-American. By 1990, both East St. Louis and Emerson Park's African-American population increased from approximately 68% in 1970 to 98%, a stark contrast to the surrounding St. Clair county communities which remained predominantly white.

As early as the 1960s, the economic and population shifts were further exacerbated by real estate agents who promoted racial segregation and encouraged "white flight" from East St. Louis. Mr. Suttle, a long term Emerson Park resident and active member of Emerson Park Development Corporation, explains,

... red lining was going on real strong. Even if you had a good job and you wanted to fix your home up ... [you'd go] to the bank and borrow money to fix it, you couldn't get it. So people just moved where they could. They'd move 10 miles up the road and get any money they wanted. Buy new houses, buy old houses and fix them up. But you couldn't do it in East St. Louis because it was red lined. Insurance companies red lined too. The insurance rate was three times as high here as it was ten miles away.

At the same time, "panic-peddling" and "block-busting" enabled black residents to move into Emerson Park from the South End neighborhood (many residents were displaced from the South End when Popular Bridge was under construction). Emerson Park, historically a white neighborhood, quickly transformed into an all black neighborhood as white families sold their homes in fear of dropping property values. Some bankers and insurance agents approved unstable loans, leaving unprepared and financially struggling residents without the means to maintain their homes in Emerson Park, while making sure to receive their own commissions since the loans were backed by the federal government.

Sustained deindustrialization during the 1970s and 1980s impacted nearly every industrial city, particularly in the Northeast and Midwest of the United States. The job losses, population decline and rise in families living in poverty exacerbated East St. Louis' economic and fiscal crisis. With a shrinking tax base and reduction in state and federal aid, the municipal government cut services and local programs. Broken street lights, potholes and other neighborhood infrastructure was left in disrepair. In an effort to raise local revenue, the government increased local taxes. By 1977, East St. Louis' tax rate per total capita assessed valuation (tax effort) was six-and-a-half times larger than the average tax effort of St. Clair County (Farley, 308-309). The high property tax rates

left little incentive to maintain homes because as assessment values increased, so did taxes.

Emerson Park, like many other parts of East St. Louis, began to look like a battleground rather than the once prosperous neighborhood it had been. By the mid-1980s public services became virtually nonexistent, services that in many other towns were taken for granted. Trash was not collected between 1987 and 1992. Deferred maintenance, the lack of street cleaning and trash pickup coupled with illegal dumping, contributed to the physical disorder and exposed the neighborhood to social disorder as well, particularly drug related criminal activity. When manhole covers were repeatedly stolen, the city replaced them with inferior ones that were quickly broken again. Many residents feared for the safety of children walking through the neighborhood. Some people burned their trash, but others left it in vacant lots and in the alleyways. Over time, abandoned and gutted buildings became a common fixture along the neighborhood blocks. Stray dogs wandered the streets and “pharmaceutical salesmen” hung around the street corners and parks.

### *Abandoned Houses and Chicken Dinners*

In the mid-1980s a group of Emerson Park residents decided that they had had enough. They were tired of political corruption, city bureaucracy and the physical disorder contributing to an ongoing cycle of decline in the neighborhood. According to the nomenclature of Anthony Downs, the neighborhood would have been considered “heavily deteriorated” and with no signs of improvement (Downs, pg. 65).

Ceola Davis led the neighborhood organizing as a staff member of the Lessie Bates Davis Neighborhood House in Emerson Park.<sup>2</sup> Lessie Bates provided social services, child care, after-school and recreation programs for school-aged children as well as utility assistance and employment training. Ms. Davis, once a client at the Neighborhood House, eventually became a staff member and began working with families struggling to pay their utility bills. Ms. Davis had a deep commitment and a shared sense of solidarity with those living in the neighborhood, as she was a life-long resident of East St. Louis and lived in Center City Homes, a public housing project in Emerson Park. She not only worked to provide services to families in need, but also motivated people to think broadly about neighborhood revitalization in Emerson Park. Over time, neighborhood clean-ups and neighborhood beautification became an established part of the Neighborhood House’s seasonal activities.

Despite these activities, the neighborhood still faced many hurdles. Meeting with people in their homes, in her office and in the alleyways, Ms. Davis rounded up a critical mass of residents. At one point, Ms. Davis met with Doug Borders, owner of Borders’ Trucking, and discussed the problem of abandoned houses in the neighborhood. With little money to deal with the hundreds of burnt down and crumbling homes, Ms. Davis and Mr. Borders, along with the help of many other women and men including Anna Stevenson, Lillian “Shug Park” Shugue, Cathy Tucker, Emil Lampkin, Oran Jackson,

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<sup>2</sup> Lessie Bates Davis Neighborhood House was founded in 1909 by the United Methodist Foundation.

Eric Steeta and Willie Ron of East Side Partners got to work. Ms. Davis brought Mr. Ron and Mr. Borders a list of problematic houses in the neighborhood. In turn, Mr. Borders recalls they looked for “good lumber, aluminum and brick to sell to salvage and recycling companies.” Using their connections to people working in construction and related businesses, Mr. Borders and Mr. Ron were able to find buyers for the salvageable materials, such as, a contractor in Atlanta looking for old bricks.

The abandoned homes and derelict structures posed safety hazards to neighborhood residents, particularly children. Ms. Davis recalls that she organized a clean-up around a particular vacant lot because a young girl had been raped in a nearby abandoned home. Ms. Davis mobilized residents and anyone else willing to work to help tear down the houses. Mr. Borders and Mr. Ron put their regular work on hold and dedicated three months of their time and equipment to the neighborhood project. Mr. Borders said, “I called my debts in.” Everyone who owed him a penny came out to dismantle the houses or haul the debris away. After tearing down three houses brick by brick, the group made \$3,000. Then Ms. Davis used the money to sell fried chicken dinners to residents and daycare centers in the neighborhood. She handed out flyers saying, “Don’t cook tonight, dinner at Ceola’s.” Ms. Davis and the early Emerson Park neighborhood organization stretched a few pennies into thousands of dollars which enabled them to beautify the neighborhood houses, streets and parks.

These early actions grabbed the attention of many people and mark the beginning of a long history of struggle between neighborhood leaders and the regional power structure. Ms. Davis, Mr. Borders and Mr. Ron were arrested for taking down the houses, but were later released without charges. Many residents hesitated when it came to challenging authority because the city government, housing authority or other powerful local institutions threatened to evict them, put them in jail or fire a family member. Being a single woman without many family ties, Ms. Davis did not worry about corrupt politicians, government officials or landlords taking revenge. Other residents worked secretly and looked beyond the law to remedy neighborhood problems. A number of houses fell victim to “arson for neighborhood stabilization” as a last resort. Eventually, the work of Emerson Park residents proved to city hall and others that they were organized and they were not going to back down until the derelict structures were removed from the neighborhood. Direct action and confrontation techniques were the hallmarks of Emerson Park’s early neighborhood activists and continue to influence the foundations of neighborhood revitalization by the Emerson Park Development Corporation.





## Struggle for Power, 1988-1990

The period from 1988 to 1990 was still a formative period for the EPDC. This was also a formative period for the University of Illinois' involvement with East St. Louis and a time of community organizing throughout the city.

### *Early University Involvement*

As a preface to this period in the history of Emerson Park, it is important to understand the University of Illinois' early involvement in East St. Louis. In 1987, State Representative Wyvetter Younge, the Chairperson of the Illinois Committee on Higher Education Finance, challenged the University of Illinois to demonstrate its commitment to the state's urban poor. She is often quoted as saying, "There's no way in hell your budget will be approved if the university doesn't figure out its public service mission." The university responded by creating the Urban Extension and Minority Access Program (UEMAP), led by the School of Architecture in collaboration with the Department of Landscape Architecture and the Department of Urban and Regional Planning. Under the leadership of Professors Carolyn Dry and Ernest Clay from the School of Architecture, approximately 130 students and 16 faculty members engaged in research on East St. Louis between 1987 and 1989.

During this time period, students and professors conducted their research according to the "professional-expert" model that provided little opportunity for local involvement. Their research focused on large-scale waterfront and downtown redevelopment projects along with a plan to build a modular housing factory in East St. Louis. Students also developed a master plan for the city. According to Professor Dry, this strategy was adopted because of a belief that by focusing on improving physical infrastructure and promoting economic development, they could stimulate job creation and improve the social welfare of local residents.

During this period, the Emerson Park Development Corporation, led by Ceola Davis, was active as well. Ms. Davis' work with the Emerson Park Development Corporation was a logical outgrowth of her job as a community outreach worker at the Neighborhood House. By 1989, Emerson Park Development Corporation took an important step towards formalizing itself by incorporating with the State of Illinois as a non-profit corporation. Several other residents including Richard Suttle, Sr., Peggy Hume, Herb Reed, Pinkie Whittaker, Henry Peete and Ella Rush became more involved as the organization formalized.<sup>3</sup>

According to Ms. Hume, the university's early focus was on "the whole cleanup thing. ...trash wasn't being picked up, so we would get out and clean lots and things like that." Mr. Suttle adds that, "They [the university] were doing a lot around alleys and stuff like that, but nothing else was happening. In fact a lot of students from the university they

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<sup>3</sup> Other people?

were coming down here ... It wasn't really our deal. People from the school were coming down here and doing all the work. Folks who lived in the neighborhood were sitting on their porch and saying 'hey, you're doing a good job,' but they were not taking part."

### *Community Organizing*

During this same time period, a group called New Spirit Community Organizing began doing neighborhood cleanups and pressing the city to restore trash collection in the area. New Spirit was a collaboration of neighborhood organizations led by Sister Cecilia of St. Patrick's Church. Some Emerson Park Development Corporation members also participated in New Spirit including Mr. Suttle, Sr. Meanwhile, Ms. Davis and other Emerson Park residents continued to pressure the local government to do something about the derelict houses, illegal dumping and trash service.

It was around this time, in 1989, that members of the Neighborhood House completed formal training in direct action organizing through the Midwest Academy. This style of community mobilization empowers residents to take direct action against community problems. Employing this strategy, Emerson Park Development Corporation members sought out residents who were not involved in the organization, but faced the same type of daily struggles and concerns. By organizing neighbors together, EPDC increased the power of the neighborhood. EPDC used the increased membership as a means to create change in Emerson Park. Henry Peete explains how this worked in practice: "...if we wanted something done in the city Ms. Davis always taught us, go in big numbers . . . maybe about thirty or forty of us would go down there to a council meeting."

### *Emerging Partnerships*

A significant turning point for both the Emerson Park Development Corporation and the University of Illinois' involvement in East St. Louis took place between 1989 and 1990. In 1989, students and faculty members from the university were losing interest in East St. Louis because their ideas were not being implemented. Soon thereafter, Ken Reardon was hired by the university as an assistant professor in the Department of Urban and Regional Planning. Professor Reardon collaborated with the UEMAP faculty to complete a preliminary evaluation of the program. A series of interviews with over fifty neighborhood activists, professional planners and local government officials revealed that few residents and local officials were aware of the university's research. In his interview with Ms. Davis, Professor Reardon asked, "What do you think about a university outreach program?" Ms. Davis squeezed Professor Reardon's hand and said, "Honey, we don't want a guy that looks like you telling us what any sixth grader already knows." Ms. Davis was one of many residents who were skeptical of the university as the university along with many other government institutions, had a long history of failed redevelopment and revitalization programs in the area.

In response to the input from Emerson Park neighborhood leaders and the results of surveys with local residents and officials, the university adopted a new approach that emphasized community development based on participatory action research. The name

of the program was changed to the East St. Louis Action Research Project (ESLARP). In the fall of 1990, Mike Andrejasich of the School of Architecture, and Brian Orland of the Department of Landscape Architecture along with Professor Reardon and eleven of his students, began working with the Emerson Park Development Corporation to develop a comprehensive neighborhood improvement plan. Residents collaborated with university researchers to identify significant neighborhood issues that could be addressed in the new neighborhood plan. An emphasis was placed on developing specific policies and programs that could be implemented with minimal resources and would contribute to concrete improvements in the quality of life of neighborhood residents.



## Partnership with the University, 1990-1994

### *The Ceola Accords*

Up until 1990, the Lessie Bates Davis Neighborhood House had been the primary supporter of the EPDC. However, with its limited resources, the Neighborhood House was finding it increasingly difficult to support EPDC while concentrating on its core mission. When the University of Illinois began soliciting potential neighborhood partners to collaborate with, Bill Kreeb, the director of the Neighborhood House, felt that a partnership between EPDC and the university would benefit both EPDC and the Neighborhood House.

Despite Ms. Davis' early uncertainty, she also saw this as an excellent opportunity to combine forces with the University of Illinois to help further the goals of the EPDC. Before agreeing to this collaboration, Ceola Davis offered a series of conditions to Professor Reardon and others at the university. First, the community should be given control of the university's local research agenda. Second, residents should participate actively in each step of the research and planning process. Third, a greater emphasis should be placed on program development and implementation. Fourth, the university should make a stronger commitment to raising funds for local community revitalization programs. Fifth, she wanted a greater commitment to developing non-profit organizations.

### *Partnering with the University*

In 1990, progress towards developing the comprehensive plan began, under the newly formed partnership between the EPDC and the university (Professor Reardon and students) as well as under the new empowerment planning initiative. Bi-weekly meetings with community leaders and residents were held and community participation was employed in completing the land use, building and site condition, and infrastructure maintenance survey of the Emerson Park Neighborhood. Residents were paired with university students and sent to complete their surveys, a tactic that generated considerable attention among those who lived in the neighborhood. These research-related encounters with neighborhood residents increased monthly meeting attendance from 15 to 125 in the fall of 1990.

Not only did the university involvement contribute to EPDC's organizing efforts, but EPDC made a lasting impression on many students. Perhaps no one else has been impacted as much as Vickie Kimmel Forby. Beginning in 1991, under the instruction of Professor Reardon, Ms. Forby volunteered in the ESLARP program and as a student through the East St. Louis Planning Workshop. Ms. Forby was also instructed by the leaders in the Emerson Park neighborhood such as Ms. Davis and Mr. Suttle, Sr. Under their guidance, she learned the subtleties of living in Emerson Park, especially from a political aspect. On one particular occasion, Ms. Davis asked Ms. Forby to bring a roll of butcher-block paper and markers on her next trip to Emerson Park. Ms. Davis used the

supplies to map out the entire political hierarchy in the neighborhood, starting with the mayor. Ms. Forby explains, “I kept looking at her and thinking that I would have never thought that that was important, but it was really important because East St. Louis is like any other small town, everybody knows everybody, and most people are connected whether they are related or whether they are friends or neighbors or however community comes together, people are connected.” As Emerson Park Development Corporation grew so did Ms. Forby’s admiration for the community. According to Ms. Forby, “It changed my life.”

### *The First Neighborhood Plan*

The planning students needed only four months to draft a preliminary neighborhood plan, which was presented to neighborhood residents for review in early December 1990. In January 1991, local residents met to formally adopt the Emerson Park Neighborhood Improvement Plan. Major components of the 1991 Neighborhood Improvement Plan sought to aid Emerson Park in the areas of neighborhood beautification, housing rehabilitation and development, substance abuse and public safety, economic development and job generation, and community organizing.

One of the most important and substantial areas of the plan included the implementation of “small-scale physical improvement projects.” Beautification and maintenance of vacant lots became an integral part of the plan as well. In addition, the plan called for the development of a building and site code enforcement program to preserve the changes made to neighborhood properties. And recommended that public amenities and neighborhood infrastructure be upgraded.

Eleven specific activities were mentioned to meet the above objectives. They included:

1. Organization of a large-scale volunteer clean-up project.
2. Forming of a locally organized lawn care cooperative, employing out-of-work neighborhood residents to cut and maintain county-owned vacant lots.
3. Encouragement by St. Clair County for owners of poorly maintained properties to hire the above services.
4. Assignment of neighborhood clean-up activities to those on probation with mandatory community service hours to fulfill.
5. Development of a “tool library” to provide equipment needed by residents for the outdoor clean-up projects.
6. Formation of a Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP) to increase community involvement of area youth by providing summer employment for clean-up efforts and to increase education in the areas of neighborhood environmental concerns.
7. The passing and strict enforcement of a no-dumping ordinance by the East St. Louis City Council. This included stricter fines for offenders of illegal

- dumping. Revenues collected from the stiffer fines fund the enforcement of the new regulation.
8. Acquirement of funding for a building seal-up and demolition cooperative. The local unemployed would be hired for these projects, much like the lawn care cooperative above.
  9. Acquirement of funding for emergency street and infrastructure repairs, including the replacement of missing manhole covers, the filling of large potholes, and the installation of street signs and missing street lights.
  10. Organization of a grassroots effort between the community and University of Illinois students for the design and building of a community playground and park across from the Cannady School.
  11. Completion of a feasibility study by University of Illinois students for the development of a community recycling cooperative program which would address the city's waste disposal problem while creating low-skill jobs for residents.

The emphasis on small-scale neighborhood beautification projects made the plan more tangible and enabled the ideas and goals to be realized. The implementation of the above activities was entirely reliant upon the organized efforts of local volunteers. These activities also relied upon funding provided by local professional and business organizations and required the cooperation of state, county and city government. Federal cooperation was also needed for the clean up of hazardous waste sites within the neighborhood. The Neighborhood Plan recommended that EPDC hire a "full-time community organizer with community development and housing experience" using funding provided by local, regional and national foundations.

### *Community-based Prevention Plan*

Discussion about the neighborhood plan led to the EPDC asking ESLARP to assist in developing a community-based substance abuse and crime prevention program. This plan focused upon improving safety and reducing crime throughout the neighborhood. By analyzing then-current crime statistics for the city of East St. Louis, University of Illinois staff developed a Community Safety Plan for the Emerson Park Neighborhood. The Plan included the following six major points:

1. Physical Safety (Residential, Commercial, Industrial)
2. Crime Prevention through Environmental Design
3. Creating a Community-based Substance Abuse Prevention Policy
4. Organizing a Neighborhood Crime Watch
5. Developing a Community Policing Plan in East St. Louis
6. Implementation of the Emerson Park Public Safety Plan

Important parts of the Community Safety Plan instructed residents on how to improve the overall security of their homes. Guidelines attached to the document included ways in which residents could take greater measures to protect against intruders, including the installation of reliable window and door locks and the construction of symbolic physical barriers in front and around the perimeter of their homes.

Residents had four main priorities for the first year of the Community Safety Plan's implementation. First was the creation of an effective Neighborhood Crime Watch Program. Second on the list was crime prevention education programs for residents listed (including instruction on home security improvements). Next was the development of a crime analysis system, which would provide residents access to monthly information on arrests occurring within the neighborhood. Fourth, guidelines were to be established for basic Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) improvements. CPTED rests on the idea that the physical environment can be changed or managed to produce behavioral effects that will reduce the incidence and fear of crime, thereby improving the quality of life.

### *Land Banking*

EPDC also started buying up land parcels in 1994 in order to prevent land speculation and to control future development in the neighborhood. Ownership of land in the area later proved useful for the siting of the new MetroLink stop and the development of new housing. Through St. Clair County, the governing jurisdiction for East St. Louis, the EPDC bought land as it became available through public auction. EPDC purchased (and continues to purchase) land for a price based on the frontage of the property. Because the land is relatively affordable, EPDC was able to purchase and maintain as well as pay taxes on the vacant lots. As opportunities present themselves, EPDC prepares the lots for development, as was the case in the new Parsons Place development.

Land banking poses some challenges, particularly in the demolition of derelict structures in a timely manner. The city moves quickly on removing brick buildings, because they sell the bricks for a handsome profit, whereas wood-framed homes provide the city with little monetary incentive. Therefore, EPDC has had to struggle to clean up some lots, through no fault of its own and to demolish derelict wood-frame structures on certain abandoned properties. In 1994, Emerson Park had 378 derelict buildings, today they have less than 42.

As of 2002, EPDC owned approximately twenty to twenty-five percent of the vacant land, about 325 lots, in the neighborhood. In other words, these land purchases account for about 50,000 frontage feet, or enough to build 100 single-family homes with fifty front feet each. EPDC expects to purchase seven more in the next year. EPDC spends approximately \$150 to \$750 per lot at the county auction, and about \$9,000 a year in property taxes and to keep the lots clean.



## Capacity Building, 1995-1998

The period between 1995 and 1998 was a time of tremendous growth for the Emerson Park Development Corporation and the neighborhood. As word spread about EPDC's mission, the core membership grew from 50 to 180. EPDC gained federal 501c3 tax-exempt status in addition to state recognition as a non-profit organization. These newly acquired powers, along with a new executive director and strong community involvement, created the necessary framework to complete large-scale projects, such as the MetroLink station, new community housing and the renovation of Cannady Park. These developments propelled EPDC and the Emerson Park neighborhood into the position they are in today.

### *Formalizing the Organization and Hiring Staff*

Beginning in 1994, Ms. Forby began working for the University of Illinois Extension, which "provides practical, research-based information and programs to help individuals, families, farms, businesses and communities in Illinois." Through the university extension, Ms. Forby participated in outreach work in East St. Louis, prompting many to notice her commitment to the area. In 1994, in fact, she proved integral to the mobilization of the community in its efforts to relocate the site of the MetroLink light rail station to Emerson Park, a goal that ultimately was accomplished and which she considers one of EPDC's greatest successes. After two years with university extension, Ms. Forby accepted the job as executive director of EPDC.

Two crucial factors in EPDC's increased influence were the acquisition in October 1995 of 501c3 tax-exempt status and recognition as a non-profit tax-exempt organization. This allowed EPDC to independently seek grants, donations, and funds tax free. Before this period, they had relied on other fiscal agents, such as Lessie Bates Davis Neighborhood House, the University of Illinois and the city. With the new 501c3 status, the EPDC gained financial flexibility and final decision-making power. This redistribution of power to EPDC from other outside organizations created a more balanced power structure within Emerson Park. As Ms. Forby explains, "Nothing is healthier for a community than competition."

Being recognized as a non-profit tax-exempt organization by the state of Illinois gave EPDC access to additional governmental programs and funding, for example EPDC could compete for Community Development Block Grants (CDBG) and Ford Foundation grants. Emerson Park's ability to purchase land cheaply allowed them to maintain more control over local neighborhood development. The Urban Resources Partnership Program awarded EPDC their first federal grant in 1995 for the amount of \$35,000 to clear fifty lots and create a Christmas tree farm and pumpkin patch. EPDC planted 350 four-inch saplings in 1996; today the Christmas trees stand over four feet tall.

EPDC's success with these projects demonstrated that the EPDC was able to manage federal funds in a responsible and accountable fashion. EPDC's proven for financial

dependability led to larger grants from the government, including a \$50,000 grant in 1996 and another two for \$100,000 in 1997 and 1998, all from Urban Resources. Urban Resources continues to be EPDC's most consistent source of funding. In 1997, EPDC received a one-time operating grant from the East St. Louis Community Fund of \$40,000.<sup>4</sup> This grant allowed for further growth and provisions for the organization, such as additional staff and additional office expenses, including the purchase of a computer. Ms. Forby and Cathy Klump, another UIUC student, were hired using this operating grant.

### *MetroLink*

In all of Emerson Park Development Corporation's attempts at revitalizing the neighborhood, one of the most significant events was the securing of the MetroLink extension at 15<sup>th</sup> Street and Baugh Avenue. Now for the first time, people had an alternative means of convenient public transportation both into and out of the Emerson Park neighborhood.

It all started when, in 1994, the EPDC Board--Ceola Davis; Richard M. Suttle, Sr., Cathy Tucker and Peggy Hume--and Ms. Forby learned of the MetroLink extension project. EPDC mobilized the neighborhood residents to call for the relocation of the proposed MetroLink light rail station in Emerson Park. This would provide the neighborhood a means to achieve what residents wanted: a return of neighborhood services and businesses such as a gas station, dry cleaners and neighborhood markets.

EPDC lobbied for a "park-and-ride" facility on the north side of Interstate 64 in the Emerson Park neighborhood rather than the proposed elevated line and "walk-and-ride" station on the south side of Interstate 64. Residents wanted greater economic development opportunities that came with the park-and-ride facility along with expected increases in the area's population, disposable income and car counts. The MetroLink was viewed as a key to future development.

Emerson Park worked with East-West Gateway Coordinating Council, UIUC and other local officials to win East St. Louis' city council's support of the proposed changes. In 1995, Mayor Gordon Bush and the council agreed to the realignment of the MetroLink station and the park-and-ride concept. The final project design included increased parking and a retail pad at the station, thanks to the proposals developed by UIUC architecture students in 1996.

The parking lot accommodates over 850 vehicles, giving the Emerson Park MetroLink station the second largest parking lot on the entire line. Today, the parking lot fills up each morning with residents from both East St. Louis and the surrounding suburbs looking to shorten their commute to work. According to the Bi-State Development

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<sup>4</sup> Establishment of the East St. Louis Community Fund was the result of a legal settlement in 1993. The court ordered Louisiana Riverfront Development to deposit \$7 million as repayment for illegal use of public funds.

Agency, the average weekday ridership for MetroLink in FY 2001 was 42,381 (St. Louis Regional Transit 2002).

The completion of this project came about through the relationships and partnerships among three different types of groups: neighborhood and advocacy organizations (including ESLARP at the University of Illinois and the Lessie Bates Davis Neighborhood House), transportation and county departments (including the Bi-State Development Agency, East-West Gateway Coordinating Council, Madison County and St. Clair County), and local city council members in East St. Louis. Although there was much disagreement along the way as to where the new station would be located, the various groups eventually agreed that it would be in the Emerson Park neighborhood.

A great deal of media and academic attention has been given to this major accomplishment. The Emerson Park MetroLink extension is just one example of a situation proving that hard work really does pay off. After waiting eight long years, the first MetroLink train entered the new station on May 4, 2001.

### *Housing Rehabilitation and New Construction*

For decades Emerson Park, along with other neighborhoods in East St. Louis, did not see any new residential development. Many existing homes were falling into disrepair as owners were unsuccessful in their attempts to get home improvement loans because of long-standing red lining practices.

EPDC joined a coalition of neighborhood service providers to improve the declining housing stock in Emerson Park. Emerson Park Development Corporation, Lessie Bates Davis Neighborhood House, The Catholic Urban Program, East Side Heart and Home Corporation, ESLARP and others joined together to form the Neighborhood-based Family Housing Program. They set the goal of building twenty-five new homes for low-income families that were currently living in substandard housing in their first five years of operation. All homes in this program were built through volunteer work and then sold to the families for no profit. First Illinois Bank provided the funding for construction. To keep the mortgage costs within reach of low-income families, each home receives \$15-20,000 from HOME funds to bring the loan amount down. Through this program, EPDC has helped develop four new homes in the neighborhood on the 1300 block of Winstanley.

With their 501c3 tax-exempt status in hand, EPDC was able to receive a HUD grant for home rehabilitation. In 1997, CDBG Operations Corporation awarded EPDC with a \$150,000 HOME grant for the rehabilitation of six owner-occupied homes in the neighborhood. The EPDC board required that the applicants be low-income residents living in Emerson Park. Then at one of the board meetings, a local youth picked five names out of a hat. Each home received approximately \$25,000 for home improvements. While EPDC was excited about the rehabilitation projects, they also recognized that every home in the neighborhood needed between \$10,000 and \$40,000 worth of rehabilitation work.

In addition, in 1998 EPDC started to individually assist families in qualifying for home improvement loans through the city's CDBG competition for home improvement grants and loans. The staff at EPDC helped families in need fill out the application. Of the 600 that applied the first year, only fifty "got in the door," of which only fourteen of EPDC-assisted families were selected. EPDC continues to help families apply for home improvement assistance.

### *Cannady Park Renovation*

The renovation of Cannady Park was one of the major physical development accomplishments of 1998 in the Emerson Park neighborhood. Located on 15<sup>th</sup> Street, directly across from the Cannady Elementary School, this three-acre park was owned by the City of East St. Louis and had only one small playground, built in 1980. The park was neglected and had not been properly maintained for a long time. When the park was finally brought to the attention of EPDC in 1998, it was a completely overgrown weedy field. As a result of the efforts to revitalize the park, EPDC received an Urban Resource Partnership grant of \$100,000. Ms. Forby and other local residents aspired to turn the park into a place that residents could use daily. Ms. Forby explains that part of the motivation to restore the park came from Ms. Davis: "Cannady Park was a dream of Ceola's... when we received that grant she was really excited because we were going to be able to do something directly affecting the children."

They adopted the city's first effort to use recycled materials and spent \$100,000 to build the basketball courts, add more playground equipment and to restore the park. Emerson Park residents as well as EPDC, ESLARP, Neighborhood Technical Assistance Center (NTAC)<sup>5</sup> and other UIUC organizations including members of the APO fraternity, contributed to the fieldwork that took place mostly in May of 1998. After renovation the park had one newer playground and one basketball court.

Local officials were reluctant to install the basketball court because they feared that the park would eventually attract local drug dealers and gangs. But the EPDC Board "decided that we could risk it. We could at least get them off the street. They wouldn't be blocking traffic. And if they were going to sell drugs then we were doing this around a bunch of houses that we could get enough neighbors to run that kind of activity off, and that's exactly what we did." EPDC also had local youth help build and paint the courts. The youth took "ownership" over the park and since its creation few problems have been reported. The basketball courts continue to be one of the nicest landmarks for local youth and residents.

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<sup>5</sup> NTAC was established in 1995 as an extension of ESLARP in East St. Louis. NTAC staff assisted EPDC with grant writing and project implementation.





## **Building a Sustainable Neighborhood, 1999-2002**

Through the use of strategic community planning, urban design, community organizing and adult education, EPDC has an impressive record of accomplishment. Since 1999, the Emerson Park community has experienced many positive changes with the help of the Emerson Park Development Corporation. But to keep things in perspective, Ella Rush points out that “we’ve come a long way, and this did not happen over a year or two.” The more recent successes are the fruits of planting a solid foundation for these projects to rest upon, which has taken over fifteen years of hard work. Some of the more recent accomplishments include an expansion the EPDC staff, regional recognition, and development of a sustainable neighborhood revitalization plan. EPDC also continues to envision the future with resident and community empowerment as a centerpiece.

### *Incubator: A New Community Building*

In 1999, the EPDC began leasing a former Small Business Incubator and the former Vanilla Company from Lessie Bates Davis Neighborhood House for the purpose of creating office space for several community organizations. EPDC moved their operation from the basement library in the Neighborhood House to a building just outside the Emerson Park neighborhood, what residents refer to as the “incubator.” In 2000, EPDC added five YouthBuild instructors, and move enabled them to work more effectively.

In six years, the EPDC budget jumped from \$35,000 in 1995 to \$1.3 million in 2000. EPDC has nine paid staff members whose work ranges from community organizing and housing assistance to counseling and general office duties. More specifically, EPDC has a full-time executive director, office manager, five YouthBuild instructors, one GED staff person and one community organizer. The GED staff’s salary is paid for by South Western Illinois College and the community organizer’s by Sustainable Neighborhoods Regional Housing and Community Development Alliance. In addition, the board of directors was expanded from four to thirteen members in March 2000.

Today, the incubator is used to run the day-to-day operation of EPDC and serves as a community center for local residents. In addition to space for EPDC offices, there is a computer laboratory, a dance studio, an after-school activity center, the Carpentry Pre-Apprenticeship Program and classrooms for the YouthBuild program. Eventually, EPDC would like to see a new youth and family development center in the Emerson Park neighborhood.

### *Second Neighborhood Revitalization Plan*

In 1999, the EPDC board decided it was time to create another neighborhood plan because the one drawn up in 1990 had become out of date. The plan was based on input from community meetings and the data from surveys and interviews carried out in the neighborhood. UIUC students conducted a neighborhood physical assessment

survey of land-use and infrastructure as well as interviewed over one hundred residents and thirty community and business leaders. Between September and December of 1998, residents worked to develop the neighborhood plan. Cathy Klump, a former planning student at the University of Illinois, helped finalize the written document as part of her Master's Project.<sup>6</sup>

As part of developing the new plan, Emerson Park residents participated in a "Cognitive Mapping Exercise" with the assistance of planning and design students from the university. The residents identified the most important features of the neighborhood using photographs and color markers on large maps. The cognitive mapping exercise was the first step in the SWOT analysis -- a technique used to identify neighborhood strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats.

The top ten neighborhood strengths included the following: 1) location and access to jobs and services, 2) strong sense of community, 3) improved services, 4) availability of neighborhood-based social services, 5) presence of numerous religious institutions, 6) new housing investment, 7) reasonably priced and publicly controlled land for redevelopment, 8) presence of neighborhood-oriented businesses, 9) availability of buildings for rehabilitation and 10) the presence of an effective community development corporation (EPDC). The top ten neighborhood weaknesses included: 1) population loss, 2) extensive housing deterioration, 3) weak municipal housing demolition program, 4) drug related crime and prostitution, 5) lack of municipal investment in street and infrastructure maintenance and repair, 6) lack of living-wage jobs, 7) limited neighborhood-based retail, 8) lack of animal control, 9) lack of activities for children of all ages and seniors and 10) high-priced utilities.

The rationale behind the new plan included updating Emerson Park's goals to reflect changes in the neighborhood such as the MetroLink station and Parsons Place, as well as developing a strategy for implementation of those goals. The finished plan contains six target area objectives and several strategies for achieving Emerson Park's goals for the future as articulated by the residents. The strategies include focusing on economic development, housing improvement, crime prevention, human services, zoning, land use and municipal infrastructure improvements, and community organizing.

### *Parsons Place*

Emerson Park is growing their first sustainable neighborhood with Parsons Place. In 1999 EPDC finalized a development plan for new housing in Emerson Park with McCormack Baron and Associates, utilizing a tax credit deal to keep the units affordable. The Parsons Place development includes financing approximately \$1 to 1.5 million from the Enterprise Community, the Enterprise Zone, the Economic Development Administration, tax increment financing, the Illinois Housing Development

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<sup>6</sup> In June 1999, Ms. Klump was hired as the director of the Neighborhood Technical Assistance Center, where she provided technical assistance to EPDC. For example, NTAC collaborated with EPDC in proposal writing and assisting with ESLARP outreach weekends. Emerson Park has seen over 2,500 student volunteers since 1990.

Authority and the Danforth Foundation. Sun American Bank and AFL-CIO Investment Trust will carry the first and second mortgages respectively. The development is the first major housing project in East St. Louis in twenty years.

Parsons Place, a \$21 million development of town homes and apartments, includes a mix of market-rate and low- and moderate-income subsidized units. The project is a 174-unit multi-family rental apartment development, located across the street from the new MetroLink station in Emerson Park. "We are really hoping to change the face of what people see as they drive by the city," states Ms. Forby. The new development replaced 47 acres of weeds and burned-out houses. Parsons Place now serves as a new neighborhood gateway from I-64. Henry Peete, the current vice president of EPDC, now believes "a lot of people who moved away from Emerson Park want to come back." Mr. Suttle, Sr. adds, "It's the die-hard folks like me who were determined to stay here and try to bring the city back to life, because it was truly dying." Parsons Place may be the catalyst for bringing residents and economic development back to Emerson Park.

The first of three phases was completed in December 2001 and is currently being leased. This housing development was a huge success for the EPDC. It provides safe quality housing options located close to transportation and is a well spring for pride and forward momentum. The new housing will nearly double the neighborhood's population, adding 800 to 1,000 people.

As a co-general partner of Parsons Place, EPDC recently received approximately \$300,000 for their operating expenses. The EPDC board has started to use the community room in the Parsons Place project for their monthly meetings, enabling new residents to more easily be involved in the neighborhood organization.

### *YouthBuild*

The new housing is not the only project contributing to the growth of the sustainable neighborhood; the YouthBuild program is also an important component. YouthBuild is a five-faceted program that provides pre-apprenticeship construction trades training, GED classes, leadership development, counseling and job training to assist high-risk youth between the ages of 16 and 24. Program participants enhance their skills as they construct and/or rehabilitate affordable housing for low- and moderate-income persons.

The Annie E. Casey Foundation awarded EPDC with a \$50,000 grant to develop the YouthBuild proposal and in October 1999, HUD awarded EPDC with a \$300,000 YouthBuild grant. Many community partners contributed to the program as well. McCormack Baron and Sun American Bank matched the grant with \$100,000. St. Clair County and the City of East St. Louis have contributed \$150,000 and \$60,000 respectively for the YouthBuild students to rehabilitate a three-unit building in Washington Park. In addition, EPDC is working toward the creation of a charter school in East St. Louis with commitments from HUD and the Deaconess (Hospital) Foundation. The school will house the YouthBuild program along with EPDC and Neighborhood House offices.

EPDC is positioning the YouthBuild students to become young ambassadors who can spread the success stories to all parts of the city to further aid in the revitalization of Emerson Park and of East St. Louis. Having won the HUD Best Practice Award in 2000, it is apparent that these students are truly excelling in the program.

### *Regional Recognition*

The positive work of the Emerson Park Development Corporation is not just recognized in Emerson Park, but has recently been recognized throughout the metropolitan area of St. Louis and at the national level. The Danforth Foundation designated the Emerson Park Development Corporation as a Sustainable Neighborhood in 1999 and partnered with them in the development of Parsons Place. EPDC was the only neighborhood given such a distinction on the Illinois side of the St. Louis suburbs. This recognition has helped EPDC to continue to bring new resources into East St. Louis, such as the recent donation of Little Tykes playground equipment that will be installed by YouthBuild students, Emerson Park residents and UIUC students in May of 2002.

EPDC has also been designated as a part of the Greater St. Louis Regional Empowerment Zone. Through this program, EPDC was awarded \$1.1 million for infrastructure improvements including streetscape development, building demolition, sewers, water services, street paving and fencing for the Parsons Place development. Focus St. Louis "What's Right with the Region" recognized EPDC's commitment to promoting stronger communities in 2000, and at the national level EPDC received a HUD Best Practice Award for YouthBuild in 2000. It is the impressive shop that they run and the mental toughness program of YouthBuild that inspired the recommendation for the award.

With all of these great things happening, it is no wonder that Emerson Park was recently added to the NeighborWorks Network, an organization that provides a variety of programs and activities designed to address the demands of their local neighborhoods. Some of these programs include developing multi-family housing, initiating revolving loan funds for housing rehabilitation, sponsoring youth neighborhood beautification, and developing resident leaders. This is a huge step for the EPDC because they are now a part of a national network that will give them access to sources of information and training.

### *Future Goals*

EPDC has come a long way since its inception in 1985. Today, EPDC finds itself in a position for redevelopment and positive change. In the future EPDC would like to expand employment and business opportunities for the residents of Emerson Park, encourage reinvestment in new housing and construction, reduce the incidence of drugs and crime, and improve the overall quality of life in the neighborhood by empowering residents and responding to the unmet needs of the youth and of all the families in the

neighborhood. Specifically, EPDC has outlined the following as their primary goals for the future:

- Expand employment and business opportunities for local residents through training, education and new economic development.
- Encourage reinvestment and expand affordable housing options for renters and owners through rehab and new construction.
- Reduce the incidence of drugs, violent crimes and prostitution, while improving community-police relations.
- Respond to the unmet needs of youth and their families and empower all residents.
- Create a district land use pattern that facilitates growth in housing and retail uses and improves the quality of the local infrastructure.
- Empower and involve more residents in the EPDC and strengthen the sense of pride and community in the area.

The future of this area as a sustainable neighborhood and community is looking bright: Parsons Place will provide quality housing to suit the needs of both long-time and new residents, the MetroLink light rail station will add much needed car counts and people to attract viable businesses and opportunities to further aid in the sustainability of Emerson Park, YouthBuild will further develop leaders both young and old to help revitalize the region, and the NeighborWorks network will increase housing options and conditions in East St. Louis. Ella Rush says she's excited about the future of Emerson Park. "When you see things that are going on in your neighborhood . . . and you see progress, everyone wants to be a part of it."

A truly sustainable community is comprised of sustainable neighborhoods. These neighborhoods are areas that are successful in raising caring, responsible and healthy children and adolescents. They also support the diverse makeup of families and care for all individuals, families and elderly persons because they are a part of the neighborhood and community. Mr. Peete adds, "Before I leave I would like to see this city back together . . . Emerson Park will be one of the richest parts of East St. Louis. It will be." Emerson Park, along with the rest of East St. Louis, hopes new economic growth and prosperity will come soon.

The remaking of Emerson Park is a work in progress and residents feel they are moving toward positive change. Emerson Park's future looks bright because EPDC holds a winning combination of assets and relationships: integration into a network of local and regional institutions and organizations, access to funding and technical support, ability to leverage the political system and, most importantly, a strong community-based planning process.





## Personal Interviews, Fall 2001 and Spring 2002

Ceola Davis, Emerson Park resident and founder of EPDC

Richard Suttle, Sr., Emerson Park resident and board member

Peggy Hume, Emerson Park resident and board member

Cathy Tucker, Emerson Park resident and board member

Doug Borders, former Emerson Park resident and founding member of EPDC

Vickie Forby, Executive Director of EPDC

Terrie Holder, EPDC and New Spirit Community Organization staff

Ella Rush, Emerson Park resident and board member

Pinkie Whittaker, Emerson Park resident and board member

Herb Reed, Emerson Park resident and board member

Kenneth Reardon, former University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign professor

Bill Kreeb, Executive Director, Lessie Bates Davis Neighborhood House

Lisa Graves, Lessie Bates Davis Neighborhood House

Sara Johnson, Emerson Park resident and EPDC member

James Jones, interim director of ESLCAN

Carolyn Dry, School of Architecture, University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign

## Photo Credits

Photos provided by the Emerson Park Development Corporation, Lessie Bates Davis Neighborhood House, East St. Louis Action Research Project and Robert Selby, School of Architecture

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State recognition of ninety years of ministry at the Lessie Bates Davis Neighborhood House. [www.legis.state.il.us/legisnet/legisnet91/hrgroups/hr/910HR0904LV.html](http://www.legis.state.il.us/legisnet/legisnet91/hrgroups/hr/910HR0904LV.html)

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## **Appendix A: Emerson Park Development Corporation Board Members, July 2001 – July 2006**

### **Emerson Park Development Corporation BOARD MEMBERS 2002**

**PRESIDENT, Richard M. Suttle, Sr.** was born in East St. Louis and was raised in Belleville until the age of nine. He then returned to East St. Louis and presently lives at 1121 Lake Avenue where he has resided since 1968. Mr. Suttle has one brother and two sisters. He has one son and one granddaughter. He is a member of Mt. Sinai Baptist Church and the Class of 1952 of Lincoln High School. He owned a trucking company and car wash until 1967. In 1968 he attended Belleville Area College and graduated after two years with an Associates Degree in Life Insurance Underwriter Training LUTC/CLU. He retired in 1988 and has been involved with the Emerson Park Development Corporation since 1990. He also sits on the boards of East St. Louis Community Action Network (ESLCAN), New Spirit Organizing Office, and the Urban Resources Partnership Program.

**Occupation: Retired Insurance Broker**

**VICE-PRESIDENT, Henry Peete**, is a thirty-five year resident of the Emerson Park Neighborhood, and resides at 918 Lynch Avenue, East St. Louis, IL 62205. He has been employed by the Fairmont Racetrack since 1965. He and his wife Jean are the parents of seven daughters and the grandparents of seven. He is a Deacon, Trustee, elder service volunteer and bus driver of the Christ Fellowship Church.

**Occupation: Horse Trainer**

**SECRETARY, Peggy Hume**, has been a life-long resident of East St. Louis and has lived in the Emerson Park Neighborhood for more than twenty-five years. She is a member of the Ninth Street Church of God in Christ. She graduated from East Side High School, is a Certified Nurse's Aid and also attended Professional Business School in St. Louis and the Metro Business College. She has had computer training from Bits and Bytes Computers in Belleville. She has one son attending Lincoln College on a golf scholarship in Jefferson City, Missouri. Currently she is employed at The Mental Health Center in East St. Louis as an Administrative Aid for Child and Adolescent Services. She also works part-time at Grandpa Pigeons in Collinsville as a cashier. Peggy's skills include shorthand and typing and she has extensive computer experience and good interpersonal skills.

**Occupation: Case Worker**

**TREASURER, Cathy Tucker**, is a twenty-nine year resident of 1117 Winstanley Avenue in the Emerson Park neighborhood. She graduated from Venice High School and moved to East St. Louis with her husband Charles. They have raised three children in the neighborhood. Cathy has been an employee of Sterling catering services for more than fifteen years and worked at the American Steel Foundry prior to her position there. She has been an active member of the Emerson Park Development Corporation since 1985 and has served on the Lessie Bates Davis Neighborhood House Board prior to becoming an EPDC Officer.

**Occupation: Caterer**

**Mrs. Geraldine Brewer**, 1709 Winstanley Avenue, is a homemaker and has been a homeowner in the neighborhood for over ten years. She works on the EPDC Crime and Public Safety Committee. She is actively working with the neighborhood facilitator preparing for the "Smoke-Out" next month.

**Occupation: Retired**

**Mr. Louis Courtland**, 1320 Lake Avenue, and his wife are active members in EPDC. He built a new home in the neighborhood valued at \$185,000 in 1999. He owns and operates a construction company. Mr. Courtland attends Church of God In Christ, a church within the neighborhood that is preparing to build a new sanctuary.

**Occupation: Contractor**

**Mr. James Hall**, 1118 Lake Avenue is an original member of EPDC. He has actively participated in the neighborhood since the organization was created. He worked during the “blitz build” of the new homes built by the Neighborhood Faith-based Housing Program. He is retired, and works part-time as a seasonal farm hand.

**Occupation: Retired Farm Hand / Burner**

**Mrs. Mildred Hopson**, 1108 Natalie Avenue, is a domestic worker; she does upholstery and sewing from her home. She is a homeowner who actively works on the Crime and Public Safety Committee. She is eager to do what is needed to rid the neighborhood of crime.

**Occupation: Domestic Worker / Upholsterer**

**Ms. Lori McKinney**, 1108 Exchange Avenue, is employed by School District 189 as a teacher’s aide; she is also a precinct committeewoman in the Emerson Park neighborhood. Her family owns a trucking business in the city. Her family has resided in the neighborhood for over forty years. She works with city government to get needed public works and funds for the neighborhood. She has also been instrumental in recruiting residents to participate in EPDC.

**Occupation: Teacher’s Aid / Precinct Committeeperson**

**Ms. Gwendolyn Moore**, 1329 Winstanley, is a lifetime resident. She is a single mother and works as a Certified Nurse’s Assistant. She is the proud owner of one of the first homes built by the Neighborhood Faith-based Housing Program. She regularly attends the meetings and is genuinely concerned about the future of the neighborhood.

**Occupation: Nursing Technician**

**Rev. Leon Peterson** is a retired Army Sergeant that pastors at the Fifteenth Street Baptist Church within the neighborhood. He and his wife are active neighborhood participants. He recruits members of his congregation to get involved in redevelopment of Emerson Park. He was part of the group of residents to go to the governor’s office to request services and funds for the neighborhood. He works on the Demolition Committee. His church provides a food pantry and feeds the hungry within the neighborhood.

**Occupation: Minister**

**Mrs. Marinella Travis**, 1707 Winstanley, has been a homeowner for over twenty years. She works at the local hospital and has actively participated in the neighborhood meetings.

**Occupation: Nurse**

**Ms. Pinkie Whittaker**, 1204 North 18<sup>th</sup> Street, is a homemaker who has been active within the neighborhood assisting the elderly residents on her block. She is a member of the Crime and Public Safety Committee and was the group leader for the recent tire recycling project within the neighborhood. The project was a great success.

**Occupation: Housewife**

## **Appendix B: By-Laws of the Emerson Park Development Corporation**

As of 09/19/01

### **ARTICLE I**

- A. Name: The name of the corporation is the Emerson Park Development Corporation (EPDC).
- B. Purpose: The purpose of EPDC is to address economic and social problems in the Emerson Park neighborhood of East St. Louis, Illinois. The group works on the following issues:
1. Street Repair: Blocked sewage lines, poor streets and street lighting.
  2. Beautification: Excessive trash on property, lots and in alleys; demolition and removal of abandoned and collapsed houses; creation of mini-parks.
  3. Housing: Working in coalition with other organizations to create low- and moderate-income housing.
  4. Skills Training: Sponsoring and organizing workshops to provide skills in areas of fundraising, media, and a variety of issue areas including drugs, energy conservation, pollution and crime.
  5. Police and Fire Protection: Holding meetings with enforcement officers to assure the needs of the neighborhood are being voiced.
  6. Education: To accomplish its goals EPDC engages in public education, education of the news media and hands-on development projects.
- C. Office: The principal office of the corporation shall be located at the Lessie Bates Davis Neighborhood House, 1200 North 13th Street, East St. Louis, Illinois 62205. The mailing address for the corporation is Post Office Box 6126, East St. Louis, Illinois 62202-6126.
- D. Discrimination: There shall be no discrimination by the corporation or any committee based on race, color, religion, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, disability, age, health related condition, handicap or association.

### **ARTICLE II**

- A. Membership:
1. EPDC is open to all residents, business owners, leaders of religious institutions, non-profit institutions, and social service organizations of the Emerson Park Neighborhood of East St. Louis, Illinois. The Emerson Park Neighborhood is bound by Nectar Avenue on the North, Baugh Avenue on the South, Ninth Street on the West and 19th Street on the East.
  2. Any person who meets all of the following qualifications is entitled to be a voting member of EPDC:
    - a. S/he has completed a membership form that states s/he has read and/or understands the goals and work of EPDC.
    - b. S/he has paid such annual membership dues that are set by the Board of Directors, unless payment of dues is waived by the Board due to financial hardship.
    - c. S/he has not been terminated from membership due to failure to comply with the requirements of 1 or 2 of this article.
  3. Membership dues are payable annually, on the twelfth month anniversary of the month in which the person first joined EPDC.
  4. All members are entitled to become a member of any committee of EPDC upon meeting the rules of that committee, and are entitled to attend all meetings of each committee.
  5. Voting members shall have the following duties:

- a. To vote on changes to EPDC's Goals Statement.
- b. To make decisions at regular and special meetings of the members as are necessary to further the organizational purposes of EPDC.
- c. To nominate nominees for the positions on the Board of Officers.
6. There shall be regular meetings of the membership of EPDC on the Second Monday of each month in the Library of the Lessie Bates Davis Neighborhood House.
7. The Annual Meeting of the voting members shall be held on the Second Monday of July at 6:00 PM in the Library of the Lessie Bates Davis Neighborhood House.
8. The President, Board of Directors, or 20 percent of the voting members may call a special meeting of the members at any time, upon providing not less than 5 days notice of said meeting.
9. All resident members are entitled to one vote upon matters submitted for a vote. Non-residents who are representatives of religious institutions, non-profit institutions, and social service organizations are allowed one collective vote for the organization they represent.
10. At least 8 voting members must be present at a general or special meeting for a quorum. In the instance that a quorum does not exist, all business that does not require voting may take place. Decisions of the members shall be made by a simple majority of those present at any meeting of members. Decisions on behalf of the corporation may be made at membership meetings. This provision does not include all voting privileges held by the Board of Directors or the Board of Officers of EPDC, some of which are exclusive to those particular designations.

### **ARTICLE III**

#### **Board of Directors:**

- A. The number of Directors shall not be less than eleven (11), and shall remain constant from the date the organization became a 501(c) 3, unless the Director moves from the community or is deceased. At such time the other Directors may appoint a Director by a majority vote of the remaining Directors. Appointments to the Board of Directors may be nominated from the floor at a meeting consisting of not less than 20% of the voting members.
- B. To be eligible to be a member of the Board of Directors, a member must meet the following qualifications:
  1. S/he must have been a resident of Emerson Park or have worked in a religious institution, non-profit institution, or social service organization for at least 5 years.
  2. S/he must not be an employee of EPDC.
- C. The Board of Directors will appoint those who will hold the offices of President, Vice President, Secretary and Treasurer to a term of five years confirmed at each annual meeting of the membership.
- D. The Officers shall be confirmed by a minimum of 20 percent of the voting members at the first meeting following the Annual Meeting.
- E. Vacancies: A vacancy in one or any of the Offices between annual meetings can be filled by the Board of Directors appointing a qualified member to that position. That seat will be confirmed by the voting members at the meeting following the appointment of that officer.
- F. Powers: The Board shall have the following powers:
  1. To establish and dissolve standing committees and to define their purpose.
  2. To elect and remove officers.

3. To hire, supervise and terminate employees of EPDC and to determine the terms of compensation.
  4. To make such decisions between monthly meetings as are necessary to further the corporation's purposes, provided that such decisions are made by a majority of the Board of Directors.
  5. To set annual membership fees, and to waive the annual membership fee of any member who is suffering financial hardship.
  6. To terminate the membership of any member of the corporation, except that any such vote to terminate a member must be a unanimous decision of the Board of Directors or of 2/3's of the voting members present at the next meeting.
  7. To transact all business within the powers of the corporation and to delegate such of its powers as it deems appropriate.
  8. Borrow moneys in the name of Emerson Park Development Corporation specifically to allow the organization to fulfill its mission.
  9. To purchase and or sell land in the name of the Emerson Park Development Corporation.
- G. Decisions: Except as otherwise provided, all decisions of the Board shall be made by a majority vote of the members of the Board. A majority of the Board shall constitute a quorum.

#### **ARTICLE IV**

##### Officers:

- A. The officers of the corporation shall consist of a the President, Vice President, Secretary, and Treasurer appointed by the Board of Directors annually from a list of nominees submitted from the general membership at the Annual Meeting.
- B. Powers of the Officers:
1. The President shall/may:
    - a. sign any documents required by law, so there are two signatures on any document;
    - b. have the authorization to call special meetings of the members;
    - c. speak in the name of EPDC at other such times when s/he is specifically authorized to do so by the full Board of Directors;
    - d. serve as facilitator for all board meetings;
    - e. preside over all regular and special meetings;
    - f. be an ad-hoc member of all standing committees.
    - g. sign checks for the Emerson Park Development Corporation with one or more other Officers or Board Members.
  2. The Vice-President shall/may:
    - a. serve all duties of the President in the absence of the President;
    - b. represent the organization and/or President at any committee, media event, or local statewide meeting.
    - c. sign checks for the Emerson Park Development Corporation with one or more other Officers or Board Members.
  3. The Secretary shall/may:
    - a. sign any documents required to be signed by law, such that there are two signatures on any document;
    - b. respond to correspondence;
    - c. maintain the membership records;
    - d. take written minutes of all regular, special and Board of Director's meetings;
    - e. maintain a complete set of minutes of the meetings of the members and the Board of Directors at the office of the corporation. The secretary may delegate any of these tasks to other members of EPDC, other than those tasks required

- by law to be performed by the Secretary, upon receiving the approval of the Board of Directors.
  - f. sign checks for the Emerson Park Development Corporation with one or more other Officers or Board Members.
4. The Treasurer shall/may:
- a. collect receipts, write checks and pay bills as needed by obtaining the appropriate signatures;
  - b. make deposits;
  - c. maintain financial records in a ledger of all transactions of EPDC and of those required by government bodies,;
  - d. the treasurer shall make a financial report to the members every six months;
  - e. sign any contracts or other documents required by law, such that there are two signatures on said document.
  - f. sign checks for the Emerson Park Development Corporation with one or more other Officers or Board Members.

## **ARTICLE V**

### Committees:

- A. The Board of Officers shall appoint and dissolve such standing committees as it shall deem necessary to carry out the purposes of EPDC.
- B. Each standing committee must have at least three voting members and shall hold meetings at least quarterly, or the committee shall be dissolved by the Board.
- C. Each standing committee shall establish the membership requirements for that committee, the rules of the committee, and the decision-making procedure of the committee. Any disagreements in such procedures and requirements shall be presented to and resolved by the Board of Directors if the committee is unable to reach agreement.
- D. A standing committee shall have the power to do acts and make decisions within the Statement of Goals of the corporation and within the scope of the purpose of the committee as defined by the Board of Directors. Should a committee wish to engage in action that will involve the purposes of another standing committee, it shall consult and reach agreement with that standing committee and shall be resolved by the Board of Directors, or by the voting members at a regular or special meeting of members.
- E. The chairperson of each committee shall be responsible for preparing the agenda for each committee meeting.
- F. An individual member of each committee shall be responsible for delivering a summary report of the committee meeting held prior to the general meeting.
- G. The members of the Board of Directors may from time to time establish such ad- hoc committees as are necessary to further the purposes of EPDC.

## **ARTICLE VI**

### Indemnification:

EPDC will indemnify any and all board members, directors and EPDC staff in case of a law suit.

## **ARTICLE VII**

### **Amendments:**

These by-laws may be altered, amended or repealed, and new by-laws may be adopted at any time, upon following the procedures set forth herein. The Board of Directors or 10 percent of the voting members may propose amendments to the by-laws at any time. All changes to the by-laws must be approved by three-fourths of the Board of Directors present at the meeting. At the conclusion of the meeting the amendments will be rewritten to reflect the changes approved.

