

1.0 Introduction

1.1 Purpose of the plan

The purpose of Lansdowne's 2001 Revitalization Plan is to record the current conditions of the Lansdowne Neighborhood and create a document that includes a set of concrete proposals that can assist Lansdowne Neighbors Inc. (LSC) in achieving their primary goal of improving the living conditions for the residents of Lansdowne. The specific goals must be generated by as broad a group of residents as possible to secure a plan that serves all residents of the neighborhood. This has been a priority throughout the development of the plan and extensive outreach efforts and regular meeting has accomplished a very broad base of participating residents.

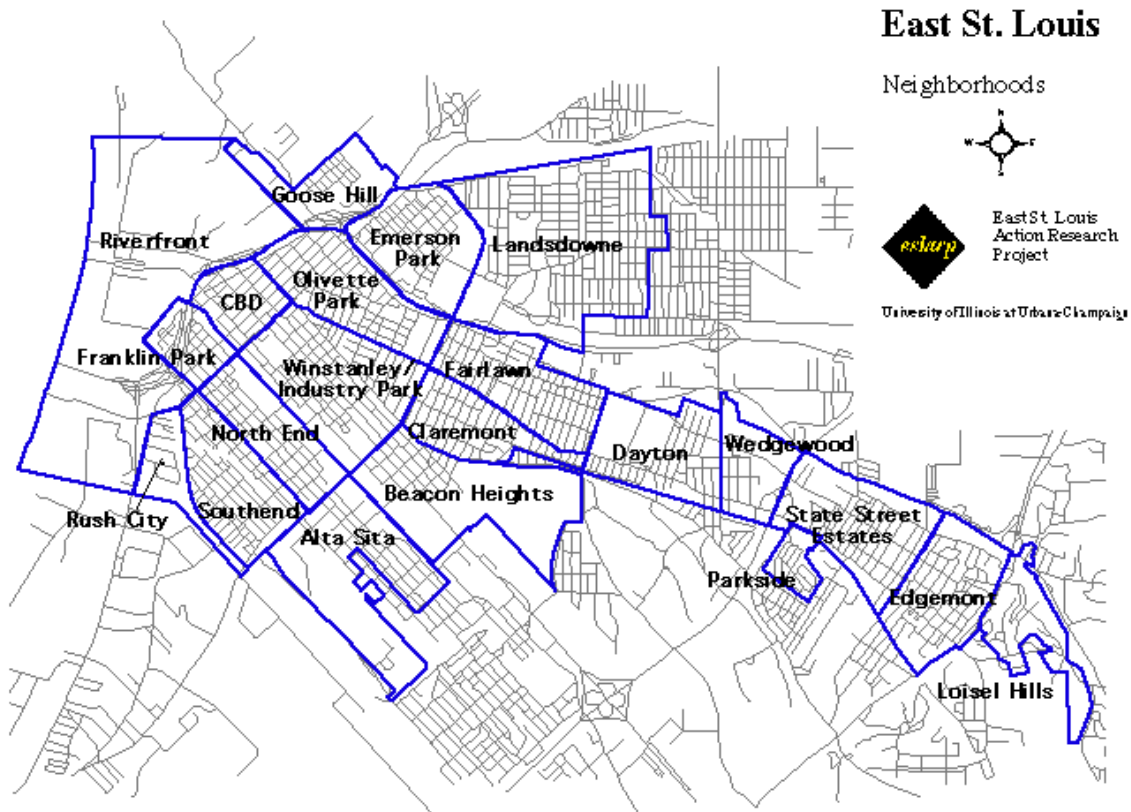
A well-developed strategy for the desired changes in the neighborhood is necessary for success in implementing any larger scale programs. Without a comprehensive plan the greater picture of how individual programs will work together is missing. Another relevant issue is that a planning document such as this is important for the chance of success in obtaining funding.

For these reasons LSC has developed a comprehensive Neighborhood Revitalization Plan that documents the current status of the neighborhood and clearly outlines the desired changes and how to achieve them.

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1.2 Study area

The physical area for the plan is the Lansdowne Neighborhood in the City of East St. Louis, St. Clair County, Illinois. Lansdowne is displayed as one of the East St. Louis Neighborhoods on map 1.1.



Map 1.1: Neighborhoods in East St. Louis

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1.3 History of East St. Louis

The history of the Lansdowne Neighborhood is closely connected to the history of the surrounding communities and especially the history of East St. Louis in which the neighborhood is located, see map 1.2 below. East St. Louis history dates back to the 1790s, when James Piggot built a ferry landing and started transporting people from St. Louis, MO. The first settlers named the area Illinois Town, but this was changed in 1861 when the residents of the area voted to change the name to East St. Louis to symbolize the relationship to the neighbors across the river. On map 1.2 below the close connection to St. Louis, MO., on the other side of the river is obvious.



Map 1.2: East St. Louis and its neighboring communities

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By the early 20th century, East St. Louis was a major industrial center with heavy aluminum manufacturing, steel and paint industries. The booming industry attracted many African Americans from the South, and immigrants from Eastern Europe to the area. During the Depression many East St. Louis factories closed and others moved to areas with a cheaper labor force. During World War II Industry had a renaissance with war production and in 1957 the City was chosen by Look Magazine as the “All-American” city.

At this time, contrary to today, the area was booming with local services. There were several grocery stores, and specialty stores such as bakeries, shoe-stores, hardware stores and drug stores. The residents recall that health services were excellent with some of the most respected specialists living and practicing in the area. The city of East St. Louis was up until the 1960’s, when white and black middle-class flight took its course, segregated with only specific parts open for African American residents to purchase property. Prior to this time, Lansdowne was an all white neighborhood. The schools were also segregated and when black families stated to move into the neighborhood their children were transported to schools outside the neighborhood.

In the 1960’s, as demand for the city’s heavy industrial production slowed and the railroad’s role as the main transportation network was challenged by semi trucks on the county’s highways, the situation in East St. Louis rapidly changed. Most of the city’s blue-collar jobs disappeared. Loss of employment market and white flight caused the population to decrease by almost half from 1960 to 1990. The stores began to close in the 1970’s and with historically shrinking tax rolls, the City was forced to eliminate many of its municipal agencies, beginning with its City Planning Office. The City’s tax base declined from \$560 million in 1970 to \$190 million in 1990, forcing the city to eliminate all but its most essential services. An example of this cut back was the ceasing of garbage pickup by the City in 1987. This service was re-instituted in 1992. The number of firms in East St. Louis declined from 1,527 in 1967 to 383 in 1987. Unemployment and poverty had devastating effects on the City and its neighborhoods. There are very few “pull” factors to keep households in the City and therefore it continues to lose many of its employed residents to more prosperous suburban communities.

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1.4 History of LSC

Lansdowne Neighbors Inc. was officially formed in 1999*. The inspiration to form a Neighborhood organization in Lansdowne came from the examples of other neighborhoods in East St. Louis where the existence of neighborhood organizations were starting to make a difference. Some residents had heard of the possibility of receiving grants for neighborhood improvement and the desire to make this happen was the driving force in the upstart of the LSC.

A group of dedicated residents started working with the staff of the Neighborhood Technical Assistance Center (NTAC), who taught the residents the basic knowledge needed on how to start working towards the goals of LSC.

The main purpose of LSC is to regain some of the lost beauty of the neighborhood. There was a strong desire to get all the trash in the neighborhood cleaned up, get the empty lots and alleys cleared of wild growing weeds, and get a growing number of dilapidated structures demolished. Another main purpose was to create a stronger bond among the residents of Lansdowne. There was a need to recreate a network of neighbors-helping-neighbors with mowing lawns, watching out for the children, shopping and other daily tasks. This network could stand as a united front when facing the City officials and politicians with the wishes for action in the Lansdowne neighborhood.

1.5 The 1992 Lansdowne Plan

In 1992 LSC's predecessor, a neighborhood organization that was dissolved in the early 1990's, cooperated with ESLARP on preparing a similar document as the present Lansdowne revitalization Plan. Unfortunately the organization did not exist long enough to implement this plan, illustrating the importance of building a strong organization as one of the primary goals of a Planning process such as the one described in this plan.

The following is a summary of the 1992 plan:

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Profile of Lansdowne:

This section is based on Census data for 1960, 1970 & 1980, Neighborhood condition Survey, Infra Structure condition survey, Interviews with 90+ residents, and SWOT and cognitive mapping exercises conducted at neighborhood meetings.

Main results:

- ?? Total population in Lansdowne has remained stable while it declined in the city at large. White flight was replaced by blacks moving into the neighborhood.
- ?? Significant decline in the home ownership rate
- ?? High percentage of minors
- ?? Households below poverty level 48%
- ?? Land use: 57.6% residential, 38 % Vacant lots
- ?? 6% of single family housing was unoccupied
- ?? Building condition for single family housing: 36% good, 41% fair, 15% deteriorated, 8% dilapidated
- ?? Strengths of the area: Good relations to neighbors, family history in the neighborhood, churches, junior high school
- ?? Weaknesses of the area: Drugs and related crime, unemployment
- ?? Services: convenience store and food market needed
- ?? 70% of interviewed residents were not aware of the neighborhood organization

Improvement strategy:

The plan develops a three-phase strategy aimed at stabilizing the neighborhood over a 5-year time period.

Phase one: expanding membership of Lansdowne Awareness Community Committee, Safety of the neighborhood, emergency infrastructure efforts,

Phase two: mini parks, neighborhood park, existing housing improvement plan,

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Phase three: New affordable housing, community-based enterprises

Each phase has a number of detailed programs with the following content covered for each program: Introduction, Objectives, Activities, Resources

Programs for Phase 1:

- ?? Community Organization Initiative
- ?? Public Safety Initiative (Crime reporting system)
- ?? Infrastructure Improvement Initiative

Programs for Phase 2:

- ?? Housing rehabilitation (create “tool library”, educate owners, assist in getting loans)
- ?? Park and Recreational Services Initiative (Mini parks and community gardens, playgrounds). Includes designs.

Programs for Phase 3:

- ?? New housing construction initiative (single family and duplex affordable housing on Linden between 38th and 40th, 2,3 & 4 bedroom units). Includes Site Plan, Front and Side elevation, floor plan and photos of models.
- ?? Business and Employment expansion initiative (employment information bulletin, training, job fair, retail opportunity study to approach banks etc., lobby City to consider service contracts for worker owned cooperatives for building demolition, clean-up, street repair etc.)

1.6 East St. Louis Action Research Project (ESLARP)

The East St. Louis Action Research Project is an interdisciplinary project of the Departments of Urban and Regional Planning, Landscape Architecture, the School of Architecture, Leisure studies and Computing science at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign. ESLARP was invited by LSC to participate in the Lansdowne Revitalization Plan development.

Neighborhood residents have over the years set ESLARP's research and technical agenda. Many planned solutions fail when they are imposed on a community by outsiders who do not comprehend the problems they face. Neighborhood organizations are the bridge between the University of Illinois and East St. Louis citizens. ESLARP projects, conceived by local residents and officials, have addressed neighborhood beautification, housing improvement, job creation, and park development. Because local individuals and neighborhood organizations participate in goal setting, program development, and plan implementation, these projects are more likely to be self-sustaining. Students and residents learn from each other by working together. Community members work together with University students and faculty in both planning and implementation. The opportunity for hands-on work attracts many students to ESLARP. Their commitment to project completion - through repeat visits to project sites and neighborhood meetings - encourages the continued involvement of residents. At the same time, the students learn about working in distressed communities from the participating residents. Through their lifetime experiences, residents know what is wrong in their neighborhoods, and in many cases know how to make things better, but lack the organizational and financial resources necessary to bring about change.

In ESLARP projects, concerned citizens work with faculty and students trained in physical strategic planning and organizational development. Together they have planned, financed and implemented effective solutions to issues like housing and safety problems. A primary goal of this cooperative effort is supporting and enhancing the capabilities of community-based development organizations. The Planning Philosophy of ESLARP will be evident in the next section of the Plan, "Methodology", Chapter 2.

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1.7 Context for the Lansdowne Neighborhood revitalization Plan

Other planning within the City and region is important in the context of the planning process in Lansdowne. Lansdowne is closely connected to the opportunities and constraints imposed on and by the City of East St. Louis. Other planning efforts also document possibilities for funding for particular types of projects that Lansdowne is eligible to apply for. Therefore, we need to pay attention to the planning efforts that take place here. In the following section three plans will be briefly described. For a more comprehensive description please refer to these planning documents. The described planning documents can be obtained by contacting: CDBG, 301 River Park Drive, 3rd floor, East St. Louis, IL 62207.

**City of East St. Louis
Fiscal years 1995 – 2001
Consolidated Strategy & Plan Submission
Housing & Community Development Programs (final draft, June 1995)**

The East St. Louis CDBG is the lead agency for developing the Consolidated Plan. An outside private firm, Community Program Development Corporation (CPDC), has developed this plan in cooperation with the CDBG, pursuant to a contract with the City of East St. Louis and HUD.

The plan consists of a descriptive part with information on the following issues:

?? Housing Market and Inventory Conditions

-Assisted housing, homebuyers assistance, homelessness, special needs housing, affordable housing needs

?? Employment and Business development

?? Infrastructure

?? Planning, capacity building and technical assistance

?? Public facilities and services

The following part of the plan includes the vision for the future of East St. Louis. This vision includes creating more jobs and turning around the out-migration from the city, leading to improved service and infrastructure. The vision also includes an improved transportation system and improved care for the disadvantaged. Part of the vision is to improve the visual appearance of the City and give it an attractive and vibrant look. This includes visitor's centers,

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promenades, commercial centers, entertainment centers, housing improvements and demolition of abandoned structures.

The plan develops a number of programs to achieve the visions and to guide CDBG/HOME/ESG investment during the 5-year period (1995-2001):

?? **Affordable Housing Programs**

- Upgrade the existing housing stock
- Expand home ownership opportunities
- Expand the supply of quality rental housing for low-income residents
- Expand the quantity of housing facilities and supportive services for special needs population
- Develop the local residential construction industry

?? **Community Development Programs**

- Develop policies and programs to improve infrastructure and environmental conditions
- Develop strategy for reducing real estate tax rate
- Reduce the negative image of the City
- Develop and implement plan for the assemblage of land for development
- Create a supportive atmosphere for business development and growth

?? **Homeless Programs**

- Expand the quantity of facilities and supportive services for the homeless
- Facilitate the development of a coordinated continuum of care-systems for homeless persons among agencies within the community

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The City of East St. Louis' 2001 Action Plan CDBG Operations Corporation

This plan administers projects funded by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). The plan states the following activities to be undertaken under each of the three government grants that the corporation administers:

?? **Community Development Block Grant**

Public facilities (street and sewer improvements)	\$812,120
Public service (recreation and education programs)	\$120,000
Housing rehabilitation (homeowner occupied)	\$400,000
Land clearance and demolition	\$400,000
Economic development	\$150,000
Code enforcement	\$ 75,000

?? **HOME Investment Partnership Program**

CHDO Set-Aside	\$ 88,650
Homebuyer assistance	\$ 99,950
New construction	\$343,300

?? **Emergency Shelter Grant**

Rehabilitation of homeless shelters	
Essential service for homeless persons	-Based on request
Operating subsidies to homeless shelters	

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**Greater St. Louis
Regional Empowerment Zone
“Building the Bridge”
St. Louis, East St. Louis, Wellston, St. Louis County**

This plan is highly relevant for the Lansdowne neighborhood since this neighborhood is included in the designated Empowerment Zone area. The vision of the Empowerment Zone is expressed in the following citation from the document (“Building the Bridge” page III-4):

*It is a bridge to a brighter future,
A vital regional community with equal economic opportunity for all.*

*It is a family oriented place, the best place anywhere to raise a family,
And a place where history and future are balanced and respected.*

*It is a place where jobs are plentiful, rewarding, and fulfilling.
Those who want to work will find a marketplace eager for their services.
Job readiness is encouraged, supported, and assumed. Access to jobs is assured.*

*It is a place where geographic, political, and historical boundaries
Are set aside in the pursuit of opportunity and improvement.*

*It is a place where growth and prosperity is not limited
to certain zip codes or municipalities. The gaps between haves and have-nots
is narrowed, not through reallocation of resources,
but by allowing true equal opportunity for all.*

*It is a place where schools bring out the best in all students,
Preparing them for a world of change, alternately challenging
And nurturing them, seeking leaders among them
while valuing all for their individuality and their potential.*

*It is a place where neighborhoods are safe and sustainable,
where housing is affordable, where families can walk without fear,
where neighbors gather to share and support, and where children play carefree and joyful.*

*It is a place where planning involves partnership and collaboration and
where historic, artificial barriers have been reduced or eliminated,
resulting in a broader community that truly shares
a responsibility for every aspect of the future.*

It is a region all citizens are proud to call home.

The document includes a Community Assessment describing existing conditions & trends, regional issues & problems, strengths & assets, and developable sites.

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The implementation part of the Empowerment Zone plan focuses on the following project areas that each has several programs outlined (see the Empowerment plan, part VI):

- A. Business development
- B. Workforce development
- C. Commercial/industrial development
- D. Neighborhood/community development

The following section of the plan (Chapter 2) will describe the methodology used to develop the plan.

