

2. Empowerment Planning Approach

ESLARP's primary goal is to improve the quality of life of neighborhoods in East St. Louis by empowering residents through research, technical assistance, and outreach activities by UIUC students and faculty. This goal corresponded well with the overall goal of the LSC. Ms. Ruth Merrit, president of LSC, therefore approached ESLARP to request assistance on developing a plan for the Lansdowne neighborhood. The past success of ESLARP's collaboration with other neighborhood organizations in East St. Louis to generate comprehensive plans helped LSC realize that this planning process could positively improve current conditions of the Lansdowne neighborhood.

The timeline below summarizes the planning process undertaken. A more extensive description of the planning process proceeds this timeline.

- | | |
|----------------------|---|
| November 2000 | -Meeting between ESLARP staff and faculty and members of LSC to discuss the cooperation on developing a revitalization plan for Lansdowne |
| February 2001 | -Outreach campaign and student introduction to the Lansdowne neighborhood on the 2 nd & 3 rd
-Neighborhood Condition Survey and Neighborhood Residential Survey on the 2 nd & 3 rd
-Outreach campaign to local neighborhood churches on the 4 th
-LSC meeting February 20 th : Presentation of data from first weekend
-Cognitive Mapping/SWOT Analysis exercise
-Collection and Analysis of Census Data |
| March 2001 | -LSC meeting March 20 th : Student presentations of data collection and residential feedback
-Student presentations on research topics
-Preparation and outreach for Neighborhood Summit
-Neighborhood Summit on March 30 th |

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- April 2001** -Analyze results from Neighborhood Summit
 -LSC meeting April 17th: Student presentations and residential feedback on program areas
- May 2001** -LSC meeting May 15th: Presentation of Infrastructure and Organizational Capacity/Human Capital programs of final plan
- June-Sept. 2001** Final editing of plan and final approval by the LSC

After LSC initiation of the planning process, the community development workshop class at the University of Illinois (UP 378, Spring 2001) provided planning assistance to the neighborhood. Two design classes, in Architecture (ARCH 372) and Landscape Architecture (LA 236/338), became part of the revitalization effort for the semester. The planning class collectively collaborated with LSC and residents of Lansdowne to produce a revitalization plan for the neighborhood. The class was mainly responsible for organizing and facilitating the planning process. The Landscape Architecture and Architecture classes were responsible for the design of physical improvement projects that reflected the ideas of residents through the planning process.

Outreach

The first step initiated in the planning process was to create awareness of the activities that would be undertaken during the spring. A campaign, consisting of press releases, flyers and pamphlets, was started describing the efforts of LSC in devising a neighborhood plan and the need for residential participation. Another activity used to spread awareness in the neighborhood was an outreach effort to the neighborhood churches (See Figure 2.1). A group of students visited various churches on February 4th to emphasize the importance of residential input and participation in the planning process. Church members were invited to attend LSC meetings to express concerns and ideas for improving the Lansdowne neighborhood.

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Lansdowne Steering Committee
3700 North Caseyville Street
East St. Louis, Illinois

January 2001

The Reverend [insert name]
[insert church name, address, etc.]

Dear Pastor [insert name]:

The Lansdowne Steering Committee is launching a series of community meetings about neighborhood improvement, to bring our neighbors together and talk about making a better future for Lansdowne. We hope to get the entire community involved in deciding how the neighborhood can develop and prosper, with, for example, improved housing, parks, new employment opportunities and more local retail services. The ideas and proposals generated in our community meetings will be the basis of a new neighborhood plan, which will help us obtain funding for the projects we decide are important.

We will be preparing the plan with help from students active in the University of Illinois East St. Louis Action Research Project (ESLARP). As you may know, ESLARP has been a part of our community for several years. The students will be helping out with surveys, canvassing residents, collecting information and other steps in preparing the plan. However, it is important to remember that the ideas in the plan will come from Lansdowne residents, and we want to involve as many of our neighbors as we can.

I would be so pleased to have you and your [Church name] congregation participating in our meetings, and I would be grateful for your help in encouraging church members to attend. I have enclosed an announcement about the first meeting. It would be especially helpful if you could make announcements about the meeting at services, and include the meeting details in your church bulletin. Also, students and faculty from ESLARP would like to visit your church on February 4, 2001, to introduce themselves and get acquainted with you and your congregation; I hope we can arrange this visit.

Our first meeting will be held on Tuesday, February 20, 2001, at 7 p.m., at the Pilgrim Green Church, located at the corner of 37th Street and Caseyville Avenue. We will be holding meetings on the third Tuesday of each month, and we will send you reminders before each meeting. If you have any questions or comments about our project, please call me.

I look forward to seeing you on February 20th. Thank you for your help in making our community meetings a success.

Sincerely yours,

Ms. Ruth Merrit

President of the Lansdowne Steering Committee

Figure 2.1: Example of letter sent to neighborhood churches

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Data Collection:

Neighborhood Condition Survey

A data collection team was created the first outreach weekend (February 2nd-4th). The Neighborhood Condition Survey (NCS) collected data based on parcels throughout the neighborhood. Student volunteers used parcel maps and scantron forms to survey current conditions of each parcel, building conditions, occupancy, number of trees, trash build-up on property and right-of-ways, etc. The completed scantron forms were scanned to create maps based on conditions reflected by the coded data for later analysis.

Residential Survey

Another data collection team established that weekend was in charge of interviewing residents through the Residential Survey. Teams of two went door-to-door to give residents a 68-itemed questionnaire, consisting of a mixture of open- and close-ended questions, concerning issues the quality of certain aspects of their community, such as the environment, local housing conditions, the mix of goods and services, public and education facilities and community planning. A total of 55 surveys were completed for analysis. In addition names and phone numbers of people interested in participating in the planning process were collected and this list was used throughout the process to invite people to meetings.

Census Data

The next step of the data collection process was for students to collect and analyze Census Data for Lansdowne, the City of East St. Louis, and St. Clair County over the last few decades. The data was used to draw comparisons and to show changing conditions in certain categories such as: population, housing, income, employment, household composition, etc. Demographic data from the 1960, 1970, 1980, and 1990 U.S. Census reports were used to create the neighborhood profile. The historical trend analysis was conducted using data from Census Tracts 5004 and 5005, which together encompass and extend past the Lansdowne neighborhood. This data provides a historical resource for analysis of future trends.

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☞ Cognitive Mapping, SWOT Analysis, and Photo Exercises

The residents participated in two key exercises of the data collection that gave them the opportunity to identify current conditions of their neighborhood. These exercises empowered residents to decide where and what problems need to be the focus of the planning process. Residents were asked to define their neighborhood boundaries, neighborhood strengths and weaknesses. To gain the greatest input from the neighborhood, students performed extensive phone calling outreach to the resident list to get them to participate at the February 20th LSC meeting.

A group of approximately 30 residents, students, and faculty participated in a Cognitive Mapping and SWOT Analysis exercise (See Figure 2.2). The Cognitive Mapping exercise was performed by grouping about 4-5 residents into smaller groups with students marking a map of the Lansdowne neighborhood. The variety of information identified by residents was the outer boundary of Lansdowne, district boundaries, local landmarks, resources or assets, and problems sites/areas. After each group finished marking their individual maps, they reported out to the larger group. A collective map was created with each groups input. Figure 2.3 gives a more detailed description of the Cognitive Mapping Exercise.



Figure 2.2: Residents and students participating in exercises

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Lansdowne Community Development Plan

February 20, 2001

Lansdowne Steering Committee and ESLARP

Pilgrim Green Church, 3700 N Caseyville

7:00pm

Mapping Our Neighborhood

Long Term Residents, small children, business people and community leaders in all neighborhoods have vast knowledge of the community where they live, work, play and serve. Community Improvement plans that take advantage of this information are much more likely to produce positive results than those created by outsiders. This means that neighborhood participation is the most important ingredient for making a successful Community Plan!

During the next thirty minutes, please work in teams of four to identify the MOST IMPORTANT FEATURES of the Lansdowne Community. A University of Illinois student will be available to each group if you need assistance or have any questions about this exercise. After completing this exercise, each group will pick a spokesperson to present your group's findings. Please use the color markers provided to complete the five following tasks:

1. **USING THE BLACK MARKER**, Draw the OUTER BOUNDARIES of the Lansdowne neighborhood, where you understand them to be.
2. **USING THE BLUE MARKER**, Draw the boundaries for any DISTRICTS (for example-industrial areas, shopping strips, church rows, etc). Please CIRCLE and name these districts (if there is a name).
3. **BY MAKING AN X WITH THE BROWN MARKER**, identify the neighborhood's most important LOCAL LANDMARKS (for example-historic homes, parks, schools, churches, or monuments).
4. **USING THE GREEN MARKER**, Label Lansdowne's most important RESOURCES or ASSETS (for example-open green spaces, successful businesses, social service agencies, housing)
5. **USING THE RED MARKER**, Label Lansdowne's biggest PROBLEMS SITES/AREAS (for example-trash, flooding problems, speeding vehicles, high crime activity, illegal dumping)

After each team has completed these tasks, we will come together as a large group, and one person from each small group will share what they accomplished. The University students will consolidate all of this information onto one wall-size map.

Figure 2.3: Description and Instructions to Cognitive Mapping Exercise

Through the SWOT Analysis exercise, the residents identified several strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats that exist within their community (See Figure 2.5 for description of SWOT). A list for each category was generated based on residential feedback. There was often agreement amongst the group about items they felt should be listed, especially for the weaknesses category. After this exercise, a few residents

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volunteered for a Photo Exercise. They agreed to walk around the neighborhood and to take pictures of areas of Lansdowne that was identified in the SWOT exercise. The University provided disposable cameras in which the residents committed to returning to the next meeting with the cameras and pictures taken (See Figure 2.4)



Figure 2.4: Example of resident photo of abandoned house

Lansdowne Steering Committee SWOT Analysis Exercise

Introduction to SWOT Analysis

A SWOT analysis is developed and used by researchers prior to revitalization in order to create the best development for an area. SWOT stands for strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. A list of strengths is created which incorporates positive aspects that currently exist within a community. These aspects may include natural features, such as parks and rivers; infrastructure, such as highways, railroads, historical buildings; or current services and organizations. For example, you all could look at Lansdowne and see that there is access to and from interstates, a new sufficient light-rail, active community-based organizations and presence of churches. Weaknesses would be any negative aspects within the study area. Using the strengths associated with the area, a list of future opportunities can be established. These could be based on untapped resources or potential assets, which may include vacant storefronts for rehabilitation or abundant open space for redevelopment. And lastly, the SWOT includes a list of any current drawbacks that may pose any future threats.

Example Schedule

30 min. – Length of Exercise

5 min. – Explanation of SWOT by the Main Facilitators

15 min. – Break into four groups (each representing an aspect of the SWOT Analysis) to generate with a list from each group

5 min. – Group Leaders shares their group's responses with everyone in meeting

5 min. – Opportunity for residents to add any input to the lists and to finalize results

List of Materials

4 Poster Boards – Large enough to write our lists big and clearly

Markers – Bright and visible for the audience

Who's In Charge of Exercise

Main Facilitators – two students in charge of introducing the SWOT Analysis and explaining the procedure of the group work.

Group Leaders – students in charge of assisting residents within the group devise a list for their aspect of the analysis

Figure 2.5: Description of SWOT Analysis exercise

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Discussion of the collected data:

LSJ Meeting -March 20th

At this meeting students prepared a presentation of all the data collected and analyzed to share with residents. Extensive phone outreach was used again to gain support and participation. About 15-20 residents attended this meeting. Students summarized census data, SWOT, and Cognitive Mapping results. Residents were given the opportunity to give feedback as far as incorrect data or information that may have been left out. Through the extensive data analysis students were able to group the neighborhood's primary goals into eight areas:

- ?? Infrastructure and Municipal Services
- ?? Housing
- ?? Crime
- ?? Environment and Open Space
- ?? Recreation Services
- ?? Organizational Capacity
- ?? Human Capital
- ?? Neighborhood Based Services

The residents agreed that these were important areas that the plan should address. The students became responsible for researching successful programs that were implemented in communities similar to Lansdowne's situation as a guide to developing programs in each of these areas.

Neighborhood Summit

On March 31, 2001 the Lansdowne Neighborhood Summit was held at the Lansdowne Junior High School. Prior to the event, extensive outreach to residents and community members was given through phone calls, flyers, posters and press releases (See Figure 2.6).

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Lansdowne Steering Committee
East St. Louis, IL 62205
Phone: 618-271-9605

Fax: 618-271-9651

Dear Neighbors and Friends,

You are cordially invited to participate in the 2001 Lansdowne Neighborhood Summit meeting on Saturday, March 31st from 9:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. at the Lansdowne Junior High School, 3939 Caseville Ave. The goal of this meeting is to formulate a comprehensive neighborhood improvement plan that addresses Lansdowne's most critical issues: environment, infrastructure, employment, housing, youth development, and municipal service needs. The Lansdowne Steering Committee (LSC) is a community-based organization working to address these issues. With a collaborative effort, we hope to identify the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats to our neighborhood. With the input from the community, resources of the University of Illinois, and funding from federal and state agencies, we feel that our goals can be met.

Hopefully you have noticed all of the excitement surrounding the Lansdowne neighborhood in the last couple of months! Since January, Lansdowne Steering Committee has partnered with the University of Illinois's East St. Louis Action Research Project to conduct a participatory planning process for the revitalization of the Lansdowne area. You may have seen students from the University cleaning lots, going door-to-door interviewing residents or participating in neighborhood meetings. The partnership has collected detailed information regarding environmental, economic, and social conditions in our neighborhood. A summary of residents' perceptions of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats confronting the Lansdowne neighborhood is enclosed as well as the proposed development goals and objectives for the community. Your response to these and other planning proposals will be the focal point of our March 30th Summit.

Our next step is to gather as many residents, business owners, pastors, institutional leaders and social service providers as possible in one room for a full day of brainstorming on the future of Lansdowne. Lansdowne residents and local leaders attending the Neighborhood Summit will use this and other information to design a framework that will guide the future development of our neighborhood. Your views on how residents, in partnership with local leaders, can improve local housing conditions, infrastructure, environment, and crime will be included in a Neighborhood Improvement Plan focusing on the next five years. We will also discuss topics including human capital, organizational capacity, neighborhood based, and recreational services. We are confident that the Lansdowne Neighborhood Summit will result in an impressive strategy for improving the Lansdowne area. However, this is only possible with your active participation in the Summit.

Please mark Saturday, March 31st on your calendar and plan to participate in the Lansdowne Neighborhood Summit. Transportation to and from the meeting starting at 9:00 a.m. is available, as well as childcare. A delicious and complimentary BBQ lunch will be served and childcare is provided free of charge. Participants at this meeting will have the opportunity to share their ideas and proposals for strengthening our neighborhood. We look forward to seeing you on March 31st; we encourage you to bring your family, neighbors, and friends to this important meeting. Individuals in need of transportation to the meeting are encouraged to call Craig Miller of the Neighborhood Technical Assistance Center at 271-9605.

Sincerely,
Ms. Ruth Merritt, President

Lansdowne Steering Committee

Figure 2.6: Invitation to Lansdowne Neighborhood Summit

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The event lasted all day on a Saturday, to allow residents, community leaders, City representative, students and faculty to plan and problem solve addressing the most critical needs within the eight program areas. Approximately 20-30 residents attend the Neighborhood Summit, which was a lower turnout than expected. A reason for the disappointing turnout, later expressed by residents, was the fact that the meeting was on Saturday, which is usually a busy day for residents, and that it was an all-day event. Figure 2.7 shows the agenda of the Neighborhood Summit.

Lansdowne Steering Committee 2001 Neighborhood Summit Meeting Saturday, March 31, 2001
AGENDA:
I.Registration, Complimentary Coffee & Donuts 9:30 a.m. – 10:00 a.m.
II.Welcome to the Lansdowne Neighborhood Summit! ??Ms. Ruth Merritt, President of Lansdowne Steering Committee 10:00 a.m. – 10:15 a.m.
III.Introduction of ESLARP and University students ??Janni Sorensen 10:15 a.m. – 10:20 a.m.
IV.Review of Summit’s Agenda and the Goals of the Day 10:20 a.m. – 10:30 a.m.
V.Presentation and Discussion of: ??Lansdowne SWOT Analysis ??Lansdowne Goals and Objectives 10:30 a.m. – 11:15 a.m.
Complimentary BBQ Lunch 11:15 a.m. – 12:00 noon
VI.Break-out into Issue Committees, Brainstorm on Innovative Program Development Ideas ??Environment and Open Space ??Crime ??Housing ??Infrastructure and Municipal Services ??Organizational Capacity ??Human Capital ??Neighborhood Based Services ??Recreational Services 12:00 p.m. – 12:45 p.m.
VII.Program Prioritization and Development with “Friends of Lansdowne” ??Regional professionals recognized as leaders in the above areas 12:45 p.m. – 2:15 p.m.
VIII.Group Presentation of Programs to Revitalize Lansdowne 2:15 p.m. –3:00 p.m.
IX.Design Students’ Presentations 3:00p.m. – 4:00 p.m.
X.Summit Evaluation

Figure 2.7: Agenda for Neighborhood Summit

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The meeting began with an introduction to the Neighborhood Summit and ESLARP. Then, students presented Lansdowne SWOT Analysis, Goals, and Objectives prior to lunch. Instead of the initially planned breakout session for each program area, students facilitated a brainstorming session for all of the areas amongst the whole group, due to the low number of residents. Residents generated ideas for short and long term programs that could improve current conditions. The meeting ended with design students presenting models of future development based on resident ideas and needs. The Neighborhood Summit was a platform for residents' comments, suggestions, and feedback whether positive or negative to be incorporated in the programs and designs being developed for the plan.

NSC Meeting-April 17th

The April 17th meeting incorporated reflections of the Neighborhood Summit, design students' models and the presentation of the preliminary programs developed to address the concerns and ideas generated at the neighborhood summit. Residents gave positive feedback on the models and the programs presented at the meeting. Planning students were following this meeting able to start developing formal programs to be incorporated in the plan based on this meeting. The process lead to a list of programs within six more concentrated program areas:

- ?? Organizational Capacity/Human Capital
- ?? Neighborhood Based Services
- ?? Housing
- ?? Infrastructure
- ?? Environment/Open Space/Recreation
- ?? Crime Prevention

At the meetings that followed over the summer the programs would be discussed in detail and residents made significant changes to make the programs suitable for the needs of the neighborhood.