

# Emerson Park

## *In the beginning ...*

Ms. Ceola Davis and other members of the Emerson Park Development Corporation (EPDC) met with Ken Reardon of ESLARP in the summer of 1990 to talk about creating a **comprehensive neighborhood stabilization plan** to halt the outmigration of businesses and residents and to **address widespread crime and infrastructure problems**. They wanted residents to **identify the problems, create alternative solutions**, and secure the resources to implement the plan. The University's role would be as facilitator and technical assistant. The Neighborhood Improvement Plan for Emerson Park was born in 1991.

## **Commitment, hard work, and patience**

Emerson Park has developed a strong, committed, and resourceful board and member base. **Monthly neighborhood meetings and events regularly attract large groups of residents**. A full-time director has assisted the neighborhood in advancing their development plans and securing opportunities. The partnership between ESLARP and Emerson Park has grown strong over the years. University faculty, staff, and students provide technical assistance and volunteer support to complete resident identified and directed projects. A short list of these collaborative efforts include:

- Emerson Park **Crime Prevention Plan**
- **Clean-up** of abandoned lots
- Creation of a Christmas **tree farm**
- Construction of **new single-family homes**
- **Rehabilitation** of several homes
- Re-creation and **revitalization** of Cannady Park
- Plans for over 200 units of new **mixed-income housing**
- Plans for a **new light rail station** as an extension of the St. Louis Metro-link

In 1997, the Emerson Park Development Corporation requested help in devising a revitalization plan for the neighborhood. Countless resident and city leader interviews, physical condition surveys, and resident meetings have led to a plan which addresses the changing needs of Emerson Park. It includes policy recommendations and program initiatives in six areas including **crime prevention, youth and family development, housing, economic development, land use, and organizational capacity building**. Planning works in Emerson Park because residents know how to plan for their neighborhood. ESLARP's participatory approach to community based planning has **put residents in control of their neighborhood's future**. The improvements in Emerson Park speak for themselves. ESLARP's partnership with Emerson Park has been one of the East St. Louis' greatest success stories.

