



NEIGHBORHOOD CAPITAL BUDGET GROUP

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To All Friends and Allies of the Neighborhood Capital Budget Group:

After 18 years of serving Chicago's grassroots community organizations and neighborhoods, NCBG will cease to operate effective February 1, 2007.

While the closing of our organization may seem sudden to some, many of you have been aware that for a long time NCBG has struggled financially in the face of declining revenues. Since 2003, we've had to downsize from 10 staff to 2. Many of you will want to know how this happened: Major foundations that once supported NCBG changed their grantmaking priorities and stopped funding NCBG altogether. Others cut off funding to NCBG because they set time limits on the number of years they will give grants to the same organization. Some foundations cut the size of their grants year after year.

NCBG's Board of Directors, staff, and volunteers tried very hard to find alternative sources of funding. State funding looked promising, but no state grants ever came through. Marketing NCBG for "fee for service" contracts just didn't work out. The bottom line: We have not been able to secure enough money in grants or contracts for our advocacy mission, or technical assistance and research services to sustain NCBG's current or future operations.

The time has come to close our doors.

Our websites, www.ncbg.org and www.bettertransit.com will remain in place for at least the next 6 months. We will post contact information for key allies in our campaigns to rebuild our schools, reform Tax Increment Financing, rebuild our neighborhoods, improve our transit system, and hold government accountable to our communities. We hope that you will reach out to one another and continue to build coalitions. **As of February 1st, you may send inquiries to: NCBGCBT@gmail.com. While we can't promise to respond to every email, we'll do our best.**

And on **Thursday, March 15th, from 5:00 – 7:00 pm**, we hope you'll join us for a reunion and celebration of NCBG's achievements: **Garfield Park Conservatory Community Room, 300 N. Central Park Avenue**. Free off-street parking is available if you drive; or take the CTA Green Line to the "Lake/Conservatory Drive" stop.

We hope that you share the pride we feel in the legacy of our work together, which is truly extraordinary:

Together, we helped to create broad understanding of how government spends the public's money; why active involvement in public budgeting is not only your right but your responsibility; and why the well-being, diversity, and affordability of our neighborhoods is so vitally important to the future of this great city.

Together, we raised important questions and challenged those who run City Hall, our schools, and our public transportation system – the local governments that spend billions of the taxpayers' money annually and determine the viability and character of our neighborhoods. We offered constructive solutions and pushed through "good government" public policy reforms to generate public investment in all of our neighborhoods, rather than in just a few areas or Downtown.

Together, we developed tools for empowerment – how to track your neighborhood TIF district and organize for community control over development; how to advocate for better public school facilities to provide a decent, safe, and educationally nurturing learning environment for our kids; how to prioritize public spending on what's important and fair, and not just on what politicians think will make them look

good. We've worked together to help you develop visionary plans for transit oriented development, or for the renewal of neighborhoods that City Hall neglected for decades.

NCBG is proud of the successes that we achieved together:

- **The successful fight to save the CTA Green Line**, get funding to rebuild the Blue and Brown lines, and the ongoing efforts to transform our mass transit system into a truly world class operation.
- **The billions of dollars that the City has invested in public works since 1992** – including the neighborhood public libraries, new fire and police stations, and other local public works projects -re-surfaced WPA streets, new sidewalks and alleys, bridges and industrial streets, business area improvements—that we all organized to win.
- The **progress toward greater transparency of and community control over the City's TIF program**, with the creation of dozens of local "TIF Community Oversight" committees and taskforces – all demanding to know what the City is doing with TIF funds and what redevelopment plans City Hall has on the drawing boards for our neighborhoods.
- **Greater openness in government**, such as the annual disclosure of the City's Capital Improvement Program, the Mayor's annual public hearings on the City Budget--which he actually attends!--the State mandated TIF Annual Reports, the right to testify to the CTA monthly board meetings, and the State's about-to-be-released Audit of the CTA.

Now you know more about how the City, CTA, and the public schools spend YOUR money than any bureaucrat or politician ever expected you to know. We hope that you'll use that knowledge, build on it and past victories, and keep on organizing for your fair share. **We hope you'll insist on greater government accountability to the public—to all of you who actually foot the bills for government spending decisions and pay the salaries of those in public office!**

Next Steps? NCBG's Board member organizations and our allies *will continue to organize* on the important issues that NCBG has addressed:

- **Reforming and reining in TIF**, as a key step in **organizing for balanced, accountable, inclusive development** of our neighborhoods
- **Reforming the Chicago Public Schools' school closings policy** – check out the information on **HB0200** at www.ncbg.org!
- **Advocating for a comprehensive and inclusive master plan for our public schools** – one in which parents, families, neighborhoods, and educators have a real voice, and through which we improve every neighborhood public school and develop it as the center of community life that it should be
- **Transforming the CTA and our region's mass transit system** – watch for the release of the State Audit, and support the calls for accountability reforms that are coming from Springfield and City Council (go to www.bettertransit.com for details)
- **Demanding accountability over the City's public works spending**, including the **Aldermanic Menu Program**.

It has been an exciting 18 years, **resulting in over \$12 billion in new public investment in our neighborhoods** --in infrastructure, public facilities, public schools and the mass transit system; and in a growing movement to make government open up its books and its decision making to the people. NCBG's board and staff are grateful that we had the privilege to work with you.

For the NCBG Board:

Mildred J. Wiley

Mildred J. Wiley, President of the Board – Bethel New Life, Inc.

Jackie Leavy

Jackie Leavy
Executive Director

John Paul Jones

John Paul Jones
Director of Community Outreach