Acting Up:
How Community Organizations Work With, Around, and Against City Hall
for Housing Justice in Chicago

By

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Yale University
New Haven, Connecticut (2013)

Submitted to the Department of Urban Studies and Planning
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

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ABSTRACT

This thesis argues that community organizations in Chicago, from the Loop to Pilsen to Kenwood, pursue housing justice by employing three modes of action, each of which embodies a particular relationship to the state. They act with the state by ordinance to pass laws and engage in electoral activity; around the state by convening to leverage relationships in the absence of formal legislation; and against the state by contesting to challenge centralized decision-making. Using community planning theory, this view builds on conceptions of collective efficacy by focusing on the relationship of community organizations to the state’s regulatory power rather than on indicators of social capital or civic action. The research is based on over 30 interviews with leaders and activists in neighborhood associations, community development corporations, and independent political organizations working on prominent housing justice campaigns since the 2008 foreclosure crisis. These campaigns include a rent control ballot initiative, the introduction of several anti-eviction ordinances, an affordable housing preservation program, and the establishment of a community zoning board. In each of these cases, the varying isolation, interaction, and blending of the three modes of action complicates dichotomous portrayals of the grassroots—state relationship, providing an analytic lens through which to understand how and why certain issues become important on both neighborhood and citywide scales and how neighborhood groups position themselves and mobilize via-a-vis the state.

Thesis Supervisor: Lawrence Vale
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Raul Raymundo  Chief Executive Officer, The Resurrection Project; Chairman, Pilsen Land Use Committee
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<td>Tom Dart</td>
<td>Cook County Sheriff</td>
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ACRONYMS

ALAS  Alianza Latino-Americana para el Adelanto Social
ALEC  American Legislative Exchange Council
AMI  Area Median Income
APHA  American Public Health Association
APNC  Albany Park Neighborhood Council (now Communities United)
APO  Asociación pro Derechos Obreros
ARO  Affordable Requirements Ordinance
ATU  Autonomous Tenants Union
CASA-HGT  Centro de Acción Social Autónomo – Hermandad General de Trabajadores
CAPs  Community Action Programs
CbSL  Community-based service learning
CCLBA  Cook County Land Bank Authority
CDC  Community Development Commission
CDOB  Chicago Department of Buildings
CDPH  Chicago Department of Public Health
CHHIP  Chicago Healthy Homes Inspection Program
CHI  Chicago Housing Initiative
CMHDC  Chicago Metropolitan Housing Development Corporation
DSA  Democratic Socialists of America (Chicago chapter of the)
ECP  Enterprise Community Partners
ESDC  Eighteenth Street Development Corporation
HHCG  Harrison-Halsted Community Group
IHS  Institute for Housing Studies at DePaul University
KCR  Keep Chicago Renting Ordinance
KOCO  Kenwood Oakland Community Organization
LCBH  Lawyers’ Committee for Better Housing
LSNA  Logan Square Neighborhood Association
LUCHA  Latin United Cooperative Housing Association
MSA  Metropolitan Statistical Area
MTO  Metropolitan Tenants Organization
NCHH  National Center for Healthy Housing
NCO  Northwest Community Organization
NCP  New Communities Program
NHHS  National Healthy Housing Standard
NWSPB  Near West Side Planning Board
PASH  Proactively Addressing Substandard Housing collaborative
PCZB  Pilsen Community Zoning Board
PEAR  Preservation of Existing Affordable Rental program
PERRO  Pilsen Environmental Rights and Reform Organization
PLUC  Pilsen Land Use Committee
PMG  Property Markets Group
PNCC  Pilsen Neighbors Community Council
PN4S  Pilsen Is Not For Sale campaign
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<td>UICC</td>
<td>University of Illinois at Chicago Circle Campus</td>
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<td>Voter Activation Network</td>
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ILLUSTRATIONS

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For Arnold Missner and Isaac Budovitch
Introduction: Situating City Hall and Constructing Communities

When you think about urban planners and community organizers, you might think of Jane Jacobs and her neighbors fighting Robert Moses to prevent a highway from blasting through Greenwich Village. Or maybe Saul Alinsky organizing the Have Notes in the Back of the Yards to demand change from the elites. Or perhaps the more recent empowerment of communities to serve as a check and balance on City Hall and its planners in order to right historic wrongs. The founding parables of the discipline of planning and the history of organizing create the sense that the two exist in direct opposition to each other.

In Chicago, this dichotomy seems to play out on the ground. The city grew from a small settler outpost to become one of the world’s largest urban centers at the turn of the twentieth century. It hosted industries and a quickly growing immigrant population. By the 1950s, the United States started to deindustrialize. Mayor Richard J. Daley consolidated power within Chicago’s historically weak mayoral system by creating an infamous Democratic Machine, with which he presided over a declining city by doling out jobs, enforcing segregation, buying votes, and building big downtown projects like expressways and skyscrapers. After a brief period of insurgent reform by Mayor Harold Washington’s administration from 1983 to 1987, Mayor Richard M. Daley transformed Chicago into what Larry Bennett calls “the third city” by attracting service sector jobs and beautifying downtown and the lakefront to attract tourists and foreign investment.¹

In 1914, Chicago poet Carl Sandburg wrote about the ‘first city’: “Come and show me another city with lifted head singing so proud to be alive and coarse and strong and cunning / ... / Fierce as a dog with tongue lapping for action... / ... Laughing the stormy, husky, brawling laughter of Youth...”² By 1951, in the deindustrializing ‘second city’, Nelson Algren wrote that the husky laughter that Sandburg heard already sounded more like “a juke-box running down in a deserted bar”.³ As the city transformed, Mike Royko updated Sandburg’s paean for the modern day, describing what would soon become Bennett’s third city: “Come and show me another city with razor-cut head singing so proud to have a mustang and a white turtleneck and reservations for dinner / fierce as a poodle with tongue lapping for dog yummies”.⁴ Even by the 1960s, Carl Sandburg was less known for his poetry than for Sandburg Village, a development of modern residential towers that were no doubt home to many fierce poodles. The early twentieth century Chicago of stockyards, tanneries, steelworks, and ethnic states had become a midcentury Chicago of decline and, by the 1990s, a cosmopolitan, ‘world class’⁵ city home to people singing about dinner reservations, but ever more segregated and increasingly unequal.

¹ Larry Bennett, The Third City: Chicago and American Urbanism (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010).
² Carl Sandburg, “Chicago” (Poetry Foundation, 1914).
⁵ Euan Hague notes that Chicago’s economic development office is named World Business Chicago (WBC), and is chaired by the Mayor. WBC’s name is emblematic of a global trend in municipal governance to achieve ‘world class city’ status by becoming aesthetically pleasing centers for the service economy. This type of development
During each of its three incarnations, Chicago has been understood as a city of interrelated dichotomies: At its founding, it was the city in a garden. In 1983 it became the White City of the World Columbian Exposition and the black downtown (in both architectural and, more significantly, in social terms). Carl Sandburg’s ‘first city’ was one of elevated trains and sunken ghettos, Zorbaugh’s The Gold Coast and the Slum, and the stockyards and the ivory tower. Skipping ahead, the decline of Chicago’s industries, the impoverishment of many of its neighborhoods, and the focus of successive mayoral administrations on third city projects at the expense of neighborhood development has created the perception of yet another dichotomy – a contemporary understanding of Chicago as two contrasting cities – one affluent and white and the other poor and predominantly Black. This emergent social dichotomy is also geographic in character, with densely populated, wealthier neighborhoods that enjoy prompt city services and public improvements concentrated along the lakefront, downtown, and major university campuses, contrasted with poorer, inland neighborhoods that experience disinvestment, violence, and outmigration. According to this view, Bennett’s third city is actually split into two opposing camps of haves and have-nots. The have-nots live in peripheral neighborhoods and, in reaction to City Hall’s focus on ‘downtown’ development, engage in Jacobsian, local opposition to the growth machine that serves the neighborhoods where the haves live.

Do these dichotomies hold? Enter contemporary Chicago, take a walk, and see for yourself. Start at the corner of LaSalle and Washington Streets in the Loop. The tall art deco facades of banks rise up along LaSalle. Daley Plaza is down the block. The five-story-tall Picasso sculpture in the Plaza is dwarfed by the towering Daley Center, once the tallest building in the city and still home to the Cook County Circuit Court. In between the banks and the Plaza is City Hall, which houses the City Council chamber and the Mayor’s Office. Many of the streets around City Hall are named after presidents – Washington, Madison, Adams, and others. To the north of City Hall there is a break in the presidential streets for Lake, Randolph, and Wacker, which runs along the Chicago River. Across the River, there is a glass façade with often comes at the expense of existing residents whether it be because of the use of eminent domain to construct large projects, the diversion of budgetary resources away from local development, and the influx of a high-earning creative class. See, Cliff Hague, Euan Hague and Carrie Breitbach, Regional and Local Economic Development (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 270.


8 In The Adventures of Augie March, Saul Bellow’s main character describes the vicissitudes of the Chicago stockyard stench that penetrates the University Chicago campus on a westerly wind. Bellow was criticized by other Chicago writers for his frequent juxtaposition of Chicago qua city and the possibilities of human though, which was interpreted to suggest that the reality of life in the city could only be fully understood once one escaped it by reading the classics of Western thought or traveling abroad. See, Rotella, October Cities, 94, footnote 7 (p. 334). In Ravelstein, a novel modelled on the real life of Allan Bloom, Bellow admires the main character’s ability to relate his scholarship on the Greek classics as a member of University of Chicago’s Committee on Social Thought with the fact that the University itself sits in the midst of an increasingly impoverished city. This thesis would problematize Bellow’s dichotomous portrayal of the life of the mind and the rough life of the city by noting that the University, through land development and an urbanism of exclusion, contributed to the impoverishment and marginalization of the surrounding neighborhoods. See, Saul Bellow, The Adventures of Augie March (New York: Penguin, 1953); Saul Bellow, Ravelstein (New York: Penguin, 2000).

9 Emily Badger, “Whites and blacks in Chicago are living in two totally different cities,” The Washington Post, May 9, 2016.
“TRUMP” emblazoned in twenty-foot-tall silver letters across an upper floor. Aldermen balked at the sign when it was erected in 2014, and Mayor Rahm Emanuel reviewed options for having it removed or altered. But, oddly enough for a city in which Aldermen and ultimately the Mayor seem to get anything they want, the sign remains in place.

Back along Washington Street directly across from City Hall is the office of the Lawyers’ Committee for Better Housing (LCBH). The Committee began in 1980 as a group of community lawyers in Rogers Park, a neighborhood at the northernmost reach of the city where most buildings are shorter than Trump’s ‘T’, let alone the towering Picasso. They set out to find ways to preserve that neighborhood’s stock of affordable housing by partnering with the local Alderman and placing problem buildings into receivership. Several decades later, and LCBH now has offices directly across from City Hall. You can look down into the Mayor’s Office and over the top of the Picasso from the desks where they draft and introduce progressive legislation to the Committee Chambers.

Walk two blocks west from City Hall and ride the “El” out of the Loop. To go north, you will ride the Chicago Transit Authority’s Brown Line. When the River is jammed with boats during the summer, the CTA conductor might toot his whistle to vessels passing under the bridge, which will toot back. The train then weaves through balconied loft spaces in River North, bypasses the open fields and new condo buildings where the Cabrini-Green public housing development once stood, makes several stops in upscale Lincoln Park and desirable Lake View, and then does a two-stop run west over a commuter rail trunk line and through several neighborhoods before reaching Ravenswood. This is where the Mayor lives. It is here where he catches the Brown Line every morning and rides it through Lake View and Lincoln Park, by Cabrini-Green, over the boats in the River and into the Loop to Washington Street on his way to City Hall. He finds a standing spot on the train and pulls the folds of the newspaper over his peripheral vision, relying on the two large men that accompany him during the morning commute to keep an eye on the other passengers. When the Mayor was first elected in 2011, protected bike lanes sprung up along the Ravenswood stretch of Lawrence Avenue, which runs parallel to the Brown Line.

One stop after the Mayor’s Ravenswood, the Brown Line empties out except for several riders going further west. There are now fewer Apple earbuds, gym bags, and electronic copies of the New York Times opened on smartphone screens. Those that remain stare out the window or close their eyes and rest. By this point, the protected bike lanes along Lawrence Avenue are no more. The train crosses the North Branch of the Chicago River and the residences transition from large single-family homes to apartment blocks. Several closely spaced stops later and one arrives at Kedzie Avenue. The train platform is at grade in an alley between rows of two- and four-flat apartment blocks. From the platform one can watch men working on cars in their garages and groups of children riding from open garage to open garage on toy bicycles. Outside the station on Kedzie Avenue, you will find the Lebanese Salaam Restaurant, the Botanico Lucero Inc. for consultas espirituales, and the Dukan International Food Market where you can buy Damascene pastries. Several blocks north on Kedzie is the intersection with Lawrence Avenue, where there is Nazareth Sweets, the Lindo Michoacan grocery store, and Pharmacy One, which caters to one of the most diverse neighborhoods in Chicago.

Here, all the way past the Mayor’s house, across the train tracks, and over the river at the corner of Kedzie and Lawrence Avenues, is the office of Communities United, where community organizers work with the local Alderman and organize area residents to help renters remain in spite of rising rents and evictions. Inside the office, assemblages of tables look large enough to host dozens for discussion. Down the street and back across the Brown Line tracks, other organizations that prefer to protest, crash Ward meetings, and put pressure on developers meet in the basement of a church.
From Albany Park, go four miles south on Kedzie Avenue. You will pass directly through Logan Square, then under the Bloomingdale Trail, a new rails-to-trails linear park, and finally to the intersection of Kedzie and North Avenue in the Humboldt Park neighborhood on Chicago’s West Side. There are more vacant lots here than in Albany Park, remnants from abandonment and arsons in the 1970s. Just several blocks to away is Paseo Boricua, the center of Puerto Rican life in Chicago. Unlike the truncated Lawrence Avenue bike lanes, the Bloomingdale Trail runs without interruption from swanky Bucktown and gentrified Wicker Park in the East all the way into Puerto Rican Humboldt Park in the West. The Mayor boosted the Trail when it was completed in 2015 as part of his plan to build hundreds of new parks around the city. But the bike lane running down the Trail’s middle brought not only competitive cyclists who glare at the strollers and dog walkers, but also investors who demolished affordable housing to build pricier units alongside the new amenity.

It is in Humboldt Park where Sandra Cisneros’ *The House on Mango Street* takes place. At the end of the book, the young Esperanza, daughter of Mexican immigrants who move from house to house to escape rodent infestations, rent increases, and crumbling sidewalks, talks to her friend Alicia from Guadalajara:

> You have a home, Alicia, and one day you’ll go back there, to a town you remember, but me I never had a house, not even a photograph...only one I dream of.
> No, Alicia says. Like it or not you are Mango Street, and one day you’ll come back too.
> Not me. Not until somebody makes it better.
> Who’s going to do it? The mayor?
> And the thought of the mayor coming to Mango Street makes me laugh out loud.
> Who’s going to do it? Not the mayor.  

Organizations like Latin United Cooperative Housing Association (LUCHA) and the Logan Square Neighborhood Association (LSNA) have worked together both in the past to address abandonment and the loss of affordable housing, and in the present to address fallout from the Bloomingdale Trail project as it forces more residents to leave. In a slight variation of Cisneros’ story, the Mayor almost came to ‘Mango Street’, but stopped short at his linear park, which, without accompanying measures to prevent the destruction and redevelopment of affordable housing, now threatens residents with displacement. While the new amenity makes the neighborhood better in some ways, it makes it more precarious in others. In the end, the neighbors in Humboldt Park have seen nothing of the Mayor except for his linear park, and will have to make the neighborhood ‘better’ on their own.

From Kedzie Avenue in Humboldt Park, ride the North Avenue bus eastward into Wicker Park, moving back towards the Lake and downtown. On the six-cornered intersection where the bus connects with the Blue Line you will see expensive coffee stores and boutique pizza restaurants. This is what the Humboldt Park community fears their neighborhood might become if measures are not taken to preserve affordable housing there. Leave the street and navigate the elevated walkways hanging from the El’s lattice of iron and wood up to the Blue Line, and take the train towards Forest Park. You will go through the Loop and under City Hall, Daley Plaza, and the Picasso sculpture before curving to the west and surfacing above ground in the middle of the Eisenhower Expressway, next to the University of Illinois at Chicago. A flood of students will pour off the packed train, leaving just several riders to continue westward to Garfield Park and Homan Square. Follow the crowd out of the station and across Harrison Street onto the wide quads of the UIC campus. Walk for a mile south along Morgan Street. You

will see little other than university-owned parking lots, sports fields, and administration buildings where an Italian neighborhood once stood. Adjacent Little Italy is home largely to University professors and downtown business folk. Nearby Greektown is now almost entirely office space and restaurants, where the waiters will set your food on fire before it hits the table. You will pass by the wide parking lots and quiet townhomes at the corner of Maxwell Street, where the busiest market west of the Hudson once stood. Continue in between the new loft buildings abutting an elevated rail yard that acts like a wall between the University Village residential development and the adjoining neighborhood to the south.

You emerge into densely packed Pilsen on the other side of the wall. This is what the swath of parking lots, fields, townhomes, and university buildings looked like before the wrecking ball came to make way for the expressway and university campus. You have to walk down a flight of stairs to reach some front doors in this neighborhood because the homes were constructed before Chicago’s streets were raised out of the mud in the nineteenth century. Ornate wooden trim under the eaves of the oldest houses looks like it would fit better in Plzen, a hilly central European village after which Bohemian immigrants named their Chicago neighborhood. Pilsen is now populated by many of the Mexican families who left their homes on the other side of the rail yard when the expressway and the university came.

Take a right off Morgan onto 18th Street, which runs through the heart of the neighborhood. There are storefronts that sell tortillas in bulk next to a growing number of Edison lightbulb coffee shops and used clothing stores whose merchandise is more expensive than the new stuff you can buy downtown. Thousands of people, mostly from Mexican households, have been displaced from Pilsen in recent years as rents have risen. After a fifteen minute walk westward on 18th Street, you pass under the Pink Line tracks and find a converted storefront with wide glass windows. This is the Pilsen Alliance, a community organization that runs ballot initiatives and disseminates information on new luxury development in the area to encourage residents to participate in protecting and developing the community on their own terms. Closer to the Pink Line and across from Bank of America, The Resurrection Project is developing affordable housing for local families, but also encourages Pilsen households to buy more affordable homes outside of the neighborhood to build their wealth. These are just two organizations out of many working along 18th Street.

From Pilsen, take the Blue Line back into the Loop and transfer to the Green Line. As you go south on the Green Line, you will ride by Chinatown, where people live in the same Ward and vote for the same Alderman as they do in Pilsen, despite the reality of geography. When that Ward’s Alderman was indicted on corruption charges, a new Alderman was appointed by Mayor Richard M. Daley, son of Mayor Daley the elder, who was from Bridgeport, just off the right side of the Green Line as you head farther south. The first Mayor Daley used Federal funds to build highways that seal his Irish neighborhood off from the adjacent Chinese, Mexican, and Black communities. He named the highways after important Democratic politicians.

You will pass next into Bronzeville, the northern edge of the African American neighborhoods that stretch for miles to the South and West. Get off at 43rd Street. Stately buildings and large public facilities attest to the area’s long history. A giant portrait of Nat King Cole is affixed to the center of the façade of the shuttered ‘Forum’ on 43rd Street, where many greats once played. There are now many vacant lots, though new townhomes have filled some of the gaps and threaten a new type of trouble for residents who cannot afford quickly rising rents. That is why the Kenwood Oakland Community Organization along Cottage Grove Avenue convened a number of organizations from across Chicago to get the City to implement rent control. When City Hall sponsors discrimination and disinvestment, the answer might actually be an appeal to that same institution to change the rules of the game.
This portrait of downtown and several Chicago neighborhoods suggests that there is more to the dichotomy of community organizations fighting City Hall. In fact, there are community organizations that work with, around, and against elected officials, policies, plans, and projects. Not to mention the way that community organizations work with and sometimes against other community organizations on similar issues. This thesis aims to deconstruct the dichotomy of community organizations fighting urban planners. From the Loop to Albany Park to Pilsen to Bronzeville, this research argues that community organizations pursue housing justice in Chicago by employing three modes of action, each of which embodies a particular relationship to the state. They act with the state by ordinance to pass laws and engage in electoral activity, around the state by convening to leverage relationships in the absence of formal legislation, and against the state by contesting to challenge centralized decision-making. Using community planning theory, this view builds on conceptions of collective efficacy by focusing on the relationship between community organizations and the state’s regulatory power rather than on indicators of social capital or civic action.

This research is based on over 30 semi-structured interviews with leaders and members active in community organizations; members in local social movements and political parties; faculty and students at DePaul University, University of Illinois at Chicago, and the University of Chicago; not-for-profit developers; and philanthropic funds working on prominent housing justice campaigns since the 2008 foreclosure crisis. These include a rent control ballot initiative, the introduction of several anti-eviction ordinances, an affordable housing preservation program, and the establishment of a community zoning board. In each of these cases, the varying isolation, interaction, and blending of the three modes of action complicates dichotomous portrayals of the grassroots – state relationship, providing an analytic lens through which to understand how and why certain issues become important on both neighborhood and citywide scales.

I spoke with interlocutors between January and March of 2018 by snowballing from an initial interview with Professor John Betancur in the College of Urban Planning and Public Affairs at the University of Illinois at Chicago. I used what sociologist John Walton terms “individualizing comparisons” to find both unique and analogous factors between various community organizations and other actors located mostly but not exclusively in the several neighborhoods described in the previous paragraphs. The research also draws on past scholarship and documentary reporting as well audio-visual recordings of symposia, City Council meetings, and media interviews.

While this thesis focuses on community organizations that have launched successful campaigns for housing justice, it is important to keep in mind that community organizations can just as easily organize around discriminatory, regressive, and exclusive causes as they can around issues of housing justice. Creating collective efficacy, according to Robert Sampson, requires social cohesion and common expectations of social control. Even when deployed for just causes, these processes exclude some residents either by defining them out of an issue or by delineating acceptable positions on an issue to create a ‘community’ of supporters. These dynamics remain an implicit subtext throughout the following chapters.

From urban communities to social movements to how community organizations plan

The concern for neighborhoods begins with theories of ‘community’ in the Western tradition, each of which ascribes a particular purpose to these associations of individuals. Socrates’ city-state community was a platform for justice, early Christians formed church communities in order to commemorate Jesus’ Passion, and eventually Hobbes, Locke, and Rousseau’s theorized the social contract based on the equality and rationality of the individual and to avoid war of all against all. Just as the weakening of trade guilds, the Church, and the Divine Right of Kings contributed to the development of social contract theory, so the Industrial Revolution and its attendant urbanization inspired Karl Marx to conceive of communities defined by each class’s relationship to the modes of production and embodied for the world historical purpose of overthrowing the bourgeoisie. Benedict Anderson writes that high-capacity printing technologies and rapid transportation created the ‘imagined communities’ that created nations, linking the reality of community with the concept of territory. Emil Durkheim, Georg Simmel, and Max Weber created the field of sociology to study the creation and dissolution of communities in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

The Chicago School of sociologists turned the historical interest in community into an explicit focus on neighborhood. Louis Wirth, Robert Park, Florian Znaniecki, Roderick McKenzie, Ernest Burgess, Harvey Zorbaugh, and others used Chicago’s uniform grid as a controlled space in which to study how communities organized or disorganized and how that influenced ethnic homogeneity, crime rates, poverty, and other variables. Wirth’s *The Ghetto* and Zorbaugh’s *Gold Coast and Slum*, among other texts, linked the idea of community and its protective and exclusive effects to the social-spatial reality of the geographic neighborhood. Park understood neighborhoods to be “natural areas” and wrote that, “our great cities turn out, upon examination, to be a mosaic of segregated peoples – differing in race, in culture, or merely in cult – each seeking to preserve its peculiar cultural forms and to maintain its individual and unique conceptions of life.”

The consolidation of mayoral power in Chicago and the top-down approach to urban renewal exemplified by Mayor Richard J. Daley in Chicago and Robert Moses in New York, respectively, seemed to counter the Chicago School’s understanding that cities are most importantly comprised of neighborhoods. Harold Gosnell, however, writes that city hall machines grew out of neighborhood political organizations and cemented their control by doling out jobs through local officials. Neighborhood opposition also played a large part in resisting urban renewal plans, documented in Jane Jacobs’ argument for understanding the city from the block up in *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*.

In the second half of the twentieth century, theorists revised and challenged the Chicago School’s understanding of urban communities by intersecting it with economic and legal regimes. In *The Backyard Revolution*, Harry C. Boyte argues that organic relations, like the neighborhood community, not yet “collectivized, rationalized, and refashioned in the image of the marketplace,” incubate citizen movements. He draws on a tradition of mid-century community organizing to argue that these movements’ local good will and problem solving can lead to economic redistribution, political

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14 Sampson, *Great American City*.
empowerment, community-building, and alliance-formation.\textsuperscript{18} Manuel Castells and his colleagues in the new urban sociology, on the other hand, saw in the local action that sprouted across Europe in 1968 the seeds of broader structural change not through good will but through ideological commitments and “proto revolutionary urban social movements.”\textsuperscript{19} John Logan and Harvey Molotch wrote about the influence of elite-political alliances in determining city form and function. The ‘growth machine’ contended that rather than being “natural areas,” racially homogenous neighborhoods were the result of policies and structures.

A group of Chicago scholars updated the importance of urban communities at the turn of the twenty first century. Amanda Seligman provides a cogent example of community-based action in \textit{Block by Block} and \textit{Chicago’s Block Clubs}, showing how individuals living on a particular block form what she calls “collectives” to change their environment, demand city services, and politically organize.\textsuperscript{20} Eric Klinenberg writes in \textit{Heat Wave} that the reasons for and impacts of city-wide events like the death toll of the 1995 heat wave are best understood at the neighborhood level where differences in municipal services, income, age, and social networks determine everyday lived reality.\textsuperscript{21} In \textit{Great American City}, Robert Sampson devotes 552 pages to reviving a community-centered understanding of social phenomena. Sampson shows that, even at a time when distances seem shortened by the internet and speedy intercontinental travel, the power of community, place, and neighborhood endures and continues to determine our health, civic engagement, altruism, social networks, and a range of other phenomena.\textsuperscript{22} Sampson goes on to examine how communities not only determine altruism and social networks, but how they create collective efficacy. He combines the urban communities literature summarized above and the social movements literature, some of which is outlined in the following paragraphs, to understand how urban communities serve as a base for collective civic action.\textsuperscript{23}

As Sampson argues, one of the primary (though hardly the only) function of urban communities is to provide a platform for collective efficacy. Social movement literature, however, is not limited to movements arising out of local associations. Anthony Oberschall, for instance, defines social movements as transcending accepted, individual forms of addressing problems by seeking to address issues collectively for an \textit{entire class} of people (emphasis added), suggesting an explicitly non-territorially bounded character. That said, answers to the questions of how movements come about, what determines their form, and what determines their final success provide an understanding of how local associations like urban communities can foster social movements as well.

Frances Fox Piven theorizes that social movements come about when the ‘system’ loses legitimacy, otherwise fatalistic individuals stand up to assert their rights as part of a framework for change, and people who consider themselves helpless suddenly see themselves as empowered.\textsuperscript{24} Oberschall argues that social movements arise to challenge long-standing circumstances when there are changes in the

\textsuperscript{18} Bennett, \textit{Neighborhood Politics}, xiii-xiv.
\textsuperscript{22} Sampson. \textit{Great American City}.
\textsuperscript{23} Ibid., 181.
basic conditions of life most likely to produce discontent; changes in beliefs and values, aspirations, and expectations; changes in the capacity to act collectively; or changes in opportunity for successful action.

More than simply theorizing antecedents to action, James Wood and Maurice Jackson argue that there are three social movement paradigms. The first is the social-psychological paradigm (theorized by Ted Robert Gurr), which holds that social structures like family and politics shape people’s values, motives, and actions. One branch of the social-psychological paradigm is relative deprivation theory, which holds that individuals act when they sense salient, relative differences in the modes of everyday life in and between members of different social structures. The second is the social-structural paradigm, which holds that behavior is determined by the structures of politics, bureaucracy, and economy. The third is the psychological paradigm, which holds that individual personality is the prime determinant in collective social behavior.25

Another way to categorize social mobilization is according to the liberal and Marxist paradigms. The liberal paradigm assumes that individual, rational persons act in a conciliatory manner as part of social movements to solve collective problems. For instance, the functionalist and structuralist understandings of social movement mobilization outlined by Donatella Della Porta encompass the common liberal view in the United States that actors are spurred to action when they sense relative changes to their position vis-a-vis other groups.26 The Marxist paradigm, on the other hand, understands social movements to respond to changes in structures such as the state or economy that determine the functioning of society. Mobilization therefore derives from economic (material) class interests and is an inherently confrontational process that ends with state capture.

The third paradigm arose in a postcolonial setting and understands social movements to be driven by new identities and ‘groups’ that realize their coherence as a response to the turn to markets and globalization (women, fisherfolk, garment workers, peasants, etc.).27 These groups enact ‘identity politics’ by challenging the inherited collective and individual definitions of the liberal and Marxist paradigms and by mobilizing around territory and local cultural practices while remaining disinterested in state capture.

Despite the heterogeneity of these theories, they all point implicitly to the importance of local associations in the development of social movements. Piven’s changes in the basic conditions of life, the capacity to act collectively, and the opportunity for success materialize on a local, territorialized stage. Likewise, Wood and Jackson’s argument on the importance of social institutions and structures necessitate imagined collectives larger than the family but smaller than the state. Urban communities also fit within the liberal, Marxist, and postcolonial paradigms of social movements.

Seeing Harry C. Boyte’s argument that social movements arise out of the “‘organic’ relations that modern life has not completely collectivized, rationalized and refashioned in the image of the marketplace”28 through the lens of Jane Jacob’s organic localism focuses Wood and Jackson’s list of

social institutions to associations such as the family, the block, and the urban community or neighborhood. Moreover, Robert Sampson’s understanding that urban communities determine one’s lived experience suggests that Piven’s changes in the basic conditions of life occur nowhere else than at the local scale. Saul Alinsky’s model of confrontational community organizing by which organizers partner with neighborhood institutions like churches, small businesses, and lodges realizes Piven’s capacity to act collectively and the opportunity for success at the urban community level, embodied through these neighborhood institutions both in theory and reality.29

Amanda Seligman’s understanding of ‘cooperative’ action at the block level shows that urban communities can serve as a platform for the liberal paradigm’s rational solution to collective problems.30 David Harvey’s understanding of the Right to the City centers on place-based capital accumulation and calls for a city-centered rights movement, infusing urban localism into the Marxist paradigm.31 Larry Bennett’s characterization of Chicago’s ‘third city’ that features new immigrant identities,32 Sandercock’s ‘mongrel cities’,33 and Lilia Fernandez’s and Felix Padilla’s scholarship on the coalescence of Puerto Rican and Mexican communities in Chicago34 suggest that the postcolonial paradigm can also play out at a neighborhood level.

Now that it is clear that social movements can occur at the urban community scale, one must ask: what do these movements do? Harry C. Boyte describes that the social movements of the 1970s and 1980s called for a reversal of state hierarchies through the “return of political and economic power to the local level”.35 He describes that church groups organized to rally against corporate predation, block clubs formed to address rent increases, crime, and healthcare, and large organizations like the Citizens Action Program in Chicago were able to turn out thousands of local residents for direct actions. These movements disaggregated the scientific ‘public interest’ of social science. They “represented a rekindled faith in the citizenry itself, a conviction that, given the means and the information, people can make decisions about the course of their lives; a belief that people can develop a conception of the public interest that does not deny – but rather is nourished by – specific interests.”36

These movements also indicated a structural transformation of inequalities and empowerment of historically marginalized communities. Saul Alinsky developed his model of confrontational community organizing in Chicago’s Back of the Yards and Woodlawn neighborhoods to empower the ‘Have Nots’.37 Alinskyites (including their distant descendant Barack Obama who worked as an organizer in Altgeld Gardens during the early 1990s), espoused a direct approach to organize people into movements to

30 Seligman, Chicago’s Block Clubs, 18.
32 Bennett, The Third City.
35 Boyte, The Backyard Revolution, 3.
36 Ibid., 7.
37 Bennett, Neighborhood Politics, 15.
extract concessions from elites.\textsuperscript{38} Alinsky’s Industrial Areas Foundation was established to build local organizing capacity within urban communities.

These movements act outside state establishments by inverting hierarchies and empowering communities while also sometimes interacting with government bodies when necessary to achieve particular ends. The public interest advocacy approach introduced by Ralph Nader uses disclosure, publicity, and litigation in the state’s courts to achieve community-centered goals.\textsuperscript{39} Neighborhood councils, some set up by Alinsky himself, have historically acted alongside the state and in certain cases with significant state funding to generate more equitable urban renewal plans at the local scale.\textsuperscript{40}

This relationship between urban community movements and the state is the missing piece of Robert Sampson’s understanding of collective efficacy as portrayed in \textit{Great American City}. Sampson sheds new light on what collective efficacy could look like and mean for urban communities by examining “collective civic action” rather than contestational and visible direct action events that had traditionally been the focus of social movements literature.\textsuperscript{41} By focusing on “civic events” rather than on membership, giving, television viewing, or other ways that social capital had previously been measured,\textsuperscript{42} Sampson shows how urban communities make “claims for social change”.\textsuperscript{43} I build on Sampson’s view by introducing a planning frame to place social movements in relation to the state, which allows for a deeper understanding of how community organizations function.

The following section introduces a community-centric planning frame to build on Sampson’s conception of collective efficacy by focusing on the relationship between community organizations and the state’s regulatory power rather than on indicators of social capital or civic action. That said, Sampson’s portrayal of the complexity of collective efficacy must be retained, lest the following paragraphs make it seem like urban communities are monolithic, pre-packaged, and incapable of anything but progressive action. Sampson tells us that “if community has come to mean everything good, as a concept it loses its

\textsuperscript{38} Alinsky, \textit{Rules for Radicals}. Alinsky’s organizing methods have been criticized as being undemocratic, authoritarian, and overly professionalized: “As events in the Back of the Yards were to prove, relying on the skills of an organizer and the influence of traditional community leaders was not very democratic, and the programs that non-ideological, populist-style organizations like the Back of the Yards Neighborhood Council pursued were not only undemocratic and ineffective in addressing economic problems, they could be racist and reactionary as well.” See, Robert Fisher, \textit{Let the People Decide: Neighborhood Organizing in America} (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1994), 65.; Ira Katznelson argues that the isolation of grass roots Alinskyite groups from populist and workplace-based movements prevented the former from creating a social class-centered platform. Instead, Alinskyite neighborhood groups tend to focus on racial and neighborhood institution building. See, Bennett, \textit{Neighborhood Politics}, 15.; Ira Katznelson, \textit{City Trenches: Urban Politics and the Patterning of Class in the United States} (New York: Pantheon, 1981).

\textsuperscript{39} Boyte, \textit{The Backyard Revolution}, 7.

\textsuperscript{40} The Near West Side Planning Board is discussed in Chapter Three as a prime example of neighborhood movements coalescing into institutions capable of interacting with and working alongside state planning institutions, though the NWSPB’s goals were ultimately thwarted by an intransigent mayoral administration. Elsewhere in the city, residents of East Humboldt Park invited Alinsky to establish the Northwest Community Organization (NCO) in order to work with and manage the Department of Urban Renewal’s plans for the neighborhood. On the NWSPB see, Fernandez, \textit{Brown in the Windy City}, 105-109. On the NCO, see, Ed Marciniak, \textit{Reviving an Inner City Community: The drama of urban change in East Humboldt Park in Chicago} (Chicago: Loyola University of Chicago, 1977), 19.

\textsuperscript{41} Sampson, \textit{Great American City}, 181.

\textsuperscript{42} Ibid., 182.

\textsuperscript{43} Ibid., 184.
analytic bite and therefore means little.” 44 Mike Royko provides us a biting, meaningful portrayal of urban communities in Chicago that Sampson would likely appreciate:

Daley was a product of the neighborhoods and he reflected it in many good ways – loyalty to the family, neighbors, old buddies, the corner grocer. You do something for someone, they do something for you. If somebody is sick, you offer the family help. If someone dies, you go to the wake and try to lend comfort. The young don’t lip off the old, everybody cuts his grass, and takes care of his property. And don’t play your TV too loud…But there are other sides to Chicago neighborhoods – suspicion of outsiders, intolerance towards the unconventional, bigotry and bullying. 45

As Royko put it, the “neighborhood-ward-city-county” 46 communities that comprise Chicago could be just as much a force for good as they could be for bad. Indeed, they can do many things. Sampson writes that urban communities can launch platforms appealing to broad social change. 47 Seligman describes how local associations in the form of block clubs gather to make physical improvements to neighborhoods when city services did not arrive on time or at all. 48 That said, Seligman and Thomas Sugrue also write how block clubs and other local associations can act to enforce segregation. 49 While collective efficacy is often celebrated when it resists the planner’s wrecking ball, the role of community organizations in having invited urban renewal into their neighborhoods to entrench racial segregation is less discussed. 50

Sampson also writes how an urban community’s collective efficacy is rarely monolithic within a given neighborhood. Rather, there are distinct networks of leaders and activists across different geographic scales with prominent “isolates” and “cliques”. 51 Euan Hague, a Professor in the Department of Geography at DePaul University in Chicago told me that community organizations often partner more effectively with organizations outside of their neighborhood because the multiplicity of groups with any given neighborhood forces each to take opposing stances on issue. 52 This also suggests that any community organization, whether its platform is for “good” or for “bigotry and bullying”, will have cut a slice of both an issue and a resident base to consolidate a particular form of collective efficacy.

44 Ibid., 45.
46 Ibid., 104.
48 Seligman, Chicago’s Block Clubs, 6.
50 From the late 1950s to the mid-1960s, the white Garfield Park community on Chicago’s West Side lobbied University of Illinois trustees and City Hall to site the future University of Illinois at Chicago campus in their neighborhood, in part to preserve the racial homogeneity of the community. See Seligman, Block by Block, 100.
51 Sampson, Great American City, 16-17.
Introducing the planning frame

States are a relatively modern invention, and are themselves ‘communities’, albeit existing at a different scale and for a different purpose than neighborhoods. States are understood to hold a monopoly on violence and to regulate activity by enacting and enforcing law. This discussion will leave aside the question of different types of state regimes (democratic, monarchical, etc.) and instead focus on the expression of the state’s regulatory activity through the allocation of resources and services. While elected officials and government bureaucracies certainly have a say in the functioning of government, it is largely planners who devise the infrastructure and programs that allocate resources like water, schooling, garbage pickup, physical improvements, and infrastructure. Given that those planning decisions concern the allocation of resources to the constituent units of the city and that this discussion focuses on the role of neighborhoods, the following paragraphs will examine how the state plans.

It would seem that the state and its planning capacity is the very opposite of the communities and their purpose outlined at the beginning of this chapter. Planning was professionalized in the first half of the twentieth century when Ford perfected the assembly line and Weber theorized bureaucracy. Leonie Sandercock calls this mode of planning, which lasted until the 1960s, the “rational comprehensive model”, or the “heroic model”. Sandercock describes that this model rests on the pillars of “rationality; comprehensiveness; scientific method; faith in state-directed futures; and faith in planners’ ability to know what is good for people in general.” Alan Altshuler writes that, “the comprehensive planner not only must assume that societies have goals…but also that these goals can in practice be determined, articulated, measured at least roughly as to importance, and harmonized to form a hierarchy of community objectives. Beyond this, he must argue that technicians can prescribe courses of action to achieve these objectives...” Harvey Perloff and Andreas Faludi write that professionalized planning consolidated around a core of social science and envisioned a single, rational actor who pursued the abstract ‘public interest’ through the application of instrumental, technical knowledge. Alan Altshuler continues that, “a comprehensive planner is a specialist in defining, or at least comprehending, the overall public interest....The planner’s claim is one of professionalism and research; if it seems somewhat devoid of human warmth, it sounds also more authoritative, more precise, more modern.”

Paul Davidoff developed advocacy planning to contest the rational comprehensive model by infusing it with politics and the ends of redistribution at a time in the 1960s and 1970s when disenfranchised communities were demanding attention and resources. Instead of a disinterested, rational, and scientific technician acting on behalf of an abstract public interest, Davidoff envisioned that the advocacy planner would go to previously unrepresented communities, learn what people needed, and represent their voices back at city hall in order to push for the redistribution of resources. This planning model pointed to the potential for social movements to inform and even act like planners; their disaggregation of the rational planner’s public interest into what Harry C. Boyte understands as ‘specific

56 Sandercock, Towards Cosmopolis, 62.; Harvey Perloff, Education for Planning: City, State, and Regional (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1957); Andreas Faludi, Critical Rationalism and Planning Methodology (London: Pion, 1986). Other contributors to the development of rational planning include Tugwell, Banfield, Meyerson, and Friedmann.
interests informed Davidoff’s model. While Davidoff’s “Advocacy and pluralism in planning” recognized the existence and needs of different communities, the reality of politics when the advocacy planner returned to city hall with community demands, and the state’s disparate resource allocation in the name of ‘public interest’, meant that advocacy planning depended on the same professionalized expertise as the rational comprehensive model.

At around the same time, David Harvey’s *Social Justice and the City*, Manuel Castells’ *The Urban Question*, and Richard Foglesong’s *Planning the Capitalist City* argued that planning theories had not yet recognized planning’s role as negotiating capital interests and managing the protests of the poor. In *Urban Fortunes*, John Logan and Harvey Molotch argue that planning, “virtually from its inception in the United States” has been in service of the growth machine, defined as an alliance between ruling elites and capital interests. The authors use the example of Chicago’s first mayor to demonstrate how elites determine the trajectory of government, its public policy, and city growth and planning. William Ogden arrived in Chicago in 1835 when the outpost’s population was under four thousand. He succeeded in becoming a railway developer, owner of real estate, and the new city’s first mayor. As mayor, he was able to put roads exactly where he wanted them, resulting in a property he bought for $8,000 appreciating to over $3,000,000 in a period of eight years.

Logan and Molotch also argue that when waves of immigrants and industrialization made American cities ‘unmanageable’ in the late nineteenth century, planning controls on land use, zoning, urban design, and social policy was in large part designed to pacify the growing working classes. They describe that “some of the country’s wealthiest families...helped create an ‘urban policy network’” to advise on planning issues. Oren Yiftachel’s argument that, “planning can be used as a tool for controlling disadvantaged groups, primarily for the purpose of advancing majority interests and preserving a hierarchical social and political order,” extends Harvey and Molotch’s materialistic model into postcolonial urban spaces inhabited not only by elites and poor, but by different nationalities, religious groups, genders, etc.

Building on the advocacy planning model, Norman Krumholz developed the equity planning model, in which planners ally themselves with progressive regimes to channel money, power, and participation to

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64 Logan and Molotch, *Urban Fortunes*, 152.
those who have historically not received it. While the advocacy planning model envisioned planners negotiating the terrain of political institutions to enact redistributional policies, equity planners seek out political opportunity with progressives. Robert Mier worked as the Head of Economic Development Planning in Mayor Harold Washington’s progressive administration in Chicago, which was premised on treating all neighborhoods fairly and allocating resources to Black and Latino neighborhoods that had long suffered neglect. That said, like all the models that came before it, equity planning assumed that the planner would remain the handmaiden to the state, albeit a progressive regime.

Other reactions to the shortcomings of advocacy planning include the social learning and communicative action models. In order to deconstruct the planner’s role as technician and problem solver, John Friedmann focused the social learning model on dialogue and information exchange between professionalized experts and the experienced knowledge of communities. John Forester, Patsy Healey, and Judith Innes based the communicative action model on Jurgen Habermas’ theory of communicative action that does away with the alliance between instrumental knowledge and the exercise of power and explores more open ways of knowing and working through experiential and communicative action alongside communities. While these models did more than their predecessors to break down the primacy of expertise and the planner’s fate to work through the state, its philosophical pedigree meant that it understood the world through universal rather than social categories such as citizenship, gender, or race, which limited its applicability to lived reality.

Beginning in the 1990s, the radical planning model finally attempted to reverse the hierarchy of planner and state, instead taking communities and their representative organizations as the prime subject of interest. While Sandercock explains that there are many genealogies of radical planning, she addresses only their common concern with structural transformation of inequalities and empowerment of historically disempowered communities. These two components are significant because in all of the previous planning theories, ultimate power remained with the planner acting through the state, and action was constrained to isolated and pragmatic concerns. Jacqueline Leavitt and Allan Heskin argue that despite introducing new epistemologies, reframing the public good as a problem of distribution, and acknowledging the role of politics, all previous planning models failed to transcend their reliance on state bureaucracy and action and to address the lack of power that communities often feel. Leavitt turns this reliance on its head, and situates the ultimate authority for knowing and planning with community organizations; “Community-based groups who develop bottom-up programs are engaged in planning that occurs outside the local planning establishment.”

When community organizations engage in planning, Heskin says, the planner must become completely ‘deprofessionalized’ and regard his or her own role as that of an ally alongside the community in its quest for empowerment. Sandercock explains this position, writing that “planners’ roles are not the heroic ones described in the rational model. Rather...planners acknowledge that theory and practice

67 Sandercock, Towards Cosmopolis, 93.
68 Ibid., 95.
70 Sandercock, Towards Cosmopolis, 97.
71 Ibid., 97.
73 Sandercock, Towards Cosmopolis, 100.
become everyone’s concern and that responsibilities for both are multiple and overlapping.”

The multiple and overlapping roles suggest that communities’ engagement with planning is not necessarily (though it might be) oppositional or a ‘check and balance’ on state power, but rather a critical and reflective participation in it. Leavitt writes that, “at some point the people [and community organizations] with whom I work will interact with either the planning establishment or other political bodies….The overall intent of this type of practice is not to create a plan as much as it is to generate a political process that involves plans or programs.”

A comparison between what localized social movements do and what community organizations do reveals that they can do quite the same thing. Boyte’s social movements that seek to “return of political and economic power to the local level” sound very much like Leavitt and Heskin’s community organizations that reverse state hierarchies. The movements’ focus on developing a conception of the public interest that “is nourished by…specific interests” parallels the radical planners’ dismantling of the positivist ‘public interest’. Alinsky’s empowerment of marginalized communities interests Leavitt and Heskin’s concern over communities’ lack of power. Finally, the nuanced interaction between social movements and state bodies mirrors Leavitt’s experience of community organizations “interact[ing] with either the planning establishment or other political bodies” and generating “a political process that involves plans or programs”.

Why a planning frame?

I do not mean to flatten, dismiss, professionalize, or coopt the complex, nuanced, and rich work of community organizations by imposing a planning frame. On the contrary, I introduce the planning frame as one of many in a long-standing discussion between theorists, organizers, activists, residents, and others on the nature of community organizations and their work. I argue that the planning frame can contribute to this conversation by breaking down the neighborhood-downtown dichotomy, enriching the language of organizing, and enriching the language of planning.

The planning frame shows that community organizations do not only fill the role of contesting or ‘checking and balancing’ the machinations of city government, but rather engaging in their own planning activities and at times enlisting the state to help them. The nuance of this lens lies in the fact that it allows community organizations to be alternatingly oppositional, collaborative, unilateral, improvised, and formal.

The planning frame likewise can enrich the language of community organizations’ work. Community organizations come with a myriad of languages and traditions from which to draw, including Alinsky’s empowerment of the Have Nots to organize and demand concessions, Nader’s litigious public interest work, and faith-based social justice activism. The planning lens puts a different set of vocabularies and ways of understanding community efficacy within reach.

74 Ibid., 99.
76 Boyte, The Backyard Revolution, 3.
77 Ibid., 7.
When applied to the work of community organizations, the planning frame also enriches the language of planning. Sandercock calls for new ‘epistemologies’ of planning, by which she means, “what do I know? How do I know that I know? What are my sources of knowledge?...What level of uncertainty or ambiguity can I tolerate?...How adequate is my knowledge for the purpose at hand?...What right does my knowledge confer on me as a planner?...And who possesses knowledge that is relevant to planning?”

Realizing the movement from the comprehensive rational planning model to a community organizations-based model allows for the incorporation of the full range of knowing exercised by community groups (experiencing, dialogue, protest, etc.) into the language of planning.

While the scientific generalism of ‘public interest’ has been largely expunged from planning theory, the parallel homogeneity of ‘place’ is apparent in the limited number of façade designs on downtown buildings, the parking lots in front of commercial strips, and the standardized planning controls that make it all possible. The experiential epistemologies that community organizations employ turn ‘place’ into ‘home’, whether it be someone’s actual apartment, lot, block, or neighborhood. The epistemological potential of the planning frame as applied to the local work of community organizations could also incorporate neighborhood-based literature, film, photography, and other art into planning’s knowledge. Esperanza’s question, ‘who’s going to make Mango Street better?’ might inspire the planner to think about place as home and the responsibilities and limits of the state to address her concerns.

One might imagine that if Nelson Algren’s fiction were considered a source for planning knowledge, the Kennedy Expressway would not have blasted through the air space that his bedroom once occupied on Chicago’s northwest side. Or, if not the rerouting of an eight lane expressway, it might have at least strengthened Royko’s literary request: “If the mayor and some of those stiffs in the city council can see their way clear, it would be a nice gesture for them to rename one of the little streets around Wicker Park after him. Algren Court, or Algren Place. Nothing big. He wouldn’t expect it.”

Plan for the thesis

This thesis discusses how community organizations pursue housing justice in Chicago by acting with the state by ordinance to pass laws and engage in electoral activity, around the state by convening to leverage relationships in the absence of formal legislation, and against the state by contesting to challenge centralized decision-making. Each of the three following chapters discuss one mode of action, followed by a conclusion in chapter four.

How do community organizations act with the state by ordinance? Chapter One explains how action by ordinance aims to act through state mechanisms, including the passage of legislation, litigation, and electoral politics. The chapter begins by explaining how community organizations launched a ballot

80 “The moment I cross Fullerton I glide over to the left land and in a few seconds cross what was once the short stretch of Wabansia Avenue that intersected North Bosworth. Rolling over that sector of long-gone Wabansia, the part that was eminent-domained by Mayor Daley’s myrmidons and turned from mangy gray two-flats into mangier gray roadway to hurry us Loop-ward, I think of Chicago novelist Nelson Algren and French novelist-philosopher Simone de Beauvoir, who occupied that precise space more than a third of a century ago, sharing Algren’s squeaky bed on the second floor of 1523 Wabansia. An air space vacated so long ago that a billion cars have long since occupied it momentarily, hurrying toward the city with which Algren had a lifelong love-hate affair.” Cited in Rotella, *October Cities*, 41. See, Arthur Shay, *Nelson Algren’s Chicago* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1988), ix.
initiative across multiple city Wards in support of rent control to address rising rents and displacement. I go on to explain how other community organizations and allies in City Hall, from the Loop to Albany Park to Hermosa, undertook legislative initiatives to pass ordinances that protect renters living in foreclosed properties from displacement, unjust eviction, and substandard housing conditions. Through these examples, the chapter shows how acting by ordinance cannot exist in a vacuum because passing laws, electing officials, and voting on referenda involves work outside of these narrowly defined state mechanisms. Action by ordinance therefore invokes other modes of action including action by convening in order to create support and knowledge around a legislative initiative, and action by contesting in order to pressure policy makers into voting a certain way. Action by ordinance can also transcend its legislative, electoral, and litigious ends to become a strategic, more contestational tactic. Introducing legislation that has no chance of getting enough votes in a legislative chamber, for instance, can put other elected officials in the revealing position of withholding their support on important laws and policies.

How do community organizations act around the state by convening? In Chapter Two, I argue that action by convening often arises to address the limitations of ordinance. When electoral initiatives and legislation take time and then suffer from a lack of comprehensiveness or enforcement, community organizations forge relationships to devise new programs. This chapter recounts how a community organization in Albany Park created an affordable housing preservation program when a city ordinance failed to protect affordable properties after the foreclosure crisis. Another example from Humboldt Park and Logan Square probes how community organizations convene to create solutions for problems the state either did not foresee or chose not to address when it constructs public amenities that can price low and moderate-income renters out of a neighborhood. The chapter complicates acting around the state by noting that no action can be completely independent from state mechanisms or regulation, and shows that even community organizations that dedicate themselves to convening ultimately call for comprehensive planning rather than patchwork solutions. This is why conveners sometimes turn to action by ordinance in order to institutionalize their efforts and coordinate programs on larger geographic scales, avoiding the undemocratic pitfalls of an overly self-reliant civil society and the myopia of neighborhood-level localism.

How do community organizations act against the state by contesting? In Chapter Three, I show how the history of urban renewal, large scale development projects, and ongoing residential development on the Near West Side informs contemporary contesting. Specifically, I describe how a community organization in Pilsen contests gatekeepers and opaque practices within state institutions like the City Council and local zoning boards to empower residents to redefine what kind of ‘progress’ and ‘development’ they want for their neighborhood. This type of contesting is premised on Logan and Molotch’s argument that, “the issues that reach public agendas...do so precisely because they are matters on which elites have, in effect, agreed to disagree...For all the pluralism Banfield...uncovered in Chicago, he found no disagreement with the idea that growth was good.” Contesters on the Near West Side therefore do not exclusively focus on opposing individual projects or plans that have been pre-packaged by elites for public review, but rather on broad themes of development, displacement, and exclusion.

82 This form of Chicago contestation has parallels elsewhere. Balakrishnan Rajagopal argues that since the 1980s, social movements have been challenging inherited development discourse by redefining what development means and should look like. See, Rajagopal, International Law From Below.
How do the three modes of action overlap, and how do neighborhood concerns become the basis for citywide action? The Conclusion describes how community organizations can convene in order to contest, contest in order to pass new legislation, and act by ordinance as a form of contesting. I also discuss future paths of research on the relationship between social categories such as race, gender, and age and the modes of action, with preliminary examples drawn from throughout the thesis. Finally, I argue that the three modes of action offer a lens through which to understand how community organizations take issues of immediate concern on a given block or in a particular neighborhood and turn them into citywide campaigns for social change.
Acting with the State: Action by Ordinance

City Hall takes up an entire block at the center of the Loop in downtown Chicago. It has uninterrupted limestone facades, treeless sidewalks, and a lone policeman standing out front with hands folded under his vest. On one side of the building is LaSalle Street, lined with towering bank headquarters and capped at its southern terminus by the Chicago Board of Trade where a faceless Ceres presides over the buying and selling of futures. On the other side of the building is Daley Plaza, named after the Mayor who built the Chicago Democratic machine. Daley made the Plaza famous in 1967 when he eagerly unveiled a giant five-story-tall Picasso at its center, which was supposed to capture the spirit of Chicago. Visitors and residents alike have admired the statue for making Chicago stand out as a rough city that can yet appreciate art. People in suits descend from office buildings, weave around the statue’s base, and then ascend into other office buildings. There is an entrance that comes into City Hall from the street of banks on the West and an entrance that comes in from the Picasso on the East. The two sides of the building are actually two different buildings – one side for the County and one for the City. While they are identical, the City side apparently cost much more to build. Mike Royko tells us that “Chicago history is full of such oddities. Flip open any page and somebody is making a buck.”

If you can make your way through City Hall’s lobby looking like you know where you are going and get to the right bank of elevators, you can ride to the fifth floor and see the Mayor’s Office. The accessible part of the floor is a wide hallway capped at one end by wall-to-wall glass with a frameless glass door set in the middle. Behind the glass there is a wide secretary’s desk that looks like a Judge’s bench. This is the Mayor’s office. While the current Mayor has forgone limousined arrivals and lives in modest Ravenswood, one rarely sees him. You might catch him riding the Brown Line to work, standing between the backs of two large men who scan the other passengers. After the 2015 release of a video showing a police officer shooting 17-year-old Laquan McDonald 16 times, people called for the Mayor’s resignation. He fired the Police Superintendent instead, and became even less visible. For the fifth floor visitor, there is nowhere to go except humbly towards the glass door under the secretary’s gaze, or quickly back into the elevator and down to the lobby.

On January 16, 2018, I walked by the policeman and the uninterrupted limestone façades of City Hall on my way to meet Frank Avellone, the Senior Attorney at the Lawyers’ Committee for Better Housing. The Picasso looked down on me as I passed. Back in 1967, Royko wrote that the sculpture “looks like some giant insect that is about to eat a smaller, weaker insect” with the “eyes of every slum owner who made a buck off the small and weak...[and] every building inspector who took a wad from a slum owner to

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make it all possible….Any bigtime real estate operator will be able to look into the face of the Picasso and see the spirit that makes the city’s rebuilding possible and profitable.”

I rode the elevator to the ninth floor. As I unpacked my notebook and pen in Avellone’s office, he told me to stand up. “I forgot to show you the view,” he said, beckoning me to the window. He pointed to a corner office with deep windows in the building across the street.

“That’s the mayor’s office.”

As we began to talk, Avellone told me that he wants to see a series of city ordinances, “a trump card against displacement”, as he puts it, signed into law at City Hall across the street. A trump card to answer the slum owner who made a buck off the small and the weak, the building inspector that took a wad from the slum owner to make it possible, and the big time real estate operator that makes a profit by building and rebuilding. The trump card would have helped Esperanza’s family deal with the rodent infestations and rising rents in Humboldt Park by forcing the mayor to ‘make Mango Street better’. Avellone’s trump card would protect tenants in foreclosed properties, regulate the rental market, protect tenants from no cause evictions, and mandate the inspection of all rental properties in the city.

Action by ordinance aims to act through state mechanisms, including the passage of legislation, litigation, and the mechanisms of electoral politics. Given its tools, action by ordinance usually focuses on regulation, though it can also aspire to broad social change. Acting by ordinance, however, cannot exist in a vacuum because passing laws, electing officials, and voting on referenda involves work outside of narrowly defined state mechanisms. It therefore invokes other modes of action including action by convening in order to create support and knowledge around a legislative initiative, and action by contesting in order to pressure policy makers into voting a certain way. This type of action can take the form of Norman Krumholz’s equity planning model in which planers negotiate political terrain to advance redistributational policies, and also like Robert Mier’s version of equity planning in which planners ally themselves with progressives to achieve their ends. Finally, action by ordinance can transcend its legislative, electoral, and litigious ends to become a contestational tactic. Introducing an ordinance that has no chance of getting enough votes in City Council can put other elected officials in the revealing position of withholding their support on important laws and policies.

Each of the four pieces of Avellone’s trump card involves action by ordinance. However, as the details of each piece of the trump card reveals, action by ordinance cannot exist alone. First, the movement for rent control, embodied in the initiative to repeal Illinois’ Rent Control Preemption Act that bans rent regulation within the State, sprung from an organizer’s conviction that the rental market should be regulated by legislation. The movement allied with progressive state representatives to introduce a Rent Control Preemption Act repeal bill, and then convened a Lift the Ban coalition to pass a non-binding rent control referendum. Second, the Chicago Healthy Homes Inspection Program (CHHIP) is in many ways a standard consumer protection law in the form of a proactive rental inspection. The action by ordinance that produced CHHIP, however, began when several legal advocacy groups, public health initiatives, and

progressive officials in the Chicago Department of Buildings convened to devise a solution to substandard housing conditions. Third, the Just Cause/Good Cause to Evict Ordinance was the initiative of a progressive elected official who convened a coalition of community organizations to think of how to prevent displacement by introducing new legislation. While the Ordinance has a strong sponsor in the City Council and is modeled on successful legislation in other cities, the lack of grassroots convening practices such as door knocking and public education has slowed the initiative. Fourth, the Keep Chicago Renting Ordinance (KCRO) came about as a legislative fix to prevent banks from evicting tenants in foreclosed properties. Several community organizations convened a Keep Chicago Renting coalition in order to ensure the efficacy of the final legislation as it was drafted in City Hall. The Lawyers’ Committee for Better Housing (LCBH) has since litigated KCRO cases to uphold its tenets.

Lifting the ban on rent control

The 1997 Illinois Rent Control Preemption Act, which prohibits the passage of rent control legislation in Illinois, sits in the way of Avellone’s trump card. It is a peculiar piece of legislation for a state in which the only instances of rent control date to Second World War-era federally mandated price controls and the anti-inflation measures of the Nixon years. However, it was in reaction to the Nixon administration’s consumer controls, which stood from August 14, 1971 until January of 1973, that a conservative staffer in the Illinois Senate, Mark Rhoads, established the Conservative Caucus of State Legislators. Soon after its founding, the Caucus changed its name to the American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC). ALEC would eventually leave a nationwide mark in the form of conservative legislation ranging from stand your ground laws to the identical language of rent control preemption acts in Michigan (1988), South Dakota (1990), Arkansas (1993), Tennessee (1996), and Illinois (1997). With this and other legislation, ALEC has been able to roll back consumer protection regulations across the United States. In 2003, then Oklahoma state senator and ALEC member Scott Pruitt said that ALEC “puts legislators and companies together, and they create policy collectively.”

6 Maya Dukmasova, “The secret history of Illinois’s rent control prohibition: How conservatives preempted rent control before the public was ready to talk about it,” Chicago Reader, May 16, 2017.


8 The text, stating that “A local government unit shall not enact, maintain, or enforce an ordinance or resolution that would have the effect of controlling the amount of rent charged for leasing private residential or commercial property” was distributed to lawmakers in an ALEC handbook until 1995. A Center for Media and Democracy web platform recently made public the same text along with 800 other ALEC model bills that were reportedly handed over by an anonymous whistleblower. Illinois’ 50 ILCS 825 Rent Control Preemption Act reads in part, “A unit of local government, as defined in Section 1 of Article VII of the Illinois Constitution, shall not enact, maintain, or enforce an ordinance or resolution that would have the effect of controlling the amount of rent charged for leasing private residential or commercial property”. See: Nancy Scola, “Exposing ALEC: How Conservative-Backed State Laws Are All Connected,” The Atlantic, April 14, 2012.; See also, Rebecca Burns, “Landlords, Your Lease Is Up,” In These Times Vol 42, No. 3 (March, 2018): 32.

9 Scott Pruitt is the head of the Environmental Protection Agency at the time of writing. See, Margaret Talbot, “Dirty Politics: Scott Pruitt’s E.P.A. is giving even ostentatious polluters a reprieve,” The New Yorker, April 2, 2018, 42.
Jawanza Malone is the Executive Director of the Kenwood Oakland Community Organization (KOCO) located a block north of 43rd Street on Cottage Grove within the Oakland neighborhood. KOCO is just down the street from Bronzeville, so named by St. Claire Drake and Horace R. Cayton in *Black Metropolis: A Study of Negro Life in a Northern City*.10 Walking from KOCO towards Bronzeville along 43rd Street, one passes stately stone mansions along South Martin Luther King Drive. Some have boards in the windows. Next to the 43rd Street Green Line station there is a brick building as elegant as it is huge with a stone engraving high on its façade that reads, ‘THE FORUM’. Nat King Cole and other luminaries once played in the Forum’s main hall for people to dance on what is thought to be Chicago’s oldest hardwood ballroom dancefloor, dating to the late 1800s. During the Depression, labor and communist groups held meetings in the building. By the 1970s, however, the main hall fell into disuse. A series of commercial establishments opened on the ground floor. By 1985, when Mayor Harold Washington renamed 43rd Street to honor a blues giant, the Forum’s most prominent tenant on the façade facing the newly coined Muddy Waters Drive was a liquor store.11

By that time, many of the stately mansions were abandoned. Other buildings in what was Bigger Thomas’ South Side fell victim to arson and were torn down. But beginning in the early 2000s, a cropping of new townhomes sprung up on empty lots. For the middle- and lower-income residents of the area, however, this new development added insult to a history of injury as they were priced out of the neighborhood. Meanwhile, an entrepreneur bought the Forum in 2011 to prevent its demolition and installed a chalkboard on the exterior of the building with the words “I WISH 43RD STREET WAS: ___” followed by blank lines for residents to write their thoughts.12 Towards the top, someone finished the sentence, writing “the Black Metropolis again”.13

When asked ‘why rent control?’, Malone tells a story: “There’s an 84 year old woman who lives in our neighborhood who’s seen her rent double when a venture capital firm out of New Jersey bought her building. She’s a woman who’s lived there most of her adult life, and right now she has to pay almost all of her monthly income just on rent. Her children have to help her with her other living expenses.”14 If Picasso could capture the spirit of Chicago in his sculpture without ever having visited the city, no doubt the New Jersey investors could too. At a housing justice forum in April 2018, Malone outlined KOCO’s understanding of the old woman’s dilemma as one of an historical and racialized, unregulated profit imperative dating back to the founding of the United States: “The Revolutionary War was about a bunch of guys who were pissed off because the Brits were cutting into their profit margin. So as we fight against housing injustice in this city, we’re going against a legacy of exploitation,” in which African Americans have endured centuries of systematic substandard housing conditions. Malone went on to say, “when we’re taught the mythology of our country, we aren’t told that it’s about people who would do anything to make a buck.”15 In Malone’s mind, this unbridled profit motive calls for action by

11 “Mayor To Name Street For Muddy Waters” *Chicago Tribune* August 2, 1985.
12 Entrepreneur Bernard Loyd bought the Forum in 2011 days before it was to be demolished. His community development corporation, Urban Juncture, plans to rehabilitate the performance and retail spaces within the building. Urban Juncture partnered with students from the nearby Illinois Institute of Technology to install the outdoor chalkboard. See, Katherine Flynn, “In Chicago’s Bronzeville, The Forum Is Ready For Its Comeback” National Trust for Historic Preservation February 6, 2017.
ordinance to introduce legislation that would regulate the rental market and, in so doing, convene residents around a conversation on broader housing justice goals.

Meanwhile, the Pilsen Alliance, a community organization based in the eponymous Mexican-American neighborhood on the Near West Side, was thinking about launching a new campaign in 2016. The Pilsen Alliance is a member in the Chicago Housing Initiative (along with KOCO), which for years had tried to pass the Keeping the Promise Ordinance that would put Chicago Housing Authority units in low-poverty areas and prevent further net loss of low-income housing by ensuring one-for-one replacement of demolished public housing units. When Mayor Emanuel blocked the ordinance, Pilsen Alliance began thinking about other ways to address the city’s housing issues. When KOCO invited Pilsen Alliance’s Director Byron Sigcho to talk about a new campaign and Malone asked, “what do you think about rent control?” Sigcho said he was very intrigued. By the summer of 2016, KOCO had formally convened the four members of the Steering Committee of what would become the Lift the Ban coalition. The Steering Committee was comprised of KOCO, Pilsen Alliance, Northside Action for Justice, and the Lugenia Burns Hope Center, which was founded by Barack Obama in 1994 before he left community organizing to become a state senator. In December of 2016, the Steering Committee members spoke with progressive state representative Will Guzzardi about repealing the Rent Control Preemption Act so that localities could enact their own laws on rent control. Two months later on February 6th, 2017, Guzzardi introduced H.B. 2430 that stated simply, “the Rent Control Preemption Act is repealed”.

After the Steering Committee had convened to oversee Guzzardi’s introduction of the bill, Malone explained that “the coalition began to meet with different representatives to get cosponsors and get the bill out of committee.” The bill had six cosponsors two months after Guzzardi first introduced the bill (at the time of writing it has eight, the most recent joining on March 29, 2018). The coalition soon realized it would need to extend its activities to counter the real estate lobby. Malone said that while some signed on, “it became increasingly difficult to have conversations with the representatives because, within weeks, every legislator got emails and calls from the real estate lobby telling them not to support the bill. So we targeted legislators for several months while also building coalition membership, and convened coalition meetings over the summer of 2017 that were hyper-focused on rent control, the mechanics of it, what it looks like in San Francisco, what it looks like in New York, why we need it, how the preemption came into being.”

On the evening of Thursday September 7, 2017, state representatives Guzzardi and Theresa Mah joined the leadership of LCBH, KOCO, Pilsen Alliance, and other community organizations at the Dvorak Park.

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17 Byron Sigcho, interview with author, April 7, 2018.

18 Ibid.


21 Bill Status of HB2430, 100th General Assembly.

gym in Pilsen at a “rent stabilization rally”. Avellone was there and explained to the audience that “there are 670,000 rental units in Chicago. At just 2.5 people in each of those units, that’s just about half the people living in Chicago. They tell you renting is just a temporary status on your way to becoming a homeowner...Well, I would bless you and say you are a full-fledged American by being a renter. Congratulations.”

Representatives from the Pilsen Alliance who were at the gym estimated that 10,000 families had left their working class, majority Mexican neighborhood since 2007 due to rising rents. Half of those were evictions. A local renter in attendance, who described herself as an Aztec dancer, said that she had lived for seven years in the neighborhood paying $550 when she received a 30-day notice to vacate her apartment. Soon after, she learned that the same unit was going for $2,500 per month. The Institute for Housing Studies at DePaul University found that the gap between the demand for affordable rental housing by lower-income households and the supply of rental units costing 30 percent or less of those households’ income increased steadily from 157,000 units citywide in 2007 to 188,000 units in 2015. This affordability gap was highest in lower-income neighborhoods. The gap in Pilsen Alliance’s Near West Side submarket was 8,652 units in 2017 (demand for 24,485 units and supply of 15,833 units). The gap in KOCO’s Bronzeville/ Hyde Park submarket was 14,429 units (demand for 46,535 units and supply of 32,106 units).

On September 28, 2017, the Lift the Ban coalition held a citywide, open meeting attended by residents, community organizations, and advocates from all over Chicago. This meeting galvanized coalition support for a nonbinding ballot measure on implementing rent control. While this action by ordinance relied solely on electoral mechanisms, it was driven by an increasingly large convening of organizations and contested legislators who would deny the residents of Chicago their desire for rent regulation.

By the end of October 2017, the coalition was collecting petition signatures in earnest to get the nonbinding measure on the March 20, 2018 primary ballot. The coalition had grown in size, with each member focusing on garnering support in different areas of the city. “The coalition membership was 95 percent recruited by the four Steering Committee members,” Malone explained. “When we recruited groups, part of the recruitment spiel was ‘where do you want to engage people in the long term?’ We made it clear that this isn’t a one-time hit. People need to be educated on the issue so that they can stay involved and participate in future initiatives and conversations.”

Each coalition member selected the precincts in which it would operate based on capacity and local knowledge. Malone said that “the level of expertise of individual groups was all over the map. The Steering Committee members had done this n number of times in the past. But there were newer groups without experience in electoral initiatives. There was a steep learning curve. People without much experience might be effective in one precinct, while experienced groups with relationships with aldermen canvassed entire wards.” As Malone explained, the Lift the Ban coalition door knocking

24 Maya Dukmasova, “In the face of rising evictions, legislators continue push for repeal of Illinois’s ban on rent control,” Chicago Reader, September 8, 2017.
25 Dukmasova, “In the face of rising evictions.”
26 Butler, “Activists demanding rent control.”
27 Institute for Housing Studies at DePaul University, “2017 State of Rental Housing in Cook County,” May 11, 2017.
29 Ibid.
campaign was not a traditional, one-time electoral event. Rather, the coalition envisioned it as an issue-based convening between organizations and their bases that, given its discursive and long-term nature, would become part and parcel of the larger struggle for housing justice. Malone said that the coalition “wanted long term engagement because we knew people are going to have questions. Also because the real estate lobby is countering our initiative, so we need access to residents to counter the lies that the real estate lobby has been putting out for the last five decades.” This aligns with Malone’s original justification for acting by ordinance on rent control, namely that by engaging in a campaign to regulate the rental market, the coalition would be able to convene a broader discussion on structural inequities and the goals of housing justice.

That discussion was significantly influenced by the real estate industry’s counter arguments. Brian Bernardoni, the Senior Director of Government Affairs and Public Policy at the Chicago Association of Realtors, likened rent control to “throwing a hand grenade on your lawn to get rid of dandelions.” In a joint interview with Malone, he held that while displacement narratives are compelling, rent control will reduce the property tax base, thereby increasing property tax rates, and that economic development policies would be more effective than rent control at stabilizing communities. Bernardoni said that with rent control, “landlords stop investing in communities and they stop investing in their own buildings. Rent control may be very popular with voters but it’s a destabilizer of housing stock and is essentially a contributor to rent going up in certain communities.”

Malone argued that the stories about developers not investing in their buildings is “a mythology that just isn’t true,” and that New York City’s well-regulated rent control policy “stabilize[d] the housing market” for a time. Malone added that the ultimate failure of rent control to keep housing affordable in places like New York and San Francisco was a result of concessions made to the real estate industry that reduced the number of regulated units. Academic studies have documented the real estate lobby’s influence. In Massachusetts, landlords pushed for a successful statewide referendum in 1994 to eliminate rent control in cities such as Boston and Cambridge, leading to rising eviction rates and the ultimate exodus of 40 percent of Cambridge households that lived in formerly rent controlled units.

Malone said that the common practice of applying rent control only to preexisting units is as nonsensical as if the Environmental Protection Agency only regulated older factories, or if the U.S. Food and Drug Administration only regulated tomatoes from farms established before a specified date. Malone sees

30 Ibid.
33 Ibid.
34 Rockett, “Could, and should, Illinois embrace rent control?”
35 Thayer, “‘What’s Next for Housing Justice in Chicago?’” 42:45.
37 Thayer, “‘What’s Next for Housing Justice in Chicago?’” 43:30.
rent control as a critical consumer protection, and the Lift the Ban campaign as drawing a line in the sand after hundreds of years of exploitation.  

Rent control advocates understand displacement and neighborhood instability as the result of exploitative real estate investment. Bernardoni’s suggestion to implement economic development policies instead of rent control does not address Malone’s concern that John Logan and Harvey Molotch’s alliance of business elites and government would not also use those policies in order to maximize profits at the expense of residents. While Malone illustrates his concern using an anecdote from the American Revolution, Logan and Molotch cite an example of one of Algren’s “Dauntless Pioneers”: William Ogden arrived in Chicago in 1835 when the to-be city’s population was under four thousand. He would eventually become the city’s first Mayor, which allowed him quite literally to put streets where he needed them to boost his own private real estate investments. A property he bought for $8,000 appreciated in eight years to $3,000,000.

Academic arguments fall on both sides of the rent control debate. In his thorough survey of journal articles on the topic, Blair Jenkins finds that most scholars agree that “rent control introduces inefficiencies in housing markets....[and] does not sustain any plausible redemption in terms of redistribution.” A survey showed that over 93 percent of members of the American Economics Association agreed that rent ceilings reduce the quantity and quality of available housing. However, scholars also point to justifications for rent controls when markets fail due to landlord monopolies, or when markets are too slow to fully meet lower income housing needs. Jake Blumgart, however, argues that the negative view towards rent control is a bias reproduced by the ‘market inefficiency’ example in every freshman-level economics textbook. Blumgart writes that two of New York’s largest building booms, in the 1920s and from 1947 to 1965, occurred during periods of rent control, suggesting that the policy alone does not suppress investment. Indeed, the consultants at the New York City Rand Institute who proposed New York’s softening of rent control in 1970 described that developers built 350,000 housing units in the 1950s while the incidence of overcrowding and substandard housing decreased. While investigating reports of skyrocketing code violations beginning 1965, Rutgers University Professor George Sternlieb found that the owners of regulated buildings in New York City were having trouble covering the cost of supply, largely due to the rising cost of debt service. The extraneous impacts of debt service and population trends lend credence to Edgar Olsen’s claim that the arguments in Jenkins’

38 Ibid., 46:10.
46 Ibid., 3.
literature review are based on theoretically flawed and over-simplified models of market response to rent control.\textsuperscript{47}

The Chicago chapter of the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA) first heard about Lift the Ban from Pilsen Alliance’s Sigcho, who the DSA had invited to speak at a meeting in July of 2017. In September of that year, Sigcho invited DSA to be part of the coalition,\textsuperscript{48} and the DSA Executive Committee voted to endorse the chapter’s participation. The Chicago chapter of the DSA is divided into the North Side, West Cook, and South Side Branches. The South Side Branch led DSA’s Lift the Ban work,\textsuperscript{49} which featured a canvassing operation in two precincts in the 5th Ward that were selected with the input of KOCO and Southside Together Organizing for Power (STOP).

The DSA relied on its membership base to do weekend canvassing. Robin Peterson, who coordinated the South Side DSA’s relationship with the coalition, said that, “in the first round of collecting signatures to get the measure on the ballot, we distributed post cards for people to send to Leslie Hairston, the Alderman of the Fifth Ward. There was a major turnout for canvassing the week prior to Thanksgiving. The other members and I pushed it forward to get signatures by the December deadline.”\textsuperscript{50}

The Lift the Ban coalition made the December deadline and got the nonbinding referendum on the ballot in 77 precincts in the 3rd, 4th, 5th, 7th, 12th, 22nd, 25th, 33rd, and 36th Wards. The text asked either “Should the State of Illinois lift the ban on rent control to address rising rents, unjust evictions, and gentrification in our community?” or, “to stop gentrification and rapidly increasing rents in Chicago, do you support the State of Illinois repealing the Rent Control Preemption Act?”\textsuperscript{51} The coalition’s action by convening in the form of door knocking, argument, and discussion had achieved the first step in the broader goal of action by ordinance.

In January, the DSA moved its coalition operations to a newly incorporated Housing Working Group run by Peterson and her colleagues John Aspray, Loreen Targos, and Ruthie Lichtenstein.\textsuperscript{52} “We got into the nitty gritty of canvassing on every Saturday and Sunday for one and a half months,” Peterson said. Namely, the DSA and other coalition members learned the mechanics and tools of action by ordinance and also initiated a more comprehensive action by convening by working with other organizations and engaging in broader discussions on housing justice. The coalition accessed a non-for-profit subscription to the Voter Activation Network (VAN) through several coalition members’ ongoing participation in the Chicago Housing Initiative. The DSA members doing Lift the Ban work learned how to cut turf, conduct turnout phonebanks, get familiar with territory, and distinguish good turf from bad turf.\textsuperscript{53} Peterson said that “it was good for us to have the experience because we now know how to use VAN and to door knock. Most of the time, building capacity was one of our main goals. Also, because Chicago has a lot of

\textsuperscript{48} Robin Peterson, interview with author, April 3, 2018.
\textsuperscript{50} Robin Peterson, interview with author, April 3, 2018.
\textsuperscript{51} Maya Dukmasova, “Here’s what’s next in the push to lift the ban on rent control in Illinois,” \textit{Chicago Reader}, March 28, 2018.
\textsuperscript{52} Peterson, “How Should Socialists Organize?”
\textsuperscript{53} Ibid.
powerful, radical community organizations, it is hard to organize in many places without relationships. So it’s good to prove yourself as a good coalition partner.\(^{54}\)

Unlike DSA, 33\(^{rd}\) Ward Working Families (WF33) in the Albany Park neighborhood on the northwest side had significant experience in action by ordinance. Organizers at WF33 had honed their electoral chops when they worked on Tim Meegan’s aldermanic run in 2015. Meegan decided to run against 33\(^{rd}\) Ward alderman Deborah Mell, who had been appointed to that position on July 24, 2013 by Mayor Emanuel when her father, Alderman Richard Mell, retired from office.\(^{55}\) Alderman Robert Fioretti (2\(^{nd}\) Ward) voiced opposition at the City Council meeting during which Aldermen approved Mell’s Appointment, saying “I do know Deb Mell, and I like Deb Mell, and I like what she stands for. But we are not a monarchy. We are a democracy. So let’s start acting like it.”\(^{56}\)

Meegan, along with activists who would later form WF33, responded to Fioretti’s call, knowing the only way to ‘act like a democracy’ would be by acting through ordinance and running an insurgent aldermanic campaign. Chris Poulos, now an organizer at WF33, had never run a campaign before. Backing a schoolteacher to challenge the Mells’ cumulative 40-year reign (Richard Mell served as Alderman for 38 years) looked to be tough in a city where it is normal for the same name to appear on ballots for decades.\(^{57}\) Poulos said, “we were told that usually you run once, you lose, and then you really gain your footing in the next election.” But after doing a lot of door knocking, Chris was stunned when Meegan came within just several votes of a runoff. “That was a test to see if leftists and organizers can run campaigns, and it also built a base for leftists in Albany Park.”\(^{58}\)

This electoral experience boosted WF33’s membership and demanded the nervous attention of Alderman Mell. WF33’s experience, base, and newfound if contentious relationship with the Alderman positioned the organization further up Malone’s learning curve of electoral initiatives. WF33 took responsibility for six precincts in the 33\(^{rd}\) Ward as part of its Lift the Ban work. WF33 drafted a “Path to Victory” document seven weeks before the March 20 election that outlined ‘win numbers’ (for 75 percent and 90 percent ‘yes’ votes) in its six precincts based on a 2014 gubernatorial Democratic primary turnout, and the number of volunteer shifts needed in each precinct to hit those numbers.\(^{59}\) The document stressed the importance of multiple encounters with voters through door knocking and phone banking, organized by precinct captains.\(^{60}\) Like DSA, WF33 “wanted to use the issue and canvassing to expand membership…and…to use the ballot referendum to engage current members and practice election work.”\(^{61}\)

\(^{54}\) Robin Peterson, interview with author, April 3, 2018.

\(^{55}\) City of Chicago, Office of the City Clerk, “Appointment of Deborah L. Mell as Alderman of 33\(^{rd}\) Ward” Committee on Committees, Rules and Ethics,” Record # A2013-92, July 24, 2013.

\(^{56}\) Mike Royko provides a colorful description of this phenomenon: “[Mayor Daley] built that expressway, and he named it after Dan Ryan, another big South Side politician, who was named after his father, a big South Side politician”. Royko, Boss, 11.


\(^{58}\) 33\(^{rd}\) Ward Working Families, “Rent control ballot referendum: path to victory,” n.d.


\(^{60}\) 33\(^{rd}\) Ward Working Families, “Rent control ballot referendum: path to victory.”
Lift the Ban Coalition Member Locations

- American Indian Center
- Autonomous Tenants Union
- 33rd Ward Working Families
- Northside Action for Justice
- ONE Northside
- Northwest Side Housing Center
- Chicago Democratic Socialists of America
- Somos Logan Square
- Westside Health Authority
- Action Now Institute
- Lawyers' Committee for Better Housing
- Metropolitan Tenants Organization
- SEIU Health Care
- 25th Ward IPO
- Pilsen Alliance
- Kenwood Oakland Community Organization
- Lugenia Burns Hope Center
- People for Community Recovery

- Location of Lift the Ban coalition member
- Precinct participating in the Lift the Ban referendum
- Major Streets

1 Mile
The systematic action by ordinance in the form of canvassing, learning the tools of electoral politics, and convening a coalition of organizations put significant pressure on elected officials. Two democratic gubernatorial candidates, businessman J.B. Pritzker and state senator Daniel Biss, both gave their support to the initiative (J.B. Pritzker won the March 20, 2018 primary as the Democratic gubernatorial candidate). On the campaign trail, Biss said that, “the state right now is preempting local control in order to screw over those who have been left behind.” For his part, Guzzardi stressed the importance of the coalition’s work. A week after the referendum received 75 percent approval across 77 precincts, he said, “this is a very important step in legislative progress on this issue...the real estate lobby is very powerful in Springfield, and in order to overcome that power we need to demonstrate to my colleagues that there’s broad popular support for this issue. I think the 16,000 people who voted on this question is a big step in that direction.” Months earlier, at the launch of the campaign, sitting next to representative Mah, he told the audience at Dvorak Park gym, “you shouldn’t trust any of us. What you need to do is pressure us.” He went on, saying, “you are all organizers. So go organize.” Guzzardi, like Esperanza, would laugh at the thought of the mayor coming to make Mango Street better. While action by ordinance centers on electoral initiatives, legislation, and alliances with elected officials, its roots and its ultimate efficacy comes from residents who convene and contest.

After the successful ballot referendum, the coalition planned to pursue action by ordinance ‘downstate’ because there are not enough state representatives in Chicago alone to pass Guzzardi’s repeal bill. Behind what seems like action by ordinance are layers of knocking on doors, building base, growing coalitions, and pressuring elected officials. Even if the Lift the Ban campaign takes years, or even if it fails altogether to produce new legislation, it still has value. WF33’s Path to Victory document states that “rent control draws a clear line between our organization and our opponent, Ald. Mell, as well as the real-estate industry and Chicago Forward ([Mayor] Rahm’s SuperPAC) who will likely be donors in Mell’s bid for re-election”. Sitting across from Mayor Emanuel’s office, Avellone referred to Chicago’s late preeminent community organizer, saying, “Saul was wrong. You need to wage the war to make the point, even if you know you’ll lose. It’s not only about the battles that you know you can win. A war is when you put something in front of the Mayor and say ‘sign on the dotted line if you’re with us’. You know he’s not going to sign, but it makes it clear who’s on whose side.” By asking elected officials to ‘sign on the dotted line’, action by ordinance can become action by contestation and draw Malone’s ‘line in the sand’.

63 Dukmasova, “Here’s what’s next in the push to lift the ban on rent control in Illinois.”
64 Dukmasova, “In the face of rising evictions, legislators continue push for repeal of Illinois’s ban on rent control.”
65 Butler, “Activists demanding rent control, more affordable housing in area.”
67 33rd Ward Working Families, “Rent control ballot referendum: path to victory.”
68 Avellone was not referring to the Lift the Ban coalition’s work in particular with this remark, but rather to his legal defense and advocacy work in general. Interview with Frank Avellone, March 30, 2018. Robin Peterson of DSA also said that lifting the ban would be a large issue in the 2019 mayoral and aldermanic elections in Chicago.
Percent "Yes" Vote by Precinct

Average Percent "Yes" Vote by Ward

Lit the Ban Ballot Referendum Results, March 20, 2018
Chicago Healthy Homes Inspection Program (CHHIP) dates back to 2015 when LCBH and the Metropolitan Tenants Organization (MTO) convened a cooperative to investigate how to regulate maintenance on rental properties. Like the Lift the Ban coalition, CHHIP grew out of a perceived need to regulate rental units – this time for their quality and safety. The MTO subsequently convened with the Civitas Childlaw Center at Loyola University Chicago to obtain Environmental Protection Agency funding to create the Proactively Addressing Substandard Housing (PASH) collaborative, along with two working groups. The working groups first convened for their bi-monthly meetings in April of 2017. One working group was tasked with evaluating Chicago’s building code to identify where it does not conform with the National Healthy Housing Standard (NHHS), developed by the National Center for Healthy Housing (NCHH) and the American Public Health Association (APHA).69 The other working group was tasked with designing a proactive rental inspection program.70 The working PASH collaborative convened community members, public health professionals, legal and policy advocates, researchers, and government officials in order to inform the content of a future CHHIP ordinance.71

On January 24, 2018, the collaborative approved a White Paper to serve as a framework for proactive rental inspection in Chicago. David Jacobs, the Chief Scientist at the National Center for Healthy Housing, served as the principle author, while other PASH collaborative members edited the document. LCBH composed a model CHHIP ordinance included as an appendix in the White Paper. The model ordinance calls for rotating inspections of all rental properties in the City on a multi-year basis, and uses the NHHS as a guide to determine compliance benchmarks. It would allow the Chicago Department of Public Health (CDPH) to promulgate regulations to create a healthy housing inspection protocol list and ensure compliance with the NHHS. It would also provide for a fund to aid lower-income landlords in making mandated repairs.72 The model ordinance also forbids retaliatory evictions, and makes the owner and landlord liable for the cost of relocation in the case that the premises must be vacated due to health hazards.73 Finally, Sections 17 through 21 outline provisions for transparent, public oversight of the

69 National Center for Healthy Housing, “National Healthy Housing Standard.”
70 Frank Avellone, interview with author, March 30, 2018.
71 Center for the Human Rights of Children, “Proactively Addressing Substandard Housing: A Working Group Meeting: Proactively Addressing Substandard Housing (PASH) Working Group Update,” accessed May 22, 2018. While the PASH initiative dates to 2017, the Loyola University Center for the Human Rights of the Children, Center for Urban Environmental Research and Policy, Center for Urban Research and Learning, Loyola University Medical Center, and the Civitas ChildLaw Center received seed money for its Advancing Healthy Homes/Healthy Communities – Tackling Environmental Disparities project (the project) in December 2011. That first phase of the project included conducting scientific research on environmental toxins, building agreement among public and private actors on the importance of healthy homes, developing an advisory board comprised of public, private, university, and community representatives, engaging community organizations to identify needs, and convening a working conference to develop a project blueprint. See, David Cumrine, Philip Nyden, Katherine Kaufka and Anita Weinberg, “Advancing Healthy Homes/Healthy Communities – Tackling Environmental Disparities: Concept Paper,” Loyola University Chicago, February, 2012, 3.
73 If the relocation is permanent, the owner and landlord are liable to pay the tenant at least $10,600 per unit in relocation assistance, and if it is a temporary relocation, the owner and landlord are liable for a sum of at least three times the monthly rent. The tenants do not have to pay rent during the period of relocation. Lawyers’ Committee for Better Housing and Reviewers, “Appendix A – Draft Ordinance,” in PASH, “~White Paper: Why Chicago Needs a Proactive Healthy Homes Inspection Program.” Draft, January 29, 2018, Article IV, Section 16 a, b, and c.
Program, including that the CDPH work with community organizations to reach out to tenants, landlords, and owners; that CHHIP revenues may be used for the CHHIP-related activities of community organizations; and that CDPH establish a CHHIP Advisory Committee comprised of at least six community organizations in different areas of Chicago. The White Paper estimates the annual expected Program budget at over 42 million dollars. The model ordinance was circulated among the collaboration members for comment.

While the PASH collaborative originally intended to house the Program within the Chicago Department of Buildings (CDOB), they now propose that it be housed within the CDPH. While this may be logical given the importance of NHHS for the Program and the public health rationale behind the draft legislation, interlocutors also suggested that the CDOB Legal Department’s concerns over illegal takings and the sheer size of the Program precluded consensus on housing it at the Department of Buildings. There is also historic distrust of building inspectors in Chicago. After all, the Picasso’s eyes are those “of every building inspector who took a wad from a slum owner to make it all possible.” Moreover, it became clear that CHHIP aligned well with the Department of Public Health’s mission over the course of a year of discussions that culminated in a meeting with the Commissioner in February of 2018.

The complex network of organizations and individuals working first on the project and then on preparing draft legislation for CHHIP is a prime example of how action by convening leads to action by ordinance. The threat of environmental hazards investigated by scientists and policy makers at the NCHH and APHA led to the creation of the NHHS. Meanwhile, multiple centers at Loyola University in the disciplines of law, medicine, and urban studies joined to form the Advancing Healthy Homes/ Healthy Communities – Tackling Environmental Disparities project in 2011. Community and advocacy groups like LCBH and MTO then joined to create PASH, which convened stakeholders, including officials from the Chicago Department of Public Health, to draft an ordinance. The years of convening to obtain buy-in and technical expertise from various parties led to action by ordinance in the form of draft legislation.

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74 Section 18 states that the Chicago Department of Public Health “shall work with and support community organizations to reach out to Tenants, Landlords, and Owners and educate them about their rights and responsibilities under this Chapter, including through community events, notices and fliers, and help lines.” Section 18 also stresses the importance of geographic representation across Chicago: “The Department shall ensure that its partnership with and support of community organizations under this Chapter shall include organizations that together can adequately serve all geographic areas of the City of Chicago...” Section 18 also mandates that the CDPH “establish a process by which community organizations may apply with the Department to be listed on the notices provided to Tenants, Landlords, and Owners...[and that] The Department is authorized to use revenue collected under this Chapter to fund CHHIP-related activities of community organizations registered under [Section 18]...” The Advisory Committee outlined in Section 19 is to “assist with implementation and administration of CHHIP, including by: Educating and engaging community members about CHHIP and their rights and obligations...; Providing ongoing comment, recommendations, and consultation to the Department...; Reviewing and providing comment and recommendations on annual data regarding CHHIP that the Department collects, as well as the process for collecting and analyzing that data; and...Participating in the Department’s and external evaluations of CHHIP.” Finally, Section 19 mandates that “The meetings and activities of the Advisory Committee shall be subject to the Illinois Open Meetings Act, 5 ILCS 120/1 et seq. and the Illinois Freedom of Information Act, 5 ILCS 140/1 et seq.” See, Lawyers’ Committee for Better Housing and Reviewers, “Appendix A – Draft Ordinance,” in PASH, “White Paper.” Section 17. Financial Assistance for Remediation; Section 18. Education and Outreach Activities; Section 19. CHHIP Advisory Committee; Section 20. Regulatory Authority; and Section 21. Annual Reporting.


76 Frank Avellone, interview with author, March 30, 2018.

77 Royko, “Picasso and the Cultural Rebirth of Chicago.”

78 Frank Avellone, interview with author, March 30, 2018.
**Just cause evictions**

As of December 15, 2017 there were 32 groups supporting the Chicago Just Cause/ Good Cause to Evict coalition, which aims to create a legal protection against wanton displacement, given that 25 percent of the 25,000 to 30,000 annual evictions in Chicago are without good cause.\(^79\) The Alderman of the 35\(^{th}\) Ward, Carlos Ramirez-Rosa, is the principal sponsor of the Chicago Just Cause/ Good Cause to Evict Ordinance. LCBH has taken the lead in convening stakeholders around the proposed legislation. “We’re shopping it with the Latino, the Progressive, and the Black Caucuses at City Hall to get cosponsors and give it some legs,” Avellone said.\(^80\) When LCBH called a dinner meeting with the City Council’s Progressive Caucus members, however, only three of eleven Aldermen showed up. Avellone described that the coalition has “been remiss in activating the Ordinance. Thirteen groups met with Carlos in January and developed a strategy to push it forward. But we’ve relied too much on Carlos taking the lead alone. It needs an independent and parallel effort to drive things forward.”\(^81\)

Avellone explained that the proposed ordinance would be important in the fight against displacement because “organizing can only buy time and bargaining power with landlords and developers. You might change the time of eviction from winter to summer so the kids can reenroll in school, or delay it until after a tenant’s major surgery, and you might increase the voluntary relocation assistance. But nothing more. The no fault 30-day eviction notice is not only the gentrifier’s tool – it is a prehistoric piece of legislation that has survived the test of every progressive movement in history. It dates to 12\(^{th}\) century England. Or maybe 13\(^{th}\) century – I’m a bit rusty on that history.” Action by ordinance is important when working around or against the state is insufficient. That said, action by ordinance often seems to require an ‘independent and parallel effort’ of convening or contesting to give a legislative initiative its legs.

**Keep Chicago Renting**

Catalin Stoian and Mihail Stancu had the eyes of Daley’s Picasso.\(^82\) Between December 2006 and January 2007, Stoian and Stancu, the owners of the real estate business MKST Enterprise Inc., converted the units in their building at 4914 North Spaulding Avenue in the Albany Park neighborhood to condominiums. Because the units in the rental property were occupied, Stoian and Stancu decided to do their renovation project on paper.\(^83\) They obtained generous appraisals on the apartments and took out several mortgages totaling 1.8 million dollars. They renovation complete, they then sent the money to Romania and fled the United States.\(^84\) When Stoian and Stancu defaulted on their mortgage, the unknowing tenants who had been paying rent all along received two-week eviction notices from the banks. Meanwhile, the management companies hired by the banks used illegal methods like shutting off

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79 LCBH documents attest that landlords and Chicago courts are already familiar with the concept because just cause eviction has been the legal standard in public housing, tax credit projects, some project-based subsidy programs, and the first year of any housing choice voucher tenancy. See, Lawyers’ Committee for Better Housing, “Chicago Just Cause/Good Cause for Eviction,” February, 2018.


81 Ibid.

82 Royko, “Picasso and the Cultural Rebirth of Chicago.”


the heat and trying to change the locks on the doors at night to get the residents to leave.\footnote{Ibid.} The confused tenants took the notices to Communities United, which at the time was called the Albany Park Neighborhood Council.\footnote{‘Communities United’ will be used to refer to both the contemporary institution as well as its predecessor institution, the Albany Park Neighborhood Council.} The staff learned about MKST Enterprise Inc. when they went to investigate the situation. By pressuring elected officials and banks, Communities United was able to place the building in court receivership, secure the tenants’ right to remain and pay their rent, and got Cook County Sheriff Tom Dart to place a moratorium on tenant evictions from foreclosed properties.\footnote{Brown, “Brown: Tenants stood their ground, changed landscape for renters.”} While the Spaulding building was a particularly dramatic case, tenant evictions from foreclosed properties was common during the financial crisis. The Foreclosure rate had risen 53 percent in Chicago from 2011 to 2012 and 91.5 percent of the 9,632 properties auctioned in 2012 ended up in the hands of banks, which favored eviction.\footnote{Ted Cox, “Ordinance Stalls That Would Keep Renters in Foreclosed Buildings,” DNAinfo, Feb 15, 2013.} The organizers at Communities United tried to work around regulatory measures to get banks to continue to lease to tenants, but failed. They then decided to act by ordinance, pushing for legislation that would allow the tenants to remain. To do so, they convened the Keep Chicago Renting coalition.

Communities United, Business and Professional People for the Public Interest (BPI), and LCBH led the Keep Chicago Renting coalition, which introduced the Protecting Tenants in Foreclosed Rental Property Ordinance (PTFRPO) at City Hall, more commonly known as the Keep Chicago Renting Ordinance (KCRO). In 2012 and 2013, the coalition launched a campaign of door knocking to garner support for the Ordinance. Communities United also created a parallel initiative, Renters Empowering Neighbors Together (RENT), to door knock and engage people at the neighborhood level on the issue of evictions from foreclosed properties.\footnote{At Communities United, Nick Jefferson headed up RENT, while Demian Kogan led the citywide Keep Chicago Renting coalition. Demian Kogan, interview with author, April 10, 2018.} “I would get a list of foreclosed properties from LCBH and would door knock,” Nick Jefferson, an organizer at Communities United, explained. “We would door knock to collect data on how much tenants were being offered to relocate, how long they were given to move, etc.” This building-by-building effort convened organizers, residents, and elected officials to understand the reality on the ground in order to advance the coalition’s action by ordinance by informing the content of the proposed legislation as it was negotiated in the Committee on Housing and Real Estate.\footnote{After its introduction on July 25, 2012, what would become the KCRO was first mentioned in Committee documents in the agenda for Wednesday, May 1, 2013 (Item 15. “An ordinance, introduced by Alderman Richard F. Mell (33rd Ward) and others, adding Chapters 5-14 – Protecting Tenants at Foreclosure – to the Municipal Code. (Keep Chicago Renting) (O2012-5127).”) In the Committee’s May 30, 2013 meeting, Alderman Mell et. al.’s substitute ordinance was recommended to pass by voice, though the meeting notes show that Alderman Matt O’Shea (19th Ward) and Alderman Mary E. O’Connor (41st Ward) filed to have their names removed as cosponsors of the ordinance. See, Committee on Housing and Real Estate, “Agenda of Matters to be Considered by the Committee on Housing and Real Estate Thursday, May 30, 2013 10:00 A.M. City Hall – Council Chamber” Office of the City Clerk, May 30, 2013.; Committee on Housing and Real Estate, “Summary of Reports of the Committee on Housing and Real Estate to be Submitted to the City Council at the Meeting of June 5, 2013” Office of the City Clerk, May 30, 2013.}

Jefferson said that, “we had a ‘the bank won’t take my money’ campaign where renters in foreclosed properties went to bank branches and offered to pay their rent, and the banks wouldn’t accept it. The
campaign got press coverage. We had an action every month. We also talked directly with Mayor Emanuel and found that it would be more effective to talk about the crime that vacant buildings create rather than the evictions that cause those vacancies, so we used that angle as part of our advocacy.”

Helping Jefferson and the other organizers at Communities United was Chris Poulos of 33rd Ward Working Families, who was at the time a graduate student at the University of Illinois at Chicago’s Urban Planning and Policy program interning at the Metropolitan Tenants Organization. “Through my work at the Tenants Organization, I got involved with Communities United on the Keep Chicago Renting campaign. We were holding meetings, door knocking, conducting actions, and talking with Aldermen.”

While it would be several years yet before Poulos became involved with Meegan’s aldermanic campaign, his focus was shifting from convening to ordinance-based action. “I felt burnt out by housing organizing at the time. So this initiative was when I saw that electoral politics was where it was at.”

Avellone was helping to negotiate and draft the ordinance at City Hall using the door knocking and direct actions as leverage. “We were pleasantly surprised at his initial number for the relocation fee,” Avellone told me, pointing across the street to the Mayor’s window. “15,000 dollars from the Mayor was a huge surprise. But eventually it was negotiated down to 10,600.” Despite the Mayor’s highball number, others in City Hall were calling for a much more modest sum. The original legislation had no provision for relocation assistance at all when it was introduced to Committee, but rather a blanket ban on eviction, and a prohibition on rent increases unless authorized by a court. Organizers at Communities United, however, were able to get cash for keys agreements of up to $10,000 with Wells Fargo, which helped the coalition justify the $10,600 relocation assistance sum included in the final ordinance. The original KCRO draft bill targeted only mortgagees who obtained foreclosed properties because the coalition’s initial research revealed that a full 86 percent of the foreclosed buildings were acquired by banks. “But for whatever reason,” Avellone said, “the City came back with a comprehensive ordinance that targeted all buyers of foreclosed properties, encompassing even the venture capital firms that were buying up these units” at judicial sale. Committee negotiations stalled the ordinance until it was finally approved in May of 2013. The KCRO was amended to the Chicago Municipal Code on September 24th of that year. In its final form, the KCRO mandates that the first buyer of a foreclosed property distribute a

93 Ibid.
94 Frank Avellone, interview with author, January 16, 2018.
95 Section 6 of the first draft of the ordinance says, “the court may allow an increase of rent if, in an action brought by a foreclosing owner, the court finds by a preponderance of the evidence that the current rent is below market rate and an increase of rent is necessary to operate, manage, and conserve the dwelling unit.” See, Committee on Housing and Real Estate, “Keep Chicago Renting Ordinance,” Office of the City Clerk, Ordinance O2012-5127. July 25, 2012.
97 Frank Avellone, interview with author, March 30, 2018. In the first draft of the ordinance, a “foreclosing owner” is defined in Section 2(c) as “a person or entity, or agent acting on behalf of a person or entity that holds title in any capacity, directly or indirectly, to a foreclosed property and either (1) was a mortgagee who was a party to the foreclosure...or (2) is the Federal National Mortgage Association or the Federal Home Loan Mortgage Corporation.” However, in the final ordinance, 5-14-020 of the Municipal Code defines “owner” as “any person who...is: (1) pursuant to a judicial sale of a foreclosed rental property [from a mortgagee], the purchase of the foreclosed rental property...or (2) a mortgagee...” See, Committee on Housing and Real Estate, “Keep Chicago Renting Ordinance,” Office of the City Clerk, Ordinance O2012-5127. July 25, 2012.; Chicago Municipal Code, 5-14-020.
notice to tenants explaining that the owner can either terminate the lease and provide tenants $10,600 in relocation assistance, or renew the lease with a maximum rent increase of two percent per year.\textsuperscript{99}

Two years after the passage of the KCRO, lobbyists from the Small Bankers’ Association and the Credit Union Association approached the Mayor’s Office asking for more clarity on what was required of them to comply with the new ordinance. The Mayor’s Office referred the lobbyists to the Keep Chicago Renting coalition, as has been City Hall policy under the Daley and Emanuel administrations on questions of community and coalition-led legislation. Through its acting by ordinance, the Keep Chicago Renting coalition had obtained a sort of \textit{de facto} legislative power on the issue.

Avellone explained that, “there was all kinds of stuff going on out there,” in regard to the notices that new owners were giving their tenants in foreclosed properties; “everything from overly-detailed notices that were completely incomprehensible to a piece of paper with ‘get out’ scrawled in crayon,”\textsuperscript{100} Communities United had kept up its door knocking campaign to monitor compliance with the new ordinance. Door knocking revealed that in 80 percent of cases, the new owners were exploiting loopholes to get around the KCRO. Diane Limas, Communities United’s Board President, told the Housing Committee that, “oftentimes, new owners would cut off contact with renters after sending the proper notice. But by cutting off contact, the new owner was able to remove tenants without paying the relocation assistance fee.”\textsuperscript{101} Avellone said that bankers and other owners were asking, “What do we do? Do we give a 21-day notice? A 60-day notice? A 90-day notice? There’s got to be some way of nailing down a pattern of communication”.\textsuperscript{102} It became clear when the lobbyists approached Avellone that even well-crafted legislation can fail to be comprehensive. The coalition leveraged Communities United’s continued door knocking campaign through its newfound, \textit{de facto} legislative power to present evidence before the Housing Committee and propose ways to close the loopholes. The City Council subsequently clarified the timeline and notice requirements in the KCRO.\textsuperscript{103}

Because action by ordinance deals with state mechanisms like legislation and electoral politics, it encompasses litigation as well. LCBH represented its first tenant in a KCRO case in May of 2014. In September of 2015, LCBH gave a private bar training on the KCRO for lawyers. By March of 2018, seven Judges at the Cook County Circuit Court had ruled in nine KCRO cases. New owners have argued in court that the two percent limit on rent increases runs afoul of Illinois’ Rent Control Preemption Act. Three Judges have ruled that the KCRO constitutes rent control and that the rent renewal rate clause can be severed to keep the rest of the ordinance intact. Three other judges found that the KCRO is not rent control. In the last case, heard by Judge Brigid Mary McGrath, Avellone, who represented the plaintiff, came up with a standing argument as a convenient ‘out’ for a Judge that might not want to rule that a city ordinance is illegal on the one hand, but also might want to avoid tangling with real estate and banking interests on the other.\textsuperscript{104} In his argument, Avellone wrote that,

\begin{quote}
 defendants’ preemption claim is a constitutional challenge to the City’s municipal authority…A party only has standing to raise such a challenge where they have ‘suffered or [are] in
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{99} Chicago Municipal Code, 5-14-040.
\textsuperscript{100} Frank Avellone, interview with author, March 30, 2018.
\textsuperscript{101} Fran Spielman, “Council adds new protections for tenants displaced by rental building foreclosures,” \textit{Chicago Sun Times}. April 15, 2015.
\textsuperscript{102} Frank Avellone, interview with author, March 30, 2018.
\textsuperscript{103} Spielman, “Council adds new protections for tenants displaced by rental building foreclosures.”
\textsuperscript{104} Frank Avellone, interview with author, March 30, 2018.
immediate danger of suffering a direct injury’ as a result of enforcement of the challenged statute or ordinance. Jackson v. City of Chicago, 2012 IL App (1st) 111044, P 63. There is generally no standing for a party to argue that the challenge statute or ordinance would be unconstitutional ‘if applied to third parties in hypothetical situations.’

He went on to argue that the new owners were not adversely impacted by the KCRO, suffered no injury, and therefore lack standing. Judge McGrath found that the new owners of a property did not have standing to challenge the KCRO’s rent renewal rate clause.

In 2016, Cook County Circuit Judge Raymond Mitchell dismissed the KCRO action in Carmen Rivera v. The Bank of New York Mellon and Bayview Loan Servicing, LLC, finding that the rent renewal rate clause contravened the Illinois Rent Control Preemption Act. The Plaintiff was represented by Cameron and Kane, which had attended Avellone’s KCRO training in 2015 and was recruited to the Keep Chicago Renting cause by the Logan Square Neighborhood Association. Judge Mitchell held that the clear statutory mandate precluded all other arguments, and that the rent stipulation within the KCRO was not severable due to its centrality to the Ordinance’s stated purpose. While the Judge ruled the KCRO to be invalid, the judgment had no precedential authority. After the ruling, the large corporate firm Jenner and Block and the City Law Department took up the case alongside Cameron and Kane, with LCBH serving in an advisory role. The lawyers filed a motion for reconsideration. “We had the not-for-profit, the local law office, the giant law office, and also the City. It was a case of steel sharpening steel,” Avellone said. Judge Mitchell ruled a partial repeal on reconsideration on April 25, 2017 that overturned his previous decision on severability.

**Message to the grassroots**

Action by ordinance relies on action by convening and contesting in order to achieve its ends. The effort to repeal the Rent Control Preemption Act, the CHHIP draft ordinance, the Just Cause Eviction campaign, and the KCRO all involve convening organizations and individuals by knocking on doors, setting up working groups, and creating coalitions. The CHHIP draft ordinance, for instance, followed on years of conversation and planning among various centers at Loyola University and community organizations that eventually established the PASH working groups. The Lift the Ban Steering Committee members held regular meetings for over a year to discuss the mechanics of rent control before approaching representative Guzzardi in late 2016 to discuss the introduction of a repeal bill. These coalitions also contest policy and indifferent or oppositional elected officials by building bases and staging direct actions. “Even Mayor One Percent knows when the shoe hurts too much,” Avellone said of Mayor Rahm Emanuel. “He had to pass KCRO because of the grass roots advocacy and organizing.”

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106 Carmen Rivera v. The Bank of New York Mellon and Bayview Loan Servicing, LLC, No. 16 M1 108289 (Cook County Circuit Court, Illinois.)
109 Ibid.
110 Frank Avellone, interview with author, January 16, 2018.
The efficacy of action by ordinance stems from its inadequacies. First, the justice of a cause does not alone produce successful legislation or litigation, which requires convening and contesting. Amy Kapczynski and Jonathan Berger show that the Treatment Action Campaign case in South Africa only reached that country’s courts after years of grassroots organizing. Second, politics can block court cases and legislation even after successful convening and contesting. In this case, action by ordinance serves a purpose through its failure. Avellone said that it is “not only about the battles that you know you can win….you put something in front of the Mayor and say, ‘sign on the dotted line if you’re with us’. You know he’s not going to sign, but it makes it clear who’s on whose side.” Third, when legislation does pass, it is often ultimately insufficient to achieve the intended social ends. The same is often true for litigation. While there might be de jure adherence to legislation and court decisions, there is often significant de facto non-compliance. Courts have applied various forms of judicial activism to address the inherent inadequacies of legislation and litigation. César Rodríguez-Garavito describes how the Colombian Constitutional Court mandates “injunctive remedies” that instruct government agencies to coordinate and monitor compliance with the Court’s decisions. Popular activism in the form of convening and contesting has also been important in ensuring the efficacy of laws and court decisions, which often develop into new action by ordinance in the form of supplemental laws or additional litigation. These examples illustrate the veracity of Alexis De Tocqueville’s argument that ineffectual laws can be remedied over time.

Tocqueville’s idea of legislative gradualism, Kapczynski and Berger’s convening, Avellone’s contesting, and Rodríguez-Garavito’s understanding of the interdependence of court decisions and other forms of action produce a heterogeneous picture in which action by ordinance depends on and can even become action by convening and contesting. Organizations convene and contest by mobilizing residents to door knock, stage actions, pressure elected officials, and convene coalitions. “In the end”, Avellone said, “all of these issues of justice come down to local democracy. Whether it’s climate change or displacement or labor rights, it comes down to the local decision making power at the micro scale – that is where change needs to come from”.

Carmen Prieto has worked 28 years at the Wieboldt Foundation, which develops decades-long relationships with its community organizer grantees across Chicago. She has seen what Avellone terms ‘local democracy’ develop since around 2000 as local residents and people of color have forged new modes of organizing distinct from the Alinskyite model, which held that community campaigns should be led by people from outside the community, usually white, middle class men. “People from within these communities are realizing that the powers that be were pitting them against each other, and that

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112 As cited earlier (footnote 68), Avellone was not referring to the Lift the Ban coalition’s work in particular with this remark, but rather to his legal defense and advocacy work in general. Interview with Frank Avellone, March 30, 2018.


115 Frank Avellone, interview with author, January 16, 2018.
they all have shared concerns,” Prieto said. They are now leveraging these shared concerns to convene from the neighborhood to the city levels by creating coalitions aimed at legislative change.116

Action by ordinance has led organizations to link neighborhood concerns to citywide issues through the passage of ordinances and staging of electoral campaigns. 33rd Ward Working Families, for instance, became a member in the Lift the Ban coalition, applying the knowledge it gained from Tim Meegan’s local aldermanic campaign and the organization’s continuing opposition of Alderman Mell to a citywide electoral initiative on housing justice. Sitting in a Starbucks on the northwest side near the Kedzie Brown Line in a neighborhood of two- and four-unit apartment blocks, seven miles from Avellone’s view of the Mayor’s office and the buggy-eyed Picasso, Poulos described WF33’s opposition to Mell and its work in the Lift the Ban coalition: “We’re seizing the state at the local level.”117 From his perspective at LCBH, which serves as the crafter and strategist behind many grass roots actions by ordinance, Avellone reiterated that, “the action is on the ground, at the local level. Whenever I’m talking to a group of people I sign off by asking the audience, ‘when are you going to run for office?’”118 Apparently, it is not the Mayor who is going to make Mango Street better – it is you.

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Acting around the State: Action by Convening

The four corners at the intersection of Kedzie and Lawrence Avenues in the Albany Park neighborhood on Chicago’s northwest side feature the Lindo Michoacan grocery store if you need masa harina, Nazareth Sweets for kunafe, a Persian café, and the offices of Communities United, just next to Pharmacy One, whose sign reads PHARMACY FARMACIAصيدلية. When I met Nick Jefferson, Communities United’s Housing Organizer, he sat across from me at an assemblage of tables large enough to seat a meeting of at least 20 people.

“How do you leverage relationships in the absence of formal legislation to secure affordable housing for a community?” Jefferson asked rhetorically. He was responding to my question about lessons learned from Communities United’s Renters Organizing Ourselves to Stay (ROOTS) program. He could also have been giving advice to Esperanza if innovative laws failed to force the Mayor to make Mango Street better. Action by convening often arises to address the limitations of action by ordinance, described at the end of the last chapter. When electoral initiatives and legislation take time and then suffer from a lack of comprehensiveness or enforcement, community organizations forge relationships to devise new programs. Because no action is completely independent of state mechanisms, however, action by convening sometimes relies on action by contesting to cajole state representatives to create amenable environments for negotiated programs, as well as action by ordinance to institutionalize and broaden solutions first devised by convening. However successful their programs might be, conveners are conscious of the ultimate need for more stable and comprehensive solutions to the problems they try to address. This is why conveners sometimes turn to action by ordinance in order to institutionalize their efforts and coordinate programs on larger geographic scales, avoiding the undemocratic pitfalls of an overly self-reliant civil society and the myopia of neighborhood-level localism.

The ROOTS program secures discounts on the sale of foreclosed, bank-owned properties to mission-oriented developers who lease out units at below-market rents, allowing low- and moderate-income households to stay put in Albany Park. It is an excellent example of action by convening because it arose to address shortcomings in the Keep Chicago Renting ordinance, in part by drawing on the resident base created by the Keep Chicago Renting coalition and Renters Empowering Neighbors Together program described in the first chapter. ROOTS ultimately led to several unwitting actions by ordinance in the form of changed policies and procedures at Fannie Mae and the Cook County Land Bank, and a City ordinance that funds the further rehabilitation of existing affordable housing. Later in the chapter, the Latin United Community Housing Association’s convening work with the Logan Square Neighborhood Association shows how action by convening addresses not only shortcomings in legislation, but also the negative and neglected outcomes of large infrastructure projects.

Leveraging relationships on the northwest side

The ROOTS program grew out of the Keep Chicago Renting Ordinance that protected tenants living in foreclosed properties in the short term, but did little to guarantee the affordability of those units in perpetuity. Demian Kogan, a former organizer at Communities United, explained that banks generally prefer not to manage foreclosed property and instead sell to a second buyer not bound by KCRO requirements. Tenants in foreclosed properties were therefore only safe so long as the bank or whoever the first buyer might be remained the landlord. Communities United’s Board President, Diane Limas, explained that “when the market started to improve, cash investors were coming in and scooping up our two to fours,” the two- and four-flat buildings particularly prevalent in Albany Park. The investors were converting these historically affordable rental properties into expensive apartments and single-family homes.

An organizer working in Albany Park described that the neighborhood in particular and northwest side more generally comes under unique housing pressure because of the prevalence of two- and four-flats in the local housing stock; these buildings are some of Chicago’s most affordable rental housing but also some of the most desirable to convert into upscale condos due to their size, location, and durability. The Institute for Housing Studies at DePaul University documented that while the rental stock of all types of buildings in Chicago increased on average from 2007 to 2015, the City lost 5,709 rental units in two- to four-unit buildings from 2012 to 2015, most likely due to foreclosures during the 2008 crisis and condominium conversions when the market recovered. Given this context, organizers at Communities United saw the need to work around state mechanisms to independently convene actors that could stabilizing this stock of rental buildings on the northwest side. Communities United convened a developer, a financer, the Cook County Land Bank Authority, and Fannie Mae to purchase, rehabilitate, and lease affordable rental units.

The process of convening this diverse set of actors started in 2015 when Communities United interviewed five mission-driven developers and chose the Chicago Metropolitan Housing Development Corporation (CMHDC) to purchase and manage at risk two- to four-unit rental buildings. CMHDC’s Executive Director, Rafael Leon, said that “we usually do our developments and financials without community involvement.” But Communities United had already spoken with Fannie Mae and other banks that owned affordable buildings on the northwest side, and presented CMHDC with a picture of

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2 Demian Kogan, interview with author, April 10, 2018. Chapter 5-14-020 of the Municipal Code defines a bona fide third-party purchaser as “any person who, through an arms length transaction, purchases...a foreclosed rental property from an owner. A ‘bona fide purchaser’ shall not include any person who had a mortgage lien on the foreclosed rental property during the foreclosure procedure.” The Code goes on to exempt bona fide third-party purchasers from the ordinance: Municipal Code 5-14-030 states that the KCRO “shall not apply to: ... b) any bona fide third-party purchaser.”


4 Ibid., 1:22.

5 Antonio Gutierrez and Jake Marshall, interview with author, January 24, 2018.

6 The share of rental units in two- to four-unit buildings as a part of Cook County’s total rental housing stock decreased from 35.7 percent to 30.4 percent from 2007 to 2015. See, Institute for Housing Studies at DePaul University, “2017 State of Rental Housing in Cook County,” May 11, 2017.

7 Enterprise Community Partners, “ROOTS: Preserving Affordable Homes in Chicago, Enterprise Community Partners.”

8 Rafael Leon, interview with author, April 16, 2018.
ongoing displacement and its vision for how CMHDC, as part of a larger group of convened organizations, could help. Communities United found that it was impossible to obtain public financing from the City to buy and manage affordable housing in such small buildings. Communities United convened with CMHDC to work around this state constraint because, as Leon explained, “we didn’t need to use public assistance because we have private financing. We told Communities United that we could develop without the city at the beginning, and would hope to get public financing later.”

Because City Hall would not finance the ROOTS program, Communities United and CMHDC convened Enterprise Community Partners (ECP), which provided a five million dollar line of credit for building purchases. Andrew Geer, the Chicago Area Vice President of ECP, explained that “Enterprise’s role was really to help...think through the complexities and what they needed to do to actually preserve this affordable housing stock.” He also said that “it’s the first of its kind I’ve seen where it’s very focused on two factors – one is the gentrifying community, the second is the assets that they’re trying to acquire are occupied. So it’s preserving the housing but, more importantly, keeping the families in those communities.” ROOTS was now a convening of three.

Originally, Communities United wanted all of the ROOTS units to be affordable to households earning 50 percent of the Area Median Income (AMI). Leon explained that he had to say ‘no’ because, to achieve such deep affordability, CMHDC would have to cross-subsidize from the rest of its affordable portfolio, decreasing affordability in other properties. Once Communities United had brought them to the table, it was largely CMHDC and ECP that dealt with the financial aspects of the program. The organizers let CMHDC work independently on purchasing, rehabilitating, and leasing the properties. CMHDC and ECP calculated affordability benchmarks using pro formas for each property based on their unique rehabilitation needs.

Leon reported to Communities United that CMHDC was having trouble making the pro formas affordable, in part because the banks’ selling price was not low enough. Kogan asked, “how can we incentivize banks to sell to mission driven developers like CMHDC?” The doorknob bags were the answer. Roxanne Smith was renting in a foreclosed two-flat in Albany Park in 2013 when she found a green bag on her front door containing information about the ROOTS program. A journalist reported that “the green bags...on people’s doors contained information about renters’ rights and workshops on what to do while living in a foreclosed building – a grassroots strategy that Communities United views as an empowerment tool.” The organizers at Communities United were inspired to use green bags by the Harvard Legal Aid Bureau’s Project No One Leaves in Boston, which distributed red bags with legal information useful for those living in foreclosed properties in that city. Originally used in the Renters Empowering Neighbors Together program (which was almost named the Green Bag Campaign), this

9 Ibid.
11 Enterprise Community Partners, “ROOTS: Preserving Affordable Homes in Chicago, Enterprise Community Partners.”
12 Riley, “Chicago Renters View ‘ROOTS’ as Solution to Affordable Housing.”
14 Demian Kogan, interview with author, April 10, 2018.
15 Rafael Leon, interview with author, April 16, 2018.
16 Demian Kogan, interview with author, April 10, 2018.
17 Riley, “Chicago Renters View ‘ROOTS’ as Solution to Affordable Housing.”
18 Demian Kogan, interview with author, April 10, 2018.
tool was more successful at grabbing renters’ attention than paper fliers. Kogan recalled that “we liked the bag tactic because with traditional door knocking, if you don’t find someone at home, you have to leave a piece of paper under the door or rubber band it to the doorknob. Those are easily ignored or forgotten.”

With the green bags, the office phones were ringing with calls from curious residents.

Communities United activated a cadre of over ten neighborhood leaders to undertake the bag campaign and to organize tenants in foreclosed buildings and properties being eyed by cash investors. The Communities United neighborhood leaders organized residents to pressure elected officials including Alderman Deborah Mell, Congresswoman Jan Schakowsky, Congressmen Mike Quigley and Luis Gutierrez, and Senators Dick Durban and Mark Kirk to negotiate with Fannie Mae to provide a cost avoidance discount on foreclosed properties sold to CMHDC. The cost avoidance discount, which ranged up to 30 percent, was based on the rationale that by selling quickly to CMHDC, Fannie Mae could avoid the costs associated with holding the property longer while looking for another buyer. “When Fannie Mae didn’t offer lower prices to CMHDC, we would activate the community pressure through the elected officials to get the deal we wanted,” Kogan recalled.

Leon said that each organization served its purpose, with Communities United reaching out to and pressuring elected officials, and CMHDC negotiating on the financial details of the cost avoidance discount with Fannie Mae.

Getting external actors to do what the organizers wanted also involved recognizing points of leverage. Communities United had partnered with the Institute for Housing Studies at DePaul University to determine that Fannie Mae was the largest foreclosing owner in Albany Park. There was an additional advantage in pressuring Fannie Mae for the cost avoidance discount besides its sheer size. “The fact that Fannie Mae was operating at the federal level might have incentivized them to have a conversation with the elected officials about the discounts to save their image. A Bank of America, say, might not have done that,” Kogan explained.

In order to further increase affordability, CMHDC wanted to use tax credits for their ROOTS properties. Fannie Mae, for its part, did not want to set a precedent of working with tax credits. Leon came up with the idea to involve the Cook County Land Bank Authority (CCLBA) as an intermediary to qualify for the use of Donation Tax Credits, which could equal up to half the value of each property. According to the Cook County Code of Ordinances, the CCLBA was incorporated in 2013 to “facilitate the return of vacant, abandoned and tax-delinquent properties to productive use thereby combating community deterioration, creating economic growth and stabilizing the housing and job market.” Jefferson pointed out that the issue of cash purchases and foreclosed properties so relevant to the ROOTS

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19 Ibid.
21 Communities United, "VICTORY: Communities United’s ROOTS Campaign Preserves 44 Units of Affordable Rental Housing...Over 40 More Units in the Pipeline!" Accessed May 22, 2018.
22 Demian Kogan, interview with author, April 10, 2018.
23 Rafael Leon, interview with author, April 16, 2018.
26 Rafael Leon, interview with author, April 16, 2018.
27 Cook County, Illinois – Code of Ordinances, Part II – Land Development Ordinances – Chapter 103 – Land Bank Authority, Sec 103-4 – Purpose.
program were conspicuously absent from the CCLBA’s statutory mandate, and that for this reason the CCLBA was reluctant to heed CMHDC’s proposal. Further action by convening was of order.

Jefferson said that Communities United was “able to get its foot in the door based on the CCLBA’s underlying mission” (housing market stabilization), and “persuaded them to work with us.” Leon explained that both CMHDC and the CCLBA conducted significant legal research to ensure the legality of the process. Once the lawyers cleared the plan and CMHDC picked up the CCLBA’s legal fees, the actual transactions “took a matter of seconds”. One of the leaders from Communities United subsequently got on the CCLBA Board and pushed the Bank to concentrate more on displacement-oriented work, convincing other CCLBA Board members to augment the Bank’s mission beyond the question of vacancy and the tax role. Like the ad-hoc cost avoidance discount, this action by convening used negotiation, influence, and research to devise a novel way of working around sometimes obstinate institutional actors. A page on CCLBA’s website now states their mission as promoting the “redevelopment and reuse of vacant, abandoned, foreclosed or tax-delinquent properties” and supporting “targeted efforts to stabilize neighborhoods” (emphasis added).

As of July 2017, CMHDC was able to lease the 41 units within the 18 buildings in the ROOTS program to approximately 200 tenants at $300 to $400 per month less than market rate units. Pre-existing tenants in ROOTS units pay the same rent as they did before the purchase of their property, and new tenants must qualify with incomes of no more than 80 percent of AMI. Kogan said that, “we had to make it a no-brainer for the banks to do what we wanted them to do. We accomplished this through legislation in the case of the KCRO.” In the case of ROOTS, Communities United accomplished it by convening organizations and “ultimately by changing practices.”

In addition to the ad-hoc practices at Fannie Mae and the CCLBA that deepened the affordability of ROOTS units, action by convening led to the passage of a city ordinance. Communities United and CMHDC convened with ECP to work around affordable finance constraints because efforts at engaging public officials to support a municipal funding stream had been fruitless. What was originally a strategy to work around the state by convening received support from City Hall when, on February 28, 2018, Mayor Emanuel introduced the Preservation of Existing Affordable Rental program (PEAR) ordinance to the Committee on Finance. The City Council passed the ordinance on March 28, 2018 with a unanimous vote. The ordinance incorporates the PEAR program within the Chicago Department of Planning and Development “to maintain affordable housing in appreciating neighborhoods by providing funds to

29 Rafael Leon, interview with author, April 16, 2018.
32 Nick Jefferson, interview with author, January 17, 2018.; Riley, “Chicago Renters View ROOTS as Solution to Affordable Housing.” Because CMHDC, ECP, and other partners created these 41 affordability units by convening and working around the state, there is no legal guarantee of affordability. Whereas public financing comes with affordability deed restrictions, the inability to obtain public financing for such small buildings means that CMHDC ultimately decides on the degree and duration of affordability. Rafael Leon, interview with author, April 16, 2018.
33 Demian Kogan, interview with author, April 10, 2018.
35 The ordinance passed with 48 yes votes and two absences.
refinance private sector debt in exchange for affordability restrictions...”

Specifically, PEAR makes up to two million dollars in zero interest refinancing available for CMHDC’s current debt. The program targets 15 of the 20 total units in nine CMHDC-owned buildings scattered across Chicago.

When I asked Leon why he thinks the City implemented the PEAR program, he referenced the cost savings of CMHDC’s approach to rehabilitating existing buildings as affordable housing rather than building new. “If you can buy an existing unit for 130 thousand dollars, or create a new unit for 250 thousand dollars, what are you going to do? You’ll create PEAR”. The conveners of ROOTS saw in the passage of the PEAR program Kogan’s model of success by ‘changing practices’. The ROOTS program convened multiple organizations to improvise a development model in the face of various constraints imposed by state mechanisms, whether the initial lack of public funding, or the failure of existing legislation to address second buyers of foreclosed properties. The improvised program proved to be more efficient than established modes of providing affordable housing. The PEAR program signifies a change in practices by providing public financing for this development model, and also by legislating the affordability component by imposing 30-year deed restrictions on properties receiving PEAR refinancing.

Since the launch of ROOTS, the number of foreclosed properties purchasable at a discount from Fannie Mae has decreased, and organizers at Communities United are thinking about how to continue to preserve affordable housing through similar but distinct means. Communities United set up a citywide working group on twos and fours, as well as a separate working group on multi-family courtyard buildings to think about how to preserve the historic affordability of these prevalent building typologies through a variety of means.

Jefferson asked, “if there were city funding, could a mission driven developer step in to maintain affordability? First, we need to know why these owners are selling their properties to cash investors. We can do a community education campaign to understand why owners are selling and, if we can’t keep these owners in the neighborhood, how we can get them to sell to a mission driven developer instead.” Another way to advance ROOTS, Jefferson said, is to intervene in tax delinquent properties. “There could be a way for us to step in and transition these properties to a mission driven developer, or to help struggling owners keep their properties in the first place.” Like the action by convening that served as the basis for ROOTS, Jefferson is thinking about who to convene to

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38 There are nine buildings specified in the ordinance: 1811 N. Lotus Avenue, 2244 W. Farragut Avenue, 2308 N. Mango Avenue, 2734 W. Gregory Street, 5000 W. Montana Street, 5214 Parker Avenue, 5331 W. Barry Avenue, 5858 W. Diversey Avenue, and 6514 N. Sacramento Avenue. Committee on Finance, “Establishment of Preservation of Existing Affordable Rental Program ["PEAR Program"],” 4.
39 Rafael Leon, interview with author, April 16, 2018.
40 Committee on Finance, “Establishment of Preservation of Existing Affordable Rental Program ["PEAR Program"],” 3.
41 There are currently seven courtyard buildings in Albany Park with a total of 200 units that Communities United is trying to get Celadon Holdings LLC to buy and renovate as part of the ROOTS program. Nick Jefferson, interview with author, January 17, 2018.
42 Nick Jefferson, interview with author, March 27, 2018.
43 Ibid.
address the issue of tax delinquency as ROOTS evolves. He said that “Communities United might be able to work with the Preservation Compact”, a collaboration for policy on affordable housing preservation, which itself was created in 2007 as a convener of public, private, and nonprofit leadership in Cook County.44

Before RENT, the Keep Chicago Renting coalition, and ROOTS, back in 2007, the owners of the building at 4914 N. Spaulding did their paper renovation. The building went into foreclosure, its tenants received eviction notices, and the owners fled to Romania with 1.8 million dollars in mortgages.45 “That was the first time that renters came to us with weird eviction notices,” Kogan recalled. Even though the renters were able to remain at the Spaulding building after it was placed in court receivership,46 Kogan explained that the breakdown in oversight and regulation that the Spaulding building exemplified inspired thought on more durable solutions to precarity and displacement. First came RENT and the Keep Chicago Renting coalition in 2012, which addressed the issue of foreclosed properties through a city ordinance. When action by ordinance failed to address the issue of cash investors as the market recovered, Communities United launched ROOTS as an alternative solution that convened various organizations to find ways to create an affordable housing preservation program despite financing, legal, and administrative constraints. Jefferson summarized, explaining that “ROOTS needed an alignment of political will, resources, and community engagement. If you have all three, you’ll have a successful project.” 47

Non-ROOTS routes in Albany Park

Antonio Gutierrez and Jake Marshall were working as organizers at Centro Autónomo when renters at a building on Sunnyside Avenue in Albany Park received eviction notices from the building’s owner, Silver Properties Group. As these and other evictions came to their attention, the two organizers decided to leave the Centro to establish the Autonomous Tenants Union (ATU) to empower tenants, create a non-hierarchical organizing structure, and break away from service oriented programming.48 While Communities United and ATU work predominantly in the same neighborhood on similar issues, the ATU takes a radically different stance when it comes to the question of how to preserve affordable housing. While Communities United aimed through the ROOTS program to convene a developer, financier, bank, renters, and elected officials to collectively agree upon ad hoc programming, the ATU organizes tenants to contest landlords and institutionalized power.

At an ATU asamblea on March 24, 2018, a group of at least 30 residents and organizers sat in a circle in the basement of the Christ Lutheran Church, just several blocks south of the intersection of Lawrence and Kedzie. Two tables in one corner of the room were lined with tupperwared snacks. Children occasionally burst through a door at the far end of the basement looking for parents among the seated guests and pursued by an ATU member who would coax them back into the adjoining room. Marshall quietly handed two-channel headphones to people as they arrived. Another organizer paced behind the circle of chairs with his hand cupped over his mouth, translating from English to Spanish and Spanish to

45 Brown, “Brown: Tenants stood their ground, changed landscape for renters.”
46 Ibid.
English as people took turns speaking. Several renters from a building in Albany Park told the group that their landlord had served them eviction notices one month after a minor fire damaged one of the units in the property. As the tenants told their story, organizers from ATU responded with occasional clarifying questions on how and when the notices were served, and another ATU member in the room spoke about his recent eviction experience. Addressing the tenants, Gutierrez said, “if you resist and fight, you might be able to get relocation assistance, but the owner just wants to do things as cheaply as possible.”

Once the tenants had told the full of their story, another organizer got up and asked the members if they knew about ATU’s “sword and shield”.49 He went on, explaining that, “the shield is what we can win under the law,” and then asked, “what is the sword?” A woman in the audience replied that it is what you use to “gain power.” The organizer responded, “it’s direct action – the law only affords us so much, but we have power because we have each other.” Gutierrez then addressed the tenants: “We can get all of you together and make it a pain for the landlord to just kick you out.” As the meeting dispersed, Marshall huddled with the tenants and told them that, “you have to tell the landlord that once you are organized into a tenants’ union, he needs to negotiate with a union representative and nobody else.”

After the meeting, several ATU members piled into cars and drove several streets to the south along Kedzie to leave fliers under the door of every house and the wipers of every windshield on a block where there is an ongoing eviction. Marshall explained that, “the landlord really doesn’t want anyone to know that they’re evicting people. So we’re informing everyone.” The ATU uses their shield primarily in eviction court proceedings. They rely more heavily on the sword to contest landlords that attempt to evict longstanding residents by unionizing tenants. While this mode of action looks like contesting for its confrontational stance towards individual landlords, it also resembles action by convening for its circumnavigation of state mechanisms and problem solving by bringing individuals together, emphasizing the syncretic nature of the three modes of action.

Unlike Communities United, the ATU also relies on a clearly contestational stance in their dealings with Alderman Mell. Jefferson feels that Communities United has “established a basis for mutual respect” with Mell, which was important when it came to getting elected officials to put pressure on Fannie Mae to provide the cost avoidance discount to CMHDC. “We don’t see aldermen as targets, but as people who need to be equipped with tools and community knowledge to better fulfill their jobs on behalf of the community,” he said.50 When Communities United door knocks to gauge the need for or effectiveness of particular policies and programs, it is not primarily to build the power and awareness of its base in preparation for a fight, but rather to gather information to rationally inform the actions of elected officials and build renters’ capacity to organize and engage in discussion with institutional actors. Gutierrez of the ATU, on the other hand, told me that the Union “doesn’t believe in electoral politics. We don’t want to lend legitimacy to the system.”51 33rd Ward Working Families (WF33), which has coordinated with ATU on affordable housing and eviction campaigns, shares the contestational approach. When I asked Chris Poulos at WF33 how the organization relates to Mell, he responded, “we go straight for the jugular.”52

49 The ATU borrowed the ‘sword and shield’ concept from City Life/ Vida Urbana.
52 Despite the similarity in confrontational language and some tactics, it is important to recognize that while the ATU largely disavows electoral politics, WF33 is an independent political organization that arose out of Tim
The ATU’s contestational approach dates to when Gutierrez and Marshall left Centro Autónomo after learning about the Silver Properties Group evictions on Sunnyside. The Sunnyside building originally came to the attention of volunteers who were door knocking for WF33. Investigation revealed that Silver Properties Group, represented by Ron Abrams, was evicting the tenants in order to make renovations to the building and increase rents. The ATU organized the tenants and began to contest Mell’s stance and actions. WF33 and ATU members started to show up at Mell’s weekly Ward Nights to protest the issue. Mell told the organizers and residents that she had called Abrams, but that he had not responded. When Marshall recommended that Mell put the Sunnyside property on the Ward’s list of ‘problem buildings’, Poulos recounted that her chief of staff said, “we don’t want to rock the boat, because then we won’t be able to negotiate with Abrams in the future on this kind of stuff.”

Unsatisfied with Mell’s incremental, negotiation-oriented approach, ATU organizers went to Abrams’ financier, the Albany Bank and Trust Company, to contest that local institution’s servicing a client who was evicting people from the community. While Mell did not demand that Abrams call off the eviction, WF33 and ATU pressured her into vowing to no longer accept contributions from developers. “Mell moves on things because she is worried we could take her out,” Poulos said. He described that Alderman Carlos Ramirez-Rosa took notice when Abrams went to purchase several properties in the 35th Ward. Showing up at Ward Nights, protesting, and pressuring local institutions had apparently made the Sunnyside story an issue of more public concern. Poulos said that “Carlos asked Abrams ‘what’s going on here?’ Abrams got spooked and dropped the evictions in the Sunnyside Property. He probably saw that things weren’t going to go his way with his 300-odd units on the northwest side so long as the eviction story was out there.” Abrams actually dropped the evictions in an independent settlement when he ended up in court. It is clear why Antonio and Jake attribute the tenants’ victory to ATU and WF33’s contestation rather than action by ordinance in the judicial system; the ATU had forced Abrams to back down by encircling him. Going straight for the jugular had paid off.

**Convening in Humboldt Park**

LUCHA means ‘struggle’ in Spanish. You might therefore expect that the Latin United Community Housing Association (LUCHA) would pursue similar tactics to those of ATU and WF33. But, in the words of the organization’s executive director, Juan Carlos Linares, LUCHA “thrives on negotiation,” and in fact looks more like a convener in the mold of Communities United than a contester going straight for the jugular. This might not be surprising if one considers that organizers invented the acronym for LUCHA in 1989 when Lucha, created out of the Westtown Concerned Citizens Coalition by Puerto Rican community leaders Juan Rivera, Pablo Medina, and Felix Padilla, bought 42 units and went from being a group of community organizers to an affordable housing developer.


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54 Ibid.
55 Ibid.
57 Ibid.
58 Ibid.
59 Juan Carlos Linares, interview with author, March 27, 2018.
LUCHA is located on North Avenue in Humboldt Park, approximately one mile away from Paseo Boricua, a stretch of Division Street that is an historically important place in the Puerto Rican diaspora for its concentration of Puerto Rican residents and record-setting iron Puerto Rican flags that function like giant gates to mark the beginning and end of the commercial strip. The Casita de Don Pedro y Doña Lolita stands at 2625 W. Division at the center of the Paseo and serves as a community-based garden and gallery. A statue of Pedro Albizu Campos stands in front of the small structure. The statue was originally intended to be installed among the trees of Humboldt Park on the other side of Division Street. But the Chicago Park District barred it from being erected alongside the statues of Leif Erikson and Thaddeus Kosciuszko in the Park. The likeness of the leader of the Puerto Rican independence movement that attempted to gain autonomy from the U.S. was too political to add alongside the monuments to the Norse explorer who ‘discovered’ North America and the Polish military engineer who fought with the U.S. against the British in 1783. Thus denied its public testament to the neighborhood’s changing demographics, the Puerto Rican community set up the statue across the street.

LUCHA’s action by convening to address unaffordability in Humboldt Park is best understood as part of a decades’ long legacy of Puerto Rican displacement in Chicago due to large city-led development projects. Puerto Ricans had originally settled on the Near North Side in the 1940s and 1950s around the intersection of Clark and Superior Streets. In the 1950s, the Chicago Plan Commission examined the area just north of downtown and determined that it would need to be redeveloped so that nearby Michigan Avenue could become, in real estate mogul Arthur Rubloff’s words, a “magnificent mile” (which is the name by which the area is now commonly known). When federal funds became available for the Commission’s project, the desirable Gold Coast neighborhood was designated “stable”, while the adjacent slum along the Chicago River was slated for destruction (it would become the public housing development called Cabrini-Green). The Puerto Rican settlement at Clark and Superior was designated for “Commercial Rehabilitation and Renovation”, which prioritized non-residential use, thus precluding the return of any residents. Several blocks farther north, Rubloff presided over the destruction of a multiethnic neighborhood that was also home to many Puerto Ricans and, in its place, built a luxury multi-tower complex named Carl Sandburg Village after Chicago’s preeminent poet who, fittingly for the social consequences of this eponymous development, wrote many years earlier that Chicago was always “shoveling, / wrecking, / planning, / building, breaking, rebuilding”.

The city provided no solution for the displaced Puerto Rican community, which was pushed into the adjacent Lincoln Park neighborhood. Over the course of the 1950s, however, non-Puerto Rican residents

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60 Statues in Humboldt Park have long been important in immigrant groups’ claims to neighborhood space and legitimacy. The German community erected the statue of Humboldt in 1892, and then a statue of Fritz Reuter in 1893. Approximately 5,000 Scandinavian residents attended the unveiling of a statue of Leif Erikson in 1901. The statue was an expression of the immigrant community’s claim for stature, especially in light of the Italian community’s employment of Columbus to legitimize their place in American society. The rivalry peaked during the Chicago World’s Columbian Exposition of 1893, which celebrated Columbus-based discovery mythology. A delegation of Scandavins landed at the Exposition in a replica of a Viking ship to stake a rival claim. In 1904, the Polish community put up its own claim in the form of a statue of Thaddeus Kosciuszko. See, David A. Badillo, “Humboldt Park” in Encyclopedia of Chicago, Chicago Historical Society, 2005.


63 Carl Sandburg, “Chicago” (Poetry Foundation, 1914).
along the eastern edge of the neighborhood lobbied the Community Conservation Board to designate over a thousand acres of Lincoln Park as a Conservation Area, making it eligible for restoration funds. Historic housing was thereby rehabilitated and became unaffordable to many of the Puerto Rican residents.64

By the 1960s, the Puerto Rican community had grown in Humboldt Park and West Town. In 1966 Mayor Richard J. Daley announced the celebration of Puerto Rican Weeks, which ended on Sunday June 22, 1966 with a celebration along what would later become known as Paseo Boricua. That night, Police shot and killed a Puerto Rican youth in a nearby alley. Outraged at a legacy of police brutality and displacement, the community rose up, and several days of street violence ensued. As a response to the upheaval, the Chicago Commission on Human Relations held open hearings with Puerto Rican residents. People spoke out about two decades of discriminatory displacement and brutality. One man said that the City was enforcing “apartheid, Chicago-style” and that antipoverty programs had yet to reach his twice and thrice-displaced community.65

The violence that Puerto Ricans had experienced as a result of urban renewal programs, the police, and, more generally, the American possession of their island did not start with the events of 1966. As rising rents had pushed Puerto Ricans farther west from Lincoln Park into West Town, Wicker Park, and Humboldt Park, they encountered white ethnic households. Inter-communal tensions rose. Orlando Davila founded the Young Lords in 1959 to “counter the mounting antagonism against Puerto Ricans by other [white] youth gangs.”66 By 1964 the Young Lords’ new leader, Jose “Cha Cha” Jimenez, was frustrated with the gang’s growing role as service provider and infused a dose of political awareness into his organization’s outlook and works, inspired by the Nation of Islam and Puerto Rican nationalism. The group became “nationalist, panethnic, anti-imperialist, multiracial, and grounded in the working class.”67 In 1968 the Young Lords officially became the Young Lords Organization with a newspaper and political platform. The YLO partnered with Fred Hampton of the Black Panthers Party along with the Students for a Democratic Society and the Young Patriots, a southern white group operating several neighborhoods north of Division Street in Uptown, to form the Rainbow Coalition in 1969.68

The 1960s also saw the expansion of the Division Street Area Community Action Programs (CAPs) as part of the War Against Poverty. The CAPs were meant to help communities establish their own local antipoverty programs. The “maximum feasible participation clause” in Title II of the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964 mandated that CAPs be “developed, coordinated, and administered with the maximum feasible participation of one-third residents of the areas and members of the groups served.”69 The Office of Economic Opportunity, however, made individual agreements with cities to channel CAP funding through city halls. Mayor Richard J. Daley used this special arrangement to control the leadership of the CAPs organizations to strengthen the Hall’s grip on neighborhood politics until the Quie Amendment of 1966 mandated that one-third of the CAP’s board be of the poor, weakening the Democratic Machine’s initiative.70 This allowed for the relatively independent operation of CAPs along La

64 Fernandez, Brown in the Windy City, 176-177.
65 Ibid., 165.
66 Orlando Davila’s Young Lords overtook the early 1950s integrationist movement Los Caballeros de San Juan. See Felix M. Padilla, Puerto Rican Chicago (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1987), 157.
67 Fernandez. Brown in the Windy City, 175-76.
68 Ibid., 182.
69 Padilla, Puerto Rican Chicago, 158.
70 Ibid., 159-60.
División, including the Division Street Urban Progress Center, which housed several job training and learning agencies as well as a Neighborhood Health Center.71

Other communities in the area also mobilized around issues of displacement. The multiethnic community of East Humboldt Park had reached out to Saul Alinsky in 1961 to create the Northwest Community Organization (NCO) in order to manage the Department of Urban Renewal’s activities in the area.72 The NCO created a set of demands including building height limits, a rent control clause for displaced residents (that rent increases be no more than 10% per year), and that all people displaced by development projects be resettled within the community.73 After a victory that rerouted the Kennedy Expressway around St. Stanislaus Parish and the abatement of the imminent threat of urban renewal, the Chicago 21 Plan of 1973 signaled trouble. It envisioned a revitalized downtown that obviously catered to business interests rather than those of the residents in adjacent neighborhoods, including East Humboldt Park.

John Hillenbrand of St. Boniface Church said in 1976 that, “this neighborhood is a mixture of Poles, Mexicans, Puerto Ricans, Blacks, French Creoles, and Italians. The ethnic groups in this community work well together because they’re all minorities. They all have the same housing needs.”74 Milton Cohen of the Jewish Council on Urban Affairs said in 1974 that, “history may be about to repeat itself. Yet another area of Chicago communities seems destined to be priced out of the range of the people who now call it home.” The JCUA held a large public meeting that, surprisingly, spurred the Chicago Central Area Committee to give grants of $12,500 to communities to draw their own anti-displacement development plans.75 While the NCO planned for the community, spinoff organizations including the Bickerdike Redevelopment Corporation and the Northwest Employment Development Corporation specialized in housing, job development, and other issues of local concern.76

The Humboldt Park neighborhood and its growing Puerto Rican population had weathered urban renewal programs, police brutality, and economic decline when a spate of arsons ravaged the neighborhood in the late 1970s. In 1978, Eduardo Camacho documented that over one third of the housing in East Humboldt Park had either been destroyed by fire or abandoned.77 A coalition of 33 community organizations called for the city to do something about the fires, picketed the office of the the Alderman of the 31st Ward, and eventually held a number of public hearings with the City. After the hearings, representatives from the 33 organizations met with city officials to draw up a plan of action, which culminated in the creation of a dedicated arson investigation team that would patrol the community to investigate fires. In 1976 the Westtown Concerned Citizens Coalition received a Community Development Block Grant to convene discussions over urban renewal, spot clearance, and the development of affordable housing.78 It was out of the Westtown Concerned Citizens Coalition that Lucha was born in 1982.

71 Ibid., 161.
72 Ed Marciniak, Reviving an Inner City Community: The drama of urban change in East Humboldt Park in Chicago (Chicago: Loyola University of Chicago, 1977), 19.
73 Ibid, 23.
74 Ibid, 29.
75 Ibid., 30-31.
76 Ibid., 37.
77 Padilla, Puerto Rican Chicago, 193.
78 The Community Housing Education Corporation was established to pursue these goals and was tasked with rehabilitating buildings that could be sold or rented at affordable rates. See Padilla, Puerto Rican Chicago, 220.
When Linares became the Executive Director of LUCHA in April of 2013, he inherited a community organization working in a largely Puerto Rican community that was facing its fourth wave of displacement due to the foreclosure crisis and gentrification. The community could see in this new threat a reiteration of its history of displacement and struggle, from Clark and Superior in the 1950s to Lincoln Park in the 1960s to West Town and Humboldt Park thereafter. Not only had the recent foreclosure crisis led to the displacement of many neighborhood residents. The city had also unveiled plans in June of 2013 to repurpose a defunct elevated railroad as a linear park called the Bloomingdale Trail, which would pass in between the Humboldt Park and Logan Square neighborhoods on its way from gentrifying Bucktown in the East to its terminus at a rail yard in the West. This large-scale project was part of Mayor Rahm Emanuel’s push to create 800 new parks in Chicago. Residents living along the western reaches of the proposed park feared that the large scale, city-driven project, like the redevelopment of Clark and Superior, the construction of Carl Sandburg Village, the renovation of homes in Lincoln Park, and the construction of the expressway through East Humboldt Park, would displace them as housing prices rose in reaction to the new amenity. In their eyes, the linear park would provide a clear path for gentrification to work its way west from Bucktown. Residents along the project’s eastern reaches, on the other hand, feared that it would become a “gang highway”. 79 In the legacy of past community-led solutions ranging from the Young Lords to the CAPs to the Westtown Concerned Citizens Coalition, LUCHA and other organizations sought to address the threat of displacement.

When Linares came to LUCHA, he encountered conflicts in the organization’s property management operations. “I didn’t know anything about property management, but I knew a lot about communication. So I brought everyone to the table to resolve the conflicts. People might speak different languages – there are even differences between Puerto Rican and Mexican Spanish – but you need to find common ground.”80 Linares’ convening also addressed limited resources. LUCHA maintains relationships with other actors in the neighborhood to serve its constituents. “People might come into the office with a crisis,” Linares explained. “There was a woman who had a college degree and a job downtown, but her son had a chronic medical condition that required attention at random times during the day, which put her ability to work and earn a living in jeopardy. For these crisis situations, we need to know every good service provider in the area. That way we can get someone with, for instance, medical expertise to take care of her son.”81 The lack of social safety nets and the rising unaffordability of housing in relation to incomes means that “there are great interdependencies between groups”82 when it comes to convening organizations to address whatever issue might be at hand.

LUCHA acted by convening when the City broke ground on the Bloomingdale Trail, also known as the 606, in August of 2013. Like past large scale projects in Puerto Rican neighborhoods of the city, the plan for the 606 did not sufficiently address the threat of displacement it would pose to local lower-income households. It is ironic that the City touted the linear park as a step towards connecting Chicago’s famously diverse yet infamously cantonized neighborhoods, while LUCHA used the same principle of convening a diverse group of people and actors from different areas of the City to address the project’s fallout in Humboldt Park. The City’s cosmopolitan yet myopic social engineering did not consider the reaction of a Latino community that had suffered the impacts of a series of high-minded projects dating back to the 1950s.

80 Juan Carlos Linares, interview with author, January 22, 2018.
81 Ibid.
82 Ibid.
Displacement of Puerto Ricans in Chicago, 1950s - Present
“We first decided to do something when the property taxes of the affordable housing we manage in the area went up and community members started to face displacement,” Linares recounted. “The Logan Square Neighborhood Association (LSNA) was also losing its membership from local schools as people with children were rapidly priced out of their neighborhood.” Just as Communities United started with data analysis prepared by the Institute for Housing Studies at DePaul University on cash investors, the LSNA also partnered with IHS to analyze rising rents around the 606. Sarah Duda, the Associate Director at IHS, said that “data can be an equalizer in that it brings everyone around the table to have a clear view of what is as opposed to everyone having a different opinion on what the issues are.” LUCHA subsequently took responsibility for the data analysis partnership, which culminated in a 2016 IHS report, “Measuring the Impact of the 606: Understanding How a Large Public Investment Impacted the Surrounding Community”. In response to LUCHA’s questions, the report found that a premium for proximity to the Trail drove recent home price increases in Humboldt Park.

The LSNA and LUCHA convened discussions around the IHS data. “We defined the problem as the deconversion and teardown of affordable housing along the 606 and the construction of expensive single family homes in its place. So we asked how we can solve this problem, and came up with an in-the-box solution – let’s up the demolition fee!” Suddenly, action by convening became action by ordinance, though the initiative retained its original emphasis on convening organizations around a critical issue. The LSNA worked with an attorney to do research on model legislation in other cities on which to base a 606 demolition ordinance. Meanwhile, similar to the strategies employed by the groups in Albany Park around issues of affordable housing, the LSNA staged public actions to create momentum behind the initiative. Just as Linares prioritized convening and communication to serve constituents in need, he explained that LUCHA collaborates with other organizers to participate in direct action in order to support joint initiatives. “Organizing at LUCHA has been over for a while,” he told me, citing LUCHA’s transition to property management in 1989 and dwindling funding for organizing in the City. Like LUCHA’s approach to direct service, “the strategy is now to tap into other organizations that have organizers.” LSNA staged protests, and LUCHA participated in some. “We are not primarily marching, though we do that too,” Linares explained.

In the spring of 2017, Aldermen Joe Moreno (1st Ward), Roberto Maldonado (26th Ward), and Carlos Ramirez-Rosa (35th Ward) got behind the Pilot Act for the Preservation of Affordable Housing in the 606 Residential Area (Pilot Act). The Pilot Act would apply to an approximately three-square mile area (the 606 Residential Area) around the western terminus of the 606 Trail identified by IHS as particularly

83 Juan Carlos Linares, interview with author, March 28, 2018
84 Sarah Duda, interview with author, January 24, 2018.
87 There was a proliferation of not-for-profit, community-driven affordable housing development in Chicago during the 1970s and 1980s. Christine Kelly, Donald Kelly, and Ed Marciniak write that not-for-profit housing development organizations “were, in the main, grassroots initiatives from inner-city communities. In such deteriorating neighborhoods, community groups, church institutions and local leaders established not-for-profit housing groups to build anew or to rehabilitate moderately priced housing, so that residents in search of apartments could remain in the neighborhood. See, Christine Kuehn Kelly, Donald C. Kelly, and Ed Marciniak, Non-Profit with Hard Hats: Building Affordable Housing (Washington, D.C.: National Center for Urban Ethnic Affairs, 1988), 16-17.
88 Juan Carlos Linares, interview with author, January 22, 2018.
Developers of residential housing in the Area would be required to deposit “606 Residential Area Affordable Housing Preservation Fees” (Preservation Fees) in a 606 Residential Area Affordable Housing Trust Fund, managed by a board of local organization representatives, residents, Aldermen, and City Commissioners. The Pilot Act stipulated that the City would not issue demolition or redevelopment permits for projects in the Area until the applicant developer paid the Preservation Fees into the Trust Fund. Moreover, zoning changes allowing for the subsequent development of housing would not be approved until the full payment of Preservation Fees or the designation of at least 50 percent of units in the development as affordable. Linares said that “the ordinance was designed to keep the profits of walk away developers in the community. It was as simple as that.”

After it was introduced on May 24, 2017, the Pilot Act languished in the Committee on Zoning, Landmarks and Building Standards. Linares explained that three months later on September 6, 2017, “the Mayor introduced a pair of draft ordinances that usurped our initiative”. The Mayor’s two ordinances were passed by the City Council on October 11, 2017. They designate Pilot Areas on the Near West Side, Near North Side, and in the Milwaukee Corridor in which the stipulations of the City’s Affordable Requirements Ordinance (ARO) are intensified. The Mayor said they would “create more affordable units...while helping the city to assess the most effective ways of meeting neighborhood affordable housing goals.” “The final ordinances are half-measures,” said Linares.


91 The Pilot Act defines “affordable” as “a sales price or rent less than or equal to the amount at which total monthly housing costs...would total not more than 30% of household income for eligible households”. It defines “affordable housing” as “with respect to rental housing, housing that is affordable to households earning up to... (30%) of the area median income, and...with respect to owner-occupied housing, housing that is affordable to households earning up to... (60%) of the area median income”. These affordability requirements are much more stringent than those of the Affordable Requirements Ordinance (ARO, Municipal Code 2-45-115), which defines “affordable” in the same way while defining “affordable housing” as “with respect to rental housing, housing that is affordable to households earning up to... (60%) of the area median income, and...with respect to owner-occupied housing, housing that is affordable to households earning up to... (100%) of the area median income.” See, Committee on Zoning, Landmarks and Building Standards, “Amendment of Municipal Code Chapter 2-45 by adding new Section 2-45-160 entitled ‘Pilot Act for the Preservation of Affordable Housing in the 606 Residential Area’,” Ordinance O2017-3900, City of Chicago, Office of the City Clerk, Document Tracking Sheet. May 24, 2017.


93 Ibid. The pair of draft ordinances is vaguely reminiscent of Royko’s description of the City Council in Boss, his profile of Mayor Richard J. Daley: “Independent aldermen have been known to come up with a good idea, such as providing food for the city’s hungry...; Daley will acknowledge it, but in his own way. He’ll let [alderman] Keane appropriate the idea and rewrite it and resubmit it as an administration measure. That way, the independent has the satisfaction of seeing his idea reach fruition and the administration has more glory. But most of the independents’ proposals are sent to a special subcommittee that exists solely to allow their unwelcome ideas to die.” Neither LUCHA nor LSNA were satisfied with the mayor’s initiative, nor did it seem that Emanuel acknowledge the concept of increasing demolition fees. But the ultimate disappearance of the Pilot Act might signal that the Mayor went about things ‘in his own way’. See, Mike Royko, Boss: Richard J. Daley of Chicago (New York: Signet, 1971), 20.

94 City of Chicago, “Mayor Emanuel Announces City Council Approval of Two Ordinances to Increase Affordable Housing in Gentrifying Neighborhoods” October 11, 2017.

95 Juan Carlos Linares, interview with author, January 22, 2018.
Comparing the Pilot Act and the Mayor’s final initiative, it is actually the text of the latter that more comprehensively articulates key structural changes in society as an underlying cause of displacement. In a run-on sentence of legalese, it states:

“Whereas, in the last decade more than fifty companies have moved their corporate headquarters from the suburbs to the city, bringing more high-wage jobs and a workforce to walkable, transit-rich, mixed-use environments; and whereas, this trend has transformed, and continues to transform, neighborhoods close to the city center and along transportation lines leading to downtown; and whereas, with increasing demand for housing near downtown, the pace of development and the value of homes in urban core neighborhoods have escalated and existing low and moderate income residents have been priced out of their communities; and whereas the City Council finds that this cycle of gentrification and displacement exacerbates historic patterns of racial and economic segregation, deepens the concentration of poverty and wealth, and widens disparities in access to good schools, jobs, healthcare and other amenities; and whereas, the City Council finds that the 2015 Affordable Requirements Ordinance...is insufficient to prevent displacement and broad demographic change in gentrifying neighborhoods...”\textsuperscript{96}

The Pilot Act, on the other hand, focuses very narrowly on the fallout from the 606 Trail development:

“Whereas, the City is experiencing a shortage of affordable housing, especially in gentrifying neighborhoods; and whereas, the lack of affordable housing is a critical problem, which threatens the economic and social quality of life in the City; and whereas, the unmet demand for affordable housing units in the Logan Square and Humboldt Park neighborhoods is already among the highest in the City; and whereas, the opening of the 606 Trail in 2015 has accelerated: (a) increases in rents and property prices...adjacent to the 606 Trail...; (b) the elimination of affordable housing units..., including the replacement of existing two-flats with rental units by new construction of owner-occupied luxury units; and (c) the displacement of long-term residents.”\textsuperscript{97}

While neither of the Mayor’s “Near North/Near West ARO Pilot Area Ordinance” nor his “Milwaukee Corridor ARO Pilot Area Ordinance” call out the narrowly devised public policies and financial incentives that led to growth in the service sector workforce at the expense of others, it clearly states that this element of the ‘third city’ has contributed to the reproduction of structural racial and economic injustice. While the text refers only to “patterns” as opposed to “policies” of “racial and economic segregation” (the likes of which that pushed the Puerto Rican community from Clark and Superior all the way to Humboldt Park) it does identify shortcomings in the existing affordable housing policy framework and goes on to propose a remedy.

The reason that Linares calls the remedy a “half-measure” is likely not because of the introductory language. It is because the remedy is only a small adjustment to the ARO within broadly defined pilot

\textsuperscript{96} Committee on Housing and Real Estate, “Amendment of Municipal Code Chapter 2-45 by adding new Section 2-45-117 entitled ‘Near North/Near West ARO Pilot Area Ordinance’ (Affordable Requirements Ordinance)” SO2017-6224, City of Chicago, Office of the City Clerk, September 6, 2017.

areas that far exceed the geographies that their names evoke as opposed to the Pilot Act’s more aggressive stipulations to “keep profits of walk away developers in the community” within a targeted area facing a very specific problem. Namely, the Mayor’s ordinances eliminate the option for developers to pay an in-lieu fee instead of developing affordable units within the designated areas, and increase the ARO requirement from 10 to either 15 or 20 percent affordable housing depending on a development’s exact location and funding source.

While affordable housing advocates often criticize the ARO’s in-lieu fee option and the low 10 percent affordability requirement as insufficient, the very definition of Area Median Income raises questions about the critique’s meaning. Area Median Income is calculated for the Chicago Primary Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA), which encompasses both the City of Chicago’s 2.7 million residents as well as the approximately 6.8 million additional residents living within the MSA but outside of Chicago’s municipal boundaries. Some of the communities within the MSA but outside of Chicago are much wealthier than those within the city. This might skew the definition of “affordability” by incorporating incomes from wealthy suburban areas in the calculation of qualifying income for affordable units in Chicago. With this perspective, the Mayor’s ordinances will not be able to do much to reverse historical patterns of displacement and exclusion. By channeling steep demolition fees into a fund for the development of affordable housing, the Pilot Act circumnavigates the pitfalls of the ARO and its variants. But the question of “affordability” remains ever looming.

From convening to strategic planning

Jefferson began and ended our first conversation together by saying that, “the city needs to strategically plan for the future.”98 While the ROOTS program successfully “leveraged relationships in the absence of formal legislation”,99 the limits of action by convening are clear. While Frank Avellone at LCBH said that everything comes down to local democracy, and “local decision making power at the micro scale”,100 Avellone and others would agree that independent, local, conveners leveraging relationships ‘in the absence of formal legislation’ is clearly not sufficient. It is not enough to ‘make Mango street better’ by yourself, or even with partners. Jefferson stressed the need for more comprehensive action, saying that “City Hall supports the Garfield Park Police Academy plan because it sees it as an engine of economic growth. But this will raise the issue of affordability in the neighborhood. The city cannot just build things and hope that the community organizations will take care of the social and economic fallout. That needs to be part of the original plan.”101 He recounted that a city official once told him that it is the city’s job to put in infrastructure and it is community organizations’ job to figure out how to provide affordable housing when that infrastructure makes neighborhoods more expensive.

There could not be a better way to describe the construction of the 606 and the city’s lackluster leadership in addressing the displacement it caused. Whether it be specific infrastructure projects like the 606 or the broader agenda of encouraging highest and best uses, Jefferson holds that the responsibility for mitigating negative outcomes falls ultimately on the state. “There is a need for centralized, strategic, and long term planning at the city level.”102 Representative Schakowsky intends

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99 Ibid.
100 Frank Avellone, interview with author January 16, 2018.
102 Ibid.
something similar when she says that “I hope that [the ROOTS] model can be used across Chicago and beyond” (emphasis added).103

This perspective on implementing strategic planning where local action by convening is not enough is consistent with Communities United’s deliberative approach, which relies on consensus among multiple actors to rationalize actions at ever-larger scales. In Jefferson’s view, even the differences in approach and tactics between community organizations is subsumed within a higher strategic purpose that rhetorically parallels that of the arc from action by convening on a neighborhood scale to strategic planning at the city scale. In Jefferson’s view, confrontational groups like ATU strengthen the hand of convening organizations like Communities United because the threat of confrontation and bad press pushes elected officials, developers, and others to acquiesce to the less stringent demands of the convener. Communities United’s tactic to “negotiate and compromise in order to build the basis for a better future,”104 is strengthened by the presence of other groups that rely on the ‘sword’ or ‘go for the jugular’. Even when they are not invited to the convener’s table, Jefferson says that confrontational groups unwittingly participate in the process of open negotiation and the exchange of ideas towards a common purpose. Jefferson says that they push the convener to consider alternative viewpoints within the community. In Jefferson’s words, “everyone has a role to play.”105

The need for large scale strategic planning is clear in the affordability calculations for ROOTS units. Even with Fannie Mae’s discount and the Donation Tax Credits facilitated by CCLBA, affordability in the ROOTS program only reaches 80 percent of AMI. In a place like Albany Park, a working household might make $30,000 per year, which is well below 80 percent of AMI. Moreover, the fact that pre-existing renters in ROOTS buildings are able to pay their original rent amount actually decreases the affordability of other ROOTS units overall because CMHDC calculates affordability based on portfolio-wide cash flow.106 While Communities United preserved affordable housing by convening CMHDC, ECP, CCLBA, Fannie Mae, and others to create a novel program, the persistent affordability constraints suggest that a higher level of convening and coordination is necessary.

As such, the impact of the affordability of any single CMHDC unit on the affordability of the rest of the units is the same coordination problem that exists at the municipal level in terms of allocating municipal funding such as PEAR between different affordable housing projects. Yittayih Zelalem, who worked for years at community development corporations said that funding for affordable development has dried up.107 Just as coordination at ever-larger scales of governance is necessary to address Albany Park’s affordability crisis, the lack of funds at a central level inevitably trickles down to CMHDC’s affordability calculations within its portfolio. Whether the issue be within a single portfolio or between affordable developers across the entire city, Nick said that achieving community objectives “is not a matter of confrontation, but about distributing resources that are already there in a better way. However, this redistribution inevitably takes away funding from other worthy projects in other parts of the city, so ultimately it’s an issue of strategic, comprehensive planning.”108

103 Riley, “Chicago Renters View ‘ROOTS’ as Solution to Affordable Housing.”
105 Ibid.
107 Zelalem is Associate Professor at the University of Illinois at Chicago’s College of Urban Planning and Public Affairs; Yittayih Zelalem, interview with author, April 3, 2018.
The notion that everything is connected and that therefore all actions entail uncomfortable tradeoffs underlies the existential need for Jefferson’s idea of “centralized, strategic, and long term planning at the city level.”

Linares described the need for a comprehensive strategy to address displacement in Humboldt Park, in similarly comprehensive and networked terms: “When a displaced family moves to the suburbs, it means longer commute times, the need for more flex hours at work, reduced productivity at work, health issues, and pollution from transportation. If only the tax payers had put in a little extra subsidy to keep that person in the city and in their home, you could have prevented a host of negative consequences.”

The lack of strategic planning to make affordable housing more than a competitive race for tax credits, or to address the cascade of externalities when a family is displaced from Humboldt Park, is one of the motives for action by convening. This type of action mirrors the interdependent complexities of the challenges it seeks to address by bringing diverse actors together, each with a particular focus. The power of convening is the sum of these actors’ work, which on the local level can preserve some affordable units to prevent displacement in Albany Park, or stimulate thinking about how to mitigate the impact of the 606. At a more comprehensive citywide level, convening means coordinating between local agendas and action. Linares went on to describe the $90,000 in property tax LUCHA has had to raise recently for its affordable properties. Given the lack of state planning to keep people in Humboldt Park, Linares said, “that money should be going directly to our clients,” as opposed to a County and a City that builds amenities like the 606, raises property taxes, and then leaves community organizations to pick up the pieces.

When it was completed, City Hall touted the Englewood Whole Foods at 63rd and Halsted as the harbinger of economic development for a neighborhood suffering from out-migration, a result of a history of structural racism. Meanwhile, some local residents voiced concerns that the development would create gentrification and displacement. I met Jefferson for coffee there on March 27, 2018 before he went to a coalition meeting nearby and before I boarded the train to travel 15 miles back to the intersection at Kedzie and Lawrence to meet Poulos from 33rd Ward Working Families. We sat at the window drinking coffee, looking out across the newly paved development of chain stores and parking spaces. Across the street stand several squat office developments and an empty corner lot where a man is selling hot dogs out of an insulated cart. Jefferson told me what had happened the previous day: “I was at the City Council meeting where they approved nine billion dollars in tax credits for the O’Hare Airport expansion project. All the Aldermen were fighting for their people to be hired for the actual work. But the airport project is a city wide issue. And everyone’s fighting over crumbs.”

The absence of coordination between tax credits for projects like O’Hare and those for affordable housing creates an environment in which one’s next meal might be the crumbs in the City Council chamber. While City Council passed the PEAR program just a day later, it seemed like the O’Hare project would go forward just like many others without proper heed paid to its potential impacts, both good and bad.

109 Ibid.
110 Juan Carlos Linares, interview with author, January 22, 2018.
111 Ibid.
113 Larry Bennett coined the term “third city” to refer to changes in Chicago precipitated by Mayor Richard M. Daley’s development of the city’s service-oriented economy beginning in the early 1990s. This followed the ‘first city’ of industrial growth in the first half of the 20th century, and the ‘second city’ of structural deindustrialization in the second half of the 20th century. The third city signaled a radical change, entailing the construction of large public projects like Millennium Park and the Museum Campus, as well as the influx of educated and wealthy
Jefferson suggested convening at larger scales by creating coalitions who learn about shared interests in order to fight for each other along with greater state responsibility for comprehensive planning as alternatives to the race for breadcrumbs. The Keep Chicago Renting coalition brought neighborhood organizations together from all over the city to address the foreclosure crisis, and the ROOTS program brought a community organization, local renters, a developer, banks, elected officials, and others around a table to preserve affordable housing. As I walked from the Whole Foods to the Green Line station down the street, I saw that the first block in the other direction has not a single home. That’s about ten vacant lots. Ultimately, the Englewood Whole Foods did not trigger gentrification. Nor did it noticeably boost economic development. On this project too, it would seem, the city needed a more comprehensive plan.

residents into certain neighborhoods, while poorer areas emptied out. See, Larry Bennett, The Third City: Chicago and American Urbanism (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010).
Acting against the State: Action by Contesting

Moises Moreno, a housing organizer at the Pilsen Alliance in Chicago’s Pilsen neighborhood, was pouring over voter spreadsheets when I arrived at the Alliance’s office. The space is one large room in an old storefront on 18th Street with a vestibule entrance and large front-facing windows. Pilsen Alliance is only a dulceria, dentista, and panaderia away from the 18th Street Pink Line station, which houses a small window where you can buy churros – perhaps the only culinary establishment in the entire Chicago Transit Authority. Southerly light poured into Pilsen Alliance’s office even on that January day, illuminating the conference table where Moreno sat. It was two months until the March 20 Lift the Ban referendum, and Moreno was devising strategies to educate people on rent control and get out the vote across the 25th Ward’s diverse precincts. Large, multi-colored ward maps hung on the walls around the large space.

Moreno broke away from his work to talk to me about the Pilsen Alliance and his own story: “It was painful to leave when I got priced out of Pilsen. Coming back now to see the displacement that is happening is painful. This is our final fight – we have to stop the bleeding.” In order to stop the bleeding, the Pilsen Alliance has focused on contesting closed planning processes that impact the Mexican-American community. Moreno turned and pointed to a mural on the wall behind us. It read, ‘nothing about us without us is for us’. “That’s a truism for us,” he explained.

Action by contesting is directed against the actions of state representatives and institutions. The exemplary contester might have been Socrates who did not challenge the justice of the laws that put him to death, but rather the justices that interpreted them. Community organizations that act by contesting see in state mechanisms such as the legislature, planning boards, and democratic values more broadly the potential for justice. They therefore direct their contestation towards unjust gatekeepers and practices.

Contesting is premised on John Logan and Harvey Molotch’s argument that “the issues that reach public agendas...do so precisely because they are matters on which elites have, in effect, agreed to disagree...For all the pluralism Banfield...uncovered in Chicago, he found no disagreement with the idea that growth was good.” Action by contesting responds to the fact that the perceived ‘elites’ see ‘growth as good’ and ally themselves with gatekeepers in government to control what is left to the public to debate. Contesters do not exclusively focus on opposing individual projects or plans because those projects and plans come to communities pre-packaged by elites. Action by contesting focuses on the elites and their gatekeepers behind the projects and plans and, even more broadly, on the processes that those elites control.

Community organizations also contest the consensus among perceived ‘elites’ that ‘growth is good’. Contesters disrupt the ‘growth’ discourse on their own terms by seeking to redefine what growth means. When Chicago Alderman Burt Natarus told local residents that a new development in their neighborhood was a sign of gentrification, that it would displace people, and that these two things are “called progress,” a local community organization contested the development by redefining ‘progress’ as development that would benefit rather than displace the neighborhood’s current residents.

Since its founding during a Community Congress in 1998, the Pilsen Alliance has served as a popular platform for community members to address issues ranging from public school closures to pollution from a local coal-fired power plant to residential displacement to job creation. Throughout its twenty-year history, the Pilsen Alliance has contested established planning processes that have excluded community input. This chapter will describe how local conflicts over land use and development from the 1950s to the time of writing have shaped Pilsen Alliance’s strategy of action by contesting.

Contesting the Circle Campus

Pilsen is at the center of the Near West Side, an area that became home to German and Irish immigrants shortly after the City’s incorporation in 1838. It was just east of Pilsen where Ms. O’Leary’s mythologized cow kicked over the lantern that caused the Chicago Fire. This infamous story that conveniently blames the 1871 conflagration on a stereotypically irresponsible Irishwoman highlights the history of ethnic othering in Chicago. O’Leary and the fire conveniently exemplify the continuing marginalization of the area’s residents though the Irish, German, Bohemian, Greek, Italian, Jewish, African American, and Mexican presence.

By 1889, the year in which Jane Addams established the Hull House several blocks north of Pilsen to serve the area’s impoverished and densely packed residents, the Near West Side was home to Bohemians, Greeks, Italians, and Eastern European Jews. The Bohemians named the neighborhood Pilsen after their native Plzn. The intersection of Maxwell and Halsted streets between what is now Pilsen and the University of Illinois at Chicago campus was known as Jewtown. The nearby Taylor Street corridor was the workplace of both Al Capone as well as Frances Cabrini, who would be canonized as the first American Saint and lend her name to the public housing development several miles to the north built over the razed Italian settlement at Little Hell. By the 1920s, the Great Migration of African Americans from the South transformed the Near West Side, a part of which was renamed Black Bottom. At the same time, Mexicans began to arrive in Chicago in 1916 and settled, among other locations such as the far southeastern corner of the city, on the Near West Side. They found employment nearby as

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3 As cited earlier, this parallels Balakrishnan Rajagopal’s observation that, since the 1980s, social movements have been challenging inherited development discourse by redefining what development means and should look like. See, Balakrishnan Rajagopal, International Law From Below: Development, Social Movements, and Third World Resistance (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).
6 The Cabrini-Green public housing developments were located on Chicago’s Near North Side between downtown and the North Branch of the Chicago River. For a history of the Italian settlement that preceded the public housing development and its ultimate destruction, see Lawrence Vale, Purging the Poorest: Public Housing and the Design Politics of Twice-Cleared Communities (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013).
7 Fernandez, Brown in the Windy City, 63.
railroad workers. Burnham’s 1909 Plan of Chicago placed the proposed Civic Center and its massive open plazas near the densely settled corner of Halsted and Harrison, just north of Taylor Street. The Center was never built, though it hinted at things to come.

By the 1940s, the area was largely Italian with significant Mexican, African American, and Greek populations. The 1947 Illinois Blighted Areas Redevelopment Act allowed for the creation of Land Clearance Commissions with the power to exercise eminent domain in areas deemed to be ‘blighted’. The Near West Side came under scrutiny because of its majority-minority populations living in densely packed, old residences and the area’s immediate proximity to downtown. Like other communities such as the residents of East Humboldt Park who invited Saul Alinsky to help them form the Northwest Community Organization, the residents of the Near West Side organized to bend the opaque machinations of redevelopment to their benefit. Jane Addams’ nephew Eri Hulbert convened Italian residents in 1949 to establish the Near West Side Planning Board (NWSPB) that would “plan and effect legal foundations for basic land use and street requirements;...stimulate private and public rehabilitation and redevelopment according to plan; [and]...effect with present occupants, a stable, modern enduring Near West Side”. One year after the Board’s founding, NWSPB membership counted 128 Italians, 70 African Americans, 15 Mexicans, 5 Greeks, and 122 others. The Mexican American Council of Chicago, the Mexican Civic Committee of the West Side, the Mexican Methodist Church, the Manuel Perez American Legion Post 1017, and St. Francis of Assisi Church all participated in the Board’s work on behalf of the community. This forum was particularly important for Near West Side Mexicans and Mexican-Americans who were fighting for a foothold in a city and society that denied their immigrant community access to opportunity, political representation, and financial power that other white ethnic residents of the Near West Side, both past and contemporary, had enjoyed to varying degrees.

At one NWSPB meeting, an invited speaker from the city’s Office of Housing and Redevelopment told the audience that, “here you have tremendous resources. You have here not only commercial..., industrial, [and]...residential resources...but you have spiritual..., cultural..., [and] social resources...There is a direction to what you are doing”. When the City designated the entire Near West Side as ‘blighted’, the NWSPB, having left a positive impression on the Housing and Home Finance Agency through its joint work with the Near West Side Community Council, was able to negotiate to achieve a more targeted designation at the block-level.

The NWSPB did push for the ‘blighted’ designation of a larger swath of neighborhood around the intersection of Harrison and Halsted Streets. It is unclear whether this was a racially motivated campaign by Italian residents fearful that their neighborhood would become majority African American without government intervention, or whether other forces were at play. The proactive use of redevelopment and urban renewal by community organizations is often eclipsed by stories of communities fighting the

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10 Ed Marciniak, *Reviving an Inner City Community: The drama of urban change in East Humboldt Park in Chicago* (Chicago: Loyola University of Chicago, 1977), 19.
12 Ibid., 107.
13 Ibid., 106.
wrecking ball. The true narratives are more complex. By 1958, the community negotiated its inclusion in Illinois Project R-10. It encompassed plans for new affordable housing that would be made available to the area’s residents, along with a shopping center.\textsuperscript{15}

Two years later, with many of the buildings in the Harrison-Halsted Illinois Project R-10 area already demolished to make way for affordable housing, Mayor Daley suddenly considered a different direction. In a series of events that would play out over and again on the Near West Side up to the time of writing, the City scrapped the hard-won result of community involvement. Daley proposed the site to the University of Illinois, which accepted the offer in February of 1961 to build the University of Illinois at Chicago Circle Campus (UICC).\textsuperscript{16} UICC would be a degree-granting version of the temporary two-year branch of the University that was established on Navy Pier to educate returning soldiers as part of the G.I. Bill. Residents within the Illinois Project R-10 were told that they would not be returning to the renovated neighborhood they had originally been promised.\textsuperscript{17} The Circle Campus was named after the adjacent, newly constructed circular expressway interchange that connected the Eisenhower, Dan Ryan, and Kennedy Expressways, the construction of which had recently displaced many of the same residents that would lose their homes to UICC. The circular tangle of ramps had once been the proposed site for Daniel Burnham’s Civic Center and Plaza, which “was designed to instill life into a dying neighborhood as well as to remove a major cause of downtown congestion.”\textsuperscript{18} The idea may have inspired planners to locate the monumental interchange at the same location and build UICC next door for roughly the same purposes.\textsuperscript{19} A member of the faculty at the newly established campus “proudly noted [that] it was the first university to be named for a transportation feature since Oxford and Cambridge”.\textsuperscript{20}

Mike Royko wrote that the campus “wasn’t easy to build because thousands of families in the city’s oldest Italian neighborhood had to be uprooted and their homes and churches torn down.”\textsuperscript{21} The residents formed the Harrison-Halsted Community Group (HHCG) to resist the City’s surprise plan. Italian residents were particularly outraged by the decision because their community had raised $600,000 to rebuild the Holy Guardian Angel parish and school after it had been demolished for the construction of the nearby highway. The rebuilt facility was once again in the wrecking ball’s path.\textsuperscript{22} Approximately 4,800 Mexicans lived in the area that would become the Circle Campus. Some 600 Mexicans attended a protest in March of 1960 with signs reading “respeten nuestros hogares”.\textsuperscript{23}

Several women in the community took cases to the Cook County Circuit Court in opposition to the plan, but were ultimately unsuccessful.\textsuperscript{24} Several individual property owners in the area filed lawsuits for the loss of their property to no avail. The community as a whole then brought a case before a federal court arguing that, “the university’s construction would disrupt the neighborhood’s ‘ethnic character’”. The

\textsuperscript{15} Ibid., 109.
\textsuperscript{16} Ibid., 109-110.
\textsuperscript{17} Ibid., 115.
\textsuperscript{22} Fernandez, \textit{Brown in the Windy City}, 116.
\textsuperscript{23} ‘Respect our homes’. See, Fernandez, \textit{Brown in the Windy City}, 117.
\textsuperscript{24} As discussed in Chapter 4, community action has often been gendered, whether it be the Young Lords community health outreach work in Puerto Rican Lincoln Park, Florence Scala’s contestation of City projects on the Near West Side, or more recent work on education and environmental justice in Pilsen.
judge on the case, however, disagreed, “observing [that the argument]...smacked of ‘provincialism’ and could be used to defend racial segregation”. 25 Activists at present-day Pilsen Alliance that contest Near West Side development proposals for catering to higher-income households at the expense of the neighborhood’s Latino residents are often implicated in similar discourses in which they are labeled as anti-development,26 or ‘racist’.27 Royko wrote that the thousands of families in the city’s oldest Italian neighborhood “cried that they were betrayed because they had been promised they would stay. But [Mayor Daley] built it.”28

A different community farther west was sad to see the residents of the Near West Side fail to thwart the UICC plans, but not out of any care for the residents who would be displaced. The residents of Garfield Park on the West Side had been inspired by the community-backed and University of Chicago-led urban renewal initiative in Hyde Park that used new post-War laws and funding mechanisms to insulate the campus and adjacent residential area from the growing African American population in and around the neighborhood.29 Many African American households had moved to Garfield Park after their neighborhoods in other parts of the city were destroyed by highway construction.30 The largely white residents of Garfield Park launched a similar campaign to convince the University of Illinois trustees and Mayor Daley to locate the new campus in their neighborhood, hoping that it would have a similarly segregating effect as the University of Chicago experience in Hyde Park.31 The Mayor came down against the neighbors’ proposal, though not for its ‘provincialism’ or ‘defense of racial segregation’. Rather, the Daley’s vision for urban renewal, inspired and influenced by that of the business community’s Central Area Committee, began in the Loop and worked its way outward. The jump all the way to Garfield Park did not fit the plan. The struggles of Near West Side residents against the UICC project, the Garfield Park residents’ efforts to attract the development to their neighborhood, the racialized reasons for both these initiatives, and the Mayor’s final decision highlights the varied nature of community action at cross purposes.

25 Fernandez, Brown in the Windy City, 122.
26 John Betancur, interview with author, January 5, 2018.
27 While reporters have not generally entertained accusations of Latino racism against white residents in gentrifying neighborhoods, the sentiment often comes up in comments sections on articles that discuss anti-gentrification campaigns in Pilsen. One reader commented on an article that quoted Alderman Danny Solis as defending his development policies in Pilsen against accusations of ethnic cleansing by responding, “I remember ethnic cleansing in Pilsen. We were among the eastern europeans [sic] who lived in pilsen [sic] before it changed.” The reader then made a parallel between what they reported to be the past intimidation of Eastern Europeans by Latino residents and current campaigns to block the construction of apartments not catering to the area’s contemporary lower-income Latino population. See, Linda Lutton, “Wil Development Bury the Barrio?” Chicago Reader. April 23, 1998.
28 Royko. Boss, 12.
31 Garfield Park residents “hoped that placing the campus in the Park would reduce the impetus of the black movement into the area, both by serving as a barrier and by attracting upper-income and professional residents from the University, thereby maintaining or raising land values...This was the only community in any of the sites considered that actively sought the campus.” Rosen, Decision-Making Chicago-Style, 67. See also, Seligman, Block by Block, 100.
The Circle Campus and the nearby highway construction pushed Mexican households into what would become the barrios of Little Village and Pilsen. Mexican community organizations proliferated from 1968 to 1974 in their newfound home south of the elevated rail yards at 16th Street. They drew on ongoing struggles against opaque, top-down planning initiatives in Chicago as well as the Chicano movement in other parts of the United States. The Alianza Latino-Americana para el Adelanto Social (ALAS) was one of the first major Mexican groups to become active in Pilsen. It regularly met at Howell House, a long-standing settlement house that traditionally served the Central and Eastern European residents of the neighborhood. Local parents organized around issues of school equality, and students organized walkouts and wrote a “Latin American student Manifesto”.33

During the 1970s, Saul Alinsky and the Industrial Areas Foundation pressured white leadership to relinquish its hold on the Pilsen Neighbors Community Council (PNCC), and groups such as the Asociación pro Derechos Obreros (APO) and the Centro de Acción Social Autónomo – Hermandad General de Trabajadores (CASA-HGT) took root in Pilsen. APO member Magda Ramírez-Castañeda and her colleague Yenelli Flores organized demonstrations against the Chicago Transit Authority and commandeered its buses to protest the CTA’s discrimination against Latinos in the 1970s. In 1972, the La Raza Unida Party, comprised of members of the Pilsen Comité and CASA-HGT, ran a Mexican American candidate for Congress.37

The Chicano movement enlivened the activism on 18th Street, which, like the Young Lords Organization that formed in Lincoln Park around the same time, “used the language of militancy, self-determination, social justice, and cultural pride to claim a space...literally and figuratively.”38 The push for self-determination, based on parallels between the colonization and dispossession of Mexican territory and peoples in what is now the American West and the dismissal of the claims of Mexican communities in large cities like Chicago, inspired the local takeover of institutions such as Howell House and the change in leadership at PNCC. Howell House was soon renamed Casa Aztlán and adorned with symbols of Mexican sovereignty and popular struggle such as a mural of Emiliano Zapata. Like the Young Lords’ efforts to provide community service in Lincoln Park, Pilsen gangs called a truce and opened the free Benito Juárez Health Clinic inside Casa Aztlán.39

Until the 1970s, Mexican Americans were politically invisible due to lack of representation at City Hall. This was in part because of the lack of a Mexican arm of the Democratic Machine. Anti-poverty funds

32 In 1955, the confluence of three highways near downtown blasted through the Near West Side. One of the highways, the Congress Expressway (Dwight D. Eisenhower Expressway), removed 16,000 families during its construction. Fernandez, Brown in the Windy City, 106-107.
33 Fernandez, Brown in the Windy City, 208.
35 “The Pilsen network of activists that came to be known as the Comité had various names including the Committee in Support of the Farah Strikers and, later, the Maria Saucedo Committee. It developed gradually sometime between 1972 and 1973 as an informal network of friends and activists. See, Leonard G. Ramírez et. al., Chicanas of 18th Street: Narratives of a Movement from Latino Chicago (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2011), 13.
38 Ibid., 210.
39 Ibid., 227
that trickled to the Black submachine never made it to Mexican communities. The historic exclusion of Mexican Americans from political process in Chicago combined with particular city initiatives and community betrayals such as the Circle Campus to create the imperative to contest and break open the locked box of city policy and decision-making.

Contesting continued

The history of large development plans on the Near West Side has inspired contestation. The anti-displacement activism of the NWSPB and HHCG; the self-determination radicalism of CASA, the APO, and the myriad other groups of the 1960s and 1970s; and the Pilsen Alliance’s contemporary activism promoting public process and transparency at their root a contestational stance towards top-down plans foisted upon residents. The antagonists also share a common pedigree. It was Mayor Richard J. Daley who created the Democratic Machine, scrapped Illinois Project R-10, and displaced thousands of residents with the Circle Campus. Daley’s son, Richard M. Daley, became Mayor in 1989 and likewise promoted large projects including an expansion of UIC that met community protest.

In 1996, Mayor Richard M. Daley appointed Danny Solis as Alderman of the 25th Ward and President Pro Tempore of the City Council after Alderman Ambrosio Medrano pleaded guilty to corruption charges and vacated the seat. Solis lived in the 1st Ward when Daley appointed him as Alderman in 1996. He subsequently moved into the 25th Ward, albeit only six houses from its northernmost border, creating a sense of alienation among residents living further south in Pilsen. Moreover, Solis had backed Mayor Daley’s decision to close Maxwell Street Market, part of an urban renewal project described below that cost approximately 100 Mexican-American workers their jobs. Betancur explains that Solis’ former community organization, UNO, allied with the Eighteenth Street Development Corporation in the early 2000s to take a moderate if not positive stance towards changes to the ethnic make-up of Pilsen. While Solis boasted an impressive resume including service as the Executive Director of the PNCC, many increasingly saw him as the local representative of a dark history dating to the Civic Center proposal of 1909. When Daley first appointed Solis, John Kass hinted at what was to come:

“Daley operatives believe that the white ethnic-Latino political coalition will maintain the City Hall status quo for years. And they see Mexican-American political stability as critical as the

40 The organizations also found ways around the constraints of patronage, just as the Community Action Programs were eventually able to function independently on Paseo Boricua in the late 1960s and 1970s leading up to the establishment of LUCHA. El Centro de la Causa, a Pilsen social service institution, bypassed traditional patronage channels to create community-controlled projects with federal and state funding such as the Chicano Mental Health Training Program (CMHTP). The Centro also obtained $75,000 to launch a demonstration project called Servicios Sociales del Barrio, which provided social services to families and incorporated a research component. See, Fernandez, Brown in the Windy City, 231.

41 Fernandez, Brown in the Windy City, 232.


Southwest Side undergoes rapid racial change. Senior Daley political advisers said it was Solis’ ability to deal with other Southwest Side political camps that helped seal the aldermanic job."

Chicago political tradition gave Solis the power to ‘deal’ with more than just political camps in his territory to maintain the status quo. While Mayor Richard J. Daley had consolidated his machine by curtailing aldermanic power during the 1950s, Aldermen retained a significant degree of independence in deciding routine zoning changes in their wards. An Alderman’s ability to review and pass zoning changes was a significant component of the office’s power. Even though all zoning changes ultimately go before a vote of the City Council, it is rare for Aldermen to oppose a colleague’s initiative.46 Whether Solis used his power to maintain City Hall’s ‘status quo’ or to ‘deal’ with local camps by offering concessions, and whether the answer to that question is good or bad, depends on who you ask. Many Pilsen residents, for their part, would contest the Alderman’s power for its role in what many see as unilateral development in and around the neighborhood.

In the mid-1990s, UIC announced plans to expand southward from the Circle Campus and over Maxwell Street, just north of Pilsen. The project would replace what remained of the historic Maxwell Street Market, once called Jewtown and Black Bottom, with 68 acres of townhouses, midrise residences, dormitories, academic buildings, shops, restaurants, parking facilities, and parks.47 The project was designed to bring in at least 1,600 residents, and the units were projected to cost $198,000, double that of the average Pilsen home.48 The 700 million dollar South Campus expansion would be built by the South Campus Development Team, a joint venture company comprised of Mesirow Stein Real Estate Inc., Harlem Irving Cos., and New Frontier Corporation. Richard Stein of Mesirow Stein Real Estate Inc. said that the project, dubbed University Village, would “tie together two existing neighborhoods – Pilsen to the south and Little Italy to the north”.49 It was the Circle Campus that had disconnected the two neighborhoods.

In the eyes of many Pilsen residents, the University Village plan was a repetition of history. As with Daley’s scrapping of the Illinois Project R-10 in 1960, Moreno said of the University Village proposal that, “the Pilsen residents never got any notice nor where they consulted on the Maxwell Street project.”50 Alejandra Ibañez, Pilsen Alliance’s first Executive Director, called it ‘University Pillage’.51 In what would become a pattern, the private South Campus Development Team donated a sum of $32,650 to Solis’ 25th Ward Regular Democratic Organization.52 As plans for the destruction of the Maxwell Street Market developed, a shop owner said that “I had faith in the system…I had faith we could work things out. I don’t anymore. In retrospect I would tend toward radical politics”.53

48 Lutton, “Will Development Burry the Barrio?”
49 Handley, “New village on campus.”
52 Most donations were in increments of $1,000 or $2,500 at intervals of five to eight months. South Campus Development Team LLC donated to the 25th Ward Regular Democratic Organization 13 times from 2000 to 2008.
Legacy of Displacement: Development on the Near West Side, 1955 - Present
While the University created a South Expansion Community Committee to give community leaders in surrounding neighborhoods a voice in the University Village project, Committee members felt excluded from decision-making. Just as Moreno described that residents never received notice of the University Village project before the plans were prepared, Carmen Velasquez, who represented the Alivio Medical Center on the Committee, read in a Monday edition of the Sun Times that the Development Team would double the number of homes planned for University Village, though nothing of the sort had been mentioned at the Committee’s meeting on the previous Friday.\(^{54}\) The pattern of residents learning about large development projects or of significant changes to existing proposals from media stories or chance encounters is not unusual in Pilsen.

In 1999, the City designated the Roosevelt/Union Tax Increment Financing (TIF) district to raise 50 million dollars for the construction of University Village.\(^{55}\) Tax Incremental Financing can be used in ‘blighted’ areas that would not be redeveloped ‘but for’ the use of TIF. The initial assessed property values within the TIF district serve as a baseline against which increases to value are measured. Those increases are designated for projects within the district.\(^{56}\) TIF has been described as “one of the most powerful tools that municipal governments have for fostering and facilitating market driven urban renewal.”\(^{57}\)

When the Roosevelt/Union TIF district was designated, activists in Pilsen had recently heard about a lawsuit in the Village of Addison, Illinois. The plaintiffs alleged that the locality violated the Fair Housing Act of 1968 by creating TIF districts in two of the Village’s Hispanic residential communities “with the intent of reducing the Hispanic population and discouraging future Hispanic settlement”.\(^{58}\) The City then discussed creating a Pilsen TIF to redevelop the Pilsen Industrial Corridor running along the southern border of the neighborhood, “as a planned and cohesive industrial and employment district providing sites for a wide range of land uses, including manufacturing, distribution, assembly, warehousing and research and development uses.”\(^{59}\) Pilsen residents said “remember Addison” to rally against both the City’s specific TIF plans and the unilateral use of potentially discriminatory development tools in general.\(^{60}\) Because TIFs allow the city to use eminent domain for development projects, the community also used “remember Taylor Street” to rally opposition to the plan, recalling Mayor Richard J. Daley’s...

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\(^{54}\) Lutton, “Will Development Burry the Barrio?”

\(^{55}\) City of Chicago and the Board of Trustees of the University of Illinois, “The Board of Trustees of the University of Illinois, on Behalf of its Chicago Campus (South Campus Development Project): Redevelopment Agreement” January 11, 2000.; Mae Rice, “Can Anyone Stop Pilsen from Gentrifying?” *Chicagoist*, June 28, 2016.


\(^{57}\) Lutton, “Will Development Burry the Barrio?”
construction of the Circle Campus over the Taylor Street neighborhood that displaced 7,000 people, 16 percent of them Mexican.\textsuperscript{61}

In response to the TIF proposals, Pilsen residents turned to what the Maxwell Street shop owner might have had in mind when she mentioned ‘radical politics’. As the Community Development Commission (CDC) considered enacting the Pilsen TIF, Pilsen residents went downtown to protest at City Hall. Carlos Arango, the executive director of Casa Aztlan, explained at one such protest that “it’s not that residents are against progress in the community...but...it has to be a progress that’s going to benefit everyone. It has to be a progress in which residents are included and in which they can express their interests and their necessities.” Referring to the University of Chicago’s rapid expansion into surrounding neighborhoods on the City’s South Side, Arango continued, “we don’t want to see...the University of Chicago in Pilsen. The only thing that type of development has done is displace people.”\textsuperscript{62} Later that day, as the CDC chair announced the first order of business, the president of the board of the PNCC interrupted to say, “please take note, members of the CDC...that there are 100 Pilsen residents here and businesspersons who oppose the proposed Pilsen industrial TIF. Just take note.”\textsuperscript{63} During the proceedings, residents shouted, “we reside in the community. We decide our future!”\textsuperscript{64}

Despite community protest, the city designated the 23-year Pilsen Industrial TIF in 1998 to cover 907 acres on both sides of the Chicago River. The TIF’s purpose was to retain industrial jobs, stating that, “49.7% of the private sector employment in zip code 60608 is in manufacturing and wholesale trade...maintenance of this industrial job base is critical to the economic well-being of the area and to the city.”\textsuperscript{65} Only 12 TIFs were designated in Chicago between the passage of the Illinois Tax Increment Allocation Act in 1977 and the election of Richard M. Daley as mayor in 1989. Daley, however, used TIFs extensively and, by the mid-2000s, it was estimated that 16 percent of the city’s tax base and up to a third of its territory was covered by TIF districts.\textsuperscript{66} Like other TIFs, the Pilsen Tax Increment Financing Redevelopment Project Area was “part of [a]...strategy to encourage managed growth and stimulate private investment within the Pilsen Community....”\textsuperscript{67}

However clear the Pilsen TIF’s purpose seemed, the community remained concerned over the TIF’s designation and use. While community pressure like the protest at City Hall convinced Solis to exclude commercial corridors from the Pilsen industrial TIF, there was nothing to prevent future amendments to the district’s boundaries. Moreover, local residents have no formal say over how TIF dollars are spent in Chicago. There was also nothing to prevent new infrastructure built with Pilsen industrial TIF money or a change in the real estate market from attracting upscale residential construction to the area, so long as the Solis would support a zoning change to allow non-industrial projects on industrial land. Many industrial facilities in Pilsen are situated on residential parcels, making the situation even more tenuous. Finally, TIF money can be spent in adjacent TIFs, and the proliferation of TIFs under the Daley administration meant that incremental tax revenue raised in Pilsen could actually be spent in up to three

\textsuperscript{61} Many of the displaced households relocated to Pilsen, ingraining the history of displacement at the hands of the City into the community’s collective memory. Lutton, “Will Development Burry the Barrio?”

\textsuperscript{62} Lutton, “Will Development Burry the Barrio?”

\textsuperscript{63} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{64} Ibid.


\textsuperscript{66} “Tax Increment Financing,” 7-9.

adjacent districts. While the Pilsen TIF would raise money for projects in the local industrial sector, there would be no way for the community to ensure that the money raised would ever be used for that purpose, or whether the money raised from Pilsen tax payers would ever be spent in the community at all.

The Pilsen TIF and the University Village heightened the community’s concern over large scale planning projects, the exclusion of community residents from decision-making, and the impacts these initiatives would have on the neighborhood. In response, Pilsen residents and community organizations convened a Community Congress in 1998 that brought together “remnants” of the 1968-1974 Pilsen radicalism at a time when the energy of the grassroots coalition convened by the likes of the YLO of Humboldt Park that elected Mayor Harold Washington in 1983 and 1987 was fading. The Congress set forth a community plan that, among other things, provided for the foundation of the Pilsen Alliance.

The Pilsen and Roosevelt/Union TIFs along with the University Village project contributed to local concerns over land use, large developments, public process, and community input that stretch back decades to the Circle Campus and the radical ferment of the 1960s and 70s. Over the next twenty years, Pilsen Alliance would contest the exclusive nature of decision making on local developments by advocating for open discussion and community input on large projects in Pilsen.

**Contesting Concord Homes**

As University Village broke ground, the growth of Mayor Daley’s ‘development state’ boosted real estate markets around downtown, increasing pressure on Pilsen’s lower-income residents. The Pilsen Alliance’s focus on contesting the opaque nature of the City’s approval of developments in and around Pilsen became more urgent as these projects priced families out of the neighborhood. The corner of 18th and Peoria Streets sits within the Pilsen TIF and approximately one block from the southern edge of University Village. The series of development proposals for this site from 2003 through the time of writing and Pilsen Alliance’s approach to opening closed negotiations around those proposals exemplifies Pilsen Alliance’s strategy of contestation. The intersection’s location at the geographical nexus of the Pilsen TIF and University Village, the latter having grown directly out of Mayor Daley’s Circle Campus project, links Pilsen Alliance’s current contestation and the debate over community input on development decisions with parallel historical struggles.

Wholesale fruit distribution warehouses and the manufacturing plant of the Tool and Engineering Company occupied the blocks on either side of Peoria Street between 18th and 16th Streets in 2003. Even though the buildings were located within the Pilsen TIF that was designated to maintain an “industrial job base...critical to the economic well-being of the area...,” the booming residential real estate market created an appealing alternative. In May 2003, Concord Homes Inc. proposed a development that would include 132 one- and two-bedroom condominiums in 13 buildings across the

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68 Lutton, “Will Development Burry the Barrio?”
70 The Tool and Engineering Company closed its manufacturing plant in 2002.
Each two bedroom would cost $280,000, far more expensive than existing units in the area and unaffordable to most Pilsen residents.  

Given the size and centrality of the proposed development, Pilsen residents learned about Concord Homes according to the precedent set by past projects of its scope – by chance and immediately before implementation. Victoria Romero, a member of Pilsen Alliance’s board at the time, told Chicago Tribune reporter Gina Kim that learning about Concord Homes “was a fluke...One of the people in one of our supporting agencies happened to be at a City Council meeting and heard about the proposal.”  

In response, the Pilsen Alliance developed a strategy to contest the project and organized 14 organizations into the Coalition of Pilsen Residents and Community Agencies. The Coalition informed community members, other organizations, and churches about the Concord Homes proposal and sought to organize against it. During the summer of 2003, the Coalition petitioned the Alderman, the attorney for Concord Homes Inc., and the Chair of Chicago’s Zoning Committee to stop the project. According to Pilsen Alliance’s Executive Director at the time, Alejandra Ibañez, this work was part of the Alliance’s broader popular education campaign on TIFs and public policy. The Pilsen Alliance team “worked at Whittier Elementary, so that parents could build a broader understanding of public policy [including TIFs] not as something abstract, but as something that would directly impact their children’s school.” Now that the Pilsen TIF was a reality, it needed to be understood not “just as something ‘bad’, but as a policy tool that could be used for good or bad depending on what the community pressured the public officials to do with it.” The education campaign, “created an awareness of the connection between TIF dollars, Solis, the school, and city power.”  

Over the summer of 2003, the Pilsen Alliance created the Pilsen Is Not For Sale Campaign (PN4S) to contest Concord Homes. PN4S literature described the development as “not affordable to families in the Pilsen community,” and pointed out that the proposed condominium units were “too small to provide adequate housing for large Pilsen families [and that the development was] residential while being in an area designated for industrial developments to create needed jobs in Pilsen.” The Coalition also contested what it perceived as an exclusionary community engagement process by demanding a say. Solis ‘dealt’ with the opposing camps in August of 2003 by calling a community meeting with Concord Homes Inc. and approximately 150 residents and representatives from local organizations. The residents and organizations presented a statement of demands:  

The proposed development does not benefit the community and, therefore, is not supported by the Coalition.  
1. The Coalition demands that Alderman Solis end all procedures for Concord Homes’ proposed development  
2. The Coalition will follow up with Alderman Solis to formalize his position.  

73 John Betancur, “Gentrification before Gentrification?”  
76 John Betancur, “Gentrification before Gentrification?”  
77 Alejandra Ibañez, interview with author, February 5, 2018.  
79 Euan Hague, “18th and Peoria.”  
80 Cited in John Betancur, “Gentrification before Gentrification?”
In September of 2003, Solis responded to the Coalition’s demands, saying that he would no longer consider the Concord Homes project due to lack of community support. The development was called off.\textsuperscript{81} Reflecting on this victory and other early Pilsen Alliance campaigns, Ibañez said, “the key was to move people from a personal level. Many immigrants and undocumented people felt they didn’t have a voice because they could not participate in electoral politics. Moving people from a personal level meant getting them to engage at the public level in community-wide activism.”\textsuperscript{82} By mobilizing a community to contest closed-door development politics, the Pilsen Alliance had created a model that would challenge a decades-long history of top-down planning on the Near West Side.

Pilsen Alliance’s contestation strategy relied on what Winifred Curran, an Associate Professor at DePaul University’s Department of Geography, describes as “shedding daylight on things”. In the first several years of its existence, the Pilsen Alliance disrupted the exclusive Concord Homes development process by creating a coalition, holding community discussions, presenting a public list of demands, and engaging in popular education. At around the same time, Pilsen Alliance organizers approached DePaul University’s Steans Center for Community-Based Service Learning to forge a learning partnership in order to more systematically ‘shed daylight’ on the impact of development controls such as TIFs and zoning ordinances.\textsuperscript{83} The partnership materialized in January of 2004 with a Pilsen-focused community-based service learning curriculum in GEO133, an introductory urban geography course taught alternately by Professor Curran and her colleague, Professor Euan Hague.\textsuperscript{84}

In 2004, the Pilsen Alliance was primarily concerned with the impact of the Pilsen TIF district on property values, development, and displacement. Hague and Curran instructed the students in GEO133 to examine property assessed values within and outside of the TIF boundaries, but found no significant relationship. Further investigation revealed that differences in land use were more important in determining changes in property assessed value, with residential parcels appreciating faster than industrial parcels. During the 2004-2005 school year, Hague and Curran adjusted the pedagogical approach, assigning students to particular blocks in Pilsen to collect parcel and building information from the City of Chicago, the Cook County Assessor’s and Treasurer’s offices, City News Chicago, and the Chicago Housing Authority. By 2006, two years after the partnership began, the students’ work allowed Hague and Curran to develop a database of parcel and building information including data on zoning, which formed the basis of the Pilsen Building Inventory Project. In 2008, the professors and their partners published \textit{Contested Chicago: Pilsen and Gentrification}, which highlighted findings from the partnership.\textsuperscript{85} This work contributed to Pilsen Alliance’s campaign to raise awareness in the

\textsuperscript{81} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{82} Alejandra Ibañez, interview with author, February 5, 2018.
The rationale behind this community-based service learning (CbSL) partnership was to provide Pilsen Alliance with information for the development of future campaigns and to challenge students’ understanding of urban issues through field research. The CbSL approach aligned with the Alliance’s focus on contesting current practices by ‘shedding daylight’. For the students, GEO133 opened up new ways of understanding the city. Hague recounted that “one student expressed being confused by the declining real estate values on her block and asked what might be causing that….we urged her to come up with her own theory, arguing that there was no one who knew more about this particular block that she did….Ultimate...
gentrification?"94 The referendum garnered 75 percent of the vote. Solis, however, announced through an official at a community meeting in May, 2006 that he would not sponsor any down zoning ordinances for the neighborhood.95

Contesting closed doors

The closed-door process leading up to Victoria Romero’s surprise discovery of the Concord Homes project and Hague and Curran’s research findings further justified the Pilsen Alliance’s focus on contesting unilateral planning decisions made on behalf of Pilsen without community participation. As a result, the Coalition of Pilsen Residents and Community Agencies decided in 2003 to push for the establishment of a community zoning board that would review applications for zoning changes and large projects.96 The Coalition worked with Pilsen Alliance to get the 300 signatures required to hold a non-binding ballot initiative on the topic. The Pilsen Alliance actually collected 700 signatures to put the question on the ballot, and approximately 30 core members of the Coalition continued door knocking over weekends to register voters ahead of the election.97

In the primary of March, 2004, Pilsen residents voted on the question, “Shall the alderman hold open public meetings on zoning changes in Pilsen?” The measure passed with 95 percent of the vote.98 Alderman Danny Solis responded to the results, doth protesting, “it’s a no-brainer...[t]he referendum is almost like, ‘Should mothers take care of their children?’ The answer to that is yes.”99 Public discussions on zoning changes seemed all the more important to Pilsen residents because the 25th Ward is large, winding, and diverse. It includes Pilsen, but also Chinatown, University Village, and higher-income income areas near the edge of the Loop. The Coalition felt it had to demand a say in Solis’ zoning decisions, which, for a number of reasons such as the economic and social diversity of the 25th Ward, might not address their local concerns.

Eight months later, Solis inaugurated the 19-member Pilsen Community Zoning Board (PCZB) to provide advisory opinions on zoning changes before referral to the City of Chicago’s Committee on Zoning.100 A longtime Pilsen Environmental Rights and Reform Organization (PERRO) organizer, Jerry Mead-Lucero, said that “we originally wanted [the PCZB] to be a board that would actually be somewhat binding, that we would review these proposals and that we would actually be able to veto them if we needed to....” But the prospect of legally binding community input “was...a non-starter [with Solis], and so what we ended up with was this advisory board. but at least it was a step forward – we thought at least, if we

94 Curran and Hague, Contested Chicago, 43.
96 Betancur, “Gentrification before Gentrification?”
97 Kim, “Pilsen residents win vote on zoning.”
98 Betancur, “Gentrification before Gentrification?” 43; Kim, “Pilsen residents win vote on zoning.”
99 Kim, “Pilsen residents win vote on zoning.”
100 The PCZB was comprised of members from the Pilsen Alliance, Alivio Medical Center (AMC), The Resurrection Project (TRP), the Pilsen Neighbors Community Council (PNCC), the Eighteenth Street Development Corporation (ESDC), Mujeres Latinas en Acción, Pros Arts (also known as Ele Varte), Pilsen Environmental Rights and Reform Organization (PERRO), and several individual community members. See Bridget Newsham, “Who Pulls the Strings on the PLUC? Pilsen’s Land Use Committee draws hear for cozy relationship with its alderman,” South Side Weekly, February 8, 2018.; Kim, “Pilsen residents win vote on zoning.”; Curran, Hague and Gill, “Practicing Active Learning,” 86.
made it clear to the alderman that there was going to be a big community fight behind one of these proposals, that would be something worthwhile, and at least we’d have the information about what was happening so that we could organize around it.”

Even without legal authority, access to information and ‘daylighting’ could incite community contestation of development proposals.

The Pilsen Alliance had successfully used the ballot initiative to pressure Solis into creating a forum for public input on closed-door development proposals. This was significant considering the history of under-the-table projects like the Circle Campus, University Village, and Concord Homes. Then Executive Director of Pilsen Alliance Alejandra Ibañez said that, “engagement in electoral processes has its limits because of the percentage of non-citizens.” However, like the mothers with whom she worked to turn personal concern for their children’s schooling into public power to challenge the city’s use of TIF money and operation of public schools, Ibañez said that “when people vote on stuff that is on their block, people turn out to vote.” She summarized by describing that the referendum and the PCZB “is an organizing tool and a first step in getting people involved.”

The PCZB would also provide an outlet for the information in Hague and Curran’s Pilsen Building Inventory. The Pilsen Alliance asked the Professors for detailed, building-level data on zoning status, building permits, taxes, property values, sales, and ownership to inform PCZB deliberations. By 2006, the CbSL partnership’s “extensive and systematic community mapping project...[and] database of current building conditions and publicly available information on building permits, property taxes, assessed values, property sales and ownership” contained information on 5002 lots and 4763 buildings.

**Contesting Chantico Lofts**

The first major development to come before the PCZB was Lipe Properties’ 2004 Chantico Lofts. Steve Lipe purchased the Lerner Box Company factory at 1061 W. 16th Street in December, 2004 and named his proposed development the Timber Lofts Apartments. While Pilsen’s RT-4 residential zoning would have allowed Lipe to develop the property into condominiums without a zoning change or community input, the developer sought a zoning variance to RM-5 to allow for a higher density project. PCZB’s members split. The Resurrection Project (TRP, an affordable housing developer) and Eighteenth Street Development Corporation (ESDC) supported the development, while the Pilsen Alliance and PERRO opposed it in favor of a commercial project designed to generate local jobs.

The controversy on the PCZB peaked during a public meeting in February of 2005. Pilsen Alliance and PERRO representatives raised concerns over affordability and green space. Victoria Romero recalled that “we had all these tough questions for [the developer].” Lipe did not address the tough questions and instead presented what he considered concessions such as changing the name of the project to Chantico

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101 Newsham, “Who Pulls the Strings on the PLUC?”
103 Betancur, “Gentrification before Gentrification?” 44.
104 Curran, Hague and Gill, “Practicing Active Learning,” 86.
105 Winifred Curran and Euan Hague, “The Pilsen Building Inventory Project.”
Lofts after an Aztec goddess, painting the window frames red to conform with what he characterized as Mexican aesthetic taste, and installing a mural of the Virgin of Guadalupe. Ibañez recalled Lipe’s proposal as an attempt to “coopt our culture” that clearly missed the critical, underlying issue of the community’s economic and social concerns, as well as the underlying concern over community input and process.108 Romero explained that “when we started opposing the development, the alderman stated publicly at the meeting that he would no longer support us...he said we had made a mockery of the developer.”109

Shortly after the February meeting, it came to light that Lipe had legally contributed to Solis’ aldermanic reelection campaign, heightening concern that even accepted and legal forms of doing business and politicking were hedging out community input.110 This discovery also heightened the sensation that the developer was not engaging in a meaningful process with the newly created PCZB but rather making ersatz proposals that dodged the substantive question of land use and affordability, while appearing to have tried to sidestep critical scrutiny by forming a relationship with Solis. The City of Chicago Zoning Board’s hearing on Lipe’s RM-5 variance request confirmed the community’s sensation in tone and substance. At the meeting, Alderman Bernard Stone (50th Ward) told the Pilsen residents giving testimony that “we dictate the rules. We write the rules and you don’t answer me. We tell you.”111 The Board granted Lipe his variance.

Solis approved Chantico Lofts, disbanded the PCZB, and replaced it with the Pilsen Planning Committee (PPC). PCZB members received letters from the Alderman explaining that the new body would be more “objective” and “professional”.112 The PPC was comprised of all the organizations that supported the Chantico Lofts development, namely TRP, PNCC, ESDC, and the Alivio Medical Center. Maria Balderas, a community member who had participated in the PCZB ballot initiative and been a member of the PCZB said that when Solis disbanded the Board, “those of us who advocated for this body and for this advisory board, we were literally kicked out”.113 Mead-Lucero of PERRO said of the PPC that, “as far as I’m concerned, that was basically the end of the effort. From that point on, it was just a rubber stamp for the alderman, and it wasn’t really going to make much of a difference.”114

The PPC’s role as a zoning arbiter lasted for less than a year. It met for the first time on November 22, 2005,115 and held its last such meeting in August of 2006, when it designated its members as constituents of the Pilsen Land Use Committee (PLUC). The PLUC was tasked with overseeing a new affordable housing policy laid out in the 2006 Quality of Life Plan. The policy doubled Chicago’s Affordable Requirement’s Ordinance in Pilsen, suggesting that 21 percent of units in all new residential developments over a certain size within the neighborhood be affordable to households earning between 60 and 85 percent of Area Median Income.116 The PLUC’s stated mission was to ensure, “that any new

109 Newsham, “Who Pulls the Strings on the PLUC?”
113 Newsham, “Who Pulls the Strings on the PLUC?”
114 Ibid.
116 Newsham, “Who Pulls the Strings on the PLUC?”
residential developments are carried out in a balanced manner so that the residents in Pilsen have the opportunity to live in these new developments.\textsuperscript{117} In the eyes of the community organizations that Solis excused from the PCZB, the PLUC was more of the same.\textsuperscript{118}

The 2006 Quality of Life Plan was the first document required from Pilsen community organizations as part of their participation in the New Communities Program (NCP), established to strengthen neighborhoods, “in the path of gentrification”. TRP led Pilsen’s participation in the NCP. TRP’s Chief Executive Officer, Raul Raymundo, was also chairman of the PLUC.\textsuperscript{119} This connection cemented the feeling among former PCZB members that the dissolution of that body had concentrated decision-making power in the hands of several Solis-approved individuals and organizations. Romero summarized the insular and independent nature of the select few actors allowed to formally participate in the planning process, saying that, “all members of [the PLUC]...need aldermanic approval for their most important programs. The Resurrection Project needs Solis to approve any zoning changes for upcoming development, Pilsen Neighbors needs permits for their largest festival of the year, Fiesta Del Sol. Without Solis’ grace, they are paralyzed.”\textsuperscript{120}

Raymundo touted the PLUC’s ‘balanced’ work in a public announcement on the TRP’s website by citing the Committee’s rejection of a 500-unit development at 18th and Peoria Streets for being too dense and its approval of a 99-unit development at 1414 W. 21st Street that did not meet the 21 percent affordability requirements, but where the PLUC was able to get the developer to expand the playing field at nearby Benito Juarez High School.\textsuperscript{121} The Pilsen Alliance and other former members of the disbanded PCZB, however, saw in these decisions an alarming lack of transparency. In this exclusive environment, dissenting organizations were often labeled by Solis and his allies as uninformed troublemakers.\textsuperscript{122} Raymundo’s announcement took an accusatorial tone towards the groups that oppose the PLUC on procedural grounds: “While certain groups with political agendas and news outlets have focused attention on PLUC’s recommendation of the 99-unit development, lost here is the amazing fact that the PLUC denied the recommendation of the 500-unit development on 18th and Peoria.”\textsuperscript{123} Emails that Pilsen Alliance requested from the City and which the South Side Weekly eventually obtained suggest that the PLUC did not know what rents the developer of the 99 unit development at 1414 W. 21st Street was going to charge when it approved the development. South Side Weekly reporter Bridget Newsham wrote that “this small insight into PLUC’s decision-making process highlights their lack

\textsuperscript{117} PLUC members are The Resurrection Project (TRP), the Alivio Medical Center, Eighteenth Street Development Corporation (ESDC), and the Pilsen Neighbors Community Council (PNCC). See Newsham, “Who Pulls the Strings on the PLUC?” Mission quote taken from Pilsen Land Use Committee, “Pilsen Land Use Committee Activity Report 2015-2017,” 1.
\textsuperscript{118} The establishment of the PLUC and the 2006 Quality of Life Plan signaled a shifting and nuanced terrain of inclusion and exclusion. The Pilsen Planning Committee Housing Task Force and the Pilsen Togetherness Chamber of Commerce were designated as ‘support organizations’ for the Plan’s ‘Strategy 1.2’ to, “Support inclusion of affordable housing units in all new developments in Pilsen.” The Plan assigned Pilsen Alliance the task of maintaining, “affordability by introducing and passing a continuation of the former 7 percent cap on property assessment increases.” Despite this assignment, the PLUC and the related developments in 2006 did little to recover the say that the Pilsen Alliance and other community organizations lost when they were excluded from the PCZB. See, Pilsen Planning Committee, “Quality-of-Life Plan,” 23.
\textsuperscript{120} Newsham, “Who Pulls the Strings on the PLUC?”
\textsuperscript{121} Raul Raymundo, “Balanced Development vs. Gentrification,” The Resurrection Project.
\textsuperscript{122} Hague, Hague, and Breitbach, “Skills for Regional and Local Economic Development,” 276.
\textsuperscript{123} Raymundo, “Balanced Development vs. Gentrification.”
of commitment to the [21 percent affordable housing] decree,” and even more so to an open, substantive, and transparent process.\textsuperscript{124}

The self-appointed membership of PLUC seemed to the Pilsen Alliance like an elected official and a select group of private and not-for-profit sector allies’ closing yet another door in the face of community input. Ibañez said that the Pilsen Alliance was “coopted” by the leading role TRP took in the PLUC through Raymundo’s chairmanship. “We wanted to engage with TRP, but TRP was dependent on the Alderman for development projects and funds and land.”\textsuperscript{125} Sigcho said that “there’s a big issue when organizations decide single handedly and by appointment how development will go in Pilsen.”\textsuperscript{126} Sigcho said that Solis uses the PLUC to legitimize his decisions rather than serve as an open forum for community decision-making. After the Circle Campus, University Village, and Chantico Lofts, Sigcho reiterated that “it’s important for us to be able to talk about zoning openly and transparently.”\textsuperscript{127}

\textit{Contesting Centro18}

In 2005, after the disbandment of the PCZB, a developer made a proposal for a mixed-use, 400-condominium development within Pilsen’s industrial TIF at the corner of 18\textsuperscript{th} and Peoria Streets, the same site as the defunct Concord Homes.\textsuperscript{128} The development was called Centro18 and was led by CityView, the company belonging to President Clinton’s former Secretary of Housing and Urban Development Henry Cisneros, alongside Mota Construction and Kimball Homes.\textsuperscript{129} Solis told journalist Ben Joravsky that, while the city should probably have left the 18\textsuperscript{th} and Peoria lots out of the Pilsen industrial TIF, it would nonetheless make more sense to demolish the remaining industrial structures on the site because the proposed Centro18 project would yield 15 million dollars in property taxes over 16 years to feed the TIF. Solis gushed about how the money would be used for community projects: “The best thing I’ve done since becoming alderman is creating that TIF...You can imagine all of the things we can do with that money.”\textsuperscript{130}

You would have to have a big imagination to think of all the things TIF money could do, because a Chicago TIF functions like “a giant piggy bank controlled by the mayor and the local alderman, whose unmonitored spending may or may not have anything to do with its original purpose.”\textsuperscript{131} The Pilsen Alliance saw Centro18 as problematic not only because of the recent disbandment of the PCZB and lack of community input, but also because it proved the community’s original concerns over the use and abuse of the Pilsen TIF.\textsuperscript{132} While Centro18 did not receive public funds, there were anecdotes that recently displaced nearby food wholesalers had been interested in relocating to 18\textsuperscript{th} and Peoria before Centro18 was proposed.\textsuperscript{133} Moreover, the community would have no say in how Solis spent the

\textsuperscript{124} Newsham, “Who Pulls the Strings on the PLUC?”

\textsuperscript{125} Alejandra Ibañez, interview with author, February 5, 2018.

\textsuperscript{126} Byron Sigcho, interview with author, April 7, 2018.

\textsuperscript{127} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{128} Hague, Hague, and Breitbach, “Skills for Regional and Local Economic Development,” 276.

\textsuperscript{129} Hague, “18\textsuperscript{th} and Peoria.”

\textsuperscript{130} Ben Joravsky, “Those Slippery TIFs,” Chicago Reader, December 8, 2005.

\textsuperscript{131} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{132} The Pilsen Alliance and others had opposed the 1998 Pilsen industrial TIF out of fear that public funds would be used to attract private development not designed for local residents. See, Hague, Hague, and Breitbach, “Skills for Regional and Local Economic Development,” 276-277.

\textsuperscript{133} Hague, Hague, and Breitbach, “Skills for Regional and Local Economic Development,” 277.
projected 15 million dollar tax increment. It seemed like the community’s fear that the TIF would remain a 23-year-long locked box had come to pass.

Like the Chantico Lofts proposal, the architect for Centro18 used aesthetics to try to smooth over community opposition by revealing a design that imitated Mayan pyramids at a public meeting on February 1, 2006. Outside the meeting, protestors held signs reading, “Develop Don’t Displace!” The ‘affordable’ units in the building would cost between $150,000 and $215,000, while the market rate units would be up to $699,000, far outside the purchasing power of most community residents. As with the Chantico Lofts project, the superficial aesthetic gestures betrayed the lack of substantive engagement with the concerned residents. At the same time, the community came to find that Kimball Homes had donated $19,000 to Solis’ 25th Ward Regular Democratic Organization between 2006 and 2007. The fact that the project was led by a former HUD Secretary’s private company, that the developer had made contributions to Solis, and that the site raised questions about the use of industrial TIF resources without community input epitomized Pilseñon Alliance’s concerns over officials and their allies making decisions about them but without them. Victoria Romero said that, “I knew as soon as I saw Cisneros’s name it would be a harder fight.....Our fears are becoming true. They said, ‘Oh no, don’t worry about the TIF — it’s all about industry, not housing.’ Yeah right, sure.” These concerns were made plain at a meeting of the Chicago Plan Commission on February 16, 2006 where Alderman Burt Natarus (42nd Ward) said of the project that, “this is gentrification. It will displace people. It’s called progress.”

The City Council voted unanimously in favor of the project (with two abstentions). The real estate developer Peoria LLC bought the land and in late 2006 the existing buildings at the site were razed. But then the real estate market crashed, Kimball Hill Homes filed for bankruptcy, and the project was shelved.

While Centro18 would never be built, two subsequent changes to the site’s status made it likely that the lack of process would reproduce itself in the future. First, Peoria LLC sold most of the site to the Chicago Province of the Society of Jesuits in 2009 for 6.5 million dollars. The Jesuits discussed plans of building housing for clergy there. The second change came several years later. On July 24, 2013, Mayor Emanuel appointed state representative Deborah Mell to succeed her aged father, Richard Mell, as Alderman of the 33rd Ward. Alderman Robert Fioretti objected to the appointment, exhorting the Council to act like a “democracy” rather than a “monarchy.” The Council approved Mell’s appointment. She would be challenged two years later in 2015 by aldermanic candidate Jim Meegan,

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134 Ibid., 277.  
135 Hague, “18th and Peoria.”  
137 Joravsky, “Those Slippery TIFs.”  
138 Burt Natarus was the Alderman of the 42nd Ward for 36 years, from 1971 until 2007. Hague, “18th and Peoria.”  
who promised to reinstate the 33rd Ward Advisory Council that functioned like the PCZB and that he claimed Mell had disbanded. Meegan said during his campaign that “any development projects or zoning changes...should be discussed by an elected group of residents. Everything should be done above board on the table in public”. Just minutes after Mell’s appointment in the City Council chamber back in 2013, Aldermen voted to reclassify the 18th and Peoria site to a B3-2 Community Shopping District. This district, according to Chicago’s zoning code, allows for by right permitting of “residential dwelling units above the ground floor”.

Current contestation

Kevin Maloney began his real estate career by using his state student loans to buy duplexes and rent them to other students at SUNY Buffalo. Maloney would go on to found Property Markets Group (PMG) in 1991. PMG now focuses on “premier luxury residential properties” and “consistently enhancing the luxury experience.” It is headquartered in New York with offices in Chicago and Miami and in 2018 boasted among its ongoing projects a 1,400-foot tall residential tower along Central Park. When PMG revealed plans in April of 2015 to develop 500 residential units at 18th and Peoria Streets, community groups were largely opposed to the project. In what sounded similar to promotions of its Manhattan-based projects, PMG said of 18th and Peoria that, “the site represents a unique and generational opportunity to develop a one-of-a-kind project strategically located within the city of Chicago, steps from thriving retail, public transportation and several major highway corridors.”

In May of 2015, Pilsen Alliance learned that the Midwest Jesuits’ planned to sell the land at 18th and Peoria to PMG and called the deal “gentrification on steroids”. It was also learned that a year earlier, Lipe Properties, the developer behind Chantico Lofts, had led a group offering to buy from the Jesuits, though the deal did not go through. The Pilsen Alliance protested outside the Midwest Jesuits’ headquarters. Jeremy Langford, a spokesman for the Jesuits, confirmed in a statement that the property would be sold to the developer: “Property Markets Group has assured [the Jesuits] that PMG is the appropriate entity to address details regarding any proposed plans for the property, and PMG is committed to a process that includes engaging with the Pilsen community over proposed plans.” Residents, however, felt that the deal was another example of outside actors deciding the fate of the

143 The text of the ordinance is available in the form in which it was introduced by Ald. Solis on June 26, 2013. See, Committee on Zoning, Landmarks and Building Standards, “Zoning Reclassification Map No. 4-G at 1600-1729 S Peoria St, 1600-1624 Newberry St, 834-892 W 18th St, 827-925 W 16th St,” Ordinance, O2013-5438, June 26, 2013.
144 Chicago Zoning Ordinance, “Chapter 17-3, Business and Commercial Districts; 17-3-0100, District Descriptions; 17-3-0104 B3, Community Shopping District; 17-3-0104-C,” 32.
150 Gallun, “Developer plans 500 apartments in Pilsen.”
community behind closed doors. Sigcho, who was at the time a Pilsen Alliance board member, wrote an open letter stating that, “as a Catholic parishioner in Pilsen and someone who was educated in the Jesuit spirit of social justice, I am extremely disappointed in your lack of response to even meet with the community, with the poor and those of us who will be affected by this plan.”

On December 18, 2015, the PLUC rejected PMG’s plan because the proposal did not meet the 21 percent affordability requirements and was considered too dense for the neighborhood. PMG came back with a different proposal in early 2016, but the PLUC rejected the 578 unit proposal on May 25, 2016. PMG then indicated that it would go ahead with a smaller development of 300 units that it could build by right because of the 2013 zoning change to a B3-2 Community Shopping District. On June 22, 2016, however, the City Council voted at Solis’ behest to change the B3-2 Community Shopping District to a M1-2 Limited Manufacturing/ Business Park District, denying PMG any by right residential options. With this change, Solis said he bought the community, “time…to develop the best plan for the 7.85-acre site…I’m not going to rezone it for [PMG]…to do a residential development, not without concessions…It’s probably the biggest space now that’s available in all of Pilsen, and I want to make sure that we do something exceptional there, not just allow a developer to build a bunch of units there, make money and leave.”

PMG, represented by Principal Noah Gottlieb, forged ahead with its plans for the site. Reminiscent of residents’ impromptu discovery of past projects, Pilsen community groups learned from a January 26, 2017 DNAinfo article that PMG had closed on the purchase of the site from the Midwest Jesuits approximately a week earlier. Despite the PLUC and Solis’ rejection of PMG’s past proposals, the Jesuits had unexplainably remained confident enough in PMGs commitment “to a process that includes engaging with the Pilsen community over proposed plans,” to sell their property to the developer. The sale also raised concerns over the Alderman’s true commitment to opposing the project or its developer, heightened by the lack of any way for community organizations to gain access to PLUC’s review process. Eleven community organizations wrote an open letter to DNAinfo expressing their concern over the sale of the property.

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152 Ibid.
153 Lulay, “New Plan for Pilsen’s Huge Vacant Lot.”; the PLUC’s 2015-2017 Activity Report indicates that the project at 1600-1800 S. Peoria St. contained 498 proposed units and was rejected by the Committee on December 18, 2015. See, Pilsen Land Use Committee, “Pilsen Land Use Committee Activity Report 2015-2017,” 3.
155 The text of the ordinance is available in the form in which Ald. Solis introduced it on June 2, 2016. See, Committee on Zoning, Landmarks and Building Standards, “Zoning Reclassification Map No. 4-G at 1600-1728 S Peoria St, 1600-1624 S Newberry St, 834-892 W 18th St and 827-925 W 16th St,” Ordinance, O2016-5481, June 2, 2016. The “M1, Limited Manufacturing/Business Park district is to accommodate low-impact manufacturing, wholesaling, warehousing and distribution activities that occur within enclosed buildings. The district is intended to promote high-quality new development and reuse of older industrial buildings.” See, Chicago Zoning Ordinance. “Chapter 17-5 Manufacturing Districts; 17-5-0100 District Descriptions; 17-5-0102 M1, Limited Manufacturing/Business Park District,” 51.
156 Lulay, “New Plan for Pilsen’s Huge Vacant Lot.”
158 See Jeremy Langford’s 2015 letter regarding negotiations over sale of the property, Lulay, “Pilsen Group Blasts Jesuits.”
If [the purchase of the site reported by DNAinfo] is true, we are extremely perturbed by the secret negotiations that have taken place between the Jesuits Providence of the Midwest and Noah Gottlieb, NY Developer and Principal at Property Markets Group or ‘Trump Junior’ as he is known in some community circles....[we] are equally disturbed that for the past three years the Jesuit Providence of the Midwest has refused to listen to the community and never took into consideration the neighborhood concerns...It is insulting that the stakeholders/ residents who have built a healthier Pilsen community have to find out through the media that a deal has been reached.159

Gottlieb responded, writing that, “I find our current president and his policies absolutely disgusting. This shouldn’t be about me, this is about what we can accomplish together.”160 For a dispute ignited by the exclusion of community groups from decision-making until final plans for the sale of the land had been made, Gottlieb paradoxically called for everyone to “keep an open mind” until PMG’s final plans would be revealed.161

In April of 2017, PMG unveiled ‘ParkWorks’, its new development proposal for the site that would include 465 one, two and three-bedroom units and 10,000 square feet of retail space.162 PMG held three public meetings on June 7, 13, and 14 at which PMG advertised that it would provide “updated details about the proposed development plan and its contribution to the surrounding neighborhood”.163 PMG’s announcement described the meetings as open fora rather than a presentation, at which “members of the development team [would]...be present to answer any questions you may have.”164 This sounded to organizers like a presentation of ‘final plans’. The Pilsen Alliance developed a campaign to contest the years of closed-doors PLUC meetings and the surprise sale of the property by the Jesuits. Sigcho sent an email inviting community members to, “join us at [PMGs]...‘open house’...[and] send them a clear message that we do not need more luxury housing in Pilsen.”165 Pilsen Alliance also created a facebook event inviting its membership to attend PMG’s open house on Wednesday, June 7, 2017 from 5:30 – 8:30 PM at 1907 S. Halsted, several blocks from the proposed development. The facebook event showed 125 individuals registered as ‘going’, and another 769 as ‘interested’.166 The facebook event’s details highlighted Pilsen Alliance’s focus on contesting the process through which ParkWorks was proposed and reviewed.

The devil is always in the details. We will continue to demand transparency from Mr. Gottlieb and PMG. Hope they learn that campaign contributions not always get you favors in a well organized community.167

At the June 7 meeting, Sigcho stood among residents and told Gottlieb that “being at the table after the fact is not the same as sitting down and saying, ‘This is the situation’”. In response, Gottlieb asked “Do you agree or disagree that the purpose of tonight is for everybody to sit at the table?...We hear your

159 Letter from 11 Pilsen community groups to DNAinfo, January 30, 2017.
160 Lulay, “Pilsen Groups Slam Developer as ‘Trump Jr.’”
162 Struett, “ParkWorks May Not Work for Pilsen.”
163 Lulay, “New Plan for Pilsen’s Huge Vacant Lot.”
164 ParkWorks, “Parkworks Open House on June 7th, 13th & 14th” Eventbrite.
165 Lulay, “New Plan for Pilsen’s Huge Vacant Lot.”
166 Pilsen Alliance, “No more Luxury housing in Pilsen,” facebook event, June 7, 2017.
167 Ibid.
concerns.” But even though PMG was ‘hearing concerns’, its representatives took a non-substantive approach to addressing community concerns similar to the token aesthetic solutions offered by Lipe and Cisneros for Chantico Lofts and Centro18. Curran, who attended one of the open houses, said, “I was tagging with a community member asking the developers hard questions. And they kept answering the same question in different ways. It was like they were throwing spaghetti at a wall and seeing what would stick.”

Even though Gottlieb’s proposal boasted “more affordable housing than any privately funded project in Chicago’s history…[with a] rent controlled portfolio of properties,” many organizers and community members felt the closed process had indicted the project, and were concerned with the developer’s plan to purchase residential properties throughout Pilsen to meet the 21 percent affordability requirement. One local activist described it as a plan to “corporatize the neighborhood,” and PMG’s rendering of the ParkWorks off-site portfolio unwittingly looked like an octopus with tentacles emanating from the project site. In a 2013 interview with the New York Times, PMG’s founder Kevin Maloney explained that everything PMG does “has an exit. So it’s either an exit as a condominium, and we sell it, or we’ll rent it up and sell it to a REIT or a third party. We don’t want to be long.” He explained that, “if we hold it, we end up getting a 10 to 12 percent return on our money, versus if we sell it, we’ll see a capital return rate north of 50 percent, and we’ll reinvest those funds.” While the interview focused exclusively on PMG’s projects in New York and Miami (Maloney only mentions Chicago once in the interview to explain that 10 percent of the company’s work is there), the ‘get out quick’ profit-driven mentality of a large developer with headquarters in New York concerned community organizations.

ParkWorks Affordable Housing Portfolio

PMG says it is “creating a rent controlled portfolio of properties that secure affordability for existing residents.” Some residents, however, see it as an octopus of community corporatization.

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168 Struett, “ParkWorks May Not Work for Pilsen.”
169 Winifred Curran, interview with author, April 10, 2018.
171 CHIresists activist, interview with author, January 22, 2018.
The Pilsen Alliance learned that the PLUC would meet with Gottlieb on October 10, 2017 at 9:00 AM to discuss the ParkWorks proposal. Organizers decided to show up uninvited at the PLUC meeting to contest the decision making process and express their opinions on PMG’s project. When Sigcho and Moreno arrived at Alivio Medical Center for the meeting, the PLUC members asked them to leave, and then had security escort them from the building. An open letter from Pilsen Alliance to the PLUC after the incident summarized the context for the action and its results:

For 13 years, Pilsen residents have been excluded from the decision making process that suppose [sic] to be transparent and public in order to insure [sic] accountability and checks and balances. Instead, PLUC has become more and more hostile towards public participation….We were shocked by the response given by a few members of PLUC who not only denied access to the meeting, but decided to call security to escort out of the building our Executive Director, Byron Sigcho, and our Housing Organizer, Moises Moreno, in one of the most shameful and authoritarian acts this appointed committee has made in its 13 years of existence. 175

The open letter also demanded official minutes from the October 10 “closed session” and that any decisions on PMG’s proposal take place “in the public domain” with “public participation before any agreement is made”. 176

Six days after the meeting, the PLUC voted to reject ParkWorks. 177 In keeping with Pilsen Alliance’s methods, however, the organization continued to contest the PLUC’s closed-door policy, even though organizers agreed with the substance of the Committee’s rejection of PMG’s proposal. On a Saturday in January, 2018, the Pilsen Alliance’s Youth Committee held an open meeting as part of its ‘gentrification series’ 178 to discuss PLUC’s decision making process, to which Solis and the PLUC’s members were invited. The invitation read,

For over a decade...the Pilsen Land Use Committee...has been meeting privately with developers in pilsen [sic] and serving as an advisory board for Alderman Danny Solis....Despite pressure from community members, PLUC has not only refused to make these meetings public, but has even refused to disclose any information about where they meet, why they meet, and what is discussed at these meetings. 179

None of the invited PLUC members showed up. At the meeting, youth organizer Karla Velasco said, “we invited every single person who is a part of PLUC, and none of them are here...We want to have a discussion with you, we want to talk about what you are doing. We want to know what goes on in these meetings that you don’t want everyone to know about. So why are you not here? Do you not care about the community?” 180 Moreno described the members of the Youth Committee as “fearless and angry and not afraid to get in the face of the Alderman.” 181

176 Ibid.
178 Thayer, “‘What’s Next for Housing Justice in Chicago?’” 35:32.
180 Newsham, “Who Pulls the Strings on the PLUC?”
181 Thayer, “‘What’s Next for Housing Justice in Chicago?’” 35:40.
In early 2018, PMG sued the City for blocking residential development on the site by changing the zoning to a M1-2 Limited Manufacturing/ Business Park District in 2016. Gottlieb said in a statement that the zoning change is illegal because it “reduces the value of the property without a corresponding public benefit”.182

Gottlieb’s rational approach to the negotiation process based on affordability requirements has elicited a backlash of contestation from community groups like the Pilsen Alliance that see his tactics and proposal as part of a history of closed-door decisions ranging from the sale of the site by the Jesuits, to the dissolution of the PCZB, Concord Homes, University Village, and the Circle Campus. Gottlieb explained his position several weeks before filing his lawsuit by emphasizing the importance of market supply in creating affordable housing. Increasing affordable housing requirements, he argued, creates a de facto moratorium on development that exacerbates the plight of lower-income households.183 While Gottlieb spoke of affordability thresholds and the logic of supply and demand, Moreno spoke in terms of process: “It’s how things get done – behind closed doors. We have to kick the doors down. It’s a shot against how these organizations are doing work,” not necessarily what they are doing.184

Without referring explicitly to the ParkWorks project, Gottlieb explained to me that PMG has had trouble reaching a compromise on the proposed development because local actors have no interest in a middle ground. He said that PMG has proven its dedication to what the company calls ‘social responsibility’185 by facilitating toy drives, movie nights, and tutoring services in its other properties around Chicago.186 In a series of articles on PMG’s core values, the company described how its X Social Communities brand of rental buildings are “havens for open arms, ears, and minds,”187 designed to encourage meaningful interactions between neighbors.188 It is no wonder then that Gottlieb is frustrated with the community’s opposition to PMG’s proposals, given the X Social Communities brand’s admirable philosophy of openness and tolerance backed by unique design and building management strategies.189

What Gottlieb interprets as a lack of interest in the middle is in fact the result of a misalignment of two very different approaches to development. PMG’s approach is rooted in project outcomes enabled by the company’s unilateral initiative as a property owner to be a good neighbor.190 Pilsen Alliance approaches development by contesting results-based projects by demanding open and iterative public processes.

To further complicate the picture, Gottlieb’s proposal got mired in Chicago’s local development politics. Like anyone who is constantly challenged for being an outsider in their adopted home, Gottlieb bristles at references to (or accusations of) his background as a ‘New York developer’. He has spent over ten

185 The tag line for PMG’s ParkWorks proposal is “guided by social responsibility”.
186 Noah Gottlieb, interview with author, January 22, 2018.
189 PMG is helping to pioneer a new lease-by-the-room business model that ostensibly encourages social living environments. PMG also invites local retailers to lease commercial space in its buildings, and builds social community and co-working spaces in its properties. See, Property Markets Group website, Development Real Talk, accessed May 22, 2018.
190 Noah Gottlieb, interview with author, January 22, 2018.
years in Chicago and says that his detractors use his New York associations simply to disparage him. Describing PMG’s tactics around the ParkWorks proposal and ultimate lawsuit, however, Curran said that, “New York City developers come to Chicago like big city kids, thinking they’re going to blow this second tier market off the map. But they don’t realize how personal Chicago politics are and how much power the aldermen have. And they end up getting in trouble.” She also said that “as opaque and feudal as Chicago is, organizing matters.”

Nothing about us without us is for us

After Moreno showed me Pilsen Alliance’s truism, ‘nothing about us without us is for us’ on the wall, he explained how the Alliance understands changes in the neighborhood: “We know everything is driven by the free market, but there is regulation – there are power players catering to higher-end tastes and interests.” Regulation by ‘power players’ catering to interests other than those of Pilsen’s residents describe the Circle Campus, University Village, the Pilsen TIF, Concord Homes, Chantico Lofts, the disbandment of the PCZB, Centro18, and ParkWorks. To contest these power players, Pilsen Alliance puts “stakeholders at the front and center. When we talk about affordable housing, it’s the renters and the people being displaced that need to be leading the fight.” Moreno explained that getting young people involved, putting residents first, doing research, and shedding daylight on things denies what he calls the “dinosaurs” the ability to point and say “it’s Moi [Moreno] being who he is and what not.” “No,” Moreno would respond. “It’s the young people.”

In 1998, Solis described that community opposition to his programs and projects turned the 25th Ward into “a Bizarro world...[in which] every development project in Pilsen has been questioned, and not only questioned, but there’s been allegations that it’s part of a conspiracy to ethnically cleanse the area or to gentrify the area. That includes a streetscaping project along 18th Street, the UIC expansion [University Village], and an industrial TIF [the Pilsen industrial TIF] that I’m proposing for the neighborhood.” Moreno explained that the Alliance’s opposition to Solis’ projects is not a game in opposites, but a question of contesting decisions about the neighborhood that the Alderman is taking while only consulting a select number of stakeholders at the expense of community input. As cited above, Moreno said that, “it’s how things get done – behind closed doors. We have to kick the doors down. It’s a shot against how these organizations are doing work.” As Sigcho explained, the Pilsen Alliance is fighting to establish platforms for community driven development processes “from the beginning of a project, not just after the fact.”

Ibañez understands contesting closed-door processes as a transformative experience in which individuals, like the mothers who became involved at Whittier Elementary on the issue of asbestos and the use of TIF funds, transform their intimate challenges into a public cause and find that they have the power to contest the way in which the Alderman, City Hall, and the Chicago Public Schools

191 Ibid.
192 Winifred Curran, interview with author, April 10, 2018.
194 Thayer, “What’s Next for Housing Justice in Chicago?” 36:00.
195 Ibid., 28:20.
196 Lutton, “Will Development Burry the Barrio?”
198 Byron Sigcho, interview with author, April 7, 2018.
Commissioner run the City.\textsuperscript{199} Shedding daylight on things is not limited to contesting the PLUC, but involves a deeper level of personal transformation that contests established notions of what responsibility and power a local resident has.

Some interlocutors suggested to me that Pilsen’s current moment, characterized by a quickening influx of wealthier residents, increasing unaffordability, and a downtown-minded Mayor, signals the Pilsen Alliance’s ‘last chance’ to defend the neighborhood from mass displacement and total transformation. Curran put this in perspective and described that when she began her partnership with the Pilsen Alliance in 2004, Pilsen observers and residents felt that their community was on the brink of disappearing. “But here we are,” she told me in April, 2018. “Granted that the PLUC is opaque, but at least it exists. Solis also implemented the 21 percent affordability mandate. Pilsen Alliance’s organizing has led to at least some lip service to affordability and to community process. Things can be superficial, but at least there’s a façade of process. So long as there’s a façade, the Pilsen Alliance can organize and show when the façade is a façade. They have won some victories, and they can show when the emperor has no clothes. It’s about being able to say, ‘listen, we’re not about this project or that developer. We’re about thinking broadly about how we do things,’” which is a way to contest planning processes not only at 18\textsuperscript{th} and Peoria or in Pilsen or in the 25\textsuperscript{th} Ward or the Near West Side, but in Chicago as a whole.\textsuperscript{200}

\textsuperscript{199} Alejandra Ibañez, interview with author, February 5, 2018.
\textsuperscript{200} Winifred Curran, interview with author, April 10, 2018.
Conclusion: Acting from the Bottom up

Various scenes inspired this project: Frank Avellone of LCBH drafting ordinances across from City Hall, Nick Jefferson convening actors at the Communities United office near Lawrence and Kedzie, LUCHA’s problem-solving in a thrice-displaced community, and Pilsen Alliance’s one-room office adorned with ward maps and the moto ‘nothing about us without us is for us’. These scenes depicting the everyday work of different community organizations in very different parts of Chicago also overlap. The model legislation that LCBH drafts is built on the door knocking efforts mapped out on Pilsen Alliance’s walls. When ordinances do not do enough, Communities United’s conference table has enough room for the developers, financiers, elected officials, and neighborhood residents to figure out a solution.

The three modes of action are ideal types. In reality, they are intertwined. Action by ordinance incorporates action by convening and contesting. While the Lift the Ban coalition clearly employed electoral means towards the ultimate end of regulating the rental market through legislation, it also convened community organizations to door knock and contested real estate industry lobbyists and their gatekeepers in the City Council and the state legislature. Action by ordinance can also become a form of action by contesting, as Avellone suggested when he touted the strategic power of proposing legislation that is doomed to fail in order to force the Mayor to take a stand on an issue. Jawanza Malone of KOCO described how action by ordinance, rather than being a “one time hit,”1 functions in the long term like convening by designating a legislative issue as the focal point of an ongoing discussion between community organizations and residents on housing justice. Ultimately, action by ordinance relies on people convening and contesting to make Mayor One Percent know when the shoe hurts too much.2

Action by convening occurs when a community organization uses its relationships to solve problems when existing legislation is not enough or absent altogether. The Renters Organizing Ourselves to Stay (ROOTS) program, for instance, addressed the inevitable inadequacy of any single law to stem speculation in a changing market. Action by convening brings together different actors including contesters and those that write ordinances. LUCHA convened the Logan Square Neighborhood Association and the Institute for Housing Studies at DePaul University to draft model legislation that would mitigate the displacement effects of the 606 Trail, but also to contest City Hall’s actions through protests. While this convening effort looked very much like ROOTS in that it addressed the inadequacies and oversights of state action, its final goal was in fact an ordinance.

To contest the development schemes that displaced people from the Near West Side for decades, Pilsen residents relied on action by ordinance to pass a ballot initiative calling for the establishment of the Pilsen Community Zoning Board. This action by ordinance and the establishment of the PCZB was “an

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1 Jawanza Malone, interview with author, April 5, 2018.
2 Frank Avellone, interview with author, January 16, 2018.
organizing tool and a first step in getting people involved.” In other words, it convened residents and established a body through which they could contest development practices.

**Other perspectives**

This research has focused primarily on defining and showing examples of the three modes of action. One significant issue that it did not investigate is the intersection of community identity with the ways that community organizations act. Every community organization exists within layered and intersectional social worlds. There are certainly relationships between those social worlds, the goals which any organization identifies as important, and the modes of action it deploys in pursuing those goals. Further research might investigate how social phenomena and identities interact with the modes of action. The following paragraphs show what that investigation might look like using the examples of race, gender, and age.

**Race**

The question of how race impacts and informs community action is linked to the racialized nature of ‘American’ identities and political associations through history. W. E. B. Du Bois wrote that, during and immediately after the Civil War, the Confederacy devised ways of keeping the (formerly) enslaved population on one hand and the white, landless free population on the other from uniting to overthrow the planter class. Martin Gilens and others have argued that this historic division between different racial versions of what Piven would call ‘poor people’s movements’ shaped narratives around welfare and the expression of leftism in the United States. More than a century later, Chicago and then New York saw the election of the first Black mayors to lead those cities based on grassroots mobilization among Black and Latino communities. These victories focused attention on the importance of bridging the ‘black-brown’ divide to seize the reigns of City Hall. John Betancur and Douglas Gills, however, write that intersecting class with African American and Latino identity reveals a legacy of increasing socioeconomic inequality between the working class and the elites who ‘represent’ what outwardly might appear to be their community in order to reap personal gain by maintaining the white-dominated status quo.

The conversations that I had with community organizations reveal potential linkages between race and modes of action. What Wirth called “natural areas” and Royko called “ethnic states” have continually changed, dissolved, and reincarnated in twenty-first century Chicago, though neighborhoods are still largely segregated by race due to the structures identified by Logan and Molotch. Given the overlap of geography with race, a community organization based in a particular neighborhood often has a dominant if not exclusive membership within one race, ethnicity, or nationality. When community organizations talk about building citywide alliances, they are therefore often implying multiracial

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7 Betancur and Gills, “Introduction.”
coalitions. Nick Jefferson at Communities United described to me how their work is not limited to Albany Park (which itself is one of the most diverse neighborhoods in Chicago), but expands as far south as North Lawndale, a predominantly African American neighborhood. When Jefferson stressed the importance of convening at ever-larger geographic and strategic scales by learning how to fight for each other, he implied the importance of interracial coalition work. Juan Carlos Linares at LUCHA said the same, telling me that his historically Puerto Rican organization “needs to know how to knock on doors in North Lawndale,” and that LUCHA’s staff must reflect that need.8

Since the 1980s, the demonization of welfare and popularization of ‘bootstrapping’ as economic policy has laid blame at the foot of impoverished communities of color for their own troubles while burdening them with an invented ‘moral’ responsibility to find a solution.9 The parallel between this form of blaming the victim and Jefferson’s account of City Hall’s support for large projects with the expectation that “community organizations will take care of the social and economic fallout”10 is significant in racial terms because the negative impacts of these myopic projects hurt communities most when they are built in lower-income communities of color.11 Similarly, while Jawanza Malone’s call for regulating the rental market seems on its surface to be a disinterested policy recommendation, it too draws from the racialized socioeconomic context of American history.12 Malone said that the Revolutionary War was about the Founding Fathers’ profit margin, and that the struggle for housing justice in twenty-first century Chicago therefore goes against a “legacy of exploitation” in which African Americans have always been left with the short end of the stick. Different racial groups’ historical relationship to the state and to the economy therefore would inform the meaning of working with, around, and against the state. From this perspective, any action by ordinance is a struggle to end discriminatory market practices, action by convening a way to build power among historically divided communities, and action by contesting a way to challenge the alliance of elite ‘representatives’ of various groups with the white status quo.

Gender

While every community is made up of men, women, and children, it is historically often men’s voices and actions that rise into public view.13 Distinctly gendered narratives and actions are visible in several historical examples cited in the previous chapters. Many of the radical movements of the 1960s and 1970s were dominated by men despite their flourishing at a time in which women were also demanding recognition and power. The Young Lords Organization in Lincoln Park, for instance, put men in the front and center both figuratively and also literally by using the handsome picture of the movement’s leader,

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8 Juan Carlos Linares, interview with author, March 27, 2018.
9 Betancur and Gills similarly highlight the proclivity of market logic to push responsibility both for the cause of and solution for social ills on the communities suffering their consequences.
11 Jefferson was referring in particular to the Garfield Park Police Academy, which would sit in the middle of a low-income and predominantly African American community.
Jose “Cha Cha” Jimenez, as a *de facto* graphic identity.\(^{14}\) While women were involved in the YLO even in its very early years, they filled distinct and lower-profile roles. Because many of the male YLO members were married and had children, their wives would stay at home with the children during the Organization’s often confrontational and sometimes violent protests (the argument being that if not for the gendered role of childcare, the women too would have been protesting). That said, women played a significant role in the YLO by helping community members seek and obtain medical treatment either at established facilities or within the YLO’s own healthcare network. This highly visible and gendered work helped gain wider community support for a group that was often seen simply as a ‘gang’.\(^{15}\)

In Pilsen during that same time, activist Cristina Vital and other women founded Mujeres Latinas en Acción and staked out a female claim in the largely masculine Chicano movement. Vital wrote that she felt expected to prove her radicalism and commitment to the cause through her male partner. Reflecting on her identity as a woman in the Pilsen community she wrote that, “the woman question affects everything. Until sexism is eradicated, women will always feel like they have to work harder to prove their worth.”\(^{16}\) The gendered conflicts to which Vital drew attention within what externally appeared to be a monolithic movement and social narrative calls for a more nuanced investigation into how various forms of activism and action are claimed and controlled by men.

Alejandra Ibañez, the Pilsen Alliance’s first Executive Director, noted that the initial campaigns around the use of TIF dollars and the asbestos issue at Whittier Elementary School mobilized women who were concerned over the lack of investment because their children studied there. As cited in the last chapter, she said that “the key was to move people from a personal level. Many immigrants and undocumented people felt they didn’t have a voice because they could not participate in electoral politics. Moving people from a personal level meant getting them to engage at the public level in community-wide activism.”\(^{17}\) The involvement of families and in particular mothers in the Whittier Elementary campaign connected the personal issues of health, education, and family life with the use of TIF dollars, the Alderman, the school, and City Hall.\(^{18}\) In this case, women’s voices and actions provided a critical link from the personal to the political. Carmen Prieto, the Associate Director of the Wieboldt Fund, likewise noted that the overtly masculine model of Alinsky style organizing has been gradually replaced by activism on the part of neighborhood residents, people of color, and women.\(^{19}\)

**Age**

The role of young people in shaping the social reality of cities has been as well documented as it is easily overlooked in the traditional city-making narrative of planners, architects, and politicians. Andrew Diamond wrote about the role of street gangs to show that teens and young adults formed the vanguard of grassroots activism in Chicago.\(^{20}\) In *Mean Streets*, he argues that first-generation American youth in


\(^{15}\) Fernandez, *Brown in the Windy City*, 194-198.


\(^{17}\) Alejandra Ibañez, interview with author, February 5, 2018.

\(^{18}\) Ibid.

\(^{19}\) Carmen Prieto, interview with author, March 28, 2018.

the first half of the twentieth century formed racial identities by defending territorial boundaries, lending an age-centric perspective to the Chicago School’s understanding of racialized neighborhoods. Diamond’s study begins with the race riots of 1919. In his profile of Mayor Richard J. Daley, Royko asks whether the young Daley had participated in the racial violence unleashed by other childhood members of his neighborhood ‘athletic club’:

“The question has been raised by newspapers from time to time: Was young Daley a participant in the violence? Blacks passing through his neighborhood were beaten within screaming distance of his home....Daley belonged to a close-knit neighborhood club known as the Hamburg Social and Athletic Club. And this is what the [1919] riot study had to say of the club: ‘Responsibility for many attacks was definitely placed by many witnesses upon the ‘athletic clubs’ including Ragen’s Colts, the Hamburgers, Aylwards, Our Flag, Standard...and several others. The mobs were made up for the most part of boys between 15 and 22. Gangs, particularly of white youths, formed definite nuclei for crowd and mob formations. Athletic clubs supplied the leaders of many gangs.’”

Royko goes on to shows how ‘athletic clubs’ and other gang-like formations of youth served as bases of manpower and loyalty for City Hall political machines as their members grew up. Diamond also argues that, “gangs became an integral part of political machines and ethnic politics and were rewarded for their cooperation by precinct captains and aldermanic leaders. Young male gangs also became the enforcers of community boundaries.”

Lilia Fernandez describes that Puerto Rican boys in Lincoln Park, West Town, and Humboldt Park during the 1950s and 60s formed gangs to protect themselves from racist attacks: “Despite community pleas, police continued to use excessive force in their arrests of Puerto Rican men and boys...Young people began fighting against displacement of the poor...They formed a group called the Young Lords Organization (YLO). The group emerged initially as a street gang in the late fifties, to defend Puerto Rican boys in the neighborhood from white youths. Within a matter of years, however, the group adopted a politically conscious agenda...” On the surface what seemed like youth physically defending their community or perpetrating acts of wanton violence was actually a critical process in the political economy of the city that informs and is informed by gender and racial contexts.

In a very different context and approximately one hundred years after Daley was a Hamburger, Moises Moreno spoke about the importance of youth organizers at the Pilsen Alliance. The Pilsen Alliance Youth Committee, among its many campaigns, convened an open meeting to discuss the Pilsen Land Use Committee’s decision-making process at the height of the controversy over the construction of Property Markets Group’s ParkWorks at the corner of 18th and Peoria Streets. As cited in the last chapter,
Moreno said that the members of the Youth Committee are “fearless and angry and not afraid to get in the face of the Alderman.” He also suggested that the young people’s involvement is an integral part of Pilsen Alliance’s mission of putting residents first and shedding daylight on closed-door processes. In obviously age-conscious language, he said that the Youth Committee denies what he calls the “dinosaurs” the ability to discredit Pilsen Alliance by pointing and saying “it’s Moi [Moreno] being who he is and what not” because in fact, “it’s the young people.” For Pilsen Alliance, the youth are an ‘authentic’ voice that epitomizes open decision-making processes free of backroom deals and ulterior motives. This non-partisan ‘people’s’ voice is a pillar of the Pilsen Alliance’s action by contesting.

**Acting from the bottom up**

This thesis started with the dichotomy of the community organization and the planner. By taking a walk (and a train and bus ride) around Chicago, it quickly became apparent that the reality of community action is more complex than a binary opposition. Community organizations work with, around, and against City Hall, whether they be across from Daley Plaza in the Loop, at Kedzie and Lawrence on the northwest side, near the 606 Trail in Humboldt Park, in the shadow of the UIC campus in Pilsen, along 43rd Street in Oakland, or elsewhere. By tracing the genealogy of urban communities, social movements, and urban planning theory, I showed how community organizations act like planners if nothing else for their complex relationship with the state. The previous chapters provided examples of how community organizations act by ordinance, convening, and contesting and how those actions blend and complement one another.

Beyond several isolated examples, the question remains of how a patchwork of community organizations transcends issues in their own neighborhoods to form larger citywide coalitions. Euan Hague of the Geography Department at DePaul University said that over the course of 2017 into early 2018, community organizations increasingly formed coalitions. First, there was the Chicago Housing Initiative, and then the Lift the Ban coalition, comprised of many of the same members. The model in which community organizations react to specific development and policy proposals within a delineated geographic and social purview seems to no longer hold.

Carmen Prieto explained in Chapter One that the tendency towards coalition building is a result of residents and activists “realizing that the powers that be were pitting them against each other, and that they all have shared concerns.” They are now leveraging these shared concerns to convene from the neighborhood to the city levels by creating coalitions. Hague hypothesized that the teachers’ strike in 2012 and Jesus “Chuy” Garcia’s challenge to Mayor Emanuel in the 2015 election gave a fresh vision of politics and community organizing as it could be if only organizations formed citywide coalitions around key issues.

Other activists, organizers, and residents have their own visions of and explanations for citywide action. Juan Carlos Linares of LUCHA pointed out the interdependency of actions and reactions in Chapter Two.

28 Andy Thayer, “‘What’s Next for Housing Justice in Chicago?’ A forum sponsored by Chicago Democratic Socialists of America and Solidarity,” video recording, Wednesday April 18, 2018, 8:13 PM. 35:40.
29 Ibid., 28:20.
“When a displaced family moves to the suburbs, it means longer commute times, the need for more flex hours at work, reduced productivity at work, health issues, and pollution from transportation. If only the tax payers had put in a little extra subsidy to keep that person in the city and in their home, you could have prevented a host of negative consequences.”

Relatedly, Nick Jefferson stressed the need for comprehensive, citywide planning rather than piecemeal strategies that put the onus on individual community organizations to pick up the pieces of shortsighted public policy. He suggested convening at larger scales by creating coalitions and pushing the state to take more responsibility for comprehensive planning.

In Chapter One, Jawanza Malone and the other Steering Committee members of the Lift the Ban coalition brought dozens of organizations from across the city together to win a ballot initiative in 77 precincts. But behind the obvious implications of coalition work for citywide action, Malone’s strategy to make Lift the Ban more than “a one-time hit” holds a greater power than simply convening organizations to launch a ballot initiative. By convening people around the issue “so that they can stay involved and participate in future initiatives and conversations,” the coalition members are drawing Malone’s “line in the sand” on housing justice, which will serve as a platform for future action. It is a line in the sand that contests all of the people from the Founding Fathers of America to Algren’s “Dauntless Pioneers” of Chicago, to Daley’s Picasso outside City Hall, to whoever made City Hall itself so expensive to build, who are out to “make a fast buck off whoever...[is] standing nearest.”

A Chicago rent control law would signify for its supporters the possibility of aligning the powerful mechanisms of the state to work in their favor. These themes extend beyond rent control to other lines in the sand on housing justice. For instance, Pilsen Alliance’s contesting of closed-door decision-making convenes Pilsen residents for long term discussions around development politics and priorities, contests all those who would make a buck off of their displacement, and sees in the initiative to create a community zoning board the potential to use the state’s tools in residents’ favor.

33 Juan Carlos Linares, interview with author, January 22, 2018.
36 Ibid.
37 “The Revolutionary War was about a bunch of guys who were pissed off because the Brits were cutting into their profit margin. So as we fight against housing injustice in this city, we’re going against a legacy of exploitation...when we’re taught the mythology of our country, we aren’t told that it’s about people who would do anything to make a buck.” Thayer, “What’s Next for Housing Justice in Chicago?” 29:20.
38 “They’d do anything under the sun except work for a living, and we remember them reverently...under such subtitles as ‘Founding Fathers,’ ‘Dauntless Pioneers’...Meaning merely they were out to make a fast buck off whoever was standing nearest.” Nelson Algren, Chicago: City on the Make (Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1951), 16.
39 Mike Royko said that the sculpture, “looks like some giant insect that is about to eat a smaller, weaker insect” with the “eyes of every slum owner who made a buck off the small and weak...[and] every building inspector who took a wad from a slum owner to make it all possible....Any bigtime real estate operator will be able to look into the face of the Picasso and see the spirit that makes the city’s rebuilding possible and profitable.” Mike Royko, “Picasso and the Cultural Rebirth of Chicago” in One More Time: The Best of Mike Royko (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999).
40 Mike Royko tells us that of two identical buildings constructed to house the County and City offices, the City side was much more expensive. “Chicago history is full of such oddities. Flip open any page and somebody is making a buck.” Mike Royko, Boss: Richard J. Daley of Chicago (New York: Signet, 1971), 16.
41 Algren, Chicago: City on the Make, 16.
Acting by ordinance, convening, and contesting each entails relationships with the state that are applicable across all issues of housing justice, whether it be rent control, community zoning, affordable housing preservation programs like ROOTS, or housing legislation like the Keep Chicago Renting ordinance or Chicago Healthy Homes Inspection Program. These different ways of ‘acting up’ show how community organizations can realize shared interests in order to fight for each other at the citywide scale.
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