

# UPTOWN COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

## **CORRIDORS OF VISION**

**7<sup>TH</sup> FACILITATED SESSION**

**Wednesday November 19, 2003**

**4 p.m. to 6 p.m.**

**4753 North Broadway**

**1<sup>st</sup> Floor Conference Center**

### **Study Area:**

**Uptown - through the Artist's Eye**

(See map attached)

### **Participants:**

Mary Laura Bushman, Facilitator, Institute of Cultural Affairs, Upcorp Board

Kathy Ahler, REST

Pam Bergdall, Methods for Active Participation

Eve Brownstone, artistic consultant

Tom Camacho, Serendipity Youth Theater

Paul Carpenter, Argyle Winmore Neighbors

Br. Mark Elder, DePaul University

Bob Ford, People's Church

Eileen Grogan, McCormick Boys and Girls Club

Don Hohendael, City of Chicago Department of Planning and Development

John Holden, Uptown Historical Society, Dover Street Neighbors

Liz Holland, Abbell Credit

Erin Knapp, ACM, Urban Studies Program

Tony Kopera, Community Counseling Centers of Chicago

Dan Kravetz, ACM Urban Studies Program

Alex Levy, Pegasus Theater

Diana Long, Urban Art Retreat

Tonia Lorenz, Winthrop Townhouse Condo Assn.

Heather Meyers, EZRA

Tyler Philippi, Buena Park Neighbors

David Rowe, Uptown Chicago Commission

Wally Rozak, Uptown Chamber

Loralee Streelman, Somerset Place

Bob Tack, Lord Companies LLC

Co Vuong, Argyle Winmore Neighbors

Alison Zehr, DPC

Simone Zurawski, Argyle Street Task Force, DePaul University

Joyce Dugan, UPCORP Director of Economic Development

Rebecca Dugan, Volunteer

**Executive Summary:**

At the November 19 session, participants continued the Corridors of Vision process with a session to address all forms of art throughout Uptown. Several areas were suggested:

- The intersection of Wilson and Broadway
- The intersection of Broadway and Leland Avenue (under the tracks)
- The intersection of Lawrence and Sheridan
- The intersection of Lawrence and Broadway,
- The Truman College front yard (north side of the building, from the eastern entrance west including the Pegasus Theater building).

Outreach for this session was extensive. Over 75 packages were mailed to elected officials, block clubs, community organizations and institutions. Each participant received an assessment workbook with questions centered on five values: accessibility, safety, goods and services, aesthetics and community diversity. Participants were asked to visit several study areas to observe and absorb the look and feel of the corridor and to consider questions raised concerning the values, locations and art.

Based on their notes and observations, participants shared their current impressions and visions for the study area as it exists and as it might exist in the future. Facilitator Mary Laura Bushman guided the group through a collective brainstorming, sharing in pairs and small group breakout with the objective of focusing on several different Vision Elements, descriptions and Action Steps to carry forward the creative and forceful changes envisioned by the group.

This session was the seventh in a series of Corridors of Vision workshops. The workshop series represents Phase 1 of the Corridors of Vision process. In later phases, UPCORP will share its draft vision for the corridors of Uptown with other community groups, incorporating input and inspiring discussion. With each refined iteration, the visions will grow into a tool with which the community can evaluate development, identify and attract new businesses and development, and guide the revitalization of the Uptown Community.

The process used at this session was based on the previous Corridors of Vision sessions, which were designed and led by Mary Laura Bushman of the Institute of Cultural Affairs, and by Rev. Dr. Sid Mohn. Ms. Bushman and Dr. Mohn are both experienced facilitators and members of the Upcorp Board of Directors. Ms. Bushman donated her time and materials for this session. Funding for this session was provided by the City of Chicago Department of Planning and Development and by Abbell Credit Corporation.

## **Process:**

1. Introduction
2. Silent Walk: Individual Brainstorming
3. Sharing in Pairs: Prioritizing Ideas
4. Identifying Vision Element Categories
5. Small Group Breakout: Vision Paragraphs & Action Steps
6. Synthesis & Plenary

## **Session Highlights:**

### INTRODUCTIONS:

Participants introduced themselves, named their connection to the community, and identified up to three nouns or images that reflect their current impressions of the corridor. These **Current Views** included:

In transition  
Bustling  
Not cohesive  
Untapped potential  
Past and Future  
Diverse  
Unfulfilled/Scary  
Unplanned  
Not cohesive  
Eclectic  
Economically diverse  
Constantly changing

### SILENT WALK:

Bushman invited the session participants to imagine taking a silent walk through Uptown five years into the future and to envision the community as it might be on that future walk. They were asked to record five images as they might appear five years from now.

### SHARING IN PAIRS:

Working with a partner, the participants chose three best or most unique ideas to share with the group. Starting with one best idea per pair (the “without which” keystone), group members placed the idea cards on the wall in front of the room. Then the second, third and fourth best ideas, if not already mentioned, were added. Once all the ideas were placed on the wall, the group worked together to categorize the ideas into Vision Element categories.

## VISION ELEMENTS:

The seven Vision Element categories determined by the group were:

- Preserve Uptown's Personality and Showcase
- Town Square (a/k/a Truman College)
- Community Visible Art
- Welcoming and Defining
- Unification with Meaning
- Opportunities for Artists
- Vibrant Street Life and Retail

## SMALL GROUP BREAKOUT

Participants numbered off into seven groups, each considering one of the Vision Elements listed above. With the benefit of the Idea Cards, each group collaborated to develop a Vision Paragraph and specific Action Steps. Worksheets were provided for the paragraph (one per group) and the action steps (several per group). The completed Vision Paragraphs and Action Steps for each of the Vision Elements are detailed on the pages that follow.

## SYNTHESIS & PLENARY

The groups reconvened to share and comment on the results of their small group work. Bushman led the group in a discussion to synthesize their ideas about the composition of the area and the similar impressions shared by the participants.

Participants shared their reflections on the evening:

**What do you remember?** – Eating, meeting new people, organizing to strategize, brainstorming.

**What made you most excited?** - Working in small groups on chosen topics.

**Did you worry about anything?** Worried most about how connections would be made going forward.

**What did we forget?** - To involve all stakeholders, to communicate in more concrete terms, to plan for our impact on neighborhood children. We also did not give consideration to traffic, affordable housing, retail, underlying neighborhood change.

**What did we accomplish?** Participants want to increase Truman's use as a community center. They see the opportunity to unify our community by displaying places that are important to us and they feel that we can encourage learning in our community by folks walking through and enjoying art in strategic places.

**What do we do next?** Participants felt that ideas raised in this session were more real and achievable than in previous sessions and that the action steps proposed could be initiated soon. Participants felt that the group represented the middle ground, not changing everything, not staying the same.

**How would you characterize tonight's session?** People coming together to plan Uptown's future with hope.

**How can we engage more people in the process of planning?** Participants felt it is possible to realize this engagement by making requests/demands; perhaps through representative theater, through a heart map of sacred places.

Folks who had attended other COV sessions, felt this was the least contentious and that attendees were more focused on a common goal.

All attendees shared concern about the lack of people of color and agreed that more community outreach and dialogue needs to continue to encourage all neighbors to attend and share.



**VISION ELEMENT:**

**PRESERVE UPTOWN'S PERSONALITY AND SHOWCASE**

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**VISION PARAGRAPH:**

To restore Uptown's buildings and facades in order to improve historic neighborhood building stock. This will help to create an economically viable retail climate consistent with the neighborhood's historic character.

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**ACTION STEP:**

Encourage cleaning and historically sensitive restoration.

**WHEN:**

NOW and continuing into the future.

**HOW:**

Solicit **smaller** property owners for participation in city-based assistance programs (façade rebate, SBIF). Participants should include Uptown Chamber, UPCORP, Alderman Shiller and Alderman Smith, Department of Planning and Development.



**VISION ELEMENT:**

**TOWN SQUARE A/K/A TRUMAN COLLEGE**

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**VISION PARAGRAPH:**

Use Truman College as a town center. The Park District should run the pool and gym. A warm weather festival marketplace with food and crafts will make the mall vibrant and more regularly used for scheduled and special events. A Sunday family market, concerts, air fairs would be listed on a marquee (perhaps more than one). Truman’s front yard should be beautified with planters, lights, benches, art and color. Winter events could include ice skating, a haunted house, etc. An ethnic food festival “A Taste of Uptown” could be an annual event. Vendors currently selling wares inside Truman could set up outside in the mall.

**ACTION STEP:** Pursue Park District to run gym and pool.  
**WHEN** Start now for next fiscal year’s budget  
**HOW** Apply public pressure, have large community meetings, enlist local organizations for support

**ACTION STEP:** Get City to schedule a farmers’ market  
**WHEN** NOW for market in summer  
**HOW** Uptown Chamber and block clubs coordinate effort

**ACTION STEP:** Encourage Truman to beautify its front and coordinate mall events and marquee  
**WHEN** NOW  
**HOW** Organize a dedicated group from block clubs, Uptown Chamber, Uptown Chicago Commission and other community groups.



**VISION ELEMENT:**

**RESTORE AND ADD MORE PUBLIC ART**

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**VISION PARAGRAPH:**

We want to restore and add more public art in the Uptown neighborhood. Let's start with an agreed-upon over all plan of what materials are to be used, what murals, on which buildings, where sculptures will be placed. Community involvement from the beginning is very important. Some ideas for public art are: sculptures, mosaics, painting murals, reliefs, store windows tromp d'oeil, all to celebrate themes of neighborhood (such as diversity, history, cultures in Uptown).

**ACTION STEP:**

Hold Community Forums: Set up forums involving comprehensive cross-section of Uptown community to discuss/decide on a limited number of themes (as few as three) for the community public art program.

WHEN:

Soon

HOW:

Have Upcorp solicit underwriters, involve Uptown Chamber, Aldermen's offices and others.

Upcorp will issue invitations and conduct forums to decide themes.

Establish a committee for each potential site to conduct a competition to select a lead artist for the venue.

Each committee will conduct inclusive mini forums with neighbors and the artist to get input for the design of the art piece.



**VISION ELEMENT:**

**WELCOMING AND DEFINING**

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**VISION PARAGRAPH:**

The intent is to create a positive image within the neighborhood that will leave a lasting impression not only with visitors and consumers, but also with residents. We firmly believe that the addition of enhanced physical attributes will lead to greater pride within the community. We propose that the visual enhancement of the streets, not only in the retail areas but residences as well, will help people recognize the historical significance of the neighborhood. New era lighting and better landscaping will not only help us remember the past but look toward the future by creating pride in our diversity.

**ACTION STEP:**

- Replace sidewalks as needed.
  - Upgrade electrical to accommodate new era lighting.
  - Install planters, gateways, benches (streetscape).
  - Plant trees.
- WHEN One to three years from initial planning to implementation.
- HOW Community input and outreach.  
Task Force meetings  
Make proposal to the City
- WHO Ward officials and task force participants lobby for funds  
Department of Streets and Sanitation  
Department of Planning  
46<sup>th</sup> and 48<sup>th</sup> Ward officials  
Community organizations  
Businesses and residents



**VISION ELEMENT:**

**UNIFICATION WITH MEANING**

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**VISION PARAGRAPH:**

To elevate Uptown to a premier regional and community shopping and entertainment destination recognized for all its assets. Increase and promote its accessibility and improve its public image to the delight and pride of its residents. Highlight its unique character, cultural and historical features.

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**ACTION STEP:** Create maps and signage.

HOW: Inventory historic and current features, physical attributes, and cultural stories, including oral histories.  
 Provide large maps at prominent entryways and parking areas.  
 Prepare brochures and paper maps for wide distribution (kiosks and stores). Maps would highlight neighborhood features and be fun.

**ACTION STEP:** Create neighborhood/building markers.

WHEN Inventory of neighborhood assets – NOW  
 Signage – at launch of revitalized neighborhood

HOW Inventory and brand neighborhood features.  
 Work with community artists to create markers.  
 Markers should highlight architectural, historical and cultural features of the neighborhood and be designed to tell the story neighborhood residents and ethnic communities wish to express.



**VISION ELEMENT:**

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**OPPORTUNITIES FOR ARTISTS  
“BETTER THAN BUCKTOWN”**

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**VISION PARAGRAPH:**

We would like to see expanded opportunities for promoting the arts and artists in the Uptown community and we can envision the conversion of Uptowns numerous vacant/dilapidated buildings into a thriving and visible new arts environment. In two principal steps/stages, we would begin with serving/preserving and publicizing the individuals and groups already here. This would lead to the next step, involving the attraction and development of fresh talent.

**ACTION STEP:** Create a central organization (similar to a co-op) that would preserve, promote and attract artistic endeavors and enterprises for both individuals and groups. This step involves identifying prospective buildings and spaces ripe for conversion to this purpose.

**WHEN:** This could start right and continue as an on going process.  
**HOW:** To begin, a key meeting, perhaps sponsored by Upcorp, of the artists in the community who would meet one another, share ideas, especially about identifying their interests and needs. Hopefully, this meeting would result in the establishment of a centralized organization dedicated to promoting the arts in the Uptown community and in the city over all.

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**VISION ELEMENT:**

**VIBRANT STREET LIFE AND RETAIL**

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**VISION PARAGRAPH:**

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To provide a unique and diverse retail experience in Uptown that would provide goods and services to Uptown residents as well as attract visitors from outside the area. The goal would be to make the entire experience safer, more comfortable and cleaner. We want to reinforce community identity and create community cohesiveness through a street fair or farmers' market.

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**ACTION STEP:** Conduct a street festival, a holiday festival, and regular walking tours of Artistic Uptown.

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**WHEN:** Hold the street festival in the summer; the holiday festival in December. Walking tours should be held monthly, on Saturdays, in the morning.

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**ACTION STEP:** Seek diverse retail, establish an SSA to contribute to cleanliness and safety.

**WHEN** ASAP

**HOW** The Chamber of Commerce should coordinate the festivals and the SSA. Artistic pursuits could be handled by an arts collective similar to the Creative Alliance of Uptown. Uptown Historical Society could coordinate the walking tours. We would like a branch of Swedish Bakery in Uptown.

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