

# Loyola University Chicago Anchor University Project

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The West Pullman and Greater Crossing neighborhoods on the south side of Chicago are predominantly African American and low/moderate income. They are neighborhoods that are vulnerable to crime/violence, and the youth struggle to find a way toward a future without gangs and violence.

The Chicago chapter of Habitat for Humanity (Habitat Chicago or HC; <https://www.windycityhabitat.org/>) is a 40 year old organization with a new CEO, Jennifer Parks, whose vision goes beyond building homes to include a more comprehensive neighborhood revitalization. Loyola University Chicago's Institute of Environmental Sustainability (IES) is partnering with HC in West Pullman, a neighborhood where HC has worked for several years on the 119<sup>th</sup> Street Corridor project – building new homes, revitalizing older homes, and weatherizing other homes on S. Union between 119<sup>th</sup> and 120<sup>th</sup> Streets. This year HC is working on acquiring 12 vacant lots on S. Union, and have discovered high concentrations of lead in the soils that the Environmental Protection Agency requires be cleaned up before building can occur. The Dutch Boy Paint manufacturing facility was in this neighborhood a few decades ago, and legacy lead remains in many of the neighborhood soils. IES is partnering with HC to test and remove the lead from these soils through a process called bioremediation. Deep-rooted prairie grasses, brassicas, and other fast growing plants are grown on the soils and lead from the soil is taken up by the plants. The plants are then cut and harvested, and the plant biomass, which contains lead, is taken off site and disposed of. IES faculty and students who are majoring in Conservation & Restoration (B.S. degree) are designing a research project with the aim of developing a soil bioremediation strategy that can be used by neighborhood homeowners to reduce and ultimately eliminate lead and other industrial legacy toxins from their soils, making their soils fit for children's play and for growing vegetables.

LeRoy Chalmers, HC Strategic Partnerships Manager and LUC alum, and Nancy Tuchman, Founding Dean of IES are partnering on the lead remediation project, with IES faculty Larry DeBuhr. Over the past 3 years, Chalmers and Tuchman have met multiple times to discuss a larger project in this neighborhood that could provide more comprehensive social services for West Pullman youth. The "big idea" concept is a community center (LUC as Anchor University) with an organic farm/garden where students could go after school to participate in growing food, obtain academic tutoring in reading, writing, math and science, obtain social services such as trauma & violence counseling, financial literacy services, and legal services. Multiple departments and schools at LUC could have roles in such a community center, including, but not limited to:

- Farm, remediating and building soil, growing food, selling food, cooking, and nutrition - IES
- Tutoring – students in English, Math, Writing, Reading, Science - SOE
- Feeder Program into Arrupe – Arrupe faculty, staff and students
- Violence Prevention and Trauma counseling – SSW, Psychology, Center for Violence
- Legal assistance – LUC Law Clinic
- Health check-ups – SON, SSOM
- Sports and Exercise – Athletics students and staff
- Music, theater and art lessons – DFPA
- Researching the impacts of these community services on youth as they become adults – CURL, SSW
- Asset Building through Individual savings accounts for families, financial literacy, tax returns – QSB