

ABOUT THE DC PROMISE NEIGHBORHOOD INITIATIVE

What is the federal Promise Neighborhoods Initiative?

Promise Neighborhoods are one of the most anticipated social-change concepts to come along in the last two decades. President Obama's FY2010 budget for the Department of Education includes funds for planning Promise Neighborhoods. The document states: "This new initiative would provide competitive, 1-year planning grants to non-profit, community-based organizations to support the development of plans for comprehensive neighborhood programs, modeled after the Harlem Children's Zone, designed to combat the effects of poverty and improve education and life outcomes for children, from birth through college."

The Harlem Children's Zone (HCZ) provides a "pipeline" of enriching supports and educational opportunities that begins with The Baby College, a series of workshops for parents of children ages 0-3. The pipeline goes on to include best-practice programs for children of every age through college. The network includes in-school, after-school, social-service, health and community-building programs. Thus, programs are designed to support children within the Zone from birth through their entry into the labor market. The HCZ Project began as a one-block pilot in the 1990s, then following a 10-year business plan, it expanded to 24 blocks, then 60 blocks, then ultimately 97 blocks. Impact results for children and families served by the HCZ are impressive.

What is the DC Promise Neighborhood Initiative?

The DC Promise Neighborhood Initiative has been established to plan and coordinate a pipeline of high-quality educational opportunities "wrapped" by evidence-based social supports for children and youth ages 0 – 23 in the Washington, DC Ward 7 Community. The DCPNI pipeline will produce outcomes that reverse poor academic performance, numerous public health issues of epidemic proportions, chronic unemployment and poverty, and widespread violence. The DCPNI draws much of its learning and inspiration from The America's Promise Alliance and the Harlem's Children Zone. Initiative leaders plan to apply for a federal planning grant in 2010.

Where Will the DC Promise Neighborhood Be Located?

The initial "footprint" for the initiative is the Parkside-Kenilworth community, which is located in Ward 7 in Northeast Washington, DC (Census Tracts 96.1 and 96.2). Parkside-Kenilworth is the ideal neighborhood from which to begin. A state-of-the art recreation center, the Abe Polin Memorial Community Development project, and a planned footbridge connecting the community to Ward 7's downtown represent just a few of the public-private development initiatives planned, and the three local schools -- Cesar Chavez Middle & Upper, Neval Thomas Elementary and Kenilworth Elementary -- have already established a unique charter-public relationship that will utilize enhanced community and student supports to ensure student achievement at every age.

The neighborhood has a well-defined geographic boundary formed by the Anacostia River, a major thoroughfare (Eastern Avenue), a decommissioned Pepco power plant, and above-ground commuter rail lines. Approximately 8,000 individuals reside in the Parkside-Kenilworth Community, including more than 2,000 youth ages 0 – 17. Of Parkside-Kenilworth's approximately 2,000 households, more than 35% are female head-of-households with children under age 18. The Parkside-Kenilworth Community, along with the rest of Ward 7 and DC's Ward 8, experience DC's

highest rates of poverty, teen pregnancy, HIV/AIDS, violent juvenile deaths, illiteracy, unemployment, substance abuse, high school dropouts and poor school performance. Expansion into additional neighborhoods is intended and expected, expanding across I-295 into the rest of Ward 7 and even into Ward 8 over time.

What Are the Goals of the DC Promise Neighborhood Initiative?

The ultimate goal of the DC Promise Neighborhood Initiative is to advance children successfully through school, into college, and onto successful careers. To achieve this, the initiative will mirror the “Five Promises” of the America’s Promise Alliance, which state that each child will benefit from:

- **Caring adults** who provide support and guidance – in their families, at schools, and in their communities.
- **Physical and emotional safety wherever they are** — from the actual places of families, schools, neighborhoods and communities to the virtual places of media.
- **A healthy start** comprised of regular health check-ups and needed treatment, good nutrition and exercise, healthy skills and knowledge, and good role models of physical and psychological health.
- **An effective education** that equips them for successful work and lifelong learning.
- **Opportunities to help others** in their families, at schools and in their communities.

Who is Planning the DC Promise Neighborhood?

In October 2008, Irasema Salcido, the founder of the Cesar Chavez Public Charter Schools for Public Policy, convened a small group of community residents and other school supporters to develop a Promise Neighborhood initiative in the neighborhoods adjacent to the Chavez Ward 7 campus in Parkside-Kenilworth. As a recognized leader in the DC Charter School movement, Mrs. Salcido’s immediate goal was to create a strong educational pipeline from birth through elementary school so that students arrive at the Chavez Parkside middle school campus prepared to succeed. Roughly one-third of Chavez Parkside students reside in the immediate neighborhood and the vast majority hail from Ward 7. In addition, Mrs. Salcido and the committee recognized the importance of attaining high test scores, grades, and college attainment rates for children throughout the community anchored by Chavez and its neighboring elementary schools.

Since those early days, many influential partners have joined the effort. Organizations represented on the Steering Committee include: America’s Promise Alliance, City Interests, the Chavez Schools, DC Appleseed, the Eastland Gardens Civic Association, the East River Family Strengthening Collaborative, the Skadden Arps law firm, and the Urban Institute. In addition, dozens of others have pledged their support; to name a few: the ANC 7D, the Annie E. Casey Foundation, the AT&T Foundation, Bethesda New Life Gospel Church, the Buffet Early Education Fund & the Bounce Learning Network (which support Educare, a nationally recognized 0 – 5 effort), the Children’s National Medical Center, the Citybridge Foundation, DC Council Chairman Vincent Gray, DC LISC, the England Family Foundation, the Horning Family Fund, McKinsey & Co., Microsoft, the Moran Family Foundation, Office of the Deputy Mayor for Education, Prince Charitable Trusts, Ward 7 DC Councilmember Yvette Alexander, and Zion Baptist Church of Eastland Gardens. Programmatically, the partners listed above already offer the core pieces of the educational pipeline, as well as crucial wrap-around services and sophisticated technical assistance capacity.