



# The Chicago Neighborhood Development Awards

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## Friend of the Neighborhoods, 2006

**James Capraro**  
**Executive Director**  
**Greater Southwest Development Corporation**

One of the pioneers of the community development movement when he helped found the Greater Southwest Development Corporation (GSDC) in 1974, Jim Capraro is now a nationally recognized leader with a stunning list of accomplishments that have changed lives and transformed the heart not only of his Southwest Side neighborhood, but influenced the redevelopment of communities throughout the city of Chicago.



Over the past 25 years, with Jim at the helm, GSDC has attracted \$492 million to the Southwest Side in real estate development. Jim led the establishment of the Greater Southwest Model Industrial Corridor, which galvanized the area's commercial zone, saving and creating thousands of jobs. The Western Avenue Retail Corridor, another GSDC project, has attracted more than \$100 million in new retail development, generating millions for local businesses, bolstering the tax base and creating hundreds more jobs.

Jim also actively engaged in a campaign to preserve and create quality, affordable housing opportunities. Since 1992, GSDC has successfully constructed three senior housing developments; it has purchased and substantially rehabilitated eight properties; and GSDC offers a variety of programs that provide educational opportunities, technical assistance, and financial support to area residents.

Most recently, Jim was heralded nationwide for his campaign to win passage of landmark anti-predatory lending legislation aimed to curb a spate of foreclosures in his neighborhood.

But what makes Jim this year's Friend of the Neighborhoods is that he has shared his knowledge and experience, as mentor and counselor, with countless others in the field and his work has become a model both locally and nationally. Indeed Jim's name is associated with nearly every important advance made in the field of community development in Chicago, such as the passage of the Community Reinvestment Act, the founding of CANDO, the protection under law of job-producing neighborhood industrial areas, re-use of brownfields, neighborhood-led commercial/retail development, and most recently the fight against predatory lending.

For his ability to see and forge a healthy community with diverse populations, good housing options, a vibrant economy, and strong social services and civic institutions and to be the teacher and friend of so many others who are sharing the struggle, Jim Capraro is named this year's Friend of the Neighborhoods.