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Press Release to Southwest Detroit Business Association News, February 17, 2007

For Immediate Release

Agency links good alleys, and good parks and good environment for kids – Thank you, LISC and Skillman!

Alleys will be cleaned up by workers with chainsaws and dump trucks. City workers will come through with graders and gravel trucks to make the rough places smooth. Painters will follow, painting out the graffiti. Then youth will come through, led by trained artists, and will paint colorful murals in place of ugly graffiti.

All of this will be happening this spring and summer on the 20 blocks of a neighborhood that residents have decided to call “Springdale.” It is bounded by a West Vernor Highway in the north, Springwells on the east, the rail viaduct on the south, and Lawndale on the west. The agency leading the project is Neighborhood Centers Inc. (NCI), best known for its All Saints Neighborhood Center and Park at Longworth and Mullane. Dennis Nordmoe, NCI Director, says that good neighborhoods for children are neighborhoods that are clean and orderly. He says that the state of the alleys in southwest Detroit is a disgrace and an incentive for people to move out who otherwise could stay and provide leadership to the community. Overgrown alleys give encouragement to criminal activities and are dangerous environments for children. Yet, in the absence of decent parks, children often use the alleys for play while some alleys are in such terrible condition that adults stopped using them for access to their garages.

NCI got a grant from The Local Initiatives Support Corporation to clean and grade the alleys in the Springdale neighborhood to make it a healthier place and to give encouragement to residents who are considering fixing up their own homes. The grant will also pay for the mural project that will be coordinated by NCI's new youth development director, Christine Bell, MSW. Ms. Bell is working under a support from the Skillman Foundation to organize youth activities throughout Springwells Village neighborhoods including Springdale. Bell is organizing additional youth activities All Saints Neighborhood Center including Microsoft supported computer training programs for children and young people. Anyone interested in working with her on youth programs should call her at 313-841-4447.

In addition to the alley project, NCI is working on park improvements in Springwells Village. Its next target is the Lafayette Playlot on W. Lafayette St. The Skillman Foundation gave \$65,000 toward this project. NCI is raising an additional \$120,000 to complete the project. Other community development agencies in southwest Detroit are partnering with NCI in a group called the Springwells Village Community Development Collaborative to bring home repair funds and new housing into the neighborhood. The plan is to have a major impact on the Springdale neighborhood and then move quickly on to the further development of nearby neighborhoods. Nordmoe sees southwest Detroit is a place where successful families living in healthy neighborhoods will show all of Detroit how to achieve great lives for children.