

**BPI** Business and  
Professional People for  
the Public Interest  
*For a Just Society*  
**Annual Report 2013**



Recipient of the MacArthur Award for Creative and Effective Institutions



Business and  
Professional People for  
the Public Interest

*For a Just Society*

## Mission

BPI is a public interest law and policy center dedicated to addressing compelling issues of social justice and quality of life in the Chicago region.

## Vision

All people deserve equal justice and a quality of life that includes:

- Equal access to opportunity
- Healthy learning and living environments
- A voice in decisions that affect their lives

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*Gregory Grove, Artist*

*Mural in Legends South, Savoy Square Community Center  
(mixed-income development on former site of Robert Taylor Homes)*

## Dear Friends,

*At a certain point in the life of every organization it's tempting to fall into the "complacency trap"—the belief that we've seen it all before. So, after 45 years of dealing with some of society's most intractable social justice challenges, how does BPI remain fresh and creative in our approach?*

The complacency trap is especially perilous to an organization like ours, dedicated as we are to making change and charged with working to improve life opportunities for the most disadvantaged. That's why it's so important for BPI to relentlessly search for new ways to solve old problems. Here are a few ways we are going about this:

We are making significant headway with our early childhood learning initiative in the Altgeld Gardens development and three adjacent neighborhoods—a geographically isolated area home to over 4,000 low-income people, half of whom are children under 18, and nearly a thousand eight and under.

BPI launched this effort two years ago by forming a broad-based community coalition dedicated to increasing early learning opportunities for young kids living in the Altgeld-Riverdale neighborhood. Today, our coalition has grown to include 30 members. While our work at Altgeld is by no means complete, we're making great strides—and we're proud of what the community and BPI are accomplishing together.

Perhaps our most important achievement to date is making free doula and home visiting services available to all new Altgeld-Riverdale moms 21 years and under. With BPI support, Catholic Charities and Ounce of Prevention are providing these services, which have been shown to build stronger bonds of attachment between mother and child and lead to lifelong cognitive, social-emotional, and physical developmental benefits for the children.

BPI has also been working to confront another of our region's biggest challenges—the more than 200,000 vacant properties that put a huge strain on local governments and rip communities apart. We looked around the country for solutions and found a good one: land banking.

County Board President Toni Preckwinkle and Cook County Commissioner Bridget Gainer supplied extraordinary leadership last year to create the Cook County Land Bank, and BPI has been working with them every step of the way. Today, the Land Bank is up

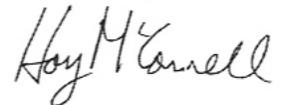
and running—with a strong board of directors, a new executive director, and some money in the bank.

In the area of political reform it has been a time of more questions than answers. The Yes! for Independent Maps redistricting reform initiative, which BPI actively supported, offered a good answer to the problem of politically drawn districts, but failed to collect the necessary signatures to put the question before voters on the November ballot. Much was learned, and we and our allies haven't closed the book on this important issue. Meanwhile, our lawsuit on behalf of the Cook County Inspector General regarding that office's authority to root out corruption in the independently elected units of Cook County government awaits a decision from the Court. Whatever the outcome, we plan to continue BPI's work to ensure that inspectors general have the independence and authority necessary to achieve more open, honest, and effective government in Illinois.

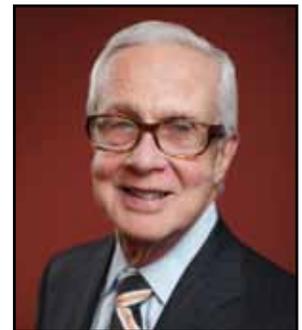
Finally, this year marked the midpoint of our Visiting Fellow in Urban Poverty program in partnership with Loyola's Center on Urban Research and Learning. Our two-year dive into the myriad issues surrounding urban poverty has already led to new insights into BPI's current work and sparked fresh ideas for our future course. You can read more about this important undertaking on page eight of this report.

None of this growth and progress would be possible without the unwavering support of our friends, community partners, and generous funders. We're grateful to each of you for your commitment to social justice and the vital role you play in advancing the BPI cause.

Sincerely,



**Nicholas J. Brunick**  
Board President



**E. Hoy McConnell, II**  
Executive Director



## Community-Powered Early Learning Collaboration in the Altgeld-Riverdale Community

Now in its second year, BPI's public housing and public education teams continue to work with the local community on the Far South Side in the Altgeld-Riverdale Early Learning Initiative. This effort is led by a growing and diverse coalition of 30 member organizations, all committed to making the Altgeld-Riverdale community one where all children have the tools and framework to succeed educationally by the time they reach third grade. Members include the local child care centers, elementary schools, library, park district, youth development organizations, faith-based organizations, and residents.

BPI convened the Altgeld-Riverdale Early Learning Coalition under the belief that any lasting change would have to come from the efforts of those who live and work in the community. This initiative has seen steady progress on a number of fronts.

The Coalition's new service for community residents, the Altgeld-Riverdale Parenting Program, has three separate components: doula (birthing and coaching) services, home visiting services, and parent support groups. Among other things, doulas provide information on infant cognitive and social-emotional development, assistance navigating medical support and social services, and parenting support until the infant

reaches three months. At this stage, a family support worker takes over providing in-person home visiting services, counseling on infant developmental phases, information on the importance of talking and reading to babies, screening for developmental delays, and registration help for pre-K programs. Home visitors also support parents in achieving personal education and employment goals.

Complementing both doula and home visiting services are weekly support groups for pregnant and parenting moms, facilitated by the family support workers and doulas. On a weekly basis, these groups meet to discuss a variety of issues, including dealing with post-partum depression, difficulty with fussy babies, relationship and family challenges, as well as problems at work or school.

As more research documents the importance of doula and home visiting programs to the cognitive, social-emotional, and physical development of children and strengthening the bonds of attachment between parent and child, the Altgeld-Riverdale Parenting Program is fulfilling a singularly vital role in its community.

The Coalition has also dedicated itself to making sure the multiple organizations providing out-of-school-time programs are working together and providing a diverse menu of programs for young children. Just this

“I am so happy and proud to know that our doula and home visiting program is up and running. I’m also proud of how the different Coalition agencies have worked together. I see the results from it every day in my community—like the safety patrol that makes sure our children get to and from school safely, the library and its programs for the schools, and the collaboration between the pre-schools and grammar schools. I have seen much progress in the past year.

Most of all, I am proud of all our members of the Early Learning Coalition.”

—Ms. Theresa Hollins, Community Leader

year, a group of three social service providers and BPI successfully launched “Camp Fit Kids,” a full-day camp for children four to twelve. Located at a local elementary school, Camp Fit Kids provides a range of activities designed to improve children’s fitness, nutrition, and social-emotional and academic well-being.

Until formation of the Altgeld-Riverdale Early Learning Coalition, collaborations like Camp Fit Kids were rare but are now becoming more common. In fact, for the first time, local pre-K and kindergarten teachers from the four elementary schools and the child care centers are working together to make sure young children have a successful entry into kindergarten.

Finally, in order to improve communication and connections among the people and organizations of Altgeld-Riverdale, the Coalition, with BPI’s assistance, has launched its own community portal or website, known as The Community Beat ([thecommunitybeat.org](http://thecommunitybeat.org)). It has become a popular way for everyone to stay current on local news and events.

With much remaining to be accomplished, the Altgeld-Riverdale Early Learning Collaboration is making important strides in strengthening early learning opportunities for the residents of this community.

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I love this program. The Altgeld-Riverdale Parenting Program has helped me get in touch with my feelings about parenting. I feel comfortable being able to talk and share my parenting experiences with my peers without feeling judged. My social workers meet with me and my daughter two times a month to give me information and fun activities that help me to understand her development.”

— Brianna Brooks, New Parent

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## Why Does BPI Support Mixed-Income Housing Development?

their BPI's longstanding support of mixed-income redevelopment of neighborhoods once dominated by large public housing developments is sometimes the subject of debate—especially in light of Chicago's affordable housing crisis. Why do we think that low-income Chicago children, families, and individuals are better served by communities that comprise a mix of incomes?

Two key factors lie at the heart of BPI's support for residential developments that include housing affordable to people with a range of incomes: conviction and evidence.

First, it is our conviction that all people deserve to live in safe, healthy, thriving neighborhoods with good schools, parks, community centers, stores, and all the things that make a geographic space a real community.

Second, an overwhelming body of research documents that living in concentrated urban poverty, often in a severely distressed urban neighborhood, is likely to have seriously harmful consequences. Hundreds of studies, writes famed scholar William Julius Wilson, demonstrate an array of damaging effects on individuals including lower educational achievement, joblessness, and exposure to crime. "Concentrated poverty," Wilson concludes, "adversely affects one's chances in life." And now, new research has demonstrated that poverty—and

the trauma that often accompanies it—affects one's very life with adverse effects on brain development, health, and life expectancy. Two recent widely acclaimed books by scholars Robert Sampson and Patrick Sharkey not only reach the same conclusion but show that these effects, which diminish the life prospects of children and adults, can persist through generations.

Mixed-income development is designed to confront the effects of concentrated poverty. It is intended to enable public housing families to live in well-working communities that have a range of household incomes as well as better educational and economic opportunities.

Critics of the mixed-income approach make three major arguments. The first is that mixed-income development frequently causes disruption in the lives of the families displaced by redevelopment as well as a reduction in the number of public housing units. The second is that studies do not show conclusively that mixed-income communities lead to improved outcomes—for example, higher incomes—for their public housing residents. The third criticism is that mixed-income developments generally do not accommodate public housing households with the most acute needs, such as very large families and those with mental or physical disabilities or skill deficits that make stable employment impossible.

“I’m deeply involved in my community of Oakwood Shores and have worked to improve the living conditions for my neighbors and me. Growing up in mixed-income housing, I’ve seen some of the positive and negative aspects of living here—it’s constantly a work in progress. Over the years, however, and with residents devoting their time and energy, my community has flourished and become so much more than just a mixed-income housing development. Even though I’m heading off to college next year, I’ll always be proud to call Oakwood Shores home.”

— *Chance Mitchell*  
Oakwood Shores Resident and BPI Intern

BPI believes the “disruption in lives” criticism is a problem of implementation—not a conceptual defect. It is true that in the development of many mixed-income communities, more could and should be done to minimize displacement and assure replacement units are provided in neighborhoods without concentrated poverty. BPI and others have worked since Chicago’s Plan for Transformation began in 1999 to address the issues of relocation and return.

The second criticism expects certain outcomes much too soon. Many adults who have spent the entirety of their lives in concentrated poverty, as have many public housing residents, face an array of challenges that cannot be quickly overcome. Improved life outcomes for these adults is not a short-term process. Therefore, we believe that important outcomes, such as children’s graduation rates, their college attendance, the life patterns of their children, are meaningful indicators of progress. For public housing families who have moved into mixed-income developments, it is still too soon to have reliable data on these important measures. Nevertheless, common sense tells us that children who grow up in safe neighborhoods with good schools are likely to fare better in life than children who grow up in unsafe neighborhoods attending low-performing schools.

The third criticism makes the “best” the enemy of the “good.” Mixed-income housing cannot resolve all of the challenges of concentrated poverty, but it can provide better life circumstances and expanded opportunity for many thousands of families. Families with the deepest needs require different policies and programs, and public housing is often not the best solution for them. This, however, is not a reason to forego the important benefits mixed-income living does provide for those who are able to take advantage of this option.

The report card on the nation’s fifty-year record of trying to improve severely distressed urban neighborhoods by fixing up their infrastructures and service systems is extremely disappointing. BPI believes that mixed-income redevelopment represents a promising alternative—in fact, is one of society’s best shots at providing significantly improved life opportunities for thousands of families and individuals who live in concentrated poverty and deserve better. We see mixed-income development as a most promising way to achieve this goal for the most people. This is why BPI supports it.



## A Prescription for Saving Our Neighborhoods

If you are a casual consumer of news about the housing market, you might feel a bit confused. One day's stories cite a steep drop in foreclosure activity and the number of people at risk of losing their homes. Another day, you read about communities with an overwhelming number of vacant properties and no buyers—even at very low prices. Then the next day, you learn about neighborhoods where full-time workers with decent salaries can't afford the rents.

What's going on? The answer lies in the fact that the housing market is a reflection of the larger economy. All the trends that shape the economy also shape our neighborhoods, our cities, and our region. So, it's true that the steady growth in the number of jobs means more people are able to make regular mortgage payments. More young families are able to buy homes. More recent college graduates are able to move out of their parents' homes into their own apartments.

At the same time, however, there are still too few jobs. And many of the jobs being created pay less than the jobs they replaced. So even though the number of people at risk of foreclosure has fallen by about half in the last few years, it remains twice as high as normal. Too many people still struggle to find safe, decent

affordable housing. Too many neighborhoods struggle to keep buildings safe and occupied.

This combination—of growing stability and resurgent strength in some communities and dangerous instability and ongoing weakness in others—creates a number of major challenges. They help to define BPI's recent affordable housing work and our focus in the years ahead.

Here are three specific measures that we believe will strengthen our neighborhoods while increasing the availability of affordable housing throughout the region.

### **Seize the opportunities offered by stronger market neighborhoods to create affordable housing at no cost to taxpayers**

BPI wants to ensure that, as neighborhoods strengthen and prosper, as many people as possible are able to take advantage of this opportunity. Still, many working families and individuals find themselves priced out of more and more neighborhoods. Chicago's Affordable Requirements Ordinance can provide a partial solution. The City has agreed to review its ordinance, and this presents an opportunity to make important changes. In return for providing certain incentives to developers (e.g., allowing them to build a little more densely,

“The development of effective strategies to create and preserve affordable housing and to stabilize distressed neighborhoods requires an awareness of both local market conditions and the challenges lower-income residents face, as well as a deep understanding of the local, state, and national policy contexts. BPI is a critical resource for housing policy development in the region because they have invested the time to understand the issues and build the key relationships necessary to make an impact.”

— *Geoff Smith*

Executive Director of the Institute for Housing Studies  
at DePaul University

especially in places close to public transportation), they could be asked to step up their commitment to produce affordable housing. Such an approach would cost the city nothing while stimulating development, strengthening neighborhoods, and providing good housing for working families. Other cities have successfully used this approach. As a member of the Mayor’s Affordable Housing Task Force, BPI will press for creative approaches to increase the availability of affordable housing in Chicago.

### **Bring Down the High Cost of Building and Preserving Housing**

The slow but steady pace at which housing markets are improving in some neighborhoods is an encouraging sign. But many developers continue to say that Chicago is a less attractive place to do business than it might be. Building in Chicago is a very expensive proposition. Part of the problem lies in building code provisions that drive up costs without producing significant benefits. BPI is working with a diverse group of public and private interests to identify specific ways to bring down construction costs without sacrificing safety. Targeted building code reform will encourage investment in upgrading properties, helping to stabilize neighborhoods that have suffered the most in recent years.

### **Build the Infrastructure to Save Threatened Neighborhoods**

In this uneven recovery, too many vacant properties cause harm to many communities, and the private market alone can’t solve the problem. BPI has been instrumental in helping to create the Cook County Land Bank Authority, a new public entity charged with turning troubled properties into community assets. Land banks can demolish buildings that can’t be saved and fix problems that make the properties unappealing. They can help preserve affordable housing by converting vacant buildings into affordable rental property and, in the process, stabilize neighborhoods. In some of the hardest hit communities such as Flint, Michigan, and Cleveland, Ohio, land banks have made a huge difference.

The Cook County Land Bank has the potential to do the same; however, it doesn’t yet have the resources it requires to make a difference in all the communities that need help. If support for the Cook County Land Bank reaches levels achieved by land banks in other large metro areas, it will be able to improve thousands of properties across the county. BPI will continue to play an active role in making sure the Cook County Land Bank generates the resources necessary to fulfill its great promise.



## Marking Year One: BPI's Visiting Fellow in Urban Poverty Program

After nearly 45 years of striving to advance social justice, it's fair to say that the common overarching issue BPI confronts in just about all of our work is concentrated urban poverty. This is precisely why we decided to use part of the grant we received as a recipient of the 2012 MacArthur Award for Creative and Effective Institutions to take BPI on a rigorous two-year exploration of deep and persistent poverty in our country and the Chicago region—causes, effects, and emerging solutions. To partner with us in this “intellectual refueling,” we chose the Loyola University Center on Urban Research and Learning (CURL) to serve as our Visiting Fellow in Urban Poverty.

This June marked the midpoint of our journey. During this time, BPI program staff and a number of our directors have met each month with CURL Director Dr. Philip Nyden and Associate Research Professor Dr. Christine George for a half-day “Knowledge Exchange,” designed to tackle a different aspect of the poverty challenge by digging into the latest research and leading-edge thinking.

At each Knowledge Exchange, we invite one of the leading experts in the field to join us as we mutually explore the various dimensions of urban poverty always with the goal of challenging ourselves to answer these questions: How is this particular issue relevant to BPI? Do we have the resources and capabilities to do something meaningful about it?

To date, we've explored such issues as the dynamics of intergenerational poverty, growing suburbanization of poverty, latest trends in housing mobility strategies, impact of stress and trauma on children living in disadvantaged neighborhoods, the learning gap between poor students of color and their wealthier counterparts, and the critical importance of early learning and its lifelong benefits—especially for children growing up in poverty.

These are complex, challenging topics, and each has stimulated a provocative conversation during our half-day sessions. It's too early to draw any conclusions about how specifically this will affect our program agenda and policy efforts down the road, but it's fair to say that the deeper our examination takes us, the more apparent it becomes that addressing the impact of concentrated urban poverty through a child-focused perspective will be increasingly important to BPI.

“A child who returns home from a stimulating educational setting to a stressed family environment with few learning resources and parents who are worried about making ends meet is likely to do less well than a child who experiences enriching environments both in and outside the home.

Human capital two-generation approaches go about changing the child by fostering learning and social competence through an early education program and changing the child’s home environment by promoting parents’ education, employment and income.”

—*Lindsay Chase-Lansdale and Jeanne Brooks-Gunn*  
“Two-Generation Approaches in the Twenty-First Century.”

One thing we do know for sure: our exploration will help keep BPI the learning, solution-seeking, creative, and deeply committed organization it’s always been. We are eager to begin year two of this endeavor and look forward to sharing with you how our discoveries will impact BPI’s priorities and program agenda in the years to come.

“An important lesson to draw from the entire literature on successful early interventions is that it is the social skills and motivation of the child that are more easily altered—not IQ. These social and emotional skills affect performance in school and in the workplace. We too often have a bias toward believing that only cognitive skills are of fundamental importance to success in life.”

—*James J. Heckman*, “Invest in the Very Young”

“Nationwide metropolitan residential racial segregation today results largely from the ongoing effects of racially explicit government policies, quite similar to Jim Crow in the U.S. South and apartheid in South Africa. These government policies, although no longer explicit, had and continue to have enduring effects. Policies of de jure residential segregation have been well-documented but largely forgotten, including by many contemporary advocates of racial equality.”

—*Richard Rothstein*, “Race Remains the American Dilemma”



## Keeping Government Accountable in Illinois

### Empowering Inspectors General

The Illinois Constitution dealt Cook County a strange hand. The President of the Cook County Board is elected from the county at large and is designated “chief executive officer of the county.” Yet important county officials—such as the Sheriff, the County Clerk, and the Treasurer—are separately elected. Each of these elected county officials is funded with county money, yet what authority does the “chief executive officer” or the County Board, for that matter, have over these separately elected officials?

Good question. Not explicitly answered by the Illinois Constitution. To be answered, in part, however, by a lawsuit in which BPI attorneys are representing the Independent Inspector General (IIG) of Cook County.

The Cook County IIG is charged with investigating such things as waste and fraud in the operation of county offices, including the offices of the elected officials. The ordinance also provides that all county officers are to cooperate with IIG investigations.

Some county officials don’t like that. Though they accept the county’s money, they say they are responsible not to the county but to the people who elected them. So when the IIG launched an investigation of possible wrongdoing in the office of the separately elected Cook County Assessor, cooperation wasn’t forthcoming. A subpoena was served and ignored—and a lawsuit followed. Must the Assessor respond to the subpoena or not?

The case is now before a Cook County Judge but is likely to wind up in the Illinois Supreme Court. Stay tuned to learn how this hand plays out.

### Reforming the Illinois Redistricting Process

It was an ambitious undertaking from the outset: Could Illinois establish a way of drawing legislative maps that took the process out of the hands of the politicians and put it into the hands of an independent commission? That was the question posed by Yes! for Independent Maps, an independent ballot committee actively supported by the entire CHANGE Illinois! coalition, including BPI Directors Deborah Harrington, Frank Beal, and Hoy McConnell.

The proposed constitutional amendment would take the job of drawing legislative boundaries away from lawmakers, whose goal is to get re-elected, and assign the responsibility to a panel of citizens whose goal is to empower voters. What would a fair map do? It would put elections more directly in the hands of voters, and election results would not be determined by partisan gerrymandering.

In order to put this reform initiative before Illinois voters, the committee needed to obtain 300,000 voter signatures. After a prodigious effort, Yes! for Independent Maps unfortunately fell short of that number.

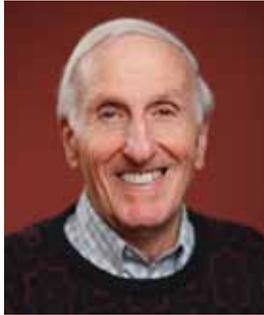
A subsequent judicial ruling stopped further action this year, but left the door open to a renewal effort in the next election cycle.

As BPI’s Deborah Harrington stated, in her role as chair of the Yes! campaign, “We will put the lessons learned in this campaign and from the judge’s ruling to good use. We still have at least two more statewide elections—in 2016 and 2018—to bring a redistricting effort before voters.”

## BPI Staff



**Marissa Manos**  
*Administrative Director*



**Alex Polikoff**  
*Co-Director, Public Housing  
Senior Staff Counsel*



**Angela Bailey**  
*Senior Education Associate*



**Susannah Levine**  
*Senior Policy Analyst*



**Ellen Elias**  
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**Karen Bemis**  
*Polikoff-Gautreaux Fellow  
Staff Counsel*



**Hoy McConnell**  
*Executive Director*



**Em Hall**  
*Communications Manager*



**Gloria Gatz**  
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*Director, Affordable Housing  
Senior Staff Counsel*



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**Julie Elena Brown**  
*Co-Director, Public Housing  
Senior Staff Counsel*



**Betsy Lassar**  
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**Justin Tresnowski**  
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**Deborah Johnson**  
*Receptionist*



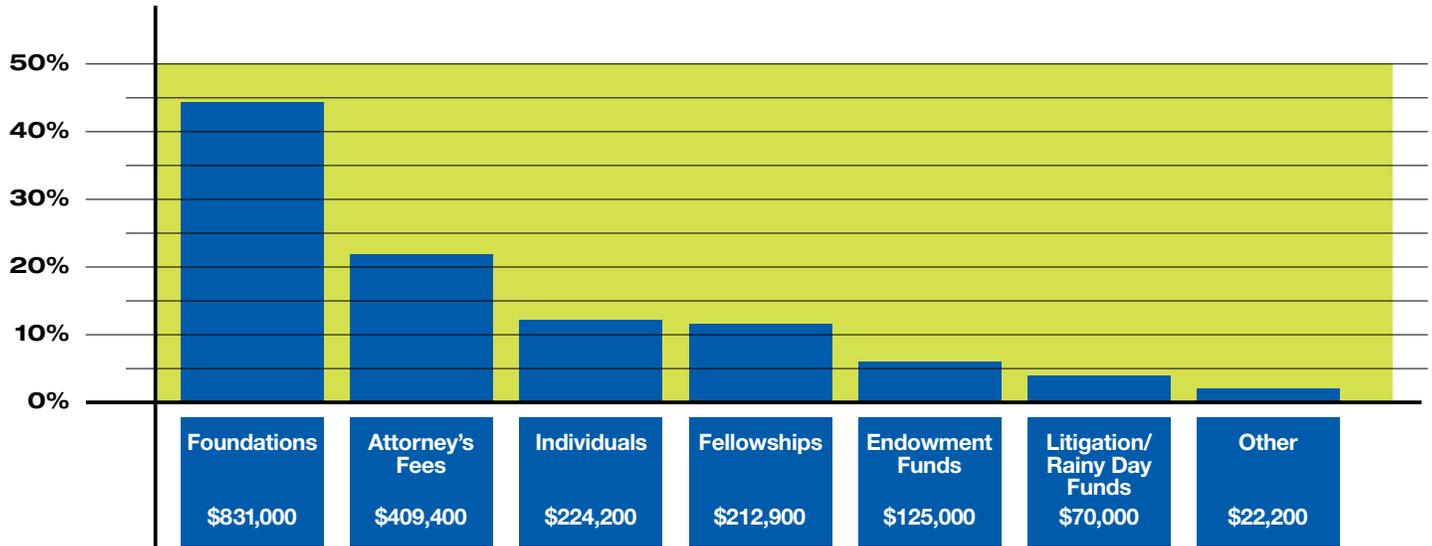
**Kim Zalent**  
*Director, Public Education*

## 2013 Financials\*

- Foundations and attorney's fees contributed two-thirds of BPI operating funds in 2013.
- Over three-quarters of funds were used to support BPI personnel and programs.
- Operating revenue exceeded expenses, resulting in an increase to operating reserves of \$51,700.

Sources of Funds  
Total — \$1,894,700

*\*/Unaudited.*



Uses of Funds  
Total — \$1,894,700



# 2013 Contributions

January 1, 2013 — December 31, 2013

## INDIVIDUAL CONTRIBUTORS

### \$25,000

Special gift to support the Altgeld-Riverdale Early Learning Initiative in honor of Steven Kersten, BPI Board President 2008 - 2012:

Paul C. Gearen  
Priscilla L. Kersten  
Mark A. Barbato

### \$10,000 - \$24,999

Sheldon Baskin and Judy Wise  
Steven and Priscilla Kersten  
Hoy and Patti McConnell

### \$5,000 - \$9,999

Lucy and Peter Ascoli  
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Gail Pinsky Gottlieb  
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Iris Krieg and James Hardy  
Susan Larson  
Howard Learner and  
Lauren Rosenthal  
Paul Lehman and Ronna Stamm  
Rosanna A. Márquez

## 2013 Contributions (continued)

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Ronald and Audrey Grzywinski  
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Dawn M. Stockmo  
Susana Vasquez  
Courtney and Alex Weil  
Ernest C. Wentcher (*deceased*)  
Kristine Westerberg  
Ann S. Wolff

### Up to \$249

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Robert Andrews  
Aya Barnea and Jacob Lessem  
Olga Baron  
Holly Bartecki  
Ron and 'Queta Bauer  
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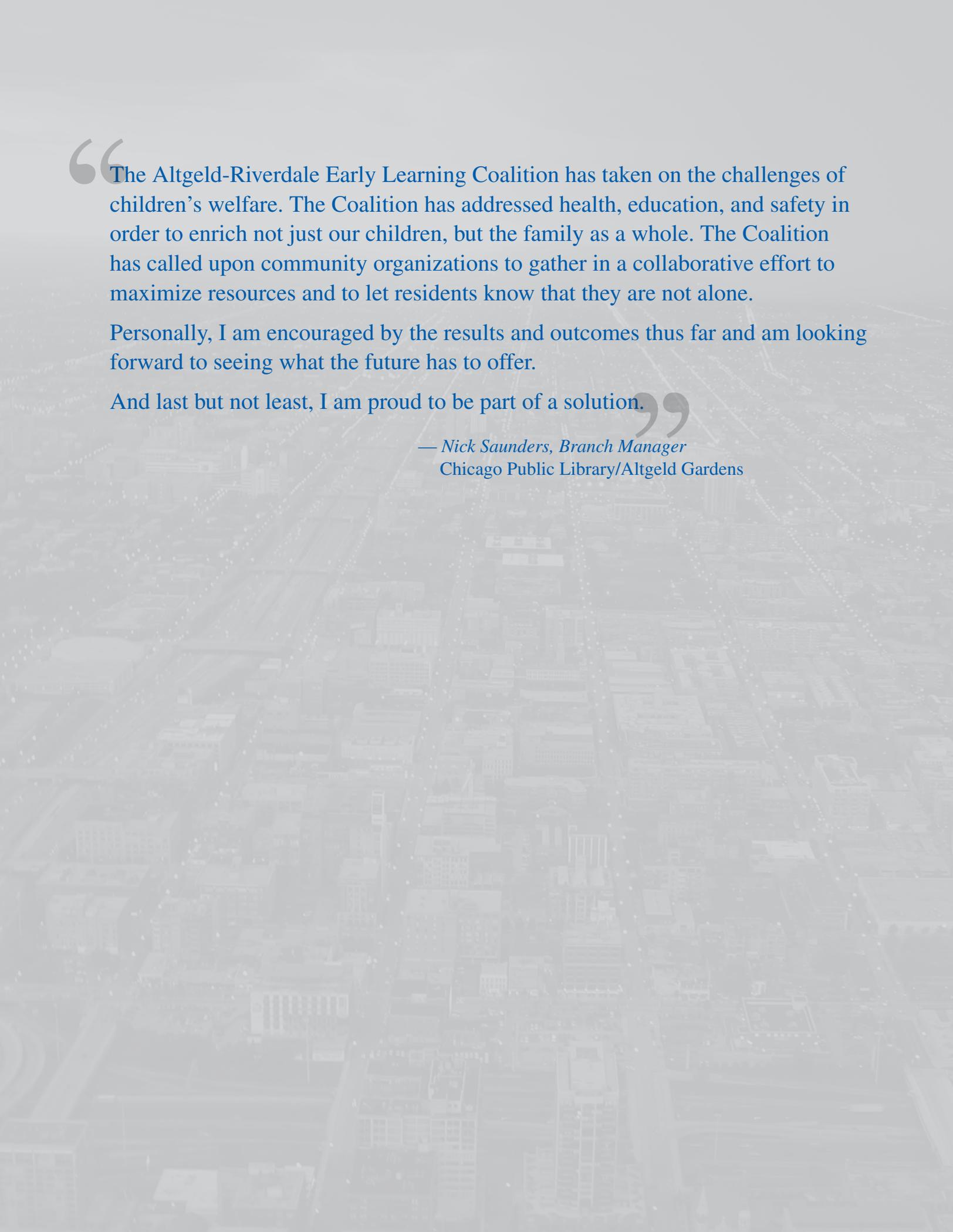
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An aerial, high-angle photograph of a city grid, showing a dense pattern of streets and buildings. The image is faded and serves as a background for the text.

“The Altgeld-Riverdale Early Learning Coalition has taken on the challenges of children’s welfare. The Coalition has addressed health, education, and safety in order to enrich not just our children, but the family as a whole. The Coalition has called upon community organizations to gather in a collaborative effort to maximize resources and to let residents know that they are not alone.

Personally, I am encouraged by the results and outcomes thus far and am looking forward to seeing what the future has to offer.

And last but not least, I am proud to be part of a solution.”

— Nick Saunders, Branch Manager  
Chicago Public Library/Altgeld Gardens

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