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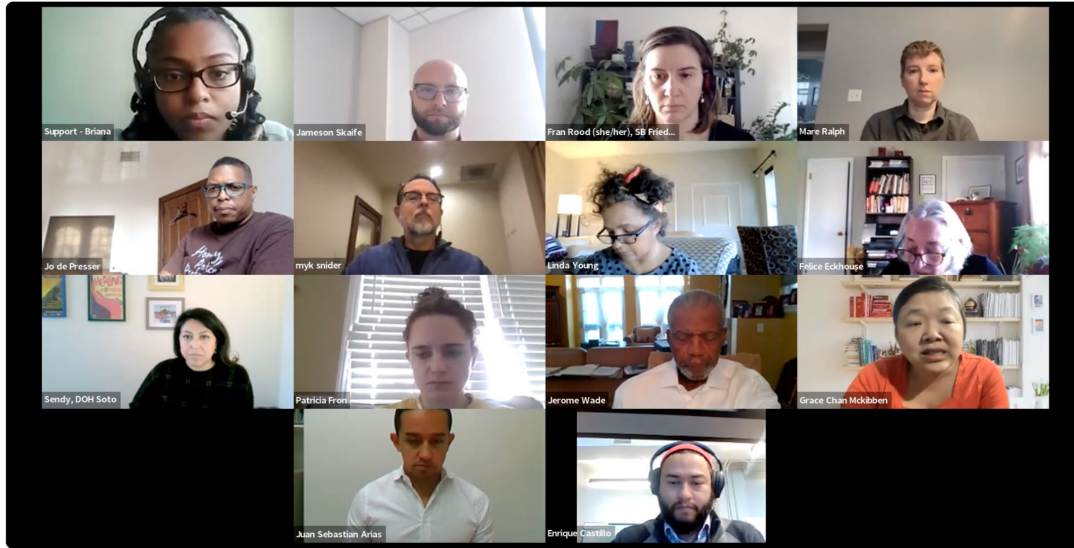
Housing + Neighborhoods Meeting #7

December 2, 2021, 10:00AM | 2 hours

Documented by: Leon Downs

ATTENDEES

- Briana (Facilitator)
- Fran Rood
- Sendy Soto
- Jerome Wade
- Ann McKenzie
- Enrique Castillo
- Patricia Fron
- Grace Chan McKibben
- Jameson Skaife
- Juan Sebastian Arias
- Jessie Wang
- Dalia Aragon
- Victoria Moreno
- Freda Madison
- Myk Snider
- Mare Ralph
- Linda Young
- Jackie Paige
- Patrick Murphey
- Felice Eckhouse
- Juan Luna Nunez
- Michelle Merritt
- Jo de Presser



MEETING GOAL

The primary goal of this meeting was to succinctly refine objectives by incorporating feedback from the Advisory Committee, and clarify the language before moving on to the policy development stage.

WHERE WE ARE



Step 1
We Are
Setting the Stage



Step 2
We Have and Need
Develop A Policy Toolkit



Step 3
We Will
Set Policy Framework

KEY TAKEAWAYS

1

How can the City be more responsive to its communities? The onus cannot fully fall on the communities to be constantly engaged. The City should bear a greater level of accountability and responsibility to its underserved constituents going forward.

2

The framework for housing and neighborhood objectives needs to be strong enough to withstand not only regular political changes but also dramatic changes like the past two years of the pandemic. Community engagement should be integral to this and be a part of the final policy solution(s).

3

Evaluation and accountability methods should be incorporated so that the objectives are tested, assessed, and iterated on if needed.

CONVERSATION HIGHLIGHTS

“Most recently, we did some small business studies to look at how small businesses were doing during the pandemic, and discovered that a lot of the small businesses in the Chinatown and surrounding areas do not typically access government grants and loans. A lot of the funding had been either borrowing from family and friends, or just trying to use non-traditional ways to get collateral.”

Grace Chan McKibben | Coalition for a Better Chinese American Community (CBCAC), Executive Director

“The neighborhood CVS got closed down one year or so ago, somehow the dollar store across the street is still open.”

Chicago Resident | From the PhotoVoice Workshop Submission

“I recognize that all of our 77 communities are unique, and I respect that, but we cannot have aldermanic prerogatives different in 77 communities. I don’t believe that’s contributed to any equitable distribution of resources across the city of Chicago [...] Us Chicagoans should identify a baseline, what we expect all communities in Chicago to have. Clean air, safe water, access to healthy food, all of that, [...] we need to quantify that.”

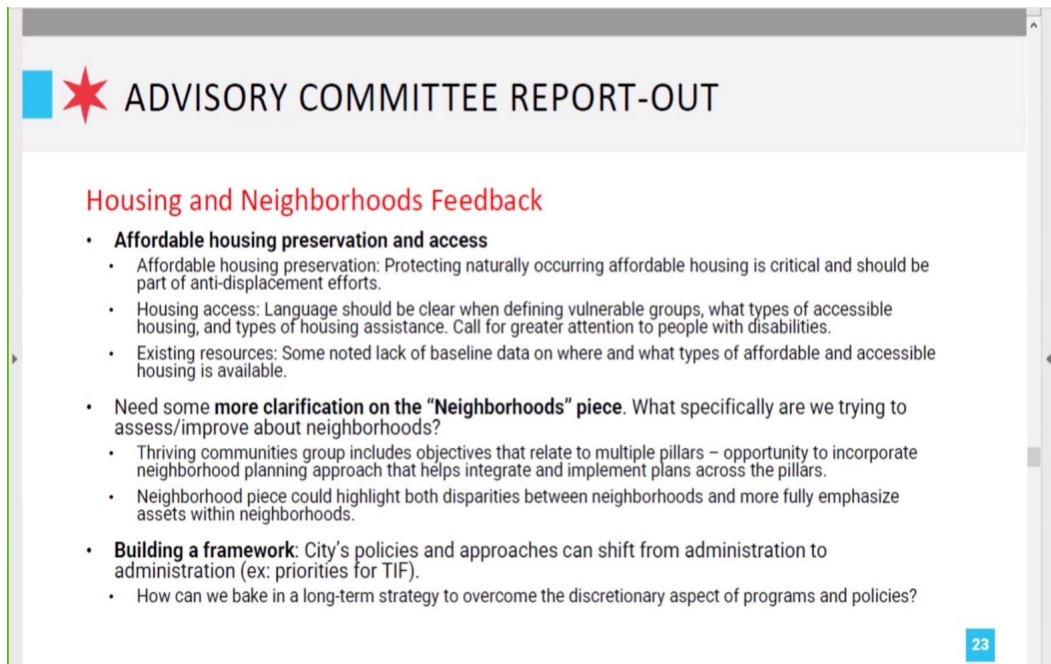
Linda Young | Central South Shore Area Council, President

“A lot of elected officials and leadership just flout the laws — they just don’t follow them. Many of them are going to jail right now because they don’t follow the law. [...] How does our municipal governance self-police itself? Because the Inspector General has no authority over them, and they’ve stripped the IG of its authority, so we can make all of these recommendations ad nauseum, but if they don’t follow them, then what does it all mean?”

Jackie Paige | Housing & Neighborhoods Volunteer

NOTES

- Grace Chan McKibben, a pillar community partner with Coalition for a Better Chinese American Community (CBCAC), opened the discussion on increasing civic engagement and education among Chinese communities, as well as We Will Chicago's Chinatown Vision Plan. The Chinatown Vision Plan has been focusing on getting out the vote, drawing an equitable redistricted Census map, beautifying its riverfront, building more neighborhood schools, and encouraging a dynamic and active Chinese American community.
- Michelle Merritt, artist-Organizer with Honey Pot Performances, presented on the Housing and Neighborhood team's community engagement work in Englewood, Chinatown, Bronzeville and Pilsen. Merritt described the guiding vision for their engagement work as "engag[ing] in an asset-based approach to reimagine more equitable and just Chicago communities for the future," with special attention on systematic disinvestment. The "asset-based approach" deals with and attempts to expand the specific assets of the community, which include visual arts, music, and other commercial and/or cultural products. Common themes of being working class with histories of migration stood out among these communities.
 - While turnout was low for many of the team's engagement events, spanning from July through November 2021, they did receive community feedback on what residents needed for their neighborhoods to improve. Diverse and affordable housing options, development without displacement, urban improvements, repurposing vacant schools, multi-purpose community spaces, more local businesses and commercial activity, and improving area safety were among that list of needs.
 - The team also co-hosted a PhotoVoice Workshop, with the Public Health and Safety pillar, which was an engagement event where residents would submit a photo in their neighborhood and describe the significance of the location. The photos varied—some were traumatic, sites where murder had taken place, and others more insidious, a shut down CVS pharmacy next to a Dollar Store that remained open. The PhotoVoice Workshop was generally an opportunity for residents to make observations about their neighborhood and share their realities of life.
- Patricia Fron asked about opportunities to continue engaging folks who participate in events hosted by community partners. Juan Sebastian Arias said there is no structured form of continued engagement outside of the pillar surveys. Arias added that it would be great to keep a list of folks to be added to an email list for upcoming engagement opportunities and suggested people leading engagement efforts direct participants to sign up for updates on the We Will Chicago website. Jo de Presser with Honey Pot Performance added that they're collecting community members' data.
- Jessie Wang and Fran Rood presented on the Advisory Committee's feedback. The report said it's imperative for existing affordable housing to be protected as part of anti-displacement efforts. It also suggested clarifications around the language around defining "vulnerable groups," types of housing assistance available, and what specifically about neighborhoods is being targeted for improvement. The report back also inquired about how frameworks for their objectives can survive the shorter-term nature of programs and policies.

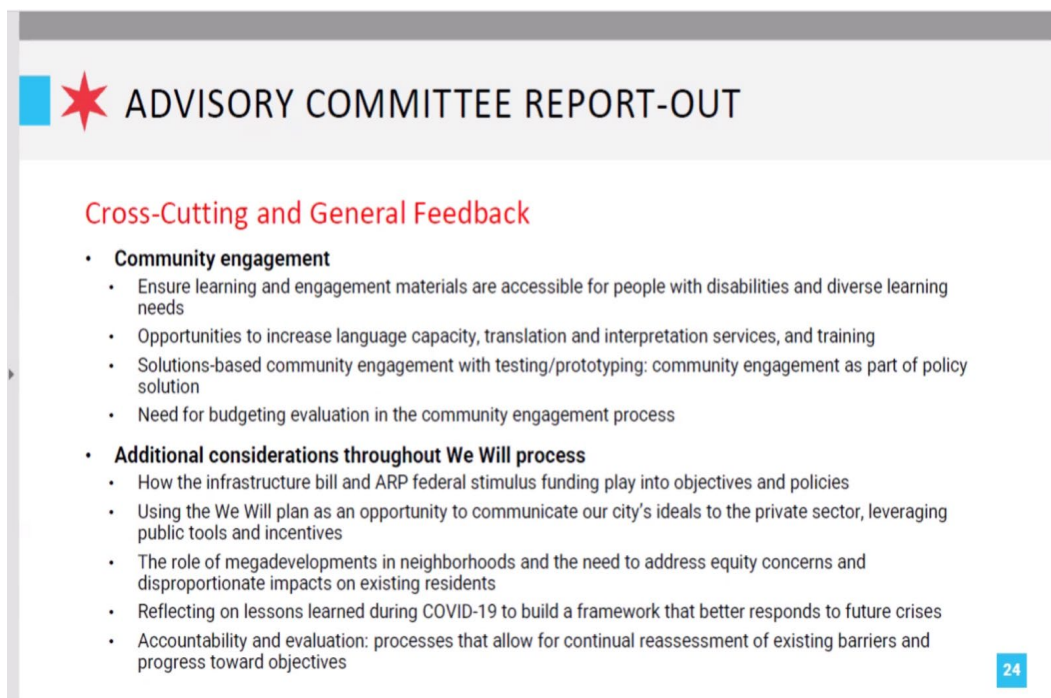


ADVISORY COMMITTEE REPORT-OUT

Housing and Neighborhoods Feedback

- **Affordable housing preservation and access**
 - Affordable housing preservation: Protecting naturally occurring affordable housing is critical and should be part of anti-displacement efforts.
 - Housing access: Language should be clear when defining vulnerable groups, what types of accessible housing, and types of housing assistance. Call for greater attention to people with disabilities.
 - Existing resources: Some noted lack of baseline data on where and what types of affordable and accessible housing is available.
- Need some **more clarification on the "Neighborhoods" piece**. What specifically are we trying to assess/improve about neighborhoods?
 - Thriving communities group includes objectives that relate to multiple pillars – opportunity to incorporate neighborhood planning approach that helps integrate and implement plans across the pillars.
 - Neighborhood piece could highlight both disparities between neighborhoods and more fully emphasize assets within neighborhoods.
- **Building a framework**: City's policies and approaches can shift from administration to administration (ex: priorities for TIF).
 - How can we bake in a long-term strategy to overcome the discretionary aspect of programs and policies?

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ADVISORY COMMITTEE REPORT-OUT

Cross-Cutting and General Feedback

- **Community engagement**
 - Ensure learning and engagement materials are accessible for people with disabilities and diverse learning needs
 - Opportunities to increase language capacity, translation and interpretation services, and training
 - Solutions-based community engagement with testing/prototyping: community engagement as part of policy solution
 - Need for budgeting evaluation in the community engagement process
- **Additional considerations throughout We Will process**
 - How the infrastructure bill and ARP federal stimulus funding play into objectives and policies
 - Using the We Will plan as an opportunity to communicate our city's ideals to the private sector, leveraging public tools and incentives
 - The role of megadevelopments in neighborhoods and the need to address equity concerns and disproportionate impacts on existing residents
 - Reflecting on lessons learned during COVID-19 to build a framework that better responds to future crises
 - Accountability and evaluation: processes that allow for continual reassessment of existing barriers and progress toward objectives

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- Fran Rood provided tips for refining objectives' language so that they're accessible to community members unfamiliar with policy. Pillar members then went into breakout groups to draft objectives corresponding to guiding questions.
- Participants agreed that the city has done a lackluster job of responding to the current housing crisis, which has led to nonprofits being overburdened with the responsibility of mediating it. The city needs a better framework for responding to crises and not letting communities fall through the cracks. Hopefully American Rescue Plan funds from the Federal Government can begin to ease the stress.

- Some participants lamented that Aldermen tend to be more responsive to wealthier, better resourced neighborhoods, which deserves examination. Some ideas on creating ward “scorecards” were floated, where residents could compare and contrast how alderpeople were handling various issues.
- Participants stated it would be constructive to better define and diagnose specific issues around neighborhoods, such as which asset inequities exist, and what services may be lacking from community to community (e.g., transit access and quality).

RESOURCES

Chinatown Community Vision Plan

[Community goals for Chinatown, in partnership with We Will.](#)

We Will Chicago, Housing + Neighborhoods

[We Will's Housing & Neighborhoods Pillar](#)

Metropolitan Planning Council

[Moving Toward Racial Equity in Chicago's Affordable Housing Policy](#)

Inside Chicago's Silent Housing Crisis: The Housing Cliff

[On Chicago Housing Crisis](#)

Urban Displacement Project

[Chicago - Gentrification and Displacement](#)

NEXT STEPS

- For the January 13 meeting, the team will be setting the policy framework and assessing performance. They'll discuss innovative policy directions, revisit HREIA and incorporate its framework, identify assets, barriers, and start work to build out the policy framework and performance metrics.