

PILLAR 2 OF 8



  **WE WILL CHICAGO**

CIVIC & COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Ensuring all Chicago stakeholders
have opportunities to help guide
the city's future

  **CHICAGO**
MAYOR LORI E. LIGHTFOOT

wewillchicago.com

CIVIC & COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT



As Chicago confronts challenges like racial health, wealth gaps and climate change, the City needs an engaged, empowered public that leverages the power of democracy to improve lives and communities.

Chicago needs its government entities to be responsive and accountable to evolving, community-identified concerns and solutions through engagement activities that promote democratic decision-making and trust-building. For decades, many Chicagoans, especially youth, communities of color and residents with disabilities, have been ignored, disengaged or shut out from local democratic processes.

While City agencies undertake community engagement efforts in some form, approaches are hampered by a lack of staff capacity, training, inter-agency coordination and procedures that promote accountability and accessibility. Public engagement by the city is therefore seldom anchored in trust, and residents perceive meetings as superficial afterthoughts that confirm predetermined solutions. Open-ended discussions without implementation have led to frustration and fatigue that continues to impair and reduce participation in democratic processes.



The goals of the Civic & Community Engagement Pillar include developing new, creative public agency tools and partnerships to proactively build trust with communities that have been historically excluded from many of the benefits of living in a great city like Chicago.



KEY TERMS

Civic Engagement

Involves any individual or group activity that addresses issues of public concern to protect public values or makes a change in a community. It is instrumental to democracy.

Community Engagement

The process of working collaboratively with and through groups of people affiliated by geographic proximity, special interest, or similar situations to address issues affecting their well-being. It is a powerful vehicle for environmental and behavioral changes that will improve the health of the community and its members. It often involves partnerships and coalitions that help mobilize resources and influence systems, change relationships among partners and serve as catalysts for changing policies, programs and practices (CDC, 1997).

Truth and Reconciliation

A process undertaken to discover and reveal past wrongdoing by a government (or non-state actors) in the hope of resolving conflict left over from the past.

“ Most people value their time, and if they feel like the process does not allow them to give input, they check out very quickly... I think there’s a difference between transparency and empowering people to contribute to the decision-making process. ”

– May Toy | Skinner Park Advisory Council, President

GOAL 1

Build more robust and effective civic infrastructure to enable Chicagoans to improve their lives and neighborhoods.

Because community engagement by the City of Chicago occurs across many different departments, sister agencies and entities like ward offices, there are no uniform standards on how to conduct public input and engagement processes that shape neighborhood-level and citywide decisions. Strengthening the ways Chicagoans can engage in public life includes enforcing systemic improvements to the City's processes and tapping into Chicago's abundance of neighborhood organizations that already bring neighbors together to strengthen their communities, and help residents access resources every day.

OBJECTIVES

To achieve this goal, We Will...

- 1.1** Create stronger, proactive, long-term partnerships with community organizations, block clubs and other coalitions to increase engagement.
- 1.2** Support and encourage more inclusive and creative community engagement across City departments and sister agencies such as the Chicago Transit Authority (CTA) and Chicago Public Libraries (CPL).
- 1.3** Work with the Native American and disability communities, among others, to articulate and collect both quantitative and qualitative data that represents those populations.

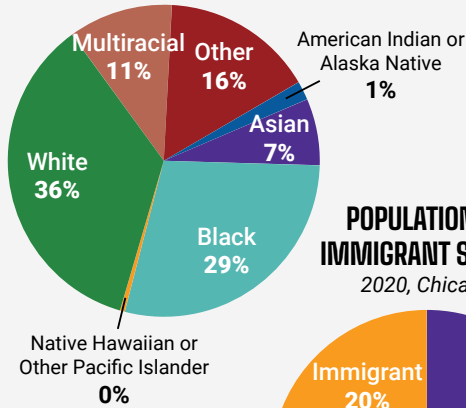


SUPPORTING DATA

Chicago's civic infrastructure should address the City's diverse population across race, ethnicity, gender, age, ability and immigration status.

POPULATION BY RACE

2020, Chicago



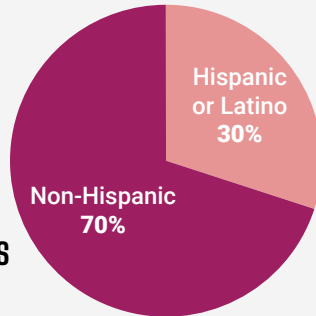
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
0%

Note: Population of two or more races includes roughly 37,000 Chicagoans who identify as mixed-race including any Native American ancestry.

Source: 2016–20 ACS 5-Year Estimates, 2020 U.S. Census, CMAP

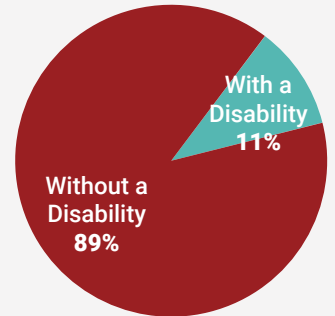
POPULATION BY ETHNICITY

2020, Chicago



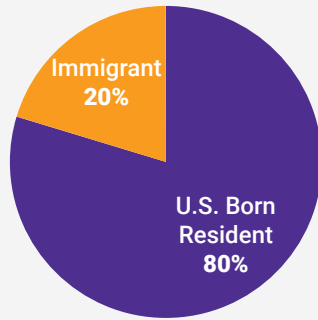
POPULATION BY DISABILITY

2020, Chicago



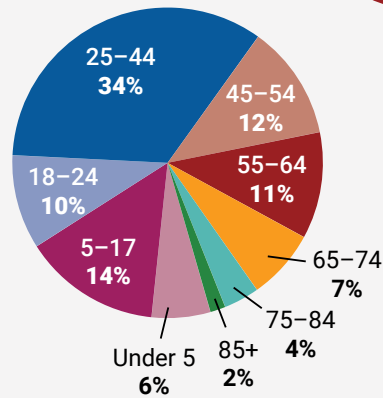
POPULATION BY IMMIGRANT STATUS

2020, Chicago



POPULATION BY AGE

2020, Chicago

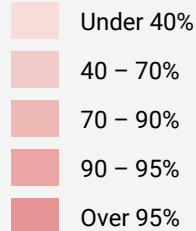


Most Chicago community areas have a non-white majority.

13% of the City's population is 65 years or older.

NON-WHITE POPULATION BY COMMUNITY AREA

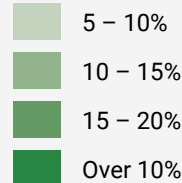
2016–20



Source: Chicago Health Atlas, City of Chicago

SENIOR (65+) POPULATION BY COMMUNITY AREA

2016–20



Source: Chicago Health Atlas, City of Chicago

BIG IDEAS

Use post-it note to share anything you'd like:



GOAL 2

Increase public access and participation in civic and democratic processes.

Local democracy is strongest when residents are deeply engaged—informing and shaping policies that directly impact their communities and advocating for issues critical to a more equitable and resilient future. Only an engaged public can hold political leaders accountable and elect leaders who are representative of Chicago's many diverse needs.

OBJECTIVES

To achieve this goal, We Will...

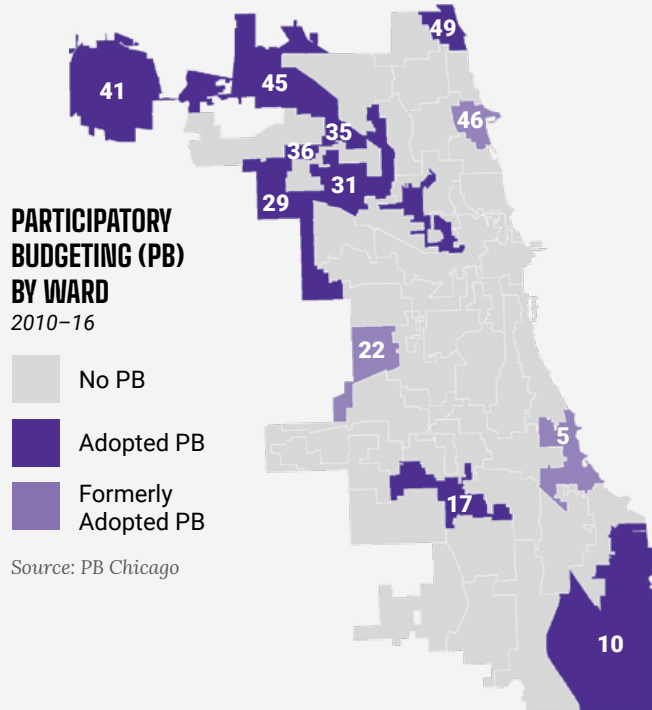
2.1 Ensure equitable access to virtual and in-person public meetings and processes across City departments and agencies.

2.2 Increase equitable representation and participation in government and democratic processes.

2.3 Welcome new immigrants and strengthen Chicago's leadership as a sanctuary city.

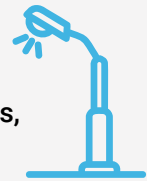
SUPPORTING DATA

Many Chicago wards utilize a participatory budgeting process.



251 PROJECTS were funded through the Participatory Budgeting process between 2010-16.

Selected projects included underpass murals, street lighting improvements, bike lanes, pedestrian improvements, street and sidewalk repairs, accessibility improvements, and tree planting.



“ I just wanted to bring transparency to the lens of accessibility. Sometimes organizations will feel like they’re being transparent, but the information that they’re providing is only in one language. ”

– Maureen Burns | Community Health Worker

Approximately 36% of Chicago residents speak a language other than English.

TOP 7 LANGUAGES BY PREFERENCES
2016-20, Chicago



Source: ACS 2016-20 5-Year Estimates

GOAL 3

Improve government transparency and Chicagoans' access to data.

Chicagoans should have meaningful access to City records, not just the ability to access them, but the ability to find them in a user-friendly way with sufficient context to identify and understand the information. Access to open data fuels equity by enabling City officials, residents, advocates and journalists to identify and address disparities in neighborhood conditions and access to City services. The City needs to build on recent open data and modernization improvements to truly make all resident-facing systems accessible, particularly for people with disabilities and low access to technology.

OBJECTIVES

To achieve this goal, We Will...

- 3.1** Improve and modernize City data collection, disaggregation and distribution systems to develop a best-in-class practice of affirmative and automated release of data and records.
- 3.2** Ensure equitable access to data for all Chicagoans.
- 3.3** Make it easier for Chicagoans to understand and participate in City Council, committee and other public body processes.

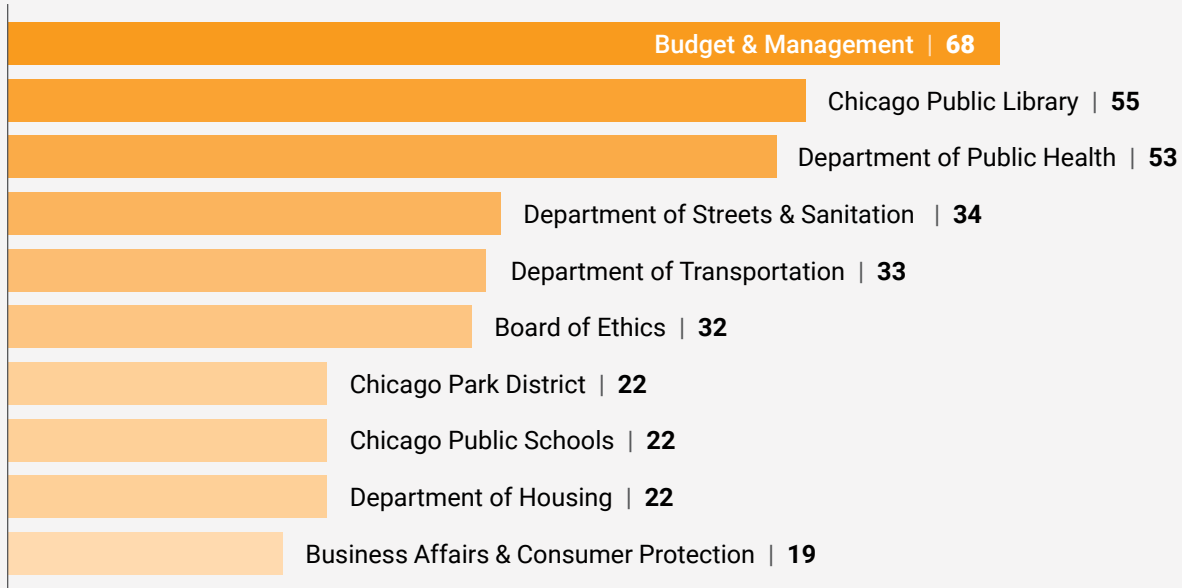


SUPPORTING DATA

A wide range of City departments have committed to open access to data.

DEPARTMENTS WITH THE MOST OPEN DATASETS IN CHICAGO'S OPEN DATA PORTAL (# OF DATASETS)

2021–22, Chicago

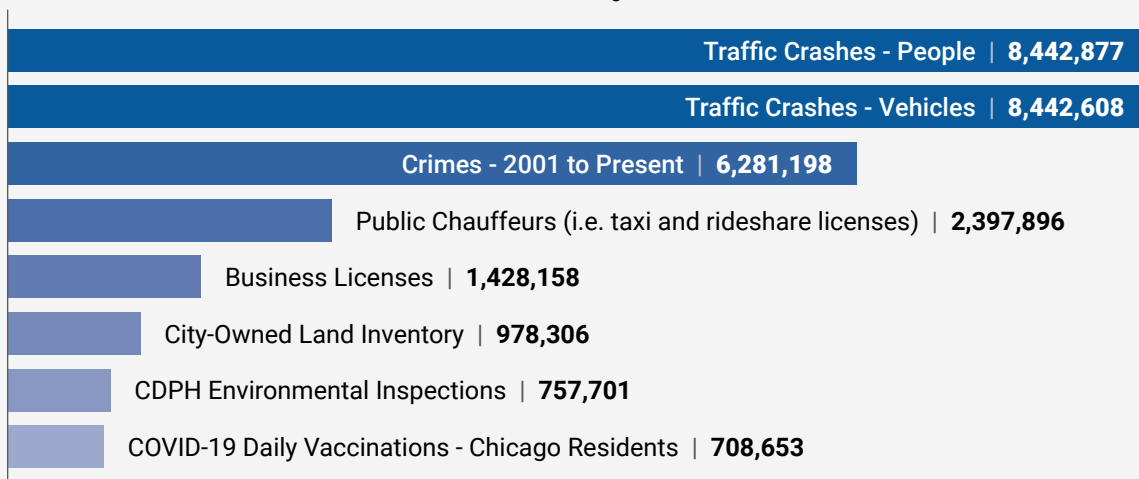


Source: City of Chicago AIS

The City's open data resources are accessed millions of times every year.

POPULAR DATASETS ACCESSED BY NUMBER OF VISITS 2021–22

2022, Chicago



Source: City of Chicago AIS

GOAL 4

Eliminate barriers to accessing City services and support.

Chicagoans interact with government in myriad ways every day—from paying water bills to checking out library books, accessing City-funded mental health services or getting car stickers. The City must strive to make all resident-facing services as simple, efficient and user-friendly as possible. This also means continuously improving access to services and supports for underserved populations, like undocumented residents, residents reentering society from incarceration, residents experiencing homelessness and new immigrants or refugees.

OBJECTIVES

To achieve this goal, We Will...

4.1 Make City processes touching residents, workers, visitors and businesses more streamlined, accessible and equitable.

4.2 Protect and provide resources to support residents who are disproportionately vulnerable and often excluded from safety net benefits and other services.



SUPPORTING DATA

Chicago's poverty rates from 2017 to 2021.

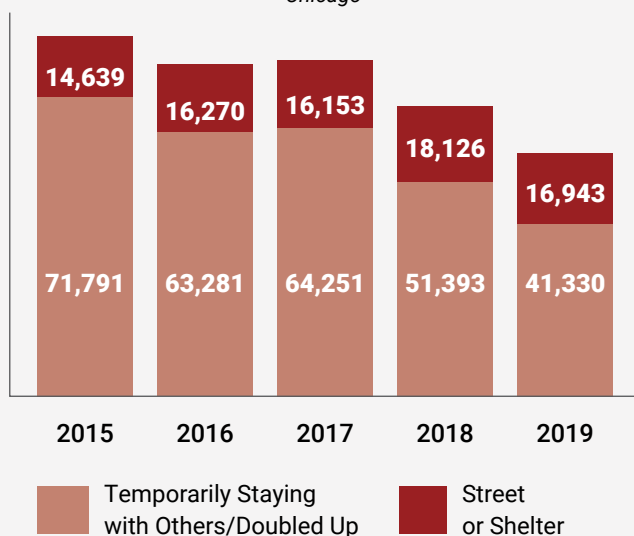
PEOPLE LIVING IN POVERTY
Chicago

	2017		2018		2019		2020		2021	
	COUNT	% OF TOTAL	COUNT	% OF TOTAL	COUNT	% OF TOTAL	COUNT	% OF TOTAL	COUNT	% OF TOTAL
Black	259,625	32%	245,493	31%	229,545	29%	217,518	28%	217,185	28%
White	177,208	14%	166,112	13%	156,642	12%	138,022	11%	129,552	11%
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	170	21%	165	24%	221	29%	196	22%	259	26%
American Indian or Alaska Native	1,596	21%	1,522	19%	1,794	22%	1,548	17%	1,835	14%
Asian	31,267	19%	32,259	19%	31,379	18%	28,490	16%	29,341	16%
Other Race	67,060	22%	60,880	21%	55,836	20%	52,684	19%	53,361	18%
Multiracial	13,506	19%	13,094	18%	12,800	17%	19,895	14%	27,879	14%
Hispanic or Latino	168,182	22%	153,530	20%	141,462	18%	127,506	17%	128,067	16%
Non-Hispanic	382,250	20%	365,995	19%	346,755	18%	330,847	18%	331,345	17%

Source: 2016–21 ACS 5-Year Estimates

Homelessness has recently decreased but still impacts more than 58,000 people.

TYPES OF HOMELESSNESS EXPERIENCED
Chicago



Source: Chicago Coalition for the Homeless

“ When we talk about getting to equity, we’ve talked about it as both an outcome and a process. We’re going to focus on equity as a process and we know that requires a new way of doing business. ”

— *Kate McMahon* | Director, Health Equity in All Policies, Chicago Department of Public Health



GOAL 5

Ensure equity, community engagement and historical reckoning drive public decision-making.

Chicago has disparities across all quality-of-life indicators by race and ethnicity. In order to realize the We Will Chicago vision for greater equity and resiliency, leaders must change the standard way that government operates. Race-neutral or “color-blind” policies only exacerbate existing inequities and inequities. The legacy of structural racism and public policies that harmed Black, Latino, Asian and Native American communities provide a responsibility and opportunity for leadership in the public, private, and philanthropic sectors to acknowledge the history and proactively build equity considerations into all decision-making. Many communities have lost trust—or never trusted—government, and have no faith in public accountability to historically marginalized communities. City government needs to support collective racial healing to reimagine and build a more equitable, inclusive future.

OBJECTIVES

To achieve this goal, We Will...

- 5.1** Establish standards and structures for community-driven decision-making.
- 5.2** Educate City officials and staff about equity and racial justice.
- 5.3** Integrate health, racial equity and climate impact tools and analysis into policymaking and planning.
- 5.4** Support ongoing truth, reconciliation and healing efforts.

*To see the policy ideas developed by the **Civic & Community Engagement** pillar team, visit wewillchicago.com*

