



**2023 CHICAGO MAYORAL FELLOWS**

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# A LETTER FROM THE DIRECTORS

Fellows,

Congratulations on a remarkable summer helping kick off Mayor Brandon Johnson's first term in office. You are some of the smartest, brightest, and hardworking individuals and it has been a treat for us to get to know each one of you. We hope you enjoyed this unique opportunity to experience the inner workings of municipal government. Please know that your efforts directly contributed to making Chicago a better place for its many residents.

Throughout the fellowship, the 2023 cohort of Mayor's Office Fellows contributed to 100+ projects that will have a positive impact on Chicago residents for years to come. Your proposed New Ideas, found in this book, are all worthy of consideration from the Johnson Administration and City departments. We hope that as you look back on your time in the Mayor's Office, you realize how much the many projects you worked on and your new and innovative ideas presented in this book will continue to move the City forward.

You should be proud of yourselves for completing one of the most demanding programs in the country. You have all done a great job on your projects, you also spent quality time with many of the City of Chicago's Commissioners during our Fellows Talk Series and were able to see first-hand how departments and sister agencies keep the City running smoothly with our Department Tours.

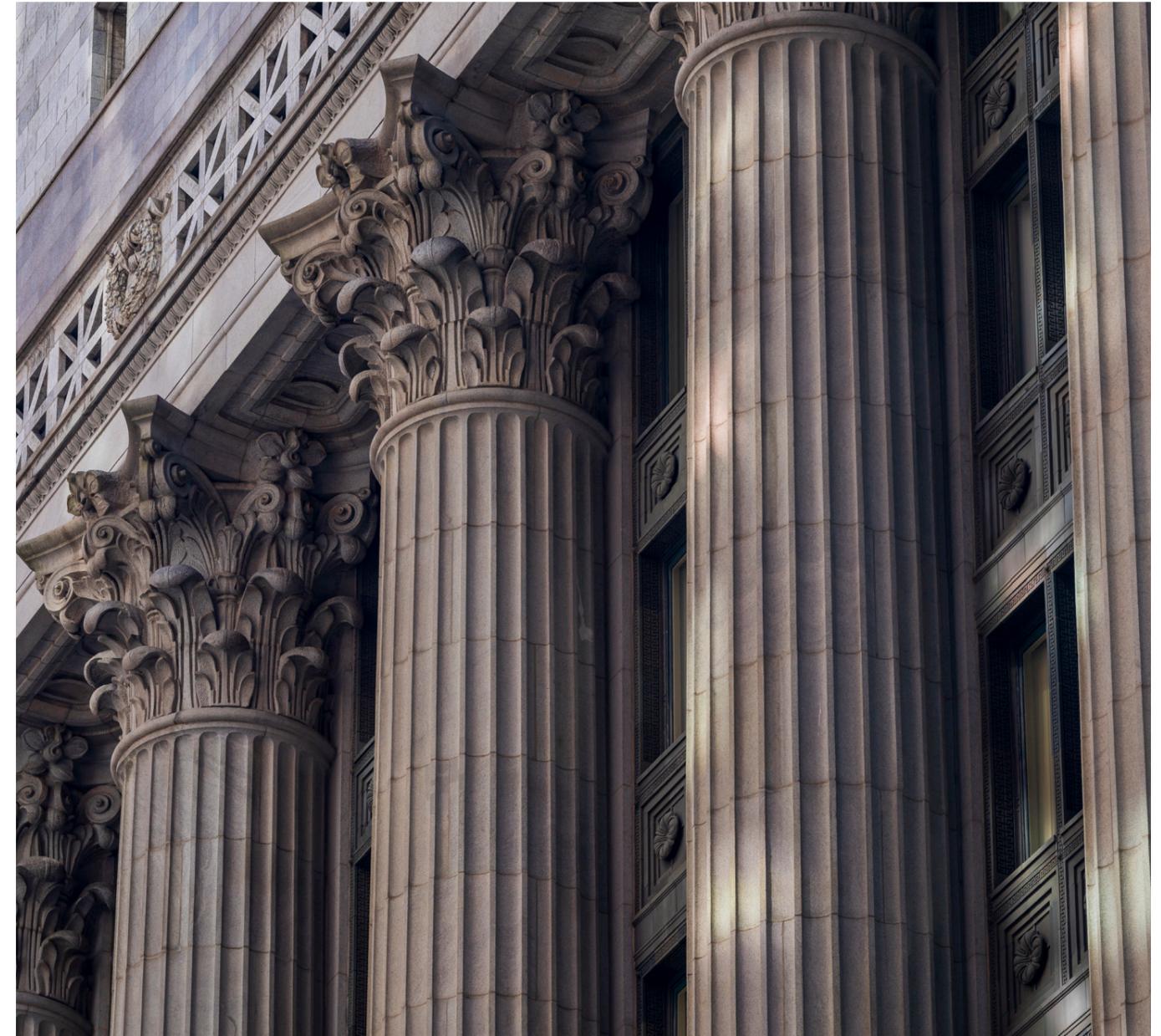
We can only hope that your time here has been an experience that you will never forget. You have been a wonderful group with so much talent. We have all enjoyed having you here and working with you this summer and we know that you will continue to excel in all that you do and succeed in your future endeavors.

**Margaret Gach (MG)**

Director of Mayoral Fellows

**J.D. Van Slyke**

Director of Special Projects



**SOCIAL**

**JUSTICE**

# Second Chance Transit Program

## Empowering Successful Reentry Through Accessible Support

by Ash Alejandro Taylor

### Why it Matters

Through equitable transportation access, returning residents can utilize support programs and seize employment opportunities. Freed from financial burdens, they can reinvest resources in crucial essentials like housing, healthcare, and education. The Second Chance Transit Program stands as a simple yet transformative measure in supporting returning residents' journey toward self-sufficiency. Its power lies in breaking the cycle of recidivism by ensuring accessibility to the expansive network of reentry support programs across Chicago by guaranteeing returning residents have reliable and affordable transportation. Seamless travel to social services, religious institutions, and family gatherings nurtures community connections, fortifying their reintegration into society. Symbolizing the government's commitment to social justice and inclusivity, the program tackles spatial barriers burdening system-impacted individuals, allowing Chicago to forge a more compassionate and equitable society for all, regardless of their past experiences. As a vital lifeline, the Second Chance Transit Program also fosters public safety and community well-being by diminishing desperation-driven crime as returning residents successfully secure their basic needs. In its measured and practical approach, this program embodies our collective resolve to uplift returning residents and weave a stronger, harmonious community.

### How it Works

Upon reentry, all returning residents will receive a Returning Residents Service Pass that is preloaded with a one-week ride pass for the CTA to ensure individuals can safely access necessary support services, supporting them during the most vulnerable moments of re-entry. From here, the program offers continued transit support in two stages. Throughout the first three months of reentry, returning residents can apply for one-month unlimited CTA ride passes to their Returning Residents Service Pass. This ensures ongoing access to vital support services, helps fulfill mandatory reentry requirements, and facilitates travel for employment-seeking activities. Lastly, three months after reentry, returning residents can apply for up to six months of Reduced CTA Fare using their Returning Residents Service Pass. This element of the program aims to alleviate financial burdens during the critical period of financial adjustment, easing the transition back to paid transit usage.

### Next Steps

Ensure CTA is accessible near correctional facilities. This could be done by establishing new CTA bus stops in the general vicinity of correctional facilities, or through a designated form of transit that connected returning residents to their nearest CTA stop, such as a shuttle.

Collaborate with the Chicago Transit Authority (CTA) and Cook County Department of

Corrections (CCDOC) in strategizing an effective awareness campaign. Ensure that all reentering residents are well-informed about the program and its utilization.

Allocate a specific budget for the Second Chance Transit Program in conjunction with the Office of Budget and Management and the Director of Reentry. Conduct a thorough financial analysis to determine the funding required for providing one-week ride passes, three one-month unlimited CTA passes, and six months of reduced CTA fare to eligible returning residents.

Develop an online application portal to extend services on the Returning Residents' Service Pass. This streamlined process will ensure quick and efficient access to transportation benefits. Seek support from sister agencies like CPL and CHA to address the digital divide and ensure access to the internet for returning residents citywide.

Implement a robust data collection and evaluation system to assess the program's effectiveness and impact on successful reentry outcomes. Encourage returning residents to participate in a brief, anonymous survey, enabling monitoring of key performance indicators, such as employment rates, housing stability, and recidivism rates. This data-driven approach will inform program improvements



# Mayor's Office for Queer Affairs

by Ash Alejandro Taylor and Jordan Enos

## Why it Matters

Queer (LGBTQIA+) people are overrepresented at every stage of the criminal justice system, starting with juvenile justice system involvement. The data is clear: they are arrested, incarcerated, and subjected to community supervision at significantly higher rates than straight and cisgender people. Queer individuals are also subject to particularly inhumane conditions and treatment when incarcerated. Suicide is the second leading cause of death among young people aged 10 to 24, and queer youth are more than four times as likely to attempt suicide than their non-queer peers. While queer youth make up only 7% of the total U.S. youth population, they comprise an astounding 40% of all young people experiencing homelessness in the country, according to Covenant House.

Thus, the Mayor's Office for Queer Affairs is critical to address the inequities queer Chicagoans experience and advance the Johnson administration's priority to protect and uplift young people.

## How it Works

The Mayor's Office for Queer Affairs will be a standalone office. Led by a director, the team will include a youth affairs specialist, and a gender equity specialist. The Mayor's Office for Queer Affairs will align with the Johnson administration's focus on young people and its goals to address the endemic of violence facing trans people and in particular Black and brown Trans women.

The objectives of this Office:

1. Develop policies regarding civil rights issues affecting queer people
2. Enact policies and programs, in conjunction with the Office of Equity and Racial Justice, that meet the City's diversity, equity, and inclusion goals
3. Coordinate among City departments, agencies, and offices to improve access to services, and to promote equity and safety for queer people
4. Establish working relationship with CPD to improve safety and communications between LGBTQ communities and police officers, including cultural competency and language training for officers

5. Act as an open and transparent liaison for queer Chicagoans to the Mayor's Office through policies, programs, and initiatives that work to remove systematic barriers,

6. The Mayor's Office for Queer Affairs will protect and advance the rights of queer Chicagoans, upholding the city's commitment to community first.

## Next Steps

Look at cities with similar offices including the District of Columbia, Philadelphia, and Atlanta

Collaborate with existing identity and advocacy-based offices such as the Office of Equity and Racial Justice and the Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities to learn about their organizational structure, priorities, and lessons learned.

Partner with local queer advocacy organizations to listen and learn how existing work can be uplifted

Create and publish an anonymous form, asking the LGBTQ community what support they need and how the Mayor's office can advance their needs in all areas of City government.



# Building Whole-Person Support Systems at Chicago Public Library

by Edith Zarco

## Why it Matters

Public libraries have long provided essential services to increase access to information and resources. As community needs have changed, libraries have adapted to meet these needs through initiatives and programs such as extending access to computers, wi-fi, and community spaces, offering protection from outside elements, and most recently making Narcan treatment stations available (medication for opioid overdose). Unfortunately, a decrease in affordable housing, access to living wage work, and mental health and addiction support services has led to an increase of library patrons expressing needs beyond library staff's training and education.

The Chicago Public Library has made strides to meet patron needs by offering six rotating social services providers that offer services and referrals for legal representation, mental health, employment, and housing needs at the Harold Washington Library Center. Most recently, the Chicago Department of Public Health has partnered with CPL to provide counseling sessions at four locations to increase mental health access. Despite CPL's progress, the majority of CPL branches are still struggling to meet patron needs. CPL currently has no social workers in any of their 81 branches. Social workers at libraries are trained to assess, refer, and intervene with needs surrounding mental health, substance use, basic needs, and moments of crisis.

Over 36 library systems have successfully implemented full-time or part-time social workers in various models. Baltimore's "Social Worker in the Library" at the Enoch Pratt free Library is one such program. It relies on a partnership with two local university social work programs and three full-time social workers to

support six branch locations for drop-in services. Other libraries, including San Diego, have expanded on this model to include a peer support model.

Some libraries, including the Chicago Public Library, have begun to address the unmet need by partnering with social work graduate programs to support community needs by hosting social work interns at no additional overhead cost. Despite some libraries finding success in the internship partnership model, there are limitations to this approach for a large city such as Chicago, including:

1. Most social work field placements are limited to the academic school year (fall-spring).
2. Many social work placements are dependent on a "match" that requires an alignment of skills and learning goals that do not necessarily guarantee a placement of an intern.
3. Models are exclusively reliant on student learners who are inexperienced in the field.
4. Relying on interns who are often unpaid to fill a service gap can exacerbate socioeconomic inequality.
5. There are no social worker library staff to supervise and guide social work students on how to best serve library patrons.

## How it Works

The Chicago Public Library can build the infrastructure to support a robust "social worker in the library" program that is designed to support patrons and student learners. CPL can employ clinical social workers to provide community outreach, assessment, information, referrals, and crisis intervention as needed. Three social workers would be able to split library

locations in three quadrants (e.g. North, West, South) dependent on the locations with the most needs. Partnerships could be formed with all social work programs in the city to provide training and experience for social work interns. Expansion to the program can include a peer support model employing library patrons with lived experience with housing insecurity and/or opioid use dependent on library community support needed.

## Next Steps

Consult with library patrons and staff about the proposed program and identify ideal service locations by need.

Identify funding (grants, foundations, municipal budget) for staff overhead cost and stipends for student interns.

Consult with other libraries with social worker at library programs for best practices.

Hire and onboard staff.

Establish drop-in hours in several locations across identified branches.

Reach out to local universities with social work programs to collaborate.

Evaluate the program.

Make adjustments to the program and explore potential expansion to include peer support model.

**PUBLIC  
HEALTH**

**+**

**COMMUNITY  
SAFETY**

# Chicago's SPIRIT

Substance abuse  
Prevention,  
Intervention, Recovery,  
and Integration Team

by Eshaka Eshwar

## Why it Matters

The SPIRIT initiative is of paramount importance for the City of Chicago due to the escalating substance abuse crisis. In 2022, the CDPH reported a distressing increase in opioid-related overdose deaths, surpassing both homicides and traffic crash fatalities combined. The number of young children (5 and younger) who have died from opioid overdoses has increased significantly, due to accidental opioid poisonings. The ramifications of substance abuse extend far beyond individual users, affecting the fabric of society in myriad ways. Families are torn apart, communities struggle with increased crime rates and healthcare burdens, and the economy faces significant strains due to lost productivity and increased public service demands. This alarming statistic underscores the urgent need for a comprehensive and innovative approach to combat the devastating impact of substance abuse on individuals, families, and communities.

## How it Works

The program is designed to target the age groups which are currently neglected to create a lasting impact on the community.

### Targeting Perinatal Mothers and Nurses:

Nurses who visit homes of perinatal mothers will provide specialized training on safely handling medications to prevent accidental overdoses of infants and toddlers which will include proper storage, administration, and disposal of medications, as well as recognizing signs of potential misuse or abuse within the household.

### Naloxone Education for School Children:

SPIRIT will conduct age-appropriate workshops and educational sessions in schools to teach children about the use of naloxone. Children

will be educated on recognizing the signs of an opioid overdose and how to administer naloxone safely in emergency situations. This empowers them to be proactive and potentially save lives if they encounter such a situation.

### Safe Spaces for Vulnerable Teenagers:

SPIRIT will collaborate with schools and community centers to create safe spaces where vulnerable teenagers can find support, mentorship, and positive activities after school. These programs will focus on building resilience, coping skills, and self-esteem, reducing the risk of turning to opioids or other substances as a means of escape.

## Next Steps

### Curriculum Development:

Work with healthcare experts to develop a comprehensive curriculum on medication safety for nurses visiting perinatal mothers to emphasize the importance of safe medication practices to protect the health and well-being of infants and toddlers.

### Naloxone Education for School Children:

Collaborate with educators, healthcare professionals, and child psychologists to design engaging and age-appropriate workshops on naloxone education for school children. Partner with schools and education boards to integrate naloxone education into the curriculum or as an after-school program.

### Safe Spaces for Vulnerable Teenagers:

Conduct a needs assessment to identify areas with a high prevalence of opioid misuse among teenagers. Engage stakeholders to understand specific challenges and preferences for after-school programs which will provide a safe and nurturing environment where teenagers can participate in recreational activities, skill-building workshops, and receive emotional support.

# Strangers for Chicago

by Aarushi Kataria

## Why it Matters

Aristotle said, "Man is by nature a social animal." We cannot survive in isolation and our interactions deeply impact each other's lives. Loneliness has been documented to cause depression, impaired cognitive health, cardiovascular disease, increased blood pressure, dementia, and increased mortality. Loneliness is grief, distended. Over the last half a century, the number of adults living alone in the US has doubled; the trend is seen across industrialized countries. In Chicago, 40% of homes are occupied by a single individual. Sociologist Klingenberg considers this, plausibly, a disaster. Rodriguez-Pose & Burlina found that a rise in loneliness limits the capacity of an economy to generate additional wealth. Medicare spends an extra \$6.7 billion per year caring for socially isolated adults. Lonely individuals exhibit lower workplace productivity, are more likely to resign, and often find it challenging to access communal support during distressing times. Loneliness costs employers \$154 billion annually.

When life gets hard, we reach out for community. This becomes especially hard when one is lonely and battling other mental health conditions. We have all learned life lessons that could help others. It can take the form of words of advice, comfort, or solution. There are 2.27 million people in Chicago from whom one can learn from. We can collect these life lessons and provide a listening ear, propelling them into the forefront. This not only enables individuals to introspect but also cultivates empathy and vulnerability with their listeners, piercing through the veil of loneliness to establish a deeper sense of community. This "Treatment not Trauma" approach can help alleviate the mental health crisis in Chicago without

hampering the City's long-term economic growth. Additionally, talking to someone is known to reduce stress, strengthen the immune system, and reduce physical and emotional distress.

## How it Works

A hotline that is connected to 311 and staffed by trained peer counselors. There will be two types of communication carried out. The first is to call single-person households for wellness check-ins. The second would be calls received via 311. The benefit of the hotline, unlike most mental health providers, is anonymity. No information regarding an individual apart from their age is required (if they are under the age of 18, special provisions might apply). The volunteers will engage in conversations with those they call or speak to and help them feel seen and heard. The volunteers will be paid on a per-minute / per-call basis.

## Next Steps

Call for applications for employees (above the age of 18) and provide them with training. Examples include Letters to Strangers' Mental Health Certification or Mental Health America's National Certified Peer Specialist certification. Next, they should be trained by the OEMC by tweaking the current training to be more geared towards mental health crises.

Launch a public campaign for the Strangers for Chicago, especially in communities with higher susceptibility to mental health conditions.

Make the hotline available 24/7 in the top languages spoken in the city (English, Spanish, Mandarin, Polish, Arabic, Hindi, and Urdu)

# Mobile Health Clinics for Reproductive Health

The development of mobile health clinics in the South Side of Chicago offering reproductive health care for women

by Ashley Hodo and Andre Jimenez

## Why it Matters

Between 2019 and 2020, obstetrics units in three South Side Chicago neighborhoods closed due to overwhelming COVID responses, financial hardships, and difficulties with staffing recruitment and retention. As a result, the South Side of Chicago is now a “birthing desert”. Emphasizing the lack of reproductive care available in

underserved communities like the South Side of Chicago is crucial to understanding the urgent need to increase reproductive health services available to women of color. Reproductive justice emphasizes the protection of black women’s bodies through providing greater autonomy and access to reproductive health services. From access to prenatal and postpartum care essential for identifying and managing potential health risks exacerbated by racial

inequities to comprehensive education and resources for menstrual cycles, contraception and STI prevention, reproductive health care must reach beyond its current scope and serve broader spectrum of health care needs. By addressing gaps in care, we can bridge the divide between short-term interventions and long-term maternal health support. We have an opportunity to create a continuum of care that not only addresses immediate needs but

also ensures long-term health and well-being for girls and women.

These interventions are specifically needed to support Black women because they face disproportionately high health disparities compared to other racial and ethnic groups. The health inequities experienced by Black women are deeply rooted in systemic racism, social determinants of health, and historical neglect of Black communities. Studies reveal that Black mothers are over three times more likely to experience maternal mortality or severe complications during childbirth compared to their white counterparts; income/wealth disparities experienced by Black women further exacerbate these health outcomes. Furthermore, black women are three times more likely to experience uterine fibroid-related morbidity, experience higher rates of tubal factor infertility (and are less likely to utilize fertility treatment options) and lack access to preventative STI medications and quality gynecological care. Implementing these interventions and services will support all women in the South Side of Chicago by improving access to comprehensive reproductive health services, with a particular emphasis on addressing the specific needs and disparities faced by Black women, ultimately fostering better health outcomes and overall well-being for the entire community.

## How it Works

Drawing inspiration from successful models, such as the Mama and Baby Care Unit in Washington D.C. where over 70% of repeat patients received care that otherwise wouldn’t have had access, we can demonstrate the effectiveness of providing long-term care to communities. This data-driven approach showcases how increasing reproductive health services can make a substantial difference in

the lives of girls and women. The Chicago Department of Public Health, March of Dimes, Chicago South Side Birth Center, local reproductive justice organizations and South Side hospitals should collaborate to create a care action plan that will serve patients in birthing deserts. This mobile health clinic will address gaps in prenatal and postpartum care, including pregnancy testing, wellness exams, birth planning, and support services. Clinics should also provide reproductive and women’s health care (e.g., pap smears, health screenings), menstrual cycle supplies and education for adolescents, contraception and birth control access, and additional resources and referrals for individual reproductive health care needs. Services may be administered by healthcare providers from partnering community hospitals and midwives/doulas. As a pilot program, care should be available Saturdays and Sundays to accommodate for working schedules and may be expanded based on measured efficacy. Existing pilot programs do not require insurance for care, which is particularly beneficial for serving the growing migrant population working to integrate into the City. Cost may be covered through grant programs and corporate and nonprofit partnerships working to address issues of reproductive justice and black maternal mortality.

## Next Steps

Engage stakeholders including the Illinois Maternal Health Taskforce, the Local Collective Impact Initiative through the March of Dimes, and the Chicago South Side Birth Center to foster greater collaborative efforts in maternal health care. Also, work with local and national Reproductive Justice organizations to gain intersectional perspectives

on reproductive health access, care, and equity.

Connect with hospitals and care providers in the South Side to further contextualize gaps in reproductive health services in South Side Chicago, review current available resources and personnel, and current practices or programs addressing reproductive health in service areas.

Review state or federal grant programs targeting workforce development in rural areas and research the development of similar frameworks for the recruitment of health professionals in the City’s underserved areas or overwhelmed medical centers.

# CTA Transit Ambassador Program

CTA Transit Ambassadors will increase customer safety and satisfaction, invest in the local community, address mental health needs and decrease CTA's reliance on CPD.

by Jordan Enos, Camelia Valldejuly, and Edith Zarco

## Why it Matters

Chicago Transit Authority (CTA) continues to struggle with safety concerns and decreased customer satisfaction. Policy implementation over the last year attempts to address the increase in crime by deploying more CPD, K-9 teams, and security guards. Existing solutions contradict the Johnson administration's commitment to service for the community with a trauma-informed focus.

The Transit Ambassador Program is an innovative alternative, utilizing non-law enforcement staff to address community safety and customer service experiences. Cities including the Greater Cleveland Regional Transportation Authority (RTA) and the Los

Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority (LA Metro) are already paving the way and seeing results.

Transit ambassadors are paid, unarmed community members tasked with keeping the peace. They will also partner with social workers and crisis teams to respond to mental health emergencies.

There are four major benefits to this type of program:

1. This approach addresses the historic violence perpetuated by the police. This program can help rebuild trust of law enforcement from community members by creating a network of support made up of transit ambassadors and law enforcement. Community members in crisis when riding the CTA will be met with the appropriate responders, either transit ambassadors or law enforcement given the situation.
2. Hiring community members who live in the neighborhoods where they will be working provides empowerment and local engagement. Community members are likelier to trust transit ambassadors who are members of their community, which provides a safe space when a crisis emerges.
3. Non-enforcement staff can engage with Chicagoans and tourists alike to provide a warm, inviting environment.
4. Transit Ambassadors alleviate unnecessary burden.

## How it Works

**Hiring:** CTA will partner with community organizations to recruit and train ambassadors that are representative of their communities. Crises teams will include social outreach workers, social workers, and mental health professionals.

**Training:** All staff will be trained in de-escalation, unconscious bias, trauma-informed response, and disability awareness.

**In Practice:** Transit ambassadors will work in teams of at least two people to patrol trains

and platforms and be available for customers. Transit Ambassadors will direct mental health emergencies and unhoused population needs to the crisis team when appropriate and contact CPD only when necessary.

**Cost Savings:** CTA has agreed to provide reimbursement to CPD of up to \$90 million over three years for services provided by off-duty police officers. The estimated cost for the LA Metro Ambassador program with 299 staff for three years is \$71,279,1895.

## Next Steps

Reach out to existing transit ambassador programs (RTA and LA Metro) to learn best practices.

Hold community meetings to obtain public input on the interest of participation and effectiveness of the program and identify local

stakeholders, including potential community-based organizations.

Establish a working group between CTA, Community Safety team, CPD, community activists, and CARE (Crisis Assistance Response and Engagement) to build a work plan, establish best practices and roles when an emergency arises, and coordinate training of new ambassadors.

Promote anonymous CTA reporting at 1-888-YOUR-CTA, and assess stations with the highest incidents, mental health needs, and low customer service satisfaction, to create a priority list based on assessed areas.



# Uniting for Road Safety



## Chicago's Community Breathalyzer Checkpoints

by Santiago Ginebra Campillo

### Why it Matters

The Uniting for Road Safety Breathalyzer-Checkpoints aims to address the mistrust towards the police, reduce crime and insecurity, and tackle the public health crisis caused by alcohol-related crashes. By involving community members in the operation of the checkpoints, building trust and accountability, and encouraging responsible decision-making, the policy strives to create a safer and more secure environment while fostering positive community engagement.

#### Public Health Crisis:

There were 1,064 DUI-related crashes in Chicago during the first three months of 2023. This represents an increase of about 4% from the same period in 2022. The

report also shows that there were 103 fatalities in DUI-related crashes during the first quarter of 2023, up from 92 fatalities in the same period in 2022. In that same year, the Chicago Police Department (CPD) made a total of 2,131 DUI arrests.

#### Prevailing Mistrust Towards the Police Force and Authorities:

A Chicago Tribune poll found that only 25% of Chicagoans favor the CPD. This number is even lower among Black and brown Chicagoans, with only 15% and 10%, respectively.

#### Prevailing Concern about Safety:

According to a Poll conducted by Mason-Dixon Polling & Strategy, Inc. "Crime and public safety" rank highest among the top issues in Chicago.

#### Need to Strengthen Public Transportation:

The city's public transportation system has not returned to its pre-pandemic usage. Encouraging individuals to think twice before 'drinking and driving' will improve public transportation rides over time.

#### A Success Story, Mexico City, Mexico:

This idea has been successfully implemented for 20 years in a complex city like Mexico City with 20+ million habitants, garnering approval from over 90% of its citizens.

The program has been credited with reducing traffic fatalities by 30% and deaths from drunk driving by 70%. In addition, it has helped to restore confidence in the police in a city where the authorities have been known to act corruptly.

### How it Works

#### Community-Based Checkpoints:

Involving community members in the operation of checkpoints will build trust and accountability within the local government. By relying on a majority of community volunteers and only two police officers per checkpoint, we can create a more inclusive and collaborative approach, benefiting the community and law enforcement.

Each checkpoint must be staffed by

community organizations, legal advisors, community safety staff, public health officials, and the Chicago Police Department.

#### Culture of Responsibility:

Through community involvement and the presence of neighbors at the checkpoints, individuals will develop a sense of security in their neighborhoods. This will also encourage responsible decision-making, reducing the likelihood of encountering a checkpoint while driving under the influence. Crime rates may be reduced thanks to the extension of a passive presence around neighborhoods.

#### Funding:

The fines collected from DUI offenses will be directed to the City's general fund. To consider, according to a 2019 report by the New York State Department of Motor Vehicles, NYC itself collected over \$500 million in fines and fees from DUI-related offenses in 2018.

### Next Steps

#### Pilot Program:

Begin with three checkpoints staffed

by community organizations, legal advisors, community safety staff, public health officials, and the Chicago Police Department.

To avoid communities that may initially feel overwhelmed by a Breathalyzer Checkpoint. They must be set up in well-known neighborhoods with a high concentration of nightclubs, bars, and other nightlife venues. This will help people become accustomed to the checkpoints over time. Examples of suitable neighborhoods include River North, Wicker Park, and Wrigleyville.

#### Consider:

Michigan Dept. of State Police v. Sitz (1990), the United States Supreme Court ruled that sobriety checkpoints do not violate the Fourth Amendment. The Court stated that "the balance of the State's interest in preventing drunken driving, the extent to which this system can be reasonably said to advance that interest, and the degree of intrusion upon individual motorists who are briefly stopped, weighs in favor of the state program."

# Increasing Food Access Through City-Owned Grocery Stores

In line with the Food Equity Council's goals, this pilot program increases access to healthy foods through city-wide grocery stores.

by Camelia Valldejuly



## Why it Matters

Approximately 500,000 Chicagoans face food insecurity, with most of them living on the South and West sides of the City. Retailers on the South and West sides closed over six grocery stores between October 2021 and May 2023, further exacerbating this issue. This is exemplified by the 2021 closure of the Aldi on W. Madison St. which left roughly 150,000 residents of surrounding communities with less access to fresh food. Retailers have cited declining sales and crime as reasons for store closures in these areas. Due to these realities and the negative long-term public health effects associated with communities lacking fresh and affordable food, the City must treat access to nutritious food as a priority. Where the private sector has decided to no longer support the community, the City must step up to provide this essential public good.

Municipal-owned grocery stores are opening and succeeding in small American towns where privately-owned grocery stores have shut down. In February 2022, the City of Chicago bought the shuttered W. Madison St. Aldi, demonstrating a will to address food insecurity. Now, the City should build on this precedent by establishing its own city-owned, city-run grocery store. The grocery store would be run as a utility, such as the City's water supply. Chicago can become the first major American city to directly provide healthy alternatives to its citizens.

## How it Works

The primary goals of the Pilot Program for a city-owned grocery store are to:

**Address food insecurity:** The grocery store pilot will launch in a food insecure area affected by

recent grocery store closures, in a community where members have agreed to be a part of the program. The store would accept all nutrition need-based programs, including SNAP.

**Provide a stable source of healthy food:** If a city-owned, city-run grocery store is to be run as a public utility, it would be structurally geared toward the needs of the community it serves. This removes profit-driven decisions from the equation. Revenue from the store would be re-invested in it for it to be a self-sustaining entity. The community would not have to worry about store closures, creating stable and reliable access to food.

**Increase economic activity:** The program will require the City-owned store to prioritize hiring employees from the community it's located in. Neighborhoods will see increased spending power among residents. The city would also partner with urban farms and community gardens to stock the store with fresh, local produce.

**Encourage City-wide public/private partnerships:** Along with partnerships with local growers, the City will partner with local businesses and organizations to provide supply chain and operations technical assistance.

To achieve these goals, the pilot program will first identify the pilot location after a community agrees to participate. The City then buys and renovates the vacant store. Lastly, the program facilitates partnerships with Chicago-based organizations, such as Inner-City Muslim Action Network (IMAN), for technical assistance and training new City employees. This includes grocery consulting for purchasing inventory, volume ordering, and distribution needs.

The funding for the program will come from TIF, state and federal funds. The

City can tap into the recent Illinois state legislature \$20 million dollar plan to support municipally owned grocery stores in food deserts, as well federal grants such as Community Development Block Grants.

## Next Steps

Identify vacant grocery stores in Tax Increment Financing (TIF) districts, allowing the city to renovate the closed store with TIF funding.

Engage with members of the identified communities to develop interest in re-opening a grocery store and ensure it meets the unique needs of the community. This would involve launching a community survey to understand community sentiment towards municipal grocery stores. The survey would be followed with in-person listening sessions to further understand what members need from their community grocery store.

Identify Chicago-based organizations and local businesses interested in participating in the program as program advisors.

Develop pro forma budget for start-up costs.

In consultation with the Food Equity Council, create a team within the Department of Planning and Development to manage the store. This team would also be the primary partners to local businesses and organizations, to map out operations and receive technical assistance.

**HOUSING**

# Empty Homes Tax

## Chicago's Path to Equitable Housing

by Arturo Sánchez Navarro and Santiago Ginebra Campillo

### Why it Matters

The dream of owning a home should not be unattainable for hardworking Chicagoans. The main goal of the Empty Homes Tax is to encourage property owners to make their empty or unoccupied residential properties available for rent or sale, thus increasing the housing supply and helping to alleviate the Housing Crisis and the Asylum-seeking challenge while adding significant revenue to the City of Chicago.

According to the City of Chicago 2022 Point-in-Time (PIT), there are approximately 3,875 people experiencing homelessness on a given day, 75% of which are Black/African American. Based on data presented by United Way, in the city of Chicago, there are over 50 vacant houses per unhoused person representing 307,284 empty homes. That said, nearly 10% of roughly 3,000,000 homes in Chicago remain vacant as the unhoused population grows.

### How it Works

According to the Chicago Association of Realtors (CAR), as of July 27, 2023, the median home price in Chicago is around \$352,000. When implementing the "Empty Homes Tax" at 1% of the home value on more than 300,000 vacant properties, the City's potential earnings from this tax initiative could exceed \$105 million annually. In addition to helping to alleviate the housing crisis with this new source of income, it would be enough to sustain approximately 6 months' cost of the Migrant Mission and Asylum-seeking situation.

#### A Success Story, Vancouver, Canada:

From 2017 to 2021, more than \$87 million USD in taxes have been raised.

Vacant properties in Vancouver are now at 1,398, which is 36% less compared to 2017.

1,755 residential properties were identified or declared as vacant in

2020, but 49% became occupied in 2021.

Added 18,000 rental units to the market in the Greater Vancouver area between 2019 and 2020.

### Next Steps

1. **Tax Rate:** The tax rate for residential vacant properties is recommended to start at 1% of their assessed value (in Vancouver, they set it at 3% this year).

2. **Exemptions and Exceptions:** For properties under active renovation or construction. As well as properties long-term rented for at least six months of the year. In the case of short-term rent, such as Airbnb, will have to comply with a total of at least six months from all the services provided.

3. **Self-Declaration:** Property owners must submit an annual self-declaration to the city, indicating whether the property was occupied as a principal residence, rented, or remained vacant for most of the year.

4. **Data Collection and Enforcement:** The city employs various means to collect data and enforce compliance to ensure accuracy in self-declarations.

5. **Revenue Allocation:** The revenue generated from the Empty Homes Tax must be reinvested in affordable housing initiatives and measures to address homelessness.

# Chicago Neighborhood Development Authority

A sustainable financing option for affordable housing and economic development in the neighborhoods.

by Christian Johns

### Why it Matters

Chicago continues to experience a contraction in affordable housing units. Cost of living increases have made finding housing difficult for low-income individuals and families. The City of Chicago (the "City") and Community Development Organizations ("Developers") have been working together to build new homes, but there is not sufficient supply to match demand. Identifying sources of funding for developments has been a consistent challenge for developers as construction and labor costs rise. The City's current method of assisting developers can reduce the financing burden, but it is not enough to fully fund the development. Issuing multifamily housing bonds through a special purpose entity can create financing opportunities and increase the number of affordable housing units built across the City.

### How it Works

Establishing a special purpose entity named the Chicago Neighborhood Development Authority (the "Authority") would offer Developers low-interest

rate financing for affordable housing projects.

The Department of Planning and Development and Department of Housing would open a recurring application for developers seeking assistance with financing affordable housing developments. The two departments would determine if the development is eligible for multifamily housing bond financing. If approved, the Developers and the City would enter into a loan agreement by way of the Authority. Under the loan agreement, the Authority loans the bond proceeds to the developer to pay the costs of acquiring, constructing, rehabilitating, or refinancing the development. The developer promises to repay the loan through rental payments which would constitute payment of bond debt. As a part of the loan agreement with a developer, the Authority may identify length of affordability, percentages of affordable housing in the development, and use of bond proceeds.

Developers, not the City or the Authority, would be responsible for repaying the bonds. This structure protects the City and creates a more sustainable option for financing as the developments begin to pay for themselves overtime through rent collection. The City could

decide to provide additional security for the bond issuances by directing real estate transfer tax revenues to the repayment of bond debt.

Eventually, the revenues generated by the various loan agreements will enable the Authority to hire staff to manage the Authority's operations, develop additional bond financing tools, and cultivate relationships between developers, contractors, and the community.

### Next Steps

Convene a working group with the Chief Financial Officer, Department of Housing, Department of Law, Department of Planning and Development, and the Committee on Finance to begin structuring the Chicago Neighborhood Development Authority.

Conduct a study to review the affordable housing financing process in Chicago and based on the results, create efficiencies.

Identify ways to reduce construction and startup costs for affordable housing developments.

**EQUITY**

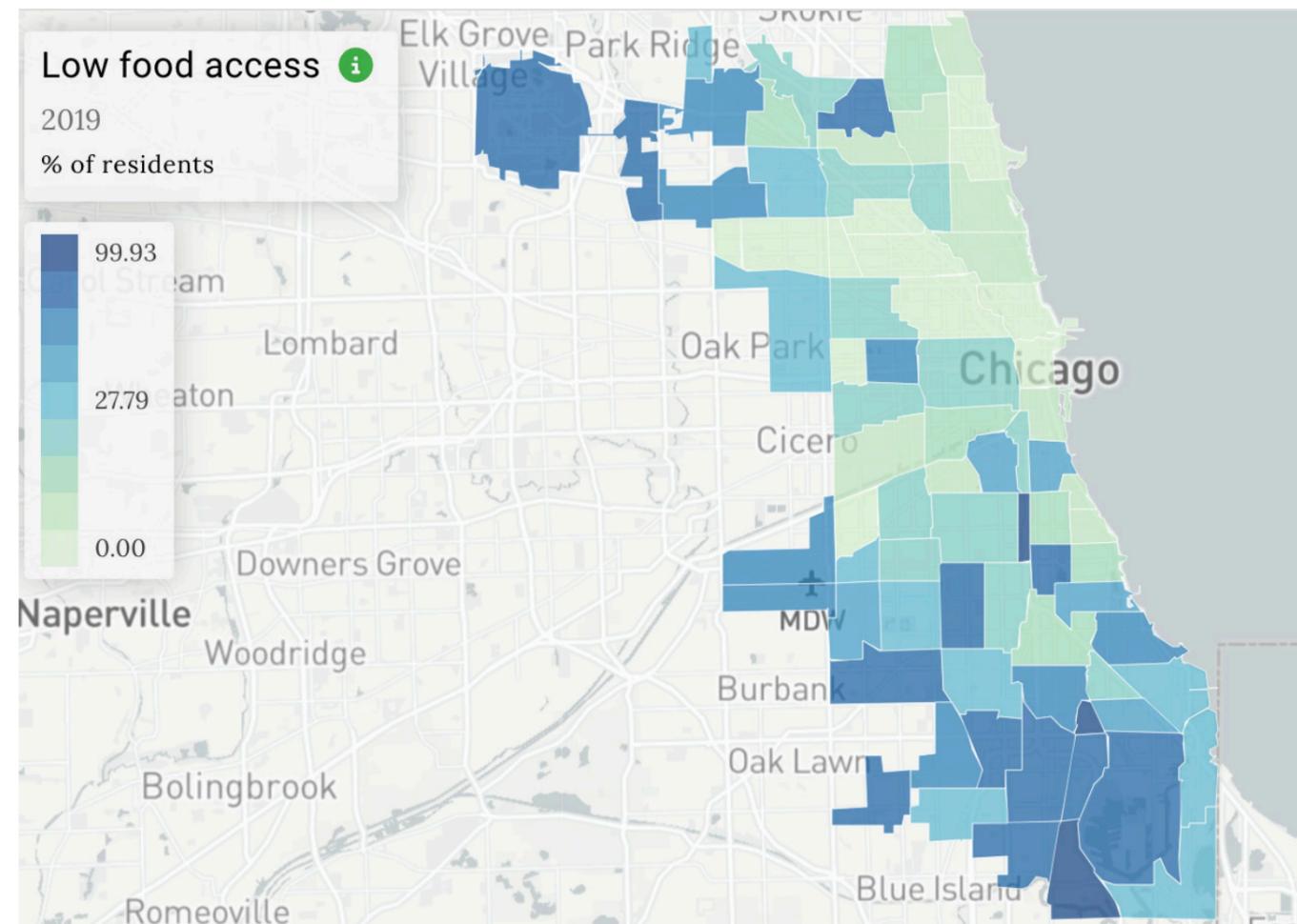
**+**

**COMMUNITY  
WEALTH  
BUILDING**

# Community Food Cooperatives

A Community Development & Wealth Building Continuum

by Nicholas Chanko



Source: Chicago Health Atlas

## Why it Matters

The City of Chicago has unevenly distributed retail grocery stores, exacerbating food apartheid and representing a significant barrier to communities' access to healthful and affordable food. Between October 2021 and May 2023, six grocery stores have closed in South and West side communities, and one in five Chicago households is food insecure. Inequitable retail access is driven by decades of disinvestment in neighborhoods and commercial retailers are taking their business elsewhere despite a high need in communities and millions of City dollars invested in these businesses.

In order to address the retail gap, the City should pilot a food cooperative program whereby the City purchases a closed grocery store in a priority neighborhood and leases it to a community food cooperative. The government has a responsibility to meet individuals' and communities' human right to food and health. At the same time, it is vital that community assets, such as local grocery stores, are owned by the people in order to build a democratic and reparative economy that prioritizes thriving and self-determination without extracting from communities. By opening community-owned grocery stores in neighborhoods facing food apartheid, the City can help address a need that isn't being met by regional and national retailers that lack commitment to these communities.

## How it Works

### The Continuum

The community development and wealth building continuum will be made up of local BIPOC growers as suppliers, community youth as owner-operators, and community members serviced as consumers. The food cooperative will be the central hub of the continuum. This project serves the City's missions and

goals related to food equity, community wealth building, and youth employment. BIPOC growers will have a reliable and consistent customer, allowing them to expand their operations. Young people aged 16 to 24 will have summer and year-round employment in their communities that provide them real responsibility, concrete opportunities for growth, and transferable on-the-job training skills. Our young people will be invested with decision-making power, communal ownership and management, and potential to turn a profit. Community members will have more quality, culturally tailored food access and a secure community-owned institution that can be an anchor for nearby commercial activity.

### The Pilot Community Food Cooperative

A closed grocery store in a priority neighborhood, such as the Whole Foods in Englewood Square, will be purchased by the city. The City will negotiate with a local food cooperative to develop a community agreement and lease the property at a below market price. The community agreement will include youth employment requirements, a plan for affordable pricing, and a percentage of local produce to be sourced from BIPOC urban growers. Over the five-year pilot period, the City and Food Equity Council will support the cooperative by facilitating technical assistance, training, and capacity building. If the cooperative remains profitable after the five-year period, the City will sell the property to the cooperative.

## Next Steps

Conduct a comprehensive literature review of food cooperative models and identify best practices of government partnerships with food cooperatives.

Host community listening sessions to

identify community needs and ideas.

Convene a community-representative group under the Food Equity Council to develop the pilot program, building from the work produced by the Retail Sprint Group.

Organize community stakeholder meetings through the Community Wealth Building Advisory Council to cultivate and identify community food cooperatives to participate in the pilot.

Explore funding opportunities such as the Chicago Recovery Plan Community Development Grant, the Healthy Food Access Development Program, and the Chicago Region Food System Fund.

Complete a feasibility study of the planned store.

# Chicago Strategy for Illinois First Steps

by Audrey Dombro

## Why it Matters

As we renew our commitment to eradicating poverty in Chicago under Mayor Brandon Johnson's leadership, we must provide opportunities for wealth-building.

Higher education is correlated with greater incomes which can generate wealth. However, this is out of reach for many Chicago youth. On average, only 14 out of one hundred Chicago Public Schools 9th graders will continue their education to obtain a bachelor's degree in their twenties. Another educational avenue to wealth, enrollment in career and technical programs, has decreased since 2015.

Children's Savings Accounts (CSAs) can empower families by providing pathways to education and asset-building. When families start saving early, they can get a greater return on investment and also cultivate a college-bound identity in their young children. The State of Illinois

has passed legislation to provide a children's saving account for every new baby, and Chicago must do more to realize the full potential of this program.

## How it Works

Signed into law in the State of Illinois in 2019, HB2237 (now Illinois First Steps) grants every child born in the state after December 31, 2022 a \$50 seed deposit to start a Children's Savings Account (CSA) through the Illinois Treasurer's Office. To receive the seed deposit, families must register for a CSA before the child reaches the age of 10 years old. The account funds can later be used for universities, trade schools, and apprenticeship programs.

We should draw attention to the program through multiple channels and integrate it with existing City supports for young families. In partnership with the Illinois State Treasurer's Office, we will train DFSS employees at Community Service Centers and CDPH's Family

Connects Chicago nurses on program enrollment and how to talk about higher education preparation with families. We will also send a targeted City of Chicago informational enrollment letter from Mayor Brandon Johnson to families in the ten neighborhoods with college enrollment at 50% or below after high school, as identified by the UChicago To & Through project. In the long term after families are registered, in partnership with community organizations and companies, the City can also facilitate additional deposits

to a child's account based on need or for meeting certain benchmarks-like attending community health neighborhood events or on the child's first birthday.

## Next Steps

Arrange several 1-hour, virtual informational trainings with Illinois Treasurer's Office Manager of CSA Initiatives, Ivette Martinez, for DFSS Community Service Center case workers and CDPH Family Connect Chicago nurses to enroll in their

preferred session.

Disseminate program flyer and information to community partners through Every Child Ready Chicago Advisory Group and the Chicago Early Learning Steering Committee.

Using birth data from the Cook County Clerk's Office for new births in the City of Chicago since January 1, 2023, send a letter from Mayor Brandon Johnson to eligible families living in neighborhoods with college enrollment at 50% or below after high

school.

Partner with cultural, health, and financial organizations in the target neighborhoods to offer incentives in the form of additional deposits for attending events and trainings.



# Driving

# Equity

## Ending Unnecessary Traffic Stops

by Nicholas Chanko and Andre Jimenez

### Why it Matters

The City of Chicago should end unnecessary traffic stops related to low level violations that have little-to-no impact on road safety. Studies show they result in low levels of citations or arrests, disproportionately harm Black and Brown drivers, and increase risk for police violence, injury, and death.

Between 2015 and 2021, the number of traffic stops conducted by the Chicago Police Department (CPD) skyrocketed from around 86,000 to a staggering 600,000. Despite briefly declining during the pandemic, stops have picked up again with over 375,000 stops in 2021 alone. The reasons for most of these stops are minor traffic violations like faulty headlights or expired registration. Surprisingly, violations directly related to road safety, like speeding or

reckless driving, made up less than 2% of stops during the same period.

The burden of these stops is disproportionately felt by Black and Latinx drivers. From 2015 to 2021, Black drivers were six times more likely to be stopped than their white counterparts, and Latinx drivers were twice as likely. These stops are highly concentrated in predominantly Black and Latinx neighborhoods in the South and West sides of the city.

Despite the high number of traffic stops, there has been little evidence supporting their role in achieving broader public safety goals. Only 2.25% of stops in 2021 resulted in arrests, most of which were for non-violent offenses and traffic violations. Contraband recovery was also minimal, with less than 1% of stops leading to drug, alcohol, or firearm seizures in 2021.

The low rates of citations (4.26% in 2021, and disproportionate stops of minority groups are indicative of over-policing Black and Brown drivers. This disparate impact presents a social and moral failure to uphold individuals' constitutional rights and treat everyone equally in public safety enforcement. It is essential that Chicago addresses these harms perpetuated against Black and Brown communities. By adopting alternative strategies that prioritize community well-being and fairness, Chicago can move towards a more equitable and effective system that genuinely enhances community safety.

### How it Works

Ending low-level traffic enforcement, similar in scope to the City of Philadelphia, would involve passing an ordinance that specifically prohibits the Chicago Police Department from conducting traffic stops for minor violations that have little impact on road safety. The targeted violations as seen in the table below would be excluded from enforcement

Under this proposed legislation, these minor violations would no longer serve as the sole or primary (pretextual) reason for making a traffic stop. Instead, law enforcement would be permitted to address these violations as part of traffic stops for more serious offenses. Importantly, this change would not hinder the ability of police to stop drivers for

reckless driving and moving violations (such as DUI or speeding) that pose a genuine threat to road safety.

### Next Steps

Conduct a comprehensive policy review of traffic stops related to low-level violations. Analyze the data on stops, citations, and arrests to identify trends and disparities in targeting Black and Latinx drivers. Assess the impact of these stops on community trust, safety, and the allocation of law enforcement resources.

Initiate a series of community forums, town halls, and listening sessions to engage with Black and Latinx communities directly affected by these traffic stops. Seek input from community leaders, activists, and residents to understand their perspectives, concerns, and ideas for alternative policing approaches that prioritize fairness and public safety.

Create a roadmap for ending enforcement of license/registration and equipment violations based on the data analysis and community feedback and focus on more meaningful interventions to enhance community safety.

License and Registration Violations	Equipment Violations
Expired vehicle registration within 60 days	Single brake or headlight out
Misplaced temporary registration permits (that remain visible)	Review mirror decorations
Unfastened Registration plates (that remain visible)	Minor bumper damage
Operation of vehicle without an official certificate of inspection	
Unlawful operation without evidence of emission inspection	

# Co-Designing Futures in the City

by Mitchell Kunichoff

Creating co-designed, continually evolving futures that resonates with diverse residents and communities.

## Why it Matters

We're inclined to imagine the future as a singular, predestined timeline. This perspective overlooks the very essence of a City as diverse as Chicago. The future of our City is not a monolithic entity, but a rich tapestry of possibilities, woven from the threads of our racial, economic, cultural, and social diversity. The future of Chicago isn't just something we predict, it's something we create together. In reinforcing our commitment to co-governance and collective decision-making, we are actively creating and constructing an equitable city that is as dynamic, vibrant, and varied as its residents. Central to this is that the policies and strategies we implement should not be one-size-fits-all but must cater to the unique needs and aspirations of our diverse communities.

## How it Works

At the center of this idea is integrating futures and foresight practices into our policy planning process across all departments, offices, and agencies. To initiate this, a comprehensive futures poli-

cy-making framework that seamlessly integrates each stage - from identifying issues to formulating policy options, and to implementing initiatives, to evaluating outcomes - will need to be established.

In the earlier stages, the futures and foresight work could revolve around spotting 'signals' of emerging trends, and then leveraging these insights to form diverse potential futures. Whether they paint utopian or dystopian futures, these scenarios provide the platform for policy designs that steer us towards desired outcomes and divert us from unfavorable ones.

Engagement stages involve empowering residents by giving them the opportunity to interpret the signals and imagined futures in their own unique ways. By encouraging them to articulate their personal preferences, fears, and implications of these future scenarios, we ensure their voices are incorporated and they have ownership in shaping policies.

Engagement stages involve empowering residents by giving them the opportunity to interpret the signals and imagined futures in their own unique ways. By encouraging them to articulate their personal preferences, fears, and implications of these future scenarios, we ensure their voices are incorporated and they have ownership in shaping policies.

## Next Steps

1. Establish a Futures and Foresight Task Force tasked with integrating futures and foresight practices into the policy planning process, overseeing the development of the futures policy-making framework, and communicating the to build broader understanding and acceptance
2. Build Futures and Foresight across department, offices, and agencies by organizing training sessions and workshops for city employees and key stakeholders, equipping them with the skills and knowledge to spot 'signals' of emerging trends, formulate diverse potential futures, and apply back-casting techniques effectively.
3. Select a handful of policy areas where this new approach can be trialed and piloted, which in turn will be used learned from and inform refinement and wider application of the futures and foresight framework.

**YOUTH**

**AND**

**EDUCATION**

# Youth City Council

by Andie Linker

## Why it Matters

Over 20% of Chicago's population is currently under the age of 18. That's approximately 543,000 Chicagoans who don't have a vote in local elections, and therefore don't have their priorities represented in our municipal government. While young people may be able to speak with their parents about who they are voting for and what's important to them, they don't have a dedicated legislative official representing them.

In 2019, the Office of the Mayor of Chicago stood up the Mayor's Youth Commission, made up of people between the ages of 14-19 to help give a voice to Chicago's youth. The Commission is tasked with advising the Mayor and City leaders, representing their peers and communities, and learning about policy and projects within the City of Chicago. While the Commission is an important sounding board for the mayor, it acts as an advisory body, and thus does not promote youth legislative power in our city.

One of the key tenants of Mayor Johnson's administration is co-governance, meaning that he will govern for the people, with the people. This means ensuring that everyone, even someone who can't vote, has a voice in his policymaking.

To promote co-governance with Chicago's young folks, we're going to give them a chance to exercise

legislative power of their own. Each ward will be represented by one person under the age of 18 for an entire summer, helping advise their alderman about key issues Chicago's youth care about.

## How it Works

The Mayor's Youth Commission and 50 Aldermen of Chicago will be tasked with reviewing applications for the yearly youth Alderman position and will appoint them to City Council for the summer. To better inform their decision, they can host virtual public hearings and debates and request an informal vote from their peers.

Once appointed, the Youth Alderman will participate in a 2-month long paid summer program, funded through One Summer Chicago and aldermanic staffing budgets. They will shadow their ward's Alderman and learn about the legislative process.

Youth Aldermen will work closely with the Department of Law, legislative affairs team, and the aldermen in their wards throughout the summer to learn how to craft and introduce their own pieces of youth-centered legislation. The 50 Youth Aldermen can gather feedback from their communities and will ultimately vote on an official ordinance they want to introduce in City Council in September. The ordinance will then be officially introduced by a

sponsoring Alderman or the Mayor's Office.

The youth Aldermen will serve one term, with a new group appointed each summer to shadow their aldermen and serve on City Council for one session. They will work with the Mayor's Youth Commission throughout the summer to understand Mayoral priorities and collaborate on legislation. By working closely with the Youth Aldermen throughout the summer, the Mayor's Youth Commission can work to get their agenda codified into law.

## Next Steps

Solicit feedback from the Mayor's Youth Commission on how it could serve their priorities and work with their busy high school schedules.

Solicit feedback from Aldermen, and recruit 3 aldermen to help lead the program.

Work with the Department of Law team to begin crafting a lesson in building an ordinance.

Call for applications for the first Youth City Council in 2024.

# Chicago Promise

Ensuring Equitable Access to Higher Education

by Lauren O'Hair

## Why it Matters

The City of Chicago has made a promise to uplift youth and work towards an educational system that values all students and ensures they have access to an adequate education. While the City has seen encouraging increases in high school graduation rates, post-secondary enrollment and graduation remains a problem for low-income Chicagoans. These problems can be addressed by adopting an initiative—call it the Chicago Promise—that would ensure that students had equitable financial access to higher education. The number of low-income students enrolling in post-secondary education has steadily decreased since 2017. The current college enrollment rate of low-income Chicago Public School students is 57.8%, with a college persistence rate of 67%. Additionally, in around one-third of Chicago's community areas, fewer than 25% of ninth-graders are expected to graduate college within ten years. These troubling trends could be due to the fact that low-income students are less likely to take on debt, especially during economic downturns, and those who do enroll in college struggle to complete their degrees, given the prohibitive costs of transportation, housing, food, and supplies. In order to ensure that low-income students can access higher education, the City of Chicago must find ways to eliminate these financial burdens.

## How it Works.

Chicago Promise would provide "last-dollar" financial support and mentorship to low-income students who qualify for the Pell Grant in order to support them in attending both two- and four-year colleges and universities in the city. Chicago Promise would improve upon a similar program in Detroit – Detroit Promise – and tailor it to Chicago. A key issue is that Detroit

Promise does not alleviate the full costs of attending college, only tuition. Chicago Promise should ensure that students receive last dollar funding based upon a college's "anticipated expenses" in their entirety. This would guarantee that all students had the funding not only to pay their tuition, but also to support themselves through college. The City of Chicago could fund the program by working with philanthropic organizations such as the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, which has a demonstrated commitment to education equity issues in Chicago, using state or federal funding, including funds from the American Rescue Plan Act, or through local tax revenue.

Chicago Promise would also send letters from the city to students informing them of their entitlement to Chicago Promise funds. A study conducted by the University of Michigan found that sending letters to students stating that their tuition was free increased the number of students who applied and enrolled at the University of Michigan. This would eliminate financial ambiguity and ensure that all students knew that they had a viable way to fund their education.

College graduation affects job opportunities and salary potential. Low-income Chicagoans deserve this opportunity. Chicago Promise would effectively revitalize communities by investing in people and targeting the obstacle of college affordability.

## Next Steps

Conduct interviews with youth from low-wealth families who decided to leave college and youth from community areas with lower rates of college persistence to identify root causes of disenrollment.

Obtain funding through philanthropic organizations, state or federal grants, and local tax revenue to fund Chicago Promise scholarship fund.

# Expanded Access to Cooperative Education in the South & West Sides

by Jordan Enos

## Why it Matters

Mayor Johnson campaigned on the promise to prioritize young people across Chicago. The success of One Summer Chicago illuminates young Chicagoans' desire for employment, in 2021 with 45,000 applicants and 20,000 job opportunities; young people are calling for an investment in their future. Mayor Johnson spoke on the program: "By taking an all-hands-on-deck approach, my administration is fulfilling our commitment to expanding year-round youth employment, uplifting young people, and creating safe, vital communities."

Cooperative Education (Co-Op) Today: The Co-Op is an active program housed under Career & Technical Education in the Office of College and Career Success; only 50 of the more than 140 public high schools participate, ranging from one – twenty students, totaling an estimated 300 active students.

Students are required to work Monday through Friday from 1 pm to 5 pm in exchange for hourly minimum wage and three school credits.

Alumni are part of a robust cohort that supports career planning and job placement amongst other graduates.

Addressing Underrepresentation:

Bridging the Gap for South and West Side Chicago Students:

The City should provide the Co-Op program with the necessary resources to tailor opportunities for students across Chicago, especially the South and West sides, so that Mayor Johnson and his administration can deliver on their commitment to expanding year-round youth employment

## How it Works

Expand employer partnerships to fit the needs of students and the community: Co-Op coordinators work with Genesys Works and Urban Alliance to identify business partners and job opportunities; employers pay between \$12 - \$15K/year, which includes student worker wages and a fee for services including professional training.

Direct Urban Alliance and Genesys Works to identify small, local businesses on the South and

West sides. Offer a subsidy to small business owners to offset the fee to incentivize participation in the program, encouraging students who want to stay closer to home while supporting their local economy.

Anchor program in equity by tailoring requirements to student availability: Students athletes, caregivers, participants in after-school activities, etc., are currently precluded from participating because of the time commitment.

## Next Steps

Collaborate with Chicago Roadmap, the successful partnership between Chicago Public Schools (CPS) and Chicago Community Colleges (CCC), to expand institutional knowledge and share resources; consider how Chicago Roadmap's programs may complement and bolster the Co-Op program.

Conduct focus groups with teachers and care-

givers to CPS students and assess awareness and accessibility of Co-Op program; develop customized marketing plans to increase program awareness in schools with low uptake and explore opportunities in neighborhoods with high knowledge and low participation.

Invite CPS high schoolers, modeled after the success of the youth community budget roundtable, to share their career interests, employers of interest, and how Co-Op can fit their needs.



**ECONOMIC AND  
WORKFORCE  
DEVELOPMENT**

# Weekly Pay

A bridge to stability

by Andre Jimenez

## Why it Matters

The first few weeks of a new job can be a vulnerable period for employees relying on their first paycheck, often 15-21 days away. This financial gap forces many to quit due to unaffordable transportation and childcare expenses. Even if they manage to weather this gap, several months may be spent recovering financially by paying back loans or relying on family support.

Priority populations, such as youth, returning residents, and workers from opportunity neighborhoods are some of the most likely to leave their job due to financial challenges in their first three weeks. A staggering 43% of employees who leave their jobs cite transportation and childcare challenges as the main reasons for their decision. This further exacerbates labor shortages that have persisted around Chicago since the pandemic.

To support employee retention, the Johnson administration should implement weekly pay for the first month of employment for city employees, followed by a transition to traditional biweekly pay. By eliminating the pay gap and providing financial stability, we can attract and retain talented employees, no matter what their financial situation is entering a job. This approach could serve as a model for the private sector, while

demonstrating the administration's unwavering commitment to employee well-being, thus leading to higher job satisfaction and improved retention rates. Often, we focus on increasing HOW MUCH we pay employees, while forgetting to reshape the WAY we pay. By mandating this pay structure within City government, the Johnson Administration will create a bridge to financial stability for valued new employees.

## How it Works

Employees making under \$25/hr will automatically receive weekly pay during their first month of employment, transitioning to the traditional biweekly cycle afterward. This change significantly reduces the paycheck wait time from 15-21 days to just 7, promoting financial stability and job satisfaction from the employees first day onwards.

To implement this innovative pay system, adjustments to payroll and an assumed payroll model akin to salaried employees' approach will be necessary. The initial costs of the transition will far outweigh the long-term benefits of improved employee satisfaction, higher retention rates, and increased overall productivity. Additionally, substantial cost savings can be expected due to diminished turnover rates.

Should an employee leave before the first month's completion, their final paycheck, reflecting hours worked in the previous week, will be paid on the following Monday. This ensures fair compensation for completed work

and eliminates concerns about paying for unfulfilled tasks. The City should embrace this game-changing pay structure to create a more prosperous and financially stable workforce.

## Next Steps

Conduct a pilot program of the pay structure with a select group of new employees (possibly OneSummer Chicago or SPRING Forward). Gather feedback from both employees and HR/payroll teams to identify any challenges or areas for improvement.

Engage key stakeholders, including senior management, department heads, and representatives from priority populations, in discussions about the proposed pay structure. Address any concerns, gain support, and ensure alignment with the organization's overall goals and values.

Develop a comprehensive communication plan to inform all new employees (especially those in priority populations) about the upcoming changes to the pay structure. Clearly communicate the benefits of the opt-out program, the timeline for implementation, and any steps employees need to take to opt out if desired.



# M.O.R.E

# Initiative

## Mayor's Office Reentry Employment Initiative

### Employment Fellowship for Returning Residents

by Kamaria S. Hill

#### Why it Matters

In 2022, more than 27% of returning residents were actively experiencing unemployment in the City of Chicago and navigating barriers to quality employment opportunities. Formerly incarcerated individuals need and deserve stable jobs and income for the same reasons as every other citizen in this country – to support themselves and their loved ones; pursue life goals and improve their quality of life; and strengthen the economic position of their communities.

#### How it Works

In response to the many barriers to reentry and the increasing 27% unemployment rate of formerly incarcerated individuals living in the City of Chicago, the goal of this program is to provide quality and stable employment opportunities for ten returning residents as they integrate back into their communities. This fellowship will connect individuals who have been impacted by incarceration to high-visibility and high-impact projects that are critical to the mission and overall success of Chicago's municipal government.

Residents will have the opportunity to network, build critical skills, and learn in-depth knowledge about the City of Chicago's internal operations across various teams within the Mayor's Office, and key departments at local sister agencies in the areas of law, finance, policy, data, communications, and public engagement initiatives. The

objective of this fellowship program is to provide resources and professional development tools to returning residents so that they are empowered to do and achieve M.O.R.E.! Residents will have the advantage of partnering alongside senior Mayor's Office staff to deliver recommendations and implement programs that improve Chicagoans lives!

As a Mayor's Office Reentry Employment (M.O.R.E.) Fellow, an individual will have the opportunity to:

Join the Mayor's Office senior staff for three months!

Participate in departmental rotations and learn about the work and mission of the City's departments through weekly presentations and guided tours.

Challenge existing policies and propose new solutions and recommendations.

Meet with the Mayor, Commissioners, Aldermen, and other stakeholders.

Attend press conferences, City Council meetings, and executive-level strategic planning sessions.

Develop framework for new policy implementation.

#### Next Steps

As an implementation strategy, the next steps are:

Engage key stakeholders including actual returning residents who have been system-impacted and are transitioning back into civilian life.

Conduct focus studies to understand what their challenges and needs are, especially around employment.

Develop an employment curriculum that is both suitable and feasible for returning residents.

Establish an Office on Reentry within the Mayor's Office to establish a footprint in Federal Advocacy, and align local policies with larger, federal policies.

Establish partnerships with local community-based organizations that specialize in workforce and economic development, and jobs.lower socioeconomic status, ensuring we support those most affected by digital inequity, providing accessible power, and promoting digital inclusivity.

# Tax Incentives for the Music Industry

Tax credits to support the recruitment and retention of sound recording productions in Chicago

by Ashley Hodo

## Why it Matters

The City of Chicago is a hub for cultural innovation, and its prominent music scene encapsulates the City's passion, vision, and soul. Chicago is a major Music City poised to continue leaving an imprint on U.S. and global music scenes. Artists of

all mediums and backgrounds have expressed growing frustrations with the affordability of producing art in Chicago. Members of the musical community often leave Chicago for cities such as Los Angeles, New York, or Nashville because these musical hubs allow for artistic career development and offer incentives and support the City has not yet extended. As the City strives to protect and revitalize the "Soul of Chicago," it is

imperative to explore support for creating and preserving creative spaces and industries. A tax incentive program makes Chicago competitive with other music hubs, including New Orleans, Atlanta, and Austin, while spurring economic development in the music sector. Similar tax incentive programs have generated tens of thousands of jobs and increased the music industry's economic impact by millions. In Fulton County, Georgia,

total music employment in this county alone includes over 10,500 industry jobs, and its music industry has a total economic output of \$1.7 billion; Louisiana receives a 40% return on investment from its sound recording tax credit program (state and local tax revenue); and Texas' continued investments in its music industry has resulted in 192,675 jobs, \$9.391 billion in industry earnings, and generates \$470 million in tax revenue. With its already thriving music industry, this is an opportunity to foster existing creative communities and engage with broad untapped musical talent.

## How it Works

The City of Chicago should implement a 15% transferable tax credit for qualified sound recording productions, with an additional 10% tax credit offered for sound recording produced in the City's Opportunity Zones. Eligible sound recording productions include:

Studio musical recording (single,

album, or EP)

Scored performances (i.e., musical recordings for television, film, and video games)

Songs produced for advertising purposes.

This transferable tax credit may be applied to all expenditures related to sound recording production, including, but not limited to, studio rentals, production equipment, and personnel (e.g., sound engineers, mixing and mastering services, etc.). The minimum spending threshold for production-related expenditures should be \$50,000, as this amount allows for a competitive advantage over states with similar incentive structures and ensures that smaller, independent artists can benefit from this incentive program.

## Next Steps

Create the Chicago Music Office under the Department of Cultural Affairs and Special Events. This

Office would promote economic development for the music industry, attract talent and industry-related businesses, and support musical artists.

Develop a working group of local artists, recording studios, and other industry stakeholders to evaluate the tax incentive structure and provide feedback to ensure equitable outcomes for artists and the broader industry.

The Department of Cultural Affairs and Special Events should collaborate with the Department of Planning and Development to create an equitable application process for tax incentives. These departments may also discuss appropriate caps for this program to ensure economic feasibility and to create a revenue-generating incentive structure.

Engage with the Illinois and Chicago Film Office to create synergy related to film production and post-production musical scoring.



**TRANSPORTATION**

**+**

**INFRASTRUCTURE**



# Considering Cyclists

by Mitchell Kunichoff and Audrey Dombro

## Why it Matters

The City of Chicago has committed to eliminating traffic deaths and injuries through Vision Zero. Despite this pledge, Chicago was recently ranked as one of the worst cities for bikeability and from 2019 to 2020, pedestrian deaths increased by 45%. Chicago infrastructure continues to prioritize the car at the expense of health and equity. Car ownership is a constant drain on income for working class residents who must pay for insurance, repair, and registration requirements. Forced to buy cars due to an unavoidable reality of limited infrastructure for other forms of mobility, Chicagoans will suffer the effects of air pollution and illness. Our immediate policies must centralize the human experience in mobility and invest in infrastructure that reflects this priority.

## How it Works

Our New Idea proposes a suite of urban planning initiatives designed to enhance pedestrian and cyclist safety and mobility across the City of Chicago and make a visual statement of prioritizing these forms of transport. The first component of the suite is the introduction of continuous sidewalks in high pedestrian areas and where busy roads meet local residential streets. By extending sidewalks across intersections, we create a seamless and level path that facilitates safer and easier navigation for pedestrians and cyclists, and visually and physically indicates to motorists that they are approaching a shared zone. This design shift from the traditional model - where pedestrians or cyclists step down to the street - prioritizes pedestrian and cyclist spaces, subtly reminding

drivers to slow down and proceed with caution. Complementing this, the second component is the implementation of pedestrian scramble systems at intersections. These systems halt all vehicular traffic momentarily, enabling pedestrians and cyclists to cross intersections in all directions, including diagonally. Both initiatives aim to promote slower traffic, reduce the risk of accidents, and improve efficiency in high-traffic areas. This suite of ideas is rooted in inclusivity, particularly benefiting those with mobility issues, parents with strollers, wheelchair users, and the cyclist community. Our New Ideas represents a forward-thinking approach to urban design, prioritizing the needs of pedestrians and cyclists in our City's infrastructure. It envisions a safer, more accessible, and inclusive Chicago.

## Next Steps

Identify and pinpoint high-volume pedestrian corridors with incidences of bike and pedestrian crashes through data analytics.

Establish temporary continuous sidewalks and modify and reprogram of the traffic light cycle at selected intersections to gauge the impact of these changes.

Update and Amend the City of Chicago's 'Street and Site Plan Design Standards' to include the requirement of continuous sidewalks.

Expand the city's portfolio for Traffic Calming Treatments to include the continuous sidewalks, allowing residents and communities who want to introduce these measures in their areas to request its implementation via their local alderperson.

# Power to the People

Transforms Chicago's infrastructure into public charging points, enhancing digital connections and inclusivity for all residents.

by Mitchell Kunichoff

## Why it Matters

As we further integrate digital interactions into our society, personal autonomy and agency are inextricably linked to mobile technology access, and having a smartphone or laptop shifts from a luxury to a necessity. Although Chicago has made significant strides in bridging the device divide through the Chicago Digital Equity Coalition and the Digital Equity Plan's recommendations, residents still face significant barriers in technological accessibility, including device charging.

Individuals facing housing instability and energy insecurity often depend on public facilities (e.g. libraries) and businesses (e.g. restaurants and cafes) to power their devices, necessitating

meticulous and careful planning of their daily activities for the seemingly routine and mundane task of charging their phones. This planning process is complicated by many businesses enforcing anti-loitering policies that require a purchase for access to electrical outlets, leading to a continual search for compliant businesses and extensive periods spent there daily. When these businesses and public facilities are unavailable, these individuals have no other options for charging their devices, putting at risk their connectivity, access to essential goods and services, and ability to maintain contact with crucial connections including family, friends, and service providers.

This issue is of importance because it diverts residents' attention from crucial higher-order tasks required for self-management and limits their ability to stay connected. Ensuring constant access to charge mobile devices is not just about technology; it's about fulfilling basic needs, maintaining social interactions, and promoting civic engagement. Without resolving this, we risk leaving a significant segment of our population disconnected from the digital world that is integral to modern life.

## How it Works

The energy of Chicago pulses not only in the vibrant culture and people, but also through the veins of the City's infrastructure. From the towering structures of our cityscape to the local businesses ubiquitous across the City, and the streetlights to transit systems, electricity quietly yet constantly courses through the City. With a vision to transform this omnipresent electric infrastructure into accessible charging points, this new idea involves harnessing public infrastructure, activating private entities through incentives, updating construction codes for future developments, and installing mobile

charging stations in lower-income neighborhoods to make all outdoor electrical outlets publicly accessible, democratize access to power and enabling everyone to access electricity.

## Next Steps

The implementation of this vision requires a fourfold strategy:

1. Utilize existing public infrastructure – the government buildings, streetlights, Divvy stations, and more – and install outdoor electrical outlets and receptacles, turning the City's omnipresent electrical energy into accessible charging points.
2. Activate private businesses and city partners such as the CTA, and non-residential buildings to make their outdoor electrical outlets and receptacles available for public use through financial incentives or tax breaks,
3. Update to the City of Chicago's Construction Codes to mandate new developments to include live outdoor electrical outlets and receptacles.
4. Strategically place and install mobile charging stations in communities of poverty and neighborhoods predominantly inhabited by residents of lower socioeconomic status, ensuring we support those most affected by digital inequity, providing accessible power, and promoting digital inclusivity.

# Loop Link: Alive + Amplified

by Arturo Sánchez Navarro

## Why it Matters

Loop Link is a public transportation service across seven Chicago Transit Authority (CTA) bus routes in downtown Chicago, aimed at connecting the central business district through dedicated bus lanes and signals. The \$41 million corridor debuted in 2015 has not met its goal of speeding up connections between Michigan Avenue and the West Loop, partly due to private vehicle obstructions and the challenging lack of prepaid boarding. By introducing key infrastructure adjustments to the existing bus lanes and stations, "Loop Link: Alive and Amplified" seeks to revitalize this resource within a six-month period, providing a nudge to an already promising solution.

## How it Works

Improvements to the dedicated bus lanes include eye-level signage and bus lane separation in strategic points of conflict, allowing transit users to experience a more efficient connection within downtown areas. Likewise, to increase the corridor's operation speed, buses would transition from in-bus payment to prepaid boarding, reducing bus "dwell time". This can be achieved through turnstiles and Ventra Vending

Machines (VVM) at both ends of the platforms, along with transparent panels that divide the stations from the bus lanes, avoiding dangerous or unlawful trespassing of the boarding platforms. Additional external electronic displays could inform users of upcoming units, allowing for a well-planned ridership experience.

Moreover, upgrading the boarding system requires marketing campaigns to inform the community about the mechanisms and benefits of prepaid transit. The communication plans include clear usage instructions, tutorials, and customer support for adopting the new system, utilizing publicity billboards and screens in stations, as well as Ventra card graphics and online ticketing platforms. The required funds adequately fit in the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, providing \$550 billion over fiscal years 2022 through 2026 in new Federal investment. These adjustments account for 20% of the original Loop Link Project, representing an estimate of \$8 million. Additionally, regular data influxes are contemplated as assessment tools to optimize the Alive and Amplified proposal.

## Next Steps

A progressive introduction of the

physical improvements will allow both private vehicle drivers and transit users to familiarize with the updated elements of Loop Link during the six-month project span, bestowing confidence in the service by following a four-stage plan:

Phase 1 (throughout the project, \$1.0 M). Community socialization

Phase 2 (3 months, \$4.0 M). Signage placement and station sheltering

Phase 3 (1 month, \$0.5 M). Bus lane separation

Phase 4 (2 months, \$2.5 M). Turnstile and VVM installation

To ensure an optimal operation of the upgraded Loop Link corridor, coordination with the Chicago Police Department and the Department of Finance would be required to enforce the exclusive circulation of buses along the dedicated lanes. Finally, these strategies will incentivize public transportation ridership, yielding additional funds to the CTA and the Chicago Department of Transportation that could in turn inspire similar Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) initiatives across the city, bridging neighborhoods through accessible, efficient, and inclusive transit infrastructure.

**ENVIRON  
MENTAL**

**SUSTAIN  
ABILITY**

# Putting an End to Botanical Sexism in Chicago

Planting more female trees will reduce hay fever for Chicagoans and provide neighbors with free fruit.

by Andie Linker

## Why it Matters

“When used for street plantings, only male trees should be selected, to avoid the nuisance from the seed.” That’s what the USDA wrote in their 1949 Yearbook of Agriculture. Since then, urban arborists have planted mostly male, or wind pollinating, cultivars of trees to ensure no messy seeds or fruits end up on the streets. The result? Our streets may have been spared a few seed pods and half-eaten fruits dropped by birds, but a worse side effect has surfaced: seasonal hay fever is at an all-time high.

Americans are currently facing an allergy epidemic. According to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention, 7.7% of American adults suffered from allergies in 2020. This is also affecting Chicagoans. While male trees are indeed “litter-free,” they produce an abundance

of pollen. With a shortage of female trees to absorb their pollen, Chicago residents are stuck inhaling all the excess pollen.

Trees are amazing for the environment; they are natural purifiers that remove toxins from our air. As we’ve experienced troubles with air quality throughout the summer, we must ensure we can enjoy the benefits trees bring us without worrying about any additional respiratory discomfort. We must prioritize planting more female trees to absorb the excess pollen.

Additionally, many Chicagoans struggle with a lack of access to fresh fruits in their neighborhoods. Over 6 grocery stores have closed on the South and West sides of our City over the past two years, thus further limiting access. By planting more female trees, many Chicagoans will have access to free fruits in

their neighborhoods, thus reducing the litter caused by these trees and providing everyone with fresh food at their fingertips.

## How it Works

The City of Chicago already has a robust tree planting program managed by the Department of Streets and Sanitation, called Our Roots Chicago. The goal of Our Roots Chicago is to plant 75,000 new trees in Chicago, especially on the South and West sides who suffer from a lack of tree canopy as compared to the North side. Chicagoans can request new trees be planted in their parkway on top of pre-planned plantings that the Department handles.

Currently, Our Roots Chicago is conducting a tree census to learn about the various cultivars of trees

around our City. The first step towards eliminating botanical sexism is to clearly document how many male and female tree varieties are in the city, and where they are located.

The Office of Sustainability should then work with the Department of Streets and Sanitation on the following:

1. Expanding Our Roots Chicago to prioritize planting female trees, such as apple, paw paw, and cherry trees; and
2. Educating Chicagoans on which species of tree are male and which are female, and how they interact with each other.

The City can also provide information on safely picking and consuming fruit from female trees, and how to avoid a mess that might attract rodents.

The existing Our Roots Chicago funding and communication channels can be utilized for this program, providing Chicagoans with more information on male trees and female trees, as well as an interactive map so that residents can know what kinds of trees show up in their community.

## Next Steps

Add information about tree sex to the current Tree Census program and ensure that this information is publicly available.

Update the planting list to include information about which tree species are male and which are female and what trees might be more suitable in different areas. Long-term, expanding the varieties of female trees available in the planting list.

Audit current City planting plans to expand the variety of male and female trees

Update the Our Roots Chicago website with information about male and female trees for Chicagoans to learn about.

Enjoy municipal fruit planted on public parkways and provide Chicagoans with a guide on how to safely pick and enjoy fruit.



# Solar Canopies Atop Municipal Parking Lots

The City of Chicago should establish a program that installs solar canopies atop large municipal parking lots.

by Moksha Menghaney

## Why it Matters

Solar parking lots can help clear a massive hurdle to renewable rollouts: land scarcity. As renewable projects have proliferated over the last few years, so has the opposition to them. Local communities vetoed over 75 large-scale projects across the U.S. in 2022, and the push to site energy generation closer to energy users has increased. For Chicago to achieve its 100% renewable goal by 2035, it must identify distributed energy resource opportunities within its boundaries to diversify its generation portfolio. One such option is to utilize parking lots, which often are next to heavy energy users like offices and urban buildings and can directly offset their energy demands and reduce the additional transmission burden on the larger electric grid. From a land-use perspective, utilizing land that has already been disturbed and is not employed for any purpose other than parking to site solar panels makes for better planning. These canopies can also be co-sited with E.V. chargers to create a sustainability-forward parking ecosystem, where the excess energy generated during the day

could be stored in E.V. batteries. They also benefit the drivers by providing protection from sun, rain, and snow. Incorporating solar canopies has multiple benefits, so much so that France recently passed a law requiring large parking lots to have at least 50% of their lot covered in solar canopies. Such projects have been demonstrated at airports, university campuses, and railway stations across many states, so the City won't necessarily be taking on undue risk but reducing some of the Chicago-specific early adoption barriers.

## How it Works

The biggest hurdle to installing these canopies is high upfront costs. Compared to ground-mounted panels, a carport requires more labor and inputs to create a higher structure, costing about 25-40% more to install. However, carefully designing the project and incorporating a public-private partnership where the City leases the parking lot land to a developer but buys power from the project through a power purchase agreement can help reduce the City's overall upfront costs. The project can utilize the federal tax credits available

for renewable energy projects with a private partnership. The City can also design an E.V. charger-linked carport and use federal funding for E.V. infrastructure to support this initiative.

## Next Steps

Identify suitable municipal parking lots. To be cost-effective, these projects would require sites with a large parking footprint and get enough solar insolation throughout the day, i.e., they are not shaded by surrounding buildings during certain parts of the day. This would rule out parking lots downtown and other dense city areas. Potential sites could be larger Chicago Public Library sites or Public Safety H.Q.

Utilize existing institutional knowledge on solar to identify and mitigate potential project development challenges.

Explore and identify the best funding methods for the initiative.

Issue an RFP to identify the appropriate project developer.



# “Good Food” Restaurant Challenge

by Natalie Spaulding



## Encouraging Chicago restaurants to contribute to a more sustainable, equitable & healthy food system

### Why it Matters

Chicago boasts a highly regarded restaurant scene; however, there is an opportunity to better leverage the restaurant industry to shape local food systems. Pre-pandemic, Chicago was home to approximately 21,000 restaurants that produced over \$16 billion in sales annually. These restaurants purchase millions of pounds of meat, seafood, fresh produce, and dairy products annually. This purchasing power can be deployed towards local products that are sustainably and ethically produced (e.g., organic, antibiotic-free products) and bolster local economic vitality and community wealth. In addition, restaurants are one of the largest urban contributors to food waste, presenting an opportunity to implement waste reduction strategies to mitigate resource waste and methane production in landfills. In terms of workforce, restaurants can bolster the economic and workplace well-being of the over 340,000 people in the Chicago metro area employed in food and restaurant jobs.

### How it Works

The City of Chicago will host an annual “Good Food” Challenge which will encourage restaurants and concessionaries in the city to make progress toward the following categories:

Local Economies

- Environmental Sustainability
- Valued Workforce
- Animal Welfare
- Community Health & Nutrition

This voluntary, low-cost program will broaden the reach of the Good Food Purchasing Policy (GFPP), which the City of Chicago passed as a resolution in 2017, by encouraging restaurants to make strides towards the five above values emphasized by GFPP.

Chicago restaurants will participate by introducing or expanding value-based practices for each category. For example, the Environmental Sustainability category could include offering half-size portions to reduce food waste. For Local Economies, restaurants could increase the percentage of their food sourced from regional producers. Technical assistance will be provided to help participating restaurants identify and implement changes to contribute to a better food system.

Restaurants will receive recognition from the Mayor’s Office for participating in the program and materials to advertise their participation, such as a window cling. Special recognition will be given to top achievers in each value category.

This program takes inspiration from successful challenges hosted by other cities, such as Nashville’s Food-Saver Challenge.

### Next Steps

#### Program Design

Through the Food Equity Council, create program participation guidelines and value-based practices/ scoring criteria in collaboration

with subject matter experts and community members.

Consider community partnerships such as the James Beard Foundation to further the reach and resources of the program.

Based on funding, determine resources and technical assistance available to participants.

Design a branding strategy that can be used to drive consumer recognition of program participation.

#### Program Operationalization

Solicit participating restaurants by marketing through existing Chicago Department of Business Affairs & Consumer Protection (BACP) and partner channels.

Evaluate the impact of the program on Chicago’s food system (e.g., measure pounds of food waste diverted from landfills).

Market participants and celebrate program accomplishments.

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Dynarski, S., Libassi, C., Michelmore, K., & Owen, S. (2021.. Closing the Gap: The Effect of Reducing Complexity and Uncertainty in College Pricing on the Choices of Low-Income Students. *American Economic Review*, 111(6), 1721–1756. <https://doi.org/10.1257/aer.20200451>

## Expanded Access to Cooperative Education in the South & West Sides

### Economic + Workforce Development

#### Weekly Pay

#### M.O.R.E Initiative

#### Tax Incentives for the Music Industry

“Fulton County Music Ecosystem Strategy.” 874-SOUND-DIPLOMACY-Fulton-Executive-Summary32pp-FullV6-Sept.pdf (georgiamusicpartners.org)

“Economic and Fiscal Impact: Sound Recording Investor Tax Credit, FY 2021 – FY2022.” 64149d4409c69d733ccf2137\_2023-Entertainment Impact-Studies-March-2023.pdf (webflow.com)

“The 2023 Economic Impact of Music in Texas.” TXP\_TMO\_TX\_Music\_Impact\_2023.pdf (texas.gov)

This tax credit percentage is comparable to other states and countries with similar tax incentives. Louisiana

offers artists 18% transferable tax credits; Georgia offers 15% non-transferable/non-refundable tax credits with an additional 5% tax credit available for productions in rural Georgia counties.

## Transportation + Infrastructure

### Considering Cyclists

<https://blockclubchicago.org/2023/07/17/chicago-is-unsafe-for-cyclists-report-shows-it-reflects-how-were-all-feeling-advocates-say/>

<https://chi.streetsblog.org/2021/02/09/chicago-traffic-deaths-were-up-45-last-year-as-speeding-increased-during-covid>

<https://blog.ucsusa.org/dave-reichmuth/exposure-to-air-pollution-from-vehicles-in-illinois-is-inequitable-it-doesnt-have-to-be/>

### Power to the People

### Loop Link: Alive + Amplified

“Loop Link”, Chicago Transit Authority (CTA): <https://www.transitchicago.com/looplink/>

## Environmental Sustainability

### Putting an end to botanical sexism in Chicago

<https://blogs.scientificamerican.com/guest-blog/botanical-sexism-cultivates-home-grown-allergies/>

[https://www.washingtonpost.com/health/244-million-americans-are-plagued-with-seasonal-allergies-cdc-says/2020/05/01/e6899ed8-8b05-11ea-ac8a-fe9b8088e101\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/health/244-million-americans-are-plagued-with-seasonal-allergies-cdc-says/2020/05/01/e6899ed8-8b05-11ea-ac8a-fe9b8088e101_story.html)

<https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/fastats/allergies.htm>

<https://www.chicago.gov/content/dam/city/sites/food-equity/pdfs/2023%20Chicago%20Food%20Equity%20Council%20Annual%20Report.pdf>

<https://www.chicago.gov/city/en/sites/our-roots-chicago/home.html>

[https://www.chicago.gov/content/dam/city/depts/streets/supp\\_info/Forestry/Forestry\\_2013/Chicago\\_Urban\\_Tree\\_Planting\\_list\\_2012.pdf](https://www.chicago.gov/content/dam/city/depts/streets/supp_info/Forestry/Forestry_2013/Chicago_Urban_Tree_Planting_list_2012.pdf)

## Solar Canopies atop Municipal Parking Lots

Ralston, W. (2023, 01 23). Why Not Cover Ugly Parking Lots With Solar Panels? Retrieved from Wired: <https://www.wired.com/story/france-solar-panels-parking-lots/>

Nugent, C. (2022, 12 08). The Overlooked Solar Power Potential of America’s Parking Lots. Retrieved from Time: <https://time.com/6239651/solar-parking-lots-france-us/>

### “Good Food” Restaurant Challenge

“Who’s Feeding the Chicago Restaurant Industry? A Closer Look at the Food & Supply Landscape,” Notch, March 26, 2019, <https://www.notch.financial/blog/chicago-restaurant-industry-food-supply#:~:text=With%20over%2021%2C000%20restaurants%20and,restaurants%20is%20an%20enormous%20task.>

“Occupational Employment and Wage Statistics: May 2022 Metropolitan and Nonmetropolitan Area Occupational Employment and Wage Estimates – Chicago-Naperville-Elgin, IL-IN-WI,” U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, May 2022, [https://www.bls.gov/oes/current/oes\\_16980.htm#35-0000](https://www.bls.gov/oes/current/oes_16980.htm#35-0000).

“Adoption and implementation of Good Food Purchasing Standards,” City of Chicago, September 6, 2017, [https://www.chicago.gov/content/dam/city/depts/fss/supp\\_info/CDGA/GoodFoodPurchasingPolicyResolution2018.pdf](https://www.chicago.gov/content/dam/city/depts/fss/supp_info/CDGA/GoodFoodPurchasingPolicyResolution2018.pdf).

“Food Saver Challenge,” Metropolitan Government of Nashville & Davidson County, <https://www.nashville.gov/departments/mayor/sustainability-resilience-environment/food-saver-challenge>.

**MEET**

**THE**

**FELLOWS**



## Aarushi Kataria

Aarushi is a Master of Public Policy candidate at the University of Chicago Harris School of Public Policy. She completed her undergraduate degree in economics and political science from Ashoka University in India. Her specializations are international development, data analytics, and computational social sciences. She is passionate about the political economy of development and economic mobility. During the summer, Aarushi worked with Business Affairs and Consumer Protection, the Department of Family and Support Services, the Gender-Based Violence Taskforce, the Department of Public Health, and the Mayor's Policy Team. Her projects included instrumentalizing the Transition Committee Report, helping prepare the ordinance for minimum wage for gig workers, reimagining social impact in financial outcomes, and working on the Gender Based Violence Strategic Plan 2.0. These projects are closely tied to her previous experience of working in mental health advocacy, economic policy design, and economic development. Aarushi is a compulsive reader, loves exploring Chicago's restaurant scene, and writing poetry.



## Andre Jimenez

Andre, a Master of Public Affairs candidate at Princeton University with roots in the Seattle, WA area, brings valuable experience from his work with the City of Tacoma's Human Rights Commission, where he served as a community liaison focused on building trust in law enforcement. This summer, he utilized his academic and personal background to support the creation of the Mayor's Office of Community Safety, advocating for community engagement through the Office of Reentry and enhanced harm reduction services via the Office of Substance Use. A passionate and committed local government professional, Andre's mission is to empower communities that are often overlooked and underserved. Beyond work, he enjoys quality time with his wife, Jazmyne, and their three daughters, Sadie, Grace, and Ivy.



## Andie Linker

Andie Linker is a third-generation lifelong Chicagoan who loves this City deeply. She is a Master of Urban Planning & Policy candidate at UIC with a focus on economic development. Over her 11 weeks at the Mayor's Office, Andie did policy research related to housing and neighborhood development, built a GIS map to help people unite with their lost pets, wrote speeches for Mayor Johnson and his senior leadership team, and worked with local leaders to help define what the Soul of Chicago means to them. She hopes to build a career in developing just, livable, resilient neighborhoods for all of Chicago. In her free time, she enjoys spending time by the river and exploring Chicago's many ice cream shops.



## Arturo Sánchez Navarro

Arturo is an Urban Planner and Master of Public Policy candidate dedicated to exploring the impact of public spaces, housing, and mass transportation on dense urban settings based on legible, intuitive, and innovative design principles. He graduated Cum Laude from the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México. Arturo previously worked with the Ministry of Mobility of Mexico City as Head of the Infrastructure Studies Department, leading urban design, signage, iconography, and road safety strategies. He also has experience at the Politecnico di Torino, Italy. His matriculation at the University of Chicago, with the support of the Fulbright Scholarship, focuses on how programs and regulations complement public infrastructure through data-driven decision-making processes and statistical tools. As a Mayoral Fellow, Arturo contributed to the Traffic Demand Management analysis with the CDOT, the 2023 Heat Watch campaign with the OCEE, data compilation on housing projects for the Affordable Requirements Ordinance (ARO), and the Tiny Homes initiative. Arturo is passionate about languages, graphic arts, and music and has developed independent editorial, illustration, and cartographic works.



## Ash Alejandro Taylor

Ash is a grassroots activist and social justice advocate from Houston, Texas. With a deep passion for community engagement, Ash has been actively involved in organizing phone banking sessions, letter-writing campaigns, and door-to-door canvassing efforts since their teen years. Ash graduated Summa Cum Laude from Texas State University with a B.A. in Political Science and dual minors in Latin American History and Spanish. During this time, their commitment to community advocacy led them to work with organizations such as Interfaith Ministries for Greater Houston and the ATX Free Fridge Project, where they provided assistance to asylum-seeking families and combated food insecurity. During the summer, Ash had the privilege of working with the Mayor's Office in impactful ways. They conducted research for the Mayor's Office of Reentry, focusing on identifying and addressing barriers facing returning residents at both the state and federal levels. Additionally, Ash worked closely with the Department of Health and Human Services, where they played a key role in spearheading the 2023 Overdose Awareness Day campaign. When not immersed in the community, Ash can be found playing with their cats, diving into audiobooks, veganizing family recipes, and enjoying Chicago's robust theater scene.



## Ashley Hodo

Ashley is a Master of Public Policy candidate at the University of Chicago Harris School of Public Policy with a focus on Social/Inequality Policy. She is a 2022 graduate of Spelman College, where she graduated Summa Cum Laude with a B.A. in Political Science with a minor in Economics. During her time at Spelman, Ashley served as a Legislative Intern with the Georgia House Democratic Caucus and was an inaugural Racial Justice Fellow with the Georgia Women's Policy Institute, igniting a passion for racial justice advocacy through policymaking. As a Mayoral Fellow, she has worked with the Department of Cultural Affairs and Special Events on research related to arts-related zoning and development, the Office of Equity and Racial Justice in its partnership with the Folded Map Action Kit, the Food Equity Council and its support for farmers' markets and assisted with other projects exploring the Soul of Chicago. Ashley's purpose is rooted in championing equitable policy for people of color to promote socioeconomic mobility, and she hopes to continue her social justice work through public service. Ashley is an avid listener of 90's R&B, enjoys cooking, and is a proud member of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc.



## Audrey Dombro

Audrey is a graduate student at the University of Michigan pursuing a Master of Urban and Regional Planning and a Master of Public Policy. Before graduate school, Audrey was a housing counselor for Detroit residents facing eviction and experiencing homelessness. An avid language learner, Audrey is interested in comparative policy and international relationship-building to share best practices for improving the well-being of people and environments in local contexts. As a Mayoral Fellow, Audrey worked with the Department of Transportation's Bike Chicago program to distribute bicycles to residents facing transportation barriers and with the Traffic Engineering department to categorize street infrastructure-related requests and analyze patterns. Audrey also worked with Economic and Neighborhood Development on a proposal for consolidating and expediting permits to speed the development of affordable housing, and she conducted personal interviews with numerous international advocacy groups and governments to gather data on the safety process for urban river swimming events. Additionally, Audrey supported emerging efforts in the Department of Streets and Sanitation to reduce organics waste in the City. As a Chicagoan this summer, Audrey enjoyed riding her bicycle to work at City Hall and visiting family and roots in Pullman.



## Camelia Valldejuly

Camelia is a Master of Public Policy candidate at the University of Chicago Harris School of Public Policy. She earned her Bachelor of Arts in Government from Harvard University. Camelia is passionate about community building and hopes to operationalize good policies in the communities they aim to serve. Prior to graduate school, she worked across different sectors: winemaking in California, hurricane disaster relief in her native Puerto Rico, and program management in the international justice sector at the U.S. Department of State. As a Mayoral Fellow this summer, she was excited to learn how the City of Chicago interacts with community organizations and the federal government to create a support network for its citizens. Her projects included working with the Department of Family and Support Services to coordinate after-school activities for newly arrived migrant youth and with the Neighborhood Broadband & Digital Equity Coalition to research broadband workforce needs. Camelia loves watching movies, picnicking in parks, and bike riding along the lakefront.



## Christian Johns

Christian is a Master of Public Policy candidate at the University of Chicago Harris School of Public Policy. Prior to this, he received a B.A. in Political Science and African-American Studies from Colgate University, where he graduated Cum Laude. He also received Colgate University's 1819 Award, the highest honor granted to graduating seniors. After graduating from Colgate, Christian worked as a public finance investment banking analyst at UBS. Christian's primary areas of focus are urban policy, transportation, and municipal finance. He is also concerned with equitable neighborhood and economic development within historically disinvested communities. Christian applied his interests to his summer projects, which included project management for the Budget Community Engagement Roundtables, the development of the Mayor's 100-Day Plan, and strategy for various Boards and Commissions. Outside of government and politics, Christian is a proud uncle of eight and loves building bustling metropolises while playing Cities Skylines.



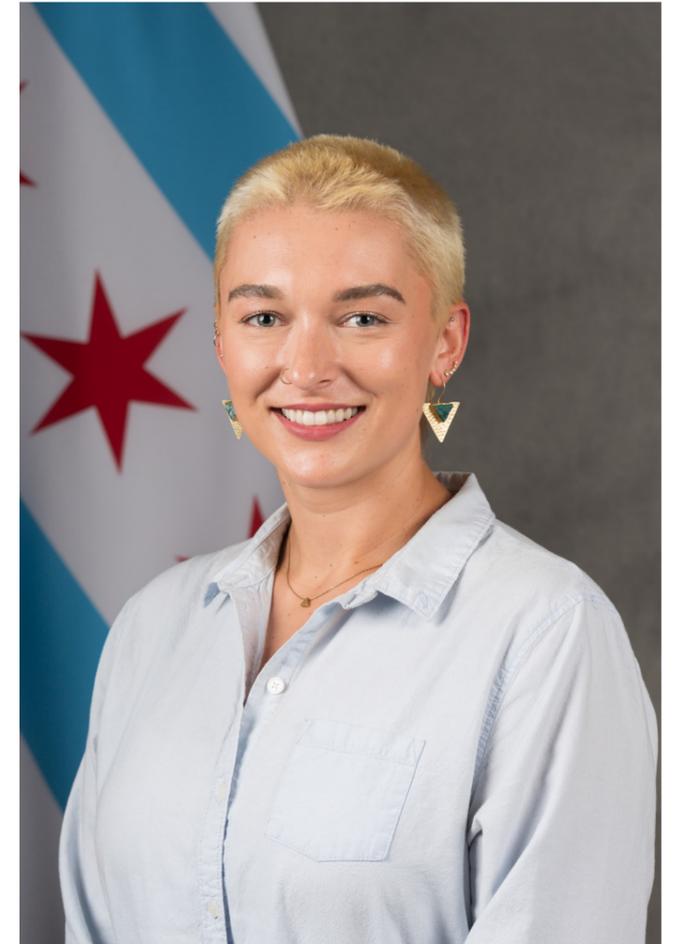
## Edith Zarco

Edith Zarco is a Master of Arts in Social Work, Social Policy, and Social Administration (S.W.) candidate at the University of Chicago. She earned her B.A. in Psychology & Gender and Women's Studies at the University of Illinois at Chicago. Before joining UChicago's Crown Family School, Edith had the privilege of serving Gender-Based Violence (GBV) survivors and immigrants through her work as a Domestic Violence Court Advocate at the Elgin Community Crisis Center and as a Social Services Associate at the Tahirih Justice Center. At the Mayor's Office, she has supported projects for DCASE's Neighborhood Access Program, the Department of Family Supportive Services, the Department of Public Health's Response Corps, the Chicago Public Library, and the Citywide Strategic Plan to Address GBV. Edith is originally from the Chicago suburb of Aurora and is a proud daughter of Mexican immigrants.



## Eshaka Eshwar

Eshaka believes in "Health is wealth" and is a Dental Surgeon from India pursuing her Master's in Public Health in Epidemiology at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor. Her experience at a corporate dental clinic pivoted her career toward public health. With a profound understanding of the intricate interplay between social determinants, healthcare policies, and individual health outcomes, Eshaka aspires to emerge as an eminent leader in the realm of public health. This summer, she mainly worked with the CDPH and contributed towards projects under the Disease Control Bureau, Naloxone distribution, Government efficiency and automation, Mental health crisis, and Community health assessment. She is a certified yoga instructor, enjoys swimming, loves dogs, is a big foodie, and is currently in love with Chicago.



## Jordan Enos

Jordan is a Master of Public Policy candidate at the University of Chicago Harris School of Public Policy, pursuing a health policy certificate with an emphasis and belief in community first. She graduated from Santa Clara University with a B.S. in finance. After graduating, Jordan worked at a non-profit in Austin, Texas as a case manager in the Financial Stability Department through the Jesuit Volunteer Corps. Upon completing the program, she moved back to her hometown of Seattle, WA, and worked at the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation on their Global Health Advocacy and Communications team. Returning to domestic policy work at City Hall, her summer projects included support for the Mayor's 100-Day Plan with the policy team, a review of the Public Health Department's RFP process to ensure it is grounded in equity and is accessible to all Chicago business owners, project management support to fill Chicago's Boards and Commissions, and partnership with the Department of Cultural Affairs and Special Events to support local artist professional development and event planning. Beyond City Hall, you'll find her cruising around town on a Divvy bike, spreading the good word on Divvy for Everyone (D4E) memberships.



## Kamaria S. Hill

Kamaria Hill is a visionary leader and public servant from Atlanta, Georgia, who has found her calling in Washington, D.C. Kamaria is pursuing a Master's in Public Policy at Georgetown University, where her primary focus is economic and workforce development. Here, she honed her skills in analyzing complex socioeconomic issues and developing innovative policies that foster inclusive growth and empowerment for all residents. Her journey from the world of tech to public policy has given her a unique perspective that she brilliantly merges in her current role. As a forward-thinking Mayoral Fellow, Kamaria's determination to blend tech, policy, and employment strategies has the potential to transform cities and redefine what inclusive and equitable urban development looks like. Her projects include collaborating with the Commission on Human Relations on increasing employment access and resources for returning residents, supporting the Department of Aviation on the development of a comprehensive aviation program, and working with the Chicago Digital Initiative.



## Lauren O'Hair

Lauren O'Hair is a Master of Public Policy student at the Gerald R. Ford School of Public Policy at the University of Michigan. Prior to graduate school, Lauren was a public-school teacher for seven years. Her experience in the classroom led her to pursue a policy degree. She is passionate about PreK-12 education and combating inequities in the education system to ensure that all children have access to high-quality education and that teachers have the necessary supports and resources to meet their students' needs. As a Mayoral Fellow, Lauren researched and recommended policies for equitable early childhood education funding in Chicago, recruitment and retention of early childhood teachers through an Education Workforce Center, and ensuring that all Chicago Public School students have access to Chicago Public Library resources. She also worked on a project with the Chicago Department of Public Health to survey healthcare providers to determine where maternal mental health services are provided in Chicago. Over the summer, Lauren has enjoyed spending time at the lake and running along the lakeshore path.



## Mitchell Kunichoff

Mitchell Kunichoff was born in Houston, Texas to Moldovan parents that moved there from the Soviet Union, grew up in the Netherlands, and is currently pursuing a Master of Design + Master of Public Policy and Administration at the Illinois Institute of Technology's Institute of Design and Stuart Business School. Mitchell aims to transform the tangible and intangible forces, structures, and systems into visualizations, designed objects, and experiences which educate, surprise, and encourage exploration and contemplation. He is fascinated with the opportunity for products, services, and policies to embody an awareness of the individuals most affected and impacted by them, or those who rely on them the most, as well as their environment. His favorite projects involve combining individuals' needs, social issues, and creative thinking to work beyond the bottom line and put human perspectives, economic prosperity, and accessibility at the forefront of my work. As a Mayoral Fellow, he worked with the different teams from the Chicago Department of Public Health on Environmental Justice issues, the Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities on disability representation in data, and with the Mayor's Office Policy Team on Equitable Transit-Oriented Development.



## Moksha Menghaney

Moksha is a rising third-year in the University of Michigan's dual MPP/MS Environment and Sustainability program. She holds an M.S. in Financial Engineering from Columbia University and is pursuing a mid-career pivot to climate and environmental policy. Her interests led her to work with the Office of Climate and Environmental Equity on various projects this summer. Her work included supporting the organization of the Heat Watch 2023 event, a NOAA-funded initiative to gather urban heat data, and assisting the Office in writing an Environmental Governance Report, which summarized internal and external stakeholder insights on how the City should organize its environmental governance functions and whether it should reinstate the Department of Environment. She also piloted the SOP writing process for the Department of Streets and Sanitation. Outside work, Moksha enjoys long walks, searching for and trying gluten-free restaurants around the City, and reading.



## Natalie Spaulding

Natalie is pursuing a joint MPP / MBA at the University of Chicago. Prior to graduate school, Natalie studied History and Finance at Washington University in St. Louis and worked as a financial services consultant. She aspires to apply her professional and academic experience towards cultivating private-sector investment in public goods and was excited to learn about successful municipal efforts to catalyze collaboration with the private sector and philanthropic organizations during the fellowship. As a Mayoral Fellow, Natalie worked with the Policy Team on the Mayor's 100-Day Plan and researched value-based spending in City concessionary environments and broadband deployment via microtrenching. She also created a comparison of mobility data collected by various city departments. In her free time this summer, Natalie has enjoyed biking on the Lakefront Trail, playing beach volleyball, reading, and learning about Chicago architecture.



## Nicholas Chanko

Nick is a second-year Master of Public Policy candidate at the Harris School of Public Policy from New York City. He received his B.A. in History and Economics from McGill University, graduating "With Distinction." Nick is passionate about working towards racial equity and justice in public institutions to improve quality of life in areas including criminal justice, community safety, housing, healthcare, and community wealth building. He has had the opportunity to problematize the confluence of challenges in these areas and shape policy solutions to improve government services by collaborating with a handful of teams across the City. These teams and projects include the Office of Equity and Racial Justice's Budget Equity Initiative; the Mayor's Office of Community Safety on interagency collaboration; the Gender-Based Violence policy team on addressing sexual assault and harassment in public spaces; the Mayor's Office of Reentry on breaking down barriers and addressing stigma surrounding returning residents; the Department of Aviation on representation and participation in concessions contracts; and the Department of Public Health on integrating health and racial equity analysis practices in their day-to-day policy decision making. Outside of work, Nick enjoys exploring Chicago's rich music scene, staying active through rock climbing and biking, and spending time at Promontory Point in the company of the majestic Lake Michigan.



## Santiago Ginebra Campillo

Santiago, originally from Mexico City, is a Master of Public Policy candidate at the University of Chicago Harris School of Public Policy, where he serves as a Graduate Assistant for the Center for Effective Government. Prior to graduate school, Santiago served as Legislative Counsel for a Mexican Senator, managing relationships with national and international organizations, organizing events, writing speeches, and advising on multiple committees. Santiago advocated for "Cancer Warriors of Mexico," a legislative reform enacted in 2019 granting paid leave for parents of children with cancer. He also worked as an independent consultant for the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) to raise awareness and prevent human trafficking in Indigenous communities in Mexico. In the private sector, through a public advocacy firm in Mexico, Santiago provided consulting services to prominent companies such as Google, Redbull, and Abbott Laboratories. As a Mayoral Fellow, he supported numerous projects, including contributions to the Intergovernmental Affairs Office on the federal level, handling the Electric Vehicles Readiness Program for the Office of Climate and Environmental Equity, and assisting the Director of Infrastructure and Services in the development of the New 5G Small Cellular Installations Rules. Santiago holds a B.A. in Public Administration from Universidad Anahuac, where he was recognized for "Academic Excellence," and later earned a Master's in Public Policy and Government from Universidad Panamericana.

**REFLECTIONS**

**ВЕРГЕСИОМС**

# SOLDIER



# FIELD

# CITY HALL'S ROOFTOP GARDEN



**ARCHITECTURE**

**BOAT**

**TOUR**





# TOURING THE CULTURAL CENTER

# GETTING AROUND O'HARE





**СНІ**