



CITY OF CHICAGO • OFFICE OF THE MAYOR



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**MAYOR LIGHTFOOT JOINS GOVERNOR PRITZKER AND BLUE CROSS AND BLUE SHIELD OF ILLINOIS (BCBSIL) FOR RIBBON CUTTING ON NEW SOUTH SIDE FACILITY**

*69% of the first wave of new hires lives within 10 miles of the new Morgan Park Blue Door Neighborhood Center*

**CHICAGO** – Mayor Lori E. Lightfoot today joined Governor J.B. Pritzker and Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Illinois (BCBSIL) to formally open its new multipurpose center in the Morgan Park neighborhood. BCBSIL's latest Blue Door Neighborhood Center (BDNC) in Marshfield Plaza at 119<sup>th</sup> Street and the I-57 expressway will focus on making a positive impact on the physical and mental health of residents outside hospitals and physicians' offices. Hiring efforts have been focused around the Morgan Park area, and 69% of new hires live within 10 miles of the center. The new facility will eventually house up to 550 employees in roles that help BCBSIL support members and network providers.

"In order to accelerate our recovery from COVID-19, we need private sector partners to step up, work with us and invest in our communities to give residents the social and economic resources they need to rise above their circumstances," said Mayor Lightfoot. "The new Morgan Park location does exactly that. We are excited to partner with Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Illinois and Health Care Service Corporation to give Morgan Park residents and the surrounding communities long-overdue access to quality jobs and health and wellness resources. In addition, this project builds on our ongoing initiatives such as INVEST South/West and the COVID-19 Recovery Task Force, both of which leverage the power of public-private partnerships to provide socioeconomic opportunities for all residents, no matter their zip code."

The Morgan Park location will combine community health outreach, including nutrition classes, yoga and other programs, connections to community resources, education on how to better use health insurance and more, along with employee workspace. In April 2019, Blue Cross Blue Shield of Illinois opened its first Blue Door Neighborhood Center in the Pullman neighborhood.

"Our Blue Door Neighborhood Centers are spaces for people to learn, connect and focus on their whole person health – which includes tackling the physical, mental, environmental and social factors that can impact wellbeing," said Steve Hamman, president of Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Illinois. "We partner with local organizations to create a neighborhood-level



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coalition working toward the common goal of making a positive impact on community health.”

Later this fall, BCBSIL is furthering its footprint across Chicago neighborhoods with the opening of a third BDNC in the Little Village neighborhood. In 2021, BCBSIL is opening office space in the Mural Park development in Pilsen. BDNC locations are currently offering virtual programming due to COVID-19. Opening dates and web-based class offerings are available at [bluedoorcenteril.com](http://bluedoorcenteril.com).

“I’m just so grateful right now – for those of us that live in the community, to be able to see a future giving back and working in the community that we live in,” said Aquea Wynn, lifelong Morgan Park resident and a newly hired health educator at the Blue Door Neighborhood Center. “Blue Cross planting themselves here in Morgan Park is a game changer and I am excited to start working to put my experience and knowledge into making Morgan Park a better place.”

Mayor Lightfoot is committed to supporting development in areas that have experienced decades of disinvestment and economic decline. Last week, the Mayor and the Department of Business Affairs and Consumer Protection (BACP) issued a \$500,000 Request for Proposals (RFP) for five Regional Business Centers (RBCs), four of which will be in key INVEST South/West neighborhoods. These RBCs will serve as extensions of BACP’s Small Business Center located in City Hall and provide critical licensing information, counseling and technical expertise to drive small business growth. Announced last year, the INVEST South/West initiative leverages \$750 million in already allocated public funding to support efforts by the City in collaboration with community, corporate and philanthropic partners in revitalizing the core of 10 underinvested communities over the next three years.

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