



CITY OF CHICAGO • OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

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MAYOR BRANDON JOHNSON ANNOUNCES SENDY SOTO AS CITY'S FIRST CHIEF HOMELESSNESS OFFICER

Mayor Johnson announced Soto's appointment at the grand opening of the renovation of Lawson House, a 406-unit affordable apartment complex in the Gold Coast.

CHICAGO – Today, Mayor Brandon Johnson announced the appointment of Sendy Soto as the City of Chicago's first Chief Homelessness Officer (CHO). Soto will be tasked with coordinating across City departments and sister agencies and developing a five-year plan to address the homelessness crisis in Chicago.

"I'm proud to welcome Sendy to my administration as we continue to work towards making housing a human right for all Chicagoans," said **Mayor Brandon Johnson**. "I created this position to ensure that we are collaborating across departments and removing any and all obstacles that prevent people from securing stable housing. I look forward to working with her to develop a holistic strategy towards combatting homelessness that centers the dignity and humanity of our unhoused neighbors."

Mayor Johnson made the announcement at the grand opening of Lawson House, a \$128 million renovation project to modernize and preserve affordable apartment units. The rehabilitation of the historic 200,000-square-foot, 24-story apartment complex transformed the building's 583 single-room occupancy units (SROs) into over 400 affordable apartment units with private kitchens and bathrooms.

The ground floor renovation now includes retail space, apartment amenities, and social services for Lawson House tenants. A new rooftop terrace will provide additional space for social services programming for residents.

“Chicago joins a small group of cities that have taken the bold step of creating a dedicated position that ensures every resident has access to safe, stable, and affordable housing,” said **Soto**. “I am proud that we are making this announcement at the newly renovated Lawson House which stands as an example of the preservation of affordable housing units that we need to see across the city. I am humbled by the opportunity to lead this work and I am ready to dream big.”

On October 3rd, 2023, Mayor Johnson signed Executive Order 2023-20 establishing the City of Chicago’s first Chief Homelessness Officer position. The executive order outlines that the CHO will be responsible for addressing the complexities of homelessness and housing insecurity in Chicago, fostering greater policy and operational coordination across City departments and sister agencies, and providing strong leadership to prevent and end homelessness.

“Affordable housing is fundamental to fostering stable, thriving communities,” said **Housing Commissioner Lissette Castañeda**. “I look forward to working with Senty to address the homelessness crisis in Chicago by working towards sustainable, data-driven solutions and deepening the diversity of our housing stock.”

Soto will work in alignment with the county, state, and federal government, particularly the Illinois Office to Prevent and End Homelessness, the Illinois Department of Healthcare and Family Services, and the White House ALL INside initiative. In partnership with City departments and sister agencies, Soto will aim to expand the inventory of housing options for people experiencing homelessness including rental assistance, rapid rehousing, non-congregate shelter, stabilization housing, permanent supportive housing, and opportunities for residents to transition out of supportive housing.

Soto brings over two decades of experience in public policy addressing issues related to homelessness, housing, community safety, and health and human services. As the Senior Director of Community Impact at The Chicago Community Trust, Soto drove funding towards underserved populations, particularly people facing housing insecurity and homelessness. Prior to that, Soto served as the Managing Deputy Commissioner for the Chicago Department of Housing. Soto spearheaded the country’s first Racial Equity Impact Assessment (REIA) on a Qualified Allocation Plan (QAP) for Low-Income Housing Tax Credits (LIHTC), leading to over \$1B in investments in affordable housing.

Soto’s leadership has been recognized with the Women Who Dared Award from the Chicago National Organization for Women. Soto was appointed by Governor J.B. Pritzker to serve on the Governing Commission for the Logan Square, Avondale, and Hermosa Expanded Mental Health Services Program where she provided support to establish an affordable mental health service center for local residents.

The position is funded through a multi-year grant by Chicago Funders Together to End Homelessness (CFTEH). CFTEH is a collaborative of more than 30 philanthropic partners aligning resources around a shared strategy to prevent and end homelessness.

“Chicago Funders Together to End Homelessness is so pleased to partner with Mayor Johnson to create the first-ever Chief Homelessness Officer position for the City of Chicago,” said **Emily Krisciunas, Executive Director of Chicago Funders Together to End Homelessness**. “A dedicated, senior-level role within the Mayor’s Office will help advance sustainable, long-term solutions to expand access to housing for all and help end homelessness in Chicago.”

Lawson House dates back to 1931 and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places for its cultural and architectural legacy. Developed by a partnership between Holsten Real Estate Development Corporation and Holsten Human Capital Development, this building is committed to preserving affordable units for households at or below 15% and 60% of the Area Median Income (AMI) levels for a minimum of 50 years.

Of the 409 residential units, 322 will be rented out using subsidies: 122 apartments will be allocated for Chicago Low Income Housing Trust Fund rental subsidies, 100 will be rented through Chicago Housing Authority Project-Based Vouchers (PBVs), and 100 will be rented through Project-Based Rental Assistance.

"Holsten is known not only for saving historic buildings, but also building communities and creating opportunities for residents to live affordably with dignity," said **Peter Holsten, President of Holsten Real Estate Development Corporation**.

The redevelopment of Lawson House received support from the Chicago Housing Authority, the City’s Department of Housing (DOH), and the Illinois Housing Development Authority (IHDA) which provided up to \$5 million in 9% Low-Income Housing Tax Credits and \$17.5 million in HOME funds to finance the preservation and rehabilitation of this historic Single-Room Occupancy (SRO) building.

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