

**TO: Maurice Cox, Commissioner, City of Chicago Dept. of Planning and Development  
Teresa Córdova, Chair, Chicago Plan Commission**

**DATE: August 20, 2020**

**RE: Comments on the Proposed Citywide Plan Vision Document Process**

The below undersigned organizations are active participants of a broader group called the Planning Coalition, a stakeholder consortium representing organizations across different sectors and geographies in Chicago. We are supportive of the City and the Department of Planning and Development's (DPD's) forward-looking objective to create a Citywide Plan, an effort that has not occurred in Chicago in more than 50 years. As part of this Planning Coalition, our organizations have been actively discussing, sharing and coalescing around ideas and strategies to make planning work better for residents in Chicago. We strive to make recommendations on the citywide plan approach and also collaboratively inform everyday planning processes that occur in communities.

As Planning Coalition members, this testimony is an opportunity to inform the Plan Commission and represent several broad principles we have discussed as a group at meetings in both 2019 and 2020. These principles should be carefully considered as DPD begins stakeholder engagement and public participation to begin defining the process of creating a Citywide Plan. They serve to provide guidance and highlight wide-ranging goals, borne from collective feedback, and is not as an exhaustive list of planning strategies.

**Prioritize City Transparency along with Resident Privacy:** The Planning Coalition appreciates DPD's proposed use of 'BangTheTable' as an engagement tool, and the deliberate goal of maximizing transparency throughout the planning process. During the engagement phases of this project, a system should be set-up to record, log, and share community responses *verbatim*, in their own words. This system and all planned outreach should also prioritize accessibility, including multiple languages, sensory conditions, etc. Residents should also be given the option to leave feedback anonymously if they choose. While many residents may want to provide their name or contact information, it is important that the feedback system allows for privacy protection to ensure all residents feel safe contributing.

**Ensure Interaction with Ongoing Planning Processes:** There are several ongoing planning processes happening throughout the city that may overlap in timing, scale, location, and goals with the proposed citywide plan. DPD's planning efforts, as well as those of other city departments and units of government, necessitate coordination with any current or future citywide planning. It is imperative to the success of any plan creation across the city that an intentional feedback loop creates a structure for integration, allowing for collaboration, influence, and consistency between those plans, among city departments, *and* between other government units. For example, the Department of Public Health's *Healthy Chicago 2025* and *Air Quality and Health Report 2020* and the Department of Transportation's traffic studies and Chicago Southwest Industrial Corridor Transportation planning should share consistent values and influence each other in practice.

**Provide Clarity on Roles, Responsibilities, and Scale:** There are a wide variety of city departments and units of government, community-based organizations, institutions, universities, private consultants, and residents who will all play a role in the citywide planning process and in the plan implementation. In addition, as previously mentioned, there are several existing plans and ongoing planning efforts happening throughout the city occurring at a variety of scales with a range of implementation partners. It is critical to the success of any planning process and plan to have clarity on the role and responsibility of each actor as well as at what scale planning decisions are being proposed and made.

**Adjust Participatory Planning Schedule:** As per DPD's proposed schedule, the first phase of the citywide planning process, producing a '*Vision and Pillars Document*,' is scheduled for completion by the end of 2020. While we understand the need for expedience and alignment with other ongoing efforts emerging from the COVID-19 Recovery Task Force report, the proposed schedule running through December 2020 is not

sufficient for a thorough, informed and consultative process. The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has added additional burden and stress to residents and communities and has immeasurably changed the way every collaborative interaction takes place in Chicago. Many communities and neighborhoods need additional time and space to heal, focus, and reflect before jumping into a planning process. Additional time should be built into the proposed schedule to ensure that residents, communities, businesses and other organizations are able to actively, and meaningfully participate in the early stages of this long-term planning process.

**Acknowledge Pressing Challenges:** A number of ongoing challenges have become increasingly more visible and pressing in recent months. Environmental justice communities on Chicago's south and west sides have highlighted health concerns regarding inequitable residential adjacency to industrial land uses. The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic is not only an immediate health crisis, but has also demonstrated the necessity for new forms of wealth creation and job growth in a rapidly changing economic environment. It is imperative that new and pressing planning challenges are acknowledged and do not take a back seat to the planning process. The city should actively work to address these challenges while also acknowledging the unintended short- and long-term consequences of land use and planning decisions.

Thank you for providing us with the opportunity to review and submit formal comments. We are eager to help DPD and the Plan Commission in the ongoing citywide planning process and continue to provide feedback and support. We look forward to working with DPD, the City and Plan Commission as part of an ongoing dialogue to help make the City of Chicago a more equitable, just and resilient place to live.

Submitted By:  
Access Living  
Coalition for a Better Chinese American Community  
Metropolitan Planning Council  
North Branch Works

cc: Dan Lurie, Chief of Policy, Mayor's Office  
Samir Mayekar, Deputy Mayor, Economic Development and Neighborhoods, Mayor's Office  
Candace Moore, Chief Equity Officer  
Eleanor Gorski, First Deputy Commissioner, Department of Planning and Development  
Kathy Dickhut, Deputy Commissioner, Department of Planning and Development