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**MAYOR LIGHTFOOT CELEBRATES INVEST SOUTH/WEST THREE-YEAR ANNIVERSARY
WITH AUSTIN GROUNDBREAKINGS**

*Mayor's Signature Revitalization Initiative for 10 South and West Side Communities Has
Generated \$2.2 Billion in Investment Commitments to Date*

CHICAGO – Today, Mayor Lori E. Lightfoot joined City leaders, local community, philanthropic, and corporate partners to commemorate the three-year anniversary of INVEST South/West, an unprecedented revitalization strategy for 10 historically disadvantaged West and South Side communities. With \$2.2 billion in public and private investment commitments to date, Mayor Lightfoot commemorated the milestone with dual groundbreakings in Austin: the \$47 Million Austin United Alliance mixed-use project at 5200 W. Chicago Avenue and an adjacent \$26 million streetscape project led by the Chicago Department of Transportation (CDOT).

"Thanks to the \$2.2 billion in investment commitments from the public and private sectors since the fall of 2019, INVEST South/West is ready to expand its reach beyond retail districts to include nearby residential blocks that are vital to sustainable neighborhood growth," said Mayor Lori E. Lightfoot. "We will soon say goodbye to the pervasive vacant lots across the South and West Sides and say hello to new two-flats, three-flats, and other walk-up structures that have been home to Chicago families for generations. As I look forward to this next phase in INVEST South/West, I am grateful for the Citywide collaboration and commitment that has already brought incredible transformations to our communities."

Mayor Lightfoot also announced today that the City's INVEST South/West neighborhood improvement initiative would expand its focus from commercial corridor investments to include infill development projects that lead to housing construction and residential population growth throughout the strategy's 10 participating community areas.

The expanded INVEST South/West initiative includes multiple new strategies to foster infill development on the estimated 5,600 vacant City lots in targeted communities. The City programs include:



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- **Come Home**, which will support construction of single-family homes, townhouses and small multi-unit buildings on residential blocks within Auburn Gresham, Bronzeville, East Garfield Park, Englewood, Humboldt Park, and Woodlawn. The initiative will launch in late-November 2022 with a nationwide Chicago Architecture Center contest that establishes modern design typologies to be built by emerging development firms and made available for affordable home buyers.
- **Ready Build**, which will make custom concept plans available for the redevelopment of corner lots with ground-level stores and upper-story homes. The plans will include conceptual architectural drawings, cost estimates and other pre-development considerations that will help emerging, minority-led development firms to efficiently initiate real estate improvements that anchor the corners of key South and West side intersections.
- **BlockBuilder**, which will serve as an [online portal](#) that streamlines the sale of surplus City of Chicago properties to private buyers. More than 80% of the 2,000 vacant lots to initially be made available through the portal's launch this year are located within INVEST South/West communities.

“These programs are prioritizing the development of ‘missing middle’ buildings that small developers can finance and make available to affordable homebuyers and renters,” Department of Planning and Development (DPD) Commissioner Maurice Cox said. “By reducing pre-development costs and streamlining the land acquisition process, these efforts will fast-track new home construction that complements that commercial corridor progress that INVEST South/West successfully expedited in the last three years.”

INVEST South/West was launched in fall 2019 with a \$750 million City commitment toward priority commercial corridors in Auburn Gresham, Austin, Bronzeville, Greater Englewood, Greater Roseland, Humboldt Park, North Lawndale, New City, South Chicago and South Shore. Since then, it has generated more than \$2.2 billion in public and private investment commitments, including more than \$450 million in mixed-use projects generated through City-issued Requests for Proposals (RFPs), including Austin United Alliance.

Austin United Alliance, a partnership between Heartland Housing and Oak Park Regional Housing Center, with more than \$32 million in City of Chicago assistance, is developing a 78-unit, mixed-income housing complex that will include a traditional financial institution, business incubator, coffee lounge and a community art platform that includes the long-vacant Laramie State Bank building and adjacent land. Construction is expected to conclude in 2024. Community members will have the opportunity to join local committees to guide efforts around housing, arts and culture and economic development.



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“The Austin United Alliance partnership brings together Heartland Housing’s development expertise and Oak Park Regional Housing Center’s 50 years’ experience building vibrant communities to create a community housing and gathering space uniquely designed for the Austin community,” said Athena Williams, Executive Director of OPRHC and Earl Chase, Executive Director of Heartland Housing

To complement these private and public investments, CDOT is implementing approximately \$280 million in streetscape improvements along 12 INVEST South/West corridors. Streetscapes consist of infrastructure, pedestrian safety, and placemaking improvements with the goal of creating unified, safe, and attractive streets that promote economic growth. Encompassing 20 miles of arterial streets, the INVEST South/West streetscape projects represent more than twice the mileage of all streetscapes completed in the 10 neighborhoods since the 1990s.

“CDOT has been working closely with community partners, residents, and neighborhood stakeholders on a dozen streetscape improvement projects along INVEST South/West corridors and we are pleased to break ground on the first of these transformative projects today in Austin,” said CDOT Commissioner Gia Biagi. “Walkable, safe, and welcoming streets are essential to fostering community and growth along our commercial corridors. We look forward to bringing more of these projects to life thanks to Mayor Lightfoot’s unprecedented INVEST South/West development initiative.”

The Austin streetscape consists of improvements along Chicago Avenue between Austin Boulevard and Cicero Avenue, including wider, more comfortable sidewalks, added street trees and parkway pavers, new lighting, community identifiers, new bike lanes, dedicated bus boarding islands, and traffic safety improvements. This effort will support the INVEST South/West initiative to re-activate neighborhood cores that have historically served as focal points for pedestrian activity, shopping, services, transportation, public spaces, and quality-of-life amenities for local residents. Construction is expected to be completed in phases with full completion expected by the end of 2025.

“INVEST South/West is not just about new construction,” said Alderman Emma Mitts, 37th Ward. “It’s about revitalizing my community and providing opportunities for my residents. Austin has been neglected for far too long and I’m honored to join Mayor Lightfoot as we make transformational change in this historic community.”

The 10 INVEST South/West communities have lost more than 500,000 residents since 1950, when more than 1.1 million people called them home, according to the U.S. Census. The new programs will incrementally help to increase local population while catalyzing



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broader neighborhood trends that, over time, could help the city to exceed 3 million people for the first time since 1980.

For more information about INVEST South/West, see a program three-year summary published today or visit the strategy website at Chicago.gov/INVESTSW.

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