

Chicago Blueprint for Fair Housing – Executive Summary

The Cook County Regional *Assessment of Fair Housing* is a first-of-its-kind planning effort, convening 13 jurisdictions and six public housing authorities to understand the underlying causes behind the region's residential segregation and related fair housing issues. The assessment will specifically focus on the communities most harmed by these issues. As part of the regional effort, the City of Chicago and the Chicago Housing Authority (CHA) partnered to craft goals and strategies to affirmatively further fair housing and make Chicago a more equitable, prosperous place, with the most impacted residents at the center of the conversation. Produced in collaboration with Enterprise Community Partners, Chicago Area Fair Housing Alliance and the Metropolitan Planning Council, this Blueprint for Fair Housing identifies actions the City and CHA will take over the next 5 years to advance fair housing.

The Assessment of Fair Housing was undertaken as mandated by HUD's AFFH rule. In July 2021, AFFH was replaced with "Preserving Neighborhood Choice." CHA will comply with the new rule and therefore, will not be involved further with the Blueprint for Fair Housing.

Context and Background

Today's fair housing challenges are rooted in Chicago's history of segregation and structural racism. When compared against the 100 largest metropolitan areas in the country, Chicago has the fifth highest combined racial and economic segregation.³ Of the 1.8 million people of color living in Chicago, 74% live in economically disconnected areas -- parts of the City not well connected to regional economic progress, as defined by the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning.¹ The majority of these areas are located on the City's South and West Sides, where rates of unemployment and poverty far exceed those in the City's North Side neighborhoods.

This segregation both drives and exacerbates income inequality, as the factors that influence a community's access to opportunity -- proximity to quality schools, viable employment, and affordable transportation -- vary greatly by neighborhood. Data and community conversations show us that disparities persist between South and West Side neighborhoods and their North Side counterparts in all areas, from education and employment to transit and environmental health. Whether it's an aging housing stock with limited access for people with physical disabilities, or an affordable community that lacks safe sidewalks or adequate lighting, symptoms of segregation and inequality around Chicago are evident.

Nationally, the typical Black family has just 1/10th the wealth of the typical white one. In 1863, black Americans owned one-half of 1 percent of the national wealth.¹² Today it's just over 1.5 percent for roughly the same percentage of the overall population.¹³ Since emancipation, the causes that have maintained and perpetuated racial wealth disparities range from laws, policies, programs, and practices, implemented at the various levels of government, to systematic practices adopted by neighborhoods, individuals, and the private sector across urban, suburban and rural communities. For every gain marginalized communities have made, new mechanisms have been created to suppress the economic promise of emancipation.

The Assessment of Fair Housing

The Assessment of Fair Housing (AFH) sets out to surface such instances of segregation and inequity, identify associated fair housing issues and contributing factors, and commit to specific plans to mitigate and eliminate them. The AFH provides a comprehensive framework for improving access to housing and opportunity for all Chicago residents and promoting equity and justice for historically marginalized groups. The process has its roots in the Fair Housing Act of 1968. The Fair Housing Act not only prohibited discrimination in housing on the basis of protected characteristics but also created a duty to affirmatively further fair housing through actions designed to overcome the legacy of segregation, unequal treatment, and historic lack of access to opportunity in housing.

To accurately identify and tackle fair housing problems, the Assessment of Fair Housing engaged community partners through a six-step process:

1. **Assess** past goals, strategies, and actions
2. **Analyze** fair housing issues and identify significant contributing factors
3. **Prioritize** contributing factors and justify the prioritization
4. **Set** fair housing priorities and goals
5. **Link** fair housing priorities and goals to subsequent planning processes
6. **Take** meaningful actions

The project awarded grants to local organizations to seek feedback from directly impacted communities with an emphasis on the South and West sides. Grantees included:

- Chicago Housing Initiative
- Connections for the Homeless
- Housing Choice Partners
- Lawyers' Committee for Better Housing
- Legal Aid Chicago
- Metropolitan Tenants Organizations
- Northwest Compass
- Respond Now

Additionally, the project established an Advisory Committee, convened by the Chicago Area Fair Housing Alliance, which was comprised of grant recipients in addition to the following organizations:

- Access Living
- Housing Choice Partners
- Northwest Compass
- Oak Park Regional Housing Center
- Northside Community Resources
- Respond Now
- Open Communities
- Supportive Housing Providers Association
- Center for Neighborhood Technology
- Housing Opportunity and Maintenance for the Elderly
- Northwest Side Housing Center
- Metropolitan Tenants Organization
- South Suburban Housing Center
- Chicago Housing Initiative
- Working Family Solidarity
- Connections for the Homeless
- Black Chicago Tomorrow
- Lawyers' Committee for Better Housing
- Neighbors for Affordable Housing
- Legal Aid Chicago
- The Chicago Urban League

Feedback sessions focused on housing discrimination and segregation; expanding affordable housing options; creating equitable opportunities to live, work, and flourish in any community; and remedying policies and practices that lock segregation in place and create unjust disparities in quality of life.

The City of Chicago published an early draft of this Blueprint for a 45-day public comment period to receive additional feedback. A summary of public comments can be found in Appendix B. A complete list of Chicago's fair housing goals and strategies can be found in the larger report, beginning on page 47.

Chicago's Fair Housing Goals

Chicago's residential segregation and fair housing challenges are driven by the root causes of systemic racism and poverty. Community conversations and extensive data analysis confirm that barriers to housing today perpetuate Chicago's residential segregation, creating a cycle of instability with long-lasting consequences that not only impact individuals, but the entire city.

Building on these findings of fair housing challenges, City and community partners collectively identified historic policies and decisions, as well as root causes, that can inform future action. Together, the City of Chicago, led by the Department of Housing, Commission on Human Relations, Office of the Mayor with additional agencies involved in implementation, and Chicago Housing Authority (CHA) will focus their affirmative fair housing work on 8 goals with complementary strategies and actions. These goals are:

Goal 1: Increase and preserve affordable, accessible housing options

- *Example: Change zoning policies to encourage the construction of housing for all income levels and that is accessible for residents with disabilities*

Goal 2: Prevent involuntary displacement and stabilize neighborhoods

- *Example: Strengthen guidelines around evictions and renewal regulations*

Goal 3: Increase opportunities and community integration for people with disabilities

- *Example: Provide an accessible website that can assist people with disabilities in locating units with accessible features*

Goal 4: Address the segregation of opportunity and related inequitable distribution of resources

- *Example: Develop a process to equitably distribute public resources based on need.*

Goal 5: Enhance housing policies and programs to increase fair housing choice

- *Example: Continue to support the Mobility Program*

Goal 6: Expand fair housing outreach, education, and enforcement

- *Example: Ensure materials are available to non-English speakers and people who are visually or hearing-impaired*

Goal 7: Preserve existing and expand affordable homeownership

- *Example: Support home repairs and rehabilitation for qualifying owners through grants, low-cost loans, or other cost assistance*

Goal 8: Ensure that internal policies and practices advance equity and address history of structural racism

- *Example: Develop standardized tools to assess racial and social equity impacts in capital planning and budget processes*

Fair Housing Issues

Across the above goals, the City and CHA seek to address the fair housing issues identified by community partners and data analysis throughout the Assessment of Fair Housing process. The challenges highlighted below each fall under one of the issue categories HUD established as part of the former Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing rule.

Chicago's fair housing challenges are outlined in more detail below. For more in-depth data, please review the Existing Conditions Analysis in Appendix A.

HUD Issue Category: Segregation and Integration

Chicago has a self-reinforcing cycle of income inequality and segregation

The inequitable housing market paired with deep income and wealth inequality work together to perpetuate segregation: Affluent households are more able to comfortably afford high-cost housing in certain communities, while lower-income households spend higher shares of their income for lower-cost options in different communities. The result is a self-reinforcing cycle in which income inequality creates segregation and segregation furthers income inequality and limits opportunities for wealth building. Economic outcomes in Chicago frequently reflect racial lines of demarcation. Of the approximately 1.8 million people of color living in Chicago, about 74% live in Economically Disconnected Areas.¹ Of the 227,000 people in Chicago that live in Racially or Ethnically Concentrated Areas of Poverty (R/ECAPs), the vast majority (78%) are Black. The second largest population is Hispanic, with 35,000 residents (15%).² Residents of color, particularly Black residents, often experience lower incomes and higher unemployment. Some communities become caught in a cycle of disinvestment, unable to promote economic development, invest in infrastructure, and otherwise serve their residents.

HUD Issue Category: Segregation and Integration

Segregation costs Chicago.

Racial and economic inclusion supports regional economic strength. In Chicago, reducing levels of economic and racial segregation to the national median could lead to a nearly \$3,000 increase in African American income, an \$8 million rise in gross domestic product, a 30% drop in homicide rate, and an increase in individuals with bachelor's degrees by 83,000.³

HUD Issue Category: Racially or Ethnically Concentrated Areas of Poverty (R/ECAPs)

Racially or Ethnically Concentrated Areas of Poverty (R/ECAPs) are prevalent across Chicago's South and West side neighborhoods.

R/ECAPs are clustered on the South and West sides of the City, with many of the areas sharing neighborhood boundary edges. 78% of people living in R/ECAPs are Black residents, compared to only 4.1% white Non-Hispanic residents. The second largest racial/ethnic group residing in R/ECAPs is the

Hispanic population, at 15%.² Community engagement findings indicate that people living in poverty, especially racial minorities, are being pushed out of centrally located neighborhoods into areas on the far South and West sides of the City.

HUD Issue Category: Disparities in Access to Opportunity – Educational Opportunities

Black and Hispanic populations have less access to high performing neighborhood schools based on where they live.

The average white non-Hispanic person and Asian person has access to more high-performing neighborhood elementary schools than any other racial or ethnic group (56.9 and 53.6%, respectively). School performance in this analysis is determined by students' state test scores in reading and math. In comparison, Black residents have the lowest access, followed by Hispanic residents (22.5 and 30.9%, respectively). Chicago's least proficient schools are in South and West side neighborhoods, where the majority of residents are Black and Hispanic, while high proficiency schools are clustered in neighborhoods north of Chicago's downtown and the Northwest side of the City, where the predominant racial/ethnic group is white, non-Hispanic.⁴

HUD Issue Category: Disparities in Access to Opportunity – Employment Opportunities

Disparities in access to employment exist across Chicago neighborhoods.

The lowest labor force participation in the City is concentrated in South and West side neighborhoods. In comparison, the highest labor force participation rates are concentrated in downtown Chicago and neighborhoods north of downtown. Areas with high access to jobs are also found in and around downtown Chicago. Consistent with the neighborhoods where Black and Hispanic Chicagoans tend to reside, the average Black Chicago resident has the least access to jobs and the labor market, followed by the average Hispanic person.⁴

HUD Issue Category: Disparities in Access to Opportunity – Transportation

Commute times and travel costs are higher in South and West side neighborhoods.

While Chicago as a whole is a highly walkable city (with a walkability score of 91.66), neighborhoods on the North side of the City are more walkable than the rest of the City. The far South corner of Chicago has particularly low walkability.⁵ While the majority of the Black and Hispanic population in Chicago has moderately high access to transit, this population has longer average commutes by CTA rail and bus service or by Pace bus service than any other racial or ethnic group. Transportation costs are higher in the far South and Southwest corners of the City where there are fewer public transportation options.⁶

HUD Issue Category: Disparities in Access to Opportunity – Low Poverty Exposure Opportunities

The average Black person in Cook County is more likely to live in an area with high poverty rates, when compared to other racial/ethnic groups.

Areas with the lowest poverty rates in Chicago are concentrated in neighborhoods north of downtown and in the northwest portion of the City. Consistent with this geographic trend, Chicagoans residing in South and West side neighborhoods of the City are surrounded by greater rates of poverty, compared to

the rest of the City. The average white non-Hispanic person in Chicago has the least exposure to poverty (58%), while the average Black person in Chicago has the most exposure to poverty (20%).⁴

HUD Issue Category: Disparities in Access to Opportunity – Environmentally Healthy Neighborhoods Opportunities

Disparities in health outcomes exist by neighborhood.

Patterns of health outcomes, including blood lead levels, asthma rates, and life expectancy, exist by race and neighborhood. The top five Chicago community areas with the largest number of children with elevated blood lead levels are all located on the Southwest and West sides of the City. When analyzing rates of child asthma-related emergency department visits by race and ethnicity, Chicago's population of Black children has by far the highest rate of child asthma-related emergency room visits. The Hispanic population has the second highest rate.⁷ Disparities in average life expectancy also exist by race, with white non-Hispanic Chicagoans living an average of 8.8 years longer than Black residents. Between certain communities, this gap widens to 17 years.⁸ These trends reflect the conditions in which people live, influencing the ease by which residents can access healthcare, healthy food, and social services.

HUD Issue Category: Disproportionate Housing Needs

Housing issues are most prevalent in Black, Hispanic, and undocumented households.

When evaluating housing problems such as overcrowding and substandard housing, Chicago's Hispanic households experience such issues at a higher rate (57%) than other racial/ethnic groups. Black households face housing issues at the second highest rate, at 54%. Areas of the City that experience at least one housing problem are concentrated in the West and Southwest sides of the City, which overlap with the location of R/ECAPs, and are heavily populated by Black and Hispanic populations.⁴ Such populations also experience the most urgent housing problems, with a large portion of calls to the city's Metropolitan Tenants Organization hotline regarding home repairs originating in South side neighborhoods. Additionally, immigrant families and undocumented residents struggle to gain access to affordable housing assistance and often find themselves in incredibly unsafe and over-crowded housing situations as a result.

HUD Issue Category: Disproportionate Housing Needs

Black Chicagoans experience barriers to homeownership.

Homeownership rates are highest among white non-Hispanic households (54.4%), and lowest among Black households (35.2%).⁴ Such a trend can be attributed to the many barriers to home ownership that Black Chicagoans face. For example, Black individuals are most likely to have their home purchase loan denied and, when approved, the loan is more likely to be non-conventional.

HUD Issue Category: Publicly Supported Housing Analysis

Affordable housing residents are mostly Black.

In Chicago, 75% of publicly-supported housing residents are Black. This means that individuals and families living in any type of publicly supported housing are more likely to be Black than any other racial/ethnic group. The rate of Black households living in publicly supported housing exceeds the share of all households that are Black in Chicago.⁴

HUD Issue Category: Publicly Supported Housing Analysis

Residents returning from incarceration have limited housing options.

The majority of unsheltered people in Chicago were previously incarcerated — 60% of unsheltered men and 58% of women report being previously incarcerated in jail or prison.⁹ Community engagement findings have reported several barriers to finding housing for previously incarcerated residents. This leaves already vulnerable residents without a place to live, exacerbating an already difficult transition. Until 2015, returning residents were limited in accessing Chicago Housing Authority (CHA) properties. In 2015, CHA created a special pilot program that permitted up to 50 formerly incarcerated individuals to live in CHA properties.⁹ Additionally, CHA has reduced its look-back period for criminal background checks from five to three years. While families are no longer prevented from living in public housing, other barriers remain.

HUD Issue Category: Publicly Supported Housing Analysis

Housing Choice Voucher holders face barriers to moving to mobility areas.

CHA's Mobility Program aims to provide opportunities for voucher holders to move into Mobility Areas, which are Chicago Community Areas that have lower levels of poverty and crime and access to positive economic indicators. However, community engagement efforts indicate that despite these efforts, many of Chicago's voucher recipients continue to reside in high-poverty, primarily Black census tracts that have little access to opportunity, including reliable transit, well-performing schools, job centers, and healthy physical and social environments.¹⁰ CHA has commissioned a Fair Housing study that is entering its second year which seeks to identify barriers voucher participants face when searching for housing in mobility areas.

HUD Issue Category: Disability and Access Analysis

People with disabilities face tradeoffs between living where there is accessible infrastructure and affordable rent.

Chicagoans with disabilities often need to choose between accessible infrastructure and affordable rent. Stakeholders have indicated that accessible infrastructure, such as maintained streets and sidewalks tends to be located in the least affordable neighborhoods of Chicago. As a result, people with disabilities are more prevalent on the South and West sides of Chicago, areas with the least proficient schools and the lowest rates of market engagement compared to other parts of the City.¹¹ Accessible housing for residents with physical disabilities continues to be scarce and expensive.

End Notes:

1 – ON TO 2050 Layer: EDAs and Disinvested Areas, Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning 2017

2 – 2013-2017 5-Year American Community Survey

3 – The Cost of Segregation [Report](#), Metropolitan Planning Council

4 – Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing (AFFH) v4a

5 – ON TO 2050 Layer: Walkability, Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning 2018

6 – Transit Availability Index, Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning 2017

7 - Discharge Data, Division of Patient Safety and Quality, Illinois Department of Public Health (2017) 8 – Healthy Chicago 2025

9 – [Re-Entry Housing Issues in Illinois](#) Report, Metropolitan Planning Council

10 - HUD Custom Tabulations of Inventory Management System/PIH Information Center data11 – HUD, Census 2010

12 – Federal Reserve Bank. [“Recent Trends in Wealth-Holding by Race and Ethnicity: Evidence from the Survey of Consumer Finances.”](#) September 2017.

13 - Schermerhorn, Calvin. [“Why the racial wealth gap persists, more than 150 years after emancipation.”](#) Washington Post, 19 June 2019.