

City of Chicago RACIAL EQUITY ACTION PLAN

Under the City of Chicago's Municipal Code (Ch. 2-4-100), all City of Chicago departments must create and maintain Racial Equity Action Plans (REAPs) "to articulate and guide strategy aimed at advancing equity and making it a permanent pillar in all departmental workstreams." Progress on all REAPs are accounted for annually as a part of the City of Chicago's budget process. This document outlines the components of the REAP and ensures that all strategies are aligned to Chicago's citywide vision: ***All people and all communities have power, are free from oppression, and are strengthened by equitable access to resources, environments, and opportunities that promote optimal health and well-being. (HC2025)***

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THE CITY OF CHICAGO'S DEFINITION OF EQUITY

Equity is both an outcome and a process:

As an **outcome** equity results in fair and just access to opportunity and resources that provide everyone the ability to thrive. Acknowledging the present and historical inequality that persist in our society, equity is a future state we strive to create where identity and social status no longer predestine life outcomes.

As a **process**, equity requires a new way of doing business: one that

- (1) Prioritizes access and opportunities for groups who have the greatest need.
- (2) Methodically evaluates benefits and burdens produced by seemingly neutral systems and practices.
- (3) Engages those most impacted by the problems we seek to address as experts in their own experiences, strategists in co-creating solutions, and evaluators of success.

Further, our focus is on evaluating our own strategies, interventions and resources in a way that prioritizes those who are most negatively impacted by current policies, procedures & practices.

Racial equity focuses on the social construction of race and how it has been used (historically and presently) to unjustly distribute opportunity and resources based on a person's skin color, heritage, ethnicity, and/or national origin. Advancing racial equity requires an analysis of systemic racism inclusive of the ways harm is created at the individual, interpersonal, institutional, and structural levels. It also requires a commitment to dismantling systems that perpetuate racialized outcomes and rebuild systems that produce systemic inclusion.

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The coordination of the development and implementation of City of Chicago REAPs is led by the Office of Equity and Racial Justice. For more information about REAPs and/or the work of the office visit www.chicago.gov/equity.

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The City of Chicago's Vision: All people and all communities have power, are free from oppression, and are strengthened by equitable access to resources, environments, and opportunities that promote optimal health and well-being. (HC2025 Vision)

1. Transportation & Infrastructure

Citywide Desired Result:

All Chicagoans have access to a safe multi-modal transportation system.

Community indicators:

Assessment of the condition, improvement, and maintenance of each of the following categories for the City overall and disaggregated by community areas, wards: Street intersections, ADA compliant ramps, complete sidewalk network, miles of protected bike lanes, audible ped signals, sufficient lighting, pavement markings, transit facilities, and services, train stations, bus stops, service availability (days & hours of service, frequency of service, etc.). Access to services, jobs, and schools. Demographics of areas most negatively affected by longer commute times, percentage of the population with a disability, and a higher percentage of household income spent on transportation.

Define the Problem

In Chicago, communities of color often have the fewest transportation choices, the longest commutes, the highest concentration of industrial centers and truck traffic in their neighborhoods, and the worst pollution from cars and trucks on their streets. People who live in neighborhoods without safe crosswalks and clear, continuous sidewalks or well-lit and sheltered bus stops live in a city whose infrastructure tells them they are unimportant. Streets that are unsafe or intimidating to cross isolate these communities, a large majority of which are Black and Brown neighborhoods, from the rest of the city and also from each other. Disconnected communities reinforce the cycle of intergenerational poverty and make geographic, social, and economic mobility more challenging. Safe Streets are those that are safe to cross with sidewalks that are inviting and are maneuverable, and wide enough to accommodate a wheelchair or stroller. These are basic necessities for a livable city and support a high quality of life.

Identify Root Cause(s)

- Historic disinvestment in Black and Brown communities
- Per the Municipal Code, sidewalks are the responsibility of adjacent property owners. In low-income Black and Brown communities, there are fewer resources to maintain sidewalks and a greater need for public funds to upkeep sidewalks. There is also a higher percentage of vacant lots and properties.
- Lack of outreach to low-income communities to share programs, services, and resources to improve infrastructure
- Lack of open data about infrastructure improvements

Define the Opportunity

CDOT believes every neighborhood should have Complete Streets—streets that have the necessary infrastructure to ensure safe and comfortable travel for everyone—and we will focus our efforts on the locations where pedestrians face the most risk.

West Garfield Park was identified as the community with the highest issues in the sidewalk network with a lack of ADA ramps and lack of infrastructure maintenance. These are barriers to mobility for all residents in this community, specifically for residents with disabilities. We see this as an opportunity for CDOT to implement our Strategic Plan goal of improving the condition of existing sidewalks and providing sidewalks where they are missing. (linked below). In addition, CDOT will continue working with Elevated Chicago to amplify ETOD implementation strategies, including the passing of the Safe Streets ordinance.

[Link to Strategic Plan](#)



Department Strategy <i>What are the department's overarching strategies to advance equity for this priority area?</i> Actions <i>What steps will the department take to advance this strategy?</i>	Timeline <i>By when will the department achieve this?</i>	Performance Measures <i>How will the department know if it achieved its goal? Identify metrics that indicate success. (e.g. staff composition and # of organizations served)</i>	Implementation Plan <i>What specific steps will the department take to carry out each action? Identify necessary stakeholders to advance this action e.g. internal department divisions/bureaus, other government agencies, community organizations, etc.</i>	Status <i>Departments will report the status of each action annually at budget time.</i>
A. Department Strategy: Make it safer and easier to walk in Chicago				
Action #1: Improve the condition of existing sidewalks and provide sidewalks where they are missing.	2022-2024	-# of ADA ramps complete -funding source identified; scope of work finalized	-Construct or coordinate installation of 8000 new ADA ramps -Identify funding and initiate sidewalk condition assessment Stakeholders: CDOT divisions (Engineering, In-House Construction, Commissioner's Office); community organizations once the sidewalk assessment area is scoped People impacted: Members of the public who use sidewalks, especially those who use wheelchairs or other mobility devices	>8000 ramps installed by end of 2022 -determining sidewalk condition assessment scope in early phases
B. Department Strategy: Partner with CTA to reduce commute times and improve the transit experience for all Chicagoans				
Action #1: Improve travel times on high-ridership bus routes	2022-2024	-# of bus routes w/ dedicated bus lanes -travel times on specific bus routes	-Install 2-3 permanent bus lane projects Stakeholders: CDOT divisions (Project Development); CTA People impacted: CTA riders who benefit from more efficient services	-Installed on 1 or streets in 2022 -Identifying other streets

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2. WORKFORCE DIVERSITY

Citywide Desired Result

All Chicagoans are connected to employment, training, and advancement through the City of Chicago.  

Community indicators:

- Employee demographics for CDOT and CDOT contractors
- Professional development opportunities provided to all employees
- Attendance at/participation in optional training and social opportunities
- Engagement with internal communication efforts

Define the Problem

City agencies often find it challenging to attract and retain talented employees. CDOT understands that employees that feel valued and respected are productive, collaborative, and bring their full selves to the job. Therefore we will focus on supporting a positive staff culture by recognizing the contributions of our employees, improving channels of communication, and offering training and professional development. We believe this will help boost morale, retain employees, and make CDOT an attractive place to work for a larger and more diverse candidate pool.

Identify Root Cause(s)

- Varied morale among employees
- Competition from private employers who offer better benefits/salary (real and perceived)
- Limited focus on internal communications; drastic reduction in social and professional opportunities to spend time together and/or collaborate since the beginning of the pandemic

Define the Opportunity

The 1,300 employees of CDOT are the essential human infrastructure supporting our city. To help them feel valued, CDOT will focus on supporting a positive staff culture by recognizing the contributions of our employees, improving channels of communication, and offering training and professional development for all new and existing staff. CDOT would like to transform the department into a great place to work by encouraging and fostering innovation, freedom to speak their mind, and providing tools that staff need to do their job well.

Department Strategy <i>What are the department's overarching strategies to advance equity for this priority area?</i> Actions <i>What action will the department take to enact each strategy?</i>	Timeline <i>By when will the department achieve this ?</i>	Performance Measures <i>How will the department know if it achieved its goal? Identify metrics that will indicate success. (e.g. staff composition and # of organizations served)</i>	Implementation Plan <i>What specific steps will the department take to carry out each action? Identify necessary stakeholders to advance this action, e.g. internal department divisions/bureaus, other government departments/agencies, community organizations, etc.</i>
A. Department Strategy: Improve CDOT's ability to recruit and retain staff			
Action #1 Create a larger and more diverse CDOT candidate pool	Started in 2022 with ongoing refinements.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -More candidates apply for open positions -more women and people of color apply for and accept open positions -# of internship opportunities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Partner with local universities/professional associations to identify potential candidates, including those underrepresented at CDOT -Formalize opportunities for internships -Review and update CDOT Apprenticeship program Stakeholders: CDOT Division of Administration; DHR People impacted: CDOT existing staff who benefit from working with colleagues with different perspectives and lived experiences; potential employees who feel more welcome at CDOT
Action #2 Develop a comprehensive training module for all new and existing CDOT staff	Started in 2022 with ongoing refinements.	-# of trainings offered	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Identify staff training needs and resources -Provide expanded training modules to staff Stakeholders: CDOT divisions (Administration, Commissioner's Office) People impacted: CDOT existing and future staff; residents and colleagues who benefit from staff that receives additional and consistent training
B. Department Strategy: Make CDOT a great place to work			

<p>Action #1 Identify opportunities to support a positive staff culture</p>	<p>2023</p>	<p>-Assess survey results over time</p>	<p>-Establish annual staff survey to assess employee satisfaction, workplace culture, etc -Establish quarterly internal CDOT newsletter Stakeholders: CDOT divisions (most divisions to be represented on an internal working group) People impacted: CDOT staff; residents, and colleagues who benefit from staff that is more informed and connected to the department</p>
<p>Action #2 Increase opportunities for staff communication and recognition</p>	<p>2023</p>	<p>-# of forum held</p>	<p>Hold regular cross-divisional learning and team-building forums <u>Stakeholders:</u> CDOT divisions (most divisions to be represented on an internal working group) <u>People impacted:</u> CDOT staff</p>

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3. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Citywide Desired Result

All Chicagoans have a meaningful opportunity to influence City of Chicago programs, policies, and initiatives

Community indicators:

The number of participants attending, collaborating, and leading efforts at the Chicago Mobility Collaborative, and their overall satisfaction with the meetings' outcomes, communication, and facilitation. Improved partnerships with organizations and groups in Black and Brown communities, particularly in the communities where there is a higher utility impact damage, higher traffic fatalities, serious injuries, and the highest disinvestment in the sidewalk network. Our strategic plan, released in July 2021, continues to guide our efforts as a department. In determining which goals to focus on for budget equity, we reviewed the desired results provided by OERJ and discussed which ones aligned best with the goals, strategies, and benchmarks in our strategic plan. Our strategic plan was done in consultation with other city departments and our own staff and in partnership with the Transportation Equity Network (TEN). TEN is a group of 30+ community-based and advocacy organizations that care deeply about transportation, equity, and mobility justice. Also, the participants of the TEN are ethnically and racially diverse and reflective of the diversity of the city. They helped us tailor our strategic plan to focus on equity and helped us better understand what is needed in communities throughout the city but especially those that have been overlooked in the past. We feel confident that, overall, our strategic plan will help advance equity in our city. Strategic Plan for Transportation: www.cityofchicago.org/CDOTStrategicPlan.

Define the Problem

For a large Department with more than 1300 employees and with one of the nation's largest portfolios (more than 4,000 miles of streets, 2,00 miles of alleys, 300 bridges, a 19-mile lakefront trail, 150 miles of rivers and tributaries, and an expanding bikeways network of more than 360 miles of bike lanes), developing an integrated approach to community engagement into every project, initiative, and program is challenging. Community members feel like their concerns and priorities are not being addressed by the Department in a timely manner; in addition, communities would like to see an increase in transparency, a more equitable prioritization of infrastructure investment, and more opportunities to learn about and be actively involved throughout the planning and implementation process of capital projects.

Identify Root Cause(s)

Chicago is a city of neighborhoods, each one of them with their unique assets, priorities, and social dynamics. In many instances, these neighborhoods are interposed with Ward boundaries that disconnect communities, particularly Black and Brown communities, from each other and from economic, social, and cultural opportunities. Ward boundaries add an extra layer of complexity in relationship-building efforts for CDOT; and although the Department has done a good job engaging Alders, deeper and more genuine engagement with residents is desired. In the past, there were limited opportunities for Chicagoans to influence CDOT's capital program, and to be informed on how the Department operates. Lack of internet access and familiarity with where the information is stored has also been a barrier to understanding all of CDOT's programs and opportunities. Internet access correlates with economic means, and this has disproportionately affected black and brown communities, resulting in insufficient input from these communities.

Define the Opportunity

The development of CDOT's Strategic Plan represents a major milestone in the relationship-building efforts with key mobility equity partners such as the Transportation Equity Network (TEN), which played a crucial role in the creation of the document. The Strategic Plan also outlines the Departments' guiding principles and goals to better integrate community engagement into all the work performed by CDOT. The development of the Chicago Mobility Collaborative (CMC) creates an opportunity and a space to actively engage communities, inform the public, and promote dialog. Black and brown communities have been the most impacted by the lack of spaces where they feel empowered to make their voices heard regarding transportation issues/concerns. Moving forward, CDOT will be more intentional about where the meetings will be hosted, the agenda topics, and presenters, and will also conduct more targeted outreach to better connect with communities that have been historically disenfranchised.

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A. Department Strategy: Adopt decision-making frameworks that prioritize equitable outcomes				
Action #1 - Make data and decisions accessible and transparent to the public	Started in 2022 with ongoing refinements.	-Information posted on the website -equity criteria reviewed and refined over time; additional criteria added as necessary	-Publish equitable project selection criteria Stakeholders: CDOT divisions (Engineering, In-House Construction) People impacted: residents of the city of Chicago, especially those whose neighborhoods have not received equitable investment	
Action #2 - Train CDOT staff to incorporate equity into decision-making and operations	2023-2024	-# of staff trained	-Participate in OERJ & related efforts (JEDI, GARE, Racial Equity Cohort training, Racial Equity Liaison meetings) -Provide equity training to staff -Stakeholders: CDOT divisions (Commissioner's Office), CDOT staff -People impacted: residents of the city of Chicago, especially those whose neighborhoods have not received equitable investment	
C. Improve relationships with communities and be more responsive to local needs				

<p>Action #1 - Create a senior leadership position at CDOT to focus on community outreach and engagement</p>	<p>2022-2024</p>	<p>-position created and filled -# of staff trained</p>	<p>-Establish and fill a leadership position with the mission of implementing the best principles for CDOT community engagement -Create a training program for staff to develop key skills for working with the public Stakeholders: CDOT divisions (Administration, Commissioner's Office) People impacted: CDOT staff who deepen competence and confidence working with members of the public; members of the public who feel heard by CDOT staff</p>	
<p>Action #2 - Make information on CDOT projects and activities more available and transparent</p>	<p>2024</p>	<p>-email distribution list -followers on social media</p>	<p>-Grow distribution list to 10,000 -Increase followers by 100% -Conduct review and consolidate existing CDOT websites Stakeholders: CDOT division (Commissioner's Office) People impacted: members of the public who can more easily learn about CDOT's work</p>	
<p>Action #3 - Work with community groups to engage residents and develop new communication strategies</p>	<p>2022-2024</p>	<p>-bilingual materials produced -translation and interpretation services offered</p>	<p>-Eliminate barriers to accessing CDOT materials and programs for people with disabilities -Eliminate barriers to accessing CDOT materials and programs for non-English proficient communities Stakeholders: CDOT divisions (Commissioner's Office, Project Development, In-House Construction) People impacted: members of the public who had limited access to CDOT materials due to language and accessibility barriers</p>	