

Joint Public Comment on the proposed resolution to adopt the We Will Chicago Draft Framework Plan

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Dear Chicago Plan Commission

Please see below our joint public comment on the proposed resolution to adopt the We Will Chicago Draft Framework Plan that is on the January 19th 2023 agenda.

Please confirm receipt.

The signatories to the comment had previously submitted these comments to DPD, but they do not seem to have impacted the draft submitted to the Plan Commission for consideration.

We respectfully ask that the Plan Commission delay adoption until more of the 600+ policy ideas that community leaders took time to propose during the planning process can be integrated into the plan.

Chris White

Organizing Director

Alliance of the SouthEast (ASE)

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Southeast & Beyond: We Will

Our Residents' Plan For Southeast Chicago & The City

Summary Outline of Major Themes, Topics, & Desired Outcomes from Southeast We Will Meetings on the City Plan

bit.ly/wewillseandbeyond

For a few years ending in 2022, community leaders in Southeast Chicago leaders held community meetings around We Will Chicago, which was promised to be a participatory process to draft a new city plan.

Unfortunately, outside of some data and vague goals, most of the 600 policy recommendations (bit.ly/WeWilChicagoPolicyIdeas) made by leaders from across the city were not included in the draft plan that was released in mid July 2022 (<https://bit.ly/WeWillJulyDraft>). In contrast, many pages of the City of Chicago 1966 Comprehensive Plan (bit.ly/1966ChiPlan), have very specific recommendations that often name specific infrastructure and institutions that are to be built and often with specific funding sources named.

Therefore, a committee of the Southeast Chicago We Will Participants have put together this outline of key recommendations that our neighbors have made during this process.

This document is a good faith attempt to collect the strongest points of agreement that were articulated at the Southeast community meetings and to turn them into clear and actionable recommendations. Most if not all of the original raw notes from the community process can be seen here: bit.ly/sewwcrawnotes

We ask you to sign on to our respectful call for the City of Chicago to incorporate our recommendations into the next draft of the We Will Chicago Plan by the beginning of the formal public comment process this fall. And we ask the city to partner with us to make these recommendations and a new, more equitable Chicago a reality. To sign on as an individual and/or organization, please go to bit.ly/seplansignon

If a detail, point, or nuance that was included or left out prevents you from signing on, we still encourage you to contact Alliance of the Southeast (asechicago.org) for support and technical assistance in making your own public comment.

1. Food Access

- a. We need to eliminate Food Deserts
 - i. Food deserts are identified in many ways.
 - ii. Lack of fresh fruit, vegetables and meat.

- iii. 500 people or 80% of people must live near a large grocery store to not be in a food desert.
 - iv. We must admit that race has been a factor in placement of grocery stores in the past.
- b. Communities are asking for:
- i. Stores that are two to three blocks walking distances from home.
 - ii. Stores that are owned by people that look like them and understand their food preferences.
 - iii. Choices of stores, fruit stands, meat markets, full service.
 - iv. Help with planting vegetable gardens, using the city owned vacant lots.
 - v. Mobile groceries such as food trucks and grocery delivery.
- c. The Health department should respond to community complaints of lack of food and how it impacts the health of their clients and make recommendations that stores are placed in food deserts.
- d. Residents have a role to play in supporting nearby stores.
- e. Supply chain design (exporting/importing, agribusiness) and issues have hurt our access to food in existing stores even though we are surrounded by fertile farmland.
- f. The problem of lack of food access is related to how TIF dollars and public subsidies have been managed.
- g. There needs to be a consequence for store chains that pull out of subsidized areas then want subsidies, zoning changes, etc. in wealthier and whiter areas. Investing in underserved areas must be a condition of benefits and accommodations in other areas.
- h. Produce, dairy, poultry, seafood and meats should be fresh, affordable, and meet or exceed all established health, sanitation, and food safety standards and requirements.
- i. There should be greater investment in community owned or controlled stores, vegetable gardens, and farmers markets that take Linc.

2. Community Decision Making, Zoning Amendments, Tax Increment Financing

- a. We need a real communication plan to keep more neighbors aware and engaged
- b. We need more engagement with officials and decision makers as well as more information about what resources are available.
- c. We need improved models of participatory decision making in which we know that what we say actually makes a difference in what happens. We want a real seat at the table where the real decisions are made

3. We need better decision making about (TIF) and Other Public Subsidies

- a. City needs to increase transparency and stop taking TIF funds without community notification and engagement . All proposed TIF Fund transfers and developments are subject to the review of the Local TIF & Zoning Board.
- b. TIF and Zoning decisions should all be made by impacted residents, not politicians, corporations and a select few. This recommendation aligns with the City's plans to increase place-based decision making.
- c. Every ward should have an elected Local TIF & Zoning board overseeing public subsidies and land use . The Local TIF Board will review Redevelopment Agreements, Community Benefits Agreements, Zoning Amendments.
- d. The Local TIF & Zoning Board will establish a Good Neighbor Policy and work with stakeholders on policy education and compliance.
- e. Local TIF & Zoning Boards will have policies and procedures that protect the public from conflicts of interest. Board members will be required to recuse themselves from discussions and deliberations on proposals that potentially constitute a personal or professional conflict of interest.
- f. There should also be monthly community meetings. Residents have a right to be informed about developments that impact their ward or neighborhood.
- g. A process should be established to obtain public feedback. The Local TIF and Zoning Board will incorporate public feedback into decision making.
- h. Information should be made available in writing and in the dominant languages of the ward or neighborhood residents.
- i. There should be community benefits tied to all development subsidies.

4. Transit

- a. Transit is currently inadequate.
- b. Improve, green, & expand transit options
- c. Housing and transportation go hand in hand.
- d. Fill holes in transit services
- e. Have a more dependable frequent schedule
- f. We need better schedules with more frequent arrivals and longer hours
 - i. Communities have been fighting route by route for better service, improved transfers, trained and supervised staff and operators, enhanced safety and properly maintained equipment.
 1. Little Village Environmental Organizer fought CTA and pulled down resources from elected officials to improve the Route 31 bus see <http://www.lvejo.org/our-accomplishments/transit-victory/>.
 2. South Chicago Community Leaders fought Metra and not only saved

but also lowered the fare on the Metra Electric and Rock Island lines.

3. Transit oriented development does not work when there are holes in service, unpredictable service, or when one cannot get home from a second shift job, appointments or events on public transit.

- g. We need more express buses; safer and more reliable CTA L routes; low cost affordable Metra access
- h. We need to acknowledge that the lack of transit access is the legacy of deliberate racist decisions meant to further segregation and also leads to increased racial profiling by law enforcement; harassment of youth/teenagers on the street, etc. https://www.apha.org/~media/files/pdf/topics/environment/built_environment/srtsnp_equitytransp_factsheet2015.ashx

5. Big Institutions (Universities, health systems, etc.)

- a. Big institutions like the University of Chicago own so much property.
- b. We need to look at how big institutions are separate from our communities and also what it looks like when they integrate more into our communities.
- c. We need to look at what big institutions take from our community versus what they put in. We need a formal process to negotiate binding community benefits agreements with large institutions.

6. Housing

- a. Ownership: We need to more actively manage having the right mix of owners and renters.
- b. We must push back against corporate ownership and mismanagement of whole blocks and large pieces of land.
- c. We must deal with bad landlords and abusive tenants who hurt our communities.
- d. Housing discrimination is still a problem, and we are still being redlined. We must have a better enforcement plan for the enforcement of fair housing, community reinvestment, and other laws.
- e. Subsidize and reward making housing greener
- f. Relief for residents to keep them housed.
- g. Housing and transportation go hand in hand.
- h. Control rents; make more housing truly affordable.
- i. Give financial and maintenance support to homeowner to make them resilient.
- j. We need to fight displacement and discrimination to keep our neighbors here.
- k. Stabilize communities by giving people more opportunities to own their housing. Target these programs to areas where there are more renters and less

owners.

- l. More and better outreach about housing programs, especially in communities experiencing displacement.
- m. We need more supports and education for new homeowners, especially around tax appeal systems and financing.
- n. Automatic property tax relief for long time homeowners, especially in areas with rapidly rising prices.
- o. More oversight of banks and other lenders with consequences for poor behavior and easy access to detailed information about how lenders are performing.

7. Learning & Environment for Children & Adults

- a. We need to improve the quality of life and social opportunities for our youth today.
- b. We need to create a better youth culture in which young people learn leadership and morals
- c. We need to fix and replace our school buildings and facilities.
- d. We need robust technical education and training for the trades so that students can prepare for employment and careers.
- e. We need to engage youth and families block by block, neighborhood by neighborhood, school by school, pew by pew, etc.
- f. We need park resources like pools and other healthy places for young people to go equitably distributed throughout the city. Resources are currently very concentrated on the North Side.
- g. We need to have a plan for 8th grade dropouts. We need to fix the way that schools fail them before they drop out.

8. Wealth Building

- a. We need to build industries and have business incubators in every community area.
- b. We need training, apprenticeships, and career pathways to good paying jobs with benefits.
- c. We need more local hiring.
- d. There are so many broken promises and so much discrimination from employers (i.e. train car assembly plant)
- e. We need funding to train, certify and hire local residents to remediate contaminated sites.
- f. We need vibrant community level economies in which needs are met and more money stays in the community.
- g. We need to prepare youth and others to be successful in a variety of different

types of careers in industries that meet community needs.

h. We need to create a better community self image for ourselves.

9. Public Safety

a. None of these ideas will work if we don't feel safe.

b. We need some sort of extra security that treats residents well and de-escalates situations.

10. Health & Environmental Justice

a. We need comprehensive mental and physical health care that treats the whole person and community.

b. We need actionable plans to close the gap in health expectancies between zip codes.

c. We need to study the cumulative effects of multiple heavy polluters in specific areas of the city and deconcentrate them.

d. The city must look for solutions to the problems of environmental racism pointed out by the HUD investigation, not argue about whether these problems exist or HUD's legal standing

e. We need to make sure that industry does not endanger residents be it through pollution, traffic, odors, or other effects.

f. The Southside is not a dumping ground. Stop using it as one.

g. We need more trees and more equity of tree resources.

(<https://www.chicagotribune.com/news/environment/ct-chicago-trees-equity-20220612-prpuxgsabzc2fa4fnwnyf4fbku-story.html>)

h. We need better park resources.

i. We need to clean up existing pollution.

j. We need to tax polluters as a source of dedicated funding for a just transition to greener technologies.

k. We need to better prepare our communities for the crisis created by climate change.

11. More Social & Community Resources

a. More gyms and youth centers

b. More entertainment, fun, and culture

c. Coffee shops and safe public spaces to hang out in, less isolation

d. Places to go out in the community, spending money there

12. More & Better Jobs

a. Remove obstacles to jobs, more open hiring

b. Better apprenticeships, training and career paths. Improve where they are

- located and how to find them.
- c. More Union jobs, Green jobs, and Creative or Art jobs
- d. Support and create more worker owned businesses
- e. Living wage jobs at or above prevailing wage that can support a family and regular raises.
- f. Concrete steps, working with the community, to attract more businesses that offer better employment.

13. Businesses, Services, & Quality of Life

- a. Technical assistance, incubation, promotion, and financial support for both new and existing businesses
- b. Remove barriers to entrepreneurship
- c. More access to financing and real estate.
- d. Eliminate deserts where there is lack of access to food and other services
- e. Help more dollars to stay in the community instead of being extracted or having those dollars go elsewhere.
- f. We need fight displacement and discrimination to keep our neighbors here.
- g. We need an organized way to keep the community clean and livable.
- h. We need better control over land and real estate so that buildings and land can be put to appropriate use rather than being warehoused or put to a use that negatively affects the community.

Signed Onto Organizationally: In Alphabetical Order

Alliance of the Southeast, ASE, Amalia Nieto-Gomez, Executive Director
Bridges/Puentes, Samuel Corona, Founding Member
Central South Shore Area Council Linda Young, President
Coalition For a Southworks CBA,
Jeffrey Manor Community Council, Marie Collins-Wright, Vice President
People's Council of Southeast Chicago, Linda Gonzalez, Lead Facilitator
South Chicago Neighbors, Emily Licon, Member

Signed On Individually, Organization Listed for Identification Purposes Only

Yessenia Baltazar, Southeast Environmental Taskforce
LaDonna Calhoun
Hazel Colar
Delia Cruz, Youth Advocacy Foundation
Ivan Cruz, Youth Advocacy Foundation
Onaje Douglas, Metropolitan Family Services
Shawn Gill
Mia H
Rachel Hardy, Southeast Environmental Taskforce
Maria Hernandez
Kim Lewis

Renee Nowlin, Secretary, KECS Block Club Association
Joann Podkul, SE Chicago Historical Society
Michelle Royster, Director, Youth Advocacy Foundation
Enrique Sanchez, Southeast Environmental TaskForce

January 13, 2023
Chicago Plan Commission
City Hall, 121 N. LaSalle St.
Chicago, IL 60602

Metropolitan Planning Council (MPC) submits this written testimony in support of the resolution for We Will Chicago and urges Commissioners to adopt the framework plan.

We Will Chicago is the first citywide plan the Department of Planning and Development (DPD) has undertaken since the 1960s. When the last citywide plan was created, many communities were excluded from fully participating in civic life and planning. MPC believes that the We Will Chicago planning process has included some of the most robust and creative engagement strategies that DPD has employed. The impact of that public participation is apparent in the fact that the framework plan before us today positions Equity and Resiliency as its two core principles, has a pillar dedicated to Civic and Community Engagement. It also includes an acknowledgement of the role city planning has played in past and ongoing harms.

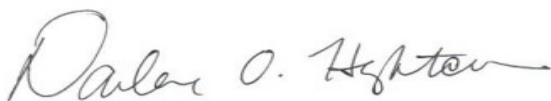
For too long, Chicago has lacked a unifying vision for what we want this city to be, and the values we want to drive public decisions. We Will Chicago captures this vision through its guiding principles, themes, goals, and objectives. This plan will serve as a critical guiding document for Chicago moving forward, and through implementation can shape future decisions related to programming, policy, investments, budgets, land use, infrastructure, and capital planning.

MPC has been a partner, advisor, and participant in We Will Chicago on various aspects of the planning process. We co-developed the pre-planning workshops that helped shape the themes and structure of the planning process, participated on the Advisory and Public Health and Safety Research Teams, created a meeting in a box toolkit to strengthen public engagement, and facilitated working groups to provide recommendations on historical reckoning and implementation. Through our participation and support, we have seen first-hand the effort and intention put into the planning process by staff within DPD, the Mayor's Office, and other city agencies.

The City has committed to several actions to advance We Will Chicago. The Mayor's Office plans to create an implementation steering committee and require city departments to create action plans to implement objectives from the plan. Departments will also be expected to show how We Will Chicago fits in with their newly required Racial Equity Action Plans and their annual budgets. DPD will align future neighborhood planning with We Will Chicago, beginning with the upcoming Central Area Plan. These implementation steps are consistent with the plan's principles, and it is encouraging to see these public commitments.

Chicago Plan Commission approval will signal to Chicago residents that their public servants value their vision for the City. It will also empower departments and staff to implement the plan and integrate its guiding principles of Equity and Resiliency into their own projects and decisions. MPC urges the commissioners to vote in support of the We Will Chicago Framework Plan.

Sincerely,



Darlene Oliver Hightower
President and CEO
Metropolitan Planning Council

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