

# THE GREATER CHATHAM INITIATIVE

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## **CONGRESSMAN RUSH, MAYOR EMANUEL AND COMMUNITY PARTNERS LAUNCH COLLABORATIVE NEIGHBORHOOD DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM FOR GREATER CHATHAM**

*Greater Chatham Initiative Designed to Strengthen Four Neighborhoods and Set Them on  
Upward Path in the 21st Century Economy*

CHICAGO— U.S. Representative Bobby Rush, Chicago Mayor Rahm Emanuel, community leaders, and partners from the private and public sectors today launched the Greater Chatham Initiative (GCI). The first-of-its-kind collaborative effort is designed to strengthen the communities of Chatham, Auburn Gresham, Greater Grand Crossing, and Avalon Park and set them on an upward path in the twenty-first century economy.

More than 250 individuals and organizations, led by a 16-member Leadership Committee, have spent the last two years examining the assets that have made these communities historically prosperous and identified six areas of investment: human capital and workforce development; business development; housing; public safety; support services and amenities; and civic capacity and institutional environment.

“I am proud to announce the launch of the Greater Chatham Initiative,” said Rush. “This is an enterprise that is near and dear to my heart. It represents the tangible results of leadership and stakeholders working creatively for two years towards the common goal of improving the economic viability and quality of life for those who live and work on Chicago’s South Side. With its tremendous potential, the Greater Chatham area is a great place to implement GCI’s new and ambitious program.”

“We are working with the community and for the community to reinvent, rebuild and revitalize the Greater Chatham area and the entire South Side of Chicago. As more businesses take root and grow, we will see a multiplier effect on housing and education - the hallmarks of a strong and stable community,” Mayor Emanuel said. “Through the Greater Chatham Initiative we can strengthen the entire city, because the City of Chicago is

only as strong as each of our neighborhoods are strong.” Michael Sacks, Chairman and CEO of GCM Grosvenor and a key funder of GCI, also spoke at Wednesday’s event.

“Our goal is to enhance these communities as places of opportunity and choice,” said Marlow Colvin, Leadership Committee Co-Chair and Vice President of Government Affairs at ComEd. “GCI will connect residents, businesses, and other assets to the regional economy, in turn attracting and retaining working and middle-class African-American families to these communities.” ComEd has made a significant commitment to GCI as a private sector partner. “Greater Chatham plays a key role in Chicago’s economy, but is threatened. This initiative will help Greater Chatham to succeed—to become a place where diverse communities and businesses can live, thrive and grow,” said William A. Von Hoene, Jr., Senior Executive Vice President and Chief Strategy Officer, Exelon. “We are proud to partner with GCI by providing a \$300,000 grant over three years, while ComEd provides a \$90,000 grant toward workforce development.”

The Leadership Committee has selected Nedra Fears as GCI’s Executive Director. “Ms. Fears is a Chatham native with a tremendous background in community and economic development, making her the perfect fit for this role,” said Alicia Spears, Leadership Committee Co-Chair and Executive Director of the Business and Economic Revitalization Association. Ms. Fears will coordinate and manage more than thirty programs and partnerships, including the Greater Chatham Workforce Center, Neighborhood Housing Resource Center, and Expanded Out-of-School Elementary-Age Youth Programming.

GCI builds on the legacy of these neighborhoods, which have long been places of prosperity and the home to influential African-American businesses and cultural icons. “Once a bastion of thriving households, tightly-knit social bonds, good schools and safe streets, Greater Chatham has been underperforming recently, challenged by the loss of middle-class jobs, a frozen housing market, and changing neighborhood demographics,” said Terry Peterson, Leadership Committee Co-Chair and Vice President of Corporate and External Affairs at Rush University Medical Center. “The time is right to set a new course for Greater Chatham – and for Chicago.”

GCI originated in the spring of 2014 after a stray bullet killed special education teacher Dr. Betty Howard within a short distance of Congressman Rush’s district office in Chatham. In response to the tragedy, Rush convened a summit of city stakeholders from all sectors of the community and called for a unified effort to address the violence head-on within the framework of a greater plan for neighborhood redevelopment and economic growth.

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