



Metropolitan  **Planning Council**

Mayoral Briefing Book

For Candidates and Transition Teams

March 2023

Executive Summary

We are at an unprecedented moment for the City – not just with the mayoral election but with nearly one-third of the City Council seats guaranteed to be filled with new alderpeople. -This moment can change the dynamics of how Chicago moves forward in the future. Issues like public safety and the economy often rise to the top of the conversation during an election. These are important, but we also need to consider how the built environment (housing, transportation, land use and planning, and water resources) has shaped people’s experiences around these issues and how we can address the systems that keep racial and economic inequities in place.

Chicago’s Mayor and City Council must make a sustained commitment to racial and economic justice for all Chicago communities to thrive and for the long-term prosperity of the entire region. Sometimes, that will require building on or extending existing initiatives, at other times, dramatically changing how the city approaches a problem. That includes focusing on:

- **Equitable development and investments that create pathways to wealth and local ownership:** The City has made initial investments to advance community development in historically disinvested communities through efforts like Invest South/West and The Chicago Recovery Plan. We need to sustain these commitments and grow investments in BIPOC-owned (Black, indigenous, and people of color) businesses, as well as address structural issues that make it hard and expensive to launch businesses in Black and Brown communities. Equity should be an explicit goal of development incentive programs and include aligned outcomes to ensure public resources are deployed where they are most needed.
- **Ensuring consistent and reliable public transportation:** We need higher quality transit service to support broad ridership and ensure that this resource is not lost or decimated. That means addressing the complex nexus of issues that affect rider experience, including frequency, safety, social services for vulnerable populations, and fare affordability. Better service can help the City realize the full potential of transit as an economic engine. The Connected Communities ordinance, which passed in 2022, should be fully implemented to incentivize development near transit throughout the city and improve pedestrian safety.
- **Investing in green and sustainable infrastructure:** Neighborhoods face issues with urban flooding, high industrial uses near residential areas and lead service lines. We need to accelerate equitable lead service line replacement and green infrastructure investments. We also need to encourage industrial land use planning that reflects community desires for economic development while protecting environmental and human health and promoting resilience.

- **Expand the table and community voice** to shape local investments. When Metropolitan Planning Council supports communities in site-specific planning efforts, people bring a wealth of information that is not often included in a data-driven community profile. We need more standards around participatory neighborhood planning and processes that center community voice in catalytic development opportunities.

To fully realize these goals the City will need to address persistent, structural governance issues. While this briefing book does not directly take on all these issues, they are at the foundation of progress toward a more equitable future. This includes:

- **Financial health.** The City needs to reduce its debt, address its pension obligations, and provide sustainable revenue sources for the many capital improvements and departmental operations needed.
- **Staffing capacity.** Many City departments – especially the Department of Planning and Development and Department of Transportation – have far fewer staff than needed to deliver the services and plans the people of Chicago need. The city needs to increase internal capacity through strategic hiring.
- **Governance reforms.** City Council should focus on citywide policies and priorities that will yield more equitable outcomes for all.

At this unprecedented moment, Chicago needs leaders with the conviction and clarity of purpose to ensure brighter futures for everyone. We need leaders committed to a city where every community is valued, every person has a voice, and every neighborhood thrives. We need leaders who take bold action.

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Build on Past Success to Foster Equitable Development and Affordable Housing Near Transit

Continued commitment to existing initiatives can help cultivate thriving communities.

Departments and offices to engage: Department of Planning and Development (DPD), Department of Housing (DOH), Department of Transportation (DOT), Chicago Transit Authority (CTA)

The Need

Chicago has made substantial investments in housing near transit over the past decade. However, much of that development has produced luxury apartments near CTA “L” stations on the north and northwest sides, while underinvesting in similar places on the south and west sides. As a result, transit-oriented development has been inequitable, serving affluent white residents but leaving Black, Latinx and low-income Chicagoans behind.

In response, the City of Chicago adopted the [Equitable Transit Oriented Development Policy Plan](#) developed with over 70 neighborhood, citywide, and regional stakeholders, as well as multiple city departments and sister agencies. The plan was formally adopted by the Plan Commission in 2021. The same group worked together to design and ensure council adoption of the [Connected Communities Ordinance](#) in 2022. Following an initial round of [pilots](#), the City recently began accepting applications for [pre-development](#) and [development](#) grants, ushering public investments to catalyze Equitable Transit Oriented Development (ETOD).

Recommendation

The City should follow-through on commitments to grants and technical assistance to drive ETOD with robust community engagement and without displacement. It needs to shift staff culture, coordinate across departments, and continue participating in coalition efforts to mutually define and measure ETOD. Finally, the City needs to continue aggressively advancing inclusionary land use regulations.

What it will take

DPD needs to continue its course of investing in, providing technical assistance to, and providing staff support to facilitate ETOD construction projects. DOH has championed coordination with DPD to advance much of this work. DOT and CTA need to follow suit so that these innovative projects can cross the finish line sustainably.

DOH has also embraced internal work to shift staff culture to align with equity goals. DPD and other departments should do the same so that those who work directly with developers and community members can help them take advantage of the benefits afforded under the Connected Communities Ordinance.

Finally, staff from DPD, DOH, DOT, and CTA need to participate in developing definitions and criteria so that a broad stakeholder group can work from a shared understanding when evaluating future investment opportunities and in mutual accountability.

Why the time is right

We need to seize upon the momentum for advancing ETOD policy and investments from over the last three years. Much of this is driven by unprecedented federal investments, so we have a unique opportunity to make sure Black and Latinx Chicago communities continue to benefit.

Action Timeline

100 days

- Issue an executive order indicating continued support for the ETOD Policy Implementation Plan.
- Set staff, funding, and technical assistance needs for pilots, pre-development, and development grants.
- Designate senior staff in the Mayor's Office to move forward ETOD implementation work.

1st year

- Appropriate needed funding for ETOD implementation in FY2024 budget
- Create a coordination structure across staff from DPD, DOH, DOT, and CTA to fully support ongoing ETOD planning, pilots, and investments, including:
 - ETOD Pilot Program initiated in October 2021
 - ETOD pre-development and development grantees resulting from the RFP issued in November 2022
 - Participation in ETOD "change teams" and in developing an ETOD "scorecard."

1st term

- Identify and address exclusionary zoning policies and practices by working with MPC and others. Examples of existing policies to address include single-family only housing near transit, which restrict denser developments; policies that allow two- and three-flat deconversions and reduce the number of naturally occurring affordable units near transit.
- Alignment of resources and implementation support to execute recommendations from the ETOD plan underway for the 95th Street corridor.

Develop a Comprehensive, Regularly Updated Land Use Plan and Align Zoning with it

Encouraging proactive planning across the city can spur equitable economic development and cultivate thriving communities.

Departments and offices to engage: Department of Planning and Development (DPD) and the Mayor's Office, Plan Commission

The Need

Currently, land use planning and zoning updates in Chicago happen on a piecemeal and irregular basis and are driven by developer, mayoral, or City Council changes. The results are frequent conflicts between land uses (e.g., residential and industrial), resources that aren't located where they are needed the most (e.g., transportation and affordable housing), and outdated land use patterns that do not reflect city and resident values and needs.

This stands in stark contrast to other cities that routinely develop land use maps to guide growth and change. Comprehensive land use plans are often coupled with neighborhood level planning, which provides an opportunity for residents to shape their neighborhood's future.

Recommendation

The City should require the creation of comprehensive land use plans and regular updates on a 10-year cycle. The City should systematize subarea planning, using neighborhood plans to inform citywide plans.

What it will take

The Mayor's Office and DPD should set the expectation for citywide planning and neighborhood planning at regular intervals (e.g., every 10 years). The City should set up a process using the following framework: 1) Define subarea boundaries to guide planning across all Chicago communities. For example, these boundaries could follow community area geography, neighborhoods, or other geographic and social markers; 2) With assistance from nonprofit and local organizations, develop subarea/neighborhood plans that reflect community priorities and align with the overarching goals of the citywide plan. Subarea/neighborhood plans should include local land use planning. These plans should be created with a significant amount of community engagement and outreach. Subarea/neighborhood plans should go before the Chicago Plan Commission for approval. 3) Subarea/neighborhood plans should roll up into a comprehensive citywide land use plan and should ultimately lead to updates to the zoning code text and map, in order to realize their goals.

Why the time is right

The City recently adopted the first citywide plan in over 50 years. In order to keep building on that momentum and move toward the principles and goals of the plan, it is necessary to instill a

culture of planning in the City. Requiring citywide plans and subarea plans to be completed and updated on a regular basis, and tied to zoning and land use changes, will help encourage forward-looking and proactive planning across the city, spurring equitable economic development.

Additionally, a zoning assessment – a review of Chicago’s zoning and land use through a health, equity, and sustainability lens – led by the MPC and Urban Institute is currently underway.

Action Timeline

100 days

- Encourage continued participation of City departments and Mayor’s Office on the steering committee for the zoning and land use assessment led by MPC and Urban Institute. Participation includes meeting attendance, material review, and active engagement with the project. If needed, ensure a new departmental or Mayor’s Office representative is assigned.

1st year

- Continue participating in the zoning assessment steering committee through the entirety of the project, so that the City is part of using the results of the assessment to develop recommendations for changes to zoning and land use policies and practices.

1st term

- Implement changes to zoning policy and practices that are reflective of the joint recommendations from the zoning and land use assessment.
- Initiate a comprehensive land use planning process that starts by developing community-engaged subarea/neighborhood plans.

Implement the We Will Chicago Citywide Plan

Follow-through on this landmark effort can establish a more collaborative, more equitable standard for citywide and neighborhood planning.

Departments and offices to engage: All City departments and all Mayor's Office departments, led by the Department of Planning and Development (DPD)

The Need

Unlike many comparable cities in both the United States as well as globally, Chicago does not have a recent history of developing citywide plans. Bucking this trend, the recently adopted We Will Chicago Citywide Plan is the first citywide plan in more than 50 years. It brought together the voices of more than 10,000 residents and stakeholders to shape the plan. It was an inclusive, collaborative planning process that identified high level goals and objectives to move the city toward greater equity and resiliency.

The City of Chicago needs to ensure this monumental effort moves forward in the implementation phase. This will require the City to think differently about implementation: the comprehensive plan from the 1960's was never officially passed by the City Council, and it remains unclear how it drove policy. This cannot be repeated with the We Will Chicago plan.

Recommendation

The City should immediately start using the We Will Chicago plan to identify departmental strategies and policies to reach the goals. The City should form an accountability body of residents and stakeholders to review plan implementation and develop tracking metrics to ensure that the plan is achieving the objectives listed for each topic area. Also, citywide planning should be institutionalized, and a regular cadence of updates should be established, like other cities.

What it will take

The Mayor's Office, along with DPD, should take a lead role in coordinating these efforts. However, implementing this plan will require engagement from all departments and offices, including, but not limited to: Department of Transportation, Department of Public Health, Department of Housing, Department of Buildings, Office of Equity and Racial Justice, Office of Climate and the Environment.

Why the time is right

The City recently adopted its first citywide plan in over 50 years. To build on that momentum and move toward the principles and goals of the plan, it is important to begin implementation. Some objectives can be implemented right away, but to set the city up for long-term success, some underlying structures of how planning functions at the city need to be improved. Even through City administration changes, We Will Chicago's values and desires, which were articulated by stakeholders and residents, should be upheld and acted upon.

Action Timeline

100 days

- Publicly commit to implementing We Will Chicago and to advancing the vision city residents have set forward.
- Assign Mayor's Office staff to implementation activities, including participation in any implementation committees.

1st year

- Create an advisory body for the plan that includes residents.
- Develop metrics to track the plan and a publicly accessible dashboard to show plan progress.
- Move forward with DPD's scope of work to a) evaluate the community engagement process occurring with planned developments and b) make recommendations to standardize the engagement across wards and projects. Plan should include research and development of appropriate community engagement standards, updates to Plan Commission rules on reporting of community engagement, and a clear enforcement and implementation strategy.

1st term

- Develop strategic plans for all departments and offices that align with the goals and objectives of the citywide plan.
- Report on plan progress with achieving defined metrics and goals.
- Align annual budgets and capital improvement plans with citywide plan priorities.
- Establish a cycle to update the citywide plan and institutionalize the planning structure.

Modernize Industrial Land Use Practices and Policies and Align Them with Racial Equity

Industrial land use planning that reflects community desires for economic development can also help protect and promote human health, the environment, and neighborhood resilience.

Departments and offices to engage: Department of Planning and Development (DPD)

The Need

Many of Chicago's land use and zoning policies were enacted decades ago, prior to current trends in industry, changes in residential patterns, and a growing public recognition of environmental justice, health, and sustainability issues. As a result, many industrial developments undermine health, community, and connectivity, and do not reflect local needs.

Recommendation

Continue DPD's current plans to complete a citywide industrial corridor study, as well as geography-specific industrial corridor modernization processes for the far south and southwest. Ensure that the industrial corridor modernization process is community-driven, prioritizes human health, environmental justice, and sustainable economic development.

What it will take

DPD should take the lead, with support from other departments (for example: Climate & Environmental Equity, Transportation, Health) on relevant topics.

Why the time is right

These activities have already commenced within DPD, and communities on Chicago's far south, southeast, and southwest sides have mobilized in order to participate and guide the industrial corridor modernization processes.

Action Timeline

100 days

- Commit to the continuation of the Industrial Corridor Modernization Process with resources (both staff and financial) assigned to ensure that ongoing work can continue as planned for 2023.

1st year

- Complete the citywide industrial corridor study.
- Complete the industrial site guidelines process being led by DPD for the far south and southwest industrial corridors. These should also inform site-level planning in the city's other industrial corridors.
- Use the information from the industrial site guideline process to plan for the capacity and resources to start a Calumet Area land use plan update, that includes an emphasis on the far south industrial corridor.

1st term

- Start and complete an update to the land use plan for the Calumet area. The Calumet Area land use plan was adopted in 2002. It has been more than 20 years since it was updated or changed, and it is past time for a revision. Use the industrial site guideline standards to implement common practices across all industrial corridors for all new industrial development sites.

Plan Sustainably for Chicago's Rivers and Riverfront Communities

A thoughtful, balanced approach to development can help us make the most of river corridors.

Departments and offices to engage: Department of Planning and Development (DPD)

The Need

Chicago has three river systems within city limits – the Chicago River, the Des Plaines River, and the Calumet (including Lake Calumet, Calumet River, and Little Calumet River). Each river has its own unique character and challenges, but there is a general need to balance development (residential and economic), public access, and ecological priorities across the river systems. Growing development pressures, ongoing nature and connectivity concerns, and growing interest in river-related recreation are often at odds with dwindling riverfront land and a complex tapestry of private and public riverfront land ownership.

Recommendation

Support the River Ecology & Governance Task Force and its ongoing reviews of new developments. Proactively plan for Chicago's rivers by routinely updating design guidelines and other revisions to planning standards.

What it will take

DPD should continue to lead the River Ecology & Governance Task Force, a multi-sector body supported by civic organizations, which coordinates river-related governance, development, and programmatic issues. DPD should also continue the process of updating the city's Sustainable Development Policy to reflect riverfront priorities, climate resilience, and other critical environmental equity concerns. In addition, DPD should initiate an update of the Calumet Design Guidelines, with a focus on the Calumet Rivers, as part of the upcoming Far South Industrial Corridor Modernization process. Finally, DPD should routinely update the current Chicago River Design Guidelines to encourage further recreational, natural solutions, and connectivity across the rivers.

Why the time is right

Many of these initiatives have already begun or have been identified by DPD and other governmental and non-governmental river partners as critical next steps. Growing interest in both industrial and residential development along Chicago's riverfront is converging with ongoing environmental justice issues and growing interest in riverfront recreation. Now is the time for proactive planning to promote equitable, resilient rivers.

Action Timeline

100 days

- Support DPD staff continuing to administer and staff the River Ecology & Governance Task Force. The Mayor's Office can continue to support this work by ensuring that it remains a collaborative effort across City departments, including the Department of Transportation, Department of Public Health, the Park District, and the Mayor's Office of Environment and Equity.

1st year

- Provide funding for continued staffing of Task Force activities through civic organizations, like Friends of the Chicago River.
- Fold the work that DPD is conducting on industrial site design guidelines in the far south and southwest sides into an update for guidelines specific to the Calumet River.

1st term

- Complete and implement new design guidelines for the Calumet River.
- Update the Chicago River Design Guidelines and provide a schedule for continued updates.

Prioritize Human Health and Environmental Justice in Zoning and Permitting Processes

Better processes can lead to better outcomes for BIPOC neighborhoods experiencing undue burden from air, water, and soil pollution.

Departments and offices to engage: Office of Climate and Environmental Equity, Chicago
Department of Public Health (CDPH)

The Need

Many of Chicago's land use and zoning policies were enacted decades ago, prior to current trends in industry, changes in residential patterns, and a growing public recognition of environmental justice, health, and sustainability issues. Zoning and permitting processes regarding individual sites do not currently allow for many environmental and health factors to be considered, beyond the footprint of the site itself. As a result, heavy industrial use continues to be inequitably distributed into already overburdened communities. These land use practices were the subject of a federal Housing and Urban Development (HUD) complaint filed by far south and southeast side communities. In 2022, HUD found that the City of Chicago's land use and zoning processes do, in fact, violate civil rights laws. The Mayor's Office is currently negotiating action items to redress these practices.

Recommendation

Adopt a cumulative impacts ordinance that considers thresholds of existing environmental and health burdens in industrial land use and permitting decisions.

What it will take

The Office of Climate and Environmental Equity and CDPH are already taking the lead and have begun a Cumulative Impact Assessment, which will inform a draft ordinance. The Mayor's Office will need to continue supporting the effort, especially with a communications strategy and outreach about the ordinance with City Council members. The Mayor will likely need to introduce the final ordinance to the City Council.

Why the time is right

The City of Chicago is currently negotiating with HUD on how to remedy its discriminatory land use and permitting processes. Although the City has begun a cumulative impact assessment and research to support an accompanying ordinance, it has also made clear that its economic development strategy will continue to include truck-intensive warehousing and transportation, distribution, and logistics centers. It is crucial to have proactive, protective permitting policies in place as development continues.

Action Timeline

100 days

- Publicly commit to support for continuation of the ongoing cumulative impacts assessment. Directly communicate support to CDPH, Office of Climate and Environmental Equity, and appropriate mayoral staff.
- Dedicate mayoral staff to learning about and participating in the cumulative impact assessment process.

1st year

- Draft and introduce a cumulative impact ordinance in partnership with CDPH, Office of Climate and Environmental Equity, and the Environmental Equity Working Group.

1st term

- Pass and implement cumulative impacts ordinance and use it in decision-making for new industrial uses.

Revise Use of Development Incentive Programs to Promote Equity

Equitable development is key to addressing historic disinvestment and helping communities thrive.

Departments and offices to engage: Planning and Development, Mayor’s Office of Equity and Racial Justice and Policy

The Need

Equity is not typically an explicit goal of development incentive programs, but it should be. In a city of constrained resources the public rightly questions the fairness of pulling funds away from other needs in favor of development projects, particularly when they are located in markets where conditions already seem favorable to investment. Equitable development is important to create thriving communities, and public incentives offer a way to support these efforts.

In this context, it is imperative for Chicago’s development incentives – such as tax increments financing districts and property tax abatements – to deliver more equitable outcomes. MPC’s review of financial incentive use across Chicago has indicated that this is not currently the case. Research is available at www.equitableincentives.org.

Recommendation

Align incentive use with outcomes related to equity, track these outcomes in a transparent and effective way, identify priority areas for incentive use based on equity needs, and then align public incentive use with these areas. Additionally, a more streamlined and simpler application process with a quicker review would make it easier for lower-resourced applicants to apply for and receive funding.

What it will take

This will require alignment around the equity goals the City is achieving through development and a new way to track progress across communities. The City should use these equity goals to review how public incentives have been used for development.

Why the time is right

Development is necessary to help the city grow. Right now, due to markets and inflation, private development is happening at a slower pace than it has previously. Public incentives provide the opportunity to help jumpstart development activity in areas that need it most, that are not benefiting from the private market. There is also an opportunity to realign city programs with the We Will Chicago citywide plan, with equity being one of its driving principles.

Action Timeline

100 days

- Commit internally to working with the DPD to align financial incentive use with racial equity.

- Review current processes and procedures in awarding incentives and reporting on outcomes.

1st year

- Work with Office of Equity and Racial Justice and DPD to define outcomes for how incentive use will build healthy, mixed-income neighborhoods across the city, aligned with the goals and objectives of the We Will Chicago citywide plan.
- Develop an incentive dashboard to track and report on outcomes from projects that used incentives.
- Fund and support a technical assistance liaison role to provide support for organizations applying for incentives.
- Create a common, streamlined application for all incentive programs.

1st term

- Create a centralized reporting structure across all financial incentive programs, with consistency in what is being tracked and how data is being reported.
- Develop an oversight committee to annually review incentive use across the different programs.

Accelerate Implementation of Infrastructure Improvements to Protect Pedestrians, Bicyclists, and Transit Users

Traffic-related injuries and fatalities are far too common but they are preventable through focused action.

Departments and offices to engage: Chicago Department of Transportation (CDOT), Department of Planning and Development (DPD), Chicago Department of Public Health (CDPH)

The Need

Every Chicago resident deserves to get where they want to go without the worry of becoming a victim of a traffic crash. Over the past four years (2019-2022) an average of 147 people died annually in Chicago traffic crashes. On average, 51 pedestrians and 9 cyclists lose their lives in Chicago traffic crashes each year.

Infrastructure improvements can reduce these traffic crashes and fatalities. Vision Zero is Chicago's pledge to eliminate traffic-related fatalities and serious injuries. Protected bike lanes improve the safety of cyclists by preventing potential conflicts with vehicles; importantly, they also help cyclists feel safer, thereby eliminating the perception of safety as a barrier to cycling by people of all ages and abilities. These kinds of improvements are critical to increasing cycling and walking as solutions to climate change and equitable access to safe, affordable transportation.

Recommendation

Chicago needs to improve the design of roadways to prioritize the safety of people biking and walking and to reduce vehicle speeds. The City should accelerate the implementation of Vision Zero Neighborhood Safety Plans and Complete Streets Quick Delivery projects, define and implement a protected bikeway network, and integrate substantial traffic calming elements into all arterial resurfacing projects.

What it will take

The Mayor's Office must demonstrate leadership and provide CDOT with the resources to prioritize investment in sustainable transportation. The Mayor's Office must support collaboration between departments, as CDOT will lead these efforts and will need to coordinate with DPD on corridor planning and development activities to ensure sustainable, safe transportation improvements are advanced at every opportunity. Similarly, CDOT should coordinate with the CDPH to help educate on the importance of accelerating implementation of traffic safety and active transportation projects, given the critical intersections with public health, as noted in [Healthy Chicago 2025](#). In order to succeed, CDOT will need the human and financial resources necessary to ensure success. See separate brief in this book: "Ensure CDOT and CTA Have Sufficient Staff to Deliver Urgently needed Bicycle, Pedestrian, and Transit Priority Projects" (page 18).

The City should support social programs to encourage people in all neighborhoods and of all backgrounds to cycle for transportation. The City also needs to transparently describe how infrastructure projects are prioritized, outcomes are evaluated, and how community members can provide input to inform project selection.

Why the time is right

During the pandemic many people rediscovered cycling for transportation and recreation, and the time is now to provide infrastructure to turn that interest into long-term sustainable transportation behavior.

The City of Chicago has been facing a traffic safety crisis for years, with little progress in reducing the numbers of deaths on the roadways. Prioritizing the conditions for walking, biking and taking transit are central to achieving not only Vision Zero's goal of eliminating traffic fatalities but also achieving the goals in the city's Climate Action Plan and Healthy Chicago Plan. Other world-class cities like Paris and London have doubled down on prioritizing safe, active transportation, but Chicago has been slow in this regard.

Given the urgency of the climate crisis, traffic fatality crisis, public health crisis and need for affordable transportation, we must make cycling safer and more appealing. The City is in the process of distributing 5,000 free bicycles to individuals in need. If the City does not provide safe locations for these cyclists, Divvy bikeshare riders, and potential future cyclists, these efforts won't reach their potential.

Action Timeline

100 days:

- Announce pedestrian, bicycle and Vision Zero infrastructure projects planned for the 2023 construction season.
- Announce the timeline for development of a citywide connected network of protected bicycle lanes.
- Announce a plan for a Chicago [Ciclovía](#) program of shutting down major thoroughfares to cars on weekends and holiday to promote cycling, following the models in [Los Angeles](#) and [Bogotá](#) in partnership with Community Based Organizations who are compensated for their participation.

1st year

- Report publicly on the methods for project prioritization and the status of Vision Zero and traffic calming infrastructure implementation.
- Conduct a program of Ciclovía events sponsored by the City of Chicago.
- Report publicly on the status of completion of a connected network of protected bicycle lanes.
- Assess options for city ordinance requiring construction of protected bike lanes on defined streets already undergoing reconstruction (for instance, the Cambridge Cycling Safety Ordinance).

1st term

- Reduce traffic fatalities among pedestrians and cyclists by more than half.
- Complete at least half of projects identified in protected bicycle lane network.
- Introduce and pass ordinance requiring construction of protected bike lanes on defined streets.

Ensure CDOT and CTA Have Sufficient Staff to Deliver Urgently Needed Bicycle, Pedestrian, and Transit Priority Projects

Dedicated planning resources can increase the City's capacity to achieve sustainable, accessible transportation options for its residents.

Departments and offices to engage: Office of Budget and Management, Chicago Department of Transportation (CDOT), Chicago Transit Authority (CTA)

The Need

As climate change accelerates, achieving the goals in the Climate Action Plan becomes more critical to our metropolitan region's future viability. Enabling Chicagoans to walk, bike, use shared micro mobility or transit for 45% of all trips requires dedicated planning staff. CDOT currently has zero staff fully dedicated to transit planning like Bus Rapid Transit (BRT), and insufficient staff working on bicycle, pedestrian, and traffic safety projects, including Vision Zero.

Recommendation

The City of Chicago must increase staffing commitments at CDOT and CTA to plan for walking, biking, and transit.

What it will take

The mayor should allocate at least 10 additional staff to the division of project development at CDOT focused on BRT, Complete Streets, and Vision Zero, and 10 additional bus planning and project development staff at CTA.

Why the time is right

Given the urgency of the climate crisis, traffic fatality crisis, and the public health crisis, we must make buses, trains and other modes of non-automotive transportation safer, more reliable and more appealing. Chicago is not keeping up with other U.S. and world-class cities in prioritizing transit, cycling and walking to achieve mode shift and climate goals. This is critical to increasing the equity and affordability of our transportation system.

Action Timeline

100 days

- Announce the creation of 10 new CDOT BRT/Complete Streets staff positions at CDOT and 10 new staff positions at CTA focused on BRT project development.
- Include funding for staff positions in FY2024 budget.

1st year

- Complete hiring for five new CDOT and five new CTA staff
- Deploy new staff on design of three BRT projects.

1st term

- Complete hiring of 10 total CDOT and 10 total CTA staff by end of first term.
- Ensure staff complete implementation of Vision Zero neighborhood and downtown traffic safety plans.
- Ensure staff finish preliminary engineering of at least three BRT corridors.

Implement Bus Rapid Transit

More efficient bus lines can improve public transit for the residents who use it most.

Departments and offices to engage: Chicago Department of Transportation (CDOT), Chicago Transit Agency (CTA)

The Need

The essential workers that underpin our food service, hospitality, medical, manufacturing, and other sectors depend on our public transportation system to get to their jobs and to meet other daily needs. Improving the quality, frequency and reliability of our bus lines is key to making the system work for low- and moderate-income residents who are the majority of its riders.

On Chicago's crowded streets, buses can be unreliable and slow, as they compete for space on the road with private automobiles. Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) – buses running in a dedicated right of way with frequent service – could deliver the transit service Chicagoans need, operating at nearly the same trip speeds as CTA rail. Also, it can be built for a fraction of the cost.

Recommendation

The City of Chicago must commit to developing one to five high-quality BRT corridors with full expectation of efficient coordination between CDOT and CTA. MPC's [Bus Rapid Transit: Chicago's New Route to Opportunity](#) provides recommendations for corridors.

What it will take

City leadership must commit to prioritizing the improvement of bus operations through implementation of BRT projects. This will require the mayor's policy team to ensure CDOT collaboration with CTA to design and implement BRT projects that make meaningful improvements to the transit rider experience.

Why the time is right

We are at a turning point, a moment when transportation policy and climate policy must align. Transportation is the top sector contributing to GHG emissions, and much of the damage is done by private automobiles.

Public transportation is an important part of the answer, but the system is facing a ridership crisis. Bus ridership, declining before COVID, has dipped substantially since the pandemic. Post-COVID traffic congestion is as bad or worse than ever, impeding bus lines and further affecting reliability. It's a vicious cycle. We must ensure bus transit operations are not slowed by traffic. It is critical to increase the value riders get from transit in order rebuild ridership and achieve climate goals. We must get more people to ride sustainable modes of transportation. If we do not make transit more competitive, the system may continue to lose riders and enter a "death spiral".

Chicago is not keeping up with other peer cities in terms of advancing progressive transit policies like BRT. New York City has converted [14th Street into a dedicated busway](#) and installed 16 [Select Bus Service](#) routes with bus priority features. Los Angeles has two BRT routes and is actively developing more projects, such as the North Hollywood to Pasadena route. Other Midwest cities are also outperforming Chicago. Milwaukee will install 9 miles of BRT by summer 2023. Indianapolis has installed 52 miles of BRT in recent years. The Twin Cities have installed 63 miles of BRT with 75 more miles planned on opening by 2027. By acting now on BRT, Chicago can ensure that transit functions well on those high-frequency transit corridors where the city is investing, incentivizing increased development density via the Connected Communities Ordinance.

Action Timeline

100 days

- Develop a strategic plan for transportation that includes BRT implementation as a treatment for the routes prioritized in the Chicago Better Street for Buses Plan and previous BRT studies such as Ashland and Western.
- Commit to advancing five BRT projects during the first term.
- Include funding in FY2024 budget to staff BRT positions at CTA and CDOT.

1st year

- Hire five new BRT/Complete streets staff at CDOT and CTA. See separate briefing on “Staff up at CDOT and CTA.”
- Evaluate current ETOD bus lines and [MPC’s Bus Rapid Transit Study](#) to define priority corridors and begin design of three corridors.

1st term

- Finish preliminary engineering for at least three BRT corridors.
- Complete construction of two BRT corridors.

Improve CTA Experience to Make Public Transit a More Attractive Choice

Safe, efficient, and equitable transit is essential to the city, now and in the future.

Departments and offices to engage: Chicago Transit Authority (CTA)

The Need

For a multitude of complex reasons, the CTA experience has degraded over recent years. The pandemic changed commuter habits. The housing crisis drove many to seek shelter in stations, and on trains and buses. With fewer passengers riding, social pressure to obey laws and courtesies slackened, leading to a lower perception of safety. While some progress has been made, and the numbers are improving, the perception of a broken system persists. And all of this is happening in the context of future funding concerns.

Recommendation

The City must work with CTA to ensure riders feel safe and comfortable and that transit is the most attractive option to get around the region. Collaborate with agencies to proactively address a range of staffing, social service and safety issues that can negatively impact transit. CTA must prioritize hiring and training to ensure service and maintain reliable headways so that riders can depend on transit.

What it will take

The Mayor will need to show strong leadership to guide needed actions by CTA to improve the rider experience. This includes demanding better operator work conditions to bolster staffing efforts, and ensuring that staff and contracted security guards are fully trained in de-escalation strategies.

Why the time is right

In a time when the effects of climate change are increasingly hard to ignore, the importance of the CTA to the city has never been greater. The City's own [Climate Action Plan](#) has set goals of enabling Chicagoans to walk, bike, use shared micro mobility, or transit for 45% of all trips. If we are to meet those goals, our public transit system must remain healthy to ensure that people can move around the city in the most sustainable manner. CTA must be the backbone of our network. It must become not only more viable, but preferable to automobiles. To achieve all these things, it must become more customer-centered, safer and more reliable.

Action Timeline

100 days

- Define needed changes to CTA employee contracts and operator working conditions and announce changes planned in year 1.
- Redirect resources from current K-9 security contract to more productive uses.

- Announce plans for establishment of Transit Ambassador Program to increase staff presence and improve the customer-service orientation of transit staff who can help identify issues, de-escalate situations, and make referrals for needed social services.

1st year

- Implement changes to agreements with CTA contractors to ensure robust training in de-escalation.
- Report on changes to CTA worker conditions and staffing levels; announce when full staffing has been reached.
- Report on when the level of delivered CTA bus and rail service reaches at least 95% of the level of scheduled service.
- Initiate CTA Transit Ambassador program.
- Report on change in share of all trips conducted by transit in the past year by transit.

1st term

- Report on change in share of all trips being conducted by transit.
- Consistently deliver at least 95% of scheduled service.
- Increase frequency of CTA and Metra transit service middays and evenings to serve nontraditional work trips and nonwork trips.

Accelerate Equitable Lead Service Line Replacement

Ensuring reliable, safe drinking water helps protect the health of all of Chicago's residents.

Department and offices to engage: Department of Water Management (DWM), Mayor's Office

The Need

With nearly 400,000 known lead service lines, Chicago has more of this toxic infrastructure than any other US city and 47 states. After decades of inaction, the City of Chicago in 2021 initiated a lead service line replacement (LSLR) program informed by a detailed plan. Similarly, the State of Illinois passed legislation requiring all lead service lines in Illinois to be replaced.

Yet Chicago's replacement program has made scant progress. According to Brett Chase of the Chicago Sun-Times [only 280 pipes have been replaced as of December 2022](#).

The current pace and scale of replacement is:

- more costly, as one-off replacements to address leaks and breaks fail to seize on economies of scale.
- more disruptive, as crews will come and go, potentially shutting off the water main, as service lines break.
- needlessly slow, as it will put generations of children at unnecessary risk to lead exposure from drinking water.

Speeding up replacement will require the city to find equitable revenue sources that don't burden the lowest income Chicagoans.

Recommendation

The City must accelerate equitable replacement of lead service lines. To do so, Chicago will need to enhance community engagement efforts, scale up replacement to the block level, and ensure lead service line replacement is equitably funded.

What it will take

The City needs to enhance engagement. Cities across the country show that community engagement is a linchpin in speedy and equitable lead service line replacement. The City of Chicago needs to address and repair distrust between residents and DWM, and to leverage Chicago's robust community engagement groups to assist in building trust. It is also necessary to scale up replacement to the block level. Lead service line replacement will be cheaper, quicker, and less disruptive if scaled up. The City needs to plan for replacement alongside other infrastructure improvements and implement a block-level plan.

Finally, it is imperative that the City develops an equitable funding plan. No one should have to choose between clean drinking water and water they can afford. The City needs to ensure that lead service line replacement is affordable to every low-income resident. This will require applying for and prioritizing federal grant funding, advocating for dedicated financial assistance

for lead service line replacement from the State of Illinois, and leveraging diverse and equitable municipal revenue sources. While Springfield will play an important role in developing dedicated revenue to replace all lead service lines statewide, the City can do its part by convening regional and statewide partners to identify equity-focused funding solutions for our neighborhoods.

Why the time is right

At Chicago's present pace, it will require 50 years to complete lead service line replacement. Chicago should have acted on this problem decades ago; we need to get moving.

Chicago has [a detailed plan to put this work in motion](#) as outlined in the Lead Service Line Replacement Report. The legwork has been done to chart a path to success in 25 years.

Federal resources have been appropriated for this work in the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law of 2021. Illinois will receive \$535 million in this funding, and Chicago needs to be in line to put some of that money to work.

By equitably accelerating lead service line replacement, Chicago has an opportunity to be a role model for safeguarding public health through infrastructure.

Action Timeline

100 days

- Pass an ordinance or resolution committing the City of Chicago to replacing all its lead service lines in 25 years, to be accomplished in a way that is affordable for low-income residents.
- Designate lead service line replacement point person in Mayor's Office. This person will be responsible for coordinating between the Mayor and the DWM, overseeing project outcomes, and addressing department obstacles to lead service line replacement.
- Set and publicize clear targets for DWM action on lead service line replacement, with clear accountability measures on 1, 5, 10, and 20-year timelines.
- Assess Chicago's self-imposed legal obstacles to equitable financing of lead service lines, for example any ordinance which prohibits the use of water rates for private-side lead service line replacement.
- Re-engage Chicago Lead Service Line Replacement Working Group. Conduct survey of participant sentiment about effectiveness of group and needed adjustments. Meet 1:1 with group participants and establish clear goals for outcomes of advisory group. Engage community groups not currently involved in LSLR Working Group.

1st year

- Eliminate municipal obstacles to equitable replacement of lead service lines through ordinance and administrative action.
- Provide clear budget plan for ramping up replacement over 1, 5, and 10 years; introduce first installment in FY2025 budget (Sept 2024).

- Engage regional municipalities to discuss state-funded LSLR needs and strategy.

1st term

- Pass any ordinances needed to secure equitable, dedicated revenue for LSLR.
- Replace 40,000 LSLs in low-income households at no cost to property owners.

Develop and Implement a Citywide Green Infrastructure Strategy in Coordination with Agencies

Planning for equitable citywide investment in green infrastructure can reduce the impact of flooding across our communities.

Departments and offices to engage: Office of Climate and Environmental Equity, Department of Water Management (DWM), Department of Planning and Development (DPD), Chicago Public Schools (CPS)

The Need

With the acceleration of climate change, Chicago will see increased rainfall and urban flooding over large sections of the city. The City needs to be prepared for this reality and plan its infrastructure accordingly. In part, this means developing a coordinated, proactive plan to implement green stormwater infrastructure equitably across the city.

Green stormwater infrastructure (GSI) is an important tool to address these impending flooding challenges. These rain gardens, swales, and constructed wetlands (to name a few best management practices) can help our sewer system hold, filter, and safely carry rainwater and reduce flooding in our homes and streets as storms increase in frequency and intensity.

Compared with pipes, tanks, pumps, and treatment centers (sometimes known as gray infrastructure), GSI can also deliver a variety of other community benefits, such as reductions in energy consumption and greenhouse emissions, improvements in air quality, reductions in heat island effect. It can also provide space for habitat, agriculture, and recreation.

Recommendation

The City should create a plan to equitably prioritize investment in green stormwater infrastructure, and optimize the placement, development, and maintenance of green public assets through cross-agency coordination.

What it will take

To make meaningful and sustainable impact, this plan will require bringing together multiple departments and agencies to coordinate planning and investment. The City should create a comprehensive plan to prioritize equitable investment in the siting, design, development and maintenance of green stormwater infrastructure. This plan should be developed and implemented through key cross-agency collaboration to ensure GSI investments are aligned with other capital improvement projects and city asset management, and that GSI is optimized to build community and climate resilience, particularly for historically disinvested communities where infrastructure needs are most persistent. A multi working group should agree to guiding principles by the end of year one, prior to onset of project and plan coordination. Within two years, a comprehensive infrastructure strategy and plan should be delivered that includes embedded or assigned staffing within each agency and department.

Why the time is right

The City's soon-to-be released federal pollution discharge (NPDES) permit may require such a plan. The citywide plan, We Will Chicago, is moving into its next phase of implementation.

Action Timeline

100 days:

- Issue an executive order with an ambitious goal to increase GSI construction across the City as a viable infrastructure strategy to reduce urban flooding.
- Include a diverse array of stormwater solutions that can more effectively respond to site challenges and community needs.
- Convene a working group, made up of multiple departments and sister agencies under the leadership of the Office of Climate and Environmental Equity, and with engagement from living infrastructure professionals, civic, community, and environmental justice organizations, draft a plan to achieve that goal through investment and coordinated action.

1st year

- Convene and actively participate in the working group with the goal of completing key projects and identifying resources and principles for sustainable coordination to maintain them.

1st term

- Establish governance structure for all-of-city GSI/nature-based solutions, with guiding principles.
- Adopt a plan for action to expand GSI investment across the city and complete significant pilot capital projects.

Facilitate Stormwater Credit Trading

Market-based investments in green and gray infrastructure can help create more of this flood-resistant infrastructure.

Departments and offices to engage: Office of Climate and Environmental Equity, Department of Water Management (DWM), Department of Planning and Development (DPD), Department of Buildings

The Need

As climate change increases intense rainfall across the Chicago region, the City of Chicago needs to increase the amount of water that our sewer system and natural areas can hold, so that it does not flood streets, basements, and other places. We will need innovative solutions to help capture stormwater and keep it from overwhelming our sewer systems and inundating our homes.

StormStore—a joint project from MPC and The Nature Conservancy—increases the stormwater management capacity of the region by investing in green infrastructure and facilitating development in disinvested neighborhoods. StormStore does so by engaging an important stakeholder group – private developers – in a marketplace guiding investment in green stormwater infrastructure where it can be most helpful.

Recommendation

Chicago needs to update its Stormwater Management Ordinance (SMO) and regulations to include alternative compliance language. Specifically, Chicago should update its federal pollution discharge permit (NPDES) to enable stormwater credit trading as a method of compliance. In addition, the city should update existing development incentives to attract development of green stormwater infrastructure in priority areas.

What it will take

This will require coordination between several departments, including DPD, DWM, and Department of Buildings to align priorities. This presents an ideal opportunity for the recently created Office of Climate and Environmental Equity to lead on innovation, facilitate coordination, and hold multiple departments accountable. City staff will also need to actively engage with developers to ensure that program supports are designed to attract significant investment in year one. The initiative may also require an initial fund of up to \$10 million to jump start market activity, which may come from existing sources of revenue or grant dollars.

Why the time is right

The time is right because, while DWM is in the early years of a capital campaign that is focused on regional constraints, there remain local issues with urban flooding not solved in the last 10-years. The suburbs are already piloting this approach with the adoption of an ordinance by the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago (MWRD). However, Chicago has the opportunity to lead on green infrastructure by taking a market-driven approach community-

driven GSI development. This action may help the City to comply with a still-in-negotiation state permit (NPDES), expected to be authorized in 2023.

Action Timeline:

100 days

- Convene a cross-departmental working group to assess barriers and opportunities for stormwater credit-trading and other creative solutions to urban flooding.

1st year

- Direct DWM resources to complete a study identifying appropriate geographies for sending and receiving surplus stormwater; trade ratios; and requirements for green stormwater infrastructure construction.
- Conduct robust, authentic community engagement in the analysis, draft, and recommendation phases of developing the report.
- Initiate a two-year pilot program implementing report recommendations and allowing for stormwater credit trading as an alternative mechanism for complying with the SMO in key areas where trading can be most impactful in reducing flooding and facilitating development in specific areas.

1st term

- Appropriate \$3 million in FY2025 budget (Oct 2024) as a seed fund to jump start construction.
- Evaluate the impact of the pilot program through technical analysis and robust, authentic community engagement. Expand city-wide if appropriate.

Update Stormwater Regulations to Use Climate-Adjusted Rainfall Data

Climate change and its impacts create an urgent need for new standards and practices.

Departments and offices to engage: Department of Water Management (DWM)

The Need

Between 2007 and 2016, insurers paid Chicago residents over \$400 million in flood damages. According to analysis by the Center for Neighborhood Technology¹, over 87% of those claims were paid in communities of color. Flooding can cause a variety of health and financial hardships, including stress, ill health, lost property, lost valuables, and lost work hours needed to handle home repairs. Flooding has also been shown to create air quality problems, such as toxic mold, and has been linked to respiratory issues, especially for children and the elderly.

The city of Chicago relies on outdated rainfall data to plan for its infrastructure. In the face of global climate change, the City will need to adopt new standards to ground its infrastructure planning. The last update to the City of Chicago Stormwater regulations was in 2016. Since then, “Bulletin 75” – a model of anticipated rainfall created by the Illinois State Water Survey – was published, providing the needed data to update those standards.

New regulations incorporating Bulletin 75 are circulating within DWM. These regulations require public and private development to use climate-adjusted rainfall data in engineering stormwater management facilities.

Recommendation

The DWM Commissioner should sign existing recommendations from the Department of Buildings and staff into regulation. DWM should also commit to a modernization of the Stormwater Management Ordinance in line with other building and development codes to adapt to climate change.

What it will take

The City needs to engage the DWM Commissioner and staff to understand the status of recommendations, including the cause of delays. The City needs to request a timeline for action. If not initially successful, this may require engagement with the Mayor’s Office and pressure from outside advocacy groups.

Why the time is right

Recommendations with limited controversy are circulating within DWM now. The DWM Commissioner has sole responsibility for approving updates. Recommended changes were reviewed and sent to DWM for approval. At this time, the only action left to be taken is for the Commissioner to sign. This should be a frictionless step for the Commissioner and the Mayor to show action on climate change. It does not require counsel review or approval.

Action Timeline

100 days

- Mayor to direct DWM Commissioner to authorize updates to Stormwater Management Ordinance (SMO) based on Bulletin 75
- Issue an executive order to DWM to study and produce a report, examining the inequitable impacts of urban flooding across Chicago and looking at the unique challenges faced by different Chicago communities and the specific solutions needed to address these problems in each community.
- Direct DWM to devote significant resources and intention to robust, authentic community engagement in the development of the study. This will mean funding and engaging frontline environmental justice organizations, who have devoted time and energy in understanding and addressing the problems of urban flooding in their communities. It should also mandate necessary coordination with the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago (MWRD). Finally, part of this effort should include movement toward greater transparency and more effective communication about local sewer model data.

1st year

- Initiate modernization review process for the SMO.
- Work with community-based organizations and environmental justice organizations to socialize the findings of the report and seek community feedback and input on the solutions proposed.

1st term

- Issue modernized stormwater management regulations that integrate with the City's Climate Action Plan, Sustainable Development Goals, and We Will Chicago.
- Pursue policy and allocate appropriate resources to solutions identified through the study that will reduce resident harms associated with urban flooding.

About MPC

Metropolitan Planning Council (MPC) is an independent, nonprofit organization that partners with communities, businesses, and government to advance policy and drive systemic change toward a more racially equitable and just Chicago region. MPC is committed to shaping a Chicago region where every community is valued, every person has a voice, and every neighborhood thrives.

Our Vision

Since 1934, MPC has been at the forefront of positive change – addressing some of the most significant challenges that have confronted our city, counties, and state. In 2022, MPC launched a new strategic plan that both leverages our traditional strengths and establishes a strong vision for the future. We’ve chartered a new path for our work that will transform policies and practices to advance racial and economic justice in our communities, infrastructure, and public systems.

Our Approach

MPC’s vision is grounded in three overarching pillars: **Thriving Communities, Equitable Infrastructure** and **Just Public Systems**. MPC is working to ensure that the Chicago region includes:

Thriving Communities: Where all communities have the resources needed to thrive, including accessible and affordable housing, healthy and resilient neighborhoods, and community centered planning and engagement.

Equitable Infrastructure: Where public and private capital investments adopt inclusive development standards and support sustainable infrastructure for all communities.

Just Public Systems: Where the public sector has the tools and internal capacity needed to transform inequitable systems and make government more transparent and fairer for all.

Our Commitment

MPC remains committed to equitable engagement and outcomes in our region’s planning.

Our long history of success at tackling some of the toughest regional planning and development challenges has been driven by collaborations and coalitions with communities, businesses, and government to get to the heart of difficult issues. MPC is a catalyst for change, advancing policies and practices that make us stronger and more equitable. We support regional planning through a strong work model that utilizes research, policy, advocacy, and technical assistance to improve the lives of all residents in the Chicago region.