

Taking Action Around the Garfield Green Line

What does “success” look like? These vision statements reflect some of the community’s desires:

Housing

Kimberly and Allen, parents of Bethany, Al, and Amaris, have rented for years in and around Washington Park. As their kids have grown, so have their space needs. The new Parade of Homes program enabled their family to buy a home of their own in the neighborhood. The homeownership and financial literacy guides, as well as the resources at the new Housing Resource Center, prepared them to become first-time homeowners, renovate their home to energy efficiency standards, and contribute to community reinvestment. Bethany will attend Malcolm X College in the fall. The new student apartment complex near the Garfield Green Line stop will enable her to commute from Washington Park and stay close to her family.



Transportation

Getting off the train, Marcus arrives just in time for the popular Community Bike Ride through neighborhood streets, ending at Boxville. The group starts out down the path on Garfield before turning down the well-lit streets. Marcus’s parents used to worry about his safety coming home, but with so many people out, the area feels much safer. His little sister, Melanie, is skating with her classmates a block away, rolling over a heart traced in the new sidewalks. Melanie checks the digital board that tells her the arrival of the next bus. With two minutes remaining, Melanie tells Marcus that Grandma is arriving with groceries and will need help getting home. Like clockwork, the bus arrives on schedule and the three make their way down the tree-lined sidewalks to the senior housing building.



Vacancy

Loretta, Geoffrey, and Sandra walk down the block, sharing ideas of what they would like to see in Washington Park. “It’s great to see that pop-up restaurant do so well in that vacant storefront,” Loretta says. “They’re thinking about leasing their own space now.” Geoffrey says, “It would be great to fill the last three lots on my block with more homes. My parents would love to move into the neighborhood to be close to their grandkids.” Sandra adds, “I remember when most of this block was vacant. The local co-op housing has really helped people grow their sense of community, and starter houses have helped families build wealth.”



As they pass each of the new community bulletin boards, they post fliers promoting the opening of the Raber House site, opened and run by a local community group.

Action Agenda

Focusing on prioritized recommendations from past plans, the Resident Advocacy Council and the Elevated Chicago Green Line South CommunityTable should take the lead on the following actions:



Get started

- Ask residents to identify where the Chicago Department of Transportation (CDOT) should address speeding, which intersections feel the least safe to walk across, and where bike lanes can be used to slow traffic.
- Reach out to the Active Transportation Alliance for help advocating for better bus service, including digital arrival boards, the return of the X55 bus, and potentially dedicated bus lanes to connect to Midway Airport.
- Work with the 3rd and 20th ward alderpeople to get input on housing needs and develop goals for a Housing Resource Center in Washington Park.
- Identify local artists who could create installations on vacant lots.
- Schedule a meeting with KLEO Art Residences to learn from their process and identify opportunities for additional mixed-income or affordable residential developments that support veterans, women, families, and students.
- Identify past, current, and potential historic preservation projects to plan for adaptive reuse, restoration, and rehab.
- Work with staff at the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP) to create a vacancy database that builds off the Washington Park parcel inventory of vacant structures and CMAP's existing files. Highlight city-owned vacant lots.
- Coordinate with local organizations like Emerald South and Sweetwater Foundation to support their work implementing small-scale improvements like Terra Firma and [Re] Construction House.



Up next

- Work with Equiticity and Urban Juncture to socialize biking by holding bike-related activities and events to get more people comfortable riding bikes.
- Use the vacancy database and work with the Chicago Department of Planning and Development to identify parcels that could serve as sites for “pop-up” art displays or other vacant lot activations.
- Develop a snow removal map of the neighborhood, prioritizing transit locations and senior housing. Work with the alderpeople’s offices and CDOT to strategize how to run and fund a plow program.
- Schedule a meeting with the Preservation of Affordable Housing to learn more about their operations, discuss the possibility of establishing a local office in Washington Park, and review funding needs.
- Schedule a meeting with the Department of Housing to discuss a community housing fund and supportive housing plan. Bring a list of goals and/or objectives based on local needs.
- Schedule a meeting with The Preservation Compact to discuss an affordable rental strategy. Bring a list of goals and/or objectives based on local needs.
- Share a list of resources that connect Washington Park residents with opportunities to acquire undeveloped and vacant properties from the city, and provide clear instructions for follow-through.
- Determine goals and objectives and schedule meetings with alderpeople, local property owners, realtors, and builders to discuss a Parade of Homes program to get developers to build on discounted city-owned lots.
- Host a developer panel with local, small-scale developers to discuss the local market, area needs, and feasibility of past development ideas, and align them with funding sources.

Planning ahead

- Review the structure of Woodlawn’s Housing Resource Center and identify needs specific to Washington Park. Establish a fundraising committee.
- Work with the alderpeople to host a Parade of Homes in Washington Park to encourage new housing built on vacant lots.
- Continue to alert alderpeople of roadway safety concerns, so that menu funds can be used to make improvements.
- Use the Housing Resource Center to build protections for long-time residents, including homeownership, property tax assistance, and building repair assistance.



For more information on the Garfield Green Line South Action Plan, including the full document and forthcoming economic development recommendations, visit cmap.is/garfield-green-line.

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