AUSTIN
FORWARD. TOGETHER.
The Steering Committee for the Austin Quality-of-Life Plan was the governing body of the planning process. Steering Committee members mobilized their networks to participate in three community summits, co-led working groups, and oversaw the planning process.

Annette Wilkerson  
1300 N. Long Block Club  
Cassandra Norman  
South Austin Neighborhood Association  
Crystal Bell  
Ella Flagg Young Elementary  
Deborah Williams  
Habilitative Systems Inc.  
Maretta Brown-Miller  
Chicago Park District, Friendship Baptist Church

Mildred Wiley  
Austin Community Action Council, Institute for Nonviolence  
Natasha Smith-Walker  
Project Exploration  
Bradly Johnson  
BUILD, Inc.  
James Bowers  
Local Civil Rights Attorney and Business Owner  
Ruth Kimble  
Austin Childcare Providers’ Network  
Terry Redmond  
South Austin Neighborhood Association  
Sharon Hartshorn  
South Austin Neighborhood Association, Friendship Baptist Church  
Vanessa Stokes  
600 N. Lockwood Block Club  
Tom Drebenstedt  
Galewood Economic Development Committee  
Athena Williams  
West Cook Homeownership Center  
Allen Van Note  
Austin Community Action Council, Greater Austin Development Association  
Crystal Dyer  
Gone Again Travel  
Dollie Sherman  
Austin Coming Together, 600 N. Lorel Block Club  
Marvin Austin  
Bethel New Life  
Stephanie Bell  
HOPE Community Church  
Danielle Dixon  
Westside Health Authority  
Kenneth ‘Butch’ Campbell (decd.)  
Peacemakers Coalition  
Nate Washington (decd.)  
Peacemakers Coalition

Implementation Leadership

Community Narrative
Co-Chair  
Briana Shields, Briana Janeé Arts  
Co-Chair  
Kenneth Varner, Healthy Schools Campaign

Economic Development
Co-Chair  
Jerrod Williams, Community Resident  
Co-Chair  
Thomas Gary, Community Resident

Education
Co-Chair  
Natasha Smith-Walker, Project Exploration  
Co-Chair  
Crystal Bell, Ella Flagg Young Elementary  
Co-Chair  
Charles Anderson, Michele Clark High School

Housing
Co-Chair  
Athena Williams, West Cook Homeownership Center  
Co-Chair  
Allison McGowan, Community Resident

Public Safety
Co-Chair  
Bradly Johnson, BUILD, Inc.  
Co-Chair  
Marilyn Pitchford, Institute for Nonviolence

Youth Empowerment
Chair  
Carmen Scott, BUILD, Inc.  
Civic Engagement
Chair  
Deborah Williams, Habilitative Systems Inc.
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<td>Focal Project:</td>
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Cover photo: Residents form a prayer circle at the beginning of a February 2017 block clean-up organized by West Side resident and activist Marseil Jackson.
Austin is ready to make great strides. We are a community that has seen good times and hard times, and the legacy of both has prepared us for this new chapter, our first Quality-of-Life Plan.

This plan sets out a comprehensive strategy to restore Austin and to create something new, building on Austin’s many assets and cultivating new expertise and investment. To reach our goals, we are creating deeper relationships and working together in a coordinated way like never before.

**Austin is built for success.**

To understand Austin and what it has to offer, it is important to know that it is the largest community area in Chicago, with the second largest population—nearly 100,000 residents. From its earliest years in the late 1800s through the 1950s, Austin was developed piece by piece. Today, we are one community that contains many neighborhoods—North Austin, South Austin, Galewood, the Island, and even smaller neighborhoods within these areas—each unique but interconnected.

Austin’s history stands on our streets and serves our community to this day. Hundreds of blocks of well-maintained housing include Queen Anne mansions and brick bungalows, homes that are Chicago landmarks and three-flats that have housed generations of residents. Columbus Park is one of a few parks in the country designated as a National Historical Landmark in its entirety, and Austin Town Hall Park and Cultural Center offers classes, camps and more.

The prime location that attracted Austin’s first developers remains one of our greatest assets. On Chicago’s western edge, our community is an “urban suburb” connected to downtown via major avenues, the ‘L’ and the Eisenhower Expressway and abutting Oak Park, Cicero, Elmwood Park and Berwyn. Our main streets have a history of serving the West Side: Madison Street as a hub of social life and local entertainment, for example, and Chicago Avenue as a commercial strip. Central Avenue is truly central, connecting all the parts of Austin, from North Avenue down south of the expressway.
The industrial land on our north, south and eastern borders offers jobs and open space, and the commercial corridors and parks built decades ago give Austin the infrastructure that supports a healthy, vibrant community.

Disinvestment has taken a toll.

The years after WWII brought disinvestment and decline to Austin, as our community experienced the demographic and economic changes that affected neighborhoods across Chicago’s West Side and many urban communities across the country. Factories shut down and their blue-collar jobs disappeared, and when middle-class white residents left for the suburbs, they took their consumer dollars and closed their businesses. As Austin's population went from majority white to majority African American in the 1970s, services and attention by the City of Chicago receded.

Over the last few decades, Austin has continued to face setbacks. The local YMCA and several grocery stores in the community left, and in the last few years the Chicago Public Schools shut down four of our public schools. The housing bubble and resulting recession hit our community hard, and many workers lost their jobs and homes went into foreclosure. During all this time, Austin has not attracted the public and private investment that builds a strong neighborhood.

Source: 2016 American Community Survey five-year estimates
**Household Income 2016**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NUMBER OF HOUSEHOLDS: AUSTIN</th>
<th>PERCENT OF HOUSEHOLDS: AUSTIN</th>
<th>PERCENT OF HOUSEHOLDS: CHICAGO</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less than $25,000</td>
<td>13,062</td>
<td>27.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$25,000 to $49,999</td>
<td>8,848</td>
<td>21.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$50,000 to $74,999</td>
<td>4,561</td>
<td>15.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$75,000 to $99,999</td>
<td>2,583</td>
<td>10.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$100,000 to $149,999</td>
<td>2,362</td>
<td>12.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$150,000 and over</td>
<td>963</td>
<td>11.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: 2016 American Community Survey five-year estimates

**Race and Ethnicity 2016**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NUMBER OF HOUSEHOLDS: AUSTIN</th>
<th>PERCENT OF HOUSEHOLDS: AUSTIN</th>
<th>PERCENT OF HOUSEHOLDS: CHICAGO</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>79,668</td>
<td>30.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latino or Hispanic</td>
<td>12,270</td>
<td>29.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>4,407</td>
<td>32.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>694</td>
<td>1.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>475</td>
<td>6.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: 2016 American Community Survey five-year estimates

With this disinvestment have come the social ills that follow. Crime rates in Austin have risen to unacceptable levels, and even when progress has been made, the perception remains that we live and work in an exceptionally dangerous community. Unemployment in 2016 in Austin was 18 percent—nearly triple the rate across Chicago—and 28.6 percent of households in Austin live below the poverty line. Since 2000, Austin has lost nearly 20,000 people, or 17 percent of the population, while the city as a whole lost about six percent.

Despite these changes, our people have remained Austin’s greatest asset. Thousands of residents have stayed in the community, invested in their homes, their blocks, and their neighborhood, helping the population to stay relatively steady since 2010. Neighbors started small groups to help out local kids or clean up empty lots. With 37 percent of our residents age 25 and under, Austin’s next generation is coming of age and ready for change.
A tipping point for a new Austin.

Things are changing in Austin. By guiding these changes and harnessing the energy, passion and hope that has been growing locally, we will improve the quality of life in Austin and begin a transformation of our community.

Although improvements are occurring, they are just glimmers of the blinding change that the future of Austin needs. The City of Chicago has invested in major restoration projects to Austin Town Hall and Columbus Park. Social service and advocacy organizations—including a dozen that have opened new sites in Austin over the last few years—are connected and working in concert like never before. Westside Health Authority established a Special Service Area and acquired the former Emmet School site for redevelopment in 2017, and this year Rock of Salvation Church, Catalyst Schools and Circle Urban Ministries broke ground for a new performing arts center.

While many factories remain closed, advanced manufacturing is stirring in the city, and more and more employers are looking for workers who are trained for this new era. The local housing market is beginning to rebound—a danger for affordability if left unchecked, but also an indication that private investors can see the plentiful possibilities available in Austin.
As urban trends and the inherent advantages of our community attract more and more residents, the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning predicts that the population density in Austin is going to jump over the next thirty years. However, their projection is no guarantee and does not indicate if the new residents will be connected to our neighborhoods or complete newcomers. With this Quality-of-Life Plan, we are answering that question. We are building a new Austin, by our community and for our community.

### Total Population in Austin

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>117,527</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>99,586</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>98,321</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>98,162</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>97,997</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>97,711</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>97,463</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>97,611</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Austin is moving forward together.

We will unite the places and people that define our community and shape our identity. Just as Central Avenue connects Austin’s different neighborhoods and assets, we will connect with our neighbors. And just as we will invest in recognizing and improving what Central Avenue offers our community, we will invest in programs, relationships and strategies that improve all of Austin.

Our passion and commitment are high, and new collaborations, connections and communications among residents and local organizations are creating momentum that is changing and improving our neighborhoods. We’re ready because we know that Austin’s not going to change unless we change it.

Working together, we will bring in the resources and expertise necessary to make Austin a better place to live and work. For too long, Austin has had too little support from outside the community. We will find the partners we need to reach the goals in this plan—the public, private and philanthropic organizations that can invest in Austin in ways that make our community and our institutions stronger.

Austin is becoming a powerful community of civically engaged residents, responsive and accountable institutions, and highly collaborative private, public, nonprofit and faith-based leaders.

Out of that power we will create:

• Support for our youth and a high-quality cradle-to-career education system
• Economic revitalization for and by Austin
• Safe neighborhoods for all ages
• A revitalized community spirit built on our cultural and recreational assets
• A vibrant real estate market that supports homeowners and affordable housing

This plan is community driven and comprehensive in scope, with strategies and projects across seven different important local issues. We recognize that these efforts are linked. Education is economic development. Homeownership impacts public safety. A voice for youth is part of our community narrative. Programs and ideas across the issues work in concert.

In our vision, this Quality-of-Life Plan will be the catalyst for Austin. The work we do in this plan is the spark for a renaissance that goes even beyond all we outline in these pages. We are moving forward. Together.
A symbol of a united Austin: Central Avenue Corridor

Central Avenue represents a unifying and supportive spine through Austin. It connects the neighborhoods and districts that together make up our community, from Galewood Crossing in the north through shopping near Midway Park and Austin's historic downtown, past Columbus Park and on to The Island in the south. Some appear on official city maps and some do not, but all are important to us.

When discussing Austin's main thoroughfares, many people think of our east-west corridors: Madison and Lake streets, Chicago and North avenues, the Eisenhower Expressway. These have become paths that often help people move through Austin on their way to Oak Park or the Loop, instead of to our community. Local leaders are working to revitalize Austin's east-west corridors and renew them as vibrant commercial districts, and this plan includes such projects as well.

We also propose that Central Avenue can complement these efforts by becoming Austin's Main Street, connecting some of our community's strongest assets. A healthy Central Avenue Corridor consistently branded from the north to the south will serve as a unifying presence, both supporting and illustrating a thriving and united Austin.
COMMUNITY NARRATIVE GOAL:

We will revitalize the image and spirit of Austin by promoting assets such as our historic housing, creating a healthy community and building a more robust environment for local arts and culture.

On our blocks, we see neighbors talking together and youth heading off for school. When we drive through Austin, we see beautiful homes, green parks and bountiful community gardens. We know that Austin has its troubles, too. But our story is much more than what we hear in the media. It is important for us to recognize what is great about Austin and what we can become and to reflect that reality to the wider world.

We can and will build on what Austin has—its history, its energy, its people—and make our community a model for what a Chicago community can be. Austin will be a place where everyone can thrive and enjoy all that our city has to offer.
OUR MEASURES OF SUCCESS:

1. Increase the ratio of positive to negative stories about Austin
2. Retain or increase the number of families with school-age youth
3. Increase life expectancy in Austin zip codes

3 to 1: Ratio of negative stories about Austin to positive stories in 2017

Each acre of park space in Austin serves 2.5X the residents as compared to the rest of the city.

48% These grocers tend to be concentrated in the northern section of Austin

52% These grocers do not sell fresh produce

Source: Fresh Moves audit of 25 independent grocers, 2011
Key local factors

The many good things in our community and the commitment of our residents are powerful stories that are largely untold.

Austin has a rich history and culture. Our heritage includes architectural history, like the beautiful terra cotta on the Laramie State Bank Building, and national landmarks like Austin Town Hall, the Austin Historic District and Frank Lloyd Wright’s Walser house. Today, our community is full of positive stories. The P.O.W.E.R. 5K race has brought out nearly a thousand runners, and the Good Neighbor Campaign meets monthly to build community cohesion and connections.

Yet, by one measurement, there were three negative stories about Austin for every positive one in the media and social media from January to September 2017. Local news outlets, such as The Austin Voice, Austin Weekly News and Austintalks.org, provide positive stories about schools, community events and other community groups. But these voices are often drowned out by news about local violence or other troubles affecting the city’s west side.

Arts and culture are part of our community, but we need more resources to help them flourish.

In Austin, we know that artistic and cultural activities bring us together and make our community a nicer place to live. Programs and organizations in Austin include the Summer of Opportunity parade/festival, Catalyst Circle Rock’s Sistema Ravinia Orchestra, and the Annual Blues Fest.

Austin also has many places to host events and galleries, from the rooms in our four libraries, underutilized spaces in our local schools and auditoriums in the Center for the Arts and Austin Town Hall, to the open storefronts perfect for pop-up shops. Renting space or accessing programs can be cost prohibitive for residents or organizations that want to expand, however. And many residents are not always aware or connected to arts and culture spaces and/or programs.
Austin can become known as a vibrant, healthy community—from good food to open space.

We have an opportunity to help our residents live longer, healthier lives and in the process change the narrative of what our neighborhood offers and what it’s like to live in Austin. The current local environment does not foster healthy living, despite community organizations that are dedicated to making Austin greener, such as the Austin Green Team and community gardeners.

Furthermore, Austin has few places to find healthy food options. Nearly three-quarters of all stores that sell food and beverages in Austin are corner stores, many of which sell liquor but not fresh fruits and vegetables. And while Austin has many parks, they can discourage outdoor activities: they are not well maintained, can feel unsafe and have too few amenities like bike lanes, beautiful landscaping or athletic fields. These are important factors in a sobering statistic: life expectancy in Austin ranks 9th lowest among Chicago’s 77 community areas, more than six years lower than the city average and 13 years lower than Chicago’s Loop, just 7 miles away.
STRATEGY 1
Invest in local arts and cultural spaces

We will expand existing programs and build new institutions in Austin that support creative, artistic and cultural endeavors of all types. Austin is home to a number of historic buildings that can house a dedicated arts center, and we will explore these opportunities to find the best mix of local arts and cultural centers that can serve the entire community.

To reach these goals, Austin will establish a public/private partnership that supports and expands existing funding for arts and culture. We will activate our school spaces to provide options for arts programming, cultural activities and arts fairs for students and the wider community.
STRATEGY 2
Increase the number of authentic images and stories portraying the Austin community

Austin is a community that has so much to offer, and it is important for our residents to see and understand that full story and for the rest of Chicagoland to know it as well. We will work to bridge the gap between residents’ experiences and how they are reflected by media outlets. One vehicle will be a new social media campaign in Austin to promote and discuss our community. Led by local youth and in conjunction with the Youth Empowerment Task Force, this online campaign will provide images, stories and conversations that reflect the many interesting and important facets of life in Austin.

STRATEGY 3
Create environments that foster health and wellness in the community

Austin will have cleaner parks, with improved facilities, and residents will have access to healthy activities in our parks and vacant lots. We will build our sense of community and get to know our neighbors with outdoor options, including maintaining our robust set of community gardens and creating new gardens that enliven our blocks. Residents will have more choices for how they eat—from grocery stores to local restaurants to schools—thanks to a campaign and institutional partnerships to add nutritious, delicious options.

We will also create new programs to provide services to residents who would benefit from mental health and behavioral health support. As also noted in our Education section, we will establish a network of trauma-informed programs, teachers and staff in our schools, a resource that helps prevent trauma before it occurs and provides knowledgeable, healing support for those who have experienced traumatic experiences. We will also lead a campaign for a ballot initiative for the Expanded Mental Health Services Program, which will establish a new mental health center in and for our community.
## COMMUNITY NARRATIVE

### PROJECT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategy 1: Invest in local arts and cultural spaces</th>
<th>LEAD</th>
<th>PARTNERS AND POTENTIAL RESOURCES</th>
<th>TIMEFRAME</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1.1</strong> Create community arts and cultural centers</td>
<td><strong>Lead:</strong> Lasondra Kern, Community Organizer; Kiana Beasley, Community Resident and Organizer</td>
<td>Austin Town Hall and Cultural Center, Catalyst Circle Rock, Chicago Children’s Choir</td>
<td><strong>Mid</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>1.2</strong> Build a public/private partnership to support and expand existing funding for arts</td>
<td></td>
<td>Chicago Austin Youth Travel Adventures, Ingenuity Inc.</td>
<td><strong>Mid</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>1.3</strong> Utilize school spaces for arts events</td>
<td></td>
<td>Austin College and Career Academy, Catalyst Circle Rock, AMFM, Rootwork, Christ the King College Prep, St. Angela School</td>
<td><strong>Short</strong></td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategy 2: Increase the number of authentic images and stories portraying the Austin community</th>
<th>LEAD</th>
<th>PARTNERS AND POTENTIAL RESOURCES</th>
<th>TIMEFRAME</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>2.1</strong> Bridge the gap between residents’ experiences and how they are reflected by media outlets</td>
<td><strong>Lead:</strong> Suzanne McBride, Austin Talks; Michael Romain, Austin Weekly News</td>
<td>The Austin Voice Newspapers, Christ the King, BUILD Inc., Austin Talks, Austin Weekly News</td>
<td><strong>Mid</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2.2</strong> Create a youth-led social media campaign to promote and discuss Austin</td>
<td></td>
<td>Austin Coming Together, The Voice, BUILD, Westside Health Authority (WHA), By the Hand Club, Prevention Partnership</td>
<td><strong>Short</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2.3</strong> Create materials that brand and market Austin and all it offers</td>
<td></td>
<td>ACT, Chicago Architecture Center, DCASE, Austin Chamber of Commerce, Choose Chicago</td>
<td><strong>Short</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategy 3: Create environments that foster health and wellness in the community</th>
<th>LEAD</th>
<th>PARTNERS AND POTENTIAL RESOURCES</th>
<th>TIMEFRAME</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>3.1</strong> Improve our parks and vacant lots and use the sites for healthy activities</td>
<td><strong>Lead:</strong> Cindy Schneider, Spaces-n-Places</td>
<td>Chicago Park District, Park Advisory Councils, Block Clubs, Catholic Charities, South Austin Neighborhood Association (SANA), Central Austin Neighborhood Association</td>
<td><strong>Mid</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>3.2</strong> Promote healthier food choices across Austin</td>
<td></td>
<td>Health Schools Chicago, Catholic Charities, PCC Wellness, Chicago Market, CLOCC, Oak Park River Forest Food Pantry, Austin Community Food Co-op, Greater Chicago Food Depository, West Side United/Rush</td>
<td><strong>Mid</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>3.3</strong> Establish a proactive, healing network of trauma-informed programs</td>
<td></td>
<td>Catholic Charities, BUILD, Chicago Public Schools Network 3, Chicago Teachers Union, Resilience, Restorative Justice Hubs</td>
<td><strong>Mid</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>3.4</strong> Build a sense of community through activities such as creating and maintaining community gardens</td>
<td></td>
<td>SANA, PCC Wellness, Austin Green Team, BUILD, St. Angela, Block Clubs, Central Austin Neighborhood Association, West Side United/Rush</td>
<td><strong>Short</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>3.5</strong> Create an Expanded Mental Health Services Program in Austin</td>
<td></td>
<td>BUILD, Catholic Charities, St. Anthony Hospital, PCC, Habilitative Systems Inc, Youth Outreach Services, WHA, Loretto Hospital</td>
<td><strong>Long</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**NOTE:** Short-term: one year  
Mid-term: two to three years  
Long-term: three to five years
Intergenerational leadership is a hallmark of Austin’s strength and our inspiration as we change the narrative about who we are as a community.
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT GOAL:

We will create economic revitalization in Austin and by Austin. We will support new and existing local businesses, entrepreneurs, and the workforce; improve our commercial corridors; and attract new investment to build a stronger, more dynamic local economy.

Austin has the infrastructure and opportunities to make our community a place with good jobs, busy stores and low unemployment. To reach that goal, we will need to change Austin’s trajectory. We need more training and job opportunities for our residents, better support for more local businesses, and improved coordination among the programs that already exist.

We have a vision of Austin with bustling commercial corridors that have a mix of local stores, restaurants and national retailers; of residents working in well paying careers and shopping in their community; and as the hub of the next wave of manufacturing and distribution. We know this vision can become our reality, making Austin a better place to live for our residents.
$159.5 million: Annual amount spent outside of Austin by local residents on retail and eating out

$14 million: Annual amount spent in Austin from people outside the community at beer, wine and liquor stores

55 percent of Austin residents over age 16 are not in the labor force

32 percent of jobs in Austin pay less than $15,000 a year, and 75 percent pay less than $40,000.

The median household income is $31,634.

OUR MEASURES OF SUCCESS:

1. Increase the number of strong blocks of occupied businesses with a clear cultural identity
2. Improve walkability score in Austin
3. Increase opportunities for paid training and apprenticeships at local businesses
4. Decrease the supply/demand gap in Austin’s spending power
5. Attract new anchor commercial operations and increase diversity of overall commercial mix in Austin
Austin has the location, infrastructure and resources to thrive economically.

Austin is well positioned for economic success with its connections to surrounding Chicago communities, downtown, and nearby suburbs by major commercial corridors, public transit, and the Eisenhower expressway. Although many nearby industrial sites are now closed, the land is a resource to attract new manufacturing, distribution and warehouse facilities, as well as other companies that can benefit from Austin's available land, central location and a newly trained workforce.

Austin is prepared to help local businesses compete. The two-block Retail Thrive Zone on Chicago Avenue is one of eight such zones sponsored by the City of Chicago that offer business owners benefits such as grants and a reduction in property taxes. Chicago Avenue is also covered by a Special Service Area (SSA), and we have nine local Tax Increment Financing (TIF) districts, covering areas from Galewood/Armitage in the north to the Roosevelt-Cicero Industrial Corridor to the south. These are important resources that can be expanded or become more robust to support our economy.
Austin’s local job market lags behind other communities in Chicago.

The long history of disinvestment in our community and the decline of American industry has led to the loss of thousands of jobs in Austin. We have 851 businesses operating in Austin, a ratio of one business for every 115 residents. That’s less than half of the economic activity in a neighborhood like Lakeview, which has fewer residents. To residents of Austin, it also feels like very few businesses are owned by people who would keep their wealth in Austin.

There are 17,114 jobs located in Austin—more than 25 percent are in healthcare and social services, 13 percent in retail trade, and 13 percent in manufacturing. Only 4 percent of our residents who are employed work in Austin.

Many local residents are looking for work or are in low-paying positions.

In 2016 the unemployment rate across Chicago was 7.3 percent, while in Austin it stood at 18 percent. To reach just the citywide average, another 4,300 residents looking for work in Austin would need to find a job—and that does not include another 8,500 adult residents who are not working or looking for work. For those who are employed, our residents can have difficulty finding a job in a well-paying career. Almost three-fourths of residents who are employed are in jobs that offer low or moderate pay—the most common job sectors for Austin residents are retail, healthcare and social assistance.

Austin Traffic Count 2014

CTA TRAIN WEEKDAY RIDERSHIP
- 1,100 - 1,500
- 1,500 - 2,500
- more than 2,500

CTA BUS WEEKDAY RIDERSHIP
- 2,500 - 6,000
- 6,000 - 10,000
- 10,001 - 16,000
- more than 16,000

DAILY VEHICLE TRAFFIC
- 20,000 - 29,999
- 30,000 - 39,999
- 40,000 - 46,000

There are opportunities for growth and demand for more local stores

The drop in population in Austin over the last few decades has decreased demand for stores on our major thoroughfares, which in some stretches feel more like a highway for people driving through than a walkable shopping district. Yet there are financial resources in our community: local residents spend more than $775 million in retail and dining annually. Many residents feel there are too few grocery stores and other local businesses in Austin—and prices are often higher than elsewhere—so they leave our community to shop. Almost $160 million of our local dollars are spent outside of Austin.

Because of Austin’s location, local retail and services can bring in money from outside the community as well. The Illinois Medical District, Oak Park and other nearby residential communities, plus Northwest, Armitage and Roosevelt/Cicero industrial corridors on the edges of our community hold the potential to help support everything from sit-down restaurants to clothing stores to entertainment options. Nearly 24,000 vehicles go through the intersection at Lake Street and Austin Boulevard every day, and more than 26,000 drive through Central Avenue and Chicago Avenue.

Unmet Retail Demand

- **Automobile Dealers**: $96M
- **Groceries**: $10M
- **Restaurants**: $9M
- **Health and Personal Care**: $21M
- **Building Supply and Garden**: $21M

Source: ESRI Retail Marketplace Profile, 2017
Strategies

**STRATEGY 1**
Improving transportation infrastructure to and through Austin

Austin is a major gateway to Chicago and we recognize the importance and potential of our major streets and transit options for residents and businesses. We will establish a process to catalogue current resources, entities and people infrastructure projects from road repair to transit stations to streetscapes. We will engage an expert in urban infrastructure as a community consultant so Austin is prepared when city, state and local plans that will impact our community are proposed or possible. We are ready to advocate for improvements that meet our needs.

To bring more shoppers and new businesses to our main streets, we will invest in beautification and signage for Austin’s commercial corridors, improve walkability, and work with local politicians to help create an environment for success. Our initial focus on Chicago Avenue with a unique cultural identity will provide a vision for how to transform similar commercial centers elsewhere in Austin.

**STRATEGY 2**
Train and develop local workers and entrepreneurs

Austin has important programs to help residents, particularly youth, become better prepared for well-paying jobs and careers, such as workforce development and entrepreneurship trainings.

To improve their effectiveness, attract funding, and generate more participation, we must first connect these existing programs. We will bring workforce development partners to the table and enter an agreement for cooperation and mutual support. We will remove barriers to accessing the training necessary to obtain well paying employment by improving opportunities for paid training and employment during training. We will prioritize training in high demand sectors such as advanced manufacturing, healthcare and building trades.

With our help, Austin will become home to a new Manufacturing Training Center to serve the West Side.

We also prioritize entrepreneurship development programs, which can help our residents create their own wealth through inspiration, diligence and hard work. Austin will become a place where someone with vision and hard work can build their own enterprise.

**STRATEGY 3**
Build the local economy and small businesses to improve community wealth and self-sufficiency

Austin can be a shopping hub for its residents and neighbors. We will explore bringing in new local restaurants, grocery stores, and housing. We will also develop materials to educate investors and lenders about opportunities in Austin and conduct outreach to commercial enterprises, including national and regional commercial anchors.

For our existing stores, we will expand Austin’s Retail Thrive zone to bring its benefits to more owners while working with Austin’s aldermen to ensure local stores and restaurants are clean and safe. We will improve the signs and storefronts in the community and provide incentives for development and local hiring.

A “Shop Local” initiative will help keep more of our own spending power in the Austin economy, driving more business to our small business owners.

In addition to retail and service industries, we will work with private and public partners to use our industrial corridors as sites for a new generation of advanced manufacturing growing in the U.S. We will build facilities and resources to support these opportunities, making Austin a prime location for their growth in Chicago.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategy 1: Improve transportation infrastructure to and through Austin</th>
<th>Lead: Yemisi Dinkins, Westside Health Authority (WHA)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.1 Catalogue current infrastructure projects in Austin and all potential funding sources</td>
<td>CMAP, Great Cities Institute</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2 Bring on an infrastructure consultant</td>
<td>CMAP, Great Cities Institute</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.3 Invest in beautification and signage for Austin’s commercial corridors</td>
<td>City of Chicago, Austin Chamber of Commerce</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategy 2: Train and develop local workers and entrepreneurs</th>
<th>Lead: Joshua Brooks, Manufacturing Renaissance; Emily Peters, Jane Addams Resource Corporation (JARC); Heather Sattler, Consultant</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2.1 Survey and connect existing workforce and entrepreneurship programs</td>
<td>St. Joseph Services, ACT, Catholic Charities, Cara, OAI, Inc., KRA Westside American Jobs Center, JARC, St. Leonard’s Ministries, Greater West Town Community Development Project, I.C. Stars, Inspiration Corporation, Housing Forward, Bethel New Life, United Way of Metropolitan Chicago</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2 Expand and support local resources like boot camps and apprenticeships in high demand economic sectors such as advanced manufacturing, healthcare, and building and trades</td>
<td>St. Joseph, Rush University, The Cara Program, Access United, WHA, Chicago Women in Trades, Illinois State Treasurer, Chicago Federation of Labor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3 Build a new Manufacturing Training Center in Austin</td>
<td>Manufacturing Renaissance, JARC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.4 Invest in entrepreneurship development programs</td>
<td>St. Joseph, Bethel, WHA, The Hatchery, World Business Chicago (WBC)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategy 3: Build the local economy and small businesses to improve community wealth and self-sufficiency</th>
<th>Lead: Marvin Austin, Bethel New Life</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3.1 Incorporate the co-op model for local restaurants, grocery store and housing</td>
<td>ACT, Austin Food Co-op, Catholic Charities, Democracy at Work, IFF, CCLF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2 Attract major commercial anchors</td>
<td>Austin Village 72 SSA, 28th Ward Alderman’s office, 29th Ward Alderman’s office, 37th Ward Alderman’s office, North Ave District, IFF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3 Learn from other newly successful economically thriving neighborhoods</td>
<td>LISC Chicago, CMAP, MPC, Civic Consulting Alliance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4 Work with aldermen to improve local businesses</td>
<td>28th Ward Alderman’s office, 29th Ward Alderman’s office, 37th Ward Alderman’s office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.5 Expand Austin’s Retail Thrive zone</td>
<td>Chicago Department of Planning and Development, Austin African American Business Networking Association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.6 Promote community engagement and outreach around a “Shop Local” initiative</td>
<td>Austin Village 72 SSA, Austin African American Business Networking Association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.7 Educate investors and lenders on the commercial opportunities in Austin</td>
<td>Bethel New Life, IFF, WBC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.8 Build facilities and resources to support the new generation of advanced manufacturing</td>
<td>JARC, Manufacturing Renaissance, City Colleges of Chicago, Bethel New Life</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NOTE: Short-term: one year  Mid-term: two to three years  Long-term: three to five years
FOCAL PROJECT: CHICAGO AVENUE CORRIDOR

Chicago Avenue is one of Austin’s primary thoroughfares that can once again become a main shopping district in our community and a draw for residents and visitors. Streetscape enhancements and other public and private investments can develop a vibrant, sustainable and safe business corridor.

This zone from Central to Laramie is a part of the Soul City Corridor, establishing an African-American cultural identity along Chicago Avenue. The Quality-of-Life Plan seeks to support this effort, supporting local and black-owned businesses to thrive in the corridor.

Two design charrettes during the process to create this plan identified initial physical opportunities to meet the community’s goals for the corridor, outlining potential ideas and options for the former Laramie State Bank and other locations rather than final recommendations. Determining specific improvements to the streetscape and sites along Chicago Avenue will continue to bring together residents, local businesses, elected officials and outside experts.

Improving Chicago Avenue is an example of how strategies from across this Quality-of-Life Plan work together to create comprehensive change.

As roadway lighting is enhanced, for example, new light poles can include high-quality metal identity signage of local landmarks like Austin’s Town Hall and fabric banners commissioned from local artists. Curb bump-outs can create mini plazas for outdoor seating for local restaurants or areas for positive loitering, helping to reclaim safe public space. This section of Chicago Avenue can be a demonstration to better market the available commercial space and pursue healthy food businesses or potential spaces for community arts and cultural organizations.

SPECIFIC PLAN ACTIONS THAT WILL GUIDE REDEVELOPMENT ALONG CHICAGO AVENUE ARE:

Community Narrative
- 1.1 Create community arts and cultural centers
- 1.2 Build a public/private partnership to support and expand existing funding for arts
- 3.1 Improve our parks and vacant lots and use the sites for healthy activities
- 3.2 Promote healthier food choices across Austin

Economic Development
- 1.3 Invest in beautification and signage for Austin’s commercial corridors
- 3.4 Work with aldermen to improve local businesses
- 3.5 Expand Austin’s Retail Thrive zone
- 3.6 Promote community engagement and outreach around a “Shop Local” initiative
- 3.7 Educate investors and lenders on the commercial opportunities in Austin

Housing
- 4.1 Preserve and invest in vacant buildings

Public Safety
- 3.1 Create art/design showcase opportunities
- 3.2 Launch beautification projects that create pride in the neighborhood
- 3.3 Promote community engagement opportunities for local institutions
- 4.1 Organize events that reclaim parks and other public spaces
DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES:
CHICAGO AVENUE
FORMER LARAMIE STATE BANK SITE

Mixed-Use Building
(Existing Parking Lot)
3-Story (28,000 g.s.f)
1st Floor Retail: 6,000 s.f.
2nd-3rd Floor: 24 units
750 s.f./unit
Parking: 23 spaces

Repurposed Garage Building
8,800 s.f.
Restaurant with Outdoor Dining Plaza

Makers / Artisan Space:
1-Story 15,000 s.f.
Shared Outdoor Space with Rehabbed Bank
Parking: 19 spaces

Rehab Former Laramie State Bank

STREETScape ENHANCEMENTS

Raised Landscaped Planter Curbs
Repair Sidewalk Condition
New Roadway Lighting/Banners
(Existing Overhead Lighting Wires to be Removed)

Repair Sidewalk Condition
New Roadway Lighting/Banners
(Existing Overhead Lighting Wires to be Removed)

CDOT PLANNED IMPROVEMENTS

Parking Restriping
Pedestrian Refuge Island
Existing Pedestrian Refuge Island
Bump-out at Side Streets
Opportunities for Landscaping, Public Art and Seating Areas
EDUCATION GOAL:

Our local educational system and partners will provide the services, opportunities and support to help all our students stay on track, enrich their education and serve their needs, from early childhood through high school to job and career readiness.

Every child in Austin deserves an educational pathway to success, from Pre K through elementary, high school and beyond. Austin has a wealth of educators, both formal and informal, as well as parent and community leaders who ensure that the resources and supports are in place. We need to design a comprehensive approach that assists teachers, counselors, parents, administrators, and community leaders in supporting the academic, social and emotional health at school and out of school. Schools also need to attract and retain students that live next door. With a comprehensive and systemic approach, we can transform education in Austin.
Neighborhood schools lost about a quarter of their students from 2013 to 2017. There are 8,687 open slots across Austin’s elementary and high schools, which equates to a loss of $41.5 million from local school budgets.

OUR MEASURES OF SUCCESS:

1. Increase level of enrollment within Austin community schools from early childhood to high school
2. Increase college and workforce preparation course options for elementary and high school students
3. Increase number of high-quality enrichment and supportive options for at-risk youth
4. Increase the number of Austin schools offering wrap-around services
5. Increase parent access to social services and resources at local schools

20% of third graders in Austin elementary schools met or exceeded reading scores.

ACROSS THE DISTRICT: 32%
AUSTIN THIRD GRADERS: 20% OVER 10% LOWER
Austin youth are excited to meet the challenges of a changing world but need the resources to compete effectively as they build their future.

Key local factors

Austin neighborhood schools are assets for students and their families, but additional resources need to be identified to better support academic success.

Many elementary schools in Austin are rated well by Chicago Public Schools, including Ellington and DePriest Elementary Schools, which offer Pre-International Baccalaureate Programs. Often residents aren’t aware of these opportunities. More than a third of the seats at elementary schools with School Quality Rating Policy (SQRP) ratings of 1/1+ in Austin are unfilled. At the same time, many students in our local schools are not reaching national averages on standardized tests. At most local elementary schools, for example, less than 20 percent of students attain grade level scores in reading and math in the Northwestern Evaluation Association Measures of Academic Progress (NWEA MAP) tests.

Our students are graduating from high school inadequately prepared for the next stage of their lives.

Austin has three local high schools within our community. Both of our neighborhood high schools, Douglass Academy and Austin Career and College Academy, are severely under-enrolled with a combined utilization rate of ten percent. Michele Clark, Austin’s magnet high school, offers a quality educational experience but must compete with other high schools throughout the city for Austin residents.
Enrollment at Austin’s neighborhood schools has fallen sharply.

When CPS closed an unprecedented 50 neighborhood schools starting in 2013, Austin lost four of our schools. Those closings were just one factor in what has been a notable drop in the enrollment in our neighborhood schools, along with fewer school-age residents, new alternative options such as charter schools, and an increasing number of students enrolling in schools outside our community.

Nearly every CPS elementary and high school in Austin had lower enrollment in 2017 compared to 2007—some with around half as many students. Across Austin, CPS schools lost about a quarter of their students in just four years, from 2013 to 2017. With CPS funding formulas, schools lose revenue when they lose students, and the budgets for our schools are $41.5 million lower because of the nearly 9,000 open seats across neighborhood elementary and high schools. Austin’s neighborhood schools are assets that the community does not want to see closed or continue to lose students.

Poverty and other hurdles are issues for many young people in our community.

Many of our students arrive at school each day with challenges that impede their academic success. These issues have an impact on student academic performance, youth development and opportunities. At 11 of our 15 local elementary schools, mobility rates are higher, in some cases much higher, than the citywide average. Some students also feel unsafe getting to school or afterschool programs due to gang boundaries or blocks with a reputation for violence.

Existing programs in Austin help students succeed.

In addition to dedicated teachers in classrooms across the community, Austin has programs and volunteers working to help students learn. Austin neighborhood schools are assets for students and their families. Entities like Parent University and the Community Action Council engage family and community in efforts to improve education and schools. They have helped engage parents in learning with their students, as well as made important plans for schools, like the decision to consolidate three schools into the Austin College and Career Academy.

Austin also has the highest number of early learning providers of any community in Chicago, including school and community-based providers. Over two-thirds have space available to enroll more children.

### Existing programs in Austin help students succeed.

- Parent University
- Community Action Council
- Early learning providers

By engaging parents and the community, these programs support student success and family involvement.
Strategies

**STRATEGY 1**
**Improve and expand access to quality early-childhood programs**
Enrollment in quality early-education programs can be a critical boost in a young person’s life, helping them be socially and intellectually ready for kindergarten and school beyond. Austin has many early-education programs where investment in accreditation and best practices in youth development can help these providers be a major asset in Austin. We will also increase the services for children with special needs and work with CPS to align curriculum for seamless transition to kindergarten.

We will increase training and educational opportunities for the staff at early-childhood providers, making both the teachers more highly qualified and making the field more desirable and effective as a workplace. In the end, a better prepared and motivated staff means a better experience for the children.

**STRATEGY 2**
**Increase parents’ involvement in their children’s education**
Parents are a critical support for students’ success, but not every parent has the confidence or academic skillset to help their child academically. We will help ensure that parents understand what is expected of their children in school and how they can be tutors at home. Outreach and clear communications will ensure that parents understand what services and supports for their children are available at the school and in the community. In this way, parents are important advocates for their children and resources for the local schools. We will empower parents to be leaders in their children’s schools and join and support their Local School Council.

**STRATEGY 3**
**Increase student access to wrap-around services**
We will inventory and assess the services and agencies that currently work in our local schools and fill in gaps by connecting them to comprehensive programs in the community, from athletics to social services to tutoring. In some cases, that can mean becoming a community school—a partnership between schools and community resources to provide students and their families with extracurricular academic opportunities, health and social services, and youth and family development programs.

**STRATEGY 4**
**Increase student enrollment in Austin neighborhood schools**
Our schools need a variety of academic options and new programs to best serve our youth and to once again become desired destinations for students and their families in today’s school choice environment. We will ensure that our schools provide a visible ladder to success through quality vocational and academic programs that meet the needs of students with different academic interests. We will communicate this opportunity for success through the marketing and outreach of our neighborhood schools to current and potential students.
The development of our children begins with early education opportunities. Our community is committed to building a strong foundation with well-prepared teachers and the resources they need to give our youngest residents a strong start in school.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategy 1: Improve and expand access to quality early-childhood programs</th>
<th>Lead: Ruth Kimble, Austin Childcare Providers’ Network</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.1 Make early education a more desirable and effective field by increasing training and salaries for staff</td>
<td>Illinois Department of Human Services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2 Improve the early learning environment in Austin by helping existing providers become accredited and more deeply prepared for child development</td>
<td>New Moms, VOCEL, A House in Austin, Truman College</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.3 Increase special needs services for children in early childhood programs</td>
<td>PCC Wellness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.4 Partner with CPS to align curriculum for seamless transition to kindergarten</td>
<td>Chicago Public Schools (CPS)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategy 2: Increase parents’ involvement in their children’s education</th>
<th>Lead: Pamela Price, CPS Parent University</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2.1 Teach academic benchmarks to parents</td>
<td>Kids First Chicago, Community Organizing and Family Issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2 Provide convenient programs at schools that help parents tutor and support their children academically</td>
<td>Catholic Charities, St. Joseph Services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3 Improve communication to parents about existing services and agencies based in Austin</td>
<td>CPS Parent University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.4 Train parents to be leaders at local schools and join and support the local LSCs</td>
<td>Westside Health Authority (WHA), POWER PAC Westside Branch, Kids First</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategy 3: Increase student access to wrap-around services</th>
<th>Lead: Michelle Burgess, CPS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3.1 Implement the Community School Model in schools in Austin</td>
<td>WHA, St. Joseph Services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2 Establish a proactive, healing network of trauma-informed programs, teachers and staff in our schools</td>
<td>Catholic Charities, BUILD Inc, CPS Network 3, Chicago Teachers Union (CTU), Resilience, Restorative Justice Hubs, Mt. Sinai, UIC Jane Addams College of Social Work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3 Implement restorative practices schoolwide for staff and students</td>
<td>CTU, Alternatives, Inc, Community Justice for Youth Institute</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Strategy 4: Increase student enrollment in Austin neighborhood schools

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project</th>
<th>Lead</th>
<th>Partners and Potential Resources</th>
<th>Timeframe</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>Sean Schindl, Kids First Chicago</td>
<td>ACT, CPS</td>
<td>Mid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>CPS</td>
<td>Mid</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>CPS</td>
<td>Mid</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>Austin CAC, CPS</td>
<td>Mid</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**NOTE:**
- **Short-term:** one year
- **Mid-term:** two to three years
- **Long-term:** three to five years
FOCAL PROJECTS: EMMET SCHOOL

Madison and Central is one of the most important intersections of Austin. The architecture and history of Madison Street make the site a gateway to Chicago, and Central Avenue is a spine that connects the many smaller neighborhoods that compose Austin.

At the heart of the location is a unique opportunity: the redevelopment of Emmet School. One of the community’s key institutions, Westside Health Authority, has negotiated site control for future use of the building. Urban design can improve Madison and Central in other ways too, connecting key sites such as Catalyst School’s new performing arts center and the Frank Lloyd Wright home on Central, for example. Development can include infill housing on nearby vacant lots, a space for events such as a local farmers’ market, and a more pedestrian-oriented streetscape.

Westside Health Authority and other Quality-of-Life Plan leaders agree that it will be important to listen to direct community voice as formal redevelopment plans are crafted because collaboration among many Austin stakeholders will be required for its long-term sustainability. Two primary themes emerged from charrettes during the planning process: the need to provide comprehensive community services and the opportunity to use the arts to engage and empower the community.

SPECIFIC PLAN ACTIONS THAT WILL GUIDE REDEVELOPMENT OF THE EMMET SCHOOL SITE ARE:

Community Narrative
• 2.2 Expand and support local resources like boot camps and apprenticeships in high demand economic sectors such as advanced manufacturing, healthcare, and building and trades
• 2.3 Build a new Manufacturing Training Center in Austin
• 2.4 Invest in entrepreneurship development programs
• 3.1 Incorporate the co-op model for local restaurants, grocery stores and housing
• 3.2 Attract major commercial anchors
• 3.8 Build facilities and resources to support the new generation of advanced manufacturing

Youth Empowerment
• 1.2 Create physical places where youth can gather and community-based organizations can offer services
• 2.3 Establish programs to build personal and professional career development and entrepreneurial training
Planners and architects helped scope some options, and confirmed that redevelopment at this intersection can achieve many Quality-of-Life Plan strategies. The site could be an opportunity for a new Manufacturing Training Center, and other workforce boot camps and apprenticeship programs. Commercial use from retail to light manufacturing is also a possibility, whether through traditional or co-op models proposed in the plan. Beyond economics, youth gathering and arts spaces could also play a part.

**IDEAS**

**MADISON AND CENTRAL: NEARBY ASSETS**

- New Catalyst Auditorium
- Grocery Store
- Walser House
- Frank Lloyd Wright Home

**STREETSCAPE ENHANCEMENTS**

- Neighborhood Gateway/Seating Opportunity
- Repair Roadway Surfacing
- Raised Landscaped Median
- Raised Landscaped Planter Curbs
- Repair Sidewalk Condition
- Infill Street Trees
- New Roadway Lighting/Banners
  (Existing Overhead Lighting Wires to be Removed)
HOUSING GOAL:

We will create a stabilized housing market in Austin, with support for local homeowners and a wide array of affordable housing options.

We are at an important moment in Austin’s history. For decades, much of our outstanding housing stock has been at risk from a lack of private investment, few dedicated public resources and most recently, the shock of the housing market collapse. However, the natural benefits of living in Austin, coupled with the rising real estate market, are changing that story. The question is: who will benefit?

We will ensure that those who have lived, worked and have a historic connection to Austin are able to participate in its rebirth. We will promote local homeownership and protect affordable rental housing. We will be sure that the necessary resources are available so that as Austin ascends, we all benefit from its success.
OUR MEASURES OF SUCCESS:

1. Decrease number of vacant properties
2. Increase the percentage of Austin residents who are homeowners
3. Increase number of community based developers willing to provide affordable housing
4. Decrease number of foreclosures filed and decrease property tax sales
5. Increase number of homebuyers occupying formerly vacant properties

In Austin, **16% of all rental units are rented using a housing choice voucher**, compared to 7% across Cook County.

We have a shortfall of **more than 8,700 affordable homes**.
Austin has strong assets to build on for its housing market.

Austin has a diverse mix of quality housing stock. You find mostly single family homes in Galewood, two-flats and brick bungalows in North Austin, and handsome courtyard apartment buildings and two- and four-flats in South Austin. Our residents have many transit options—many just a short walk away—and a mix of busy main avenues and quiet side streets. For people who want to buy a home, we have organizations that run existing programs such as homebuyer workshops, financial literacy programs and credit building programs to lend a hand.

Most local residents are paying more than they can afford for housing.

Finding affordable housing within the household budget is an issue for most families in Austin. Two-thirds of renter households and nearly half of owner-occupied homes are paying more than 30 percent of income on housing, which is considered cost-burdened. In some sections of central Austin, more than one in five rental units are rented with a HUD housing choice voucher.

Austin is still impacted by the collapse of the housing market bubble. From 2005 to 2017, owners of 36 percent of Austin residential properties filed for foreclosure. The citywide average was 20.5 percent. For these families, recovering from this setback is often still a financial issue.
Too many abandoned and vacant buildings dot our streets.
Population decline in Austin since 2000 and the foreclosure crisis have left a number of homes in parts of Austin vacant or sold at drastically lower prices at a short sale. Both routes depress nearby property values. Boarded-up buildings impact the environment of the entire block, often discouraging investment and encouraging crime. In some sections of our community, more than a quarter of the homes are vacant.

The residential real estate market in Austin is heating up, putting pressure on long-time residents.
As the city’s housing market heats up, Austin is facing higher than average increases in sales prices, according to research from the Institute for Housing Studies at DePaul University. In parts of Austin where housing is more expensive, the demand for our attractive housing stock is pushing up prices, and in the most distressed areas, prices are rising, too. In our moderate-cost neighborhoods, however, lower-income renters, families, and seniors are vulnerable to displacement from raising rents and property values, as investors seeking profit are driving up costs at a rapid rate.

Vulnerable Austin Submarkets with Rising Sale Values 2016

Source: IHS calculations of data from Cook County recorder of deeds via property insight, Record Information Services, Cook County Assessor
Strategies

STRATEGY 1
Assist in the retention, purchase and transfer of homeownership

Homeownership is the most direct path to creating and building personal wealth. Our challenge is to create access, overcome barriers and grow the opportunities for our residents.

Residents should have the first opportunity to purchase, allowing those who work and live in our community to become local homeowners and to see their household wealth grow as our community grows. A new community land trust will buy vacant or foreclosed properties in Austin and keep them in community control to remain affordable for current residents. We will provide our residents with resources to become homeowners and we will expand pre- and post-purchase homebuyer education programs so the buyers are prepared for the responsibilities of being an owner. We will promote and expand the local use of the federal Section 8 Homeownership Voucher Program, which allows voucher holders to use those funds for homeownership.

We will expand programs that help residents meet the financial challenges and reduce the cost of homeownership. We will provide support to transfer homeownership within families, so the loss of a parent or relative does not trigger the loss of a family’s home as well.

STRATEGY 2
Allocate resources in Austin to support renters, including subsidies and affordable housing

Affordable rental housing is a critical resource in Austin. We will expand what is available and protect what exists. We will be sure that renters are living in safe and well-maintained homes by ensuring there is accessible information about who owns property and by increasing communication between tenants and landlords/management.

Austin will create new TIFs to build housing in the community. Austin can become a leading advocate for a local policy agenda to address barriers to accessing affordable housing for low-income families, helping to bring resources and fair rules to our community.

STRATEGY 3
Develop a variety of affordable housing choices to serve a wide array of residents

Affordable housing can and should include resources that are specifically targeted for those who need a stepping stone to a better life. We will develop housing for residents age 55 and over, so they can stay in the community when their working years are over. And we will build new quality transitional housing for populations facing specific challenges, such as re-entering citizens and women experiencing domestic abuse. This type of supportive housing is an important resource for vulnerable individuals and families to get back on their feet until they are ready for permanent housing.

STRATEGY 4
Decrease the vacancy rate of buildings in our community

We will protect our housing stock—which is one of the premier assets of Austin—and improve our community by preserving and investing in vacant buildings so they return to residential homes. Homebuyer assistance programs at local banks and nonprofit organizations can include down-payment assistance, credit building and special loan rates. One important local effort is the Home Preservation Program that distributes small grants to property owners in Austin to help get their buildings ready for tenants. By expanding programs such as these and increasing local awareness of the support that is available, we can both reopen vacant homes and provide support for residents who are investing in our community.
### Strategy 1: Increase the amount of owner-occupied housing stock in Austin by local stakeholders

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lead</th>
<th>Partners and Potential Resources</th>
<th>Timeframe</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Shirley Fields, Hunters Realty</td>
<td>City of Chicago, Financial Institutions, realtors, elected officials</td>
<td>Mid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>1.1</strong> Introduce community “first look” opportunities for a path to homeownership</td>
<td>West Cook Homeownership Center (WCHC), Neighborhood Housing Services, Illinois Housing Development Authority, Because I Care</td>
<td>Mid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>1.2</strong> Expand programs that help homeowners retain their homes</td>
<td>Legal Assistance Foundation, Center for Disability and Elder Law, Cook County Recorder of Deeds</td>
<td>Mid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>1.3</strong> Educate and support the transfer of homeownership within families</td>
<td>West Cook Homeownership Center</td>
<td>Short</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>1.4</strong> Provide residents with pre- and post-purchase homebuyer education programs</td>
<td>ACT, WCHC</td>
<td>Long</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>1.5</strong> Create a community land-trust that can buy properties and them keep affordable</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

### Strategy 2: Allocate resources in Austin to support renters

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lead</th>
<th>Partners and Potential Resources</th>
<th>Timeframe</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dominique Davis, Mercy Housing Lakefront</td>
<td>ACT, WCHC</td>
<td>Short</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2.1</strong> Make property owner information easily accessible</td>
<td>Chicago Department of Planning and Development</td>
<td>Mid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2.2</strong> Use Tax Increment Financing funds for housing investment in the community</td>
<td>Chicago Housing Authority</td>
<td>Mid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2.3</strong> Promote and expand local use of the Section 8 Homeownership Voucher Program</td>
<td>CIC, WCHC, GADA</td>
<td>Short</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2.4</strong> Increase tenant-landlord/management communication and education</td>
<td>ACT, Westside NAACP, Heartland Alliance, elected officials, WCHC</td>
<td>Long</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2.5</strong> Advocate for a local policy agenda that reduces barriers to creating and sustaining affordable housing</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Strategy 3: Develop a variety of affordable housing choices to serve a wide array of residents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lead</th>
<th>Partners and Potential Resources</th>
<th>Timeframe</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rosie Dawson, Westside Health Authority</td>
<td>Mercy Housing Lakefront, POAH, Mather LifeWays</td>
<td>Long</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>3.1</strong> Develop housing for residents age 55 and over</td>
<td>Mercy Housing Lakefront, Heartland Alliance, Westside Health Authority</td>
<td>Mid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>3.2</strong> Build new quality transitional housing for populations facing specific challenges</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

### Strategy 4: Decrease the vacancy rate of buildings in our community

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lead</th>
<th>Partners and Potential Resources</th>
<th>Timeframe</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Athena Williams, West Cook Homeownership Center</td>
<td>Westside Health Authority, Rebuilding Together, Pioneer Advisors</td>
<td>Mid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>4.1</strong> Preserve and invest in vacant properties</td>
<td>Financial Institutions</td>
<td>Mid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>4.2</strong> Expand home-buyer assistance programs at local banks and nonprofit organizations</td>
<td>Freedman Seating, Loretto Hospital</td>
<td>Short</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>4.3</strong> Increase capacity and awareness of the Home Preservation Program</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**NOTE:** Short-term: one year  Mid-term: two to three years  Long-term: three to five years
PUBLIC SAFETY GOAL:

We will collaborate and create programs that increase a sense of safety, community and quality of life to build a healthy and resilient neighborhood.

Neighborhood public safety is a complex issue that is connected to poverty, lack of opportunity, trust in law enforcement, systemic disenfranchisement of minority populations and more. Our approach to making Austin a safer place to live for all residents is rooted in addressing the causes of crime and violence. In this way, many of the strategies throughout this plan are public safety programs—such as building a stronger local economy, supporting local youth, creating a sense of cohesion across our neighborhoods and improving educational options.

At the same time, we also will expand existing projects and strategies that help make Austin a safer place to live by focusing our efforts on prevention of crime and violence. We will stand together and show that Austin is a place of peace through multi-level approaches in order to break the cycle of violence.
12th:
Rank of Austin among Chicago’s 77 community areas for violent crimes per capita

$550 million:
Amount spent on incarceration of Austin residents from 2005 – 2009, the highest of any Chicago community

OUR MEASURES OF SUCCESS:
1. Decrease number of non-violent arrests among Austin youth
2. Create cross-training in nonviolence and trauma-informed practices across all community institutions
3. Increase resident participation in programs addressing Austin’s sense of safety
4. Decrease number of shooting incidents

Local programs like the Good Neighbor Campaign, Austin Response Team and Light the Night bring together neighbors to strengthen social cohesion

The City of Chicago spent 5x more on policing in 2018 than on mental health and youth services.
Too many residents feel unsafe in Austin.
Crime and the perception of crime are a severe impediment to a community’s well-being. Too many of our families have felt the heartache from gang activity and gun violence on our streets, and too many residents are worried that they or their children may be a crime victim in their own neighborhood.

It is also true, however, that the news about Austin can be misleading in some ways. Most crime in the community is on “hot spot” blocks or even in specific buildings, which must be the focus of efforts to make the community safer. And, because of its large size, Austin’s crime totals can make headlines, but the same statistics look slightly different when taken into perspective of the total local population. Of Chicago’s 77 community areas, for example, Austin came in 12th for violent crimes per capita in 2017, with 2,096 per 100,000 residents.

Local organizations are working on safety, but the efforts are not strategically coordinated.
Austin has many organizations and programs dedicated to increasing public safety, including youth groups, religious organizations, social service agencies, and events to promote peace. We also have many concerned residents that care for and work for a safer Austin. Dozens of block clubs in the community bring together neighbors, although most participants are middle-age and older residents. All these efforts can be connected and drawn into larger, collaborative campaigns and programs for peace.

Conditions in the community can impede public safety.
Vacant and derelict buildings and empty lots can deter pedestrians, serve as sites for illegal activity and hinder economic growth, as can our streets and parks that have issues such as poor lighting or overgrown trees and bushes. Austin has many positive programs, but connecting youth and other potential participants can be a challenge.
The Good Neighbor Campaign exemplifies the best of what we do as a community to connect residents with local organizations, creating and implementing a vision for their block.

The prison pipeline for African-American men in our society has left its impact on our community, which has lost many to incarceration. Austin has more than two dozen “million dollar blocks,” where the cost of locking up residents who lived on that block is more than $1,000,000—many arrested for non-violent drug charges. When these citizens return to our community, they must rebuild their lives with the added burden of a criminal justice record. At the same time, the City of Chicago spent $1.5 billion on policing in 2018, compared to $331 million on mental health and youth services.
Strategies

STRATEGY 1
Create high-quality prevention strategies to build a safer Austin
We can change conditions in Austin to help deter crime and violence. To help mitigate conflict and address injustice and trauma, we will add more restorative justice activities in the community, such as peace circles. In conjunction with the Youth Empowerment committee, we will launch efforts in our local schools to create new peer support groups for youth that foster emotional and social connections. We will build a greater sense of community and connect neighbors with a community website, events and door-to-door outreach.

Distrust and distance between many residents and police officers is an impediment to safety and effective law enforcement. We will establish new trainings for local police in issues such as community engagement, cultural humility and mental health, and programs that engage the community and police officers to repair the divide.

STRATEGY 2
Promote high-quality intervention strategies to help at-risk residents and those impacted by the criminal justice system
We will expand or create programs that support families and individuals who are in danger of becoming enmeshed in the criminal justice system or who are already dealing with its consequences. As noted in the Youth Empowerment section, we will build and promote a trauma-informed network in the community that offers services for mental health, domestic violence, housing support and returning citizens. We will create a restorative justice community court in Austin that can provide an alternative to incarceration. Outreach intervention programs have proven to be effective in breaking the cycle of violence on our streets, and we will support the expansion of these programs in Austin and document their impact.

STRATEGY 3
Increase displays, activities and events of culture and peace in the community
Austin can increase public safety by amplifying the voices and increasing the visibility of the majority of us who want to live in a peaceful community. Residents, especially our youth, will be able to participate in art/design showcase opportunities in our community, including welcoming signage and beautification projects that create pride in the neighborhood. These programs will bring people together and show the sense of community we have created. We will catalogue and promote our existing community engagement programs for youth at schools, churches and other local institutions to help our young people through positive, interesting opportunities.

STRATEGY 4
Establish more safe spaces in the community for youth
Our young people need more places in Austin where they can learn, have fun and simply be kids. We will reclaim and restore public spaces in our neighborhoods to become peaceful places that are clearly valued by the community and welcoming to youth. Young people will have more choices of interesting, engaging activities outside of school, such as coding clubs or sports camps. We will organize events that reclaim parks and other public spaces for peaceful and fun uses by youth and other residents.
**Strategy 1:** Create high-quality prevention strategies to build a safer Austin  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lead</th>
<th>Partners and Potential Resources</th>
<th>Timeframe</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1.1</strong> Increase restorative justice activities in the community</td>
<td>BUILD, Inc., ACT, Circles &amp; Ciphers, Lynn Morton</td>
<td>Short</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>1.2</strong> Engage and connect neighbors</td>
<td>Westside Health Authority (WHA), Jehovah Jireh #1 Outreach Ministry, BUILD, Institute for Nonviolence Chicago</td>
<td>Short</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>1.3</strong> Launch peer support groups for youth at local schools</td>
<td>BUILD</td>
<td>Mid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>1.4</strong> Establish new trainings for local police</td>
<td>Institute for Nonviolence Chicago, CPD 15th and 25th Districts</td>
<td>Mid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>1.5</strong> Strengthen community/police engagement</td>
<td>CPD 15th and 25th District CAPS</td>
<td>Mid</td>
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</table>

**Strategy 2:** Promote high-quality intervention strategies to help at-risk residents and those impacted by the criminal justice system  

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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>2.1</strong> Promote access to a trauma-informed network in the community</td>
<td>Catholic Charities, BUILD, Chicago Public Schools Network 3, Chicago Teachers Union, Resilience, Restorative Justice Hubs</td>
<td>Mid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2.2</strong> Create an Austin restorative justice community court</td>
<td>BUILD</td>
<td>Long</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2.3</strong> Expand outreach intervention programs that break the cycle of violence</td>
<td>Institute for Nonviolence Chicago, BUILD, Jehovah Jireh</td>
<td>Short</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Strategy 3:** Increase displays, activities and events of culture and peace in the community  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lead</th>
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<th>Timeframe</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>3.1</strong> Create art/design showcase opportunities</td>
<td>St. Angela School, AMFM, Austin Town Hall and Cultural Center</td>
<td>Short</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>3.2</strong> Launch beautification projects that create pride in the neighborhood</td>
<td>South Austin Neighborhood Association, PCC Wellness, Austin Green Team, St. Angela, Block Clubs, Central Austin Neighborhood Assoc, WHA, Territory</td>
<td>Short</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>3.3</strong> Promote community engagement opportunities for local institutions</td>
<td>WHA, ACT</td>
<td>Short</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Strategy 4:** Establish more safe spaces in the community for youth  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lead</th>
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<th>Timeframe</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>4.1</strong> Organize events that reclaim parks and other public spaces</td>
<td>BUILD, Jehovah Jireh</td>
<td>Short</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>4.2</strong> Engage youth in the planning of opportunities for new spaces</td>
<td>BUILD, St. Joseph Services, Project Exploration</td>
<td>Short</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>4.3</strong> Establish more spaces that are valued by the community and open to all youth</td>
<td>The Peace Corner, Chicago Park District, Chicago Public Library</td>
<td>Mid</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**NOTE:** Short-term: one year  
Mid-term: two to three years  
Long-term: three to five years
YOUTH EMPOWERMENT GOAL:

Austin will have healthier and more engaged youth who are able to reach their full potential.

A new generation is growing up in Austin. We are all responsible for ensuring that they have an environment that protects, educates and inspires them in their development. Throughout Austin, families and caring neighbors on the block, local grassroots groups, social service agencies and other organizations do exactly that.

The children, teens and young adults of Austin are like young people everywhere. They are smart and curious, funny and considerate, resilient and ready to grow up. We will build a more nurturing Austin, with more caring adults, more opportunities and more support, so the next generation begins life with every advantage we can give them.
Austin ranks “very low” on the Child Opportunity Index, a measure of 19 indicators around educational, health/environmental and economic opportunity.

OUR MEASURES OF SUCCESS:

1. Increase youth job and entrepreneurship opportunities and participation
2. Increase intergenerational community engagement programming and participation among Austin youth
3. Increase use of restorative justice practices
4. Strengthen ties between local public schools and the community
5. Youth able to advocate for themselves and identify positive coping mechanisms
6. Increase participation in youth programming

The Community Child Poverty Rate in Austin is 44 percent. Chicago’s rate is 31 percent.

Six in ten young men in our community age 20 to 24 are unemployed and not in school.

35,736 Austin residents are younger than 24.
People under 25 make up the largest percentage of Austin residents. Central to this plan is the commitment to mentoring youth development through educational opportunity, career advancement and community leadership.

**YOUTH EMPOWERMENT**

**Key local factors**

**Austin is a community of youth.**

Austin has more young people than any other community area, and people under the age of 25 make up the largest percentage of Austin residents. More than 35,500 youth live in Austin’s neighborhoods. When viewed in five-year cohorts—under age five, ages five to nine, etc.—our youth population is almost evenly distributed, with 6,500 to 7,700 residents in each cohort. Each of these populations has its own needs and opportunities, from infants to young adults.

**Too many of our youth are growing up in poverty and facing its impact on their lives.**

Many families in Austin struggle to make ends meet, and our community child poverty rate is 44 percent, compared to 31 percent citywide. Poverty often brings a host of other social ills that can harm the development of a child as he or she grows into adulthood. Homelessness, exposure to violence, hunger and other difficult circumstances are traumatic and can have lasting effects on life circumstances. Many young people in the community have become enmeshed in the criminal justice system. The 15th police district made 1,348 juvenile arrests in 2014 – the third highest district in the city.
Too many youth are unaware of development programs and positive activities.

Youth programs are offered throughout Austin, providing recreational opportunities, academic supports, and mentorship for youth. However, many exist at a small scale and are difficult to sustain. Challenges to participation include access within the community, mentorship, coordination between programs and simply lack of awareness.

Many of Austin’s young people have a difficult career path.

Summer job programs are a critical resource in our community, giving young people an opportunity to earn money, learn what kind of work they prefer and build a resume. But it’s much harder for teens and young adults to find a job in the community when the season ends. In particular, many older youth in Austin are being left behind. About 60 percent of young men in our community age 20 to 24 are disconnected, unemployed and not in school.

Source: American Community Survey, 2016 five-year estimates
Strategies

STRATEGY 1
Increase positive social connections, communications and information shared among Austin youth

Youth in our community need more opportunities to connect with and learn from each other. To create a youth-centered plan in Austin, the first step is involving young people in the leadership of the Youth Empowerment Task Force. We will create new spaces in the community dedicated to youth, a mix of places where youth can gather and hang out at locations where community-based organizations can offer services. With the Community Narrative committee, we will work to create a youth-led social media campaign to promote and discuss Austin.

STRATEGY 2
Prepare youth for year-round employment and career opportunities

Young people become prepared for employment and a career through their education but also by having an understanding of what kinds of jobs are available and meeting people in the field. We will build networks of professionals who can be a resource for our young people and establish programs to build personal and professional career development and entrepreneurial training for our young people. We will also invest in our youth themselves as they prepare for work through programs that discuss and foster self-awareness and career-focused thinking, work that will be undertaken in partnership with the Education committee.

STRATEGY 3
Expand supportive programs for local youth’s social, emotional and physical well-being

When an organization or a specific program uses a trauma-informed approach, it realizes the widespread impact of trauma and understands potential paths for recovery. As outlined in the Public Safety section, we will expand access to trauma training for professionals working with our youth in all capacities and expand the network of trauma support service systems for youth and families.

We will create new partnerships and collaborations between schools, community-based organizations, churches and the Chicago Park District to build a more supportive network that leverages the opportunities and connections among existing programs. We will forge new paths for youth interactions with mentors and role models who can speak directly to youth and be a resource outside of the home as they grow into adulthood.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategy 1: Increase positive social connections, communications and information shared among Austin youth</th>
<th>Lead: Sarah Meyer, ACT; Deonna Hart, BUILD, Inc.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.1 Involve young people in the community in the leadership of the committee</td>
<td>WHA, Assata’s Daughters, World Vision</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2 Create physical places where youth can gather and community-based organizations can offer services</td>
<td>Chicago Park District, Westside Health Authority, Christ the King College Prep</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategy 2: Prepare youth for year-round employment and career opportunities</th>
<th>Lead: Jeramie McGill &amp; Victoria Tejeda, St. Joseph Services</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2.1 Expose youth to professionals who they can relate to</td>
<td>Manufacturing Renaissance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2 Increase youth investment in self-awareness and career-focused programs</td>
<td>Chicago Beyond, WHA, Youth Guidance, Academy of Scholastic Achievement, Austin Career and Education Center</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3 Establish programs to build personal and professional career development and entrepreneurial training</td>
<td>WHA, One Summer Chicago, Apple, The Hatchery</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategy 3: Expand supportive programs for local youth’s social, emotional and physical well-being</th>
<th>Lead: Frederica Malone, Remona Sanders &amp; Gina Young, Catholic Charities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3.1 Expand access to trauma training for professionals working with youth</td>
<td>Lurie Children’s Hospital, Illinois Caucus of Adolescent Health, Chicago Public Schools, PCC Wellness, Peace Corner Youth Center, Rape Victim Advocates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2 Expand the trauma support service system for youth and families</td>
<td>Sister Survivor Network</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3 Create more supportive networks for youth programs</td>
<td>Cluster Tutoring, Chicago Department of Public Health (ReCAST), Chicago Beyond, Chicago Department of Family and Support Services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4 Create paths for youth interactions with mentors and role models</td>
<td>Project Exploration, Friends of the Children, College Mentoring Experience, BUILD, WHA</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**NOTE:** Short-term: one year  Mid-term: two to three years  Long-term: three to five years
CIVIC ENGAGEMENT GOAL:

Sustain collaborative community involvement—from community campaigns to engaging elected officials—so we can bring voices and power to the efforts to improve Austin.

The plans and programs detailed throughout this Quality-of-Life Plan will become a reality through the dedication and efforts of community residents, grassroots organizations, faith-based groups, social service agencies, and other local stakeholders working with the support of citywide resources. Primary among that support will be partnerships with our elected officials and government agencies.

Civic engagement in Austin will one day be a civic virtue. Our citizens will be empowered, educated and committed to improving their own community and their city, a force for change beyond the borders of the Austin community.
OUR MEASURES OF SUCCESS:

1. Increase the number of Austin residents attending public schools in Austin
2. Increase voter registration and voter turnout
3. Increase the number of students enrolled in civics courses
4. Increase the number of people attending beat meetings
5. Increase the number of economic opportunities for students

Austin is served by three aldermen, two state representatives, two state senators, a county commissioner and one U.S. Congressman

12 of the 17 schools that serve Austin still had open seats on the Local School Council (LSC) after the 2018 application deadline
Austin residents vote at or below the city average rate, but the percentage varies widely from neighborhood to neighborhood in our community. Voting is the fundamental act of civic engagement, and for Austin, our story is mixed. In the 2015 election for mayor, only 22,859 voters in Austin precincts showed up at the polls, or 35 percent of registered voters. While this is low, it did exceed the city’s turnout rate of 34 percent. In the year for the last presidential election, which always has a larger turnout, 43,880 people voted in Austin, or 65 percent of registered voters. This time, however, we were lower than the city’s turnout rate of 71 percent.

Austin does not have a uniform voting record across our different neighborhoods. In 2015, more than 50 percent of registered residents voted in some precincts in Galewood, for example, while in 20 precincts in south and central Austin less than 30 percent of voters participated. If we want to advocate for improvements throughout Austin, we need to show that voters are paying attention throughout Austin.
Recent state requirements for civics in high school open new opportunities for local civic engagement.

Starting in the 2016-17 school year, local legislation requires high school students in Illinois to take a semester of civics that “focus on government institutions, the discussion of current and controversial issues, service learning, and simulations of the democratic process.” This requirement is an opportunity to help young people in our community begin a lifetime of civic engagement. Local schools, such as Michele Clark Academic Prep Magnet School, have been involved in programs that connect students to a mock City Council meeting. Local legislators have sponsored legislation that requires schools to teach classes on civic engagement, however such courses have yet to be implemented in all high schools.

Austin offers several routes for residents to have a say in and be involved with improving our neighborhood.

Community leadership and civic engagement is not limited to local, state and federal government. For example, Local School Councils (LSCs)—consisting of parents, community members, teachers and school staff—play a vital role in decision-making at the local school level, ensuring a quality education for students. In 2018, however, 12 of the 17 schools that serve Austin had openings on the LSC after the deadline for applications.

Austin residents usually join and have an impact on our community through park advisory councils, block clubs, neighborhood associations like SANA (South Austin Neighborhood Association) and local business associations like the AAABNA (Austin African American Business Networking Association) and Austin Chamber of Commerce.

We also get involved with social justice organizations such as the Chicago West Side NAACP and other faith-based coalitions to cultivate and enhance leadership skills and effectively advocate on behalf of our community.

Our local residents also get involved in national campaigns and humanitarian efforts. Since the 2012 national election, when civic engagement in electoral campaigns peaked, some have stayed actively involved through organizations such as OFA (Organizing For Action) to fight for issues such as healthcare, climate change, common sense gun laws and economic justice. We also donate money to disaster relief through organizations such as World Vision.
CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

Strategies

STRATEGY 1
Empower local voters and elected officials to be a voice for Austin

Voters need to know how to engage and partner with elected officials, while officials in our community should stay engaged with key organizations and the needs and requests of their constituents. We will develop a training for political candidates to engage the community, such as the participatory budgeting process, and provide training and education to create and sustain a pipeline of prepared and engaged voters.

We will increase voter turnout and ensure that our voters are educated about the most important issues facing our community, city and state. Focus groups and door-to-door surveys can help us understand why residents don’t exercise their right to vote. We will recruit more deputy registrars to be trained by the Cook County Clerk Office, provide voters with information on judicial candidates well in time before elections, make voters aware about early voting and absentee voting options.

The new high school civics requirements for Illinois open a window to expand and improve civic education—and civic engagement—in Austin. We will partner with Chicago Public Schools to provide opportunities for students to become civically engaged in local efforts to improve youth outcomes and begin a lifetime of being socially active.

STRATEGY 2
Cultivate local leadership to become more effective advocates for our community

We will develop local leadership throughout our community so that our residents are able and ready to support and strengthen Austin. We will empower, train and prepare parent leaders to advocate on behalf of our community, including serving on and working with Local School Councils to improve the quality of education in our local schools.

To create robust community campaigns to garner support and momentum for this plan’s vision to improve Austin, we will identify and train community organizers throughout our community. One focus will be to build a core of organizers between the ages of 18-35, who can help reach out to Austin’s younger population.
### Strategy 1: Empower local voters and elected officials to be a voice for Austin

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Step</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Lead</th>
<th>Partners and Potential Resources</th>
<th>Timeframe</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>Develop a training for political candidates to engage the community</td>
<td></td>
<td>Chicago Westside NAACP, ACT</td>
<td>Mid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>Educate voters and increase voter turnout</td>
<td></td>
<td>Organizing for Action, Westside Ministers Coalition, Westside NAACP</td>
<td>Short</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>Promote expanded and improved civics classes in Chicago Public Schools</td>
<td></td>
<td>Chicago Westside NAACP</td>
<td>Long</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Strategy 2: Cultivate local leadership to become more effective advocates for our community

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Step</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Lead</th>
<th>Partners and Potential Resources</th>
<th>Timeframe</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>Train parent leaders and Local Schools Councils</td>
<td></td>
<td>Kids First Chicago, POWER PAC Westside Branch</td>
<td>Mid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>Identify and train community organizers between the ages of 18-35</td>
<td></td>
<td>ACT, Westside Health Authority, Chicago Westside NAACP</td>
<td>Mid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>Train community organizers to create community campaigns</td>
<td></td>
<td>ACT, Westside Health Authority, Chicago Westside NAACP</td>
<td>Mid</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**NOTE:**
- **Short-term:** one year
- **Mid-term:** two to three years
- **Long-term:** three to five years
More than 400 people have given their time, ideas and energy to the Austin Quality-of-Life Plan, honing ideas and building deeper relationships.
The Planning Process

This Austin Quality-of-Life Plan is the product of brainstorming and research, conversations and outreach, hard work and growing relationships. The first of its kind in Austin, the process included input from hundreds of residents and discussion among dozens of stakeholders over more than a year to delve deeply into how Austin can best move forward together.

The planning process was led by Austin Coming Together (ACT), which began working in October 2016 with the Chicago office of the Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC) to create a Quality-of-Life Plan for the Austin community. In the first half of 2017, ACT launched an unprecedented effort to bring together and create synergy among local leaders. In April, twenty of these leaders signed on as the plan’s steering committee, dedicated to uphold core values of unity, commitment, transparency, collaboration and action.

On July 29, 2017, more than 200 Austin community elected officials, residents and representatives from local organizations and businesses met at the local By the Hand Club for Kids for a community summit for the plan, centered around a consensus workshop on what actions over the next five years will create a thriving Austin community. From that public conversation, the steering committee founded seven working groups, each comprised of eight to twenty stakeholders who met regularly over nearly a year to address the issue areas outlined in this plan.

The ideas from the working groups were presented to residents and other stakeholders at two more community summits: on December 17, 2017, more than 100 participants heard proposed programs from speakers from each of the working groups and had an opportunity to vote on which actions they wanted to start immediately and which would be transformative in the community. Based on that input, the working groups created a set of finalized strategies and projects that were presented to Austin at a June 5, 2018 community summit. More than 150 community stakeholders attended and provided feedback.

In addition to these meetings, ACT staff and other leaders held numerous one-on-one meetings with local stakeholders and presented at community meetings about the plan and implementation. Consultant Teska Associates worked with the steering committee and other interested stakeholders on the plan’s two focal projects.

All told, more than 400 people have given their time, ideas and energy to the Austin Quality-of-Life Plan, honing ideas and building deeper relationships. We’re ready to take its strategies and use those relationships to make the programs outlined in this document a reality—and to transform our community into a new Austin for us all.
These individuals participated in monthly working group meetings or community summits.
Lead Agency: Austin Coming Together

Austin Coming Together (ACT) was founded in 2010 by a group of 20 community leaders that came together to discuss how to create systemic change in Austin. These leaders envisioned a thriving Austin community whose actions are driven by the core values of unity, commitment, transparency, collaboration, and action.

ACT’s mission is to increase the collective impact of its member organizations on education and economic development outcomes in Austin. ACT functions as the backbone agency for collective impact—guiding a unified vision and strategy for Austin, aligning activities of our members to ensure they are mutually reinforcing, measuring the shared outcomes of our members, and facilitating continuous communication with the broader community.

ACT’s long-term collective strategy is called Thrive 2025. Thrive 2025 outlines four measurable impact goals to achieve by the year 2025. These include increasing access to high quality early learning, creating pathways to living wage careers, improving neighborhood safety, and stabilizing the housing market. ACT and its members will achieve these ambitious goals through three strategic imperatives: 1) enhancing the access, coordination, and quality of human services, 2) creating community-driven plans like this QLP that attract public and private investment and 3) changing public policies that impede the achievement of our goals.

LISC Chicago

With residents and partners, Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC) Chicago forges resilient and inclusive communities of opportunity across America – great places to live, work, visit, do business and raise families.

Embedded in LISC’s founding, and strengthened over the last two decades, we are committed to comprehensive community planning. This planning process is essential to building the local capacity to effectively connect to the right resources to achieve fundamental change and long-lasting results in our communities. In the late 1990s, LISC, with leadership support from the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, created the New Communities Program (NCP), a groundbreaking, bottom-up, comprehensive community planning effort in which LISC supports the development of Quality-of-Life Plans (QLPs) by community leaders and residents in Chicago neighborhoods.

In each neighborhood, a designated lead agency brings together a diverse group of organizations and residents to identify priorities ranging from better education, housing, broader job choices, safer streets, new economic opportunities and stronger personal finances. LISC invests in, coaches and champions each effort from the earliest building of local relationships, through plan creation, implementation and continual evaluation.

As of 2018, 27 QLPs have been created, garnering more than $872M in new investments aligned in support of community visions in neighborhoods across the city.
Data Sources & References

Our Community
- Poverty rate: Chicago Health Atlas
- Population age: US Census/ACS, 2015 five-year estimates
- Population density estimate: CMAP Regional Trends and 2050 Forecast, June 21, 2018 Presentation

Community Narrative
- Park acreage: City of Chicago Data portal, US Census/ACS, 2016 population estimates, Trust for Public Land Park Score
- News stories: Maraki Social
- Fresh produce: Fresh Moves audit, 2011
- Life expectancy: Chicago Health Atlas 2016 data, Westside United 2017 comparison with Loop

Economic Development
- Resident spending: ESRI Retail Market Place Profile
- Alcohol sales: ESRI Retail Market Place Profile
- Labor force participation: US Census/ACS, 2015 five-year estimates
- Household income: US Census/ACS, 2015 five-year estimates
- Business/resident ratio: City of Chicago business license data
- Local employment: US Census, Longitudinal-Employer Household Dynamics Program
- Local buying power: ESRI, 2017
- Traffic count: City of Chicago Data portal

Education
- Student population: Chicago Public Schools, 2017
- Enrollment/budget: New Schools for Chicago; Illinois Policy per pupil spending, 2017-2018
- Reading scores: Chicago Public Schools, 2017 PARCC
- Unfilled seats: New Schools for Chicago, 2017

Housing
- Rental/ownership: US Census/ACS, 2015 five-year estimates
- Affordability gap: Institute for Housing Studies at DePaul University
- Housing choice voucher: US Census/ACS, 2015 five-year estimates
- Foreclosure ratio: Institute for Housing Studies at DePaul University
- Cost burden: US Census/ACS, 2015 five-year estimates

Public Safety
- Incarceration expense: Million Dollar Blocks
- Violent crime: University of Chicago Crime Lab
- Policing, mental health and youth services budgets: Chicago Mayor’s Office

Youth Empowerment
- Child Opportunity: Child Opportunity Index
- Disconnected youth: Great Cities Institute, UIC
- Juvenile arrests: Chicago Youth Justice Data Project

Civic Engagement
- Voting: Chicago Board of Elections Election Results, analyzed by LISC Chicago

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