BUILDING VIBRANT COMMUNITIES
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Building Vibrant Communities

Chicago Policy Research Team
Public Policy Studies, The College
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Acknowledgements

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At the University, we would like to acknowledge the assistance of Kevin Ulrich, Director of the Survey Lab; Jim Leitzel, Director of the Public Policy Studies Program; Lee Price, Program Administrator of the Public Policy Studies Program, and John Boyer, Dean of the College.

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Introduction

The Chicago Policy Research Team
Each year, students in the University of Chicago’s Public Policy Studies Program participate in a two-quarter practicum sequence to gain practical experience in researching complex policy problems, using various research methods, and in collaborating in groups to meet the needs of a client. The practicum, which aims to provide a window for students out of the ivory tower of academia, recognizes the practical implications of policy theory and aims to build quantitative analysis and research skills to effectively analyze policies and programs and their efficacy.

As a part of this sequence, students participate in an ad-hoc think tank called the Chicago Policy Research Team (CPRT). The CPRT has worked with Chicago clients since 2009 to conduct hands-on research and inform evidence-based policy. Last year, the CPRT partnered with DuSable Museum, the Arts and Public Life Initiative, and the Reva David Logan Center for the Arts in order to research ways to revive the art scene in the South Side of Chicago. Other past projects include working with the City of Chicago’s Department of Family and Support Services to determine the possibility of implementing an antipoverty program that addresses the needs of children and their families in areas of concentrated poverty and researching food deserts in the South Side of Chicago.

This year, the CPRT was charged with assisting the Chicago Housing Authority (CHA) to determine what contributes a “vibrant” community in an effort to address the goals outlined in their strategic plan, ‘Plan Forward: Communities that Work.’

Chicago Housing Authority’s Plan Forward
In 2013, the Chicago Housing Authority (CHA) released their strategic plan, “Plan Forward: Communities That Work” to outline their efforts in urban transformation. Plan Forward offers an updated vision of what was originally delineated in the ‘Plan for Transformation’. Using the Plan for Transformation as its foundation, Plan Forward considers the significance of the changing economy and housing market to build its mission and goals. In doing so, it aims to promote innovative policies and strategies that will better the lives of public housing residents and foster dynamic neighborhoods in Chicago. When it is completed, Plan Forward will ensure the decency of housing, expansion of resident support services, and development of “healthy, vibrant communities.”

The CHA’s Plan Forward recognizes the importance of realizing the intent of the Plan for Transformation while adjusting to the more recent challenges the agency has faced. Firstly, Plan Forward identifies that not all the needs the CHA indicated were realized by the Plan for Transformation. Principally, this includes the CHA’s promise to fulfill the housing commitment by developing or revitalizing 25,000 units. At the start of Plan forward, 85% of this goal had been met. At year’s end, the CHA aims to have fulfilled 23,902 total units, or 96% of the overall goal. Investment in the mixed-income housing communities and affordable housing subsidies are key strategies to realizing the 25,000 unit goal. Additionally, Plan Forward affirms the CHA’s vow to promote the transition to home-ownership. The CHA bolsters their commitments with a focus on economic and social development. This includes a more vigorous system to connect individuals with housing opportunities efficiently. Furthermore, Plan Forward highlights the CHA’s
decision to invest in the whole communities which interact with public housing across a variety of key sectors. The goal recognizes the value in recreation, commerce, and education to contribute to the lives in a neighborhood.

Plan Forward presents a robust strategy in order to meet the identified goals. First and foremost, Plan Forward reinforces the CHA’s commitment to forming partnerships across stakeholder groups in order to develop and sustain dynamic neighborhoods. Additionally, the quality of housing is maintained by bolstering security measures, as well as streamlining policies and programs. Finally, residents are supported with a wide range of programs: job training, technological literacy, and childhood education.

Understanding the needs, goals, and strategies of the CHA’s Plan Forward contextualizes the work of the Chicago Policy Research Team. The goals that are established in Plan Forward offer specific guidelines for the future of the CHA. Our report affirms the efforts of the CHA through the recommendations that are informed by our research and Plan Forward.

Building Vibrant Communities

The CHA’s strategic plan, ‘Plan Forward: Communities That Work’ is structured around three overarching goals for the organization. The first of these goals addresses the need to “develop healthy, vibrant communities.” When released in 2013, the CHA promised to deliver a “comprehensive analysis of desired components for the development of vibrant communities” – a feat that proved to be easier said than done. The CHA soon found that it is incredibly difficult to issue a generalized blueprint for community vibrancy. Vibrancy is achieved at the intersection of many elements and neighborhood characteristics. Factors such as safety, parks, and housing design all play key roles in determining the vibrancy of a neighborhood. Thus, when attempting to provide a comprehensive analysis of the necessary elements for the development of vibrant communities, it was important to take a wide range of topics into account.

In the Plan Forward document, the CHA identifies five key categories under which their key strategies and initiatives fall. These include housing, community assets, resident services, reimagined policies, and partnerships. The various sections of our report build upon this initial categorization, in an effort to offer a comprehensive approach to defining community vibrancy. Each section offers key findings and recommendations that can be implemented by CHA. By synthesizing the different recommendations offered in each section, we hope the CHA can continue to work to build healthy, vibrant communities.

Conceptualizing the Practicum

The research objectives of the CPRT are to define ‘vibrancy’ and to develop meaningful, data-driven recommendations. Throughout a twenty week practicum, the CPRT has worked to provide CHA employees, developers, and other stakeholders with “a comprehensive analysis of desired components for the development of vibrant communities.”

At the beginning of the practicum, we split into five working groups; (1) Built Environment (2) Civic Society (3) Services and Amenities (4) Economy and (5) Housing Policy. This division of research enabled the CPRT to focus on certain research topics that could contribute to a vibrant community. Each group began with observational research, including early exploratory site visits to different CHA neighborhoods and participatory research at over 10 CHA/CAC-sponsored meetings, neighborhood meetings (e.g. CAPS) and community events. Additionally, the CPRT
conducted literature reviews and documentary analysis on over 24 topics. We submitted this research via weekly assignments, which gave us the opportunity for feedback and to determine what information was most pertinent.

After this preliminary research, we were able to start our neighborhood asset mapping project. Our methodological approach to asset mapping was shaped by these literature reviews, documentary analyses, and exploratory site visits. After completing an asset mapping profile of these three sites, each group made key findings on the distribution of certain neighborhood assets, services, and resources that contribute to vibrancy around public housing sites. Each group tailored their plans for future research and made initial recommendations based off their key findings.

With the framework of the practicum in place, the CPRT was able to conduct exploratory field research. We completed over 37 key informant interviews, which helped inform our research design. The questions we asked and the topics we discussed emerged from the research framework we had spent about 10 weeks compiling. We split into 18 smaller working groups that focused on more specific topics, with two or three people in each. Then, we began constructing our community survey to determine what “community vibrancy” means to Chicago residents. We chose questions based on the robust research we had compiled and piloted the survey in focus groups. After sorting zip codes by median income, we chose 16 zip codes - 4 in each quartile - where we surveyed a total of 576 residents.

The last five weeks of the field practicum were dedicated to focused research. The CPRT conducted over 40 extended interviews with experts in different areas of interest. After identifying and contacting ideal participants, each student designed two interview guides intended to last about an hour. The results and information from these interviews enabled individuals to both expand on and refine their literature reviews. Lastly, each of the 18 smaller working groups were able to finish any additional research necessary for our final report. As a result of these intensive research methods, the CPRT was able to formulate sensible recommendations for the CHA, outlined in the rest of this report.

**Works Cited**

Built Environment

5  Land Transformation
10  Parks
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Land Transformation

The Chicago Housing Authority’s (CHA) mission to promote community vibrancy can be reflected through an in-depth understanding of the social and spatial significance of vacant land. Through a comprehensive analysis of the role of vacant land, it is possible to reconcile the physical, the aesthetic, and the intangible aspects of a community that contribute to an individual’s relationship to the place they reside. In analyzing the various community elements that can either contribute to or inhibit a neighborhood’s vibrancy, it is important to consider vacant land and the various ways it can be transformed. This section highlights academic research, professional expertise, and the voices of Chicago citizens in the recommendations. Principally, these recommendations reveal the value of thoroughly understanding the needs of a community before the transformation of land. By reviewing pertinent literature, we have uncovered the validity in seeking out public opinion as an instrumental aspect to the land transformation process. Through asset mapping, we have determined the large number of the unused parcels of land in the three community areas relevant to this project—Oakland, Old Town, and Lathrop Homes. This project quantifies the potential for vacant land transformation and provides an important geographic perspective to our research. In conversations with urban planning professionals, we have gained an understanding of the obstacles vacant land transformation may face. Through these various methods, we arrive at a series of substantive key findings and recommendations. Our hope is that these recommendations aid the CHA in the development of vibrant communities through the transformation of vacant land.

Summary of Recommendations

- The CHA should incorporate resident input into land transformation efforts.
- The CHA should implement small-scale transformations for vacant land.
- Recognize dual purposes for vacant land opens up new opportunities for vibrancy.

Key Findings

There exists a large stock of vacant land in neighborhoods with CHA developments. According to data provided by CHA, the agency currently holds approximately 338 acres of vacant land in Chicago. To gain a better understanding of the potential vacant land holds, we designed an asset mapping exercise in three community areas containing CHA developments—Oakland, Old Town, and Lathrop Homes. We mapped over 600 parcels in the three areas and found that the number of vacant land parcels were astonishing. In Oakland alone, there exists 14.5 vacant land parcels for every 1,000 people. Close to 40% of the vacant lots we encountered received dumping, which is consistent with the general understanding that vacant land easily attracts trash and debris, creating a ripple effect on adjacent or nearby properties. Our observation of the vast amounts of vacant land found in Oakland was also consistent with our literature finding that vacant land also tends to concentrate in neighborhoods with disproportionately high levels of marginalized populations. Thus, our findings reinforce the well-established understanding that vacant land does not support human activity, contributes to negative portrayals of a community, and detracts from a community’s vibrancy. However, a key finding from this project is that areas surrounding CHA developments have huge potential for transformation from vacant land to places that contribute to community vibrancy.
We have found that community residents are often aware of the needs present in their community, but lack the infrastructure or opportunity to make their ideas known to decision-makers. In this manner, we have found that community residents are interested in efforts to engage their voices in decision-making processes. The search for solutions to the prevailing issues of public housing requires a commitment to understanding history, people, and contexts. Public housing leadership, public officials, and city planners alike are all looking to answer problems as efficiently as possible, however, the attempt to find actionable solutions does not always recognize the voices of community residents. In our Community Survey, 60% of respondents agreed with the statement “I have a voice in my community.” However, 60% of respondents had also not attended any community meetings. Though respondents affirmed the presence of their voices they were largely absent from a formal mechanism of engagement, community meetings. Dr. Kenneth Reardon, a Professor of Urban Planning at the University of Massachusetts, Boston, offered a possible explanation for this absence. Dr. Reardon detailed the experience of Memphis Housing Authority’s attempt to engage public housing residents in the redevelopment of a housing development. The resident working group was dismissed when their planning did not match the aims of the agency. Consequently, the residents found themselves disillusioned by the idea of community engagement as a method of improving public housing. The example shared by Dr. Reardon reveals a concern of community members who want to engage in decision-making processes. It is critical to build an approach to community engagement that does not tokenize community members before ultimately disregarding their thoughts.

Community residents hold distinct knowledge and preferences that can be translated into plans for vacant land transformation. As mentioned, residents are wary of community engagement efforts because they lack consistent means of capturing voices and opinions. However, as demonstrated through the findings from our Community Survey (Figure 1), citizens have differing perspectives about what they would like to see in their neighborhood.

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<th>Possible Transformation</th>
<th>% of respondents who would like to see this transformation</th>
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<tr>
<td>Parks (Sports field, dog parks, etc.)</td>
<td>58%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Community Gardens</td>
<td>49%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farmer’s Markets</td>
<td>42%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Public Art Installations</td>
<td>29%</td>
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Figure 1: Survey responses regarding vacant land transformation
When residing in a neighborhood, citizens acquire specific knowledge about the community area over time. This equips them to make choices in a way that will benefit communities and meet their needs. Through our research, we encountered a variety of ways that the knowledge and preferences citizens hold can be translated into impacts on community planning. In an interview, Ellen Roberds, a City Action Strategist who works with community leaders to reshape neighborhood spaces, discussed the success of crowd-resourced, community-led transformation projects in neighborhoods across the country. Through our work with Roberds, we encountered a case study that provided an example of residents utilizing their distinct knowledge to transform the vacant land in their neighborhoods. Through Roberds’ work, she encountered a citizen who used his unique insight to improve his community’s vacant basketball courts. This case speaks to the importance and relevance of community involvement in land transformation efforts. While this example speaks to the power of individual citizens taking action on a transformation they deeply care about, community engagement in city planning can manifest in many ways.

An additional method that has proven to be successful in using community voices to influence land transformation efforts is that of participatory budgeting. Through participatory budgeting, residents participate in the decision-making process and democratically decide how to spend discretionary funds allocated to their community. This allows residents to use their knowledge about a community’s needs to inform how the budget for that community is spent - whether it be repaving sidewalks, creating a new park, or starting a farmer’s market. Various proposals for infrastructure and land transformation, all submitted by residents, are placed on ballots. Then, during an election period, citizens vote for how they think the community’s budget should be spent. This practice began in Brazil in 1989, but quickly spread to other regions of the world. Alderman Joe Moore of the 49th Ward introduced participatory budgeting in Chicago, and the practice has proven to be effective in allocating the ward’s budget and improving the community. Both of these examples speak to the many ways resident input can impact plans for land transformation.

**Recommendations**

**Resident input should be incorporated into plans for land transformation.** Residents might remain skeptical of formal community engagement, however, it is critical to continually and consistently make efforts to include community voices in decision-making processes. Respondents of our community survey view a wide range of possible transformations, including parks, gardens, farmer’s markets, and public art installations, as favorable. Each possibility appeals to a different group of citizens, and it is important that residents have opportunity to advocate for their preferences. Residents have extensive knowledge of their neighborhood.
needs, and are therefore well-equipped to contribute to plans for vacant land transformation. In order to make this a possibility, the CHA should use innovative methods of gathering resident input, such as focus groups and surveys, to guide vacant land transformation. We believe the CHA could also explore the idea of participatory budgeting for vacant land transformation. The CHA could potentially allocate some of their funds for their land and property to be used for transformation purposes. This spending could then be administered through participatory budgeting. This process has been effective in gathering resident input in a democratic fashion. While this would be conducted at a much smaller scale than in the 49th Ward, the CHA could reach out to city officials there to inform the development of such a process. With a huge amount of vacant land at its disposal, the CHA is in a position to experiment with various methods of opinion aggregation in order to get residents engaged in the decision-making process for land transformation.

The CHA should employ small-scale transformations as cost-effective solutions to the problems of vacant land. According to data provided by the CHA, there are currently 338 acres of vacant land in Chicago at the CHA’s disposal. The large amount of vacant land presents an impressive challenge for the CHA. Minor transformation efforts offer manageable solutions for vacant land. Rather than attempt massive transformation projects, these minor changes can refresh and renew the land. During the process, it is recommended that this land be surveyed to take account of its condition and quality to assess which minor transformations might be possible to improve the land without a major financial burden.

The CHA should recognize dual purposes for vacant land to accommodate both short-term and long-term transformations. In Plan Forward, the CHA has outlined goals to develop healthy and vibrant communities. Specifically, the document expresses a strategies to promote vacant land as a “source for long-term public and private investment opportunity” and use vacant land as “a source for short-term, creative, community-building purposes.” Additionally, the responses to our Community Survey indicate that respondents are highly receptive to a wide variety of options for land transformation. Considering the abundance of vacant land in the CHA’s possession, it is not necessary to assign

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**Case Study: Participatory Budgeting in the 49th Ward**

In 2009, Alderman Joe Moore announced that he would cede his decision-making authority over the 49th Ward’s $1 million budget for infrastructure and land transformation. Through participatory budgeting, this power was given to residents – they could now choose to use these funds as they saw fit, whether for a new park, a new soccer field, or a space for community gardens. Each year, close to 2,000 residents vote on a series of submitted proposals.

This model has proven an effective method of engaging residents in the land transformation efforts of the 49th Ward and can easily be replicated on a smaller scale.
a single use to this land. Rather, the CHA should recognize the value in creating multi-purpose land transformations that offer possibilities for satisfying short-term and long-term solutions. For example, land can be utilized as a farmer’s market before investing in the construction of a grocery store, a long-term solution. This recommendation resolves a popular critique of urban planning as being primarily concerned with the future while offering few solutions for present issues. Dr. Laura Saija suggests, “planning and doing at the same time.” This way, community members are able to utilize vacant land while the best possible long-term solutions are determined.

Further Research
Much of our research considers the importance of the built environment in shaping the lives of those who live in a particular community. Specifically, we are concerned with the utilizing land transformation as a tool to improve the experiences of residents. Our report supports highly participatory, actionable, and low-cost solutions. To further explore ways of achieving such dynamic, highly participatory measures we propose a number of additional topics of research. We suggest that the CHA explore the relationship between land transformation and indicators of success, such as job security, educational attainment, and health. In doing so, it is possible to better understand the connection between the built environment and the individual. Further, the CHA can look into different practices for participatory engagement and long-term outcomes of participatory decision-making. By using our research as a foundation, we hope that the CHA can use land transformation to make swift progress towards the development of vibrant communities.

Works Cited
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2. Cabannes, Participatory Budgeting: A Significant Contribution to Participatory Democracy, 2004
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Parks

The Chicago Housing Authority’s (CHA) mission to promote vibrancy in Chicago’s communities can be better realized through an in-depth understanding of the social and spatial significance of park space. In Plan Forward, the CHA states that it hopes to “reimagine the final phase of the Plan for Transformation, coordinating public and private investments to develop healthy, vibrant communities,” and to “expand services to more residents, targeted to their needs, and at critical milestones in their lives.”

Park space serves as an equalizing communal space that can simultaneously achieve both of these goals by providing a space for community programming and community engagement. Furthermore, parks, when well maintained and frequently utilized, are markers of a flourishing neighborhood.

In this section, we will focus on two strategies for utilizing park space: renovating existing park space to meet the needs of residents and building new park space. By creating new parks and shaping the amenities within existing parks, poorly maintained and underutilized spaces can become welcoming hubs of interaction. The CHA controls a considerable stock of vacant land, 338 acres across Chicago. We will recommend ways to transform this vacant land into well used parks. We will explore best practices for building new parks and for renovating existing parks, with a focus on the importance of resident input in the planning process.

Summary of Recommendations

- Increase the number of field houses.
- Transform vacant land into park space.
- Incorporate a diverse set of amenities into both existing and new parks.

Key Findings

Parks play a vital role in the promotion of vibrancy by fostering a stronger sense of community. Our observational research in multiple parks revealed that parks are hubs of social activity. Parks are the foundation for youth activities such as soccer leagues and promote communal interactions with dog parks and other specialized amenities. However, in our observational research conducted at the Oakland study site, we noticed that vacant lots correlated with a lack of human activity. During a visit to our class on January 14th, 2016, Francine Washington, Chairperson of the Central Advisory Council, brought to our attention the strained relationship between market rate owners and subsidized renters in mixed-income housing developments. She highlighted how these strained relationships often silence the voices of low-income residents. It was apparent that these two phenomena—vast amounts of vacant land...
and tensions between owners and renters, detracted from community vibrancy, but it was unclear how they were related.

A screening and discussion of *70 Acres in Chicago* on January 31st, 2016 brought these two phenomena to the forefront. The documentary about the demolition of Cabrini Green and the creation of new mixed-income housing developments showed that the poor treatment of low-income residents was based off of prior prejudices, rather than individual interactions.

**Parks are valuable catalysts of social cohesion and environmental connectedness**, and therefore help bridge this divide and promote real interaction among residents. Aleksandra Kazmierczak notes that social ties, in general, are in decline due to changing work patterns, increased mobility, and developments in communication. Yet, she says, social ties can “lead to feelings of security and belonging,” or a sense of identity. Kazmierczak explains that parks are a unique communal space because they are equalizers – spaces equally accessible to all people and used by all people – and can thus promote interaction and engagement within communities. She notes, perhaps most importantly, that the aesthetics and provision of amenities in parks determine how long people stay in parks, which is indicative of how people interact in these spaces. Well-maintained parks with attractive amenities invite more people to engage socially because, quite simply, people enjoy using these parks.

However, through our asset mapping research, we found **vacant land heavily outweighs park land** in our three study sites. In essence, all three sites lacked the communal space necessary to facilitate interaction among all residents. Though we specifically studied these three sites, our information gathered during the Community Survey reveals that parks are an important asset to residents across Chicago’s neighborhoods.
Our observations have shown that if park spaces are well designed, they have the capacity to shape how communities interact. Well-designed parks draw many visitors who tend to stay for extended periods of time. Through our Community Survey, we identified the park amenities most valued by Chicago residents, and thus the amenities that are most likely to attract visitors to parks (See Figure 2).

According to our Community Survey, more than 50% of survey respondents believe that benches, open space/sports fields, pathways (including walking, running, and biking paths), and playgrounds are very important to creating enjoyable park space. Furthermore, we asked respondents to indicate those things that they most want to have and most do not want to have in parks. Respondents who indicated they rarely visit parks said they want to see more amenities – like basketball courts and pools – and more general cleanliness. On the other end, those respondents who most frequently visit parks (at least once a week) indicated that they want more areas for socializing, like picnic tables, grills, and camps for kids. Both sets of respondents (rarely and very frequently) felt that crime and violence were the two things they most do not want in their neighborhood parks.

To this end, William H. Whyte has found that aesthetically pleasing spaces are safer though becoming self-policing. In contrast, unmaintained or unused parks become locales for dubious behavior, and can be perceived as dangerous, deterring their use. Therefore, in order to be effective facilitators of social interaction, parks must be well maintained and possess desirable, well used recreational facilities.
Recommendations

Increase fieldhouse presence. We recommend the CHA explore the possibilities for partnership with the Chicago Park District to further build and develop field houses in parks close to CHA developments. In an interview, Charles Barlow, Lecturer in Public Policy and Geography at the University of Chicago, suggested that field houses are desirable meeting spaces for residents and community groups. Another interview with Sara Kuse, a Chicago resident and beekeeper, revealed that field houses were not often available and rendered most park space useless during the winter. The addition of field houses would make park space a more useable resource for communities year-round, rather than just warmer months. She said, “Winter in Chicago is a difficult time. You never see people on the street — everyone is trying to hide indoors! But, a fieldhouse could change that. Event planning with a field house would mean there’s a central location for us to hang out that isn’t someone’s house.” Furthermore, they act as potential grounds for youth services to grow within.

Increase the number of parks by transforming vacant land into park space. CHA-controlled vacant land is an untapped community resource, and presents a great opportunity for the creation of new park space. 58% of respondents to our community survey indicated that they would like to see vacant land in their neighborhood transformed into a park. Since there is an overwhelming amount of unused space in all three of our study sites, there is ample potential land that can be transformed. This creation of parks will result in an increase in the use of these previously underutilized spaces and therefore lead to an increase in interaction among neighborhood residents.

We recommend that the CHA partner with the Chicago Parks District to transform CHA-controlled vacant land into park space. However, there must be two clear directives when building new parks on vacant land: 1) to build new parks on CHA-controlled vacant land in close proximity to existing and future housing developments, and 2) to build parks that are attractive to the largest number of people by incorporating amenities that both attract users and keep users in parks for extended periods of time.

In order to attract the largest number of users, we recommend that new parks contain at least two of the following amenities (depending on the size of the space, there should most certainly be as many as possible): benches, playground, sport field/open space, or pathways for running and biking. We also recommend that new parks also contain at least one area for socializing, like playgrounds, picnic tables, field houses, or other spaces that promote interaction, or programs that promote social interaction, like fitness classes or sports camps for children. The key is to develop park space that attracts users for extended periods of time. Our research strongly indicates that parks with attractive, well used amenities attract more users and promote

Case Study: Portage Park

Portage Park is located in the Portage Park community area of Chicago’s northwest side. This park has a playground, a fieldhouse, multiple sports fields, tennis courts, running paths, and several other amenities. During our observational research, we noticed that the park was a social hub for families—children and parents—as well as individual residents.

The playground attracted families who remained in the park for over an hour, both children and parents socializing with each other. Furthermore, the sports fields/open spaces attracted residents who were not with children. Many of these spaces were used for recreational sports leagues, like softball and soccer.

While of course not all parks can contain this many amenities, Portage Park is a prime example of how well maintained parks with many amenities attract users who stay for longer periods of time, leading to interaction and socializing.
social interaction. Furthermore, parks that are attract more users are safer spaces, and, given that crime was the prime deterrent of park use among the respondents to our community survey, safe parks will in turn attract even more users.

**Diversify park amenities.** Our community survey data indicates a diverse appreciation for amenities, such as open space, picnic tables, benches, playgrounds, public grills, sports fields and courts, and walking, running, and biking paths, offered in Chicago’s parks. The survey respondents did not display a preference for any particular amenity. Additionally, the respondents considered most amenities “very important” or “somewhat important”. By establishing a partnership with the Chicago Park District, the CHA can administer curate more surveys to specifically find what residents are seeking and share this information with the Chicago Park District in order to make park spaces greater centers of communal activity. An interview with Rob Reuland, a Project Manager at the architecture firm Site-Design, revealed the importance of designing park space to satisfy community members of all ages and backgrounds. Then, parks that are designed with whole communities in mind are recognized as spaces for social integration.

**Further Research**
In the future, we think that greater observational research should be conducted. This would allow for researchers and urban planners to isolate the needs of individual parks and better each space as its own entity. We also think that documenting the vacant land to park ratio in all Chicago neighborhoods would allow for urban planners to better account for the new creation of parks and see which areas specifically lack parks as communal spaces. Furthermore, the creation of a scale that measures the maintenance and upkeep level of parks would allow for a way to judge the quality of park spaces. Our literature review has revealed that park activity preferences are connected to an individual’s race and ethnicity, which creates patterns that delineate distinct predilections and can help us determine, when this data is used concurrently with demographic information, the community needs in each park space. This latter trend is something we believe can be better looked into to create a complete picture on the impact of parks on a communal space in order to promote vibrancy.

**Works Cited**
Community Gardens

As noted in the Land Transformation section of this report, CHA-owned vacant land holds great potential for transformation into places that contribute to community vibrancy. Inspired by Chicago’s official motto, Urbs in Horto, “City in a Garden”, and historical dedication to the cultivation of green spaces, we looked to community gardens as potential avenues of transforming vacant land and thus contributing to community vibrancy. In researching the effect of green spaces on urban communities, speaking with local city farmers, and analyzing how community gardens are perceived by Chicago residents, we have found that community gardens are sustainable, creative, community-building spaces that can, with due effort, be readily cultivated from vacant lots.

During the course of our research, we found it difficult to pin down an exact definition of a community garden. However, we have found it useful to stick with one provided by the American Community Gardening Association (ACGA), which is a product of two national community gardening conferences organized by the City of Chicago Department of Human Services in 1978 and 1979. The ACGA broadly defines a community garden as a space that “...can be urban, suburban, or rural. It can grow flowers, vegetables or community. It can be one community plot, or can be many individual plots. It can be at a school, hospital, or in a neighborhood. It can also be a series of plots dedicated to ‘urban agriculture’ where the produce is grown for a market.”

This broad definition of community gardens speaks to the versatility of these spaces, which we found can greatly contribute to community vibrancy by creating visually appealing spaces, promoting community engagement, improving community health and nutrition, and providing education and employment opportunities for youth.

Summary of Recommendations

- We recommend that the CHA selectively increase the number of community gardens across the housing portfolio by reserving parcels of vacant land for long-term urban agriculture use
- Each community garden should conduct appropriately timed surveys and focus groups to account for the seasonal needs and preferences of resident gardeners
- The CHA should create and implement a system of evaluation using the FamilyWorks database to track the impact of community gardens upon youth and health outcomes
Key Findings

In addition to affording residents access to fresh, healthy produce (see Food Services), community gardens contribute to community health and vibrancy in diverse ways. As noted by members of the Central Advisory Council (CAC), many public housing residents associate community vibrancy with simply knowing their neighbors and being able to depend upon them in times of need. Based on existing literature, extended interviews with urban farmers, survey data, and the success of existing CHA garden projects, it is clear that community gardens provide an ideal space in which neighbors can interact and form relationships with one another. Community gardens are safe, inclusive areas that strengthen social ties; they are versatile, visually appealing spaces that can improve the mental health of a community; and they are centers of production that provide youth education and employment opportunities.

Community gardens contribute green space to urban landscapes, thereby providing a refuge from the cityscape that can improve one’s mental well-being. Currently, very few of these refuges exist within the city. As demonstrated through our mapping of the three study areas and analysis of CHA vacant land data, neighborhoods throughout Chicago abound with vacant lots (A more thorough analysis of vacant land can be found in the Land Transformation section of this report). However, CHA-owned vacant land also indicates that there exists an abundance of space viable for creating more visually appealing green spaces, such as community gardens.

A public health study conducted by Paul Stevens brings to light an alternative view of well-being through an ecopsychological model of health, which considers health through the relationship between people and place. Under this framework, Stevens demonstrates that green spaces, such as community gardens, can improve the psychological and mental well-being of citizens and communities when incorporated into the city landscape. Steven’s findings are further supported by R.S. Ulrich’s analysis of individual responses to green space in comparison to cityscapes, thus revealing that nature views, specifically those including greenery, have more positive influences on psychophysiological states than urban scenes and green areas may even elevate mood levels. Therefore, the benefits community
gardens can afford may even transcend those related to physical well-being (see Food Services) and can support the health of community in an even more holistic sense.

In addition to being visually appealing, community gardens offer spaces in which individuals can interact. Moreover, observations we made during site visits to community gardens, accounts of local Chicago community, and our community survey data show that the social interactions that occur within community gardens are overwhelming positive, corroborating studies showing that community gardens provide spaces in which participants often set aside differences and form strong social ties with other gardeners. Ken Dunn, founder of the City Farm, affirms these findings through his firsthand experience running numerous urban farms throughout Chicago. At numerous sites he has witnessed the nature of community gardens as spaces that “provide low-income and high-income people a place to interact,” which leads to a greater sense of respect between people of different socioeconomic status and cultures that rarely occurs in other environments. This claim is further supported by responses from our community survey shown in Figures 1 and 2. In this manner, individuals who responded our survey, regardless of their income level or race, also demonstrated interest in transforming vacant land into a community garden. Given this consistent interest across income levels and race, community gardens may be spaces in which divisions between race and socioeconomic status are neutralized.

Figure 1: Rates of people by income level who responded to our survey did not differ in the rates of indicated interest in community gardens.
Figure 2: Rates of people of by race who responded to our survey of did not differ in the rates of indicated interest in community gardens

The strong social ties formed within community gardens, initiate a positive cycle wherein community members nurture the garden and the garden nurtures the community. Interestingly, this finding partially conflicts with the framing of Plan Forward’s vision of urban agriculture as “short-term, creative uses of vacant land”. As noted by Lauralyn Clawson of Growing Power, community gardens become anchors for their communities, and are valued as extensions of their homes “not just as an interim use of space before you develop something new” but a space that “really stays in perpetuity within the neighborhood.” Clawson’s view aligns more closely with an idea of community gardens as dynamic, ever-changing spaces that can function in a variety of ways, and whose meaning and character are constantly reconstructed and reinterpreted by those who use the space.

While community gardens across Chicago should ultimately serve as anchors in the community, these spaces can be considered short-term uses of space in the sense that they are less economically costly and time consuming to start up. As noted by garden directors Ken Dunn and Natasha Holbert, average start-up costs for community gardens depend upon garden size and can range from less than $30,000 to $500,000 for a garden employing both full-time and part-time workers. Taken in comparison to the capital that would be needed to build structures on these lots, however, the costs associated with starting a community garden are insignificant. Furthermore, once a garden is in commission, yearly upkeep costs are minimal. Coupled with the employment, health, and youth benefits gardens provide, urban farms and gardens represent an economically viable use of space.
As shown in the **Youth Services** section of this report, youth programming contributes greatly to community vibrancy, and community gardens can provide ideal spaces for youth engagement, education, and employment opportunities. The Chicago Lights Farm, Altgeld Gardens, and Roosevelt Square garden all offer youth programming that teach skills transferable to the skills needed for school, future employment, and for social settings. Specific examples of these programs and the life skills that they develop are listed in Figure 3.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Critical Areas of Youth Development</th>
<th>Supporting community garden youth programming aspects</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Educational curiosity</td>
<td>Culinary workshops</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Science experiments</td>
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<td>Food system literacy</td>
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<td>Social and cultural sensitivity</td>
<td>Exploring unfamiliar cuisines and food</td>
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<tr>
<td>Employment skills</td>
<td>Learn skills used on the farm and how they translate across careers</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>Participation in CHA farming programs can inspire future leadership and employment on the farm</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>Learn how to manage micro-enterprise development through flower growing and herb drying</td>
</tr>
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**Figure 3**: Versatility and applicability of youth programming in community gardens

**Recommendations**

Based upon the success of established community gardens in the Old Town study area and in Bridgeport, we believe that constructing additional green community areas would provide further opportunities to enhance participant health, social ties among residents, and community engagement. As such, we recommend that the CHA **selectively increases the number of community gardens across their housing portfolio by reserving pieces of vacant land for long-term urban agriculture**. To ensure the safety and viability of the land, it is necessary that vacant lots are thoroughly tested for toxic materials and structural soundness, before being transformed for garden use. Moreover, the process, culture, and discourse surrounding the reservation of vacant land for community garden space should be shifted towards the idea that these spaces will endure for many years. Because it has been noted that existing community gardens have become anchors in CHA communities and are valued as permanent, safe extensions of their homes, it is essential that the sanctity of each garden be preserved and that they stay in perpetuity with the community.
While we believe that community gardens should be considered long-term uses of space, we believe that they possess “short-term” qualities, in that their meaning, character, and functions are constantly reconstructed and reinterpreted by those who use them. As such, we recommend that surveys and focus groups be conducted to account for the needs and opinions of community residents regarding their gardens. These surveys and focus groups should be conducted with the intent of ensuring that residents have the necessary resources to maintain their gardens, certifying that they have ownership over these areas, and encouraging their continued participation. These surveys and focus groups should be conducted at the start of each growing season in order to plan for the next year’s season, as it takes about a year to gather the appropriate materials and to produce compost that can adequately handle the high density of produce grown in urban gardens. Creating a forum for governance over these gardens also establishes a system that may encourage the continued presence of leadership and expertise. Without expert leadership, the average community garden lifespan is only 3-5 years, whereas with leadership, community gardens can last for decades. This structure may also encourage the continued participation of community members, who are better positioned to cultivate the garden as an equitable, safe space.

To further encourage the continuity and success of current and future community gardens, a system of evaluation should be created and implemented using the Family Works database to track the impact community gardens maintain upon youth and community health. Information drawn from this system would allow existing and future youth programs to adapt to the needs of their participants. This information would also provide a source of data that the CHA could draw upon to advocate for new partnerships or resources for their gardens. Using the existing FamilyWorks database to build this evaluative system would also allow the CHA to draw upon a large set of readily available information about youth’s academic performance. Other pieces of evaluation should take into account their physical and mental well being before and after participating in garden programming as well as their educational or employment status in years after participating.

Further Research
In order to best serve CHA residents through the creation of community gardens in an economical manner, the CHA may choose to research which of its housing developments have the greatest number of residents interested in community gardens as demonstrated by opinion polls. Conducting such surveys would help the CHA streamline the process for
implementing gardens in various neighborhoods in order to both ensure that communities receive the amenities they desire and that gardens are fully utilized. Along with determining acceptable lots for garden usage in close proximity to CHA units, resident demand represents an important component of garden success, which is characterized by economic feasibility, community engagement, and neighborhood usage.

Works Cited
4. Ferris et al., *People, land, and sustainability: Community gardens and the social dimension of sustainable development*, 2001
5. Lautenschlager and Smith, *Beliefs, knowledge, and values held by inner-city youth about gardening, nutrition, and cooking*, 2007
Public Art

The arts can create and sustain social networks throughout communities, and, consequently, these same social networks can help promote community cohesion. However, the importance of community art installations, and art programs may not be immediately obvious. In fact, both of these projects may be seen as frivolous, if not seen as antithetical to the wellbeing of some neighborhoods. In affluent communities they can be considered signs of luxury while in impoverished communities, they can be considered a poor investment of already limited resources. These assumptions should not undercut the very real contributions these artistic endeavors make in any community. The arts also allow communities to establish their identities outside of traditional neighborhood characteristics (e.g. the prevalence of crime, socioeconomic status, racial and ethnic composition) that are often amplified and stigmatized by residents of other neighborhoods. Finally, the arts offer community members the chance to learn valuable skills, and to participate in non-traditional, creative outlets.

This section of the report will highlight the importance of allowing communities to have access to arts spaces, and to engage in arts programs. These claims will be contextualized with the input of neighborhood residents, the most relevant literature underscoring the importance of community art, and case studies of successful arts programs in a number of neighborhood contexts. The Chicago Housing Authority (CHA) can and should play a critical role in facilitating the development of such installations and programs by re-allocating funds to invest in such projects, contributing a portion of its vacant land holdings, and developing partnerships with local artists and organizations. The arts can be a key component to establishing community vibrancy if they are prioritized as such.

Summary of Recommendations

- The CHA should administer targeted surveys to specific communities to gauge interest in public art.
- Focus groups can produce a more nuanced understanding of public perception of public art.
- Potential partnerships with local arts organizations, such as the Rebuild Foundation could support public art.

Key Findings
As previously noted, the role that art can play in communities is very much up for debate. While public art can certainly enrich neighborhoods, one could argue its relative importance when compared to improving local facilities, investing in education, and other more traditional means of securing community vibrancy. This conflict is most palpable when the survey data is compared to academic literature and key informant interviews.

We will first delve into the role public art can play in communities—as its role is certainly nuanced in nature. Public art can amplify the voices of those that do not have traditional or large platforms to express whatever beliefs they may hold. This is particularly important when considering what art could mean to communities. Public art could serve a community such as Bronzeville that is entrenched in the history of the city of Chicago; a community that has been home to generations of the city’s Black population. Conversely, literature also suggests that public art can also be exclusionary. Malcolm Miles’ *Art, Space, and the City: Art and Urban Futures* claims “There are, then, several problems in the advocacy of public art as a social good: the exclusivity of taste; the lack of the specificity of the public(s) for whom it is intended; and the transcendent aesthetic of modernism which separates art from life.” Therefore, how well public art can represent these very same neighborhoods that are flush with historical significance, various stakeholders, and numerous opinions is questionable.

Despite this conundrum, one would be remiss not to acknowledge the importance of public art to community members. As noted by a gallery attendant of the Stony Island Arts Bank, Maya Laurie, “it’s even one thing to have paintings of black people in a black neighborhood, but those paintings...have more depth when you know upstairs there’s a library of 15,000 books from a black publishing company, that published black magazines on the black identity, about black beauty, black business, black history...Because of this everything feels much more potent. It doesn’t feel just like this pleasantry.” That being said, one cannot underscore the importance of community members having a means to represent themselves, and lay claim to an area that has traditionally excluded them. Laurie went on to explain other social impacts arts can offer communities. Many have predicted a violent summer for Chicago, and the Arts Bank and its parent foundation, the Rebuild Foundation, are brainstorming ideas to engage community members.

**Case Study: Oakland Museum of Contemporary Art**

“That’s what started me seeing a change in the Kenwood-Oakland area”

Two decades ago, Oakland resident Milton Mizenburg Jr. appropriated several neglected vacant lots adjacent to his family home to establish the Oakland Museum of Contemporary Art. This open-air ‘museum,’ filled with abstract wooden sculptures, invites public art to a neighborhood traditionally overlooked by Chicago’s art community.

Mizenburg’s innovative installations have drawn appreciation from local residents since they first appeared, and the community is now extraordinarily protective over the space – not once have the sculptures been vandalized since the museum’s foundation.

The installation represents a powerful model of community-driven public art that could bring public art to vacant land in Chicago’s most disadvantaged neighborhoods.
youth and keep them off of the streets. “We already know this summer is going to be hot,” Laurie said, “So, what can Rebuild do to engage the youth that are outside of this space? That’s block parties, arts programming, sports activities.” Indeed, public art can certainly have an impact on communities, in small, yet meaningful, ways.

Despite the purported benefits of public art and its impact upon vibrancy, the desire for public arts programming among Chicago residents is tepid. Only 63 respondents (11%) to our community survey identify public art installations as a potential use of vacant land in Chicago. Of these respondents, just 19 selected public art installations as their only choice in response to the question, Think of a vacant lot you see frequently. Which of the following would you like to see on this land?” Therefore, it would seem that public art installations are not at the forefront of resident concerns. Nevertheless, the question persists of how to leverage the seemingly unquantifiable—but very real—value of public art with community desires, even if they are small.

Successful Programs: The Rebuild Foundation
The Rebuild Foundation, headed by Theaster Gates, is a “a not-for-profit creative engine focused on cultural-driven redevelopment and affordable space initiatives in under-resourced communities, currently manages projects in the Greater Grand Crossing neighborhood of Chicago.”^3^ In its 6 year history, the Rebuild Foundation has been responsible for a number of projects, including the Stony Island Arts Bank, the Black Cinema House, and the Currency Exchange Cafe. However, the foundation’s most notable collaboration might be the Dorchester Art + Housing Collaborative (DA+HC). The DA+HC is “a rehabilitated public housing project, a block of 32 townhomes that provides housing for artists and community members with the intent of fostering dialogue and collaboration between both groups.”^4^ The project also stems from a collaboration between the Rebuild Foundation and the CHA. It might be useful for the CHA to explore further collaborations with the Rebuild Foundation as past collaborations have proven both fruitful and sustainable.

As previously mentioned, The Rebuild Foundation is currently crafting programming that would engage community youth throughout the summer as they are out of school with an ample amount of free time. This is a clear example of public art serving a community need, and have a value outside of promoting community vibrancy, or at least doing so in a very tangible way.

Successful Programs: The Heidelberg Project
The Heidelberg Project (HP), founded in 1986, is a series of public art installations in Detroit, Michigan. By repurposing the dilapidated and abandoned structures, HP “believes that a community can re-develop and sustain itself, from the inside out, by embracing its diverse cultures and artistic attributes as the essential building blocks for a fulfilling and economically viable way of life.”^5^ HP also offers arts programs and workshops to local community members, brings in guest lecturers and speakers, and offers tours to those visiting the neighborhood. The Heidelberg Project also acts as a
cautionary tale. Although in its 30th year, HP has been destroyed twice by arson, proving to be difficult to sustain in an area where the law of the land is not always followed.

**Recommendations**

It is important to keep this struggle—the struggle of maximizing the role that public art installations and arts programming can play in communities despite a lack of perceived community interest—in mind. While community survey respondents were from a diverse range of neighborhoods, with a diverse range of perspectives, it would be beneficial for the CHA to conduct further research into public perceptions on public art. The rationale behind this is twofold. Foremost, there were only several survey questions that probed resident attitudes on public art. If the CHA wants to have a firmer grasp on attitudes towards public art as a component of vibrant communities, then it would be to the agency’s benefit to administer additional surveys, conduct focus groups and resident interviews to gain a more informed view of how these projects might manifest. Similarly, it would be beneficial to narrow the scope of such research. As previously mentioned, public art can do a great deal to commemorate and honor the history of communities. Therefore, it would be useful to target research in areas such as Bronzeville, Wrigleyville, and other areas that are rich with tradition and history. These communities may immediately benefit from public art installations, or would be able to provide critical feedback about the importance of public art in communities and commemorating history more generally.

The CHA should also explore partnerships with local arts organizations. These partnerships could offer an array of resources and opportunities to community residents who are not typically afforded them. The Rebuild Foundation makes logical sense as they have partnered with the CHA in years passed. There are also local organizations and museums in many neighborhoods, such as Pilsen, and Oakland. These partnerships could bring about unexpected social impacts, such as the summer programming of the Rebuild Foundation to fight against youth violence.

**Further Research**

The CHA should consider the role that public art can play in engaging community members, community youth in particular. For instance, the Rebuild Foundation use public art to provide programming that engages community members. These include guest lectures, roundtable discussions, art classes, film screenings, and a host of materials such as books, records, and art supplies. Furthermore, the CHA should explore the logistics of providing similar programming, or the possibility of collaborations with organizations such as the Rebuild Foundation that already provide quality programming. Finally, the CHA should identify the less visible wellness and happiness gains from public art. This would further identify the need for public art in vibrant communities.

**Works Cited**

4. “Rebuild’s Story” 2016
Civic Society

27  Community Engagement
36  Community Spaces
45  Safety
Community Engagement

Community engagement refers to the avenues through which CHA should solicit community input, foster community involvement, and increase resident-community interaction to create vibrant neighborhoods that address the needs and wants of CHA residents. Community engagement is essential in constructing a vibrant community, as community input and engagement encourages feelings of resident empowerment, investment in housing, and interaction between residents, which lead to positive feelings of community ownership and satisfaction. Community engagement also promotes innovation in the housing administration process, as it catalyzes new networks of relationships, new problem-solving methods, and new, inclusive decision-making processes. Similarly, services are no longer simply delivered by professional and managerial staff in public agencies but are co-produced by users and their communities. Our research shows that these services and amenities, co-produced by residents and policymakers, better address the needs of residents than those produced without resident input. However, there is currently an unmet need to foster interaction between residents of public housing and their surrounding communities and to make resident voices heard in shaping the environment and policies that affect them.

Participation in organizations that shape the community promotes a sense of inclusion. This participation takes the form of attendance at community meetings, resident advocacy, and communication with community leaders and government officials. After coming together to discuss a common interest, residents will likely turn towards conversations about other interests or their personal lives, creating meaningful social connections.

Sandra Young, former Commissioner at the CHA and former Ida B. Wells resident, classified community engagement into two categories. The first is awareness in the broader community about what is going on in public housing developments and awareness in the developments about what is going on in the broader community. The second is community members’ ability to engage with key decision makers who create and administer the policies that affect residents. Both of these paths to engagement must be open for people who live in a community to feel properly included and informed and to ensure that planners, architects, and service providers can create communities that best serve their residents. For this reason, residents need access to a platform for sharing ideas and communicating with one another, community leaders, and key actors responsible for the management and design of their homes.

Community engagement can be achieved through a wide variety of methods ranging from having greater publicity for community meetings to creating communal ownership and involvement mechanisms such as community gardens. Design, resident composition, and location of developments also have great potential to shape community engagement. In order
to truly fulfill its mission of providing low-income families with a sustained high quality of life, the CHA should actively seek to improve the ways in which residents can engage with the social structures in the communities they live in.

**Summary of Recommendations**

- Promote and increase resident involvement with community organizations by making meeting times and locations more accessible to residents, increasing publicity, and creating opportunities for varied modes of engagement.
- Construct an intentionally social built environment, fostering community engagement and interaction through creation of well-lit and well-maintained indoor community spaces, rec rooms, arts and sport facilities, and patios.
- Expand alternate community ownership methods like public gardens and co-ops to alleviate renter/owner divide and promote long-term tenure.

**Key Findings**

Community engagement leads to better resident outcomes, addressing the causes of inequity as well as its symptoms. Civic engagement and social connectedness are practical preconditions for better schools, safer streets, faster economic growth, more effective government, and even healthier and longer lives. Without healthy community institutions and norms of mutual reciprocity and trust, social institutions falter.⁴ According to responses to our Community Survey, residents associated participation and the feeling of ownership in their communities with vibrancy and the idea that their neighborhood felt like home. Charles Barlow, Lecturer in Public Policy and Geography at the University of Chicago, and Alphonse Diaz, public housing architect remarked that community engagement also helps balance power dynamics in a community and bridge the renter/owner divide, bringing different types of residents together towards common ownership of their residences and putting all community members on equal footing to influence their housing environments.

The literature we reviewed demonstrated that interaction within communities and through communities via involvement with community organizations and attendance at community meetings is often correlated with higher resident satisfaction.⁵

Because the built environment shapes the way residents interact and engage with each other, shared spaces, both residential and public, including community gardens, parks and green space, and community centers and facilities, can make or break the potential scope for community engagement. Well constructed communal spaces can foster community involvement and promote two important hallmarks of vibrancy—community engagement (which involves interaction amongst community members, creation of community programming, and collaboration to reach common goals) and a sense of ownership and belonging in their residences. In an interview with Peter Levavi, the Senior Vice President of
Brinshore Development LLC, the developer remarked on the power of development and change:

“What power does a great housing development have to make a change in an area? I just finished a development on 70th street [where] we took 32 public housing units, renovated them, and then built an art center. The glass is now stories high and it’s well lit and open, and shines a beacon onto the neighborhood and the block went from one of the worst places in the city to being a real upbeat place. The park across the street that nobody would go into all of a sudden was filled with people. They all say thank you so much for fixing up our park. Guess what? We didn’t touch the park. It’s just the perception has completely changed.”

However, he cautions that sometimes communal spaces like yards and lobbies in public housing lead to higher rates of crime in those areas.

Currently, there is a lack of communal spaces that foster community engagement. Claudice Ware, a member of the Central Advisory Council and HCV resident, notes, “in mixed-income housing often times there aren’t enough space for families together for events, activities etc... It is important for community centers or parks to be a part of the redevelopment plan.” Additionally, Diaz informed us that vibrant communities must, “include spaces where tenants can meet and hang out and as part of the approval process for developments, the architect needs to present his plans to the community,” once again, highlighting the importance of robust public spaces in fostering community engagement and alluding to the importance of community involvement in housing administration and design.

While councils and opportunities for engagement exist, there is a need for more accessible routes to resident engagement. Research has shown that, “…collective civic engagement appears to have changed rather than declined, with sources that are organizational rather than interpersonal in nature.” Important themes from civic society key informants, Charles Barlow and R.H., a HCV resident, showed that:

a. Residents seek increased engagement with their community
b. Leaders value input of residents, and
c. There is a need for CHA to further engage with community building

From our Community Survey responses, residents seek greater engagement with their community members and resident leadership, but feel like they do not have a voice in their community. Sandra Young, former Commissioner at the CHA and former Ida B. Wells resident, elaborated on the need for greater resident engagement stating, “One of the things I’d like to see more of is education. Informing people [through] meetings and comment periods to get input from everybody [on their developments]. Then we should take those comments back to the various people [in charge of administration] and... talk about [the comments], continuing to send flyers, continue to tell them how their voice is very much needed.”

The time, place, content, and administration of community engagement meetings often hinders community engagement. One Community Survey respondent accurately described the frustrations residents feel with the community engagement process when she remarked, “Sometimes I think that these meetings are organized around a pre-determined agenda that has
already been decided behind closed doors. I wish that the community had genuine input in the issues that affect residents. Also, these meetings are often held at inconvenient times or in distant locations. I think this is intentional to limit participation, but it should change. Low levels of community engagement is attributed to accessibility, convenience, and perceived efficacy by survey respondents (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Community Survey responses to the question, “What would make you more likely to attend a community meeting?”

- Many people do not feel like they have a voice in their community. 346 out of 575 respondents, 60%, felt that they have a voice in their community, however 249 out of 575 surveyed, 43%, disagreed. When asked what would make them more likely to go to community meetings, 42 respondents stated they would be more interested in going if public officials were more open to feedback, there was more transparency in the policy administration process, and if community involvement was actually shown to be effective and actually make things better.
- Meetings are not well advertised and there is a general lack of awareness surrounding meeting time, place, frequency, and subject matter. 77 respondents stated that they would go to community meetings if they were better advertised.
- 24 residents were disheartened because they thought others don’t go to meetings or care about community issues.
- 75 respondents expressed that they thought the matter discussed at community meetings doesn’t affect them. Some of these people stated that they would be more likely to go if there were any big, impactful current issues in their neighborhood (like shootings or school closings) that they wanted to have a say in. Some respondents suggested distributing meeting agendas before the meetings, so they could see if the topics on the agenda interested them.
- 34 respondents stated that they would go to more community meetings, if they had more free time to go to meetings.
- Similarly, a lack of available child care prevents many people from going to community meetings. Seven respondents cited this as their reason for low meeting attendance.
51 and 19 respondents, respectively, stated that a more convenient meeting time and location, especially making sure that meeting places had better public transportation access, would make it more likely for them to attend meetings.

Finally, 29 residents stated that food would make them more likely to attend community meetings. Though this may serve as a mere incentive for involvement, low meeting attendance due to a lack of food could be related to above deterrents—perhaps meetings occur at mealtimes and people are forced to choose between a meal and a meeting.

Community leaders can shape the feelings and engagement within a community. When community leaders, such as Aldermen, take part in community meetings and champion events that bring the community together, there is a greater sense community investment. From both observational research at the community meetings and through our interviews, we discovered that these leaders are vital to moving a community closer together. When we attended a Oakwood Boulevard Neighborhood Association meeting, we witnessed that the local aldermen regularly attended these meetings. As a result, the residents that attended were all able to sit down and eat breakfast with their representatives and discuss their concerns and their plans for the neighborhood. In an interview, Charles Barlow stressed the importance of a mobile Alderman— the Alderman’s interest in bringing meetings to different sections of the neighborhood sends a message to the community that they wanted to include all community members in the decision-making process. Barlow also spoke about the Alderman endorsing events that brought the community together, specifically, the annual Bud Billiken Day block party held in the summer, in which the community took over a block and held fun activities and had a cookout. Barlow described this and other methods of Alderman engagement, like fun days and festivals sponsored by local Aldermen, community stakeholders, and organisations, to be a great way for residents from all different areas of the neighborhoods to meet together and create relationships with each other and their officials.

Community engagement is associated with homeownership but not with tenure. The length of time living in a community is positively correlated to individual local friendships, and participation in local affairs. Furthermore, homeownership leads to “greater community engagement, greater investment in social capital, and better education outcomes.” Home ownership, perhaps in part due to associated length of tenure and income levels, is often seen as a proxy for community investment and involvement. However, given the difficulty of isolating these variables, it is difficult to tell whether promoting homeownership is an effective way of fostering community engagement. Our survey data analysis also shows that community engagement, via attendance at community meetings, conversations with neighbors, and involvement in community groups, is not correlated with tenure (Figure 2).
However, there is an association between homeownership and community engagement (Figure 3). For instance, 69% of homeowners surveyed felt they had a voice in their community and 53% attended at least one community meeting a month. In contrast, only 54% of renters felt they had a voice in their community and 36% of renters attended at least one meeting a month. Additionally, 73% of homeowners reported having conversations with their neighbors at least once a week compared to 60% of renters. This data suggests that there is a relationship between ownership and the degree to which people are involved and interact with their community.

**Recommendations**

Community engagement is vital in constructing vibrant neighborhoods because of its ties to markers of resident success and neighborhood vibrancy, including higher resident satisfaction, better schools, increased safety, and more effective government. Thus, it is essential that the CHA work to increase resident participation in community meetings and organizations by making these events more accessible to residents. One way of achieving this is by having a variety of modes of engagement to meet different residents’ needs and involvement capacities. Sandra Young, former Commissioner at the CHA and former Ida B. Wells resident, and Robert Koerner, developer with the Davis Group had some suggestions potential engagement methods. These ideas include reviving decommissioned neighborhood and community conservation councils and expanding focus groups beyond the housing design stage. They also recommended creating online forums and surveys for residents unable to attend meetings in person to engage with each other and provide feedback virtually, as well as to poll for availability for in-person meetings.

Many existing community organizations effectively create engagement opportunities, but don’t include CHA residents. Thus, creating a strong community requires building upon these strong community ties and organizations that already exist and finding ways to get residents involved in these groups and the surrounding community at large. The CHA should do this by seeking out community partners who can help them access strong, existing community networks.

We also recommend that the CHA engage in greater publicity efforts to make residents aware of meetings and potential for community engagement, as 77 out of 575 residents stated that lack of awareness about community meetings was a main factor in limiting their community involvement. Similarly, residents also requested a broader circulation of meeting agendas to increase awareness that discussion points were relevant to their concerns. However, most of the barriers to community participation were logistical. These respondents stated that meeting times often coincided with mealtimes or work and cited difficulty in finding childcare options that would allow them to attend community meetings.
As the presence of aldermen and other public officials at community meetings influences community investment and feelings of engagement, we recommend the CHA increase opportunities for these public figures to be involved in community meetings by encouraging their participation in forums, CHA-sponsored community events, and regular engagement with public housing constituents.

Because meetings are often inaccessible due to their time, we recommend that CHA hold meetings outside of work times and provide food and childcare options during evening community meetings to make involvement in these groups more accessible to working adults and parents. The final major deterrent to community meeting attendance was meeting place accessibility. We recommend that meetings be held closer to residents and located near public transit lines. 278 out of 575 residents surveyed expressed preference for parks and field houses as a meeting space and 291 out of 575 expressed a preference for meeting in schools.

Additionally, residents in our community survey informed us that they would be more likely to get involved with community organizations if there was greater transparency in the housing administration process. For this reason, we recommend that CHA more frequently solicits feedback and demonstrates implementation of that feedback. Additionally, since community leaders have such great potential to shape community engagement, we recommend the CHA expand public officials’ and administrative leaders’ involvement in their community meetings.

Although community engagement is becoming increasingly more formalized through councils and boards, informal engagement is also essential to creating a sense of community ownership central to vibrancy. The physical space that residents occupy has great scope to shape this community interaction and engagement. Residents surveyed stated that there was currently a lack of communal spaces that foster community engagement in their neighborhoods. In an interview, Claudice Ware, a member of the Oakwood Shores Working Group, also notes, “in mixed-income housing often times there aren’t enough spaces for families to gather for events, activities etc.” For this reason, we recommend constructing developments and public spaces with an emphasis on fostering interaction through plentiful public spaces inside and adjacent to developments. Drawing on input from developers Peter Levavi and Robert Koerner, we recommend intentional inclusion of rec rooms and indoor gathering spaces within developments as well as creating spaces like art centers and fitness centers where residents can interact across tenure rates. The creation of these spaces could be effectively complemented by implementation of arts and wellness programming, an unmet need residents identified in the community survey.

Sandra Young also noted in an interview that “it is important for community centers or parks to be a part of the redevelopment plan.” To meet this need, developer Robert Koerner recommended constructing outdoor community spaces like patios and situating properties close to parks. Finally, to foster use of these communal spaces,
residents requested plentiful public, outdoor lighting to give a sense of safety and ensuring public communal spaces are well maintained, clean, and have no broken fixtures. Residents also requested additional outdoor arts, sports, recreation, and musical programming by the CHA (similar to initiatives taken by the city like Movies in the Park) to increase use of outdoor public spaces and parks near housing developments.

**Finally, we recommend expanding alternate community ownership methods and community interaction opportunities to alleviate divisions between renters and homeowners and promote long-term tenure**, which is highly correlated with involvement in community organizations and feelings of community investment and ownership. Our research reveals that there is often little engagement across class, income, and racial groups in public housing developments. Cleavages among homeowners, market-rate renters, and subsidized renters occur in part because of the perceived lack of investment in the development that renters may have because they have no equity stake in their units. To increase renters’ equity stake in their units, we recommend providing opportunities for shared ownership of neighborhood spaces like communal gardens, which help bring together mixed renter and owner populations. We also recommend expanding alternative homeownership and long-term tenure methods, which allow for greater interaction between residents and promote qualities that correlate with greater community engagement. These findings are discussed in more detail in the Homeownership section of this report.

This gap in engagement and divide between renters and owners can be partially attributed to lack of organizations that encompass both owners and renters and little scope for informal engagement between these groups. Developer Robert Koerner remarked on the difficulty of bringing homeowners and renters together due to separate residents associations between the two groups. “It is a challenge in [mixed] communities, just because by the nature of it there are separate communities between the condo association and the rental pool, so there’s not always opportunities for them to interact. They don’t get a lot of engagement because people assume people are a certain way without ever meeting them or talking to them in person.” To this end, our recommendations seek to afford residents opportunities to experience greater formal and informal interaction.

**Further Research**

Beyond tenure, there are many other factors that influence potential for community engagement. One avenue of further research is to explore the relationship markers like income, age, location, race, and many others have with community engagement through surveys and data analysis. Further, the CHA can determine whether these relationships are causal through discussion with residents and controlled studies. Additionally, while our community survey reveals that residents would prefer more convenient times and locations, the CHA can research potential partnerships with community organizations who can help them access vibrant, existing community networks.
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Community Spaces

“Community spaces” refers to the physical space where social interactions can occur. The provision of accessible, quality community spaces can facilitate interactions between community members and integrate CHA residents into the broader social milieu, making community spaces a critical element of vibrant neighborhoods. Certain types of community spaces are more effective at increasing community engagement: religious spaces, parks, schools, and common areas in housing. This section specifically looks into facilities that hold community meetings and neighborhood events, breaking these places down into the categories of religious spaces, parks and recreational spaces, schools, and other community buildings. Our research shows that through investment in these communal spaces, community members from different backgrounds can engage with one another and find the common ground of working for their community. Increasing the number of communal spaces and improving accessibility to these areas will greatly enrich the social lives of CHA residents and, furthermore, aid in the creation of functional, thriving and vibrant communities in Chicago.

Summary of Recommendations

- Chicago public schools and charter schools act as potential meeting spaces as community spaces for resident organizations after school hours.
- Park safety can be improved through ensuring proper lighting, creating official park hours, providing adequate signage, securing entry and exit points, and increasing park security.
- Partnerships between neighborhood groups and religious organizations can promote inclusivity in the neighborhood and can lead to greater utilization of already existing neighborhood spaces.
- Existing public spaces can act as potential meeting spaces for CHA residents.
- The CHA should provide equal access to communal spaces, and programming that encourages relationship-building across tenure groups in mixed-income developments as these interactions are important in breaking down social divisions between residents and promoting a sense of community.
- The CHA should consider investment in programs that follow the model of Tenant Patrol that ensure the safety, cleanliness, and appropriate use of space, whilst enabling CHA residents to feel a sense of ownership of these spaces.
- For mixed-income developments, the CHA should pair communal spaces with programming designed to bridge social divisions between residents of different income levels.

Key Findings

Schools

Our literature review and survey data reveal that there are many benefits to accessing schools as neutral community gathering places. Our observational research revealed that most meetings were occurring during the typical work day hours and, often, were held in religious spaces. The CHA should seek to hold meetings in more inclusive spaces, such as schools, because religious spaces may prevent some individuals from attending meetings, and
at more accessible times so that people do not have to give up their work day. If the CHA wants to make communities more vibrant, this includes their ability to engage with their neighbors which, ultimately, can occur in communal spaces. These are imperative steps to make sure that people are able to voice their opinions in a manner with which they feel comfortable. The literature shows that schools are underutilized neighborhood resources. In Englewood, for example, the Chicago Public School system closed 6 of their 34 school buildings, leaving empty shells available for repurposing as community centers. Schools are placed in specific locations to be accessible for the population as a whole. “The school today is conceived by city planners as the physical and social center of the neighborhood.” Beyond repurposing these now vacant buildings, however, which may require more money in order to staff the buildings, schools provide excellent meeting spaces in that they are not available during the school day. Schools are active throughout the school and work day due to the presence of students and staff and the learning that occurs in the building. This means that any meetings planned for the location would have to occur after school hours, making community meetings more accessible for individuals who work. Furthermore, school cleaning staff tend to be active after school hours, meaning that there would already be someone available to lock the school up behind any community members.

The survey data revealed that just under half of the individuals surveyed would attend community meetings at schools (278 of the 576 respondents, 13.5% of individuals said they would only attend community meetings at schools. Schools were the highest ranked location for communal meetings to occur as they do not preclude people who do not feel comfortable in religious spaces, entering private homes (which assumes someone offers their house to begin with), parks, or government buildings. Schools are already grounds for social interaction in that parents have to pick their children up and tend to communicate with one another there.

Parks
When described in economic terms, parks are often considered to be “public goods” in that one person who takes advantage of them does not inhibit another person from doing so. Indeed, parks are often anchors of communities—residents can utilize these spaces to meet their social and communal needs through various local events, programming, or via their own agency. These views were expressed by a key informant interviews with Julie Dent Tun, Secretary of the Oakwood Boulevard Neighborhood Association (OBNA). Ms. Dent Tun spoke about the importance of Mandrake Park along Oakwood Boulevard in Oakland. The OBNA’s biggest event of the year is held at the center at Mandrake Park. They utilize the park because of its location at the center of the boulevard and the accessibility to all the community members. Ms. Dent Tun’s sentiments are substantiated further by responses to the survey question, “Where would you like to have community meetings held?” Roughly twenty percent of respondents said they would like meetings to be held in “parks/field houses”.

Many survey respondents reaffirmed the importance of parks as functional spaces. The three facilities that the majority of respondents deemed as “very important” (“open spaces”, “walking/running/biking paths”, and “playgrounds”) are all facilities that promote their regular use by residents, and, in many ways, contain opportunities for users to interact with one another, creating a greater sense of community.

However, many respondents expressed concerns about parks being accessible to certain subsections of their neighborhood populations. Of the 387 responses to the question “Is there
anything you would not want to see in your neighborhood park”, roughly eight percent responded with “gangs”, “crime”, and “drugs”. While these are certainly things that almost no one would want in their community park, and all are things that threaten parks as communal spaces, questions arise about the policies and procedures to prohibit such behavior.

It is important to understand how parks operate as communal spaces when one considers how they are often policed, and what becomes of them when affected by public policy. As noted in an earlier literature review, when public spaces, particularly parks, drift further away from being accessible to all residents, there are important practical and ethical implications. Foremost, overly policing public spaces is unrealistic as it “will only create the illusion of order while at the same time implementing an urbanism that is as alienating as it is controlling.” One must also consider the ethical considerations of deeming public spaces unavailable to some members of the population, and available to others. Such decisions may be rooted in assumptions surrounding race and ethnicity, and socioeconomic status. Therefore, it is critical to reconcile the need for social order with policies that are open to all members of the community, but, simultaneously ensure public safety.

Such policies might be to install adequate lighting in public parks to deter illegal and antisocial behavior and make residents feel more comfortable in use of the park. It might also be beneficial to close facilities after sunset when possible.

Religious Spaces
Religious spaces within a community are utilized primarily as a space for people of a similar faith to gather. However, in many areas, they become identifiable centers for a community. Religious spaces are vital in a neighborhood because of the social aspect it brings to a community as well as the anchor the location represents. Not only are they spaces that welcome to practice their religion, it can be a place for people of different backgrounds to come and interact in open discourse, as well as a place where people across the neighborhood can come meeting under a common ground.

Through literature review, we realized that in many areas, religious spaces become places where social activities play out, and where people come to discuss problems in the neighborhood and the city. The religious space was a place where people from different backgrounds come to understand the complexity of issues. In our asset mapping, we found that neighborhoods with more churches tended to have more community activity. Oakland for example had 18 churches and had the strongest culture out of the neighborhoods we surveyed. When speaking to the representatives of the OBNA, a successful neighborhood association within the Oakland neighborhood, representative Julie Dent Tun described the neighborhood association reaching out to churches across the neighborhood to get members from all sides of the boulevard involved in their programing. She also describes the use of church space as a
meeting place, since it is in the middle of the community, and is low in cost. The OBNA uses these resources, tapping into their constituents for participation as well as using the space for their own meetings.

In addition, the religious spaces themselves are more accessible to other community meetings, as they are often the center of the neighborhood, and have wide spaces. From our survey findings, we found that 20% of the people surveyed would go to a community event if it were held in a religious space. Additionally Ms. Dent Tun spoke of how the church is used as an anchor meeting space, so community members know where to find the organization. The OBNA has their meetings at the same church every other month and are able to hold around 50 people in the room. Though they are not at full capacity, the church can be used for outside groups to gather as it is both welcoming and central for local residents. The OBNA also spoke of a recent initiative to beautify the churches around Oakland, through preserving its gardens and maintaining its outside features. The idea of making the churches more welcoming for outsiders makes it more adapt for outside uses, and open and welcoming to outside groups.

Communal Spaces in Housing
The importance of communal spaces within housing complexes is especially supported by the responses to our intercept survey, where over half of non-homeowners respondents considered communal spaces within their apartment buildings to be “very important” (see Figure 1).

![Figure 1: How important are common spaces in your apartment building to you?](image)

Lee Pratter, Senior Director of Development at CHA, highlighted the importance of meeting spaces in housing as a critical option in a range of communal spaces that fit different resident’s needs and weather conditions. Pratter highlights the flexibility of communal spaces in housing, noting that they can be used for a variety of activities by different groups throughout a single day. Linda Brace, Senior Project Manager at The Community Builders, Inc., also states that even in the presence of a range of options for communal spaces, equal access to communal spaces in housing by all residents is critical in encouraging social interaction between residents and mitigating power relations. Exclusion based on type or length of tenure has the potential of perpetuating social divisions among residents.
However, our research also found the limitations of community spaces in housing developments in encouraging social interaction. Linda Brace, senior project manager at The Community Builder’s Inc., noted that when planning new developments, developers need to prioritize building residential space in order to meet the required number of units or to make the development economically sustainable. For mixed-income developments specifically, Brace emphasized the importance of reaching out to residents of different income groups to dispel stereotypes and to encourage interaction, rather than simply building meeting spaces and expecting organic relationships to form. This outreach should be in a form that appeals to all residents in a development to encourage cross-tenure relationship-building. Peter Levavi from Brinshore Development also highlights the potential for communal spaces in housing to attract unwanted and unsafe behavior.

**Recommendations**

**Schools Recommendation**

Our recommendation for appropriately accessing schools is to partner up with the Chicago Public Schools system or the reach out to the charter or private schools in the vicinity and ask them about using their space after school hours, given that 48% of the respondents from the resident survey said the would be comfortable attending a meeting in this space. A potential issue here would be payment for the after school staff that remains to clean and close the building. The CHA can communicate with the CPS or other schools to help with the payment of this staff, or to pay a small fee to the CPS (perhaps in the form of a donation for children’s education) to balance out the effects of the CHA presence. The OBNA, for example, uses membership dues to allot money to the church they hold meetings in. The payment for school systems can, by following this OBNA system of dues, come from partial dues that go towards donations to the school where the meeting is held. Thus, the CHA itself is not directly responsible for the cost but is able to help support the school systems that allow them access to their spaces. There may be concerns about safety in terms of having random adults entering these school spaces after hours; however, this can be tamed by ascertaining that people only meet in one space when meetings occur - for example, an auditorium or a gym for larger meetings or a singular classroom for smaller meetings. Furthermore, most schools already have security cameras in place.

We also recommend utilizing schools as the foundation around which to develop neighborhood programs to thicken the social fabric of the community. Emily Dowdall, a researcher with the Pew Research Initiative, conducted a study on reusing closed and abandoned schools. She noted that “the negative community impact of an empty school building could pack a bigger punch that closing itself.” Hans Froelicher Jr., the president of the citizen planning and housing and headmaster of a private school in Baltimore, Maryland wrote that “today, much is being done as schools themselves are taking increasing initiative in community activity. The school today is conceived by city planners as the physical and social center of the neighborhood.” The schools already have a strong relationship with the communities they are in based on years of involvement with the neighborhood youth and continuing this trusted relationship can only better a community. These “places are full of potential, ripe for new life that anchors communities anew.”
Parks Recommendations
The primary park-related concern that residents shared was safety—who is allowed to frequent the park, and what activities are these people partaking in. However, it is important to consider the ramifications of over policing neighborhood parks. It becomes quite easy for law enforcement to utilize discriminatory practices, whether purposefully or unwittingly. The definition of “parks” was kept purposefully vague, asking respondents to “think of a park in [their] neighborhood” before responding to questions. Therefore, these recommendations are somewhat amorphous, able to be applied to parks under the purview of the Chicago Park District, or smaller parks managed by the CHA. With that in mind, it would be wise to invest in facilities and equipment to guide the behavior of local residents. For instance, the CHA should funnel its resources in these types of equipment: The CHA should ensure proper lighting and little tree cover in neighborhood parks. It certainly does not eliminate the likelihood of a crime occurring, but the possibility of being seen will most likely deter some criminal behavior. Similarly, there should be official park hours and adequate signage to reflect these hours. Parks should also provide secure entry and exit points in parks (these points should be closed in between park hours). Both of these policies would hopefully dictate resident behavior, but would do so in a way that is not discriminatory to certain groups of community members. Lastly, parks should have and regulate park facilities to tacitly communicate quality, security, and standards of the park. Since unkept facilities could communicate that crime and other socially undesirable behavior is welcome in parks, it is of the utmost importance to have functional facilities.

Religious Spaces Recommendations
With religious spaces being so central to neighborhood communities, we recommend that the CHA look to expand their usage of already established religious spaces as community gathering spaces through facilitating partnerships with neighborhood organizations and religious groups and investing in the religious spaces. We realize that many religious groups can be a great tool for connecting the neighborhood, since churches already have established connections with its constituency.

By facilitating and connecting neighborhood associations with churches, we believe that there will be increased community engagement through the neighborhood itself. Looking to the OBNA as a model, we found that they have been successful in reaching members all around the neighborhood because they reached out to church leaders to both publicize and bring people
to engage with the community organization. We believe that if the CHA can facilitate these relationships by endorsing neighborhood associations and helping to reach out to the leaders, then they can create a stronger connection of all types of community community organizations to make residents engage more in their communities.

Additionally, we believe that the CHA should look to invest in religious spaces as a way to increase the number of community spaces. 20% of our Community Survey respondents reported that they would attend community meetings if held in a church. By making a church more inviting through the investment of its facilities, or by creating new spaces, we believe there could be an increase in community engagement and usage through the community space. We believe that the CHA should look to fund small projects of beautification around churches, to create a more inviting space for the members of the church. We found additionally through our asset mapping that neighborhoods with more churches appeared to appear in more vibrant neighborhoods than neighborhoods who had only 3-4 church in their area. Religious spaces can be inviting places at the center of a neighborhood, and the CHA can help by maintain that by investing in the upkeep of these communal spaces.

Communal Spaces in Housing Recommendations

Given the concerns about communal spaces in housing with regards to limited space, we recommend that the CHA look first to existing public spaces that are close to housing developments as potential social and meeting spaces for residents. Religious areas, schools, and parks are some specific places that the CHA can look to for communal space.

However, given the wealth of literature review and community survey responses that show the importance of communal areas in housing in promoting vibrancy, we want to make a few recommendations regarding these spaces. Recommendations on the design of these spaces can be found in the Housing Design section. In this section, we have three recommendations concerning the management and programming of communal spaces in housing.

Equal access to communal spaces is important in breaking down social divisions between residents and promoting a sense of community. The location of the space should be easily accessible by all residents. Ideally, the communal space would be centrally located and either on the first floor of a building, or easily reached by elevator. The times of operation for the space should also be set to be as inclusive as possible. For example, if the communal spaces are only open during the daylight, this may exclude residents who work 9-5 jobs. Programming for the communal space could be decided to specifically leverage the different times of availability of different resident groups (depending on the demographics of the development). For example, senior citizens could use the communal space during the morning, while in the afternoon it could be used as an after school space for children. This flexibility in usage would attract all types of residents to use the space, expanding the feeling of ownership and accessibility. This recommendation should be considered based on a development’s availability of communal spaces. In a development when several communal spaces, having a diversity of programming for specific groups would encourage social interactions without excluding certain groups. However, if the development has few, or only one, communal space, the implementation of time and interest specific programming may actually exclude groups.

To ensure the safety, cleanliness, and appropriate use of a space, it is critical for personnel to be appointed for the specific management of communal spaces. Our research suggests that
these responsibilities should be shared between management and residents, with open channels of communication between the two groups. While management involvement is critical to ensure that there is enforcement of rules and consequences for negative behavior, residents should play a key role in deciding the actual use of the space in terms of programming, to increase feelings of ownership and belonging. These resident responsibilities could build on the existing tenant patrol program, which residents in traditional public housing were “moderately satisfied” with. Residents in the tenant patrol program are paid a small stipend for helping maintain a safe living environment by collaborating with community policing and security strategies developed by managers and the CHA. The tenant patrol program is thus a potential model for how managers and residents could work together to ensure the safety and appropriate use of the communal space. Management should seek to reach a diverse group of residents for input, so the resulting decisions about the communal space will better reflect the general interests of the resident population.

For mixed-income developments, the CHA should pair communal spaces with programming designed to bridge social divisions between residents of different income levels. This follows the practices of The Community Builders Inc. as mentioned in our Key Findings sections above. However, our literature review suggests that these programs should reach both subsidized and market-rate renters, rather just focusing on teaching good neighbor behaviors to subsidized renters. Outreach to market-rate renters would help break down some of the stigma and negative stereotypes surrounding public housing and low-income residents. While these programs would increase the involvement of management in designing and planning such programs, residents could potentially aid in the planning and execution process. Furthermore, these programs have the potential of increasing social interactions between residents of different income groups, a goal of mixed-income housing that has not been achieved as of yet.

Further Research
Creating a survey and conducting interviews regarding school spaces and their role in a community will help the CHA and CPS system collaboration determine more specifically the multiple uses for the space. The survey should have a multifaceted approach, targeting school administrators, teachers, and parents in order to paint a fleshed out picture of what people think the school can further provide, other than being a house of learning for youth. Furthermore, the survey should delve into whether or not communal meetings already take place in school spaces. It could even go beyond the use of schools to ascertain where certain neighborhood meetings are likelier to take place, ask about the happiness level of these resources, and move towards bettering any potential dissatisfaction.

Compiling lists of churches and church groups within each neighborhood to help connect new community groups find established groups. By creating a comprehensive list of religious spaces and groups in the community, the CHA can find can look towards already established
bodies that can be an anchors for new initiatives and projects they want to enact. The church is a great way to attract members from all over the community, and can be a resource when understanding the needs of a neighborhood and the types of people within it.

It would be beneficial to craft targeted surveys exploring public opinions about the utilization of parks. These surveys should address concerns about public safety, current and desired programming, and other factors that impact an individual’s likelihood to frequent their local park. This will offer a more nuanced understanding of how park spaces are currently utilized, and to implement subsequent policies and initiatives that align with resident needs.

A targeted survey for CHA residents could allow for information collection on how CHA residents feel about communal spaces in their housing developments. By narrowing the target population of the survey to just CHA residents, the survey results could better inform recommendations for how to improve communal spaces in CHA housing than the responses from the survey we conducted on general Chicago residents. This resident survey could ask questions about how CHA residents currently use available communal spaces as well as questions on what they would like to see in their communal spaces. The scope of this survey could even include questions about any programming that occurs in communal spaces within housing, to gauge resident interest in different types of existing programs so as to better inform programming for the future.

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Safety

In the 2000 Plan for Transformation, the Chicago Housing Authority (CHA) expressed a commitment to creating safe communities. In the 2013 Plan Forward, the CHA again highlights safety as a key concern, indicating that safe housing is “the foundation upon which people build their lives, and in turn their communities.” Safety is vital to community building, and thus vital to promoting community vibrancy. Chicago residents, too, believe that safety plays an important role in community vibrancy, as 10% of community survey respondents referenced safety when asked “What makes your neighborhood feel like home?” This section explores the role of safety in promoting community building and neighborhood vibrancy, and provides substantive recommendations to ensure that the CHA can better promote safety and security for its residents.

Our community survey data, in-depth interviews with CHA representatives, and observational research at community meetings reveals that community participation and policing plays a large role in making residents feel secure. Within housing developments, we determine that developers face the challenge of providing communal space while maintaining a safe environment for residents. We find that vacant land is often perceived as dangerous, and may benefit from transformation into spaces that are valued and self-policed by residents. These various elements must all be addressed in order to offer a comprehensive approach to safety. It is our hope that the findings and recommendations we offer will inform the Plan Forward in its efforts to create safe, vibrant communities.

Summary of Recommendations

- The CHA should work with the Chicago Police Department (CPD) to increase accountability to ensure that all CHA residents receive adequate police and security services.
- Methods of community policing, such as the Chicago Alternative Policing Strategies (CAPS) initiative, should be encouraged and emphasized.
- Developments must ensure that common areas are well-designed and actively promoted for frequent use, such that the area will be self-policed.
- The CHA should partner with residents or citywide organizations such as the Chicago Park District to transform vacant land into well-used, safe community spaces.

Key Findings

Unique and specialized approaches to security may be the most effective way to create safe communities for CHA residents. The CHA has a long history of exploring how to best provide a secure environment for all residents. The CHA once had their own police force, the Chicago Housing Authority Police Department (CHAPD), which was created to supplement the Chicago Police Department and provide specialized policing to residents and CHA properties. According to CHA documents, the CHAPD consisted of around 300 active officers that patrolled CHA facilities and surrounding areas starting in the 1970s. At the time, CHAPD was known for the specialized services it offered to CHA residents. This kind of specialized approach to policing may be particularly important in public housing communities. In *Under Siege: Poverty and Crime in a Public Housing Community*, Walter DeKeseredy presents the nuances and intricacies of crime in public housing communities. After analyzing the ways in which crime uniquely
manifests itself in communities similar to those of several CHA developments. DeKeseredy ultimately advocates for specialized solutions, such as a police department dedicated to public housing needs. However, as part of the Plan for Transformation, the CHAPD was disbanded and funds were transferred to other city departments, such as the Chicago Police Department. In an extended interview, Francine Washington, CHA resident and Chairperson of the Central Advisory Council, discussed problems with the current security services provided to CHA developments by the Chicago Police Department. She reported a lack of accountability for officers at CHA developments, citing instances where senior officers would choose to be assigned to CHA property in order to avoid direct supervision. According to Ms. Washington, this has led to officers remaining off task in their vehicles rather than patrolling the surrounding area. Further, Ms. Washington stated that while the CHAPD was flawed, residents felt a greater sense of security when they had specialized policing that was dedicated to and invested in the CHA and its residents.

Community engagement in policing and security is essential to safe neighborhoods, but is widely neglected. We conducted observational research and interviews to determine how communities engage with issues of safety and security. By attending CAPS meetings in communities that have CHA developments, we were able to better understand the process of community policing. The CAPS initiative was instituted in Chicago in an effort to promote collaboration between community members and the police in addressing crime. The issues discussed at these meetings are very relevant to the community, as residents were able provide CPD with areas of interest -- spaces where crime or suspicious activity occurs. However, the percentage of attendees affiliated with the CHA was very small. This problem is reflected in our interviews with Sandra Young and Francine Washington. Both Sandra Young, former CHA commissioner, and Francine Washington spoke to the need for more CHA residents to engage in community policing through CAPS. Both spoke of the specific and unique safety needs of CHA residents, but also admitted that residents do not often participate in the CAPS initiative. This aligns with data from our community survey, in which we found that less than 6% of total respondents, and even less CHA residents, attended CAPS meetings.

The CHA faces the challenge of providing safe communal spaces. In past decades, many of the safety issues in Chicago’s public housing have been associated with poorly maintained common spaces that are conducive to loitering and criminal activity. From interviews with public housing developers and organizations, we found that even with the demolition of the most dangerous public housing sites in the Plan for Transformation, creating safe common spaces continues to be a key challenge for developers and architects. CHA’s Senior Director of Development, Lee Pratter, emphasized the importance of community spaces in public housing sites, and Central Advisory Council member Claudice Ware echoed that “in mixed-income housing often times there aren’t enough spaces for families to gather for events [and] activities.” However, these sentiments are at odds with the concerns of Senior Vice President of Brinshore, LLC Peter Levavi, who commented that “the most important thing [in public housing design] is not to have public spaces,” and that “common quarters...don’t work because there’s nobody and
they become dangerous.” Drawing from the sentiments of our interviewees, we determined that the CHA faces the challenge of deterring crime while providing residents with spaces for communal activities.

The transformation of vacant land presents an opportunity for providing an increased sense of safety for CHA residents. From asset mapping, we discovered that the number of vacant land parcels greatly outnumbers the number of parks in the Oakland, Old Town, and Lathrop Homes study areas. We find that vacant land contributes to the negative portrayal of many communities, as it is often associated with crime and illegal behavior. For example, 79% of respondents from our community survey felt that vacant land and buildings attract illegal behavior. Transformation efforts can shift this perception, thereby making residents feel safer in their communities. However, to simply build these new spaces out of vacant lots will not guarantee that these spaces become safe spaces.

William Whyte argues that many conceive of unsafe spaces as spaces that are populated by "undesirables," which Whyte describes as "winos, derelicts who drink out of half-pint bottles in paper bags." However, he claims that it is not the undesirables themselves who cause issues, but rather the measures taken to deal with undesirables. Whyte notes that the spaces that are the safest are spaces that are self-policing. In these spaces, people are left to their own devices, and no one is unduly singled out, followed, or harassed. Rather, the spaces are so attractive to all people that they attract a diverse array of peoples, and in being used so frequently by so many people the spaces takes on new identities, and are cared for by the people that use them. Thus, measures should be taken not to deal with the ‘undesirables’ themselves, but instead to change the spatial identity of the space by making it attractive to all people, and in doing so making the space self-policing. Accessibility, usability, and meaning all play key roles on the development of a spatial identity, and spatial identity determines how much a space will be used and thus whether that space can become self-policing. Thus, in transforming vacant lots into spaces that residents hope to see in the place of those vacant lots (see Figure 1: Land Transformation), the CHA and the city must work to make those new spaces accessible, usable, and meaningful so as to make them attractive to a wide array of people, and thus self-policing.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Possible Transformation</th>
<th>% of respondents who would like to see this transformation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parks (Sports field, dog parks, etc.)</td>
<td>58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Gardens</td>
<td>49%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farmer’s Markets</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Art Installations</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 1: Survey responses regarding vacant land transformation
Recommendations

CHA must work with the Chicago Police Department and increase accountability to ensure that all CHA residents receive adequate police and security services. In the 2000 Plan for Transformation, CHA claims that the transfer of policing services from the CHAPD to the CPD reflected a recognition that “all city residents, including CHA residents, deserve the same high quality of police protection.” However, through our research, it has become clear that various problems exist in the way CPD currently offers protective services to CHA residents. We found that many residents feel that officers assigned to CHA sites are not invested in the community, and that CHA officers often fail to adequately patrol the surrounding area. CHA should investigate these concerns and work with CPD to ensure that all officers assigned to CHA sites are held accountable.

Additionally, residents have voiced that they want to feel as though the police services they are offered are truly meant for CHA residents and specialized to some extent. While it is true that the demolition of high rise buildings reduced the need for specialized police services, as noted in the Plan for Transformation, CHA residents still comment on the importance of feeling as though their protective services are tailored to them. The CHA should work closely with CPD to reassess current services and tailor them to CHA developments and residents.

Going further, the CHA could benefit from a more formalized partnership with the CPD. We can look to the New York City Housing Authority (see Case Study), where a partnership between the New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) and the New York Police Department (NYPD) allowed for a specialized bureau within the NYPD for NYCHA residents. This allowed for the transfer of policing away from the housing authority while still ensuring protection for its residents. While increased collaboration with CPD could manifest itself in various ways for CHA, it is essential that residents feel as though the CHA is actively invested in their safety and security.

Methods of community policing, such as the CAPS initiative, should be encouraged and emphasized. Through observational research and a series of interviews, we determined that community policing efforts play an important role in neighborhood vibrancy. Citizens hold unique and in-depth knowledge of their communities, and are therefore well-equipped to speak to the community’s needs. The importance of resident input in policing was emphasized in many of our interviews. In the words of Francine Washington, “the only way crime is going to change is if we all go and all speak out,” but “a lot of folks don’t see that CAPS meetings can
actually help.” According to data collected from our Community Survey, less than 6% of respondents reported that they had attended a CAPS meeting. In order to increase participation in community policing efforts among CHA residents, there must be an active effort to encourage and emphasize such initiatives. Simple measures, such as increased advertising for CAPS meetings, could greatly influence the amount of CHA residents that engage with community policing efforts. We propose a media campaign aimed at increasing awareness for local CAPS meetings as a potential strategy for the CHA to encourage resident participation. This could be done through online means such as Facebook and email, or through poster and mailing campaigns. By making information such as the time and location of the next meeting readily accessible, CHA would emphasize the importance of civic engagement in policing and security services.

**Developments must ensure that common areas are actively promoted for frequent use, such that the area will be self-policing.** Because we found in interviews across multiple sections of our report that common areas are important assets to housing developments, we propose a strategy for providing common areas without compromising safety. Common areas become safety concerns when they are left unused and are not well-surveilled, as they often were in traditional public housing developments before the Plan for Transformation. However, Lee Pratter, CHA’s Senior Director of Development, highlights that when common areas are effectively managed and positively used on a regular basis, they become strong, naturally maintained community assets.

This sentiment was echoed by several interviewees, such as public housing architect Alphonse Diaz, who added that such common areas promote informal community policing by allowing residents to feel “accountable for the long-term upkeep and maintenance of the public space.” We thus recommend that common areas be amply provided and actively promoted for frequent use, such that the areas will be self-policing. Diaz elaborates that the more valued spaces that are provided by a residence, the more likely it is that residents will engage them and become active stakeholders in their building’s community. These spaces do not have to take the form of a typical community room. For example, Diaz explains that community gardens are effective in holding residents accountable for the maintenance and self-policing of outdoor spaces. He describes how “rooftop and backyard gardens in public housing have worked incredibly well when it comes to the engagement of residents and, subsequently, holding residents accountable for the perceived state of their buildings.” The Community Gardens section can provide insight on best practices for creating garden space. Guided by our conversations with housing developers and architects, we recommend providing a variety of types of common areas that are well-promoted and designed with resident preferences in mind, such that they will be utilized regularly and self-policing.

**The CHA can partner with citywide organizations such as the Chicago Parks District or local residents to transform vacant land into well-used, safe community spaces.** The results of our Community Survey indicate that 79% of respondents believe vacant land and buildings attract illegal behavior. In order to help resident feel safer, we recommend that the CHA partners with citywide organizations or local resident groups in order to transform CHA-controlled vacant land into well-used community spaces to transform potentially dangerous space into safe space. We highlighted in our key findings that spaces that are frequently used and highly valued by residents become self-policing. By converting vacant land into spaces that are desirable to the
largest amount of people, CHA would create spaces that are well populated, highly frequented, and therefore self-policied.

In the **Land Transformation** section of this report, we describe the importance of gathering resident input for transformation efforts. In order to make sure spaces are well-used, residents should be involved at the planning stages to incorporate their distinct knowledge and preferences into designs for new spaces. Thus, by converting vacant land into one of the four popular spaces identified by our community survey and further discussed in the **Land Transformation** section, the CHA can promote the creation of safe, vibrant spaces and increase the perception of safety in Chicago’s neighborhoods.

**Further Research**

In this section, we addressed how safety could be achieved primarily through policing or safe spaces that deter criminal activity. Future research could approach the topic from a different angle – instead of exploring policing and safe spaces as ways to protect CHA residents from the existing high crime rates, CHA could explore strategies to reduce crime rates themselves. When asked how a housing development could promote or detract from safety, Sandra Young responded: “We have a lot of shootings in the area, not break-ins or anything...if we can increase more after-school programs, we can decrease some of the unhealthy things that are going on on the streets.” Rather than speaking to CHA-specific issues with policing or surveillance, Ms. Young addressed safety as a neighborhood-wide concern with “shootings in the area” and "things that are going on on the streets.” This conceptualization of safety will be useful as we move forward, as safe and vibrant communities are certainly not localized at CHA developments. A fruitful direction for research may be exploring how the CHA may make a neighborhood-wide impact in reducing crime, perhaps, as Ms. Young suggested, through engaging youth. Additionally, we believe it essential that the CHA further look into resident concerns about the current state of security and policing services at CHA developments. By investing research into these areas, we believe the CHA could move closer to the development of healthy, safe, and vibrant communities.

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Services & Amenities

52  Public Transportation
59  Food Services
66  Health
72  Youth Services
80  Technology
Public Transportation

Public transportation plays a crucial role in shaping neighborhood vibrancy because it allows for “personal mobility and freedom for people from every walk of life.”

More concretely, public transportation links residents to almost everything: employment, education, restaurants, stores, health services, financial services, friends and relatives, and more. Given that 60% of public transportation rides are for work commutes, affordable and accessible public transit options have the potential to increase employment rates, particularly in low-income communities.

Public transportation also spurs local economies by increasing access to local businesses, thereby increasing the customer base. Additionally, public transportation improves quality of life by increasing physical activity; walking to and from transit helps people exercise.

Public transportation is especially important for low income individuals, such as CHA residents, because they cannot afford a car or other expensive means of transportation. Poor public transportation services can deter improvement of their economic and social conditions.

With regards to our research objectives, we first examine potentially impactful links of transportation to vibrancy. Second, we assess disparities in access to and quality of public transportation in Chicago. Third, we make recommendations based on our findings.

Summary of Recommendations

- Developing public housing on land that is close to bus and train stops will increase residents’ physical access to public transportation, making them more mobile and services more accessible.
- By forming a partnership with CTA and holding meetings with community members in concert with CTA staff, CHA will gain a better sense of the community’s public transportation needs and be able to address these needs through a partnership with the CTA. Several topics that may be brought up in these meetings and can be addressed include new bus routes, fare subsidies, bus shelters, and digital signs with estimated times of arrival.

Key Findings

Public transportation greatly impacts many Chicagoans’ access to services and amenities within their neighborhood and the rest of the city. As the United States’ second largest public transportation system, the CTA serves roughly 1.6 million riders on an average weekday. Research has shown that non-whites are the main demographic groups that use public transportation. Since 91% of CHA heads of households are non-white, it is especially important for the CHA to address issues of public transportation. Public transit is vital to reaching school, work, health care and other services. Furthermore, the American Public Transportation Association suggests that public transportation “provides personal mobility and freedom for
people from every walk of life” and gives “people transportation options to get to work, go to school, visit friends, or go to a doctor’s office.” Given the relevance of public transportation to neighborhood vibrancy, we now identify potential disparities in access to and quality of public transportation.

Access to public transportation varies across Chicago, and some CHA housing developments have poor access to public transportation. From CTA data, we mapped the density of bus stops by census tract. As seen in Figure 1, access to bus stops varied greatly across Chicago. A map of CHA developments was overlaid on top of this map, enabling the identification of public housing and residents’ access to public transportation. Many CHA developments have moderate access to transit and some have particularly good access to transit. Others, however, have poor access to transit and are surrounded by neighborhoods that also have poor access. These housing developments include: Trumbull Park Homes, Altgeld-Murray Homes, Bowden Homes, Shakespeare, and Bridgeport Homes.

Low-income areas do not suffer from a lower density of bus stops. We compared the density of bus stops by census tract with the average income level by census tract to identify any disparities in the number of bus stops per area based on income. The juxtaposition of Figures 1 and 2 suggests that richer census tracts do not boast more bus stops per area. Indeed, a regression analysis showed no significant correlation between density of CTA transit (bus and train) stops and average income level (Figure 3). An increase in the average household income by $1 is associated with a decrease in 0.797 squared meters per transit stop. As income increases, the area per transit stop decreases, which means that richer people can more readily access a transit stop in their neighborhood. However, this relationship is not statistically significant, with a p-value of 0.293, which is smaller than the standard significance level of 5 percent.
Some CTA riders may encounter limited access to public transportation due to low frequency of transit, especially on weekends. In an extended interview with a CHA resident, we found that one of the buses the resident uses only runs on the weekdays. This poses problems because it limits people’s ability to travel on the weekends. Heather Tabbert, Manager of Local Planning and Programs at the Regional Transportation Authority, identified improving the frequency of transit as a priority. This suggests that frequency of transit may inhibit some Chicago residents’ use of and access to public transportation.

Resources to improve public transportation may not go towards the demographics and areas that need it the most. While most riders are transit-dependent, low-income individuals, policy tends to focus on recapturing lost markets in suburban areas, instead of improving transit in low-income levels.\textsuperscript{11} Furthermore, resources are being allocated towards developing transportation in Chicago’s downtown area in order to enhance affluent residents’ and tourists’ rights to the city, while areas outside of downtown are allocated less funding. Therefore, the ability for working people to get into the city is inhibited due to declining service levels and unreliable transit infrastructure.\textsuperscript{12} Ultimately, CTA’s focused investment in downtown transit negatively affects access to and quality of public transportation for transit-dependent, working people who reside far from the Loop.

The cost to travel on the CTA may inhibit people’s access to the CTA. In an interview, Heather Tabbert explained that the CTA often faces severe budget constraints, which often leads to increases in fares. However, some low-income persons may struggle to pay for relatively expensive fares.\textsuperscript{13} Additionally, Betty Thompson, the CHA resident interviewed highlighted the
cost of transfers as a barrier to transportation access. Many people need to take several buses or trains to arrive at their destinations, and with an additional cost for each transfer after the first, people are discouraged from traveling via public transportation.

There are disparities in the quality of Chicago’s public transportation, in terms of bus shelters and digital signs. Betty Thompson mentioned that only two bus shelters were in the nearby vicinity and expressed a desire to install more shelters and digital signs. In examining the CTA’s bus tracker map, it became apparent that the installation of bus trackers has not been evenly distributed throughout Chicago. Thus, it is important that the installation of bus tracker displays, which the CTA calls “valuable service tools,” especially for those without a computer or mobile device, be expanded.

There are ways to improve public transportation. Literature shows that in response to strong dissatisfaction, public transit in the United States often works to maintain existing customers through increased service frequency and quality in high-demand areas and by “exploring more effective ways of providing transit in low-demand markets, and expanding transit to serve off-peak and off-direction commutes.” The article also explores some examples of improvements, such as increased frequency, cleanliness and safety, all of which will be addressed in our recommendations. In addition, case studies have suggested that subsidy programs for public transportation can be effective in increasing access by making it more affordable. Improving physical and financial access of public transit may not be the only alternative for low-income residents. Research shows than owning a car may lead to better outcomes for low-income families. By taking both financial costs and opportunity costs into account, a report by the Brookings Institute argues for policies and assistance in increasing car ownership for poor workers. Ideas from these case studies and research can be utilized to improve public transportation for CHA residents.

In Chicago, subsidized or free fares exist for seniors, disabled persons, and public students, but have not been applied to low-income persons. However, some cities, such as Seattle, have created transit subsidy programs targeted towards low-income residents. The case study describes Seattle’s ORCA Lift program in greater detail. Many other cities have a similar program or are considering starting one. For example, Seattle and San Francisco started the fare program, Muni Lifetime, in 2005; however, it remains a small program with only 20,000 card holders. Others have tried different approaches: Greene County, OH social service providers have bought and distributed travel vouchers to their clients and nonprofits in western Pennsylvania have offered bus service for the poor. Additionally, a new report by the
Community Service Society of New York proposes halving the fare for the working poor. By supporting commuters who may be too poor to live where they work, these initiatives show that subsidizing something as simple as public transit is not trivial.

**Recommendations**

The CHA should consider developing on land in the vicinity of public transit stops in order to increase access to public transportation for its residents. The key findings demonstrated that public transportation plays a key role in access to school, work, and other services. Therefore, enhancing CHA residents’ access to CTA will also enhance their access to these important services. In fact, Yonah Freemark, from the Chicago Metropolitan Planning Council, discussed the importance of planning good bus practices into the design of the Lathrop Homes redevelopment. This advice should be applied to all other CHA’s future development projects.

To ensure that the community’s transportation needs and concerns are addressed, the CHA should form a partnership with the CTA and hold community meetings with the CTA. Establishing a partnership with CTA will allow the CHA to work together with the CTA to improve CHA residents’ access to and quality of public transportation. In conjunction with the partnership, CHA and CTA should hold meetings with CHA residents. As Betty Thompson pointed out, it is important for community members to have a say in their community’s public transportation and any changes that may occur. These community meetings would be an opportunity for community members to voice the issues they may have with the public transit in their communities and suggest ways to improve the access to and quality of public transportation. From case studies and interviews with Heather Tabbert and Betty Thompson, a few potential topics that may be addressed have come to light:

- CHA could work with CTA to increase the number of bus and train routes in existing CHA developments that suffer from poor access to public transit, such as Trumbull Park Homes, Altgeld-Murray Homes, Bowden Homes, Shakespeare, and Bridgeport Homes. For example, Yonah Freemark suggested a bus route through Lathrop Homes to connect the Blue line to the Red/Brown lines.
- CHA could partner with CTA to subsidize public transit for residents through a reduced-fare program for low-income residents, similar to the case studies described in the key findings. The CHA can establish a system of co-pay between CHA and employers, directly provide travel vouchers like the social service providers in Greene County, or help register CHA residents for a subsidy paid by the City of Chicago.
- Both Heather Tabbert and Yonah Freemark emphasized that increasing frequency of service of public transit should be a priority. Through community meetings, CHA residents could express their concerns for areas that are especially lacking in this regard.
• CHA could partner with CTA to hold “Super Transfer Days” during weekends or during special cultural events (e.g. NFL Draft City) in which transfers are free, as suggested by Betty Thompson. This will make it easier for those who need to make multiple transfers to travel into the city more often and participate in the diverse events that Chicago offers.

• CHA could work together with CTA to install estimated arrival time signs and bus shelters at the bus stops in their neighborhoods, which was also suggested by Betty Thompson. The signs and shelters will make it easier for community members to travel: the shelters make waiting for transportation more comfortable and the signs allow travelers to get a sense of how long they need to wait and an estimate of when they will arrive at their destination.

Further Research
To complement our findings on disparities in access to and quality of public transportation in Chicago, we have identified various areas that should be studied further. While our community survey provided some insight into demand for public transportation, future surveys should also capture resident perspectives on ways to improve public transportation. Some potential questions include the following:

○ How often do you use the CTA?
○ What percent of your monthly income do you spend on public transportation?
○ Do you own a car?
○ Is car ownership important to you?
○ What are some potential underserved areas in terms of public transportation?
○ Choose the three transportation amenities that are most important to you:
  ■ Better bus routes
  ■ More frequent buses
  ■ Bus shelters
  ■ Digital signs in bus stops
  ■ Subsidized transportation fares
  ■ Safe routes to get to CTA stops
  ■ Other: __________
○ How can the CTA be improved?

Beyond these suggestions, CTA and CHA could also explore topics such as the frequency of bus services, the prevalence of digital signs and bus shelters, existing CTA partnerships, and the importance of car ownership. By examining bus schedules in greater detail, potential disparities in the frequency of bus services can be identified, particularly on the weekends. Although we could not find publicly available data, it would be interesting to identify any correlations of average income with the number of bus stops with digital signs and bus shelters in a census tract. CHA can also explore current partnerships between CTA and other organizations, such as the University of Chicago’s 171 and 172 buses, to understand the feasibility and limitations of a potential partnership. Finally, since one study revealed that owning a car may yield better outcomes for low-income families, CHA should conduct a cost-benefit analysis of car ownership for its residents.

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Food Services

Food plays a fundamental role in cultural, social, and economic vibrancy within communities. However, proper nutrition through fresh fruit, vegetables, and other healthful whole foods are seldom achieved within low-income communities. Neighborhoods with insufficient opportunities to buy healthy, affordable food, for example, are disproportionately plagued by obesity, chronic disease, poor nutrition, and hunger. Food insecurity is caused by inadequate food services and is closely linked to physical inactivity as well as to high levels of stress, anxiety, and depression in comparison to residents living in higher income neighborhoods with easy access to healthy food, particularly fresh fruits and vegetables. Ultimately, reduced access to fresh food contributes to cyclical deficiencies, epitomized by a deteriorated quality of life.

Given the links between nutrition and quality of life, we present three main objectives. First, we aim to establish trends within access to fresh produce, drawing upon a community’s median income, population, and the variety of food options available. Based upon these findings, we identify correlations between an area’s median income, population, and the variety of food options available with an ultimate goal of ascertaining metrics (such as fast food restaurants per capita). Once patterns and potential problems regarding a paucity of fresh food are established, we offer potential solutions and policy recommendations to improve the variety of food available and to increase access to fresh food through alternative avenues such as farmers’ markets.

Summary of Recommendations

- We recommend increasing community access to fresh produce by making quality grocery stores a priority development goal for CHA land, partnering with farmers’ markets, and transforming vacant lots into sustainable community gardens.
- The CHA and other organizations should create programming directed towards educating community members on nutritious eating practices and informing them of the resources available to achieve an affordable and balanced diet.
- The CHA and partners should assume a more active role in managing food services within communities through various methods, such as the development of CHA land, and the avoidance of forms of intervention with questionable benefits.

Key Findings

Within neighborhoods across the country, many communities lack the resources needed to provide residents with a balanced diet at affordable prices. This is especially pertinent when contrasted with the fact that out of 575 surveyed Chicago residents, 460 cited grocery stores as one of the most important establishments in their neighborhoods. Additionally, 74 residents were moved to write out “grocery” as a business they liked having or would really like to have in a free response question of our Community Survey. Given the importance of food to individual and household wellbeing, having access to affordable nutritious food is a vital aspect of community vibrancy.

Our asset mapping revealed a consistent and measurable disparity in food quality and access in Chicago’s neighborhoods. By analyzing this spatial data in coordination with income statistics, we found that these neighborhoods demonstrate a tendency toward food inequity for those
at low-income levels, with Oakland demonstrating the most significant case given that it has the lowest median familial income of the three sites. To demonstrate these findings, grocery stores and other food establishments have been analyzed as a fraction of total retail establishments in a given area in Figure 1. The prevalence of fast food restaurants, grocery stores, other restaurants, and cafes are also analyzed on a per capita basis (per 1,000 residents) in Figure 2.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Total # of Establishments</th>
<th>Retail</th>
<th>Fast Food Restaurants</th>
<th>Grocery Stores</th>
<th>Other Restaurants</th>
<th>Cafes</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Oakland study area</td>
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Figure 1: Number of food establishments

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<th></th>
<th>Total Population</th>
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<th>Grocery Stores</th>
<th>Other Restaurants</th>
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Figure 2: Number of food establishments per 1,000 persons

Through this data, it is evident that the highest concentration of fast food restaurants exists in the Oakland study area: the neighborhood with the lowest median familial income. While this concentration is not significantly removed from those of the Lathrop Homes and Old Town study area, the low concentration of grocery stores in Oakland is striking. In comparison, The Lathrop Homes study area has more than twice the number of grocery stores compared to Oakland, while the Old Town study area has three times this number. These differences corroborate the findings that fast food restaurants are particularly prevalent in low-income areas, with access to quality grocery stores lacking in comparison, suggesting that low-income residents may be consuming less nutritious and higher calorie foods in certain cases.

Oakland is home to the smallest number of restaurants and cafes per 1,000 residents. These food establishments typically serve as hubs of human interaction and congregation: both important factors of community vibrancy. It is quite troubling to note this large disparity, especially as it pertains to “other restaurants,” in Oakland (wherein “other restaurants” is defined as all “other restaurants” that are not fast food restaurants). In general, the findings demonstrate the inequity of fresh food access in neighborhoods since lower median familial income appears
to be positively correlated with the presence of fast food restaurants, and negatively correlated with the presence of grocery stores, other restaurants, and cafes.

Given the distinct inequity in healthy food access throughout Chicago’s communities as demonstrated by spatial mapping, it is imperative to find alternative pathways to beneficial community nutrition. Through a review of academic and policy literature, Community Survey data, and findings from extensive interviews with stakeholders, we identify the following mechanisms as important contributors to equitable food consumption within communities.

The act of community gardening creates various health and social benefits for participants and can help gardeners achieve a healthier lifestyle and maintain better nutrition by consuming garden produce. In a 2013 study, researchers found a direct correlation between community garden participation and Body Mass Index (BMI). This finding is especially significant as BMI is a good indicator of a person’s propensity to develop diabetes and other diet-related health issues. By combating some of these negative side effects by encouraging fruit and vegetable consumption, community gardens may contribute to healthier neighborhoods. Beyond the lower average BMI recordings, community gardeners were also over three times more likely to consume fruit and vegetables at least five times daily in comparison to non-gardeners, further adding to community health effects. Chicago urban garden experts, Ken Dunn and Natasha Holbert, support this finding by citing dietary benefits as one of the largest byproducts of community gardening. Holbert argues that these effects are especially valuable for children where garden programs “provide kids with a window into healthy eating that they do not always see at home [and] teach children that produce can taste good and be fun to eat.” Introducing healthy foods to children at a young age is imperative to developing long-term beneficial eating practices.

Aside from the direct health benefits associated with eating a nutritious diet, community gardens streamline access to fresh fruits and vegetables, a dietary staple often lacking in low-income neighborhoods as demonstrated through a case study of community gardens in Toronto.

When asked to rank whether picnic tables and public grills were very important, somewhat important, not that important or not at all important, 442 of 555 (80%) Chicago residents answered that they felt picnic tables were very or somewhat important. 285 of 548 (52%) of Chicago residents that answered the second part of the question, felt that public grills were very or somewhat important. This is an important key finding because it suggests that Chicagoans value having public spaces to share food and indicates a potential association between food and social/cultural practices. Additionally, when asked to think of vacant lot and how to potentially use that land, 254 of 575 (44%) Chicago residents marked that they would like to see
the empty land used for a Farmer’s Market, further demonstrating the demand for fresh, local produce in Chicago neighborhoods.

In order to better understand the relationship between income and accessibility to fresh produce, as reported by respondents in our Community Survey, we had conducted a standard OLS regression using the Stata statistical software package. Essentially, to the question about whether respondents believed they had access to fresh produce in their neighborhood, we coded “disagree” or “strongly disagree” with 1 (and “agree” and “strongly agree” with 0). Then, we coded an income of $40,000 and below with 1 (income above $40,000 was coded with 0). The results show that having an annual household income of below $40,000 is statistically associated with a 15% increase in the probability that someone responds with either “Agree” or “Strongly Disagree” to the mentioned question instead of the optimal “Strongly Agree.” Seeing as low income is correlated with a lack of access to fresh produce, we believe that these results from our survey imply that low-income residents suffer from a lack of access to fresh produce on a much larger scale than those with higher median incomes.

**Recommendations**

Given the lack of equitable food access within many Chicago neighborhoods, we recommend expanding food services to community members. These services will both increase access to affordable and nutritious food and promote the utilization of available produce. The strategies are focused on creating healthier individuals by shaping the nutritional landscape of neighborhoods and by changing the consumption behavior of residents to consume fresh produce rather than processed convenience foods.

**Make quality grocery stores a priority of development goals for CHA-controlled vacant land.** The CHA could dedicate some of its 338 acres of vacant land spread across the city to quality grocery stores that sell fresh produce to address a strong desire by Chicago residents for a greater number of grocery stores. Whether it be through sale or partnership, the CHA has the opportunity to improve Chicago’s well-known challenges with food deserts, and the CHA should build these grocery stores in densely populated areas rife with poverty. Alternatively, the CHA should provide CTA subsidies for its residents who live in areas with limited access to food—fresh food, in particular (limited could be defined as a particular resident not being within a predefined number of miles of a grocery store) given that vehicle access is “perhaps the most important determinant of whether or not a family can access affordable and nutritious food.”

Thus, either affordable food options should be brought closer to residents, or residents should be empowered to more easily access these options.

**Provide farmers markets by partnering with current farmers market manager.** Currently, there is a disparity in the number of farmers markets in low-income areas in Chicago. To increase the availability of fresh produce and encourage economic vibrancy, the CHA should establish
farmers markets at their public housing sites or vacant land and should incentivize farmers to attend these events by, for instance, providing them with a larger share of the revenues.

Transform vacant CHA land into sustainable community gardens. Given the demonstrated benefits of fruit and vegetable consumption to decreasing incidence rates of diabetes and obesity, dedicating vacant CHA land for gardening purposes can contribute to healthier neighborhoods. By increasing the number of community gardens in each neighborhood, and by committing sections of these areas for CHA resident ownership, the average cost of produce for low-income families may also decrease due to the provision of affordable garden produce outside of traditional grocery stores (See Community Gardens).

Implement CHA-sponsored educational programs that are nutrition and cooking focused as well as budget friendly. Currently, poor nutrition is often a result of Chicagoans lacking the knowledge of not only how to prepare and cook healthy meals for themselves and their families, but also how to maintain a healthy lifestyle via the foods they consume on a daily basis. Without this educational component, increased access to better food makes little difference. Thus, we recommend that the CHA launch an educational campaign providing residents with information on the deleterious impacts of excessive fast food consumption and advice on how to cook healthy and nutritious food on a limited budget. For instance, it was suggested by a key informant, Plant Chicago’s Farmers Market Manager Liz Lyon, that the CHA provide cooking workshops or demonstrations at the housing sites.

Forge partnerships with organizations such as Windy City Harvest to provide or inform these nutritional programs. Windy City Harvest works with WIC offices to provide families with education about nutrition. Partnering with an organization such as this would be wise because they already have extensive knowledge of the demographic the CHA serves.

Raise awareness and market the existing ways produce is being made more accessible. LINK offers a matching program that allows participants to purchase $50 worth of fresh produce for only $25. Liz Lyon, a farmers market manager in Chicago, informed us that there is low utilization of this program and that in her experience, very few LINK users are aware of this program. This lack of awareness and under-utilization of this program could be overcome by creating resources for residents that promote programs that would improve access to fresh produce and healthy food.

Reach out to community members to ensure food options are culturally appropriate. As demonstrated by the correlation between healthy eating and culturally appropriate produce, increasing the availability of culturally appropriate food may encourage individuals to make healthier eating choices. Further, incorporating residents’ opinions into materials on best practices that promote nutrition is an important step to eroding the stigma of healthy eating as conforming to a “dominant culture,” which disincentivizes healthy food consumption.
Avoid partnerships with corner stores to implement produce sections. As part of their primary research, the Louis’ Groceries board explored the possibilities for increasing healthy food access through existing neighborhood food establishments. The board found that corner stores were unwilling and unable to support produce sections as well as unable to find store partners that had the financial capacity and infrastructure necessary to install a produce section. In effect, these types of stores were found incapable of sustainably supplying produce as seen through the case study to the right.

Avoid establishing fast food chains on CHA-controlled vacant land. The CHA should leverage its political influence to strongly discourage the establishment of fast food chains and should not allow fast food chains to be built on its vacant land (especially if this land is in close proximity to a high concentration of its families). Our key informant interviews and literature reviews have shown that fast food restaurants have a negative impact in food deserts; these findings call for a reduction in fast food establishments in some of Chicago’s most impoverished neighborhoods. Thus, instead of fast food restaurants, the CHA should facilitate the building and introduction of food establishments, such as restaurants and cafes, which typically serve as hubs of human interaction and congregation - both of which are key contributors to community vibrancy.

Further Research

Moving forward, there are several areas of food services and food security that the CHA could evaluate. First, the CHA should examine the differences in racial compositions between various locations as they relate to food equity. While race may seem disparate from the concept of “food,” we have found that food access is inherently quite personal and various racial groups and demographics are predisposed to experience reduced access to various food options. Obtaining demographic data indicating the racial composition of a particular area, for instance, could better inform our suggestions and corroborate the findings from our literature review, especially seeing as race tends to be correlated with other metrics (such as income).

We also suggest that the CHA research the ways by which residents obtain nutrition. As certain areas indicate a lack of grocery stores and fast food restaurants, it would be enlightening to see whether residents make use of these limited resources, and therefore suffer nutritionally, or commute to other communities for their food needs. Along these lines, it is important to explore the possibility that some residents do not have food security and may go to sleep hungry. Thus, if hunger is a serious possibility, we recommend that the CHA examine organizations that target hunger, such as food banks and subsidy programs, to determine how the CHA could help advertise and encourage residents to utilize these resources.
Since healthy eating practices begin during childhood, the CHA should **explore various lunch programs in schools near to CHA buildings** and determine what percentage of CHA residents have children that are on a free/reduced price lunch programs. Taking the aforementioned hunger consideration into account, if these free or heavily subsidized lunches are a staple part of a child’s diet, it is necessary to ensure that these meals are healthy and wholesome.

Lastly, we recommend that the CHA **explore potential connections between food establishments and economic vibrancy**. As both observational and survey research designate grocery stores and restaurants important neighborhood establishments, it is worth exploring how these various food establishments benefit neighborhood economies and play a role in attracting visitors.

**Works Cited**

Health

Improvements in physical and mental health have the potential to play a major role in maintaining the health and vibrancy of a community. Individuals with good physical health are at lower risk of heart disease, diabetes, and certain types of cancer. Individuals in better mental health have lower risks of suffering from anxiety and depression, and are more likely to display high levels of self-esteem and cognitive function. Taken together, physical and mental health improve an individual’s quality of life, and individuals enjoying a high quality of life are more likely to be interested, satisfied, and engaged with the communities they live in. The goal of improving CHA health services has therefore become a central focus. Providing CHA residents with the health services necessary to improve their quality of life will allow the CHA to edge closer to its goal of building vibrant communities.

Summary of Recommendations

- The CHA should work to eliminate the powerful stigma associated with mental illness.
- Promoting healthy, happy, and safe communities, beginning with improvements in the home environment, builds neighborhood vibrancy.
- The CHA should encourage the utilization of vacant land and park design to promote physical activity.
- Inclusion of point-of-decision prompts in CHA building design will help promote physical activity throughout the entire building.
- The CHA should increase access and availability of professional programs and partnerships targeting mental health, especially for the residents in critical need.
- Annual health fairs hosted by the CHA can help ensure that residents have access to the care and information that they need to stay physically active.
- The CHA should create and promote the development of resident physical activity clubs and should partner with local physical health professionals and facilities.

Key Findings

There is a strong and concerning link between neighborhood environmental conditions and residents’ mental health. High poverty and low income communities are more prone to environmental disorders, violence, and unsafe neighborhoods. Overcrowded, isolated, and loud are oftentimes characteristic of the available housing units within these communities. These neighborhood safety concerns raise a resident’s level of fear of their environment, and prolonged exposure to stressful environmental triggers of this sort lead to constant heightened feelings of stress and fear. In turn, this has been shown to have detrimental effects on an individual’s mental health.

Findings from our Community Survey supports existing research that demonstrate that minorities and those of low socioeconomic status tend to have poorer health and are disproportionately affected by illness, disease, and disabilities, and have worse quality of and access to care. Low-income respondents (those who reported earning a household income less than $20,000) disproportionately disagreed with the statement, “I have access to affordable and quality health care” than those with higher incomes (Figure 1). CHA Demographic information from 2015 revealed that 91% of the CHA head of households are minorities and 81% of the households earn extremely low income (at 0-30% of local area median income). Given that CHA residents tend to lie within the demographic that experiences disparities in health
outcomes, access to care and quality of care, ensuring that the physical health needs of CHA residents are addressed, is imperative.

Figure 1: Level of agreement with "I have access to affordable and quality health care" by income.

Poor mental health is a barrier to building vibrant communities. John McPherrin, the Director of Psychology Training at the University of Chicago, describes psychological and emotional well-being of residents as being translatable to the “life, energy, richness, and variety” of a community. McPherrin explained that only when individuals derive “happiness and meaning” from their communities are they likely to “care about and maintain” those communities. Tony Tovar, Director of Community Relations at Oak Street Health, explained that a vibrant community is one with access to mental health services. McPherrin similarly explained that people are happier when they have access to enriching resources and activities, given that it incentivizes them to engage with their communities in meaningful ways. Therefore, a neighborhood without access to mental health programs and services that promote and provide support can never achieve vibrancy.

100 percent of CHA housing sites are medically underserved areas. All CHA housing sites have a shortage of health professionals, with 78% having a shortage of primary care, and 100% having a shortage of mental healthcare. There were 2.39, 0.64, and 1.10 health-related services mapped per one thousand residents in the Old Town, Lathrop Homes study area, and Oakland neighborhoods, respectively. Our Community Survey data also indicated that some people have limited access to primary care, specifically doctors and pharmacies. One indication of access to health services is how long it takes for people to reach the resource. About 17% of those surveyed take 45 minutes or more to arrive at the doctor’s office from their home, with the maximum travel time being three hours and 10 minutes. About 13% of those surveyed took thirty minutes or longer to get to the pharmacy, and the maximum recorded was an hour and forty-five minutes. These results indicate that many people encounter long travel times, which can inhibit their ability to access basic health services.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parcel Type</th>
<th>Old Town</th>
<th>Lathrop Homes</th>
<th>Oakland</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Health parcels</td>
<td>2.39</td>
<td>0.64</td>
<td>1.10</td>
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<tr>
<td>Clinics</td>
<td>0.68</td>
<td>0.27</td>
<td>0.28</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dental</td>
<td>0.24</td>
<td>0.11</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hospital</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eye</td>
<td>0.24</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mental Health</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pharmacies</td>
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<td>0.05</td>
<td>0.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fitness Facilities</td>
<td>0.24</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>0.14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 2: Asset mapping of type of parcel per 1,000 residents.

**Low-income residents lack access to physical health resources.** Limited access to these resources is associated with a decrease in physical activity. There are 0.24, 0.05, 0.14 fitness facilities per 1,000 residents in the Old Town, Lathrop Homes and Oakland neighborhoods, respectively. Additionally, findings from our Community Survey indicate that people desire better access to physical activity facilities in their neighborhoods than what is currently provided. When asked, “Are there any types of businesses you like having or would really like to have in your neighborhood?” about 20% of respondents indicated that they wanted more physical activity facilities such as fitness centers, yoga studios, pools, soccer fields, recreational facilities, and YMCAs in their neighborhoods.

**Resident survey participants display concerns related to physical and mental health.** Among the 565 community survey responses received for the statement, “I feel safe in my neighborhood,” 93 respondents disagreed, with 28 of those individuals strongly disagreeing. Respondents in strong disagreement with this statement overwhelmingly lived in low income, predominantly black communities, represented mostly by the South Shore (22%) and West Englewood (11%) neighborhoods, meaning these individuals not only live in low income households, but appear to also be experiencing fears of their environments, potentially associated with the violence and unpredictability, characteristic of unsafe, low income neighborhoods shown to increase levels of psychological stress. Similarly, in response to the statement, “I have access to affordable and quality health care,” 93 respondents were in disagreement, with 23 expressing strong disagreement, and representing 18 different home area zip codes.

**The CHA can create vibrant communities by improving mental and physical health services.** Taken together, the key findings have revealed important implications for the future direction of the CHA on the topic of mental and physical health. For mental health, this includes taking into account the importance of identifying resident’s feelings of fear within their housing units. This
also means considering the importance in fostering supportive relationships and implementing strategies to combat poor neighborhood mental health. Finally, the CHA should also consider the importance of identifying ways to continually provide residents with easily accessible and affordable mental health resources. For physical health, the key findings demonstrate the importance of addressing physical health among CHA residents and the lack of physical health services and physical activity resources in the communities.

**Recommendations**

**It’s time to break down the stigma associated with issues of mental health.** The CHA should provide residents the opportunity to understand the importance of mental health, to influence self and professional mental health evaluations, and to support and pressure individuals to seek and receive resources for themselves and for others. This can be done with the distribution of educational material in residents’ mailboxes or emails, with educational classes and programs in communal spaces in housing developments or local schools, and with the establishment of supportive community and professional groups targeting mental health awareness, recovery, and personal well-being. Suppressing any overwhelming stigmatizing attitudes directly in this way will limit the negative behaviors, attitudes, and attributions regarding the topic of mental health within a community.

**The CHA should promote and provide healthy, happy, and safe communities, beginning with the home environment.** Housing matters for psychological health, especially for low-income families with young children, where housing units further exasperate the social isolation experienced by mothers and inhibit play opportunities for children. Policy or housing design changes should focus on creating spaces to support neighborly and informal contact between residents and play areas for children, promoting healthy relationships within the community with the potential to lead to open and supportive communal systems. This strategy has the potential to create close, healthy, and friendly resident communities that will in itself combat the symptoms, disabilities, and stereotypes associated with mental illness, and well as the support needed for intervention, treatment, and recovery. See the Housing Design section of this report for more specific recommendations.

**The CHA should encourage the utilization of vacant land and park design to promote physical activity.** To increase physical activity, the CHA should utilize and design parks and vacant land uses to include sports fields and courts as well as walking, biking, and running paths. Our key findings suggest that these physical activity resources are not only in demand by residents, but also promote physical activity. Therefore, promoting the inclusion of these resources in vacant land uses and public park designs will help increase physical activity and address the desires of a majority of community survey respondents that identified these resources as desirable neighborhood assets.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Opinion</th>
<th>Sports fields/courts</th>
<th>Walking/running/biking paths</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very Important</td>
<td>57.58</td>
<td>77.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat Important</td>
<td>26.90</td>
<td>16.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not that Important</td>
<td>11.91</td>
<td>4.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not at all important</td>
<td>3.61</td>
<td>1.60</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figure 3: Importance of physical health facilities in public parks (%)*
The CHA should incorporate point-of-decision prompts into building design to promote physical activity. To increase physical activity, the CHA can use point-of-decision prompts and design buildings and stairwells in ways that are conducive to exercise. Point-of-decisions prompts are signs posted near escalators and elevators to encourage stair use. Point-of-decision prompts and remodeling stairways can promote physical exercise by improving aesthetics, access and safety.8

The CHA should increase access and availability of professional programs and partnerships targeting mental health, especially for residents in critical need. This necessitates the CHA to conduct surveys and gather data on the unmet needs of residents suffering from mental illness that require treatment. Collection of this data can identify both individuals at greater need for mental health care as well as individuals at greater risk of receiving no mental health care services. This can inform targeted interventions that may increase service utilization, be more time and cost efficient, and have the potential to reduce the prevalence of mental health illness. This would also necessitate revisions to the CHA’s current Health Partnership application process. Such revisions include the agency initiating first contact and inviting health organizations to complete an application, rather than awaiting the application of interested health partners.

The CHA should partner with existing organizations to host annual health fairs to ensure that residents can access the care and information that they need to stay physically active. Because access to primary care is essential to staying physically healthy, the CHA should host annual health clinics that offer basic check-ups and health education opportunities for residents. Check-ups are important for informing patients on the status of their health as well ways in which they can improve their health. The education component will inform residents on how they can lead healthier lives. These annual health fairs can be achieved through partnering with existing healthcare providers and hospitals.

The CHA should partner with local physical health professionals and facilities to create and promote physical activity clubs. Partnerships with health and community organizations can create opportunities for physical activity that the residents are interested in, such as walking clubs and community sports. Social interventions help increase physical activity.9 Therefore, forming partnerships with local health and community organizations to make these type of opportunities more available will increase physical activity and provide an opportunity for community members to interact with one another. The CHA should also explore forming partnerships with gyms and other fitness facilities to offer reduced membership costs to increase access given that increased access to these resources increases physical activity.10
Further Research
A greater understanding of CHA residents’ attitudes towards physical health and activity, their physical activity habits, and the things that they perceive as barriers to their physical health is important. In doing so, healthcare assets and programs can be better aligned to residents’ needs and interests. Furthermore, long term assessments of the types of mental health illnesses that residents may be suffering from will further inform the agency about the needs of its residents. A deeper understand of the nature of healthcare disparities will result in more targeted resident services and, ultimately, promote the development of happy, healthy, and vibrant communities.

Works Cited
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6. Gordon, Inequality In The Built Environment Underlies Key Health Disparities In Physical Activity And Obesity, 2006
9. Ibid.
10. Ibid.
Youth Services

Youth are our future leaders and thus must be considered key players in the process of building vibrant communities. Traditional discussions about youth services often assume that youth are ‘broken’ or at risk of becoming so, and often regard progress in terms of the absence of negative or undesirable behaviors. However, we would like to explore an alternative discourse that is more consistent with our working understanding of community vibrancy—a discourse centered around the Positive Youth Development (PYD) perspective, which has its roots in decades of research done by comparative psychologists and developmental scientists. PYD refers to intentional efforts to provide opportunities for youth to enhance their interests, skills, and abilities and is a term used in scientific literature and by developmental practitioners to refer to programs designed to optimize developmental progress. The philosophy that “if young people have mutually beneficial relations with the people and institutions of their social world, they will be on the way to a hopeful future marked by positive contributions to self, family, community, and civil society” is central to the PYD framework. By structuring our understanding of youth services with the PYD perspective, we show how the landscape of Chicago youth services, CHA’s youth services, and CHA’s Year of the Youth initiatives contribute to community vibrancy and may also be optimized to build more vibrant communities.

Summary of Recommendations

- Develop childhood interventions such as community youth establishments and after school programs in a way that is consistent with the PYD philosophy.
- Use the PYD philosophy to guide the development and evaluation of Year of the Youth Initiatives.
- Promote and create a more positive way of thinking about youth development.
- Ensure that youth programs meet the diverse and differing needs of each neighborhood.

Key Findings

In conversations with the Central Advisory Council (CAC) about the contribution of youth services to community vibrancy, there was a common agreement that all youth possess the potential and capacity for successful, healthy development. Based upon that agreement, we have found that a PYD perspective provides a positive, strength-based vision and vocabulary for discussing youth services that is consistent with our understanding of community vibrancy. PYD focuses on the active promotion of optimal human development rather than the prevention of risky behaviors in youth. Instead of grounding its developmental approach in the presence of adversity, risk, or challenge, a PYD approach is based on the concept that children and adolescents have strengths and abilities unique to their developmental stage, context, culture, and are not merely ‘inadequate’ or ‘undeveloped’ adults. PYD has five main tenets which were empirically defined through research evaluation as positive outcomes of youth.
development programs. Those tenets are organized by 5 Cs: competence, confidence, connection, character, and compassion (Figure 1). When these 5 C’s are present, the 6th C—“contribution”—is realized (Figure 2). Therefore, we believe that youth services structured by the positive, holistic vision and vocabulary PYD offers, are consistent with our understanding of what constitutes community vibrancy.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>“C”</th>
<th>Definition</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Competence</td>
<td>Positive view of one’s actions in specific areas, including social, academic, cognitive, health, and vocational</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confidence</td>
<td>Internal sense of overall positive self-worth and self-efficacy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connection</td>
<td>Positive bonds with people and institutions that are reflected in exchanges between the individual and his/her peers, family, school, and community in which both parties contribute to the relationship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Character</td>
<td>Respect for societal and cultural norms, possession of standards for correct behaviors, a sense of right and wrong, and integrity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caring/Compassion</td>
<td>A sense of empathy and sympathy for others</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 1: Five Cs of PYD

In addition to being consistent with our understanding of community vibrancy, youth services structured by the PYD perspective have been proven to generate positive outcomes. 4-H is a national youth mentoring organization that employs the PYD framework, and has produced robust results from an 8-year longitudinal study that began in 2002. Dr. Richard M. Lerner and Dr. Jacqueline V. Lerner, in addition to the rest of the team at the Institute for Applied...
Research in Youth Development at Tufts University, Medford, MA, have convincingly validated PYD. The results from these studies show that the PYD perspective is not simply a positive, holistic way of understanding youth development, but can also offer an effective framework for conceiving and implementing youth services in ways that lead to greater civic engagement, academic achievement, and healthier living among youth — all hallmarks and building blocks of a vibrant community.

Although the 4-H longitudinal study focused upon youth in grades 5-12, we have also found that early childhood services are essential to building vibrant communities and can be incorporated into the framework of PYD. Early brain development marks a period when the child is developing human competencies and heightened sensitivities, making this stage of early child development especially adaptable to positive interventionist programs. As such, this early development stage is also the optimal time for investment. The Head Start program, which CHA residents have access to through the CHA’s partnership with the City of Chicago’s Department of Family and Support Services, focuses upon this early stage of development and has proven, through robust and long-term evaluation, that pre-school enrichment programs significantly benefit both 3 and 4 year olds in cognitive, health, parenting, and socioemotional domains. Moreover, Head Start programs have been shown to increase parental involvement with children, which correlates with positive development of children and contributes to the “Connection” domain of PYD. Since early interventionist programs, such as the Head Start program, are able to provide the social structures for future academic, personal, and professional success, we believe early childhood intervention programs are consistent with the PYD model and are therefore important components of vibrant communities that can prepare youth to be active members of their community.

After school programs are also consistent with the philosophy that youth possess strengths and abilities that can be developed through beneficial relations with the people and institutions within their social world and thus contribute to community vibrancy. Previous evaluations of afterschool programming show that children who participate in afterschool programs make better decisions, have increased school attendance, exhibit better classroom behavior, make healthier food choices, and have increased parental involvement. After school programming has the potential to help develop all the 5 Cs of the PYD model, and thus help youth become contributors and leaders in society. As noted by Ariel Kalil, the Director of the Center for Human Potential and Public Policy at the University of Chicago, these programs often provide a safe space for children, which contributes to the development of “Connection,” or positive bonds with their surrounding community and institutions. This puts children on the trajectory towards becoming leaders of their community. Kalil also notes that “building social capital and taking pride in your surroundings” plays a large part of creating a more vibrant.
community and also begins to change the narrative of ‘youth as problems’ to the fundamental PYD view that youth are resources.

Connecting youth to adults through mentorship programs, such as job training and municipal engagement, may also contribute to developing the strengths and abilities of youth. Our community survey of 575 residents in the Chicagoland area revealed what residents think would make youth more successful (Figure 3). Residents were able to select many options. Job training and apprenticeship programs were selected most often, perhaps reflecting a belief that it is important to provide youth with programs and resources geared toward personal and professional development. Furthermore, these services may help youth become more positive and active members of their communities.

One recent method of optimizing the development of youth is creating youth mentorship programs. Beyond natural mentors, such as those who are not assigned to youth by a program, there are an increasing number of ‘mentorship programs’ that use match support techniques that could boost the quality and quantity of mentoring available to youth. These programs, such as the Big Brothers Big Sisters program, which has a partnership with the CHA, has proven to contribute to building bridges between the school and the workplace, helping children navigate the transition from one environment to another and thereby help establish overall community vibrancy. However, as promising as these programs have been, experts agree that more research needs to be done on how to cultivate existing relationships between youth and adults, and how to support natural mentors, who are more regularly present in children’s lives, such as siblings, teachers, classmates, and parents.

While the PYD philosophy is helpful in understanding how to develop youth service programs to build vibrant communities, every community has varying needs that must be taken into account. Through mapping different education establishments in our three study areas, we were able to capture some of the heterogeneous needs that exist across neighborhoods in Chicago. The Oakland study area showed a high concentration of K-12 schools, with between one to two of these schools for every 1000 youth residents between the ages of 5 and 19. Of these K-12 schools, half of them belonged to the CPS system while the
other half were charter and parochial schools. This diversity of education establishments is impressive because it theoretically gives parents more options for where to send their children to school. However, we did not observe any pre-schools in Oakland, which, according to our research, may be detrimental to a child’s capacity to learn and grow. This finding reveals another opportunity to strengthen access to existing Head Start programs and develop public or private partnerships to provide additional high-quality public preschools in that neighborhood — an initiative that has already been implemented successfully by housing authorities in Topeka (Kansas)\textsuperscript{12}, Paterson (New Jersey)\textsuperscript{13}, and Murfreesboro (Tennessee)\textsuperscript{14}.

The Lathrop Homes study area is home to a wide range of educational centers, from early childhood to high school. While there are no colleges in the specific neighborhood boundaries we examined, DeVry University and DePaul University are located nearby. CHA residents in this area could thus benefit greatly from the partnership CHA holds with the City Colleges of Chicago. Apart from college education, the prevalence of daycares in this area signals a vibrant neighborhood because children have safe spaces to learn and develop the 5Cs of the PYD model.

The Old Town study area has a mix of all types of education, with an extremely high number of K-12 schools per youth resident compared to other areas. The overall variety of education options available to Old Town youth also contributes heavily to economic vibrancy as noted by Todd Palmer, the Associate Director and Curator of the National Public Housing Museum, who described education as an important “socio-cultural” component that intersects with “structural elements” that impact economic vibrancy (see the Higher Education section of this report). Moreover, although we observed only one daycare for the 2,140 children under the age of 10 in Old Town, this lack of local preschools may be less concerning because parents might leave their children at home daycares, or drop them off at a daycare on their way to work. This may point to another opportunity for the CHA to develop stronger partnerships with early childhood intervention programs in Old Town to service this family-based needs.
Recommendations

The CHA should develop childhood interventions, in the form of community youth establishments and after school programs, in a way that is consistent with the PYD philosophy. This means that the CHA should develop programs with a positive and strengths-based perspective in mind, and with a focus on optimal human development rather than bad-behavior prevention. These sorts of interventions would promote the development of the five Cs that have been found critically important in the development of a healthy and happy child more willing to interact with his and her environment. Namely, the CHA must promote and help develop a child’s competence, confidence, connection, character, and compassion, which are skills that enable a child to succeed individually, academically, and socially. Facilitating CHA youth to acquire these skills would contribute to a more vibrant community.

The CHA should use the PYD philosophy to guide the development and evaluation of the Year of the Youth Initiatives. The focus of the CHA’s Year of the Youth is for youth program developments to continue fostering success by providing youth with the experiences and opportunities necessary for development and the skills necessary for lifelong success. In order to achieve this, the CHA must ensure that programs require youth to constantly test and develop their strengths and abilities in addition to developing relationships with the people and establishments within their community. The CHA should not only adopt the PYD perspective, but should adopt strategies meant to provide a constant feed of support for youth. This may include focussed efforts on youth mentorship programs, which assist youth during the most difficult transition periods in their life, and provide them with regular help and support.

The CHA should promote and create a more positive way of thinking about youth development. This may require the CHA to change the way residents think about youth. The PYD philosophy and the successes that would come with its adoption must be shared with both youth and adults in order to ensure an understanding of a changing perspective, the importance of youth success for the development of a vibrant community, and the help required of all community members, parents, and youth for optimum results. Promoting the importance of youth throughout resident communities would ensure that residents contribute to the group effort needed for both successful youth and for building a vibrant community.

The CHA should ensure that programs meet the diverse and differing needs of each neighborhood. Our key findings demonstrated differences in the type and number of educational establishments across different communities. While some communities, such as the Lathrop Homes study area, were close in proximity to the City Colleges of Chicago and contained an abundance of daycares throughout the community, other communities, such as the Old Town study area, did not have the privilege of being close to a center for higher
education or multiple early education centers. We recommend, through partnerships and promotion, that the CHA focus efforts on establishing spaces for youth within all communities, especially throughout neighborhoods currently without them. We also recommend that, within these youth establishments, the CHA focus on developing programs promoting the five Cs of the PYD model. Furthermore, we recommend that the CHA cater these establishments and programs to the specific needs of residents in each of the CHA’s housing developments. Parents, youth, and the community-at-large should have a say in the type and number of youth-targeted programs and establishments their neighborhood is in need of, and the CHA should consider those opinions accordingly in order to truly achieve a sense of community vibrancy.

Further Research
As the CHA proceeds to implement recommendations and general changes to their existing and future programs, it will be important to draw upon the best practice guidelines that have been developed for programs consistent with the PYD model. As noted earlier, the development of mentoring programs should be supplemented with research on how to cultivate existing relationships, not just between youth and caretakers, but also between youth and older peers, or youth and siblings. Finding ways to support youth through their natural networks of support could help in cultivating the “Connection” and “Caring” domains of the PYD model and contribute to community vibrancy. More research into how the 5 Cs of the PYD model can be measured, evaluated, and reported may also be beneficial for the CHA, so that the benefits of their programs can be fully recognized by stakeholders and the public. Finally, we recognize that there may be tension between using the PYD model to guide CHA youth program development and using more traditional forms of measuring success, for example, through employment rates, economic efficiency, and crime rates. While these traditional forms of measure should continue to be researched, there should be also a push to integrate the PYD values into program evaluation, for they provide a more holistic and sensitive understanding of how youth can best be afforded opportunities to develop and take pride in and ownership of their communities.

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Internet Access and Technology

Access to affordable internet and technology is a critical component of a vibrant community, as well as a necessary tool for academic and professional success. Our research has confirmed that a digital divide has left "many people in central cities and isolated rural areas unable to acquire the new technology as rapidly as their more affluent neighbors" and many "argue that low-income persons and minorities, particularly those that reside in inner cities, are among the groups that are being left behind." According to the US Census Bureau’s 2013 report, 62.4% of low-income households owned a computer (either desktop, laptop, or handheld) and 48.4% had some internet subscription. These proportions are much lower than every other higher income tier. The current divide is a barrier to educational and employment opportunities, and may hinder the vibrancy of communities. Furthermore, we not only believe that focusing our energy to provide free or subsidized internet and access to public technology is hugely beneficial, but also feasible. A report from the Department of Commerce found that groups who had struggled in achieving computer and internet access have made significant progress. This assertion suggests that bridging the digital divide is a realistic goal. Internet access is not currently provided by CHA, but technology centers are present in select developments. We believe that the CHA could reasonably implement our recommendations to provide accessible internet, an attainable goal that would support the Plan Forward strategies to build vibrant communities.

Summary of Recommendations

- Our overall recommendation is that the CHA should provide affordable internet access options to all public housing residents and Housing Choice Voucher holders.
- Any provider of internet for public housing should offer income-tiered pricing. If no private company can provide this, then the CHA should factor internet services into the cost of utilities when calculating rent.
- Engage in ConnectHome’s next implementation phase, producing a localized solution for combating technology-access inequalities.
- The CHA should partner with local nonprofits which provide education programs on technological literacy, teaching skills such as managing online presence, typing skills, and navigating basic computer programs.

Key Findings

A study conducted at California Jordan Downs, a Los Angeles Public Housing development, found that having a computer increased communication between teachers and parents and allowed parents to help their children with assignments more easily. The majority of participants believe that having access to a computer helps students get better grades in school. 90% of respondents agreed on some level to the statement: “Having knowledge of computers has/will allow me to help my child with schoolwork.” The study also found that having access to a computer meant students did not have to travel to a public library. Having a computer encouraged kids to stay home, where they could get help from their parents, and did not have to spend as much time traveling on their own.

A recent New York Times article, “Bridging the Digital Divide that Leaves Schoolchildren Behind,” by journalist Cecilia Kang reiterates the importance of internet access to a modern-day education. The article begins with an anecdote of two children who stand outside their school...
for six hours to do their homework because their parents could no longer afford their family’s data plan. Kang points out the hypocrisy of the modern day pro-tech pedagogy:

“With many educators pushing for students to use resources on the internet with class work, the federal government is now grappling with a stark disparity in access to technology, between students who have high-speed internet at home and an estimated five million families who are without it and who are struggling to keep up.”

The belief that technology is imperative to modern education is racing far ahead of the nation’s access to affordable internet. This augments the pre-existing education gap between high and low-income students.

Furthermore, a Federal Reserve study found that students with a PC and broadband at home have six to eight percentage point higher graduation rates than similar students who don’t have home access to the internet. Other studies have shown that broadband adoption efforts have resulted in higher test scores and that students actively and regularly used their computers and the internet for learning. About 77% of K-12 teachers assign homework that necessitates internet access. These findings suggest that internet is a crucial asset to academic performance and achievement. Internet is also necessary for finding other resources, such as a summer job or apprenticeship.

![Technology Access By Income](image)

Figure 1: Home Technology Resources by Income

The results from our community survey show that low-income individuals (defined here as an annual household income of less than $30,000) have less access to the modes of technology we asked about: computers, internet, cell phones and data plans (see Figure 1). Of these categories, internet access was the source of greatest disparity due to income level. While 63.8% of low-income individuals had internet access, 80.1% of the individuals from other income levels had access to internet, marking a 16.3% difference. Additionally, 65% of low-income individuals had access to a computer, while 79.4% of the participants from higher income levels had computer access. For national comparison, the US Census Bureau’s 2013 report states that 62.4% of low-income households owned a computer (either desktop, laptop, or handheld) and 48.4% had some internet subscription.

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On the other hand, the difference in cell phone access was smallest between low-income individuals and everyone else we surveyed. 93.6% of all respondents and 92.1% of low-income individuals had access to a cell phone. This is only a 1.5% difference among income levels. This finding supports our research into an interesting pattern of households that own only handheld devices: “low-income households reported handheld alone at much higher rates than affluent households.” 8% of low-income households reported using handheld devices alone. This percentage dropped with every increase in income bracket, with 1.1% of the most affluent households reporting to use only handheld devices. This data could have an interesting implication for our study of internet access for public housing individuals, as poorer individuals may be more reliant on institutions, such as coffee shops, that offer free WiFi that they could access with their cell phones.

Significantly, however, when asked how important internet access is, CHA residents found it to be less important than the overall participant of our survey (Figure 2).

There may be a confounding variable at play here for the importance of internet access to those who do not currently have it. When interviewing one woman, she marked internet access as ‘Not that important.’ She explained by saying, “Well it’s not that important for my home because I don’t have it. I just go to the library when I need to use [the internet].” Similar statements were heard by several surveyors. Furthermore, when asked ‘What would make youth more successful in your community?’ 23.6% of respondents included better access to internet as something that would make youth more successful in their community.

Asset Mapping

In the Old Town study area, 35 parcels were mapped that provide internet to the public at no/low cost. This is one Wi-Fi location for every 55 acres. Unfortunately, not all of these parcels allow unlimited access and most do not provide passwords unless a purchase is made. In Old Town, only Starbucks, Eva’s Café, and the Chicago Public Library were found to be welcoming to non-customers using their internet. In the Lathrop Homes study area, there are 16 parcels that offer free wifi. This is one location for every 65 acres that we mapped. Though there were more wifi spots in the Lathrop Homes study area, they were concentrated on commercial streets and not found near the development itself. In the Oakland study area, there
is one location for every 124 acres that we mapped. The café spaces were Sip & Savor, Ain’t She Sweet Café, and Dunkin’ Donuts. The former two are neighbors on 43rd street and the latter is located on the north side of 37th. These are the only work spaces in this entire study area, and even these are located on its boundaries.

Current Provisions from the CHA
The CHA has addressed the issue of technology barriers by including technology centers in a number of their developments (Figure 4).

There are only technology centers at a select few developments. From an education perspective, the hours are extremely limiting. Especially students with extracurriculars, a 7pm bedtime on online homework is a barrier to educational success. For the midnight deadline, the college application, or the parent working long shifts, technology centers should be open to residents at all hours, seven days a week.

For residents who want to access internet in their own homes, CHA currently recommends Comcast’s Internet Essentials plans for residents looking for subsidized service provision. Comcast offers a plan at $9.95 a month plus tax for internet and a low-cost computer for $149.99 plus tax.10 The eligibility requirements for Comcast’s plan are financially generous, but the plan is exclusive to families with at least one student on the National School Lunch Program (NSLP). Although this targets the group most in need of internet, it excludes a large population of low-income families just as deserving.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Computer Stations</th>
<th>Hours</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Atgeld Garden</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>Mondays - Fridays: 10am - 7pm 1st Saturdays: 10am - 2pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charles Hayes FIC</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>Mondays - Fridays: 10am - 7pm (subject to change)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>28</td>
<td>Mondays - Fridays: 10am - 7pm 4th Saturdays: 9am - 12pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lake Parc Place</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>Mondays - Fridays: 10am - 7pm 4th Saturdays 9am - 1pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lawndale Gardens</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>Mondays - Fridays: 10am - 7pm 3rd Saturday 9am - 12pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lowden Homes</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>Mondays - Fridays: 10am - 7pm 3rd Saturdays 10am - 2pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Major Adams Com. Ctr.</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Mondays - Fridays: 10am - 7pm 3rd Saturdays 10am - 2pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wentworth Gardens</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>Mondays - Fridays: 10am - 7pm 4th Saturdays 9am-12pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brooks</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Mondays - Fridays: 9am - 5pm (subject to change)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 4: Technology centers at CHA developments
For residents who want to access internet in their own homes, CHA currently recommends Comcast's Internet Essentials plans for residents looking for subsidized service provision. Comcast offers a plan at $9.95 a month plus tax for internet and a low-cost computer for $149.99 plus tax. The eligibility requirements for Comcast's plan are financially generous, but the plan is exclusive to families with at least one student on the National School Lunch Program (NSLP). Although this targets the group most in need of internet, it excludes a large population of low-income families just as deserving.

In a conversation with Jesse Handler, a University of Chicago graduate who does financial quality control for the housing choice voucher program, we learned that the Housing Choice Voucher program does not consider Internet plans in calculating housing costs. Handler said, “When we calculate the housing costs for each family (gross rent) we add the rent to the owner and what is called the utility allowance.. This amount is used in figuring out how much their rent will be subsidized. Right now the utility allowance includes heat, electric, water and sewer, microwave, but not internet or WIFI.”

Encouragingly, Handler also noted that the CHA is soliciting proposals for a new internet provider that would cover senior and family buildings as well as administrative users, and is “particularly looking at upgrading access in a number of buildings that do not have great internet now.”

Prospects for the Future
Shquestra Sitawi, a YWCA Staff member, states: “The digital divide is huge in urban, African-American communities” - not just in access, but also in literacy, because people never learn how to use it, which is a really important skill for future educational and career prospects.

However, this grim reality is one that we believe does not have to continue for CHA residents. A report from the Department of Commerce found that groups who had struggled in achieving computer and internet access have made significant progress. This assertion suggests that bridging the digital divide in terms of access is feasible in the future. Based off this research into internet and technology, we believe that we could make effective suggestions to the CHA that could be feasibly implemented.

The Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) has partnered with the Obama administration to address this disparity by founding ConnectHome, a nationwide public-private collaboration to narrow the digital divide for low-income students who live in HUD-assisted housing. ConnectHome supports locally-tailored solutions for increasing access to internet and technology necessary for building vibrant communities. HUD Secretary Julian Castro is extremely passionate about connecting every public housing home to wireless before Obama’s term ends in January 2017. In a fireside chat about Google Fiber, Castro said:

“As you look around the globe, the U.S. finds itself in an unprecedented competition of brain power with young people who are intelligent and tech savvy, and we need to do our part to make sure we don’t let that go to waste. That will be good not just for one company or industry, but for the United States.”

The pilot program is ending later in 2016, with 28 cities across the country concluding their localized plans. Each city is pursuing a partnership with private or nonprofit businesses or even creating new organizations to accomplish HUD’s goals.
Recently, New York City has worked with ConnectHome to expand internet access in the New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA). New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio piloted a $10 million project in collaboration with ConnectHome to provide free internet access to 16,000 public housing residents in Brooklyn, Queens, and the Bronx.13 Shola Olatoye, CEO of the New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA), said that the "NYCHA’s vision for the families who live in our communities is one that is safe, clean and connected. Our residents, who include more than 100,000 children, have lacked access to the benefits that the wireless broadband internet provides."14

After huge success in public housing, others were inspired to work toward providing internet for all New York City residents. The City of New York partnered with CityBridge to create LinkNYC — an initiative to transform phone booths across the city into internet hotspots.15 The booths also have a tablet with phone-call making capabilities, earphone jacks, and internet access. All of this is free to anyone walking down the street, and is expected to gross $750 million in revenue for the city. As of April 20th 2016, there were 150 of 7,500 kiosks activated with 2 million connections in the first week.

Another approach to reaching the goals of ConnectHome is the partnership between Kansas City and Google Fiber. In public housing developments in Kansas City, Google Fiber has provided free, high-speed Wi-Fi to all residents.

Google Fiber has already identified Chicago as a potential expansion city.16 With 11 cities across the US that have or will receive Google Fiber, being a part of Google’s list is not arbitrary. They have a real interest in expanding in our city, but infrastructure or bureaucratic barriers are likely culprits preventing their firm commitment to Chicago. If the CHA has not made a connection with representatives from Google Fiber, then they should do so.

Google Fiber wants to provide high-speed internet to the entire population, but is even more motivated by families with school-age children who do not have access to any speed of internet. In a report on their website, they explain why: “We often talk about how superfast speeds and access to home broadband can move entire communities forward. For low income families, access to the internet can mean the difference between thriving or falling behind.”17
Recommendations

Our overall recommendation is that the CHA should provide affordable internet access options to all public housing residents and Housing Choice Voucher holders.

Though the CHA currently partners with Comcast’s Internet Essentials, this program does not consider income in its pricing. Any provider of internet for public housing should offer income-tiered pricing. If no private company can provide this, then the CHA should factor internet services into the cost of utilities when calculating rent. Maya Wiley, Counsel to the Mayor of New York City, stated, “Broadband is critical if we’re going to have a socially inclusive society, much like water and electricity.”

Although partnering with private companies to get discounts on internet seems sufficient, the CHA should work towards the goals of HUD and the Obama Administration to provide free internet access to all public housing residents. The CHA should engage in ConnectHome’s next implementation phase. HUD encourages localized solutions to the internet barrier for low-income families. The following recommendations are possible solutions, or partial solutions, to closing the technology gap:

1. NYCHA was able to provide 16,000 public housing units with free internet access and inspire the city to move towards providing free internet access for the entire city. Like New York City, the CHA could provide free wireless to the entire city and simultaneously produce revenue for public housing.
2. At the Red Hook public housing development in New York City, Digital Stewards are trained and employed to build and maintain the development’s free wireless. The CHA could recognize the potential of internet to provide resident youth with meaningful education and employment.
3. The Kansas City Housing Authority partnered with Google Fiber to bring free wireless to their public housing developments. The CHA should reach out to Google with interest and a team willing to work toward free wireless in Chicago’s public housing.

Trinity Dishmon, Economic Empowerment Coordinator at the YWCA, told us in an interview that “there’s nowhere you can go in this country” without knowledge of technology - it’s absolutely crucial to educational success. The CHA should partner with local nonprofits which provide education programs on technological literacy, teaching skills such as managing online presence, typing skills, and navigating basic computer programs. Because access to technology can only be beneficial if everyone understands how to use that technology, programs that expand internet access must be accompanied by programs that aim to expand technological literacy.

Further Research

The CHA will play a key role in connecting its residents to all of the opportunities that internet access and technology provide. Democratizing information is no small task, but there are a few beginning steps which we would encourage the CHA to consider.

The most essential piece of research left to conduct is an evaluation of the internet and technology resources that CHA already provides. Surveys and interviews should be conducted on technology center hours and amenities, the burden of purchasing Comcast, and the importance of having internet for residents. Data could also be collected on how residents are
using the technology centers. The most important piece of research may be a survey on school-aged residents — since the goal of ConnectHome is to ensure that the students reach their full potential.

CHA should inquire with HUD about how to get involved in the next phase of the ConnectHome trial. Since ConnectHome emphasizes locally-tailored solutions to internet deserts, research would need to be done on the best approach for such a large and diverse agency and city. If partnering with ConnectHome is an option, the CHA should contact with Google Fiber and LinkNYC to learn more about their programs.

**Works Cited**

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11. National Telecommunication and Information Administration, *Falling through the net: Toward digital inclusion*, 2000
12. McCandless, HUD Secretary Julian Castro, Google Chairman Talk ConnectHome Initiative’s National Implications, 2016
Economy

89  Higher Education
93  Local Spending & Business Diversity
100 Business Support
Higher Education

Public housing is always and everywhere intent upon moving residents toward economic independence and self-sufficiency. Whether assistance from the Chicago Housing Authority (CHA) is temporary or lifelong, self-sufficiency can be attained through education, meaningful employment, and fiscal responsibility. Plan Forward acknowledges the importance of “expanding” services to more residents, targeted to their needs, and at critical milestones in their lives” by implementing programs to “connect adults to relevant training and jobs.” In this section, we will recommend bolstering particular programs and adding steps to ensure that every public housing resident reaches their full potential.

Summary of Recommendations

- Information sessions for the Partners in Education program should be offered at a wider variety of times to accommodate work schedules.
- The Partners in Education program should expand its funding to residents already without outstanding college debt and those who were not aware of the program before enrolling, and offer forgiveness of City College student debt upon successful program completion.
- We recommend that the CHA accounts for their residents’ investment in education with a financial incentive.
- The CHA should work with City Colleges to provide online GED preparation and offer scholarships for online higher education or technical training programs.
- Programs in financial literacy recommended by HUD should be more widely available for residents by improving access to computers and internet.

Key Findings

Public housing authorities encourage educational advancement for residents of all ages. The CHA’s Office of Resident Services is heavily focused upon providing educational services to help residents reach better employment opportunities on the path to self-sufficiency. The CHA currently partners with the City Colleges of Chicago (CCC) to provide low or no-cost tuition for GED, certificate, and bachelor’s degree programs for their residents. Residents enrolling in these programs are awarded financial aid grants of up to $4,000 each year. By enrolling in one of the City Colleges, CHA residents gain access to tutoring, academic advising, job placement, transfer assistance, and child care. Education also opens access to facilities such as computer labs and wellness centers. By investing in higher education, public housing residents gain access to amenities that enhance their quality of life.

Opportunities for higher education are afforded by the Partners in Education Program to residents who wish to earn their GED or a new college degree. This program, however, strictly prohibits funding to any student with outstanding debt or any student currently enrolled in a City College. The reason for this is that CHA residents must attend an informational meeting on the Partners in Education Program before beginning their studies. There is concern that this would exclude a substantial population of public housing residents from pursuing a degree in higher education, thereby disadvantaging their path toward self-sufficiency. A study by the National Student Clearinghouse Research Center shows that the category “Some college, no degree” is the most common degree of educational attainment in the U.S. Indeed, there are
37 million people in the U.S. who started college but never finished. Outstanding debt to a City College may be a likely financial state of a public housing resident in Chicago.

Other barriers to higher education begin before college attainment. The Partners in Education Program also covers costs of GED preparation and testing. But as of 2014, the GED test is administered online. Because of the lack of access to technology, familiarity with the online format is a concern for performance of any low-income test-taker. In a study comparing the online version to the 2002 edition, it was discovered that 22% of students would no longer attempt the test because of its online format. Teachers were concerned with this switch, saying that this was just another barrier for low-income students. One teacher suggested that these students “may not know how to use computers and they may not know how to type” and another teacher took a guess that “most of [the students] don’t even have access to the internet. From taking the test on the computer to the increased cost, it just seems like it’s one barrier after another that keeps students from being able to take [the new GED].”

With the GED evaluation becoming computerized, a question is raised about whether the method of teaching should mirror the format of the test. Whether it is the GED or a Bachelor’s degree, many adults across the country find that the convenience of an online teaching format affords them an opportunity they would not have had otherwise. In a 2014 Learning House survey, almost 90% of online students surveyed report that online study was equal to or better than classroom study and one-third report they were not likely to have considered classroom or hybrid programs. The response that providing online education is as beneficial to students as a real instructor could be attributed to those students not experiencing classroom learning. A 2009 study by Professor Brian Donovant conducted on police officers suggests that there is no significant difference between online and in-person education on student performance. Additionally, there was no significant difference in the amount learned between groups. Although officers slightly preferred the in-person education style, they said that a major advantage of the online method was convenience. The educational demographics of this group have 59% of the officers earning less than a bachelor’s degree. For CHA residents, even for those who have minimal higher education experience, this study suggests that online education should be considered equally beneficial for residents and as a worthwhile investment for CHA scholarships.

In our community survey, residents answered a question about which businesses they would like to see in their community and many respondents were interested in businesses that would enhance education opportunities for all ages (Figure 1). Bookstores and libraries were commonly mentioned businesses that respondents liked having or would like to have in their neighborhoods.
Are there any types of businesses you like having or would really like to have in your neighborhood?"

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<td>60640</td>
<td>$40,000 - $49,000</td>
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<td>“Training facilities (educational, business)”</td>
<td>60466</td>
<td>$80,000 - $89,000</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Receives assistance from LINK</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Workshops (technical training workshops) with tools. carpentry opportunities”</td>
<td>60614</td>
<td>$40,000 - $49,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 1: Preferences for businesses that promote employment and education.

Recommendations

To be eligible for the scholarship to the City Colleges program, the resident must have attended an information session. We recommend that the CHA encourage more evening meetings, as well as offering alternate days of the week. Though locations are diverse and there are several options over a large time frame, almost every information session is held on a Wednesday morning.

By only allowing those who never went to college to participate in the Partners in Education Program, the CHA is unjustly disadvantaging a large population of their residents. The Partners in Education program should expand its funding to residents already without outstanding college debt and those who were not aware of the program before enrolling, and offer forgiveness of City College student debt upon degree completion.

For all students, we also recommend that the CHA provide stipend assistance beyond educational fees to compensate for the sacrifice of working hours in pursuit of self-sufficiency. One option is to provide a stipend for residents completing their first college degree. Many universities provide this accommodation for students in their doctoral programs because they recognize that school work interferes with earning capability. Another option is to reconsider rent calculation to factor in educational costs and loss of earnings while enrolled in

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academic programs. Either incentive will encourage enrollment and offset the cost of not working as many hours to receive this education.

Additionally, we believe the CHA should address the digital divide that limits academic success for their residents, especially in college. Residents should be provided with assistance for purchasing home computers and internet access, or the CHA should provide a rental or loan system for the duration of their degree. Once this initiative is in place, the CHA can begin to advise and fund students pursuing online degrees and educational programs.

For residents trying to earn their living while in school, time can also be a barrier to reaching their highest potential in education. Therefore, the CHA should work with City Colleges to provide online GED preparation and offer scholarships for online higher education or technical training programs.

Even for the most-educated American, financial literacy and fiscal responsibility is still at alarmingly low rates. The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) has published lists of resources for improving financial literacy, but a majority of these are online instruction sources. Programs in financial literacy recommended by HUD should be more widely available for residents. Our findings suggest that this necessitates access to computers and internet.

**Further Research**

For further research into the educational opportunities afforded to residents, the CHA should conduct an extensive survey of current Partners in Education students. Though they are enrolled in college, it would be informative to gather what financial burdens, stress, or positives changes it has made on their lives. Furthermore, it would be important to discover what more can be done to help encourage the “Some college, no degree” population to return to school.

**Works Cited**

1. Chicago Housing Authority, *Plan Forward: Communities that Work*, 2013
4. Research Center, *Signature Report 7: Some College, No Degree: A National View of Students with Some College Enrollment, but No Completion*, 2014
Local Spending and Business Diversity

According to Jane Jacobs’ book, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, a vibrant economy depends on the many small community interactions between local business owners and residents. Yet, beyond a need for businesses to be locally situated, a vibrant economy also hinges on the availability of business diversity to address a diverse range of resident needs within a community. Business diversity often stands in opposition to gentrification - a controversial topic amongst urban planners. Gentrification occurs when businesses are brought into a neighborhood without considering the interests or needs of residents already present. Thus, gentrification can directly hurt those with limited incomes such as CHA residents. When crafting diverse economies, it is important that the CHA work take an inclusive approach and work within the communities where their residents are present. Specifically, the CHA should look to support local shop owners and hire from the local community. Furthermore, it is important for the CHA to give residents a voice and consider the diversity of needs in a local community. Change in local economies can be used as a chance to reinvigorate areas; to ensure vibrancy, it is important that residents are incorporated into the burgeoning economies.

**Summary of Recommendations**

- The CHA should support local business ownership and spending.
- The CHA should encourage a diverse business sector based on the dynamic economic and cultural needs of the community.
- The CHA should also encourage business policies that are inclusive of all community voices and develop community resource guides in order to promote economic vibrancy.

**Key Findings**

The presence of locally owned, small-businesses are signs of a vibrant economy. What constitutes a vibrant economy is not any one particular aspect, but the many small local interactions and errands that occur in our everyday lives. Thus, local communities benefit from the presence of small businesses. According to the U.S. Small Business Administration, small businesses give more time and money to charitable organizations than their large competitors do. Since local business owners often live in the neighborhoods of their businesses, they tend to be far more committed to the community’s well-being and long-term stability than distant chain corporations.

Additionally, local stores keep profits circulating within the local economy by supporting other local businesses. Local stores create contracting opportunities for local service providers, conduct business with community banks, advertise through independent radio stations and other local media outlets, and purchase goods from local or regional distributors. In this way, a dollar spent at a locally owned business sends a ripple of economic benefits through the community. In sharp contrast, chain stores typically centralize these functions at their head offices.
Since local businesses play an important role in generating economic vibrancy, we chose to investigate the prevalence of local versus chain businesses through an asset mapping profile of three different study areas in Chicago: the Oakland community area, the area surrounding the Lathrop Homes housing development, and Old Town neighborhood.

In the Oakland study area, we see almost double the number of local establishments (63%) than chain establishments (37%). Among all three sites, the Old Town study area has the closest ratio of chain (41%) to local businesses (59%). In the Lathrop Homes study area, there is a predominantly local distribution of establishments, with triple the number of local establishments (74%) compared to chain businesses (26%). This finding suggests that money spent in the Lathrop Homes study area is greatly contributing to the local economy, which is quite promising when evaluating the vibrancy of the area as a whole.

To provide a more robust analysis, we also considered the income of residents within the study sites. Figures 1-3 present the three area boundaries with census tracts shaded according to the percentage of people in the neighborhood living at or below the poverty line according to the most recent U.S. Census (2014). This data set was accessed through Social Explorer, an online mapping platform that collects current and historical census data and demographic data from the U.S. Census, the American Community Survey (ACS), and the Religious Congregations and Membership Study (RCMS) for the public. The income data shows a large variation in income between and across the three communities. A substantial percentage of people in all three areas live below the poverty line, which is currently $24,300 for a family of four. However, poorer census tracts, as denoted by orange and red shading, are more prevalent in Oakland than in the two sites on the North Side. These findings are supported by the fact that the Oakland study area has a median family income (MFI) of $34,755, while the Old Town and Lathrop Homes study areas have MFIs of $111,155 and $113,118, respectively, which is nearly double the citywide MFI at $47,831.

An initial hypothesis given the previous two data sets is that high-income residents place less importance on shopping at local businesses, which explains why a neighborhood with a greater proportion of wealthier residents also contains a greater proportion of chain stores. In order to test this initial hypothesis, we looked at the responses from our community survey on what types of businesses Chicago residents find the most valuable to their communities through the
question: “Are there any types of businesses you like having or would really like to have in your neighborhood?” We found that individuals still wanted local establishments in their neighborhood regardless of their reported household income. However, what unified the heterogeneous set of resident responses was a desire to have access to businesses that fit a diverse set of needs. This desire for diversity is addressed in our second key finding on the importance of business diversity in creating vibrant spaces.

Diversity of businesses in a community area can also be signs of a vibrant economy. Marcio Mendez, manager of a small restaurant in Oak Park, reported that the most influential aspect to creating a business with longevity was the investment from local government in attracting outside cash flows into the area. He specifically mentioned the variety of stores in Oak Park being a main factor for people coming into the area which brings patronage to his business. This narrative is complemented by a 1996 study from the University of California Berkeley which states that consumers tend to travel farther to shop in places with a large variety of offerings, but stay closer to home for basic necessities such as groceries or laundry services. Therefore, a diverse range of businesses is key to building economic vibrancy.

While an influx of a diverse range of businesses is important for neighborhood growth, it is also important that current residents’ needs are taken into consideration when creating localized change. Todd Palmer, Associate Director and Curator of the National Public Housing Museum, posited a scenario of a big-box store opening in a conversation regarding economic vibrancy. He stated that while the big box store may generate economic activity in the area, the results of its opening may not all be positive: “The cultural experience of those spaces between the consumer and the business tends to be one of instrumentality. You interact in a mechanized way, to get what is needed, and those who you engage are equally disengaged from the work, the space. Psychologically we might define the sensation that opposes vibrancy as ‘alienation’” He proposes a potential solution: “Vibrancy
would distinguish between an economically divisive and structural definition of a populace as ‘customers’ and ‘workers’ and the potentially inclusive political and cultural notion of citizenship.” In order to ensure community vibrancy, communities must foster a sense of inclusion and oppose certain systems that can work against that inclusion, such as gentrification. In order to ensure community vibrancy, individuals need a voice.

Given Palmer’s account, we give voice to residents’ preferences through our community survey by asking, “What establishments are most important to you in your neighborhood?” (Figure 4). Residents were able to choose from a list of options for the types of establishments they thought were most important to their neighborhood. Residents were able to choose more than one option. The top three choices amongst residents were banks, grocery stores, and restaurants. This indicates that these spaces are high contributors of community vibrancy in the eyes of Chicago’s residents and could be spaces where the CHA could implement localized change.

Although a diverse set of businesses are necessary to meet the needs of residents, not all businesses contribute equally to economic vibrancy. There are many factors that can influence specifically where local business owners decide to invest their time. However, the difficulty lies in attracting, and maintaining, potential business owners to invest their time and money in specific community areas, particularly in areas with developing or struggling neighborhood economies. One hypothesis of why business owners decide not to invest in a community area could be due to the prevalence of “negative” or “vice” establishments, such as liquor stores or adult speciality stores. Research shows that the prevalence of these types of establishments correlates with areas of increased crime and delinquency. This research is supported by sentiments expressed in our community survey.
where the majority of respondents expressed that the types of businesses they would not like to see in their neighborhoods were liquor stores, bars, fast food establishments, and adult specialty stores. However, while residents seem to not want these establishments in their neighborhood, these businesses have to exist somewhere in a diverse city in order to address those diverse set of needs. In order to combat this NIMBY-ism, experts in land-use regulation maintain that further research is needed on the location and prevalence of these negative establishments in specific community areas before creating a plan to remove or move them.13

Overall, when looking to increase the economic output of an area, we should consider the needs and wants of a community area and work within those desires to implement local change. It is important to regard the wants and needs of the residents as new stores or locations are built. If residents feel isolated from the new stores being built in their area, a decrease in community engagement can be expected alongside feelings of discontent between store owners and residents. The relationship between owners and renters is important because they both have interests in an area, and when they share interests, their cooperation creates vibrant communities in which the store owners and residents are receptive to each other’s needs. For instance, our survey showed that the types of businesses people felt the most important to have in their community, were banks, grocery stores, and restaurants. This need may change depending on certain areas, but should always be evaluated before the start of large economic revival plans.

**Recommendations**

Local spending and diverse businesses are key components of a vibrant neighborhood and a goal of the CHA’s Plan for Transformation. From our research, vibrant economies are reliant on local businesses to prosper. In areas with high amounts of local ownership, business diversity occurs naturally when partnered with community input. Therefore we recommend that the CHA work to promote, support, and engage local businesses while keeping in mind the needs of the community they serve in order to promote both local spending and business diversity.

The CHA should focus on the inclusion of local business owners in a land-renting initiative. The CHA is one of the largest owners of land within Chicago. A way for the CHA to reach out more to local business owners would be to rent some of the infrastructure it has as possible retail locations for rates slightly lower than market value. The CHA already does a similar program with larger corporate land-developers or chain stores. The inclusion of local businesses increases the productivity of the land the CHA owns, but doesn’t use, while also helping to build a strong rapport with local business owners.

The CHA should actively seek new contractors in the small business world for Section 3 support. Local business owners are more likely to hire from their local community. It would be in the greater interest of the CHA to actively work with and engage local business owners in the hope of connecting residents with local employers in community areas with public housing. As
conveyed to us by one of our key informants, the knowledge of the Section 3 program is not widespread. By reaching out more and propagating information concerning Section 3 hiring, the pool of credible employers will increase, offering gainful employment to CHA residents. We recommend partnering with local chambers of commerce to disburse information about Section 3 to local business owners.

Small business owners located within areas with CHA housing should have an advantage over other businesses when looking for possible contractors for the CHA. Similar to how the federal government incentivizes contract building with smaller, but competent businesses, the CHA should prioritize the inclusion of small business in their directory of Section 3 Businesses. Small businesses should also be the first source for contracting work in local communities. Instead of looking at the highest market value options, the CHA should look to their own residents in order to create a more vibrant community space. These aforementioned measures will work to increase the vibrancy of the community by giving local business owners a stronger foundation to be involved with CHA and the communities it serves.

When looking for potential contractors, the CHA should aim to create mixed-income friendly commercial corridors to encourage business diversity. As seen in our mapping profile and through our community survey responses, there is no perfect ratio of establishments when creating commercial districts. What is most important is creating an inclusive space where everyone can shop. One of our respondents from the community survey voiced this concern when they stated they wanted, ‘Cafes that have an economically diverse menu where I can invite people from different socioeconomic statuses to come and chat without feeling that they would be burdened by the cost’. The CHA should listen to this concern and make sure that the businesses they contract are accessible to individuals with varied income backgrounds. Commercial corridors should be created so that both low and high income individuals can find a place to shop and have their needs met.

The CHA should work towards creating policies that continue to voice the needs of the diverse communities they serve. Therefore, the CHA should also encourage local businesses to adopt human resource policies that support economic development and social diversity, including active outreach to vulnerable and marginalized populations, through career fairs, diversity training, and targeted strategies and initiatives that encourage and support living wages (see Business Support). 14

We also recommend that the CHA develop resource guides for individuals at risk of poverty or exclusion. Community resource guides provide information on community-based services that assist low-income households. These guides often focus on services and other supports that address health, income, and employment challenges and can highlight financial services offered at a discount rate. 25 By doing this the CHA allows for resident to have the financial ability to support their local businesses. Overall, these recommendations aim to address the needs of a community and act on them in order to prevent the isolation and disenfranchisement of residents, keeping a solid community and vibrant economy.

Further Research
Learning the needs of the community and acting on them prevents the isolation of the more disenfranchised residents, keeping a solid community and vibrant economy. The next step we would recommend for the CHA is to begin to accumulate data indicating the characteristics and
locations of areas in which there is high local business ownership. The CHA could gather this information in the future by partnering with MAPSCorps, an asset mapping based youth community engagement project that aims to create a comprehensive map of local community organizations and businesses. By finding these areas with high local business ownership and resolving to give local ownership a large role in future plans, a vibrant economy becomes all the more possible.

While the CHA is gathering information about local businesses, the agency should also learn more about the resident needs in an area. Community meetings or short surveys should be distributed on an annual basis to learn about the needs of residents - paying attention to what shoppers want and what shoppers do not want. Implementing a survey similar to the one conducted in this study would be useful as a tool to understand the wants of Chicagoans.

Works Cited
3. Ibid
8. Ibid
15. Ibid
Business Support

Businesses are fundamental to economic vibrancy. Business support resources ensure that businesses stand the test of time so that they continue to provide sustainable employment opportunities for local residents. Business support resources are crucial to not only helping individual businesses thrive, but also creating a sustainable cycle wherein local businesses lead to rising income among residents and increased local spending. By supporting local entrepreneurs, especially in low-income communities, the CHA and other organizations are supporting not only these citizens’ businesses but also their communities.

Business support was identified as one of the most important components to achieve economic vibrancy by 42% of our key informants. Furthermore, prior literature has shown that business support resources are critical to offsetting the large fixed costs of starting a new business. A report released by the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) showed that most small businesses receive almost 20% of their startup financing from government administrations, demonstrating the necessity of government financing to support small business growth. In addition to government financing, 13% of an average small business’ financing comes from the owner’s own capital, meaning that starting and running a successful business is especially difficult for low-income individuals without access to personal funds.¹

Given the importance of business support in building vibrant communities, this section explores the status quo of business support resources across major U.S. cities and possible new policies to better support small businesses and, in turn, economic vibrancy. This section conducts extensive literature review and discusses in-depth interviews with business support organizations and recipients of business support, concluding with recommendations about how to better support resident-owned businesses.

Summary of Recommendations

- The CHA should extend its current Pilot Section 3 Program by partnering with the SBA and Illinois Department of Commerce and Opportunity.
- The CHA should expand its successful Business and Entrepreneurship Development Program, in partnership with the Chicago Urban League, and forge similar relationships with other organizations that support small business development.
- The CHA should create a centralized database of alternative small business lenders and banks that are providing loans at lower interest rates.
- The CHA can make improvements to the Section 3 Business Symposium.
- The CHA should make the Section 3 website more welcoming to allow residents to better understand the current services offered by the CHA.
- The CHA should leverage the CHA’s power in urban planning to strategically place chain and local businesses in commercial corridors and unsegregated locations.
- The CHA should host business plan competitions to incentivize Chicago residents who receive CHA assistance to create social enterprises.
- If one is not already in place, the CHA should implement a structured system to evaluate the success of the business support resources it provides.
Key Findings

Business support is crucial for local small business enterprises. This is especially important for those owned or managed by women, people of color, and low-income individuals. The SBA recently announced that minorities face business loan denial rates of 31.5% nationwide, almost triple the denial rate of non-minorities. Additionally, given that on average, 17% of start-up funds for small businesses come from personal funds and an additional 13% of funds come from personal loans, low-income business owners lack 30% of the needed funding for their business because they lack savings and connections through which they might access personal loans. Because minorities and low-income individuals have more difficulty finding private financing through loans or personal capital, public financial support of these businesses is often a large source of start-up capital for these businesses.

Local small businesses are at a disadvantage in terms of funding, simply due to their size. A 2014 working paper from Harvard Business School (HBS) noted that "small business loans, often defined as business loans below $1 million, are considerably less profitable than large businesses loans." This is a clear disincentive for banks that could potentially loan to small businesses. Yet another barrier to funding is good credit history, which may be lacking for a resident of a low-income community: in many cases, bankers "have trouble finding creditworthy borrowers." A 2008 working paper on small business models also stated that compared with large firms, banks experience more non-performing loans from lending to small businesses. Thus, it is no wonder that the HBS working paper concludes that "small business lending continues to fall, while large business lending rises," demonstrating the need for public financing for small businesses in an arena where private funding is highly disincentivized and consequently difficult to secure.

Finally, small business owners are in need of not only funding but also education in the area of business ownership. Without access to the same educational resources as other groups, minority and low-income individuals often find the many fixed costs and special licenses to be discouraging, according to Alex Alcantar, Director of the Procurement Technical Assistance Center (PTAC) at the Illinois Hispanic Chamber of Commerce (IHCC). Shquestra Sitawi, an Economic Empowerment Coordinator at the YWCA, noted similarly that within low-income, African-American communities, there is often a dearth of role models from which aspiring business owners can connect to other businesses and learn to navigate the complex system of business ownership.

Supporting small businesses will lead to neighborhood vibrancy. Small businesses disproportionately face barriers to economic success, and for this reason, government agencies should support small businesses. Supporting small, locally owned businesses supports overall economic development by creating jobs and raising incomes. Small Business Administration loans have been proven to lead to job growth-- an increase of about 5.4 jobs for each million dollars of loans. Another study found that small businesses create two out of every three net
new jobs. Thus, extensive data show a connection between supporting small businesses and job growth.

Our community survey showed that support of local businesses has a positive impact on vibrancy: when asked what made their neighborhood feel like home, one resident responded that it was a “strong sense of community” combined with a “strong presence of locally-owned/independent businesses.” Ten other respondents from a wide range of income backgrounds and zip codes expressed similar sentiments.

Extended interviews with providers of business support also demonstrated the positive consequences of supporting small businesses. When asked about the social goals of providing business support, Alex Alcantar from the IHCC discussed employment and Trinity from the YMCA mentioned economic growth. Beyond improving economic well-being in general, both Shquestra Sitawi from the YMCA and Alex Alcantar talked about the impact of small, local businesses on the local community. They described how supporting local businesses was important because they hired people from nearby communities and helped keep youth off the street. 52% of respondents to our community survey supported job training or apprenticeship programs as pathways for youth success in their neighborhood, demonstrating the importance of local employment opportunities for promoting vibrancy. Shquestra Sitawi also noted that local businesses not only increased employment within the local community but also kept money from leaving the community, which often happens with larger chain stores. Thus, business support of small businesses catalyzes job growth and positively influences the local community.

Successful business support includes adequate access to capital and supportive resources. Banks rarely give out loans to aspiring entrepreneurs for less than one million dollars because any amount lower is a low-return investment considered quite risky for the bank. Lolitha McKinney from the SBA described how the financial crisis of 2008 only worsened the lending situation and made banks increasingly skeptical of lending to small businesses. As a result, businesses today are being funded either by a few alternative small business lenders, scarcely available grants, or by “informal” capital—money from relatives or saved up by the entrepreneur, according to Alyssa Berman-Cutler, Director of Business and Workforce Development at the University of Chicago Office of Civic Engagement. Moreover, she stressed the importance of landlords and described that they can play a large role in offsetting the large fixed costs associated with starting a business by not charging for rent or by providing low-interest loans that can be repaid in a few years. If landlords assist local entrepreneurs, they are doing an immense service to the community and can simultaneously increase the value of the land they own (assuming the businesses they assist are ultimately successful). However, landlords must also remain financially solvent and may not be able to postpone rent on their properties, so the CHA might consider a program that would assist business owners with rent when landlords cannot. Apart from supporting small businesses financially, organizations can also help them in
other ways. For example, Sunshine Gospel Ministries helps small businesses grow by providing business training.\textsuperscript{12}

Additionally, the communication channels that the CHA has can be better utilized to promote existing opportunities; many of our interviewees believed that information could be best communicated from a centralized source. Moreover, we found that chain stores, often perceived as detrimental competitors to local businesses, can actually be quite beneficial to the operation and sustenance of small businesses. If new chain businesses are placed in commercial corridors, as opposed to segregated areas, they can attract a plethora of new customers and also increase sales and revenues for nearby local businesses. Furthermore, Alex Alcantar from the IHCC pointed out that small business owners often work with chain businesses, such as a janitorial service that works with Walmart. By engaging in business-to-business partnerships, chain businesses can support economic vibrancy by assisting local businesses in the community and “bringing them along” on the coattails of their own success. Thus, he emphasizes that communities should maintain a mix of both chain and local businesses-- as long as chain businesses remain the minority.

Furthermore, our interviewees were extremely helpful in determining how the success of a business support resource is measured. Indeed, Alyssa Berman Cutler and Lolitha McKinney, a Business Opportunity Specialist on the Business Development Team of the U.S. Small Business Administration, indicated that success could be measured by job creation, business longevity, and increase in revenue. Finally, when we asked our interviewees about whether residents should have a say in the business that enter their neighborhood, the overwhelming consensus was that the residents already have a say, via their elected Aldermen, and that residents can become more involved by joining an organization, such as a chamber of commerce.

**Recommendations**

The CHA should extend its current Pilot Section 3 Program by partnering with the SBA and Illinois Department of Commerce and Opportunity. Alternatively, the CHA can also leverage the funds provided by the City of Chicago’s Small Business Improvement Fund in order to financially support local businesses other than Section 3 businesses.\textsuperscript{13} Although the SBIF funds are specifically directed toward TIF districts, they are very much needed by businesses in lower-income areas as well, and the CHA could present an effective argument as to why they should receive a share of these funds for their transformation efforts.

The CHA should expand its successful Business and Entrepreneurship Development Program, in partnership with the Chicago Urban League. Furthermore, the CHA should forge similar strong relationships with other organizations that support small business development, such as the Women’s Business Development Center and the Illinois Hispanic Chamber of Commerce. For example, Alex Alcantar from the IHCC suggested that the CHA
could host more joint events with business support organizations, similar to the Section 3 Business Symposium. While the CHA’s primary expertise is housing, the CHA can play an important role by referring residents to existing business support resources. These organizations might help with grant applications and generally provide better education for potential business owners on how to navigate the process of building and maintaining a business.

The CHA should create a centralized database of alternative small business lenders and banks that are providing loans at lower interest rates. Until banks begin to provide smaller loans at preferred interest rates, the entrepreneurial ecosystem of some of Chicago’s burgeoning communities depends largely on alternative lenders.

The CHA can make improvements to the Section 3 Business Symposium. While the inaugural Section 3 Business Symposium in February 2016 was a tremendous success, improvements can be made in future years. First, the CHA could increase capacity for the workshops to accommodate the high levels of interest. Second, the CHA could include other industries beyond IT and construction groups to engage a wider audience. Third, it could formalize a method of evaluation and feedback in order to ensure that its business support services align with what residents want and need.

The CHA should make the Section 3 website more welcoming to allow residents to better understand the current services offered by the CHA. We recognize that access to this website may not be feasible for all residents, which is why we also support other strategies for promoting the Section 3 program, such as posting fliers in local businesses, workplaces, and community gathering spaces.

The CHA should leverage its political power in urban planning to strategically place chain businesses in commercial corridors and unsegregated locations that are conducive to galvanizing the growth of local businesses, especially Section 3 businesses. This is particularly important when the CHA disposes its vacant land holdings for commercial and/or mixed-use development. The CHA should also facilitate business-to-business partnerships between chain and local businesses, as these partnerships will make the entry of chain businesses into a community a benefit to the local economy instead of a threat to local enterprise.

Beyond Section 3 grants, the CHA should host business plan competitions to incentivize Chicago residents who receive CHA assistance to create social enterprises. Business plan competitions can incentivize innovation and provide yet another means of obtaining funding. Lolitha McKinney, a business opportunity specialist from the SBA, noted that this idea could be quite beneficial for small businesses.

If one is not already in place, the CHA should implement a structured system to evaluate the success of the business support resources it provides. Understanding the success rate of
these business support resources will help the CHA understand how to modify their practices to better support entrepreneurial growth. While this system could, in theory, include collecting business receipts or performing a macroeconomic analysis on productivity increases over a multi-year time horizon, it could be as simple as mandating annual feedback from the recipients of these business support resources.

Works Cited
6. Ibid.
11. Ibid.
13. City of Chicago, Small Business Improvement Fund (SBIF), n.d.
Housing Policy

107  Income Mix
112  Homeownership
120  Housing Design
Mixed-Income Housing

This section seeks to answer the question, “What is neighborhood vibrancy, and how can it be achieved?” by exploring the role of mixed-income housing in Chicago’s neighborhoods.

A primary goal of mixed-income housing highlighted in literature and by our key informants is to create communities that are both diverse and inclusive of residents of all income levels. We also know that social cohesion is important to Chicago’s residents: when asked “What makes your neighborhood feel like home?,” many of the responses were related to communities and social cohesion between neighbors. Mixed-income developments around the country have seen various degrees of success in creating diverse and inclusive communities. In this section, we investigate where CHA’s mixed-income sites stand in relation to this goal, and identify strategies to promote community in mixed-income sites.

We begin with a compilation of our key findings from community surveys, examinations of CHA’s mixed-income developments, and in-depth interviews with stakeholders and residents of Chicago’s mixed-income developments. First, we find that a higher income is related to feeling more heard in one’s community, but that this is not a result of more community participation among higher income residents. We also find that a lack of access to social services may leave lower income residents feeling unheard in their community. Finally, we find that communal spaces are important assets for community building in mixed-income developments.

In the context of Chicago’s mixed-income developments, our key findings lead us to recommend two potential strategies to increasing social cohesion in mixed-income sites: 1) increase access to social services for lower-income residents, and 2) increase the provision of communal spaces that are frequently used and well maintained.

By integrating our findings and recommendations into the broad framework of this report, we hope to elucidate the role that mixed-income housing plays in nurturing vibrant communities. We hope this section will inform the CHA’s approach toward mixed-income housing with respect to their overarching mission to create vibrant communities.

Summary of Recommendations

- An increase in access to social services will help low income residents in mixed-income communities feel heard.
- Increasing communal spaces in developments will create more opportunities for community engagement among mixed-income residents.
**Key Findings**

**Higher income residents are more likely to feel that they have a voice in their community.** The Community Survey data suggests that respondents are more likely to feel that they have a voice in their community as income level increases (see Figure 1). This disparity is a problem to consider when creating mixed-income communities where ideally all residents should feel like they are equally capable of contributing to their community.

<table>
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<th>Income Level</th>
<th>% of residents who feel they have a voice in the community</th>
<th>How many community meetings do you attend per month?</th>
<th>How often do you have a conversation with your neighbors?</th>
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<td>$30,000 and below</td>
<td>52.6%</td>
<td>0: 61% 1-3: 34% 4+: 2%</td>
<td>Rarely: 63% 1-2/Month: 14%  Rarely: 20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$30,000 to $80,000</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>0: 59% 1-3: 36% 4+: 5%</td>
<td>Rarely: 65% 1-2/Month: 17%  Rarely: 16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$80,000 and above</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>0: 56% 1-3: 38% 4+: 6%</td>
<td>Rarely: 65% 1-2/Month: 11%  Rarely: 29%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 1: Survey responses by income level

**Higher income residents do not act as “role models” for low-income residents in mixed-income housing.** If wealthier residents perceive that they have greater voices in their community, perhaps the “role model effect” can apply. A rationale behind mixed-income developments is that higher income residents will model positive community engagement and citizenship. Low income residents, by interacting with civic-minded and participatory high income “role model” residents, are to become more actively involved and invested in their community.3

However, our survey data suggests that all income levels have equally moderate levels of participation in community meetings. Respondents making above $80,000 a year were not significantly more likely to attend community meetings or interact with their neighbors than respondents making below $30,000 a year. Furthermore, Former CHA commissioner Sandra Young commented that no income level is particularly participatory, and that “people only come out for things that spark their interest.” She explained that renters and public housing residents in mixed-income sites were the most difficult to get to participate in CAPS meetings, but also that homeowners only participated in community meetings that were relevant to them. Higher income residents are clearly not “role models” for positive community engagement and citizenship, meaning that we must find another way to allow lower income residents to feel like they have a voice in the community, and also to improve all residents’ moderate community participation.

**Limited access to social services can make low income residents feel like they have less of a voice in their community.** When Sandra Young was asked about whether tension between residents of different income levels was a problem, she responded that the tension is more from lower income residents not having access to the services they need, as opposed to negativity.
between residents: “It’s not the tension between the residents...Residents are okay, it’s just that it’s sometimes they ...have a challenge of who should they talk to. But there's services providers that they need to talk to about their concerns.” When residents face obstacles and do not know where to turn to for social services, we find that they may be left feeling unheard in their community. Central Advisory Council member Claudice Ware noted that previously, social services had been incorporated into public housing buildings and development plans. Today, she explained, families are referred to outside social services, creating a much less cohesive social service program that can leave residents feeling uncared for and voiceless in the community.

Communal spaces are important to community building in mixed-income developments. Sandra Young commented on the popularity of social events at Oakwood Shores, such as “a movie in the park, or jazz in the park, or art show in the park, to kind of get the entire community engaged.” Notably, she said that these events are popular among residents of all income levels. It follows from the popularity of such events that residents need ample common space for these events to be held in. Accordingly, we found in our survey data that a majority of respondents at all income levels agreed with the statement “Common spaces are important in my apartment building.” However, Claudice Ware expressed concerns that “in mixed income housing often times there aren’t enough space for families to get together for events and activities.” Our findings here indicate that mixed-income developments could be lacking much needed common spaces for community building among residents.

Recommendations
Increasing access to social services will help residents feel heard in their community. We found that lower income residents were less likely to feel that they had a voice in their community than higher income residents. Because we found that neither group is particularly more participatory in their community, we concluded that perhaps it is higher income residents’ sense of self-efficacy and financial freedom in addressing community issues that contributes to their feeling of having a voice. If this is the case, we place particular importance on Sandra Young and Claudice Ware’s concerns about the challenges low income residents face in accessing social services. When low income residents are financially restricted in their ability to address issues, and when social services are not easily accessible to help address those issues, residents are left feeling unheard in their community. We thus recommend that the CHA increase access to social services for low income residents in order to help them feel heard in the community.

We specifically emphasize increasing access through communication and education. Comments from interviewees regarding social services did not express so much concern with a lack of service provision in mixed-income developments, but rather, with a lack of communication regarding services. For example, Sandra Young expressed concerns both about residents facing “a challenge of who should they talk to” for social service needs, and about residents not being well-informed of the potential benefits or their eligibility in CHA programs such as Choose to Own. This can be addressed not by increasing the provision of services, but by raising awareness of the social service programs and their potential benefits at mixed-income sites. From speaking with CHA representatives, we are aware that the CHA already makes great efforts to send flyers, post notices, and make automated phone calls to residents. We also learned that the CHA holds a number of workshops for HCV residents, the
Choose to Own program participants, and Section 3 businesses. We emphasize the importance of this communication and education, and recommend that steps be taken to increase such efforts particularly at mixed-income sites. This recommendation will be particularly applicable as CHA pursues its “Plan Forward” goal to “expand services to more residents, providing targeted services to residents at critical milestones in their lives.” With expanded, well-communicated services, public housing residents in mixed-income housing will be more directly connected to the resources that address their concerns, and as a result will be more inclined to feel that they are as heard in their community as higher income residents.

**Increasing communal spaces can create additional opportunities for community building.**

Social events are popular at CHA’s mixed-income developments, and common spaces for these events may be key to fostering greater community cohesion. The survey data and our interviewees indicate that common spaces are important to residents. However, from our interviews, we found that there are often not enough communal spaces in many mixed income developments. We thus recommend that more communal spaces be provided in mixed-income developments to allow for community building opportunities. In making this recommendation, we highlight two important aspects of an effective communal space. First, to create a space of equal community participation, residents of all income levels must be held to the same expectations in upkeep of the space. Principal Partner of the Davis Group Robert Koerner stressed the importance of equal expectations in the services and amenities provided to residents of all income levels in a mixed-income site, and our recommendation echoes this sentiment. Second, in response to concerns raised by multiple interviewees that communal areas often become unsafe, we recommend that the space be promoted to facilitate regular use. The Housing Design and Safety sections of this report highlight the importance of regular use and the resulting self-policing of communal spaces, and we reemphasize it here. In those sections, we identify strategies to create communal spaces that are valued by residents and are thus self-policied, and we recommend here that those strategies be implemented in the provision of more communal areas that will promote social cohesion at mixed-income sites.

**Further Research**

In this section, we investigated community and social cohesion between residents of different income levels at mixed-income developments. There are, however, many challenges beyond income level differences to creating a cohesive community. For example, race continues to be a salient topic in the discussion surrounding public housing and income mix. When asked to identify goals of mixed-income housing that had not yet been met at Oakwood Shores, Sandra Young explained, referring to race, that “we didn’t get the culture mix that we wanted.” In a city as racially and ethnically diverse as Chicago, and where race and ethnicity are often closely linked to income level, the topic is likely to be quite important in creating mixed-income communities. Moving forward, a potential area of research is the role that race and ethnicity play in community engagement and social cohesion at mixed-income developments.
We may also want to explore the implications of Chicago’s tumultuous history of public housing on the current position of Chicago’s mixed-income housing residents. In order to get a sense of how this project could be useful to both the CHA and across the United States, we asked our interviewees: What are challenges of working on mixed-income housing that are unique to Chicago, and what are those that are shared by housing authorities across the nation? Several interviewees highlighted the difficulty of working on housing in the contentious and political context of Chicago. Most notably, Peter Levavi, Senior Vice President of Brinshore Development, LLC, commented that “there’s more conflict between the residents and the CHA than anyplace else on the planet. It’s a huge challenge to overcome 40 years of bad blood.” Long-time CHA residents who now reside in CHA’s new mixed-income sites or in the surrounding neighborhoods are central to this conflict, and will expectedly have a unique experience of their housing. An important area of research moving forward will be the ways in which the unique positions of long-time public housing residents can best be served by the CHA.

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Homeownership

Most policymakers view enhancing access to and promoting homeownership as the best way for individuals and families to develop economic security and ensure long term tenure. Proponents of expanded access to homeownership argue that homeownership strongly correlates with higher educational outcomes, greater investment in social capital, and higher levels of life satisfaction. However, critics question the causal relationship between homeownership and economic security, arguing that economic security is what allows for people to achieve homeownership in the first place and that conditions in areas with high levels of homeownership are the product of the socioeconomic profile of the area rather than due to the presence of a greater proportion of homeowners.

Despite efforts to expand access to homeownership, purchasing a home is out of reach for many low-income families. These families often have insufficient cash for downpayment and closing costs, cannot pay down debts, have low credit scores, and are subject to higher borrowing costs. Programs that offer a pathway to homeownership have seen success on a small scale. For example, the CHA’s Choose to Own Program, designed to provide low income residents with a pathway to homeownership following the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development’s (HUD) framework, has helped some secure homeownership but serves only a small segment of the agency’s population.

Through our literature review, asset mapping project, and interviews with key informants as well as by speaking with homeowners, renters and experts in the field, we have found that pathways to homeownership should be expanded by offering diverse financing and ownership options for those seeking to buy homes. Pathways to homeownership can be expanded through the development of alternative models of ownership like community land trusts and shared equity strategies and through more flexible credit and down payment options. Additionally, the Choose to Own Program can be expanded by creating more inclusive criteria for program participation, and enhancing the services available to make residents viable participants in the program.

We also found that negative perceptions surround renting and renters create divisions that decrease feelings of cohesion and community in a neighborhood, reducing vibrancy. Mechanisms that neutralize the significance of tenure are essential to overcoming the renter-owner divide in, “the power and politics of neighborhood transformation,” as put by Charles Barlow, University of Chicago Lecturer in Geography and Public Policy. We recommend that the CHA actively promotes renting as a desirable goal of housing for families, based on their household needs and financial situations, and promotes resident involvement in community organizations, another strategy to increase communication and bridge the divide between renters and homeowners.
Summary of Recommendations

- Make homeownership more accessible to low-income residents by making homeownership affordable, expanding access to financing, and preparing potential buyers to be successful homeowners.
- Expand alternative pathways to property and homeownership, through methods like co-ops, community land trusts, and shared equity strategies.
- Bridge the renter-owner divide by neutralizing the significance of tenure and promoting community engagement.

Key Findings

Homeownership correlates with better outcomes for residents including increased community engagement, financial stability, and access to services. Our literature review reveals that homeownership was “positively related to individual local friendships, community sentiment, and participation in local affairs,” and that homeownership leads to “greater community engagement, greater investment in social capital, and better education outcomes.” However, there is mixed evidence on the causal nature of the relationship between homeownership and these outcomes. Financial stability and higher education rates may afford community members the ability to buy homes. The act of home ownership might also lend itself to greater financial stability and educational success. Our Community Survey aimed to determine whether certain variables actually correlate with homeownership in our target population to determine the relationship between homeownership, community engagement, income, and tenure, to name a few variables. We found that:

- **Ownership and length of tenure are strongly correlated.** Of the homeowners surveyed, 59% have lived in their current neighborhood for 10 years or more and only 22% have lived in their current neighborhood fewer than 5 years. In sharp contrast, 58% of renters surveyed have lived in their area for fewer than 5 years and only 24% have lived in their current neighborhood for more than 10 years. This data suggests that there is an association between homeownership and residential stability.

- **We also found that home ownership and community engagement are correlated.** 69% of homeowners surveyed felt they had a voice in their community and 53% attended at least one community meeting a month. In contrast, only 54% of renters felt they had a voice in their community and 36% of renters attended at least one meeting a month. Additionally, 73% of homeowners reported having conversations with their neighbors at least once a week compared to only 60% of renters. This data suggests that there is a relationship between ownership and the degree to which people are involved and interact with their community.

These findings show that promoting home ownership may be a way of fostering community engagement and resident success.

**Home ownership is a goal for most renters, including CHA residents.** Claudice Ware, of the Central Advisory Council and a current HCV resident, informed us that, “generally, public housing residents consider homeownership a realistic goal and have a plan to attain home ownership. We have families that are over income land have the money to pay a mortgage and home ownership is a logical alternative solution for them. Those families dislike living in an
apartment or just want to have their own space and not have to follow rules and regulations and
would like to be homeowners instead.” Our Community Survey confirms this assessment
revealing that 76% of renters and 92% of CHA residents felt that it was at least somewhat
important for them to have the resources to buy their own home.

![Figures 1 and 2: Importance of Homeownership for Renters and CHA Residents]

**Policies promoting home ownership are at the center of most housing policy, but
homeownership is out of reach for many families.** Homeownership is a core element of
achieving the American Dream from a social and a policymaking perspective. As a result,
specific policies have been designed to facilitate homeownership, such as the mortgage
interest rate reduction and initiatives like the 1995 National Homeownership Strategy. However,
critics of homeownership-focused policies argue that homeownership is not a realistic goal for
low income people. As a result, efforts to expand access to homeownership will only benefit a
small segment of households who are in sound financial positions and have access to resources
and support, as stated in *A Note on the Benefits of Home Ownership*. This holds true for the CHA’s
Choose to Own (CTO) program as well, which excludes many homeowner-hopefuls due to its
strict income requirements (50-80% of AMI), which render 90% of non-elderly, non-disabled
CHA households ineligible for the program. The 620 minimum credit score and the requirement
that household must have at least $3,000 in savings in order to qualify probably preclude even
more households from enrolling in the program.

In an extended interview with Sandra Young she mentioned a few steps that could make CTO
more accessible; “I mean I think that [CTO] need to really educate families who are able to afford
- if they’re able to afford to 600-700 dollars a month I think they should really educate them on
becoming a homeowner because it becomes an investment for them. So that’s one of the major
things I would like to see them do.” Claudice Ware provided some promising news that the CHA
hopes to expand access to home ownership to residents that don’t currently qualify for CTO,
“through marketing the program and educating the resident on the program. Then for those who
are interested in the program, providing them with the necessary resources to help them qualify
or meet the requirements of the program. The CHA also has the Family Self Sufficiency program,
in which counselors work with the families that are interested in the program, banks, and other
resources which residents could use to achieve success in home ownership.”

However, **CTO serves the residents who are eligible quite well.** Low income households who
do meet CTO’s criteria are well-served, and the program has helped 480 families become
homeowners, including 104 who have assumed their own mortgage, as we learned from the CHA Resident Services Report in the Fourth Quarter of 2015. Claudice Ware also spoke to this finding, stating, “from what I hear, Choose to Own is doing well. Recently I have referred individuals who were interested in moving from public housing to homeownership. They have no complaints.”

There remains a divide between renters and homeowners with home owners and residents with more established tenure wielding disproportionate amounts of power. Renters and lower income public housing residents have more unstable housing situations, are connected to fewer resources and sources of support, and often fall through the cracks in public housing developments as shown in our literature review. They are less able to participate in their communities and often face negative perceptions and stigma further exacerbating the divide. This divide undermines community cohesion and makes passing and implementing affordable housing policies that would benefit renters and local income residents more difficult.

A diversity of homes for ownership need to be available to fit needs of diverse homeowners. As we learned from Charles Barlow and Alphonse Diaz, leader of Diaz Architecture Company, a range of housing types that meets the needs of a diverse population is necessary for a neighborhood to achieve vibrancy. These housing options also need to be accessible by a variety of socioeconomic groups. Heterogeneity in housing design is also necessary for achieving neighborhood vibrancy. Each site or building should have its own character, rather than following some stock design.

Peter Levavi from Brinshore Development further informed us that location will determine what is possible at each of the redevelopment sites, much more is possible in areas either in or adjacent to strong neighborhoods, many CHA sites are not located well enough to achieve these goals. They are not near areas that offer the amenities and services that make a neighborhood vibrant.

To this end, the housing policy working group’s asset mapping identified differences in housing diversity and aimed to reveal whether certain combinations of housing type and location might lead to more vibrant communities. Based on the major differences we found in housing composition between Lathrop Homes, Oakland, and Old Town and our key informant interviews, we conclude that a desirable composition of housing in a particular area is dependent on the specific housing needs of a neighborhood population, which may be composed of different incomes, lifestyles, and household sizes.
Recommendations

Our first recommendation for the CHA is to make homeownership more accessible to low-income residents. Though homeownership is a goal for most residents and is central to housing policy, it is out of reach for many families. It is clear that CTO, CHA’s current home ownership access expansion program, has served well those who have met its criteria, with about 480 families successfully being connected with home ownership opportunities. However, only a very small segment of CHA’s residents meet the criteria to be eligible for CTO, we recommend working to bring more residents into the ‘eligible’ category to tackle the root of homeownership inaccessibility—financing.

For this reason, we recommend additional homeownership accessibility efforts focus on three areas, following HUD’s three recommendations from their 2012 report on pathways to homeownership for low income and minority households—making homeownership affordable, expanding access to financing, and preparing potential buyers to be successful homeowners. The first two address financial barriers to homeownership by providing down payment assistance and mortgages. The last category focuses on counseling and other services aimed at helping households navigate the complex process of buying a home.

The CHA can work to make homeownership affordable for residents by providing families with programming and financing to overcome wealth barriers. One way they can do so is by utilizing HUD’s Family Self-Sufficiency (FSS) Program, which helps families increase their earned income and reduce their dependency on welfare assistance and rental subsidies. Additionally, HUD’s FHA, HOME, and CDBG programs provide residents with wealth management and ownership support and could be well utilized by the CHA in helping their residents gain home ownership capacity. Another option is utilizing the Housing Choice Voucher homeownership program, in which the CHA can offer residents the option to apply their rental voucher subsidy toward monthly ownership expenses, facilitating the homeownership process (rent- to- own).

Additional steps the CHA could take include helping residents achieve favorable debt-to-income ratios through low monthly homeownership payments, down payment assistance, grants, subsidies, homeownership vouchers, and soft second mortgages. The CHA can also make sound mortgages available to more households by offering flexible/alternative underwriting guidelines and applying the Federal Housing Administration’s (FHA) home mortgage insurance program, which encourages lenders to provide mortgages to low income residents by offering protection against losses. Further, preparing potential buyers for home ownership through services like housing counseling can help residents become successful homeowners.

However, homeownership is not an option for everyone, even with expanded homeownership programs. For this reason, we also recommend expanding alternative pathways to property and homeownership, through methods like co-ops,
community land trusts, and shared equity strategies, which have been successfully implemented across the country. Shared equity strategies, in which communities buy the land they live on and manage them through locally run trusts, have helped Chicago residents own homes at prices they can afford. Co-ops provide the potential for wealth storage and accumulation associated with home ownership by allowing residents to own shares of a building which is communally owned, reflecting their equity in the cooperative's real estate. According to the National Cooperative Law Center, "a primary advantage of the housing cooperative is the pooling of the members' resources so that their buying power is leveraged, thus lowering the cost per member in all the services and products associated with home ownership." In Community Land Trusts (CLT), which operate lease-to-purchase programs, the CLTs retain the title to the land and the prospective owner needs to pay only for the building or unit. These CLTs can ensure the long-term affordability of the unit by providing some of the initial down payment for the house. The strategies have been successfully implemented in diverse settings from San Francisco, California to Duluth, Minnesota.

In Duluth, The CLT One Roof Community Housing, an example of a particularly successful CLT in a low-income community, has helped 295 low-income families attain homeownership—one-third to half of these families are comprised of single mothers with dependent children. Duluth has a population with very low incomes, many of whom can't afford traditional homeownership. To fill this need for quality affordable housing, the land trust rehabilitates the many foreclosed and vacant, blighted properties and sells the renovated homes, all of which incorporate green building features, to buyers at prices 20 to 25 percent lower than appraised value. These buyers are families earning less than 80 percent of area median income.

As with most CLTs, One Roof creates this subsidy by retaining ownership of land beneath the homes. Buyers enter into a 99-year ground lease and pay a small lease fee to the land trust every month. Homeowners receive 25 percent of any appreciation in appraised value of the property and 100 percent of investment in eligible capital improvements made to the home. Owners benefit from predictable mortgage payments, privacy, and an opportunity to accumulate wealth. One Roof offers free one-on-one homebuyer counseling sessions and requires buyers applying for land trust homes to complete an eight-hour, HUD-certified homebuyer education class and attend an orientation session about the community land trust
The Urban Institute’s evaluation of One Roof found that the land trust has been successful at maintaining affordability and building wealth for its homeowners.16

Finally, the CHA should bridge the renter-homeowner social divide by neutralizing the significance of tenure, promoting community engagement, and ameliorating the stigma of renting. In an interview with Charles Barlow, we learned that, “[vibrant communities need] mechanisms that neutralize the significance of tenure – i.e. ways to overcome the renter-owner divide in the power and politics of neighbourhood transformation.” Neighborhoods with greater sense of unity and fewer divisions between tenure groups have increased feelings of resident empowerment and investment, which are positive community outcomes. These strategies can be employed not to expand access to homeownership, but help residents feel more invested in their communities and place underserved residents on a more equal footing with residents who have more established housing situations. To this end, the CHA should increase pathways for community involvement, make current engagement programs more accessible, and foster resident interaction through community spaces. More detailed recommendations for increasing resident engagement with community organizations can be found in the Community Engagement section. Additionally, since home ownership isn’t an option for every CHA resident, the CHA should work to reduce the stigma of renting by promoting it as a viable long-term option for CHA residents.

**Further Research**

The alternative ownership methods detailed above—land trusts, co-ops, and shared equity strategies—are just a few of the alternative homeownership opportunities for CHA residents. To fully understand the range of alternative home ownership opportunities, the CHA can do further research into other potential pathways to homeownership. Further case studies can be used to determine what kind of methods provide better opportunities for specific developments and residents, especially in low-income communities. Additionally, though our research found correlations between homeownership and community engagement and tenure, it is unclear if these relationships are causal. To truly address the root of gaps in community engagement and homeownership, further research and controlled studies to determine causal relationships must be conducted.

As developer Robert Koerner noted, many home ownership opportunities and markets dissolved in the time of the housing crisis. As the market recovers, he noted two main difficulties in connecting residents with home ownership opportunities—residents’ credit and financing options and the high construction costs that make homes more costly to own with every passing day. For this reason, the CHA can do research into ways to lower construction costs in their developments and look further into the HUD FHA, HOME, and CDBG financing programs to determine which of these would work best in their developments. Finally, the CHA can conduct further research into the ways reduce the stigma of renting, a problem that yet remains unsolved. One way the CHA can look further into solving this question is by further collecting information about ways to foster renter-owner interaction through soliciting feedback from residents on their desired modes of engagement and measures that could facilitate it.

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Housing Design

This section explores the role that housing’s physical elements and the process of design play in building vibrant communities. Our research explores both the residential dimensions of housing design as well as non-dwelling spaces such as corridors, lobbies, and public grounds. Our research has found that in housing designs for CHA properties, developers should be conscious of creating spaces that can be both functional and also encourage interactions between residents throughout the building, interactions which build a broader sense of community in the development. Both of these distinct areas—as well as the the interplay between them—shape the sense of vibrancy in a development of neighborhood. The following section explores the need for diversity in housing type and design, the necessity for housing to be located proximate to services and amenities, the aesthetic and design considerations for communal spaces in housing, and the importance of incorporating community and resident voices in the design process.

Summary of Recommendations

- A diverse range of housing types is important for meeting different households’ needs.
- Minimizing the stigma around public housing can be accomplished by taking advantage of creative housing designs.
- Predominately residential areas should have easy access to arterial streets with commercial and civic places and options, preferably within walking distance.
- Communal spaces in housing should be centrally located and/or near existing areas of high foot traffic.
- The aesthetic design of the communal space should reflect the personality and human element of the housing community while creating a welcoming and safe environment.
- Improved communication between residents and housing designers throughout the design process can improve resident satisfaction.
- For projects where specific constraints make it difficult to receive resident or community feedback, “co-housing” practices can help architects and developers understand the perspectives of community stakeholders by having designers live in the housing they create.

Key Findings

Encouraging a diverse mix of housing types is essential to the achievement of neighborhood vibrancy.1 Through our literature review and extended interviews, we found two key considerations in the design and planning process of a new development. Lee Pratter, CHA Senior Director of Development, noted that planners first consider the potential residents of the area and design housing that accommodates their needs. For example, low-rise housing would better suit the needs of families than high-rise buildings. Our asset mapping reveals that similar types of housing are sometimes clumped together, as similar households live close together to access the same services (e.g., more single-family homes are clustered around schools, since families with children prefer low-density housing, and also prefer to be closer to schools). Secondly, planners look at the existing neighborhood architecture when designing new housing to ensure that new housing is integrated into the community’s identity.2 While this may limit the options for the types of housing that are appropriate for a neighborhood, integrating new
housing into the neighborhood by following the architectural identity of the area helps create a sense of belonging around the physical structures that can help the residents themselves feel more at home in the neighborhood. This aspect of architectural integration is especially important given the stigma surrounding public housing or low income residents. These findings highlight the importance of looking holistically across household type, available services and amenities, costs and funding constraints, and existing architectural style in determining the diversity of housing types in a new neighborhood.

Mixed-use developments are a potential solution to bringing necessary goods and services to residential areas, as informed by an interview with Linda Brace, Project Manager at The Community Builders, Inc. Our literature review and community survey results show that proximity to services and amenities are critical for resident satisfaction and for creating a sense of community. In response to the question “What makes your neighborhood feel like home?” 8.1% of the free-responses included references to ease of access, walkability of a neighborhood, or proximity to necessary services and amenities, a finding that is supported by our interviews with developers and CHA staff. Stronger neighborhoods have an array of commercial retail, civic spaces, and residential areas; mixed-use developments strive to attain this mix by including all of these different buildings and services in the same development. While mixed-income developments may not be appropriate for all neighborhoods, our survey results show that the importance of proximity resonates with residents across Chicago. Not every neighborhood may be able to support a large chain store like Target, but every resident should be able to access the goods and services, either by walking or taking a short ride on public transportation. Furthermore--following the example of Star Apartments in LA--for neighborhoods where many residents are affected by violence or poverty, the availability of on-site supportive services like counseling or employment support may play a major role in building up human capital area, leading to greater community vibrancy. Ultimately, while mixed-use development may not be appropriate in every neighbourhood, proximity to commercial and civic areas ought to be a consideration when determining the location of new housing developments. Discussions on access to grocery stores, healthcare services, transportation, higher education, and diverse businesses can be found in the appropriate sections (Food Services, Health, Transportation, Higher Education, Local Spending and Business Diversity, respectively).

Our research shows that there are two areas of consideration when designing communal spaces in housing that support vibrancy: location and aesthetic appeal. The location of communal space within the larger housing development determines how it is used and experienced by residents. Community spaces in housing are convenient ways for residents to meet and interact, and often leverage pre-existing areas of frequent social contact.
important that there are both a range of options for communal space and that the spaces are located in areas where community engagement occurs naturally, such as hallways and lobby areas. Secondly, the aesthetic design of communal spaces can impact feelings of pride in residents over their home and their shared space. Positive aesthetic design invites residents to use the space more often, and also increases resident feelings of ownership and belonging to their development of the space. Aesthetically appealing design also creates perceptions of safety around these communal spaces, which would further encourage resident use of these spaces.

It is critical to involve residents in the design and decision-making process, as residents feel stronger connections with neighbors and shared neighborhood areas if they are able to “reimagine and reinvent public spaces” together. Resident input is also important because the residents have a firsthand understanding of what resources and services are needed in a community. Robert Koerner, a developer with the Davis Group, highlighted the CHA’s effective use of resident working groups in the past 10-15 years to gather input for the design process. Unfortunately, however, resident feedback cannot always be feasibly included in design plans. There are few opportunities for community involvement pre-construction, limiting the amount of input planners receive before construction begins. Though community members can serve as liaisons between future residents and the contracted builders and designers, the feedback is often communicated inefficiently. Furthermore, Alphonse Diaz, leader of Diaz Architecture Company and an architect of public housing developments, noted that managers and developers may be hesitant to incorporate tenant input, either because they deem the resident suggestions as impractical, or the suggestions are too narrowly focused, as residents often lack the broader perspective of considering the entire development.

Recommendations

A diverse range of housing types is important for meeting different household needs. Before building new housing or renovating old units, the CHA needs to understand both the existing demographic breakdown of an area and the types of households that may want to live in the area in the near future. Housing options should meet the needs of these types of households. For example, families tend to prefer low-rise housing more than high-rise and prefer to be in close proximity to schools.

Minimizing the stigma around public housing can be accomplished by taking advantage of creative housing designs. These design opportunities include a variety of aesthetically appealing and cost-cutting design methods. An interview with Public Housing Architect Alphonse Diaz highlighted how creative street-view building designs can improve outsiders’ perspectives of construction and design quality. Diaz added, interior finishes and designs give residents a sense of accountability for their building’s appearance and provide them a sense of ownership of their residential space. The implementations of modular construction technologies can be used to help cut costs of housing projects, and, in turn, aid the implementations of other design methods. Another cost-cutting method in housing design is the adaptive reuse of older
buildings, which makes use of already existing buildings and resources present within a community. Matching the design of new developments to the existing neighborhoods architectural styles also helps integrate new developments into the neighborhood, a strategy that many architects and developers are already using. This style assimilation may help residents feel a greater sense of belonging to their community.

Discussion and recommendations on the access to specific businesses can be found in the Local Spending and Business Diversity section. Linda Brace stressed the importance of looking at the specific characteristics of neighborhoods when deciding to build mixed-use developments, a consideration that we echo in this recommendation. However, our research has shown the general importance of arterial streets in relation to the location of housing. **Predominately residential areas should have easy access to arterial streets with commercial and civic places and options, preferably within walking distance.** The CHA should work with community development organizations, businesses, and neighborhood chambers of commerce to identify thriving commercial avenues (or to support the growth of newly developing commercial avenues) to ensure that residents have access to services and amenities. Successful models have clustered residential areas around smaller, pedestrian-friendly streets that branch off of the main thoroughfare through a neighborhood. This design creates a buffer space between the busy commercial streets and the residential area, which preserves the peace and quiet that is desired by residents while maintaining proximity to services and amenities.10

**Communal spaces in housing should be centrally located and/or near existing areas of high foot traffic.** Examples would include having a meeting room off a main hallway where many residents already pass through on a daily basis. This recommendation is built off our finding that a best practice for communal space design is to leverage natural areas of social interaction within a housing development. Designating a communal space near existing areas of high foot traffic would also increase the perception of safety, versus having a communal space in a relatively deserted area of the development.
The aesthetic design of the communal space should reflect the personality and human element of the housing community while creating a welcoming and safe environment. Avoiding the sterile, generic style of the stereotypical government waiting room by using colorful decorations and well-designed furniture would help foster positive perceptions of the space and encourage usage. Personalized decorations—such as art created by residents or students at a nearby school—would humanize the space. Lastly, bright lighting and clear lines of sight around the communal area would improve perceptions of safety, which would help residents feel comfortable with using the space.

Improved communication between residents and housing designers throughout the design process can improve resident satisfaction. Past and future residents should be consulted at appropriate points throughout the entire design process. Given the success of CHA’s working groups, we recommend that this practice be continued and expanded to afford greater involvement from residents. As other non-CHA affiliated architects and developers have highlighted some difficulties in receiving and incorporating resident feedback, we recommend that the CHA encourage their development partners to use resident-centered focus groups throughout the design process, consulting either CHA-organized working groups or partnering with community organizations.

For projects where specific constraints make it difficult to receive resident or community feedback, “co-housing” practices can help architects and developers understand the perspectives of community stakeholders by having designers live in the housing they create. Co-housing practices have architects live in the housing that they have designed, with the idea that anticipating the lived experience will help the architects better design housing with the residents’ perspectives in mind. Due to various difficulties in incorporating resident feedback into the design process, having a project’s architect live in the new development can retroactively lend quasi-residential perspective in the design process. As architects anticipate their living experience in the new development, their designs would reflect their personal experiences, and thus become more nuanced and detailed. “Co-housing” could incentivize architects to perform more thorough analysis of pre-construction design considerations.

Further Research

A potential area of further research is innovative design for mixed-use developments. Other cities, including LA, have pioneered new ways of using land creatively to support both commercial and residential space. Other cities have also used different methods of selecting businesses for these mixed-use developments, using a combination of factors like community input and commercial development in surrounding neighborhoods to make informed decisions. Looking to these other cities for inspiration could lead Chicago to include more efficiently designed mixed-use developments in the available housing options in the city.

Another potential avenue for further research would be to survey CHA residents on housing design preferences. Due to the general audience of our community survey we, we could not ask specific questions concerning housing design preferences for public housing residents. However, a survey focused on CHA residents could reveal specific preferences tied to residents’ specific needs. These findings could be particularly illuminating when compared to housing design preferences of the general population. Differences between the two groups could highlight ways to specialize CHA housing design to meet resident needs. However, similarities in
preferences between the two groups could also be informative, emphasizing the need for similar housing designs between public housing and private market housing to meet resident preferences and remove the cultural stigma surrounding public housing. This avenue of research could also double as a method of incorporating more resident feedback in the design process. While a survey is not as comprehensive as existing models of resident involvement, this method of engagement allows for a greater number of residents to be involved at the design stage. Furthermore, this method will also give voice to those unable to attend meetings due to time constraints.

**Works Cited**

Conclusion

There is no perfect definition for 'vibrancy.' The definition varies for each individual, simply because what is meaningful to one person may not be what is meaningful to another. There is no general equation for creating vibrancy in Chicago's neighborhoods, and it was never our goal to try to create one. Instead, we have identified a series of particular strategies that, when taking into account the needs and wants of specific neighborhoods, can provide Chicago residents with the things they deem to be truly important. We found that vibrancy lies in the eye of the beholder, that it is a perception created and sustained by the members of a community. Individual residents form a community, and therefore it is the individual residents who make a community vibrant. By promoting the formation of community identity and providing the means for people to interact with and truly get to know each other, the CHA can create 'vibrant' neighborhoods. Through our research, we have identified several ways in which the CHA can achieve its stated goal of creating vibrant communities for its residents.

Early in our research, we identified five key areas of focus related to the CHA's efforts to create vibrancy: the Economy, the Built Environment, Civic Society, Housing Policy, and Services and Amenities. Combined, we believe these five areas cover a vast array of topics particularly important to community identity.

BUILT ENVIRONMENT

The Built Environment group was concerned with how the physical infrastructure of the environment affects the ways people interact with and perceive their own communities. Through their research, the group found that the way people perceive spaces – inviting or uninviting – greatly affects how people use those spaces. This, in turn, affects how people within a community interact and engage with each other. Particularly inviting public spaces attract users and promote opportunities for socializing and community identity building. Thus, the Built Environment groups have collectively suggested that the CHA employs small-scale land transformations as cost-effective solutions to the problems of vacant land, with a focus on new park space, community gardens, farmer's markets, and public art installations. Furthermore, the groups believe that the CHA should recognize the dual usage of vacant land to accommodate for short-term and long-term transformations.

ECONOMY

The Economy group was concerned primarily with the role that business and enterprise play in the development of vibrancy. This group paid particular attention to the development of local, small business within neighborhoods as a means for creating jobs and promoting a community identity. By supporting the development of small businesses, the CHA can improve the overall economic well-being of neighborhoods and provide a means for job training and a way to keep many of the city's youth off the streets. Thus, the Economy group has suggested that the CHA supports the creation of small businesses through partnerships with organizations that foster small business development and organizations that provide small business loans at low interest rates. These groups have also suggested utilizing business development as a means for dealing with vacant land, and thus suggest that the CHA foster relationships with small businesses to fill vacant land.
CIVIC SOCIETY
The Civic Society group focused primarily on how the social fabrics of Chicago’s communities affect vibrancy. The way people interact and engage with each other plays a key role in determining community identity, and thus is vital to vibrancy. This group was particularly concerned with the way that individuals can affect the community, both through interactions and, specifically regarding CHA housing, through the shaping of residential policy. The Civic Society groups collectively believe that the CHA can achieve a greater level of resident input by increasing the modes of engagement through greater publicity for meetings and offering meeting times outside of work times at locations near to residents or public transit lines. The CHA can also promote interaction among residents by pairing new community programming with the improvement of communal spaces within housing developments. Furthermore, the CHA can attempt to alleviate the renter/owner divide through shared equity strategies, like community gardens, co-ops, and land trusts.

HOUSING POLICY
The Housing Policy group looked at how housing can be made more affordable and accessible while enhancing community interaction and engagement at the same time. This group paid particular attention to the way the CHA could achieve this goal through existing programs, initiatives and opportunities to expand and build on these programs. They made three main recommendations. First, a diverse range of housing types, architectural designs, and communal areas are needed to help create a welcoming and safe environment for public housing residents in particular neighborhoods. Second, access to homeownership should be expanded for low income residents, through both traditional programs and alternate pathways like community land trust. Finally, access to social services and expanding communal spaces spurs greater community engagement within public housing developments and measures should be taken to accomplish this goal.

SERVICES AND AMENITIES
The Services and Amenities group focused on how services like educational and employment programs, healthcare and technology can be made more accessible to residents through both CHA programs and those offered by outside organizations. By expanding access to these crucial services, the Services and Amenities group believes that residents will be able to improve their economic well being, health, and voice in their communities. They recommend that the CHA partner with outside organizations to provide residents with access to services such as mental health care, grocery stores and the internet. Current programs offered by the CHA should be more widely publicized and if possible expanded to cover all eligible residents.
Further Research

The path towards building vibrant communities will likely never be complete; however, there are countless paths to further our research. Much of the suggested further research presented in this report requires additional survey analysis of residential preferences on a range of topics from food accessibility to home ownership opportunities to neighborhood art display preferences. More needs to be done to understand how general neighborhood opinions are influenced. However, using only city-wide surveys to determine what resources a neighborhood might need is not enough. Might it be possible residents feel safer in their communities if there was more park space, or better access to public transportation? To better answer these questions, the use of neighborhood specific surveys should be implemented as they can be helpful in understanding the thought processes and individual opinions of residents and would be especially helpful in determining causal relationships between CHA-provided community resources and individual behaviors. Surveying residential preferences would also be helpful in deciding how resources are allocated within given neighborhoods and provides residents a voice in how their communities are shaped.

What’s more, neighborhood sentiments shift with their constantly changing populations. As a result, calls for change and improvement of neighborhoods will likely never go away. However, to begin to solve the common theme and underlying problem of there being a lack engagement between public housing residents and the CHA, future research should include surveying and conducting observational research from individual public housing buildings. By conducting surveys on a smaller scale at individual public housing developments, responses will be directly related to each of the respondents’ living situations and the individual public housing developments as a whole. Surveying the whole city might wrongly include individuals deemed “outliers” to the public housing system or specific neighborhoods, as the makeup of a vibrant neighborhood might differ across neighborhoods.

The surveys in our report were used as a way for our team to grasp the general sentiments of wants and needs of neighborhoods in Chicago. Future researching methods should include taking answers from our previously utilized community survey to help create surveys that are more specific to the issues answered in surveys across specific neighborhoods. These surveys would aid us in further understanding the differences of opinion and the influences of individual thought processes across all of Chicago’s 77 community areas and build more vibrant communities.
The literature review we performed was a crucial component of this project. Very fundamentally, our review of the literature facilitated our introduction to the practicum in two ways. Foremost, the literature review gave us an idea of the work that had (and, quite importantly, had not) already been done. Secondly, it served as a valuable opportunity to critique and question the findings and methodologies of the research in related studies that had been conducted previously. The topics that we examined in our initial literature reviews were dictated by the five working groups (The Economy, The Built Environment, Housing Policy, Services and Amenities, and Civic Society).

The literature review component of the report was one of the first aspects that we completed. Often times, to inform our literature review, we met with librarians at the University of Chicago’s Regenstein Library. These librarians are subject specialists in their field and, in addition to locating relevant papers, they often suggested new topics to explore. To compile a wide selection of literature, we used a conglomerate of online and print resources. We accessed research papers using online databases such as JSTOR and Google Scholar, and we found these resources to be particularly helpful in narrowing down our sources and research scope. While reviewing this literature, we noted down the objective, the research methodology employed, the key findings from the study, and any flaws within the empirical design.

Beyond the research papers, however, we examined a variety of news articles, press releases, and websites to augment the applicability of our literature review—to facilitate its extrapolation to our real-world policy findings and recommendations. Thus, while our literature review certainly has an analytical foundation, we have supplemented the empirical findings with the ‘results’ from ‘natural experiments’—actual occurrences. Performing a comprehensive literature review was immensely helpful as it gave the working groups of the Chicago Policy Research Team an initial direction that dictated not only the areas into which we would conduct further research but also the questions we would ask key informants and residents in interviews and community surveys.
Observational Research

Observational research was one of the key components of our research, complementing and offering real world context for much of the data and information we had gathered through other means of research. Our observational research entailed identifying places, spaces, or meetings of importance to our five research groups, and simply observing, in person, the activities of that place, space or meeting. For example, members of the Built Environment group conducted extensive observational research in parks, observing how people used the space and which characteristics of certain parks made them more attractive to users than others. Members of the Civic Society group attended numerous community meetings, like the Lathrop Community Planning meeting, the Chicago Alternative Policing Strategy meeting, and the Oakwood Boulevard Neighborhood Association, in order to gain a better understanding of the concerns of residents. Furthermore, members of the Economy group conducted observational research at locations like the Shop and Loft, a mixed use (retail and residential).

For the most part, our observational research bookended our other types of research, first providing context to inform our other types of research, then providing context in which to test conclusions drawn from our other types of research. In January, many groups conducted observational research in our three study sites, spending time in places like parks, restaurants, and businesses. The goal of this round of observational research was to 1) provide a better understanding of of three study sites, and 2) to begin to form ideas of what things were important to vibrancy. Then, after most groups had compiled data and other information regarding their areas of research, students conducted more observational research as a means to provide context for conclusions drawn from analyzing said data and information. The result of this process were recommendations and conclusions drawn from and rooted in the real world context of Chicago's neighborhoods. Not only did observational research inform in key ways how we conceptualized vibrancy, but it provided much needed and sought after context for our research.

The observational research conducted throughout this project reaffirms that Chicago is a dynamic, and diverse place. It is a city not without its fair share of problems, but it is also home to people from all walks of life, all of them holding an infinite number of beliefs, desires, and aspirations. That being said, this diversity in population is accompanied by a diversity of challenges. The neighborhoods that comprise the city of Chicago face their own unique obstacles to establishing community vibrancy.

It would be an egregious understatement to suggest that communities on the south side of the Chicago have been dealt a difficult hand. Many of these neighborhoods feel desolate, speckled with vacant lots and abandoned buildings. A number of students conducting research on behalf of the Chicago Housing Authority frequently noted the abandoned and empty spaces, all too common in neighborhoods such as Oakland, and Englewood. Similarly, students raised concerns about the lack of economic opportunity within neighborhoods. Many communities had little diversity in local business. Neighborhoods were lined with beauty shops, liquor stores, and churches; there were no apparent large suppliers of jobs in these communities. However, this is not to suggest that these are places devoid of any and all sense of community. Indeed, when students surveyed residents, many expressed concerns over community safety, and the general well being of themselves, their families, and their neighbors. These are people
heavily invested in the vibrancy of their communities, but often without the resources to secure it.

On the other side of the spectrum (and the city), students marveled at the services and amenities of neighborhoods of the north side of Chicago. Communities such as Bucktown, Old Town, Boys Town, and others on the outskirts of the Loop, are home to restaurants, stores, parks, spas, gyms, and seemingly every other want of someone living in a modern, urban community. Indeed, interactions with residents of these communities were often pleasant. People were willing to be surveyed, help students find their way if they were lost, and were out and about, enjoying everything their communities had to offer. However, upon further examination, these communities were also rooted in exclusivity difficult for low-income residents to overcome. Many of the services provided in these neighborhoods were not in the economic reach of college students, let alone someone who would be receiving assistance from the Chicago Housing Authority. These was most readily apparent in Old Town, as the remnants of the infamous housing projects, Cabrini Green, are nestled in its center. The vibrancy of these communities proved hollow. They are communities for the educated and the affluent, not the spurned and disenfranchised.

Observational research is often marred by the old adage, “Don’t judge a book by its cover”. This research can be shallow, and discredited upon further research. Thankfully, this is not the case here. These observations are substantiated by thorough key informant interviews, and hundreds of resident surveys. They helped guide our research, and have led us to be one step closer to understanding community vibrancy.
Key Informant Interviews

Each working group conducted a number of key informant interviews at the research design stage. These conversations helped narrow down our preliminary research to more specific topics, guiding us towards areas for further research and potential questions for extended interviews.

Each group reached out to stakeholders from a diverse range of fields. For example, the Services and Amenities working group spoke to experts in the different topics of food, health, and technology, while the Economy working group talked to experts from the different backgrounds of academia, public housing, and organizations.

We conducted these interviews in person as well as via phone and email. For key informants who we corresponded with over email, we sent an initial email and then sent a follow-up email three days later. While each working group held slightly different conversations with these informants, the majority of the CPRT asked key informants about the three most important components for community vibrancy associated with their working groups.

We contacted a total of 87 key informants and completed 27 interviews, for an overall response rate of 31%. Figure 1 presents the number of key informant interviews completed by members of each of the five working groups. Figure 2 lists all key informants by name and affiliation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Working Group</th>
<th>Number of People Contacted</th>
<th>Number of Interviews Completed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Built Environment</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Civic Society</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Services and Amenities</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economy</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housing Policy</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 1: Statistics on Key Informant Interviews
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Affiliation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Built Environment</td>
<td>Transformation of Unused Space</td>
<td>Robbin Carroll</td>
<td>I Grow Chicago</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Parks</td>
<td>Stephany Price</td>
<td>I Grow Chicago</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Steve Weaver</td>
<td>Chicago Public Art Group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Madhury Shukla</td>
<td>Chicago Public Art Group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Civic Society</td>
<td>Public Housing Residents</td>
<td>Amber Burrage</td>
<td>CHA Resident, Cabrini-Green</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Community Leaders</td>
<td>Rebecca Fox</td>
<td>Housing Director, Lathrop Homes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Francine Washington</td>
<td>Chairperson, Central Advisory Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Services and Amenities</td>
<td>Food</td>
<td>Dana Gould</td>
<td>Food Access Program Coordinator, Pike Place Market Foundation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Liz Lyon</td>
<td>Farmers Market Manager, Plant Chicago</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Tai Yifat</td>
<td>Lecturer in Sociology, University of Chicago</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Sabina Shaikh</td>
<td>Lecturer in Economics, University of Chicago</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Health</td>
<td>Tony Tovar</td>
<td>Director of Community Relations, Oak Street Health</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Technology</td>
<td>Jesse Handler</td>
<td>Program Analyst, CHA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economy</td>
<td>Academia</td>
<td>Chad Broughton</td>
<td>Senior Lecturer in Public Policy, University of Chicago</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Grace Tsiang</td>
<td>Senior Lecturer in Economics, University of Chicago</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Charles Barlow</td>
<td>Lecturer in Geography and Public Policy, University of Chicago</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Michael Dinerstein</td>
<td>Assistant Professor in Economics, University of Chicago</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Public Housing Residents</td>
<td>Francine Washington</td>
<td>Chairperson, Central Advisory Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Claudice Ware</td>
<td>Member of Property Management Committee, Central Advisory Council</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Organizations</td>
<td>Tanya Lee</td>
<td>Co-Founder, Lee Taylor Consulting Services</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Alyssa Berman Cutler</td>
<td>Director of Business and Workforce Development in the Office of Civic Engagement, University of Chicago</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>John P. Ramirez</td>
<td>Executive Director of Plan for Economic Growth and Jobs, World Business Chicago</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Todd Palmer</td>
<td>Associate Director and Curator, National Public Housing Museum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housing Policy</td>
<td>Public Housing Residents</td>
<td>Sandra Young</td>
<td>Former Commissioner, CHA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Industry</td>
<td>Peter Levavi</td>
<td>Senior Vice President, Brinshore Development, LLC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Alphonse Diaz</td>
<td>Public Housing Architect, Diaz Architecture Co.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Academia</td>
<td>Charles Barlow</td>
<td>Lecturer in Geography and Public Policy, University of Chicago</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 2: Description of Key Informants
Asset Mapping and Parcel Surveying

As we continued our research, we wanted to highlight existing elements of vibrancy in different neighborhoods of Chicago. Based on our working group topics, we selected physical elements to be mapped in three study areas. These elements included vacant lots, parks, high-rise housing, chain businesses, and grocery stores, and more. By looking at the existing layout of community assets and parcels, we could draw connections between the presence of certain resources and community vibrancy, as well as community attributes that may lead to a diminished sense of vibrancy.

Site Selection Process

When determining sites for our asset mapping and parcel surveying data collection, the CPRT selected three study areas with geographic variation, different stages of neighborhood development, and a diversity of CHA housing types. We defined these areas based on census tracts and blocks, which allowed us to use demographic census data in our analysis.

Oakland Area

Census tracts: 8359 (Block Groups 2 and 3 only); 8396; 3511; 3802; 3602; 3801; 8365; 8364
Lathrop Homes Area

**Census tracts**: 2109; 2203; 8437 (Block Group 2 only); 8309; 514; 513; 707 (west of railroad tracks/Ravenswood Avenue only)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Boundary</th>
<th>Northern</th>
<th>Western</th>
<th>Southern</th>
<th>Eastern</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cutoff</td>
<td>Belmont Avenue</td>
<td>California Avenue</td>
<td>Fullerton Avenue</td>
<td>Ravenswood Avenue/ Railroad Tracks</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Old Town Area

**Census tracts:** 8422 (excluding Goose Island); 804; 803; 8383; 819; 818 (Block Groups 1 and 2 only)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Boundary</th>
<th>Northern</th>
<th>Western</th>
<th>Southern</th>
<th>Eastern</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cutoff</td>
<td>North Avenue</td>
<td>North Branch Canal/River</td>
<td>Ohio Street (North Branch Canal - New Orleans Street); Illinois Street (New Orleans Street to Wells Street)</td>
<td>Wells Street (Illinois Street to Division Street); LaSalle Street (Division Street to North Avenue)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHA Housing
To focus on the role of the CHA in promoting vibrancy in a neighborhood, we selected study areas with at least one CHA housing development. The three study areas capture a range of traditional family and senior public housing and mixed-income developments. A list of CHA housing in each study area follows, with mixed-income developments in italics:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Oakland</th>
<th>Lathrop Homes</th>
<th>Old Town</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lake Parc Place</td>
<td>Julia C. Lathrop Homes</td>
<td>Renaissance North</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Judge Green Apartments</td>
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<td>Orchard Park</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lake Park Crescent</td>
<td></td>
<td>Thomas Flannery Apartments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jazz on the Boulevard</td>
<td></td>
<td>Mohawk Partners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sullivan Station</td>
<td></td>
<td>Mohawk North</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vivian Gordon Harsh Apartments</td>
<td></td>
<td>Northtown Village</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legends South-Gwendolyn Place</td>
<td></td>
<td>Old Town Square</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quincy</td>
<td></td>
<td>Old Town Village West</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Langston</td>
<td></td>
<td>Parkside of Old Town</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Judge Slater and Judge Slater Annex</td>
<td></td>
<td>River Village North</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oakwood Shores</td>
<td></td>
<td>River Village South</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legends South-Coleman Place</td>
<td></td>
<td>Domain Lofts</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>River Village Pointe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Cabrini Rowhouses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Larrabee</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Geographic Diversity
While we only surveyed three sites, we mapped land parcels located in different parts of Chicago (namely, the North and South sides). Given that Chicago is both among the most diverse yet segregated cities in the United States, with significant disparities in resources that may lead to different understandings of neighborhood vibrancy on the North and South Sides, we wanted to incorporate contrasting sites which could capture such diversity in our data collection.

Stages of Neighborhood Development
To gain a comprehensive understanding of neighborhood vibrancy, we chose sites at different stages of community development. Old Town offers a full range of housing options and commercial activity. In contrast, Oakland is on the cusp of economic revitalization and is beginning to attract middle-class households. Lastly, the Lathrop Homes study area is relatively underdeveloped in terms of CHA housing with redevelopment efforts in the master planning stage, but is surrounded by high levels of economic activity and development.
**Survey Questions for Working Groups**

The five working groups were guided by distinct research questions for the asset mapping project.

The **Built Environment** group wanted to understand how the built environment can better support a community’s needs. The group mapped vacant lots, park spaces, and buildings of note (buildings that were abandoned, under construction, or for sale), community gardens, and art spaces which could serve as potential sites for the creation of new public spaces.

The **Civic Society** group worked to study community engagement and mapped community spaces which could serve as potential sites for community meetings. They wanted to see which community spaces allowed residents to interact with one another and chose to map parks, cafes, religious spaces, and schools.

The **Services and Amenities** group sought to capture the different services and amenities were provided in a neighborhood to identify gaps the CHA and its partners could fill to ensure all community members’ needs were met. Specific services included to food-related establishments, transportation, healthcare providers, and free internet sites.

The **Economy** group aimed to determine what resources for-profit businesses served a community and to understand how community businesses affected the financial well being of community members. Additionally, the group mapped economic and financial institutions which they believed would improve local economies, like banks and cash exchanges, as well as education opportunities or nonprofits that could impact residents’ future income and employment status.

The **Housing Policy** group aimed to study the diversity of housing types, following input from key informants Professor Charles Barlow and public housing architect Alphonse Diaz, which highlighted housing diversity as a key aspect of neighborhood vibrancy. They mapped housing in the three study areas and classified each according to Cook County housing classifications.

Each group devised a series of questions to help categorize buildings and land according to their research goals. These series of questions are outlined below. The flowcharts depicted show the questions asked by each working group for each land parcel they mapped.
Site Control

After each working group determined which questions they wanted to focus on, they used Site Control, a mobile application by Loveland Technologies, to collect data in each of the study areas. Originally used to map urban blight in Detroit, the application is designed to easily allow individuals to asset map, parcel by parcel, any vicinity they desire. The application allows surveyors to select an individual parcel of land and complete one of the working group surveys (Figure 1). Once the survey is completed and the parcel is categorized, the surveyor can take a photograph to accompany the collected data. In addition, the application records the date and time a submission is entered.

The mapping exercise allowed us to visualize the geographical distribution as well as quantify the amount of assets in the study areas. For example, our data helped us see how many churches were present in each community and whether or not a certain area was lacking
in a specific asset. Further, the software allowed us to filter specific characteristics for further analysis. Figure 2 presents one example from the Economy working group that categorizes specific assets at the Old Town study site.

Unfortunately, there were several complications with SiteControl, leading to the loss of data or the need to re-input data for parcels. Given that the application required the use of a smartphone or tablet computer, this occasionally presented safety concerns that we sought to overcome by mapping in groups of two or more. Furthermore, the cold Chicago winter occasionally caused smartphones and tablet computers to crash in the field, delaying our ability to collect data. Despite these challenges, the CPRT successfully mapped all three sites over a period of approximately three weeks.

**Completing the Map**

The CPRT completed the mapping of the study sites on foot, by bicycle, and less often by car. Occasionally, given the adverse weather conditions, we recorded some data on paper and input this into SiteControl at a later stage and at other times supplemented our mapping in the field with virtual mapping using Google StreetView.

Over the three week period of data collection, the five working groups successfully categorized more than 2,000 parcels across the three study sites.
Extended Interviews

Methodology
The Chicago Policy Research Team conducted more than 40 extended interviews relating to various aspects of community vibrancy. Each member of the team directed 2 interviews in his or her area of focus in order to gain a better understanding of contributing factors to neighborhood vibrancy and community well being. Extended interviews served as supplementary evidence to survey data, asset mapping, and literature reviews, to provide expert opinions and personal narratives of community experiences. Our extended interviewees were drawn from a diverse range of backgrounds to include elected officials, CHA residents, property developers, social service providers, community garden directors, students, as well as many other experts and stakeholders from Chicago and further afield.

Content
Each interview lasted from 20 to 90 minutes and featured questions generated in advance by team members. Some examples of these questions include: How important are communal spaces to community engagement in CHA buildings? What are the necessary components of a sustainable and successful community garden? How can community leaders aid economically strained neighborhoods? In what ways can community members be incentivized to attend more neighborhood meetings? To what extent do public spaces and gatherings foster a sense of community among residents? What are some architectural strategies to achieve more successful mixed-income housing in Chicago?

The results of these extended interviews have been used to guide the research process and to provide supporting evidence for key findings in each of the following research areas: homeownership, income mix, housing design, health, technology, food, parks, community gardens, art, land transformation, employment and education, youth services, business support, local spending and business diversity, safety, community spaces, community engagement, and transportation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interviewee Name</th>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Interview Topic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sandra Young</td>
<td>Program Facilitator, Chicago Park District; Co-Founder, Ujima Inc.</td>
<td>Civic Society; Economy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peter Levavi</td>
<td>Senior Vice President</td>
<td>Economy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lee Pratter</td>
<td>Senior Director of Development</td>
<td>Civic Society; Housing Policy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linda Brace</td>
<td>Senior Project Manager and Director of Ickes Revitalization</td>
<td>Housing Policy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yonah Freemark</td>
<td>Project Director at Metropolitan Planning Commission</td>
<td>Services &amp; Amenities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tony Tovar</td>
<td>Director of Community Relations at Oak Street Health</td>
<td>Services &amp; Amenities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Betty Thompson</td>
<td>CHA resident</td>
<td>Services &amp; Amenities</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 1: Extended Interview Contact List, Part 1
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interviewee Name</th>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Interview Topic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lauralyn Clawson</td>
<td>Youth Education Coordinator of Growing Power</td>
<td>Built Environment, Services &amp; Amenities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robbin Carroll</td>
<td>President and Founder of I Grow Chicago</td>
<td>Built Environment, Services &amp; Amenities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natasha Holbert</td>
<td>Director of Chicago Lights Urban Farm</td>
<td>Built Environment, Services &amp; Amenities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ken Dunn</td>
<td>Founder of the Resource Center in Chicago</td>
<td>Built Environment, Services &amp; Amenities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alderman Brendan Reilly</td>
<td>Alderman of the 42nd Ward</td>
<td>Civic Society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Julie Dent Tun</td>
<td>Secretary of the Oakwood Boulevard Neighborhood Association</td>
<td>Civic Society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trinity Dishmon</td>
<td>Economic Empowerment Coordinator, YWCA</td>
<td>Economy; Services &amp; Amenities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shquestra Sitawi</td>
<td>Economic Empowerment Coordinator, YWCA</td>
<td>Economy; Services &amp; Amenities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alex Alcantar</td>
<td>Director, Illinois Procurement Technical Assistance Center at The</td>
<td>Economy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Illinois Hispanic Chamber of Commerce</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heather Tabbert</td>
<td>Manager, Local Planning &amp; Programs at Regional Transportation Authority</td>
<td>Services &amp; Amenities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sara Kuse</td>
<td>Chicago Resident and Bee Keeper at the Chicago Park District</td>
<td>Built Environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aaron Salamonson</td>
<td>Prominent Member of the Urban Village Church</td>
<td>Civic Society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lolitha McKinney</td>
<td>Business Opportunity Specialist at the US Small Business Administration</td>
<td>Economy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alan Jacobs</td>
<td>Vice Chair of Score Chicago</td>
<td>Economy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alyssa Berman-Cutler</td>
<td>Director of Business and Workforce Development at the University of</td>
<td>Economy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Chicago Office of Civic Engagement</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maya Laurie</td>
<td>Stony Island Arts Bank Attendant</td>
<td>Built Environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Claudice Ware</td>
<td>CHA resident and member of the Central Advisory Council</td>
<td>Economy; Housing Policy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robert Koerner</td>
<td>Developer at Davis Group</td>
<td>Housing Policy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Francine Washington</td>
<td>CHA resident and Chairperson of the Central Advisory Council</td>
<td>Civic Society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John McPherrin</td>
<td>Director of Psychology Training at Student Counseling Service, University of Chicago</td>
<td>Built Environment, Services &amp; Amenities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ariel Kalil</td>
<td>Professor, Director of the Center for Human Potential &amp; Public Policy (CHPPP)</td>
<td>Services &amp; Amenities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laura Saija</td>
<td>Visiting Assistant Professor at University of Memphis</td>
<td>Built Environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ellen Roberds</td>
<td>City Action Strategist at IOBY</td>
<td>Built Environment, Civic Society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deborah Howard</td>
<td>Librarian at Oak Park Library</td>
<td>Civic Society</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 2: Extended Interview Contact List, Part 2
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interviewee Name</th>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Interview Topic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Marcio Mendez</td>
<td>Restaurant owner in Oak Park</td>
<td>Economy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rob Reuland</td>
<td>Project Manager at Site Design Group, Ltd.</td>
<td>Built Environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Todd Palmer</td>
<td>Associate Director &amp; Curator at National Public Housing Museum</td>
<td>Economy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simone Tulumello</td>
<td>Fulbright Scholar</td>
<td>Built Environment; Civic Society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alphonse Diaz</td>
<td>Founder and Lead Architect at Diaz Architecture Co.</td>
<td>Housing Policy; Civic Society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kenneth Reardon</td>
<td>Professor at University of MA, Boston</td>
<td>Built Environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Antonio Raciti</td>
<td>Professor at University of Memphis</td>
<td>Built Environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liz Lyon</td>
<td>Manager of the farmer's market at Plant Chicago</td>
<td>Services and Amenities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tal Yifat</td>
<td>University of Chicago PhD Candidate and lecturer</td>
<td>Services and Amenities</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 3: Extended Interview Contact List, Part 3
Community Survey

Selection of Survey Areas

Chicago is both among the most diverse and most segregated cities in the United States. There are significant differences manifest in the environment and amenities of each neighborhood. Given the segregation along income, race and cultural lines, we sought to capture the perspectives from residents living in several neighborhoods across the city.

We first sorted each of Chicago’s zip codes by median household income, as reported in 2015 U.S. Census Bureau estimates. In an effort to capture the diversity of incomes and the opportunities that different incomes afford, we selected four geographically distributed zip codes in each quartile for a total of 16 zip codes (Figure 1).

Given our earlier asset mapping research, we included the zip codes where each of the three study sites were predominantly located—Old Town (60610), Oakland (60653), and Lathrop Homes (60647).

We sought to administer at least 50 community surveys in these three zip codes and at least 25 surveys in each of the other selected zip codes, for a minimum total of 475 responses.

Survey Questions

Each of the five working groups contributed banks of questions that would assist the Chicago Policy Research Team in advancing its research objectives. From these question banks, a sub-group responsible for designing the community survey selected a selection of these questions for further consideration.
The **Built Environment** working group wanted to capture residents’ perceptions of vacant land in their community. The group’s initial literature review suggested that vacant land was often perceived as a negative component of communities. However, their key informants expressed that vacant land could be highly valued in a community. With this in mind, the group sought to collect data on desirable land uses for vacant land from community residents. Beyond vacant land transformation, the community survey also focused on parks and the nature of amenities that residents considered most attractive and useful.

The **Civic Society** working group sought to understand the ways in which community engagement occurs in neighborhoods. By asking questions about community meetings, this group hoped to collect data about residents’ involvement in their neighborhoods, the barriers that residents face in engaging in the community, and the nature of spaces that were most conducive to community engagement and cohesion.

The **Services and Amenities** working group wanted to gain an understanding of the challenges and barriers of access to healthcare, technology, and food. The group sought to collect a range of data to better understand travel times to essential health services for residents from different zip codes and income levels. Additionally, this group posed questions that would identify barriers to accessing the internet and technology resources in an effort to better understand the ‘digital divide’ along income lines. Finally, this group hoped to explore the extent of access to fresh and affordable produce across Chicago’s diverse neighborhoods.

The **Economy** working group wanted to identify residents’ perceptions of different businesses within their neighborhood. From speaking to CHA residents and CAC members, this group learned that some businesses were more valued or useful in some communities than in others. This group focused its questions upon gathering resident feedback about the types of businesses residents did or did not want in their communities.

Finally, the **Housing Policy** working group asked questions that examined homeownership, as well as various residential and neighborhood-related preferences by income. This group hoped to understand the extent to which residents viewed homeownership as achievable, or if it was even a desirable goal at all. Further, the group sought to explore community interactions and preferences among residents of different income levels in order to inform research on mixed-income housing. Finally, this group wanted to consider good housing design practices by asking whether community spaces within a residential building were important to residents.

**Piloting the Survey**

After compiling each working group’s questions into a preliminary survey, the survey was piloted at two focus groups—one consisting of CHA residents from Lake Parc Place and the other of three UChicago faculty and staff. These focus groups guided us in restructuring the survey, neutralizing the phrasing of questions, and reviewing the logical basis of each question and its responses. Some of our revisions took form in re-wording certain questions to be more sensitive and precise, ensuring that they did not assume any information or elicit biased responses. The survey was also structurally revised so that questions were grouped thematically by our five working groups.
Survey Administration
Following the implementation of all changes suggested by these focus groups, we set out to administer the surveys in the 16 selected zip codes. To achieve the most diverse sampling of residents within each zip code, we intercepted residents in a variety of public spaces, such as sidewalks, parks, universities, and businesses. Respondents were given a brief introduction of the project and offered a $3 Chicago Transit Authority Ventra Pass in return for completion of the survey. Respondents were given a choice of hand-writing responses on their own or having questions read aloud and recorded by the surveyor. Respondents completed demographic questions on their own for privacy reasons. All intercepted residents, both those who did and did not complete the survey, were given a brief flyer that provided a more detailed description about the project, and included contact information for any follow-up questions as well as a link to the CPRT website.

In addition to the community surveys completed by surveyors in the field, an online version was distributed to a select number of Chicago-based organizations and social groups. In total, we collected 526 in-person intercept surveys, and 49 online surveys. Topic-specific analyses of the survey data will be described in detail throughout the individual sections of the report. In the pages that follow, we include a copy of the survey, graphical representations of the demographic data reported by respondents, and a map identifying the ‘home’ zip codes of each respondent.
CHICAGO RESIDENT SURVEY

We are students working for the Chicago Policy Research Team, which is helping the Chicago Housing Authority (CHA) learn more about vibrancy in Chicago's communities. Your perspectives and thoughts on vibrancy are important to us, and we are grateful to hear them.

Your participation is voluntary, and you may choose to end the survey at any time and refuse to answer any questions.

For completing this survey, we would like to offer you a single-journey Ventra ticket as a token of our appreciation. This ticket includes one full fare and two transfers, valued at $3.

1. What zip code do you live in?

2. List the zip codes in which you primarily work and/or attend school.
   - Work ____________________________  □ Do not work
   - School ____________________________  □ Do not attend school

3. How many years have you lived in your current neighborhood?
   □ Less than 1 year  □ 1-4 years(s)  □ 5-9 years  □ 10-14 years  □ 15+ years

4. a) Which of the following best describes your housing situation?
   □ Renter  □ Homeowner  □ Other (please specify): ____________________________  □ Prefer not to say

   b) Do you receive assistance from the CHA?
   □ Yes  □ No  □ Not sure  □ Prefer not to say

5. Think of a park in your neighborhood. How frequently do you visit this park?
   □ Most days  □ Once or twice a week  □ Once or twice a month  □ Rarely

6. a) What facilities are most important for you to have in a neighborhood park?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Facility</th>
<th>Very Important</th>
<th>Somewhat Important</th>
<th>Not that Important</th>
<th>Not at all Important</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Benches</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open space</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Picnic tables</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Playgrounds</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public grills</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sports fields / courts</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Walking / running / biking path</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
b) Is there anything you like having or would really like to have in a neighborhood park?


c) Is there anything you would not want in a neighborhood park?

7. Think of a vacant lot you see frequently. Which of the following would you like to see on this land?
   - Community garden
   - Dog park
   - Farmer’s market
   - Sports field
   - Open-space field / park
   - Public art installation
   - Other (please specify): __________________________
   - N/A: Land should remain as is

8. Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements:

   | Strongly Agree | Agree | Disagree | Strongly Disagree
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vacant land and buildings attract illegal behavior.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vacant land and buildings are signs of a poor economy.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

9. a) Which of the following groups are you involved in?
   - Alderman / ward meetings
   - Block clubs
   - CAPS (Chicago Alternative Policing Strategy)
   - Faith based organizations
   - PAC (Park Advisory Council)
   - PTA (Parent Teacher Association)
   - Resident associations
   - School boards
   - Sports teams
   - Youth organizations
   - Other (please specify): __________________________
   - Not applicable

b) On average, how many community meetings do you attend per month?
   - 0 meetings
   - 1 meeting
   - 2-3 meetings
   - 4+ meetings
   - I haven’t attended community meetings
c) What would make you more likely to attend community meetings?

10. In which of these community spaces would you most prefer to attend community meetings?
   - City hall / government building
   - Religious spaces
   - Common residential areas
   - School
   - Parks / field house
   - Other (please specify):
   - Private homes

11. Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I feel safe in my neighborhood.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have a voice in my community.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can afford fresh produce from my neighborhood grocery store.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have access to affordable and quality health care.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have access to public transportation.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

12. What mode(s) of transportation do you use to get to the following places? Approximately how long does it take you to get there?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Place</th>
<th>Walking</th>
<th>Bike</th>
<th>Car</th>
<th>Bus</th>
<th>Train</th>
<th>Travel Time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Doctor's office</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(if applicable)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pharmacy</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(if applicable)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(if applicable)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(if applicable)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
13. a) Do you have a computer at home?
   ☐ Yes ☐ No

   b) If yes, do you have internet access in your home?
   ☐ Yes ☐ No

14. a) Do you have a cellphone?
   ☐ Yes ☐ No

   b) If yes, does it have a data plan?
   ☐ Yes ☐ No

15. What would make **youth** more successful in your community? **Choose 2.**
   ☐ After-school arts programs
   ☐ After-school sports programs
   ☐ After-school tutoring programs
   ☐ Better access to internet
   ☐ Better access to study spaces
   ☐ Free / low-cost summer camp
   ☐ Job training / apprenticeship programs
   ☐ Local opportunities to volunteer (e.g. community gardens)

16. What makes your neighborhood feel like home?

17. How often do you have a conversation with your neighbors?
   ☐ Most days ☐ Once or twice a week ☐ Once or twice a month ☐ Rarely
### CHICAGO RESIDENT SURVEY

18. How are important are each of the following to you?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Common spaces in your apartment building (e.g. community rooms, patios)</th>
<th>Very Important</th>
<th>Somewhat Important</th>
<th>Not that Important</th>
<th>Not at all Important</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Home internet access</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My concerns about my building/neighborhood are addressed by resident or neighborhood organizations</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have the resources to buy my own home</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

19. a) Please indicate the types of establishments that are most important to you in your neighborhood. **Choose 3**.

- Banks
- Cash exchanges
- Fitness centers
- Restaurants
- Beauty shops
- Clothing stores
- Grocery stores
- Other (please specify):
- Book stores
- Convenience stores
- Liquor stores

b) Are there any types of businesses you like having or would really like to have in your community?

c) Are there any types of businesses you wouldn't want to have in your community?
CHICAGO RESIDENT SURVEY

The final questions are intended to help us learn more about the types of people who are responding to our survey and will help us better understand our data.

A. How old are you? ____________________________

B. How would you describe yourself? Check all that apply.
   □ American Indian or Alaska Native
   □ Asian or Asian-American
   □ Black or African-American
   □ Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
   □ Hispanic or Latino
   □ Middle Eastern or North African
   □ White or Caucasian
   □ Other: ____________________________
   □ Prefer not to say

C. Which of the following ranges most closely represents your household income?
   □ Less than $10,000
   □ $10,000-$19,999
   □ $20,000-$29,999
   □ $30,000-$39,999
   □ $40,000-$49,999
   □ $50,000-$59,999
   □ $60,000-$69,999
   □ $70,000-$79,999
   □ $80,000-$89,999
   □ $90,000-$99,999
   □ $100,000-$199,999
   □ More than $200,000
   □ Prefer not to say

D. Do you participate in any food assistance programs? Check all that apply.
   □ LINK
   □ WIC (Women, Infants, and Children)
   □ No
   □ Prefer not to say
   □ Other (please specify): ____________________________

E. i) How many people live in your home, including you? ____________________________

   ii) How many of these people are under 18 years old? ____________________________

F. Gender: ____________________________

For surveyor use only

A. Survey Collector: ____________________________

B. Zip Code: ____________________________

C. Street Intersection: ____________________________

D. Date: ____________________________

E. Time Survey Started: ____________________________

F. Time Survey Finished: ____________________________

G. Total Length of Survey: ____________________________

H. Ventra Serial No.: ____________________________
## Respondent Demographics

### Income Range and Number of Respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Income Range</th>
<th>Number of Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less than $10,000</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$10,000-19,999</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$20,000-29,999</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$30,000-39,999</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$40,000-49,999</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$50,000-59,999</td>
<td>45</td>
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<td>$60,000-69,999</td>
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<td>$70,000-79,999</td>
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<tr>
<td>$80,000-89,999</td>
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<tr>
<td>$90,000-99,999</td>
<td>11</td>
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<tr>
<td>$100,000-199,999</td>
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<tr>
<td>More than $200,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Prefer Not to Say</td>
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### Race and Number of Respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race</th>
<th>Number of Respondents</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>American Indian or Alaska Native</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White or Caucasian</td>
<td>225</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian or Asian-American</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic or Latino</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle Eastern or North African</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prefer not to say</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black or African-American</td>
<td>217</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

### Age Range and Number of Respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Range</th>
<th>Number of Respondents</th>
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<tr>
<td>18-24</td>
<td>119</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-34</td>
<td>169</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35-44</td>
<td>105</td>
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<tr>
<td>45-54</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
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<td>55-64</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65-74</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>75</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prefer not to say</td>
<td>18</td>
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</table>
Bibliography

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2. CHA. Vacant Land List. [Data file]. 2015.

PARKS

COMMUNITY GARDENS

PUBLIC ART

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT


COMMUNITY SPACES


SAFETY


PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION


**FOOD SERVICES**


**HEALTH**


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LOCAL SPENDING AND BUSINESS DIVERSITY


BUSINESS SUPPORT


MIXED-INCOME HOUSING


HOMEOWNERSHIP

HOUSING DESIGN