

# **Chicago Heights Choice Neighborhood Plan**

## **6/23/2018 Kickoff Meeting - Poster Summary**

Six boards were filled out by members of the community. The planning team had the opportunity to speak with about 20-30 people and everyone had something interesting to say. The answers were varied and insightful into the social and physical fabric of Chicago Heights.

### **1. What are the biggest needs of downtown and The East Side?**

This was one of the most popular boards put out during the kickoff event. There were varied answers that included new types of shopping, housing, community programming, and others.

- Transportation to and from the new housing sites
- More walking paths and trails around the community
- A Grocery Store
- More jobs
- Street Lighting
- General Safety
- Good school walking routes
- Paved Alleyways (Lowe Ave.)
- Wi-Fi for all
- Computer Center
- Tear down dilapidated buildings
  - Rehab some if possible
- More Owner Occupied Housing
- Job/Work force Centers
  - More youth jobs
- Rec center like a YMCA
- More retail options
  - Walmart
  - Dollar Store
  - Food stores
  - Restaurants
  - Gas Stations
- More businesses to strengthen the tax base
- Boys and girls clubs
- Medical Services (hopefully free)
- Community Center
- Parenting Network program
  - Possibly a parenting center

- More Schools- a new middle school (6<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> grade) in Downtown
- More Housing

## **2. What is your BIG idea for the plan?**

Although people treated this somewhat similarly to the “needs” board, people mostly used this poster as an opportunity to write down the major changes they would like to see in Chicago Heights. Planning team members worked hard to help facilitate the creation of this board and it led to some very interesting ideas such as housing changes and institutional improvements.

- Move housing South of Route 30 (Lincoln Hwy) to help create a denser, more economically viable section of Chicago Heights and promote institutional and retail uses in north of 30.
- Mixed-use in Downtown CH
- Economically revitalize downtown
- Bigger, more useful parks
- Clean up CH so it is more visually appealing and less off-putting, especially along Lincoln Highway (the gateway to the community)
- More jobs
- Find costs to rehab the housing stock and find money to begin the rehab process
- A high quality, permanent homeless shelter
- An upscale hotel
- More youth summer programs
- Discipline/etiquette/respect/civility classes in schools
- Financial help for the elderly to keep up their property

## **3. What are the most valuable assets of Downtown and The East Side?**

This board gave residents the chance to consider what assets they already have in Chicago Heights to build upon going forward. Unfortunately this board was not as popular, which is perhaps an indication of the state of the neighborhood.

- All of the churches
- The playground in the park where the event was held
- Local Industries (this had a space for people to tally if they agreed or not):
  - Yes: 1
  - No: 3
- 16 newly built “Neighborhood Stabilization Homes”
  - Near 15<sup>th</sup> Street/Center (we could not confirm this location when driving around ourselves)
- Pace Bus/Metra

- WorkNet Center
- FC Center for Progress (A Free Tax Service)
- Food Pantries
- Chicago Food Depository
- Access Mobile
- Lincoln School (K-4<sup>th</sup>)
- Jefferson School (5<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup>)
- Washington Junior High School (7<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup>)
- Bloom Township High School (multiple people wrote this)
- Prairie State College

#### 4. What do you do for recreation and where?

Similar to the “most valuable assets” board, this poster was only partially filled in compared to the “needs” board. However, residents used the space as an opportunity to fill in their recreational desires for Chicago Heights.

People would like:

- More swimming in the park district as well as elsewhere in the community
  - (Especially more outside pools)
- Rebuild the park house, game room and bathrooms at King Park on Center St.
  - (According to residents these were torn down without community input)
- Rebuild the former “Block Beautiful Garden Clubs)

#### 5. How do you get to school or work?

This poster was meant to accompany the pin-and-string route map (shown below). Despite this, people did not really latch on to it like they did with the string map, so there was not much data to gather.

- For the people that did answer, they said:
  - Commute by car: **5 people**
  - Commute by bus: **2 people**
  - Commute by Metra: **0 people**
  - Commute by walking: **3 people**
  - Commute by bike: **0 people**
  - other: **0 people**
- The people that did take the bus indicated verbally that they were mostly happy with the existing Pace bus routes, but it would of course always be nice to have more.
- People were dissatisfied with the walking conditions of the community, with many noting the broken sidewalks.

## 6. Pin and String Map

The Pin-And String Map was overall fairly successful as an exercise for the community. The map visualized a number of interesting trends:

- Most of the event attendees were from the choice project area
- Children from Jefferson Junior High School attended the event and were some of the most active contributors to the map
- There was a good number of students from other schools such as Lincoln-Gavin Elementary and Bloom High School
- Adults were split about 50/50 for staying within the community and going elsewhere for work.
- In terms of method of transport, adults were also split about 50/50 walking and driving with only a few taking the pace bus. Nobody mentioned that they bike or take the Metra.

