



## WORKING GROUP STRATEGY GUIDE

### Education and Workforce

#### *Priority Outcomes*

- Children enter kindergarten ready to learn.
- Children are proficient in core academic subjects.
- Youth, including youth with disabilities, graduate from high school college- and career-ready.
- Households are economically stable and self-sufficient.

#### *Framing the Challenge*

- Quality education has proven to be a prerequisite in creating neighborhoods of choice. What is truly important?
  - Fulfilling academic potential through advance curriculum.
  - The education system must be viewed holistically; preschool through college.
  - Must address the need for continuing education, certificate training, and vocational training leading to jobs.
  - Optics are critical; the region must recognize the success the education system has achieved.

## **What Neighborhood Residents Have Told Us**

- Cost is a factor that keeps parents from enrolling their children in out-of-school programs, obtaining affordable daycare, and accessing community learning programming. Community Wi-Fi services and computer centers were identified as a desired amenity.
- Better schools are needed. Development of a parenting network and programming was suggested. This input suggests the need to focus on strengthening the cradle-to career continuum. Incorporate “soft skill” (discipline, etiquette, respect, civility) training into school curricula.
- There is a need for job workforce centers, apprenticeship initiatives (jobs with training) and access to job opportunities. This suggests that residents may not be aware of the range of currently available resources.
- Existing residents believe existing nearby industries do not have jobs suitable for them. There may need to be improved communication about jobs available for neighborhood residents, outreach, and job training.

## **Assets**

- School districts at all levels are engaged in the process as partners
- School districts are investing in new facilities to better serve students
- Prairie State College
- Job training/employment service entities are engaged in the CN planning process
- Several daycare facilities within the neighborhood
- Planned public school facility improvements
- Scholarships available for public housing residents

## **Challenges**

- Poor public school test scores; Chicago Heights is not generally viewed as a community with great schools
- High student mobility rate at elementary school level
- Low percentage of elementary students rated as ready for the next grade level
- Low percentage of high school students rated as ready for college course work
- High percentage of low-income and minority students