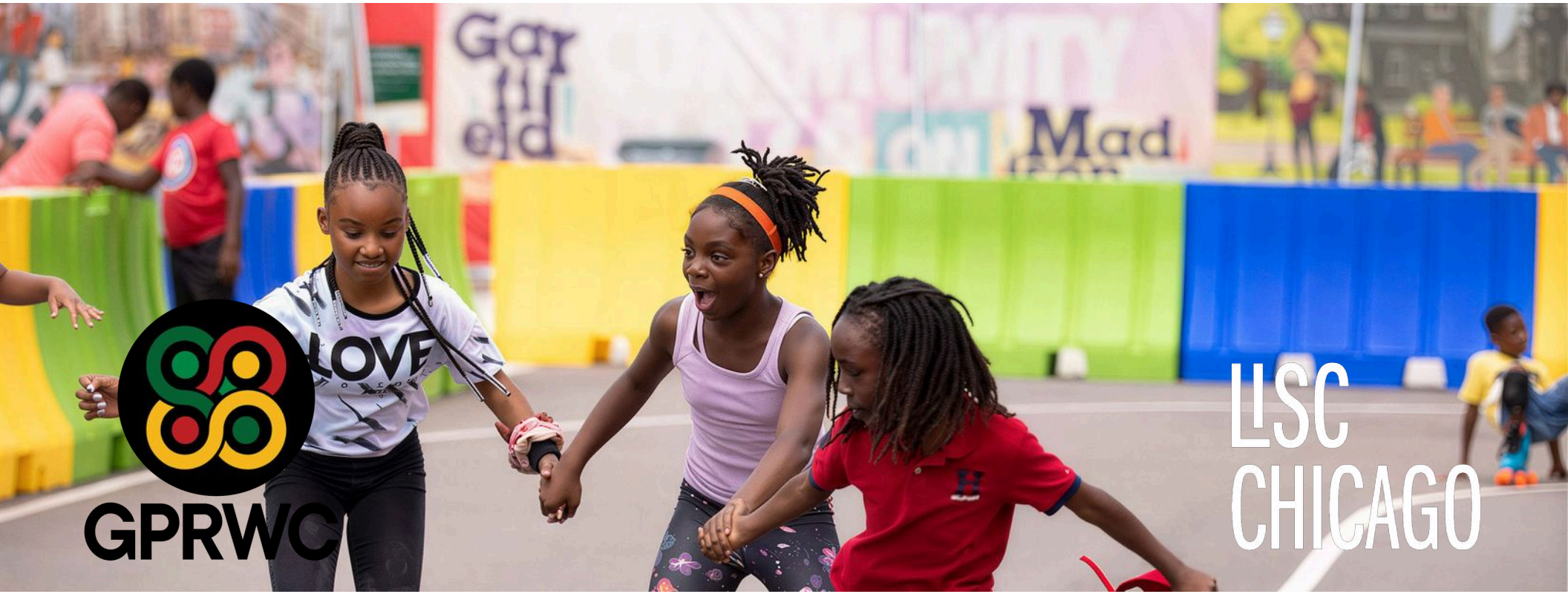
GARFIELD PARK
A VILLAGE GOING FORWARD



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OUR COMMUNITY

Building Shared Purpose: Collaborating for Garfield Park's Future

Garfield Park is a community deeply rooted in knowing ourselves.

We know our history, what harms us, our brilliance, and our power. We know what has been taken—and what has been preserved through generations of care, creativity, and resistance. Today, Garfield Park is moving forward with strength. We aren't asking for permission to do well—we are setting the rules for how our community grows and succeeds.

The Quality-of-Life Plan (QLP) is our community's collective voice made visible. It is not aspirational rhetoric or a one-time planning exercise. It is our promise to each other—written by residents, youth, and elders—that our future will be built on pride, looking out for one another, and taking the lead ourselves.

The urgency of this moment is clear.

For decades, our community has endured systemic disinvestment while remaining rich in assets: a central location on Chicago's West Side, historic boulevards, legacy institutions, deep social networks, and a vibrant ecosystem of organizers and residents committed to one another. What has been missing is not vision, but alignment—between community priorities and public, private, and philanthropic investment.

The QLP exists to close that gap.

It aligns the lived experiences of residents with concrete strategies for equitable development, public health, safety, housing stability, economic mobility, and cultural preservation. It recognizes that revitalization without our residents is not renewal—it is displacement. As such, this plan centers ownership, legacy protection, and pathways for long-term stability so that growth strengthens the people who already call Garfield Park home.

We aren't just letting change happen to us. We are the ones building our future.

By organizing the QLP around our shared priorities—youth leadership, safety, housing, arts and culture, economic development, and wellness—the plan serves as both a roadmap and a call to action. It connects historical harm to future possibility and invites partners, funders, and policymakers to invest in a vision that is already in motion.

This is Garfield Park asserting its right to shape what comes next.

FOCUS AREA ARTS, MEDIA & TECHNOLOGY

ARTS, MEDIA & TECHNOLOGY GOAL:

The residents of Garfield Park agree that our neighborhood is alive with creativity and culture. We will use technology to strengthen our connections and share resources more effectively. At the same time, we will continue to use the arts to heal and inspire, celebrating the families who have built and continue to shape Garfield Park. We are embracing modern tools to better tell our stories and keep our community connected, using technology to uplift and inspire every generation in our neighborhood.

PLANNED MEASURES OF SUCCESS:

1. Increase attendance at community cultural events
2. Increase digital participation rates across platforms and campaigns
3. Increase representation of diverse voices in community storytelling
4. Increase number of intergenerational art and tech programs offered
5. Increase partnerships with schools, churches, and businesses to amplify the West Side's narrative

ALMOST 1/3

OF HOMES IN GARFIELD PARK HAVE NO INTERNET CONNECTIVITY MAKING IT ONE OF THE LEAST CONNECTED NEIGHBORHOODS IN CHICAGO

NEARLY 18% RELY *ONLY* ON SMARTPHONES FOR INTERNET ACCESS IN COMPARISON TO 10% IN CHICAGO

The Garfield Park Conservatory is a major cultural asset, welcoming over **323,260** visitors in 2024

13.9% OF ADULTS IN WEST GARFIELD PARK DO NOT HAVE ACCESS TO INTERNET

IN COMPARISON TO **6.9%** IN CHICAGO

Key Local Factors

In Garfield Park, arts, media, and technology make the rhythm of the streets, the pulse of community gatherings, and the resilience of creative expression. Our neighborhood is where people come together—just to see what's going on—whether it's music at the Golden Dome, a skate night, or a pop-up art show at the Conservatory.

World-renowned artists like Theaster Gates are born here. Our cultural anchors like 345 Art Gallery, Firebird Arts Center, and SkyArt offer platforms for our local artists, youth, and families to create, heal, and be seen. The Conservatory hosts seasonal art exhibitions. We have the Legler Regional Library, which opened in 1920 in the West Garfield Park neighborhood, the city's first regional library. Marshall High School remains a cultural touchstone, and the neighborhood is home to one of the West Side's few gifted elementary schools, Morton School of Excellence. Programs offered through Breakthrough and Black Girls Run create space for movement, storytelling, and pride. Organizations like the Fresh Supply program blend wellness, culture, and education in ways that are deeply rooted in joy and survival.

Our assets reflect a journey that has come with a cost.

The arrival of the Conservatory Green Line station in 2001 marked a shift: increased access, yes, but also rising costs and a sense of being pushed out. As new developments rise, long-time residents ask: Who is this for? The arts are present, but access is uneven. Technology is available, but not always affordable. Despite reports from Internet Service Providers, some neighborhoods—including West Garfield Park—continue to have lower rates of household internet connectivity compared to other areas of Chicago. In 2025, only 82% of our community was reported to have internet access. Creativity is abundant but often underfunded. Community-powered initiatives like Earth's Remedies and Above & Beyond Family Recovery Center demonstrate how Garfield Park leverages media and technology to keep residents informed and connected. From Earth's Remedies' digital resource database to library classes in 3D printing and computer literacy, neighbors are building their own networks of knowledge and care, ensuring that technology serves as a bridge rather than a barrier.

Yet the spirit remains: moving generational knowledge forward, keeping people informed, and creating space for us to show up as we are. With upgraded libraries like Legler, green space on Jackson, and a growing network of cultural organizers, our community is poised to transform its creative infrastructure into a force for equity, healing, and collective power.

Strategies

STRATEGY 1

Gather community input on using technology to engage all ages, measure success, and connect Garfield Park residents

To strengthen Garfield Park's digital future, we'll gather community input on how technology can engage all ages, set clear goals, and connect residents to resources. First, we'll identify barriers—like device access, digital literacy, or affordability. Then, we'll launch a campaign with strategic leaders to reach as many residents as possible. Inclusive participation will be promoted through accessible, multilingual outreach and intergenerational programming. Finally, we'll involve elected officials, businesses, schools, and churches to amplify the message and expand access. Together, we'll transform technology into a tool for creativity, connection, and community power.

STRATEGY 2

Empower residents with disabilities, sensory differences & autism to access & engage in Garfield Park's programs

To ensure Garfield Park's cultural and creative spaces are truly inclusive, we will empower residents with disabilities, sensory differences, and autism to access and engage fully. This begins with increased investment in organizations already serving these communities—amplifying their reach and capacity. We'll also educate residents on available resources through accessible outreach and peer-led workshops. To foster belonging at every gathering, we will include American Sign Language (ASL) interpretation at all public events. By removing barriers and centering access, Garfield Park can become a model for equity, creativity, and connection across all abilities.

STRATEGY 3

Strengthen Garfield Park's community bonds by creating meaningful connections

To strengthen Garfield Park's community bonds, we will foster meaningful connections rooted in trust, transparency, and shared purpose. We'll begin by collaborating across neighborhoods and organizations to build trust and open dialogue in a regional approach. By committing to collect and share information consistently, we'll keep residents informed and engaged. Plans will be executed with clear, actionable outcomes and open communication. A centralized communication hub will connect residents to events, resources, and opportunities. Finally, we'll expand access to art education programs—using creativity as a tool to unite generations, celebrate culture, and deepen relationships across Garfield Park.

STRATEGY 4

Inspire West Side community pride to create our own community narrative

To inspire pride and deepen connection in Garfield Park, we will center cultural events, art, and storytelling as tools for visibility, healing, and collective power, creating a community narrative rooted in our own brilliance. By increasing community presence at meetings and making them more welcoming, creative, and reflective of our culture, we strengthen the spaces where our voices shape decisions. We will petition elected officials to ensure public areas are safe, well-lit, and equipped with working cameras and lights that honor our right to gather, celebrate, and feel secure. Through performances, art shows, music events, and youth-centered spaces, we uplift local talent across generations while small group chats and neighborhood storytelling build understanding and connection. Public recognition will make our collective accomplishments visible and proudly owned by the people who live, lead, and love Garfield Park and the West Side every day.

Strategy 1: Gather community input on using technology to engage all ages, measure success, and connect Garfield Park residents

PROJECT	LEAD | PARTNERS AND POTENTIAL RESOURCES
	Mercedes Pickett, Earth's Remedies
1.1 Identify barriers residents are having with technology	Earth's Remedies, ER Data Solutions, "YOU MATTER", Garfield Park Advisory Council, Westside Collective Archive, Garfield Park Conservatory Alliance, Legler Library
1.2 Campaign with strategic leaders to engage as many residents as possible	Legler Library, Peace Runners, "YOU MATTER", Westside Cultural Alliance, Garfield Park Advisory Council, Garfield Park Conservatory Alliance, West Side Rising
1.3 Promote inclusive participation	MAAFA Redemption Project, Garfield Park Rite to Wellness Collaborative, Garfield Park Advisory Council, Garfield Park Conservatory Alliance, West Side Rising
1.4 Involve elected officials, businesses, schools and churches to spread the word	West Humboldt Park Garfield Park CAC, Garfield Park Advisory Council, Earth's Remedies, Garfield Park Conservatory Alliance

Strategy 2: Empower residents with disabilities, sensory differences & autism to access & engage in Garfield Park's programs

PROJECT	LEAD | PARTNERS AND POTENTIAL RESOURCES
2.1 Add more investments in existing organizations serving populations often left out	"YOU MATTER", For Limes Smiles For Miles; Garfield Park Conservatory Alliance
2.2 Educate community on resources available	"YOU MATTER", West Humboldt Park Garfield Park CAC, Legler Library, For Limes Smiles For Miles; Garfield Park Conservatory Alliance, Garfield Park Community Council
2.3 Include American Sign Language (ASL) for all events	MAAFA Redemption Project, Garfield Park Conservatory Alliance

Strategy 3: Strengthen Garfield Park's community bonds by creating meaningful connections

PROJECT	LEAD | PARTNERS AND POTENTIAL RESOURCES
	Mercedes Pickett, Earth's Remedies
3.1 Collaborate to create more trust and transparency	MAAFA Redemption Project, "YOU MATTER", Garfield Park CDC, Westside Cultural Alliance, Garfield Park Conservatory Alliance, Rush
3. 2 Commit to collecting shared information to constantly share out	"YOU MATTER", Garfield Park Conservatory Alliance, Earth's Remedies
3.3 Execute plans with actionable outcomes with open communication	GPRWC, Garfield Park Conservatory Alliance, Fawohodie Foundation
3.4 Create a communication hub	Oak St. Health, Breakthrough, Garfield Park Rite to Wellness Collaborative, Earth's Remedies, Garfield Park Conservatory Alliance, Fawohodie Foundation, Leaders Network, ER Data Solutions
3.5 Provide more art education programs	West Side Cultural Arts Council, MAAFA Redemption Project, Garfield Park Conservatory Alliance

Strategy 4: Inspire West Side community pride to create our own community narrative

PROJECT	LEAD | PARTNERS AND POTENTIAL RESOURCES
	MAAFA Redemption Project
4.1 Host community performances, art shows, and music events that celebrate local culture	MAAFA Redemption Project, Westside Cultural Alliance, West Side Cultural Arts Council, Bethel New Life, Breakthrough Community Relations, Earth's Remedies, Garfield Park Conservatory Alliance, ALT Space
4.2 Gather small group chats where neighbors share their stories, traditions, and successes to find common ground and build understanding	Earth's Remedies, ER Data Solutions, MAAFA Redemption Project, "YOU MATTER", West Side Cultural Arts Council, Westside Cultural Alliance, Breakthrough Community Relations, Bethel New Life, Greater West Town Community Development Project, Garfield Park Conservatory Alliance, Fawohodie Foundation, Rush
4.3 Recognize collective accomplishments publicly—through block parties, newsletters, or social media	Chicago News Outlets, Westside Cultural Alliance, West Side Cultural Arts Council, Breakthrough Community Relations, Garfield Park Conservatory Alliance
4.4 Gather more community presence at community meetings	West Side Cultural Arts Council, MAAFA Redemption Project, "YOU MATTER", Westside Cultural Alliance, Greater West Town Community Development Project, Earth's Remedies, Westside Collective Archive
4.5 Petition elected officials to have proper upkeep of cameras and lights at community spaces	Garfield Park Advisory Council, Fawohodie Foundation
4.6 Develop campaigns to demand community need	MAAFA Redemption Project, Earth's Remedies, Fawohodie Foundation

MAAFA CENTER
THE MAC
4241

The MAAFA Center for Arts & Activism (MAC) is a transformative anchor for West Garfield Park, rooted in healing, cultural expression, and community-led development.

As the headquarters of the MAAFA Redemption Project, the MAC will offer space for meditation, organizing, entrepreneurship, and artistic programming that honors African diasporic heritage and uplifts local voices. Located in a historic former Episcopal Church, the renovated facility will include classrooms, a commercial kitchen, a computer lab, and a multi-purpose room—creating a safe, welcoming environment for families, youth, and elders.

The MAC's impact is both structural and spiritual. It will host after-school programs, financial literacy workshops, and intergenerational arts showcases, while continuing the legacy of New Mount Pilgrim Baptist Church as a place of refuge and renewal. The project prioritizes contracting with firms owned by people of African, Latin American, Asian, and Indigenous descent, and apprentices MAAFA participants in its construction—ensuring that the building is shaped by those it serves.

With a sliding-scale rental model and shared ownership by Garfield Park residents, the MAC is designed to be self-sustaining and community-powered. It will serve as a cultural and economic engine, where celebration, education, and organizing fuel long-term neighborhood resilience.

FOCUS AREA BUSINESS & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

BUSINESS & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT GOAL:

Our vision is to develop an arts- and culture-focused, enriched district that reflects a connection to the Black U.S. South and supports principles of self-determination, cultural place-making, and place-keeping.

We are building a local economy that supports our well-being and self-determination. Our focus is on creating family-friendly spaces that embody safety for mom, dad and children along the Madison and Pulaski corridors.

This vision should be adopted by future businesses, neighbors and property owners, as well as accompany municipal development framework. That vision should match business and economic vision from the community with the built environment and guide public and private investments for the West Garfield Park area. The area of focus should specifically encompass the Madison and Pulaski corridors; from 2000 West Madison to 5400 West Madison and 300 North to 600 South Pulaski Road.

Garfield Park's vision for business and economic development centers on vibrant resident ownership, diverse local businesses, and safe, welcoming commercial corridors that meet the full needs of residents. Our community envisions quality retail, dine-in restaurants, and entertainment zones that attract visitors for culture, not crime. Priorities include youth engagement, workforce training (especially in beauty and entrepreneurship), and support for homeowners and small-scale manufacturers. Residents call for land trusts, financial assistance, more banks, and full-service health care. With transit-oriented development, 3rd-space gathering spots, and activation zones, Garfield Park aims to keep money circulating locally and build a thriving neighborhood economy.

PLANNED MEASURES OF SUCCESS:

1. Decrease number of long-term vacant or unsafe commercial properties
2. Increase number of local businesses rehabilitating existing commercial stock
3. Increase number of shared ownership models (co-ops, land trusts investment vehicles) established
4. Increase number of Garfield Park residents participating in zoning and land-use decisions
5. Increase number of resident-owned enterprises and businesses contributing to community wealth

VACANCY RATE:

COMMERCIAL VACANCY REMAINS HIGH, WITH MANY CITY-OWNED PARCELS IN EAST GARFIELD PARK

MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME: $26,000

CITY INVESTMENT: **$2M+** IN SHARED-OWNERSHIP BUSINESS GRANTS ANNOUNCED IN **2025**

Key Local Factors

Garfield Park's business landscape is a mix of legacy, hustle, and hope—where local gems like Taste Buds, Out of the Past Records, and King's Hardware thrive through their deep roots with community. The Garfield Park Farmers Market and Save A Lot provide fresh options, while Pete's Fresh Market anchors the corridor with broader access.

Yet many of our residents still go outside the neighborhood for entertainment, shopping, and services, pointing to a need for more diverse, community-rooted businesses. Vacant buildings and abandoned lots dot the landscape as reminders of disinvestment and opportunity lost. New developments bring tension—displacement and gentrification threaten long-time residents and small businesses.

All the while, Garfield Park is still being built. The name Sankofa Wellness Village signals a bold vision for health and economic equity. The new extension to the Malcolm X West Side Campus, and Firebird Community Arts Center reflect growing infrastructure for wellness, youth, and creativity. Out of the Past, Joe Willies, Po' Fred's, and Wiley's carry the legacy of resident entrepreneurship and food.

Cinespace looms nearby, and we would love to see how we strengthen community benefits to our city's assets. Our residents continue to ask: Where are the jobs? Where's the investment in us? The call is clear—Garfield Park needs pathways for ownership, training, and business development that reflect our community's culture, talent, and vision.

Strategies

STRATEGY 1

Create safe pathways linking education, training, and inclusive jobs to sustainable economic opportunities in Garfield Park

To build a thriving Garfield Park, we will create safe spaces and pathways that connect education, training, and inclusive jobs to sustainable economic opportunity. This starts by acknowledging the shadow economy and offering real pathways into legitimate markets. We'll establish safe, family-friendly zones along commercial corridors and invest in future-focused education that prepares youth for careers beyond the 8am-4pm model. We'll advocate for flexible hiring practices that welcome those with records or trauma, and strengthen pipelines between workforce organizations, schools, and businesses. Legal opportunities tied to existing skills and trauma-informed job supports will ensure every resident can build a dignified future.

STRATEGY 2

Provide residents with resources, funding, and support to repair and maintain safe, healthy buildings in Garfield Park

To ensure Garfield Park's buildings reflect the strength and safety of its people, we will provide residents with the resources, funding, and support needed to repair and maintain healthy spaces. We'll advocate to reform grant and financing structures—so small and local businesses can access front-loaded or bridge funding without delay. Property owners will be held accountable for upkeep, and we'll push to reduce tax incentives that reward vacancy. For long-term abandoned or dangerous sites, we'll explore eminent domain. Finally, we'll incentivize the rehabilitation of existing commercial buildings to support local business growth and community-serving development.

STRATEGY 3

Empower Garfield Park residents to guide development

To make sure development in Garfield Park reflects the vision and values of its residents, we will empower community members to guide the process directly. We'll promote the existing land use advisory committee with real influence over decisions that shape the neighborhood. Knowledge-sharing workshops will equip residents with tools to understand and engage in development processes. We'll advocate for policies that prioritize local ownership and meaningful participation in development deals. Finally, we'll push for Special Service Area (SSA) funds or similar mechanisms to support corridor improvements—so Garfield Park's growth is driven by community voice, not outside interests.

STRATEGY 4

Grow transparent planning to build lasting wealth and shared prosperity in Garfield Park

To build lasting wealth and shared prosperity in Garfield Park, we will grow transparent planning rooted in community voice and collaboration. We'll promote cooperative economics and shared ownership models—like co-ops, land trusts, and community investment vehicles—that keep assets in community hands. Strengthening networks of resident-owned businesses and incubators will support local talent and entrepreneurship. We'll encourage long-term, flexible capital strategies that build generational wealth. By deepening connections between community-based organizations, we'll align efforts and amplify impact. We will also engage trusted safety leaders to connect with the shadow workforce, offering pathways toward stability, dignity, and economic participation.

Strategy 1: Create safe pathways linking education, training, and inclusive jobs to sustainable economic opportunities in Garfield Park

PROJECT	LEAD | PARTNERS AND POTENTIAL RESOURCES
	Fawohodie Foundation, Madison Business Association
1.1 Acknowledge and engage with the shadow economy and create pathways for transition into legitimate markets	Fawohodie Foundation, Greater West Town Community Development Project, Garfield PAC, Bethel New Life
1.2 Create safe and family zones along commercial corridor	"YOU MATTER", Garfield Park CDC, The K, Fawohodie Foundation, Saving Our Sons, Bethel New Life
1.3 Invest in education and training that prepare youth for 2035+ careers (beyond traditional working hours))	Garfield Park CDC, The Builders School, Greater West Town Community Development Project, Garfield Park Advisory Council, The K, Fawohodie Foundation, Garfield Park Conservatory Alliance, Bethel New Life, West Side United
1.4 Advocate for flexible business hiring practices for those with records or trauma	The Builders School, Saving Our Sons
1.5 Build better pipelines between workforce organizations, schools, and businesses	Greater West Town Community Development Project, Garfield Park Advisory Council, Fawohodie Foundation, The Builders School, Madison Business Association, Revolution Workshop, West Side United
1.6 Provide legal opportunities related to existing skills (e.g., pharmacy, dispensary jobs, entrepreneurship)	Garfield Park Advisory Council, Westside Justice Center, Fawohodie Foundation, The Builders School, Leaders Network
1.7 Offer trauma-informed supports alongside job training	Habilitative Systems, Inc., Garfield Park Conservatory Alliance, The Builders School

Strategy 2: Provide residents with resources, funding, & support to repair & maintain safe, healthy buildings in Garfield Park

PROJECT	LEAD | PARTNERS AND POTENTIAL RESOURCES
2.1 Campaign for reform of grant and financing structures to allow front-loaded funding or bridge financing for small/local businesses	Keith Muhummad, Fawohodie Foundation, Allies for Community Business, CCLF, AAECDFI, Small Business Advocacy Council
2.2 Hold property owners accountable for upkeep and reduce tax write-off incentives for vacancies	Keith Muhummad, Fawohodie Foundation, Special Service Area #77, Madison Business Association
2.3 Explore eminent domain for long-term vacant/dangerous properties	Keith Muhummad, Garfield Park CDC, Fawohodie Foundation, Cook County Land Bank
2.4 Incentivize rehabilitation of existing commercial stock for local business use	Garfield Park CDC, Madison Business Association

Strategy 3: Empower Garfield Park residents to guide development

PROJECT	LEAD | PARTNERS AND POTENTIAL RESOURCES
	Garfield Park CDC
3.1 Create a Garfield Park zoning and land use advisory committee with real influence	Garfield Park CDC, Garfield Park Advisory Council, Garfield Park Conservatory Alliance, Garfield Park Community Council
3.2 Offer knowledge-sharing workshops on zoning and development processes for residents	Garfield Park CDC, Fawohodie Foundation, The K, West Side United
3.3 Advocate for policies that prioritize local ownership and participation in development deals	Keith Muhummad, Fawohodie Foundation
3.4 Influence for SSA (Special Service Area) funds or similar tools to directly support corridor improvements	Keith Muhummad, Westside Health Authority, SSA #77

Strategy 4: Grow transparent planning to build lasting wealth and shared prosperity in Garfield Park

PROJECT	LEAD | PARTNERS AND POTENTIAL RESOURCES
4.1 Promote cooperative economics and shared ownership models (community investment vehicles, co-ops, land trusts)	Garfield Park CDC, Keith Muhummad, Gina Jamison, The K, Fawohodie Foundation, West Gate
4.2 Strengthen networks of resident-owned businesses and incubators	Garfield Park Rite to Wellness Collaborative, Garfield Park Conservatory Alliance
4.3 Encourage long-term flexible capital and community wealth-building strategies	Keith Muhummad, Fawohodie Foundation, The K, West Gate
4.4 Develop stronger connections between community-based organizations to align efforts	"YOU MATTER", Greater West Town Community Development Corporation, Garfield Park Conservatory Alliance, GPRWC, West Side United
4.5 Engage with safety leaders and trusted relationships to properly engage with the shadow workforce	Fawohodie Foundation, Institute for Nonviolence, Saving Our Sons

The “K” Social Innovation Hub will provide office, retail, and special events space for businesses and residents. With a focus on the economic revitalization of the community, the K is offering residents the opportunity to own equity in the building and supporting residents in their pursuit of developing, owning, and occupying space along the Madison & Pulaski Commercial Corridor.

The K will:

- Offer memberships to individuals, property owners, micro-entrepreneurs, small businesses, and community anchor institutions.
- Connect community members with like-minded entrepreneurs.
- Facilitate networking and skill-sharing.
- Provide human resource, legal, technology, and marketing support.
- Offer high-speed internet access and a cafe featuring local vendors.
- Offer equity ownership in the building.

Serving as a bridge between local hospital partners and the community, West Side United leverages the collective economic and social power of five local hospitals, along with collaboration from community organizations, faith-based institutions and government agencies to forge a path toward a healthier, more equitable West Side.

West Side United addresses the critical health disparities that drive the 20-year life expectancy gap through a holistic, place-based, and data-driven approach that tackles social determinants of health to improve quality of life for all West Side residents.

Live Healthy West Side aims to decrease health inequities by coordinating and scaling prioritized interventions across healthcare and community partners to align with local community needs. We strategically implement programming and community engagement to promote health justice and nutrition security. Key domains of work include hypertension, maternal child health, and food access.

Thrive West Side focuses on increasing economic vitality with community vision at the center of community development by leveraging the collective buying, hiring, and investing power of its anchor partners. We aim to shift power to the community by creating pathways to accessible jobs and increased wages, as well as to address systemic barriers that create economic burdens for West Siders.

FOCUS AREA EDUCATION & WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

EDUCATION & WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT GOAL:

Garfield Park will be a thriving hub of intergenerational learning, economic empowerment, and cultural pride—where youth lead with creativity, families build generational wealth, and education is rooted in relevance and self-determination. By partnering with faith-based institutions, local businesses, and nonprofits, we are opening doors to the careers of the future—from clean energy and AI innovation to vocational training, trades, industrial and educational internships, and Black-owned educational spaces. By integrating eco-friendly infrastructure and sustainable energy solutions to meet the demands of emerging technologies, Garfield Park will ensure every resident is equipped to shape their future with purpose, power, and environmental responsibility. Garfield Park is a community where all residents, businesses, and civic institutions are stable, healthy, and able to access opportunity.

PLANNED MEASURES OF SUCCESS:

1. Increase number of youth accessing internships and apprenticeships
2. Increase number of mentorship programs connecting elders and professionals with youth
3. Establish the use of a Garfield Park's Education & Workforce Portal
4. Decrease school dropout rates and barriers to higher education and post secondary options
5. Increase number of residents earning certifications, scholarships, or trade credentials
6. Increase in math and reading scores in all of our schools

YOUTH POPULATION:

23.4% AGED 5–19

AVERAGE AGE IN THE COMMUNITY: 36 YEARS

LABOR FORCE PARTICIPATION:

47%

Key Local Factors

Garfield Park's education and workforce development landscape is shaped by a network of community institutions, anchor organizations, City investments, and local leaders that together reveal both opportunity and ongoing challenges. East and West Garfield Park continue to experience the effects of decades of disinvestment, which have influenced school performance, job access, and community stability. The unemployment rates in East Garfield Park (approx. 19%) and West Garfield Park (approx. 23.8%) are higher when compared to the U.S. national average of 4.3%. Our community faces significant economic challenges including high poverty, elevated levels of violent crime relative to surrounding areas and stubbornly high unemployment rates.

Chicago Public Schools (CPS) data on both sides of the Park highlight the urgency of strengthening local education-to-career pathways. Our community's postsecondary milestones fall below district averages in immediate college enrollment, persistence, and credential completion. CPS West Side regional reporting situated both East and West Garfield Park in a broader context of concentrated poverty, housing mobility, and under-resourced schools. These data highlight the importance of wraparound supports—such as mentorship, and career exposure—to help young people transition successfully from education to employment.

Local health and workforce institutions are beginning to build promising bridges between education and employment. With more classrooms, meeting spaces, and programs in health care and other good-paying fields, residents in Garfield Park can finally access real opportunities close to home. We're seeing more Black and Brown students enrolling and succeeding, which shows how much our community is ready for these resources. This expansion is an investment in our future, helping families balance school, work, and childcare while creating a stronger workforce for our neighborhood.

Erie Family Health Centers, a trusted community health provider, is serving as an anchor partner in the planned Sankofa Wellness Center in West Garfield Park—a major neighborhood investment that will include workforce development, youth programming, childcare, and employment pathways. This model of combining healthcare, training, and family supports in one hub creates new opportunities for residents to access health-related and administrative careers close to home.

Similarly, the Chicago Transit Authority's (CTA) forthcoming Training and Control Center in West Garfield Park presents another anchor for workforce development. The CTA's training programs already prepare participants for union apprenticeships and transit operations, and if connected intentionally to Garfield Park residents through community outreach and supportive services, this initiative could create long-term, stable employment opportunities in construction, maintenance, and transit operations.

Faith-based institutions and community organizations remain vital to building trust and engagement. New Mt. Pilgrim Baptist Church, United for Better Living and other congregations have long been spaces where neighbors come together to learn, organize, and access support. These institutions can expand their roles by hosting workforce readiness classes, digital literacy training, and short-term certificate programs. Nonprofit after-school providers and small businesses can complement this work by offering mentorship and experiential learning. Partnerships between Erie, Rush University System for Health, YMCA, and neighborhood organizations—especially within the Sankofa Wellness Center—show the power of collaboration when institutions align their efforts around community employment and education goals.

However, many of our residents and local leaders acknowledge that progress has been slowed by a lack of cooperation and communication. People often express that "the only way to accomplish things is to come together," but building that collective action has been difficult. Residents note that "everyone wants to do their own thing" and that "all of the organizations are working on something in the vision, but it is not cohesive." This sense of working in silos limits impact and weakens opportunities for shared learning. Community voices point to the need for more consistent dialogue, shared planning tables, and efforts that "bring everyone around the table together," where each partner can contribute their expertise and align around common goals.

Some of our residents describe a strong sense of individuality and pride that can make cooperation difficult. Others highlight the need to “encourage each other” and build stronger intergenerational relationships, where “the younger generation can see what they have the possibility to be.” There is also a recognized disconnect between community members and civic processes. Several residents express that “people don’t understand the why”—that without a shared understanding of the purpose or vision, engagement can be limited. Years of disinvestment and community trauma have left many people feeling discouraged or distrustful, creating a sense of isolation and fatigue. Also noting the absence of civic education and consistent voter engagement, saying, “we aren’t aware of civics and the laws” and “we don’t have ways to educate ourselves on implementing these ideas.” This lack of awareness and participation leads to a disconnect between local decision-making and resident voice.

Other barriers include limited door-to-door outreach, weak information networks, and a lack of communication infrastructure to keep residents informed about opportunities. “No ability to know what is going on in the community” was a common sentiment shared by residents, emphasizing the need for improved neighborhood communication and engagement systems. Addressing these barriers means investing not only in programs, but also in the relationships and trust that sustain them.

Garfield Park’s pathway forward lies in reconnecting the dots—between schools and employers, between organizations and residents, and between generations. Strengthening civic education, neighborhood communication, and shared leadership structures will be just as important as expanding workforce training programs. A coordinated, community-led strategy that uses CPS data to target youth interventions, aligns with institutional investments from Erie, Rush, and CTA, and centers faith-based and resident organizations as co-designers of solutions can bridge the divide between potential and progress. By lifting up collaboration, transparency, and mutual support, our community can build an education and workforce ecosystem that turns local vision into sustainable opportunity, allowing residents of all ages to thrive together.

EMPLOYMENT OF GARFIELD PARK RESIDENTS	PERCENTAGE EMPLOYED
Health Care	18.9%
Administration	12%
Retail Trade	11%
Food Service	9.7% (West Garfield Park)
Education	8.8% (East Garfield Park)
Transportation	8.6%
Manufacturing	6.5%
Professional	3.9%
Construction	3.5%

LOCATION OF EMPLOYMENT	PERCENTAGE EMPLOYED
Outside of Chicago	40.1%
The Loop	15.7%
Near North Side	7.9%
Near West Side	6.5%
West Town	2.9%

Based on the CMAP Community Data Snapshots for West Garfield Park (2025) and East Garfield Park (2024)

Strategies

STRATEGY 1

Promote a community culture built on resource sharing and unity in support of the community

Our community will strengthen its future by fostering collaboration among residents, organizations, and institutions. This strategy encourages neighbors, nonprofits, schools, and faith-based partners to move beyond working in silos and come together around shared goals. By creating spaces for open dialogue, joint planning, and resource sharing, the community can build trust and align efforts that support education, workforce development, and neighborhood well-being. Anchors such as Erie Family Health Centers, Rush, and the CTA Workforce Training Center can help model collaboration and expand opportunities for residents. Promoting civic awareness, intergenerational leadership, and mutual encouragement will ensure that everyone has a role in shaping Garfield Park's vision. Unity and cooperation will transform individual efforts into collective impact, making progress a shared achievement.

STRATEGY 2

Establish learning hubs and mentorship programs connecting elders, educators, professionals, youth, and families

We will build neighborhood-based learning hubs that connect elders, educators, and professionals with youth and families to share knowledge, skills, and support. These hubs will serve as safe, welcoming spaces where residents can access tutoring, career guidance, digital literacy, and creative learning opportunities close to home. Intergenerational mentorship will bridge experience and innovation—allowing elders to pass on wisdom while youth bring new perspectives and energy. Partnerships with local schools, churches, industry focused hands on opportunities will provide resources and mentorship pathways leading to education and employment. By nurturing relationships across generations, Garfield Park will cultivate a culture of lifelong learning, mutual respect, and community pride—ensuring every resident has the chance to learn, teach, and lead.

STRATEGY 3

Expand visible pathways and inspirational opportunities for Garfield Park's 18–24-year-olds

Our young adults deserve to see, access, and believe in their future. We're building a network of internships and apprenticeships that put our youth directly into growing fields—clean energy, artificial intelligence, healthcare, and skilled trades. These aren't distant dreams; they're hands-on opportunities right here, shaped by partnerships with colleges, unions, and local businesses. Step by step, clear pathways will connect school to certifications, trades, and higher education. And to make sure opportunities are easy to find, we'll share them through community spaces and online platforms like MyChiMyFuture, so no one is left out.

This is about connecting ambition with real opportunity. Garfield Park's 18–24-year-olds will be inspired to pursue meaningful careers, lead the next generation of growth, and strengthen our community across education, transportation, manufacturing, professional services, and construction. When our young people thrive, Garfield Park thrives.

STRATEGY 4

Restore hands-on career programs, expand mentorship, and build skills, focus, and accountability to help residents achieve goals

This strategy empowers our residents to achieve their goals by combining practical skills training with mentorship, support, and accountability. Community progress circles will allow residents to share challenges and successes, celebrate milestones, and build a culture of mutual encouragement. Micro-grants and scholarships will provide access to certifications, trade schools, and small business startup support, removing financial barriers to advancement. After-school and weekend academies led by local professionals will teach trades, entrepreneurship, and essential life skills such as financial literacy, cooking, and home maintenance. Dedicated programs will also support our returning citizens and youth reentering school, ensuring they have pathways to education, employment, and being a community stakeholder . By connecting skill-building, mentorship, and structured support, Garfield Park can cultivate motivated, capable residents ready to pursue meaningful careers and strengthen the neighborhood's future.

Strategy 1: Promote a community culture built on resource sharing and unity in support of the community

PROJECT	LEAD | PARTNERS AND POTENTIAL RESOURCES
	West Humboldt Park Garfield Park Community Action Council
1.1 Encourage a youth movement to speak on their needs in educational settings	Fresh Supply, Garfield Park/West Humboldt Park Community Action Council, Earth's Remedies, Westside Community Empowerment Center
1.2 Redesign outdated processes to support youth in school and outside of school	Fresh Supply, Garfield Park/West Humboldt Park Community Action Council, Earth's Remedies, Westside Community Empowerment Center
1.3 Maximize community engagements, parties, social events, movies in the park, kick backs and Fee Fees in the Circle to create unifiying messaging and programming for workforce development	Earth's Remedies, ER Data Solutions, Fresh Supply, Garfield Park/West Humboldt Park Community Action Council, Bethel New Life, NO SMALL PLANS, Westside Community Empowerment Center, Fawohodie Foundation

Strategy 2: Establish neighborhood learning hubs and intergenerational mentorship programs that connect elders, educators, and professionals

PROJECT	LEAD | PARTNERS AND POTENTIAL RESOURCES
	Keith Muhummad, Greater West Town Community Development Project
2.1 Utilize trusted messengers—block clubs, barbershops, beauty salons, and churches—to distribute information in accessible formats	Earth's Remedies, ER Data Solutions, Fresh Supply, “YOU MATTER”, Greater West Town Community Development Project, West Humboldt Park Garfield Park Community Action Council, Bethel New Life, Westside Community Empowerment Center
2.2 Launch a centralized Garfield Park Education & Workforce Portal (both online and through kiosks in schools, libraries, and churches) to share information on jobs, internships, scholarships, and training	Earth's Remedies, ER Data Solutions, Fresh Supply, Westside Community Empowerment Center
2.3 Develop civic education workshops that highlight how local governance, policy, and community organizing connect to education, job creation, and wealth-building opportunities	Fresh Supply, Greater West Town Community Development Project, Fawohodie Foundation
2.4 Integrate trauma-informed practices into schools, training programs, and workforce centers to support holistic well-being and resilience	Earth's Remedies, Fresh Supply, The Builders School

Strategy 3: Expand visible pathways and inspirational opportunities for Garfield Park, especially for our 18-24 young adults

PROJECT	LEAD | PARTNERS AND POTENTIAL RESOURCES
	Tony Raggs, Resident; Greater West Town Community Development Project
3.1 Develop a community internship and apprenticeship network that guarantees youth hands-on access to industries like clean energy, AI, healthcare, and skilled trades	Earth's Remedies, ER Data Solutions, Fresh Supply, Greater West Town Community Development Project, Bethel New Life, The Gray Matter Experience, Garfield Park Conservatory Alliance, Westside Community Empowerment Center
3.2 Enhance partnerships with colleges, unions, and businesses to map clear, step-by-step pathways from school to certifications, trades, and higher education	Earth's Remedies, ER Data Solutions, Fresh Supply, Greater West Town Community Development Project, Bethel New Life, Garfield Park Conservatory Alliance, Malcolm X West Campus
3.3 Create a multi-platform system to house and distribute education, workforce, and opportunity information in accessible, community-centered ways	Earth's Remedies, ER Data Solutions, Fresh Supply, Greater West Town Community Development Project, Bethel New Life, Garfield Park Conservatory Alliance

Strategy 4: Restore hands-on career programs, expand mentorship, and build skills, focus, and accountability to help residents achieve goals

PROJECT	LEAD | PARTNERS AND POTENTIAL RESOURCES
	Keith Muhummad, Greater West Town Community Development Project
4.1 Conduct community progress circles where residents share challenges and successes, building accountability and celebrating milestones	Earth's Remedies, ER Data Solutions, Fresh Supply, Greater West Town Community Development Project, Bethel New Life, Garfield Park Conservatory Alliance, Chicago Public Schools
4.2 Provide micro-grants and scholarships for residents to access certifications, trade schools, and small business startup support	Earth's Remedies, ER Data Solutions, Fresh Supply, Greater West Town Community Development Project, Bethel New Life
4.3 Develop after-school and weekend academies for trades, entrepreneurship, and practical life skills (financial literacy, cooking, home maintenance) led by community professionals	Earth's Remedies, Fresh Supply, Greater West Town Community Development Project, Chicago West Community Music Center, The Gray Matter Experience, Garfield Park Conservatory Alliance, The Builders School, Westside Community Empowerment Center
4.4 Create intentional programs to support returning citizens and juveniles returning back into school not just the community	Fresh Supply, Greater West Town Community Development Project, Earth's Remedies, The Builders School

Located in the Austin community, the Malcolm X College West Campus is a West Side community hub that recently introduced a brand-new, 3,000-square-foot Community Center for Teaching and Learning alongside newly updated, high-tech biology laboratories.

In addition to rich academic and career pathway offerings, the college is now pleased to offer rental space in its new Danny K. Davis Community Center for partners, neighbors, and other community members.

Adult Education offers free Illinois High School Diploma GED and HiSET exam prep classes that help community members finish high school and give them an open-access entry point to college credit degree and certificate paths.

Early College classes offer local qualified high school juniors and seniors tuition-free, college credit courses as well as access to all our college resources, including biology labs, modern computer terminals, library archives, and academic tutoring.

Degree mobility enables students to take foundational Liberal Arts courses that align directly with the Illinois Articulation Initiative (IAI). This allows neighborhood residents to complete a significant portion of a traditional 60-credit associate degree locally before transitioning to the main Malcolm X College campus.

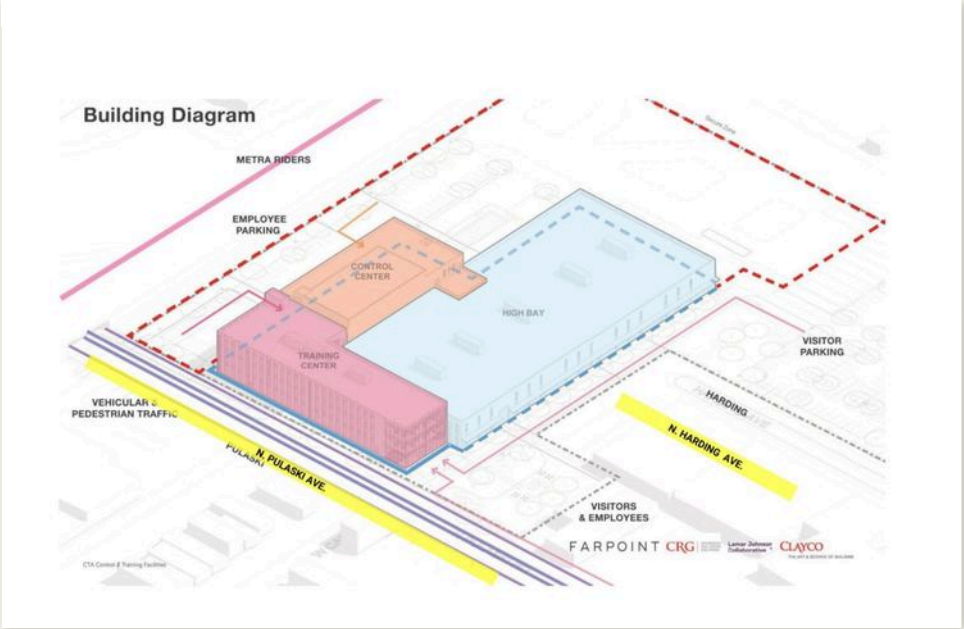
The CTA is preparing to expand its operations on the West Side of Garfield Park with a major new facility. Spanning 150,000 square feet, this site will serve as the CTA's around-the-clock Control Center, managing communications and operations for buses, trains, and rail power systems.

In addition to its control functions, the center will be the CTA's primary training hub for staff in operations, maintenance, and customer service. The three-story building will include a 63,400-square-foot high bay training area and 52,000 square feet of office and instructional space.

Located near the Pulaski Green Line station, the facility reflects the CTA's intention to embed its infrastructure within the community. The project is being developed in partnership with Farpoint Development, designed by Lamar Johnson Collaborative, and managed by Clayco.

This marks one of the largest investments in Garfield Park in recent history, aligning with citywide goals to boost economic growth in areas long underserved. The center will accommodate over 250 employees and offer updated spaces that meet modern safety and operational standards.

Construction is slated to begin in 2025, with full operations expected by 2026. The project is designed to improve transit system performance while contributing to the broader revitalization of the Garfield Park community.



FOCUS AREA HEALTH & WELLNESS

HEALTH & WELLNESS GOAL:

Garfield Park will be a safe, self-sustained village where neighbors walk, talk, exercise and gather in gardens, block clubs, and welcoming community spaces. Seniors will feel secure, youth will thrive through sports, safe spaces, and job training, and residents of all ages will build unity through health, wellness, and intergenerational programs. The village will offer essentials like grocers, laundromats, eateries, and entertainment while also supporting behavioral health, reducing stigma, and creating spaces for people with special needs. Clear communication, active precinct leaders, and community watch efforts will ensure everyone stays connected, informed, and engaged. Together, Garfield Park will flourish with beauty, joy, and belonging while closing the life expectancy gap.

PLANNED MEASURES OF SUCCESS:

1. Increase participation in block-level wellness activities and surveys
2. Increase number of residents accessing culturally sensitive health services
3. Increase number of intergenerational wellness programs offered
4. Decrease preventable health issues reported in Garfield Park
5. Increase funding secured for health facilities and programs

LIFE EXPECTANCY GAP:

THE LOOP: 87.3 YEARS

GARFIELD PARK: 66.6 YEARS

GAP: ~20 YEARS

OBESITY: 40% OF ADULTS OBESE VS. ~29% CITYWIDE

PSYCHOLOGICAL DISTRESS

OVER 55% OF ADULTS EXPERIENCED MODERATE OR SERIOUS DISTRESS (2023–2024)

Key Local Factors

Health in Garfield Park is not just about hospitals or clinics—it is about whether our residents feel safe enough to walk outside, whether youth have sports teams to join, whether elders can connect without fear, and whether families can access fresh food without leaving the neighborhood. The statistics reveal a crisis: **life expectancy in West Garfield Park is only 66.6 years**, compared to **87.3 years in the Loop—a gap of more than 20 years.** Chicago's average is 78.7, meaning our residents live **more than a decade less than the city norm**. This disparity is one of the starkest health inequities in the nation.

The Hardship Index score of 93 out of 100 underscores the depth of challenges. Health outcomes are directly tied to this hardship: more than 55% of adults reported moderate or serious psychological distress in 2023–2024, and chronic conditions such as asthma, diabetes, and hypertension are more prevalent here than citywide. Nearly 27% of our residents experience food insecurity, with concerns about both access and the quality of food available. Residents recall when laundromats, bakeries, and quality stores lined the blocks, but today many travel to Oak Brook for goods that once lived right here. This lack of local access to healthy, affordable food and basic amenities is a direct health barrier.

Safety is inseparable from health. Seniors report feeling unsafe, limiting their ability to participate in outdoor activities. Many of our residents feel "stuck in their homes" due to fear of crime, compounded by the absence of visible police patrols or community watch systems. Without safe walking routes, parks, and recreation spaces, opportunities for exercise and stress relief are cut off. Rising obesity and related health issues are linked to the absence of youth sports programs and organized teams that once supported both physical health and conflict resolution. Young adults, particularly those ages 18–20, have few safe spaces to gather, leaving them vulnerable to negative paths instead of health-building opportunities.

Behavioral health is another urgent gap. Stigma prevents many from seeking help, and culturally sensitive approaches are limited. Many of our residents question whether existing services, such as those at Franciscan Outreach at 10th & Kedzie, are truly accessible, visible, and trusted. Violence prevention programs are losing funding, reducing critical community resources. Without designated safe spaces for sharing and healing, trauma compounds and contributes to poor health outcomes. Intergenerational programming is missing, leaving our youth and elders disconnected, and residents with developmental disabilities or special needs are often overlooked.

Yet Garfield Park's wellness story is also one of resilience. Community leaders and organizations—like Erie, Bethel New Life, Peace Runners, Miles for Smiles, and Finding Justice—are planting gardens, organizing healing spaces, and advocating for policy change. Residents want outdoor spaces manicured and safe, stores restored, arts and culture revived, and systems of healing that meet people where they are—mind, body, and spirit. The Gold Dome continues to be pulsed with music and art, Madison once held three theaters, and Beidler Elementary's family room still offers community resources. These memories and pockets of support show what is possible.

Garfield Park's health conditions today reflect both inequity and determination. The desire is clear: close the life expectancy gap, expand behavioral health supports, restore safe recreation, and build a culture of wellness rooted in safety, connection, and collective empowerment. Health is not separate from community—it is the measure of whether our residents can thrive for generations to come.

Strategies

STRATEGY 1

Strengthen resource opportunities to promote connection and trust in Garfield Park

To promote connection and trust across Garfield Park, we will strengthen resource opportunities that meet residents where they are. We'll increase block-level gatherings and information-sharing spaces that invite seniors, families, local businesses, and elected officials into meaningful dialogue. Outreach will go beyond social media—using flyers, brochures, and word-of-mouth to reach every corner of the neighborhood. We'll identify and uplift free or low-cost recreational groups and activities that are convenient and accessible, ensuring every resident has a chance to participate, build relationships, and feel rooted in the community.

STRATEGY 2

Give young people healthy outlets, supportive guidance, and real opportunities to succeed on the West Side

To support the next generation on the West Side, we will give young people healthy outlets, supportive guidance, and real opportunities to thrive. By partnering with community-based organizations, we'll identify recreational and trade activities that are low-cost, accessible, and convenient for youth and families. We'll provide parents and caregivers with tools and support to connect their children to these resources. Through mentorship programs, we'll foster strong relationships that encourage healthy lifestyles, build confidence, and open doors to future success—ensuring every young person in Garfield Park feels seen, supported, and inspired to lead.

STRATEGY 3

Help West Side neighbors connect, learn about themselves, and speak up together

To help our West Side neighbors connect, reflect, and raise their voices together, we will create spaces for shared learning and healing. We'll begin by developing surveys rooted in the 8 dimensions of wellness to better understand community concerns and aspirations. Follow-up surveys will guide the creation of meaningful workshops that reflect residents' real needs. Interest-based social groups will foster connection, creativity, and mutual support. And by building community wellness spas, we'll offer restorative spaces where neighbors can care for their minds, bodies, and spirits—together. This strategy centers wellness as a collective journey, not a solo path.

STRATEGY 4

Expand accessible health services and intergenerational programs that support Garfield Park residents' connection, inclusion, and well-being

To strengthen well-being across Garfield Park, we will expand easy-to-reach health services and accessible, intergenerational programs that mobilize youth, elders, and residents of all abilities. We'll secure more funding to grow trusted facilities and programs that meet everyday needs. Community liaisons will help connect neighbors and spread the word through familiar, grassroots channels. We'll advocate for culturally sensitive courses and policy requirements that reflect Garfield Park's values and lived experiences. And by developing health incentive programs for youth and elders, we'll encourage lifelong wellness, connection, and care across generations.

Strategy 1: Strengthen resource opportunities to promote connection and trust in Garfield Park

PROJECT	LEAD | PARTNERS AND POTENTIAL RESOURCES
	Garfield Park Rite to Wellness Collaborative, Angela Taylor, Resident, Rush
1.1 Increase opportunities for connection and information sharing at the block level and invite residents, local politicians and businesses, especially our seniors	Earth's Remedies, ER Data Solutions, “YOU MATTER”, West Humbolt Garfield Park Community Action Council, Peace Runners 773
1.2 Broaden outreach efforts beyond social media to being more direct with flyers and brochures	"YOU MATTER”, Bethel New Life, Legler Library, Peace Runners 773
1.3 Identify free to low cost recreational groups and activities convenient and accesible to residents	"YOU MATTER”, Peace Runners, Garfield Park Conservatory Alliance, YMCA

Strategy 2: Give young people healthy outlets, supportive guidance, and real opportunities to succeed on the West Side

PROJECT	LEAD | PARTNERS AND POTENTIAL RESOURCES
2.1 Partner with community based organizations to identify recreational, trade activities that are low-cost, accessible and convenient	Earth's Remedies, ER Data Solutions, “YOU MATTER”, Bethel New Life, Garfield Park Advisory Council, Greater West Town Community Development Project, Peace Runners
2.2 Provide parental support to share resources with kids	Garfield Park Advisory Council, Earth's Remedies, ER Data Solutions, To Touch Life, The Legacy Families, Peace Runners 773
2.3 Establish mentorship to youth to support healthy lifestyles	Garfield Park Advisory Council, Breakthrough (BYN),Peace Runners, Earth's Remedies

Strategy 3: Help West Side neighbors connect, learn about themselves, and speak up together

PROJECT	LEAD | PARTNERS AND POTENTIAL RESOURCES
3.1 Create surveys focusing on 8 dimensions of wellness to understand community concerns	Earth's Remedies, ER Data Solutions, "YOU MATTER”, Peace Runners 773, Garfield Park Community Council
3.2 Provide follow up surveys with meaningful workshops reflective of the needs of residents	Earth's Remedies, ER Data Solutions, “YOU MATTER”, Peace Runners, The Legacy Families, Garfield Park Community Council
3.3 Develop community socials groups based on interest	Peace Runners, Earth's Remedies, Rush
3.4 Build community wellness spas	NO SMALL PLANS

Strategy 4: Expand accessible health services and intergenerational programs that support Garfield Park residents' connection, inclusion, an

PROJECT	LEAD | PARTNERS AND POTENTIAL RESOURCES
	David Teagueman, Resident
4.1 Secure more funding for facilities and programs	Bethel New Life, Peace Runners, Earth's Remedies, ER Data Solutions
4.2 Engage community liaisons to connect people and get the word out	"YOU MATTER", Bethel New Life , Earth's Remedies, Garfield Park Conservatory Alliance, the Legacy Families, Westside Community Empowerment Center, Garfield Park Community Council, Peace Runners 773, Rush, Erie Family Health Centers
4.3 Advocate for culturally sensitive courses or policy requirements for Garfield Park providers	"YOU MATTER", Westside Rising, Garfield Park Conservatory Alliance
4.4 Develop health incentivize programs for youth and elders	"YOU MATTER", Bethel New Life , Earth's Remedies, Garfield Park Conservatory Alliance, The Legacy Families, Westside Community Empowerment Center, Garfield Park Community Council, Peace Runners 773, Erie Family Health Centers

The Sankofa Village Wellness Center (SVWC) will serve as anchor for the new Wellness Village, supporting its goal of increasing life expectancy in West Garfield Park by 50% by 2030.

Residents will have access to comprehensive, coordinated healthcare and wellness services at SVWC, designed for the needs of the community. In addition to a community health center, SVWC will include health professions training, fitness facilities, credit union offices, daycare, community office, a rooftop farm and meeting spaces. The facility's architecture and interior will reflect NMP church's themes of African artistry (Sankofa, MAAFA) and the African American freedom struggle through the Great Migration.

SVWC will serve as a model for how to operationalize BCW. Governed by a community and tenant Advisory Committee, SVWC's three wings will promote Black Culture Wellness:

1. **Individual Health and Wellness: RUSH, Erie, and the YMCA will provide comprehensive, coordinated health and wellness services.**
2. **Community Wellness: GPRWC and West Side United will focus on empowerment, cultural practice, organizing and supporting community collaborations.**
3. **Investment: A Credit Union will provide individual and business financial assistance alongside financial literacy training from the YMCA.**

An approximately 2,000 square-foot innovation village will provide space for local businesses to lease stalls for launching new ventures

Peace Runners 773 programming empowers, educates and brings awareness to holistic health and wellness through physical, mental and social wellbeing while creating safe spaces for movement in our underserved communities.

Their programs center communities historically underserved by traditional fitness spaces, particularly BIPOC residents, and reduce barriers with no-cost sessions and neighborhood routes —building health, confidence, and connection one run at a time.

The Out West Run (OWR) Program is a free training program sponsored by Peace Runners 773 and is an opportunity for new and experienced runners to train together for a 5K, half marathon or marathon.

Out West Run serves residents of Chicago's West Side, especially in Austin, Garfield Park, North Lawndale, and nearby neighborhoods—providing free, safe, and inclusive place to move. They welcome first-time runners and seasoned athletes of all ages and abilities, offering beginner-friendly options, group support, and coached workouts.

FOCUS AREA HOUSING, REAL ESTATE & GREEN SPACE

HOUSING, REAL ESTATE & GREEN SPACE GOAL:

Our plan is to rebuild Garfield Park as a healthy and prosperous community by prioritizing homeownership. We are committed to ensuring that all new investment and development serves the people who currently call this neighborhood home, particularly 'legacy residents'. We will safeguard the history and beauty of Garfield Park through stabilization and revitalization of historical structures, while prioritizing current residents with financial resources, programs, and classes that support wealth-building. This includes trusts, inheritance planning, products that provide relief from reverse mortgages, and maintenance assistance. Garfield Park will also expand affordable housing and increase awareness of federal and local grants that support home purchase—especially for low-income families—so residents are not displaced but can thrive in place.

PLANNED MEASURES OF SUCCESS:

1. Increase businesses that reflect the needs and desires of community residents
2. Increase percentage of Garfield Park residents who are homeowners
3. Increase number of community-based developers providing affordable housing
4. Decrease number of foreclosures filed and property tax sales
5. Increase number of homebuyers occupying formerly vacant properties

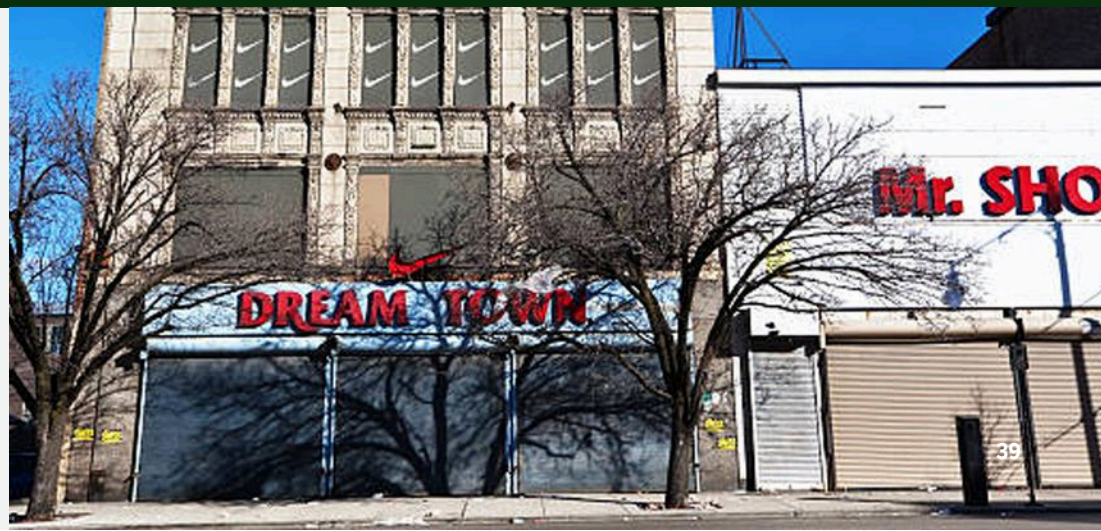
VACANCY RATES:

WEST GARFIELD PARK ~23.7% OF HOUSING UNITS VACANT
EAST GARFIELD PARK ~14–20%.

RENTER HOUSEHOLDS: ~73% COMBINED VS. ~55% CITYWIDE.

GREEN SPACE:

IS A MAJOR ASSET, BUT TREE CANOPY COVERAGE IS BELOW CITY AVERAGES



Key Local Factors

Garfield Park is a community rich in character, featuring beautiful historic homes, landmarks, and a deep-rooted history. Our long-term residents possess a wealth of knowledge and experience, actively contributing to the social and economic revitalization of the neighborhood. Despite its proximity to downtown Chicago, Garfield Park has maintained its unique identity and is now beginning to reflect a shared vision for the community's future. The neighborhood is already abundant in green spaces, including public parks, community gardens, and safety programs. These resources offer opportunities for meaningful engagement—youth programming, daily activities, and creative learning can help young people understand the value of these spaces. There are opportunities for seniors, especially those living alone, to connect with youth, young adults, and families, to foster intergenerational relationships that strengthen the neighborhood.

Despite these assets, Garfield Park faces significant challenges. Our community occupies a strategic position on Chicago's West Side, situated south of Humboldt Park, east of Oak Park and Austin, west of the Near West Side, and north of North Lawndale—all areas experiencing rapidly rising property values. Garfield Park neighbors are being hit harder than anyone else in Chicago. In 2025, the median homeowner in West Garfield Park is facing a **133% property tax increase**—that's nearly **$2,000 more** on top of what families were already struggling to pay. This spike comes from the Cook County reassessment, which shifted the tax burden onto our homes after commercial property values dropped.

While the citywide median tax bill rose by **16.7%**, Garfield Park's increase is far beyond that, making us the hardest-hit community in Chicago. For families already carrying the weight of disinvestment, unemployment, and rising costs of food and housing, this tax hike feels like another blow.

Residents are asking: how can we build stability when the very roof over our heads is threatened? How can seniors on fixed incomes, or families working paycheck to paycheck, absorb such a jump? This moment calls for collective action—neighbors, block clubs, churches, and community leaders standing together to demand fairness, transparency, and relief. Garfield Park has always been resilient, but resilience should not mean bearing the heaviest burden. We deserve investment, opportunity, and policies that protect—not punish—the families who have kept this community alive.

The **1901 Project**, a $7 billion catalytic mixed-use development surrounding the United Center, represents the largest private investment in Chicago's West Side history. With 9,500 new residential units, 2,000 affordable homes, 1,300 hotel keys, expansive office and retail space, a 6,000-seat music venue, and 25 acres of open space, the project is projected to generate more than 30,000 construction jobs and 7,000 permanent jobs. Its scale will dramatically increase property values in the Near West Side, with ripple effects extending into Garfield Park.

For Garfield Park, this moment underscores the **critical importance of local partnerships**. Supporting surrounding businesses and service providers along the strip has been—and will continue to be—essential to "growing in place." As development pressures mount, intentional collaboration between block clubs, churches, small business owners, and community organizations will ensure that Garfield Park residents benefit directly from this wave of investment. Local businesses must be strengthened to withstand rising costs, while service providers must be resourced to meet the needs of families who want to remain rooted in the neighborhood.

By building strong partnerships at the local level, Garfield Park can transform external investment into internal opportunity—protecting legacy residents, sustaining community wealth, and ensuring growth does not mean displacement but shared prosperity.

Our community has been negatively impacted by zoning and it is clear it shapes the future of where we live. Too many vacant lots—especially near transit—are still zoned for outdated industrial uses like M1-2 and M1-3, even though they sit next to homes and could become spaces for housing, grocery stores, and services we need. Over 43% of Chicago's City-owned vacant land is in disinvested communities, and 90% of transit-accessible lots are in these neighborhoods, yet investment has been slow. This lack of development, combined with high unemployment and years of disinvestment, leaves us with limited housing options, rising rents, and fears of displacement. We want zoning that makes affordable housing possible, supports mixed-use development, and addresses gentrification concerns. At the same time, enforcement of building codes needs balance—our older buildings can't always meet strict standards, and vacant properties often go unchecked, creating safety issues and even fueling gun violence. Our community sees solutions in rezoning for mixed-use development, equitable transit-oriented development (ETOD) to prevent displacement, and real investment in jobs, housing, youth programs, and green spaces. Zoning should work for Garfield Park—by creating opportunities that strengthen our neighborhood while keeping us, the residents, at the center.

Access to funding is also crucial to help small businesses thrive, as they are the backbone of a strong community network that supports growth and opportunity. To date, there are over 380 City-owned vacant lots in East Garfield Park alone, highlighting the need for investment and development in the area. Additionally, while there are senior housing options such as the 181-unit Fannie Emanuel Apartments and the 151-unit Irene McCoy Gaines Apartments, the demand for affordable senior housing continues to exceed supply. This underscores the importance of expanding housing options to meet the needs of our aging population.

By bringing together neighborhood groups, organizations, and residents, Garfield Park can transform the current cultural mindset into one rooted in collaboration, pride, and shared opportunity. These connections can create a foundation for lasting change, making our community stronger and more unified.

Strategies

STRATEGY 1

Give residents access to information, programs, in-person support, and sustainable job opportunities to be more proactive

Garfield Park has the chance to build a stronger alliance by ensuring residents have the tools and support they need to take proactive steps in housing and economic stability. This strategy emphasizes access—workshops on home and commercial ownership, savings, and credit-building will give families practical knowledge, while trusted communication networks through churches, schools, and block clubs will ensure information reaches everyone. Digital outreach and aldermanic involvement will strengthen accountability, aligning policy with community priorities. By restoring broken relationships and creating spaces to learn and contribute, residents can move from isolation to collective action, turning shared vision into tangible progress.

STRATEGY 2

Support residents with financial skills, bank partnerships, and affordable solutions to save, access information, and build wealth

This strategy focuses on financial empowerment and long-term stability. Garfield Park residents will gain pathways to affordable homeownership and business ownership through rent-to-own programs and community co-ops. Building stronger relationships with banks and financial institutions will increase trust and access to resources, while financial literacy programs will equip families with tools to save and invest wisely. Establishing a local credit union, coordinating a community land trust, and exploring real estate equity crowdfunding will create resident-led financial structures that ensure equitable access to property and investment opportunities. Together, these actions lay the groundwork for intergenerational wealth and community prosperity.

STRATEGY 3

Strengthen community bonds by encouraging teamwork, shared learning, and collective action for equity and family success

Garfield Park's strength lies in its people, and this strategy builds on that by fostering teamwork and intergenerational learning. Youth will be engaged directly in housing and real estate processes, gaining hands-on experience in property and community stewardship. Transparency between generations will be prioritized, encouraging mutual understanding and shared accountability. Block clubs will be supported and expanded, giving residents spaces to organize and collaborate. Community gardens and energy-saving initiatives will not only improve sustainability but also create opportunities for neighbors to work side by side. These actions strengthen trust, pride, and unity, ensuring families are equipped to contribute meaningfully to Garfield Park's long-term vitality.

STRATEGY 4

Empower residents in building businesses, owning property, and creating lasting wealth that benefits current and future generations

This strategy equips Garfield Park residents with the knowledge and resources to build lasting economic power. We will work with our schools to integrate real estate and economic training, teaching youth about renting, ownership, and taxes, while life skills programs prepare them for independence. Residents will gain access to consumer business education and financial literacy tools, ensuring they can navigate markets confidently. A central resource hub will provide workshops on real estate readiness, budgeting, and investing, making support accessible to all. Incentives will encourage youth to invest in their community, fostering ownership and long-term commitment. By combining education, mentorship, and practical resources, Garfield Park can cultivate a culture of empowerment and wealth that benefits generations to come.

STRATEGY 5

Preserve and clean our public spaces

Our youth and young adults will work together to maintain and revitalize Garfield Park's public spaces to improve quality of life, safety, and community pride. Investments will support daily street cleaning and the hiring of additional staff to maintain parks and public areas. Residents will have access to workforce development and training programs focused on preserving local streets, green spaces, and community infrastructure. Advocacy efforts will push for time limits on unoccupied public buildings to ensure spaces are actively used and maintained. The community will organize support for ordinances requiring that real estate be owned by residents of the neighborhood, promoting local stewardship and investment. By combining practical maintenance, workforce opportunities, and policy advocacy with our young adults, Garfield Park can preserve its green spaces and public areas while strengthening local accountability, pride, and community engagement. Preserve and clean our public spaces.

Strategy 1: Give residents access to information, programs, in-person support, and sustainable job opportunities to be more proactive

PROJECT	LEAD | PARTNERS AND POTENTIAL RESOURCES
	Geraldine Blair, Resident Garfield Park CDC
1.1 Coordinate more community organizations to host more workshops covering home or commercial purchase, savings, building your credit and other important topics	Earth's Remedies, Garfield Park Community Development Corporation, Greater West Town Community Development Project, Breakthrough CED, The Legacy Families
1.2 Facilitate intentional relationships with messengers and how the information is distributed, with churches and other community based networks and institutions	Garfield Park Community Development Corporation, Garfield Park Rite to Wellness Collaborative, Mayor's Office of Community Safety, Samantha Taylor, West Humboldt Park/Garfield Park CAC, Leaders Network
1.3 Create digital and other communication methods	Earth's Remedies, ER Data Solutions, Project Forward
1.4 Ensure aldermanic involvement	Garfield Park Community Development Corporation, Greater West Town Community Development Project, Westside Community Empowerment Center

Strategy 2: Support residents with financial skills, bank partnerships, and affordable solutions to save, access information & build wealth

PROJECT	LEAD | PARTNERS AND POTENTIAL RESOURCES
	Geraldine Blair Resident Garfield Park CDC
2.1 Create rent-to-own programs	Garfield Park Community Development Corporation, POAH, Connecting Capital & Community , Department of Housing & Urban Development, Oak Park Regional Housing Center (OPRHC)
2.2 Develop co-ops in the community	Garfield Park Community Development Corporation, Oak Park Regional Housing Center (OPRHC)
2.3 Connect community with information presented by trusted sources on the power of ownership	"YOU MATTER", Oak Park Regional Housing Center (OPRHC), The Legacy Families
2.4 Build a credit union	Garfield Park Rite to Wellness Collaborative
2.5 Coordinate a community land trust and real estate equity crowdfunding	Garfield Park Community Development Corporation, Oak Park Regional Housing Center (OPRHC)

Strategy 3: Strengthen community bonds by encouraging teamwork, shared learning, and collective action for equity and family success

PROJECT	LEAD | PARTNERS AND POTENTIAL RESOURCES
	Geraldine Blair Community Resident, Garfield Park CDC, Jim Mjenzi, Resident; Lavern Herron, Resident
3.1 Develop more youth involvement in the housing and real estate process	Garfield Park CDC, NO SMALL PLANS, Oak Park Regional Housing Center (OPRHC), The Legacy Families, The Builders School
3.2 Commit to transparency between the generations	Garfield Park CDC, "YOU MATTER", Alees Edwards, The Legacy Families
3.3 Support existing and establish block clubs	My Block My City My Hood, West Humboldt Park Garfield Park CAC, Talei Thompson, The Legacy Families, Saving Our Sons
3.4 Develop garden spaces and energy saving approaches	Bethel New Life, Chicago Community Gardeners Association, Kuumba Tre-Ahm Community Garden, Friends of Garfield Park, Westside Cultural Alliance, Garfield Park Garden Network, Garfield Park Conservatory

Strategy 4: Empower residents in building businesses, owning property & creating lasting wealth that benefits current & future generations

PROJECT	LEAD | PARTNERS AND POTENTIAL RESOURCES
	The K
4.1 Educate more economic training in our schools on renting, owning and taxes of real estate	Garfield Park CDC, Oak Park Regional Housing Center (OPRHC)
4.2 Create more life skills training and independent living skills for youth	Westside Rising, Youth Guidance/Youth Addition
4.3 Provide more information on consumer business	Wintrust, Fawohodie Foundation
4.4 Create a central resource hub offering programs such as real estate readiness events, budgeting and investing	Garfield Park Community Development Corporation, Oak Park Regional Housing Center (OPRHC), Westside Community Empowerment Center
4.5 Give youth an incentive to become invested in the community	Breakthrough (West Garfield Park), NO SMALL PLANS, Earth's Remedies, The Builders School
4.6 Provide more information on predatory lenders	Garfield Park Community Development Corporation, Oak Park Regional Housing Center (OPRHC), The Legacy Families

Strategy 5: Preserve and clean our public spaces

PROJECT	LEAD | PARTNERS AND POTENTIAL RESOURCES
5.1 Deliver investment in daily street cleaning and hiring of more street and park cleaners	Garfield Park Advisory Council
5.2 Develop a robust workforce and trainings for residents interested in preserving our local greenlands and streets	Greater West Town Community Development Project, MAAFA Redemption Project
5.3 Advocate for time limits on holding public buildings being unoccupied	GPRWC
5.4 Organize an ordinance with the City requiring that real estate must be owned by residents of the community in which it is located	GPRWC

Harvest Homes II

On a long-vacant wedge of land at Jackson and Homan, the vision of Garfield Park residents is finally taking shape. Harvest Homes II, a $39 million affordable housing development, has been approved by the Chicago Plan Commission. With 50 affordable units, a vibrant food hall, and a central green space, the project is more than just new construction—it's a cornerstone for community renewal.

Families earning between 30–60% of the area median income will gain stable housing, while the food hall and rooftop deck promise to bring neighbors together and attract visitors. The public green space, with tree groves and a playground, transforms what was once empty land into a hub of life, laughter, and connection.

Chicago House & Community-Led Housing Developments

From the earliest days of the HIV/AIDS crisis, Chicago House has stood as a beacon of stability, proving that housing is not just shelter—it is healthcare, dignity, and survival. As CEO Michael Herman reminds us, *"Housing plays a vital role in meeting the Getting to Zero Illinois plan to achieve functional zero new transmissions by 2030."*

Now, nearly 40 years after its founding, Chicago House is expanding its mission into East Garfield Park. The **East Garfield Park Homes project**, scheduled for completion in May 2026, will deliver 24 new construction units for individuals facing homelessness and living with HIV. This development joins other transformative projects in the neighborhood, such as **Harvest Homes II** and **Hub 32**, creating a powerful ecosystem of affordable housing, community services, and economic opportunity.

Together, these projects embody the Garfield Park Quality of Life Plan by addressing housing insecurity, strengthening community bonds, and building pathways to health and prosperity.

Missing Middle Housing Initiative

The **Missing Middle Housing Initiative** is more than a housing program—it's about bringing life back to our blocks and making sure families can stay rooted in the neighborhoods they love. By using City-owned land and public financing, this effort should serve the people first, creating homes that strengthen our streets, welcome new neighbors, and build stability for generations.

In October 2025, the City opened the latest round with 33 lots in McKinley Park, **West Garfield Park, and East Garfield Park**. Earlier rounds already turned more than **90 vacant lots** into homes in places like North Lawndale, Chatham, South Chicago, and Morgan Park. Each of these sites represents more than construction—it's a chance to restore safety, pride, and community strength where disinvestment left gaps.

Lots are offered to developers in clusters, but residents are watching closely to ensure this growth is coordinated and truly benefits the people who live here. The promise is that completed homes will be available at **affordable market rates for owner-occupants**, prioritizing families who want to invest in and remain part of their community—not outside speculators. Eleve West led by TRU Bandele JV to position 8 total units across 4 residential buildings along Monroe, in partnership with Westside Community Empowerment Center.

To make this possible, each lot is priced at **$1**, with up to **$150,000** in construction assistance per unit through Mayor Brandon Johnson's Housing and Economic Development bond. Since this is public money, the community expects transparency, accountability, and results: homes that are accessible, ownership that builds generational wealth, and investments that reflect the values of equity, dignity, and neighborhood pride.

The Garfield Park Conservatory Alliance's work is grounded in the belief that connection to nature is fundamentally important to the well-being of every person. Although the Garfield Park Conservatory first opened in 1908, the Garfield Park Conservatory Alliance was formed nearly a century later, in 1998, by members of the Garfield Park community.

The Alliance operates as a non-profit organization that works in partnership with the Chicago Park District to support the Conservatory through educational programming, public events, and community-centered initiatives. Its goal is to ensure this historic space continues to serve as a resource for Chicago and a place where people can connect with nature and one another.

With the Garfield Park Conservatory gardens as the backdrop and classroom, adult learners can get hands-on experience with our knowledgeable staff and volunteers. The Adult Programs range from a casual drop-in to in-depth classes and workshops, providing a place to expand your knowledge.

On Saturdays and Sundays, Nature Educators provide activities for kids of all ages at the Budding Botanists stations. This program is included in all reservations to visit the Conservatory. These stations are interactive and are all about scientific exploration, to help your family to see plants in new ways.

The Urban Roots Teen Environmental Justice Program engages high school students across the West Side in partnership with the Conservatory & Gardens. Teens focus on cultivating and nurturing a relationship with the natural world around them. The Urban Roots Program is a paid, seasonal employment opportunity grounded in environmental justice and designed to develop the knowledge, skillset and leadership development of participants.

FOCUS AREA PARENT & FAMILY SUPPORT

PARENT & FAMILY SUPPORT GOAL:

Garfield Park will invest the time and effort needed to support parents, grandparents, and our young people with the resources needed to maintain a healthy family, mentally, spiritually, economically and physically. We will ensure our families have a safe and walkable community with easy access to all essential services and amenities.

We envision Garfield Park as a place where families thrive through sustained investment in healing, creativity, and connection. By securing long-term funding and building a Family Support Fund, we will offer parenting workshops, childcare, and wellness programs shaped by community voice and cultural wisdom. Through strategic planning, intergenerational organizing, and partnerships between schools and places of worship, we will strengthen family bonds and create a blueprint for lasting resilience.

PLANNED MEASURES OF SUCCESS:

1. Increase funding secured for Garfield Park Family Support Fund
2. Increase number of families participating in trauma-informed healing programs
3. Increase number of schools and places of worship collaborating to support families
4. Decrease family instability linked to unmet priorities and trauma
5. Increase number of family-first curricula adopted in local schools

IN ILLINOIS, THERE ARE 263,890 CHILDREN UNDER THE AGE OF 18 LIVING IN HOMES WHERE A RELATIVE IS HEAD OF HOUSEHOLD.

MORE THAN **71,000** GRANDPARENTS ARE CARING FOR THEIR GRANDCHILDREN. THERE ARE MORE THAN **85,000** CHILDREN BEING RAISED BY KIN WITH NO PARENT PRESENT.

THE NEIGHBORHOOD HAS A HIGHER CONCENTRATION OF SINGLE-MOTHER HOUSEHOLDS THAN 97.7% OF U.S. NEIGHBORHOODS.

GARFIELD PARK, DISABILITY RATES ARE HIGHER THAN THE CITY AVERAGE—

ABOUT 22% COMBINED, COMPARED TO ROUGHLY 11% CITYWIDE

Key Local Factors

Garfield Park is reclaiming its legacy of strong families and vibrant community life through a bold, data-driven vision for Parent & Family Support. Once home to bustling laundromats, bakeries, and hardware stores, the neighborhood is now investing in the infrastructure needed to restore that sense of everyday stability and intergenerational care. Anchored by the Garfield Park Quality-of-Life Plan, this vision centers on long-term funding, trauma-informed programming, and community-led solutions that reflect the lived experiences of parents, grandparents, and youth.

Our existing assets provide a strong foundation for this work. Schools like Melody and Tilton remain anchors in the community, and initiatives such as Parent University at Melody Elementary and the family room at Beidler Elementary demonstrate how educational spaces can double as hubs for resource-sharing and healing. The Westside Parent Support Group, in partnership with Rush University, offers trauma-informed care and peer support, while churches adopting schools reflect a growing movement to bridge faith and education in service of family resilience.

Community-led efforts like Peace Runners and Light in the Night have created safe, joyful spaces for families to gather, walk, and celebrate together. Events such as the baseball season parade and intergenerational peace walks are not just symbolic—they're strategic interventions that build trust, visibility, and pride across generations. The YOU MATTER senior organizing project adds another layer of depth, connecting elders to leadership roles and ensuring their wisdom informs neighborhood planning and youth mentorship.

Despite these accomplishments, data reveals persistent gaps that must be addressed. According to the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP), 41% of households in West Garfield Park earn less than $25,000 annually—more than double the citywide rate. Educational outcomes also reflect systemic challenges: while 82% of Garfield Park students who began high school in 2020 graduated, only 48% enrolled in college, and just 27% completed a degree or credential by 2024. These figures underscore the need for sustained investment in family support systems that extend beyond graduation and into economic mobility.

Youth engagement data also points to areas for growth. In 2024, only 34% of 8th graders in West Garfield Park participated in the Illinois Youth Survey, suggesting barriers to participation and a need for more inclusive outreach. Programs like community-in-school partnerships and churches adopting schools are promising models, but require deeper coordination and infrastructure to scale effectively.

Garfield Park's vision is not just aspirational—it's actionable. By investing in trauma-informed parenting support, culturally responsive curriculum development, and intergenerational organizing, the community is building a future where families are not only supported, but empowered to lead. The goal is clear: a safe, walkable neighborhood where every household has access to the mental, spiritual, economic, and physical resources needed to thrive.

This is our community's moment to transform legacy into leadership, and resilience into renewal. With the right funding, partnerships, and accountability structures, Parent & Family Support can become the cornerstone of a self-sustaining, unified community—one where every generation is seen, valued, and equipped to build together.

Strategies

STRATEGY 1

Build strong, well-funded community programs with enough staff and resources

This approach begins with establishing a dedicated Garfield Park Family Support Fund to bring together City, philanthropic, and private dollars for essential services like parenting workshops, childcare, and wellness support. The strategy also calls for a major campaign to secure 20 years of sustained funding—at least $10 million annually—paired with outreach to foundations and corporations willing to make multi-decade commitments. To maintain transparency and accountability, the strategy includes producing annual community updates and outcome reports, ensuring programs remain responsive to real needs and demonstrating the impact of continued investment.

STRATEGY 2

Strengthen families by addressing trauma with community-based healing, parenting support, and relationship-building programs

This begins by bringing together parent groups and family support organizations from across the community to build shared goals and coordinated action. Through a structured strategic planning process, the community will examine how long-ignored priorities have contributed to family dysfunction, while also naming and understanding the subcultural norms that shape daily life. This collaborative approach ensures that solutions are grounded in real experiences and guided by the people most impacted.

STRATEGY 3

Promote creativity and opportunity through programs that strengthen family bonds

Garfield Park's families thrive when creativity and opportunity are woven into everyday life. This strategy focuses on strengthening family bonds by centering education and community connection. This is done by producing a community-created family-first curriculum, ensuring that schools reflect the values, traditions, and lived experiences of local families. This blueprint empowers parents, elders, and youth to shape learning environments that honor culture and build resilience. This also includes places of worship with schools, creating partnerships that extend support beyond the classroom. By linking spiritual leaders and educators, families gain access to networks of care, mentorship, and shared resources. Together, these efforts foster unity, nurture creativity, and build a foundation where Garfield Park families can grow stronger across generations.

TRUE RELIGION
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Strategy 1: Build strong, well-funded community programs with enough staff and resources

PROJECT	LEAD | PARTNERS AND POTENTIAL RESOURCES
1.1 Create a dedicated Garfield Park Family Support Fund to pool City, philanthropic, and private contributions for programs like parenting workshops, childcare, and wellness support	West Humboldt Garfield Park CAC
1.2 Engage foundations and corporations with multi-decade funding commitments	"YOU MATTER", Greater West Town Community Development Project
1.3 Provide annual reports and community updates showing outcomes of funded programs	Earth's Remedies
1.4 Conduct annual outcome reports to ensure programs meet real needs	Earth's Remedies

Strategy 2: Strengthen families by addressing trauma with community-based healing, parenting support, and relationship-building

PROJECT	LEAD | PARTNERS AND POTENTIAL RESOURCES
	CREW
2.1 Invite parent, family support groups from all over the communities to come together to organize	"YOU MATTER", West Humboldt Park Garfield Park CAC, Garfield Park CDC, CREW
2.2 Launch a strategic planning effort that shows the relationship between ignored priorities and the contribution to dysfunctional families, specifically highlighting subcultural norms	Garfield Park CDC

Strategy 3: Promote creativity and opportunity through programs that strengthen family bonds

PROJECT	LEAD | PARTNERS AND POTENTIAL RESOURCES
3.1 Produce a community created family-first curriculum for blueprint for school systems	West Humboldt Garfield Park Community Action Council, Chicago Public Schools
3.2 Match places of worship and schools to interact and seek ways to support one another	West Humboldt Garfield Park Community Action Council,CREW, The Legacy Families

Motivated by the belief that healthcare is a human right, Erie serves 96,000 patients per year at 14 locations throughout Chicago, Evanston and Lake County, regardless of insurance status, immigration status, or the ability to pay. In February 2026, Erie opened its newest location, Erie Sankofa Village Health Center, a 15,000-square-foot health center located inside the newly established Sankofa Village Wellness Center in Chicago's West Garfield Park neighborhood.

Erie Sankofa Village Health Center will serve approximately 6,000 patients annually and offer primary medical care, dental care, behavioral health and psychiatry, reproductive health, prenatal care, substance use treatment, and HIV care and prevention. Erie also offers WIC services and benefits that are open to the community.

Erie connects patients to resources that address the social drivers of health, like transportation and housing assistance, infant supplies and access to healthy food. Through a partnership with Rush University System for Health, patients will also have access to specialty care and hospital services, ensuring continuity across the care spectrum.

Erie Sankofa Village is an investment in West Garfield Park. By providing high-quality healthcare, it hopes to contribute to efforts within the West Garfield Park community to decrease the 20-year life expectancy gap between its residents and the loop and support the community in achieving health-related goals identified in the community's quality of life plan.

The CGI is a community-led effort to bring new grocers and healthy food and nutrition options to West Garfield Park as a central component of Sankofa Wellness Village.

The CGI is led by the Garfield Park Rite to Wellness Collaborative, the Garfield Park Community Council and West Side United and is tasked to bring new grocery and food options to the residents of West Garfield Park through ongoing community planning, engagement and shared accountability. The CGI ensures that community voice, self-determination and needs around food options in West Garfield Park will drive the decision making process with the City and the grocery providers.

The "YOU MATTER" Project Initiative is a vital act of remembrance, restoration, and respect for Garfield Park's Senior and Legacy Residents. At its heart, this initiative ensures that the voices of those who lived through pivotal moments—especially the decades following Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s assassination—are not only heard but centered in shaping the future of the community.

By engaging residents from five senior housing buildings, "YOU MATTER" bridges generational gaps and grounds the Garfield Park Quality-of-Life Plan (QLP) in lived experience. These oral histories and reflections offer more than memory—they provide insight into resilience, neighborhood transformation, and the enduring spirit of community. Through surveys, interviews, and storytelling events, SAV on Consulting is helping document a 50-year arc of change, struggle, and hope.

This initiative is also a model for inclusive planning. It doesn't just ask seniors to reflect—it invites them to lead. Their perspectives guide policy, investment, and programming decisions, ensuring that Garfield Park's future is built on trust, transparency, and collaboration. In a neighborhood often shaped by external forces, "YOU MATTER" reclaims narrative power and affirms that legacy residents are architects of what comes next.

This project fosters healing. By honoring the trauma and triumphs of the past, it creates space for intergenerational dialogue and community ownership. It's a reminder that sustainable change must be rooted in history, and that those who've endured the most often hold the clearest vision for what's needed now.

Investing in "YOU MATTER" is investing in truth, dignity, and long-term transformation. It's a promise that Garfield Park's elders are not just remembered—they are respected, uplifted, and central to the path forward.

There is a strong need for dedicated real estate that can house a museum to preserve and uplift our stories and history. We envision restoring and repurposing historic landmarks — such as the Guyon Hotel on Pulaski and Washington or the Bobby E. Wright Building at Madison and Kedzie — as powerful anchors for this work. These buildings hold deep cultural significance, and transforming them into spaces for exhibition, learning, and community gathering would honor the legacy of those who came before us. A museum rooted in these historic sites would allow us not only to share our past, but also to shape and celebrate the future of what is yet to come. This will be able to uplift economic development in the area, our workforce and most importantly to educate our people how far we've come.

FOCUS AREA PUBLIC SAFETY

PUBLIC SAFETY GOAL:

For decades, Garfield Park has endured hardship while holding fast to resilience, faith, and community pride. Our vision for public safety is bold: true security will not come from policing alone, but from strong bonds, economic opportunity, and residents reclaiming their streets with unity and purpose.

We see Garfield Park where children play freely, seniors walk with dignity, and families shop at Black-owned businesses without fear. Violence will be replaced with opportunity, and drug use addressed through health and healing rather than punishment. Safety will mean protection for all, rooted in respect and care.

Economic vitality is inseparable from safety. Investment must flow into people, not just downtown towers. Job programs will create nontraditional paths to legitimate opportunity, honoring the skills already present in our community. Development will protect legacy residents, ensuring affordability and preventing displacement.

Block clubs, churches, and grassroots organizations will anchor safety, building trust and raising leaders from youth and adults alike. Accountability will define our relationship with police and officials—better policing, not more policing, rooted in transparency and partnership.

This is Garfield Park's future: streets alive with pride, health, and hope, where every resident belongs and generations thrive.

PLANNED MEASURES OF SUCCESS:

1. Increase resident participation in oversight meetings and accountability forums
2. Increase trust levels between residents and institutions measured through surveys
3. Increase number of block clubs and local leadership structures strengthened
4. Decrease incidents of reckless driving and unsafe public spaces
5. Increase number of residents engaged in clean-ups and neighborhood patrols

HOMICIDE RATES:

146.8 PER 100,000 IN THE 11TH DISTRICT,

ONE OF THE HIGHEST IN THE NATION

GARFIELD PARK HAS FEWER OFFICERS PER CAPITA COMPARED TO NEARBY **OAK PARK**, WHERE CRIME RATES ARE SIGNIFICANTLY LOWER.

"Investments in youth, families, and neighborhood revitalization can mitigate crime and help break the cycle of violence in communities over the long run." The Brookings Institution

Key Local Factors

Garfield Park's greatest asset has always been its people. For over three decades, faith organizations have anchored this community, with churches serving not merely as places of worship but as centers of mutual aid, advocacy, and hope. Institutions like New Mount Pilgrim Baptist Church and organizations like MAAFA Redemption Project and Breakthrough Ministries have quietly transformed lives, helping formerly incarcerated residents secure housing and employment, offering second chances when society often offers none. Block by block, residents have maintained their homes, raised families, and preserved the cultural fabric of a historically disinvestment, displacement pressures, and decades of neglect.

What often goes unrecognized is the expertise that exists within Garfield Park. Having the street-level knowledge of how communities actually function, the organizing capacity demonstrated through persistent advocacy, and the social capital built through years of neighbors looking out for neighbors. Individuals like Ant Jones of the Street Priests and Fred Seaton of the Institute for Nonviolence Chicago are indicative of the power of these organizations. Recent trends show violence beginning to decline and evidence that community-led efforts are working. These are not isolated bright spots but proof that when residents are supported and empowered, transformation is possible.

Yet honest assessment requires acknowledging persistent barriers to public safety. Open-air drug markets continue to operate with relative impunity, creating environments where residents, particularly seniors and children, feel unsafe in their own neighborhoods. Comparing Garfield Park to adjacent Oak Park reveals stark disparities: different police response times, different levels of street infrastructure investment, different access to mental health and substance treatment services. These are not accidents but reflect accumulated effects of policy choices that have systematically underserved communities.

The absence of quality, Black-owned businesses reflects both economic disinvestment and safety concerns that discourage entrepreneurship and patronage. Without legitimate economic opportunities, particularly for young people, informal economies fill the void. The lack of coordinated, well-funded block clubs means many streets lack the organized "eyes and ears" that deter crime and build collective effectiveness. Meanwhile, gentrification pressures threaten to displace legacy residents just as conditions begin improving—a cruel irony that extracts community wealth precisely when it should be building.

These public safety challenges cannot be separated from broader health outcomes. Chronic stress from living in unsafe environments contributes to hypertension, diabetes, and mental health struggles. The public health dimension of drug use demands treatment infrastructure, not just enforcement. Organizations like Habilitative Systems Inc., Oak Street Health, Sankofa Wellness Center, and Lawndale Christian Health provide critical services, yet gaps remain in accessible mental health care, substance treatment programs, and preventive wellness resources.

True public safety requires addressing root causes: creating legitimate pathways to economic opportunity, investing in youth development, improving street infrastructure with better lighting and traffic calming, and ensuring affordable housing protects long-term residents from displacement.

Garfield Park stands at an inflection point. With its strong organizational infrastructure, declining violence trends, and residents ready to lead, this community can become a national model for community-driven public safety. Imagine Garfield Park as a place where faith organizations and block clubs form an interconnected safety network, where young people see pathways to prosperity that don't require leaving their neighborhood, where Black-owned businesses thrive on safe, well-lit streets, and where comprehensive health services support whole-person wellness. This is not fantasy but an achievable reality if investments match the community's vision and residents remain at the center of decision-making. Garfield Park can lead Chicago in demonstrating that authentic public safety emerges from community power, not imposed solutions.

Strategies

STRATEGY 1

Increase accountability in policing and local governance

This strategy establishes transparent, responsive governance structures where community voices shape public safety approaches rather than simply responding to them. Through six interconnected actions, residents will enhance communication between police and community. Work through the Community Commission for Public Safety and Accountability (CCPSA), hold elected officials accountable through regular engagement and develop independent oversight community practice. This also includes educating the community about accountability structures and organize teams of residents to attend City Council meetings. These actions build the trust and transparency that enable all other community improvements—when residents can hold institutions accountable, they gain power to advocate for resources, challenge harmful policies, and ensure public safety investments serve community well-being.

STRATEGY 2

Create opportunities and spaces for community connection

This strategy recognizes that safety and vitality depend on neighbors knowing, trusting, and supporting one another. Through focused community-building actions, it will create programs to develop community leaders—including youth—strengthen block clubs and local leadership structures, and establish opportunities for residents to communicate even in the absence of formal leaders.

By improving trust between residents and between the community and officials, and by building on strong block clubs, youth leadership programs, and regular gathering spaces, Garfield Park can cultivate the informal networks that make neighborhoods resilient. When neighbors know each other, they look out for one another, organize together, and create leadership pipelines that ensure community organizing continues into the future.

STRATEGY 3

Develop local talent while strengthening community bonds

Garfield Park possesses tremendous human capital that has been systematically undervalued and underutilized. This strategy encourages moving away from negative stories about our neighborhood. We recognize that the resilience and survival skills our residents have developed are true assets that can be used to lead our community forward. To build both individual economic opportunity and collective community pride, this strategy will work to market effective social media presence to influence youth, celebrate diverse models of success in the community and create job programs that leverage street skills. This also includes establishing nontraditional paths to legitimate opportunities and supporting residents with programs for substance treatment.

By creating more opportunities for our neighbors to succeed, we are transforming how we see ourselves and proving that Garfield Park is a place where talent is nurtured and kept at home.

STRATEGY 4

Improve street safety through environmental design

The physical environment profoundly shapes community safety and quality of life, yet Garfield Park's streets often reflect decades of neglect rather than intentional design for community well-being. This strategy recognizes that safety requires more than policing—it demands thoughtful environmental interventions that make the neighborhood more livable while building the "eyes on the street" that naturally deter crime. Through resident-centered environmental improvements, this strategy will add speed calming tactics and better lighting, enhance seating, greenery, and play areas to encourage safe gatherings, and link parks, schools, and businesses with safe walking paths. Inviting residents to help care for streets and public spaces through cleanups and neighborhood patrols.

Resident stewardship of these improvements ensures ongoing maintenance while building neighborhood pride and ownership.

Strategy 1: Increase accountability in policing and local governance

PROJECT	LEAD | PARTNERS AND POTENTIAL RESOURCES
	Institute for Nonviolence Chicago
1.1 Enhance communication between police and community	Mayor's Office of Community Safety, Garfield Park Advisory Council, Institute for Nonviolence Chicago
1.2 Work through Community Commission for Public Safety and Accountability (CCPSA)	Mayor's Office of Community Safety
1.3 Hold elected officials accountable through regular engagement	GPRWC
1.4 Develop independent oversight community practice	GPRWC
1.5 Educate community about accountability structures	GPRWC
1.6 Organize a team of residents present for City Council meetings	City Bureau Documenters Program

Strategy 2: Create opportunities and spaces that help community members meet, share, and build strong, supportive connections

PROJECT	LEAD | PARTNERS AND POTENTIAL RESOURCES
	Martin Coffer Resident, Breakthrough
2.1 Create programs to develop community leaders, including youth	Garfield Park Community Development Corporation, Bethel New Life, Garfield Park Conservatory Alliance, Institute for Nonviolence Chicago
2.2 Enhance block clubs and local leadership structures	My Block My Hood My City, West Humboldt Park Garfield Park Community Action Council, Breakthrough, Institute for Nonviolence
2.3 Create opportunities for residents to communicate in absence of established leaders	"YOU MATTER", Garfield Park Community Development Corporation, Bethel New Life, Institute for Nonviolence
2.4 Improve trust between residents and between community and officials	"YOU MATTER", Institute for Nonviolence Chicago

Strategy 3: Develop local talent while strengthening community bonds to foster pride, empowerment, and a resilient Garfield Park

PROJECT	LEAD | PARTNERS AND POTENTIAL RESOURCES
3.1 Market effective social media presence to influence youth	NO SMALL PLANS, Earth's Remedies
3.2 Celebrate diverse models of success in the community	Earth's Remedies, ER Data Solutions, Institute for Nonviolence Chicago
3.3 Create job programs that leverage street skills	Greater West Town Community Development Project, Institute for Nonviolence Chicago
3.4 Establish nontraditional paths to legitimate opportunities	GPRWC
3.5 Support residents with programs for substance treatment	Above & Beyond Family Recovery Center, Erie Family Health Centers

Strategy 4: Improve street safety by reduce reckless driving and environments promoting protection of our residents

PROJECT	LEAD | PARTNERS AND POTENTIAL RESOURCES
4.1 Add speed calming tactics, more signage and better lighting	GPRWC
4.2 Enhance seating, greenery, and play areas to encourage safe gathering	Garfield Park Advisory Council ,Chicago Park District Stewardship Program, Friends of Garfield Park, Garfield Park Conservatory
4.3 Link parks, schools, and businesses with safe walking paths so people can move safely around the neighborhood	Garfield Park Advisory Council, Friends of Garfield Park
4.4 Invite residents to help care for streets and public spaces through clean-ups and neighborhood patrols	"YOU MATTER", Garfield Park Advisory Council, Friends of Garfield Park, Chicago Park District Stewardship Program, Institute for Nonviolence Chicago

Nonviolence Chicago is a respected leader in gun violence prevention, intervention, and reduction. Their critical work heals and restores the Chicago communities with the highest incidences of shootings through through meaningful partnerships with community violence intervention (CVI) organizations.

Since 2016, they have helped over 4,000 individuals who were at highest risk of being shot or becoming a shooter lead lives of nonviolence. Their robust continuum of care is designed to help participants regulate emotions, restore mental health, and obtain living-wage jobs in the legal economy.

Chicago spends $6-$7 billion on gun violence annually. Year over year, Nonviolence Chicago and CVI partners are saving the city millions of dollars in shooting-related costs. More importantly, they are saving the lives of countless Chicago residents.

CVI Core Serves

- Street Outreach: CVI outreach workers have successfully mediated thousands of conflicts, negotiated dozens of nonaggression agreements, and forged healing connections with 117 rival groups within the communities we serve.
- Victim Support: With shooting victims in our service areas in 2024, we saw a 33% increase in the acceptance of our support services. The community trusts our presence and sees our impact.
- Employment: Job training and placement services provide a pathway to stable, meaningful work, helping individuals find positive roles to play in their communities.
- Education & Nonviolence Training: Trainings about the principles and practices of nonviolence and programs that empower individuals to build brighter futures.
- Mental & Behavioral Health: Access to mental health services that address trauma and emotional well-being disrupt cycles of violence and foster generational healing.
- Case Management & Life Coaching: We provide personalized guidance and support for victims, offenders, and their families to navigate challenges and stay committed to peace.

Madison Street Corridor Plan

The future of Madison Street belongs to the people who live, work, and travel here every day. The Chicago Department of Planning and Development (DPD) began engagement this Fall with an online survey and upcoming meetings for residents, business owners, and commuters to speak up about what *we* want for our corridor. Madison runs three miles through the Near West Side, East Garfield Park, and West Garfield Park, and for decades our neighborhoods have carried the weight of disinvestment. Now, our voices must guide the reinvestment.

Launched in October 2025, the survey is part of a larger corridor study meant to shape land use, commercial activity, transportation, and community amenities. But the real measure of success will be whether the City listens to us and ensures investments reflect our priorities, our culture, and our needs.

The survey period concluded in November 2025 and what we say now will feed into open-house meetings and draft plans, setting the tone for how Madison Street grows.

What We Need For Madison Street to Be

Transportation and Streetscape Improvements

- Safer, more walkable streets with lighting, trees, and public art that reflect our identity.
- Bus stops, bike lanes, and crosswalks designed for residents, not just commuters.

Land Use and Development

- Vacant lots turned into affordable housing and mixed-use spaces that serve families.
- Development that strengthens existing locally owned businesses instead of pushing them out.

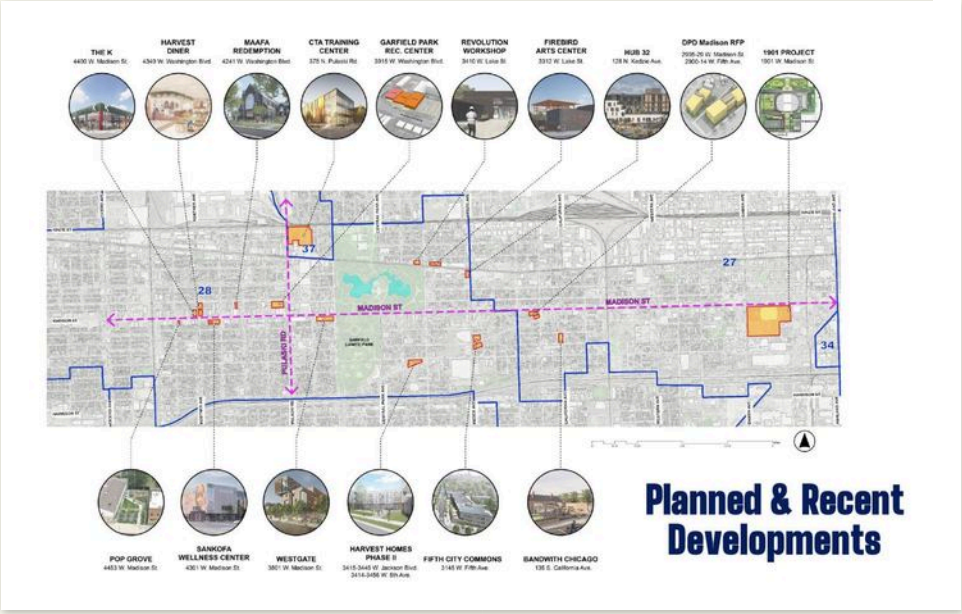
Economic Opportunity and Retail Revitalization

- Investment in local retailers and small businesses.
- Workforce pipelines that connect Garfield Park residents to good jobs.
- Protection and celebration of community anchors that have held Madison together.

Timeline

- October – Nov. 9: Survey period.
- Winter 2025–26: Public meetings where findings are shared—*our presence matters.*
- Spring 2026: Final plan released.

This corridor study is not just about Madison Street—it's about our right to shape the future of Garfield Park and the West Side. Every response, every meeting, and every contribution helps shape a future where redevelopment reflects equity, safety, and pride for the residents of the West Side.



FOCUS AREA RECREATION & ENTERTAINMENT

RECREATION & ENTERTAINMENT GOAL:

Garfield Park will become a vibrant hub of entertainment and recreation, where families, youth, neighbors, and visitors come together to celebrate culture, creativity, and community. We will create safe, engaging spaces where young people can gather, play sports, and explore their creativity, while ensuring access to fresh, healthy food that nourishes every household. Music, arts, and events will energize and uplift the neighborhood, and a central website will keep residents connected, informed, and able to access resources and opportunities that strengthen community life.

Together, we will reclaim and nurture these spaces so that Garfield Park residents can own, shape, and enjoy them for generations to come.

PLANNED MEASURES OF SUCCESS:

1. Increase attendance at recreational and entertainment events
2. Increase number of community-owned spaces available for gatherings
3. Increase number of intergenerational conversations and programs hosted
4. Increase representation of resident voices in recreational planning
5. Increase number of community calendars and hubs used to share information

38% OF HOUSEHOLDS IN GARFIELD PARK DO NOT HAVE A VEHICLE,

COMPARED TO ~26% CITYWIDE

LOWER ACCESS TO PET-FRIENDLY GREEN SPACE COMPARED TO NORTH SIDE NEIGHBORHOODS.

GARFIELD PARK **HAS FEWER CULTURAL INSTITUTIONS** COMPARED TO DOWNTOWN AND NORTH SIDE.

40% OF HOUSEHOLDS WITHOUT CARS RELY MORE ON WALKING, BIKING, AND TRANSIT

Key Local Factors

Garfield Park has always been a place alive with rhythm, competition, and creativity — a community where art, sports, and neighborhood pride pulse through every block. The people of Garfield Park have long built their own stages, courts, and gathering places that inspired generations and brought the community together in celebration of talent and resilience. From the laughter echoing in its theaters to the cheers from its basketball courts, recreation and entertainment have been the heartbeat of our neighborhood's story.

In earlier decades, Garfield Park's stretch of Madison Street offered more than just storefronts — it was a cultural corridor. Three theaters once lit up the avenue from Kedzie to Laramie: the Imperial Theater at 2300 W. Madison, the Malboara Theater at 4200 W. Madison, and the Kedzie Theater at Madison and Kedzie. These were spaces where families gathered, where young people first felt the wonder of the arts, and where neighbors shared a common joy in music and film. On special nights, the glow of the marquees reflected not just entertainment, but community pride.

The area also nurtured some of Chicago's most powerful voices in gospel and performance. Reverend Milton Brunson, a Grammy Award–winning artist and founder of the Thompson Community Singers, led worship and music that filled Madison Street with spirit and hope. His church became a center for faith and artistry, shaping both local culture and national gospel history. Formed by members N.A.R.D., Belo Zero, and AK-47, Do or Die rose to fame in the mid-1990s with their platinum single "Po Pimp" featuring Chicago's Own Twista, which reached #22 on the Billboard Hot 100. Do or Die's roots in East Garfield Park remain central to their identity. Their music reflects the struggles and resilience of Chicago's West Side, blending street narratives with smooth, melodic hooks. Beyond their chart success, they are remembered for elevating Chicago rap culture and inspiring future generations of artists. Even decades later, Do or Die continues to perform and record, carrying Garfield Park's voice into the broader hip-hop world.

Sports have been equally central to Garfield Park's legacy of excellence and perseverance. From the Marshall High School women's basketball team, led by legendary coach Dorothy Gaters, to champions like Coach Jason Fergerson, a Senior Olympian and track mentor, Garfield Park has produced athletes who transformed talent into triumph. The boat house, bandstand, and the iconic courts on Jackson and Central Park — famously featured in the film Hoop Dreams — stand as landmarks of this athletic tradition, where determination met opportunity under the open sky.

Recreation also meant gathering in spaces that built confidence and creativity. The second floor of the Garfield Park Gold Dome, once used as a theater, hosted performances and community events that showcased local talent. Youth-centered programs like After School Matters, Chicago West Music Center, and the Off the Street Club still give young people tools to express themselves and envision brighter futures. Neighborhood businesses like George's Music Room became cultural hubs that belonged not just to Garfield Park, but to the entire West Side — proof that artistry and entrepreneurship could thrive hand in hand.

Community gardens and open spaces have long been part of Garfield Park's fabric of connection and care. The Lilly Pond on Madison and the Touch of Life Community Garden provided peaceful retreats and living classrooms. Talent shows, trade programs, and skate rink meetups offered moments of unity, where friendship and fun came first. Generations remember these as the places where bonds were formed, dreams took root, and creativity flourished.

Today, Garfield Park carries forward that same spirit of collaboration and joy — through open mics for youth, fine arts showcases by United for Better Living, 1865 Juneteenth Fest and partnerships that continue to celebrate local excellence. The call now is to reclaim and reimagine these traditions, ensuring that recreation and entertainment remain cornerstones of community life.

Garfield Park's story reminds us that joy, performance, and play are not luxuries — they are legacies. Our neighborhood has always been a stage for greatness, a field for champions, and a canvas for creativity. The task before us is to honor that legacy and ensure these spaces of gathering, artistry, and pride belong to Garfield Park families for generations to come.

PEACE RUNNERS
PEACE RUNNERS

Strategies

STRATEGY 1

Upgrade physical areas where neighbors can gather, connect, and build a stronger sense of community

We will transform Garfield Park's shared spaces into welcoming places that promote connection, safety, and belonging. Revitalizing parks, plazas, and community hubs will help residents gather, host events, and build stronger ties. Many want to connect but fear crime and unsafe conditions. By improving these areas and offering low-barrier activities—like meetups, pop-ups, and youth-led cleanups—we can shift from caution to engagement. Partnering with local groups to celebrate culture and pride, and engaging those who create tension through dialogue and collaboration, will strengthen accountability, shared ownership, and community care, turning once-avoided spaces into trusted neighborhood assets.

STRATEGY 2

Develop and expand community-owned spaces that can grow with resident needs

We will develop and expand community-owned spaces that reflect resident pride, ownership, and inclusion. Many feel disconnected, saying, "We don't own our community" and "It's not ready to receive us." To rebuild trust and belonging, residents must help shape and manage spaces that welcome them. We'll promote gatherings for joy and connection, not just problems; create a shared community calendar of spaces and events for residents to use and host; and identify assets and activities already under community control. These actions strengthen collective responsibility for upkeep and restoration, ensuring Garfield Park feels open, cared for, and truly ours.

STRATEGY 3

Build inclusive programs that actively listen to and involve all community voices

We will build inclusive programs that actively listen to and involve all community voices, especially youth, elders, and marginalized residents. Many feel unheard or disconnected due to red tape, shifting resources, and limited access to creative or entrepreneurial spaces. To bridge these gaps, we will host intergenerational conversations that elevate diverse perspectives; use intentional marketing to reach non-stakeholders ; and over-communicate events through flyers, social media, texts, emails, word of mouth, and trusted community spaces. These efforts ensure everyone—especially those often overlooked—can participate, create, and lead, balancing care for Garfield Park's natural spaces with the cultivation of human growth.

STRATEGY 4

Empower residents to act as community developers to create spaces for recreation and entertainment businesses

The Garfield Park Quality of Life Plan will empower residents to become community developers by providing them with the tools, resources, and partnerships needed to identify opportunities and lead the creation of vibrant spaces for recreation, entertainment, and community gathering. Residents will be encouraged to assess neighborhood assets and needs, develop ideas for activating vacant or underutilized spaces, connect with local businesses and investors, and help shape projects that reflect the community's vision.

Strategy 1: Upgrade active areas where neighbors can gather, connect, and build a stronger sense of community

PROJECT	LEAD | PARTNERS AND POTENTIAL RESOURCES
1.1 Activate opportunities for community connection and networking to deepen relationships	MAAFA Redemption Project, "YOU MATTER", Garfield Park Advisory Council , Greater West Town Community Development Project, Garfield Park Conservatory Alliance
1.2 Engage with the individuals and groups with good rapport that can facilitate who are creating negative atmosphere to see what they want to have to move towards solutions	"YOU MATTER", GPAC, Greater West Town Community Development Project

Strategy 2: Develop and expand community-owned spaces that can grow with resident needs

PROJECT	LEAD | PARTNERS AND POTENTIAL RESOURCES
2.1 Promote gatherings not around "a problem" but for fun and to just be	MAAFA Redemption Project, Garfield Park Advisory Council, Greater West Town Community Development Project, Westside Cultural Alliance, Chicago West Community Music Center, Garfield Park Conservatory Alliance, Chicago Park District
2.2 Create a community calendar with spaces and events for community use and to host	Garfield Park Advisory Council, Chicago West Community Music Center, Garfield Park Conservatory Alliance
2.3 Identify assets and activities community has control over	MAAFA Redemption Project

Strategy 3: Build inclusive programs that actively listen to and involve all community voices

PROJECT	LEAD | PARTNERS AND POTENTIAL RESOURCES
3.1 Host intergenerational conversations	MAAFA Redemption Project, "YOU MATTER", Garfield Park Rite to Wellness Collaborative, Greater West Town Community Development Project, Westside Cultural Alliance, Garfield Park Advisory Council, Garfield Park Conservatory Alliance
3.2 Communicate intentional marketing to non-stakeholders	Garfield Park Conservatory Alliance
3.3 Over communicate events to the community with diverse methods which include flyers, social media, texts, emails, calendar invites, word of mouth at churches and other valued places frequented by community	MAAFA Redemption Project, "YOU MATTER", Garfield Park Rite to Wellness Collaborative, Garfield Park Advisory Council
3.4 Create several landing spaces for the shared information	Garfield Park Conservatory Alliance
3.5 Ensure community is represented in content brought into the community	MAAFA Redemption Project, "YOU MATTER" , Westside Cultural Alliance, Chicago West Community Music Center, Garfield Park Conservatory Alliance

Strategy 4: Empower residents to act as community developers to create spaces for recreation and entertainment businesses

PROJECT	LEAD | PARTNERS AND POTENTIAL RESOURCES
4.1 Conduct proper and consistent planning of or needs, necessities and dreams for our creative spaces	Local Initiative Support Corporation, Garfield Park Conservatory Alliance
4.2 Organize community leaders with experience and talent to bring forth plans to build on community endeavors.	Greater West Town Community Development Project, Garfield Park Conservatory Alliance

The Garfield Park Bandstand Facade Restoration began in 2024. Work completed to date includes:

- Removal, cleaning, repairs and reinstallation of exterior marble cladding to address uneven shifting and displacement of the marble.
- Extensive structural masonry repairs as a part of the marble facade restoration.
- Restoration of windows, doors, mosaic parapets, electrical service and historic site lighting.
- A historically-accurate replacement of the 130-year-old copper roof is anticipated to be completed by year-end 2026 depending on weather.

After a winter shut-down, the remaining work to be completed will start as weather allows in late spring 2027 and includes:

- Restoration of mosaic dome and dome lighting.
- Landscape restoration and new pedestrian paving.
- Projected completion Summer 2027.

FOCUS AREA YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

YOUTH DEVELOPMENT GOAL:

Garfield Park will be a great place with more jobs for both adults and teenagers. There will be better transportation for people who don't have cars. We'll upgrade our parks so kids and adults can have fun and relax safely. There will be safe places for young people to explore and always get home safely. We will get rid of violence and negativity, making sure everyone has a positive vibe and is treated equally.

PLANNED MEASURES OF SUCCESS:

1. Increase number of youth accessing stipends, mentorship, and leadership opportunities
2. Increase number of youth-driven campaigns and marketing teams active in Garfield Park
3. Increase number of youth participating in skill-building camps and career exploration programs
4. Decrease barriers (financial, structural) preventing youth from accessing internships and training
5. Increase number of Garfield Park youth serving as stakeholders in community investment and development

IN THE GARFIELD PARK NEIGHBORHOOD OF CHICAGO,

THERE ARE 21 PUBLIC SCHOOLS SERVING APPROXIMATELY 5,931 STUDENTS FOR THE 2025-26 SCHOOL YEAR.

NEARLY 1 IN 4 RESIDENTS IS UNDER 19

21.5% OF ADULTS DO NOT HAVE A HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA, COMPARED TO 13% CITYWIDE

Key Local Factors

Historically, our residents describe the West Side as "family," where neighbors helped one another and worked collectively to support children and families. Youth had access to vibrant programs and safe spaces, from the Gold Dome, a central gathering place, to the Off the Street Club, where kids could play, socialize, and build skills until they reached the age of 18. Residents recall a time when the swimming pool in Garfield Park offered recreational and learning opportunities, and local institutions like Providence St. Mel and neighborhood McDonald's created safe, structured spaces for youth engagement. Children grew up with a sense of equality and peace, connected by strong family networks and intergenerational relationships that reinforced responsibility, community pride, and collective growth. These historical accomplishments highlight the neighborhood's legacy of collaboration, care, and opportunity for young people.

Today, however, Garfield Park's youth face significant challenges that limit access to similar opportunities. A primary barrier is the lack of job and internship opportunities, leaving young people without pathways to gain income, professional experience, and confidence. Residents note that stereotypes about youth—perceptions that they are disengaged or undeserving—limit adult support for programs and discourage young people from participating. Cultural and household factors also play a role: some youth feel awkward or where their presence is undervalued, and some households may not prioritize involvement in community activities. Strengthening our youth-led initiatives and creating intentional spaces for leadership can empower our young people to see themselves as active contributors to Garfield Park's revitalization.

Infrastructure and public perception are additional barriers. Our younger residents report concerns about transportation accessibility, including inconsistent public transit stops and unreliable rideshare options, which limit access to programming, jobs, and community resources. Negative narratives about the West Side, visible litter, and disinvestment reinforce perceptions of danger or neglect, further discouraging youth engagement. Many programs and facilities have closed over the years, requiring significant investment to rebuild and re-establish safe, reliable spaces for youth participation.

Safety and accountability also remain critical. Our youth and residents emphasize the need for more community-led approaches to address violence, repair trust between law enforcement and young people, and reduce reliance on policing alone. Programs that foster dialogue, restorative practices, and mentorship can help young people navigate conflict, feel supported, and remain engaged in constructive activities. Our younger residents consistently note that community engagement, shared meals, and collaborative projects can strengthen relationships and create a culture of accountability, respect, and shared responsibility.

Despite these challenges, Garfield Park retains key assets for youth development. Public parks, community gardens, Level 1 CPS schools, and longstanding institutions offering opportunities for recreation, skill-building, and mentorship. There is a foundation of youth programs and safe spaces that, with strategic investment, can expand in scope and reach.

Intergenerational relationships remain essential. Elders, residents, local businesses, and institutions—including churches, nonprofits, and anchor organizations like Erie Family Health Centers, Rush University, and the CTA Workforce Training Center—can support youth in education, vocational training, and community leadership. By centering youth voices, encouraging mentorship, and fostering a culture of teamwork, Garfield Park can revive the historic sense of family and collective responsibility that once defined the West Side.

Strategies

STRATEGY 1

Support judgement free local youth leadership development and career exploration opportunities

Garfield Park youth will explore leadership and career opportunities in spaces where they feel safe, valued, and respected. By leveraging existing program spaces and expanding partnerships with mentorship initiatives, youth will gain access to hands-on experiences that build skills, confidence, and professional readiness. Digital tools, including the MyChiMyFuture app and social media campaigns, will keep youth and families informed of programs, services, and opportunities in real time. A youth-driven marketing team will ensure programming reflects their voice and priorities, making engagement relevant and appealing. To remove barriers, stipends, transportation, and essential resources will be provided, enabling all youth to participate fully in internships, training, and apprenticeships. By combining accessible opportunities, mentorship, and youth-led engagement, Garfield Park can foster leadership, career readiness, and long-term empowerment for its young residents.

STRATEGY 2

Harmonize around the shared community vision with our youth and young adults

Garfield Park youth and young adults are active participants in shaping our neighborhood's future. By advocating for their needs and interests, the community ensures that young people have a voice in decision-making and feel supported in their growth. Programs will expose youth to opportunities for exploring adulthood with guidance, thoughtful boundaries, and real-world experiences that build responsibility and confidence. Importantly, youth will be empowered to take the lead in initiatives, programs, and projects, fostering leadership, creativity, and accountability. By aligning community efforts around a shared vision that includes the perspectives and contributions of young residents, Garfield Park can strengthen intergenerational collaboration, nurture emerging leaders, and create a neighborhood culture where youth feel valued, capable, and invested in the long-term well-being of their community.

STRATEGY 3

Eliminate unchecked police-and-community relationships to maintain accountability and community trust

The West Side is rebuilding trust between Garfield Park residents, youth, and law enforcement by ensuring accountability and fostering collaborative relationships. The community will create pipelines to inspire residents to be the change in Chicago Police Department and other service agencies, bringing local perspectives into public safety. Youth will receive education on brain development and decision-making, while age-appropriate programs will provide training in responsible safety practices. Skill-building camps will support both the physical and mental development of young people, equipping them with tools for leadership and resilience. Emphasis will be placed on community-led law enforcement initiatives and youth leadership development to ensure that public safety is guided by local voices. Additionally, police officers will be encouraged to complete mandatory certifications and psychological training to improve interactions and accountability. By combining education, mentorship, and structured accountability, Garfield Park can create safer, more trusting community-police relationships.

Strategy 4

Coordinate consistent community investment

Garfield Park will organize to ensure sustained investment in Garfield Park that benefits residents, strengthens local institutions, and empowers youth as active stakeholders. By building Black-owned healthcare systems and creating community investment vehicles, resources can be reinvested locally to drive economic growth and opportunity. Frequent youth symposiums will provide platforms for young residents to share their perspectives, shaping programs and policies that reflect their needs. Shared spaces will foster trust, collaboration, and mutual learning across generations. Vacant school buildings will be explored as hubs for community programming, including Black culture empowerment initiatives. Programs will expand to support youth transitioning into adulthood, connecting them to experiences and networks gained through After School Matters, church programs, and other local initiatives. By centering youth leadership, community-driven investment, and intergenerational collaboration, Garfield Park can build a foundation for long-term growth, equity, and empowerment.

Strategy 1: Support judgement free local youth leadership development and career exploration opportunities

PROJECT	LEAD | PARTNERS AND POTENTIAL RESOURCES
1.1 Leverage current spaces to partners with existing programs	MAAFA Redemption Project, Garfield Park Conservatory Alliance
1.2 Increase partnerships with youth mentorship programs	MAAFA Redemption Project, Garfield Park Conservatory Alliance, Chicago Public Schools
1.3 Ensure the MyChiMyFuture app remains current with frequent updated programs and services	NO SMALL PLANS, Mayor's Office of Community Safety
1.4 Utilize social media ads to ensure Garfield Park programs are broadcasted to reach our youth and families	GPRWC
1.5 Create a youth driven marketing team	NO SMALL PLANS, Garfield Park Conservatory Alliance
1.6 Remove financial and structural barriers by funding stipends, transportation, and resources so youth can pursue internships, training, and apprenticeships without limitations	NO SMALL PLANS, Garfield Park Conservatory Alliance

Strategy 2: Harmonize around the shared community vision with our youth and young adults

PROJECT	LEAD | PARTNERS AND POTENTIAL RESOURCES
2.1 Advocate for our youth	Earth's Remedies, MAAFA Redemption Project, Chicago Public Schools
2.2 Expose our young people to be able to explore being an adult with thoughtful boundaries	Earth's Remedies, MAAFA Redemption Project, ALT Space, Root 2 Fruit Youth Foundation
2.3 Enable our youth to take the lead	Earth's Remedies, MAAFA Redemption Project, Westside Rising, NO SMALL PLANS, ALT Space, Root 2 Fruit Youth Foundation

Strategy 3: Eliminate unchecked police and community relationships to maintain accountability and community trust

PROJECT	LEAD | PARTNERS AND POTENTIAL RESOURCES
3.1 Create a pipeline to inspire more community members to become a part of community serving organizations and agencies like the Chicago Park District and Chicago Police Department	GPRWC
3. 2 Teach our youth how our brain works	Youth Guidance
3.3 Activate skill building camps to support physical and mental development of youth	MAAFA Redemption Project
3.4 Prioritize community led law enforcement and builiding our youth leaders	MAAFA Redemption Project

Strategy 4: Advance consistent community investment

PROJECT	LEAD | PARTNERS AND POTENTIAL RESOURCES
	The BASE Chicago
4.1 Build a community-owned health care systems	NO SMALL PLANS
4.2 Collaborate to create more opportunities for community investment vehicles to invest back into our community	Greater West Town Community Development Project, The BASE Chicago
4.3 Consult with youth more through frequent symposiums to check in on their perspective of our community	Greater West Town Community Development Project, The BASE Chicago, Garfield Park Conservatory Alliance - Youth Advisory Council
4.4 Provide space for us to teach each other we are in it together and trust building	"YOU MATTER", Garfield Park CDC, The BASE Chicago
4.5 Investigate vacant school buildings to come hubs and increase resident empowerment programs	West Humboldt Garfield Park CAC, Garfield Park CDC, The BASE Chicago, The Gray Matter Experience
4.6 Empower our youth to be stakeholders	Greater West Town Community Development Project, Garfield Park CDC, NO SMALL PLANS, The BASE Chicago, Earth's Remedies, The Gray Matter Experience
4.7 Expand on programs introducing life after 18	MAAFA Redemption Project, The BASE Chicago, The Gray Matter Experience
4.8 Connect youth to leverage experience after completing youth programs like After School Matters and church programs	MAAFA Redemption Project, The BASE Chicago, The Gray Matter Experience

Earth's Remedies

Garfield Park is a neighborhood defined by creativity, resilience, and a deep sense of community pride. Residents have consistently demonstrated their ability to innovate and collaborate, even in the face of systemic challenges. This project embodies that spirit by creating a collaborative portal and centralized hub for shared events and resources, amplifying the collective energy that already exists. The database reflects Garfield Park's identity as a community that values connection and empowerment. By streamlining communication and making resources more accessible, we are not only honoring the neighborhood's vibrant culture but also amplifying the efforts of local organizations, youth leaders, and residents who work tirelessly to improve the quality of life.

Residents asked for a collaborative portal and a centralized spot for shared community events to make it easier to access resources and stay informed. This initiative responds directly to those requests, creating a tool that strengthens coordination and amplifies community efforts. The impact goes beyond convenience; it reduces service duplication, improves access to critical resources, and fosters transparency between organizations and residents. By streamlining communication, the database helps families find programs more quickly, supports nonprofits in aligning their efforts, and ensures that youth and seniors are not left behind. Ultimately, this project empowers Garfield Park to leverage its creativity and resilience for strategic growth, making collaboration a driving force for measurable change.

Garfield Park has a deep legacy of grassroots organizing, mutual aid, and collective action, neighbors coming together to solve problems and share resources long before formal systems existed. This project honors that tradition by transforming those values into a modern, digital infrastructure. By creating a collaborative portal and centralized hub for shared community events, we are building on decades of community-driven work and ensuring the spirit of cooperation continues in ways that meet today's needs.

The database is not just a tool; it's a continuation of Garfield Park's story of resilience and creativity. Residents have always found innovative ways to connect and support one another, and this project amplifies those efforts by streamlining communication and resource sharing. In doing so, we preserve the essence of past organizing while introducing connective resources for strategic growth, ensuring that every voice, from youth to seniors, remains part of the conversation.

Community listening sessions and QLP feedback highlighted the need for centralized communication, shared calendars, and transparent resource management. These priorities shaped the database's design to include real-time updates, multilingual access, and features that highlight local organizations and events. Residents will see streamlined access to services, shared event calendars, and improved coordination among nonprofits, creating a stronger sense of connectedness and alignment with QLP goals.

1. **Improve access to health and wellness resources.**
2. **Strengthen communication between residents and organizations.**
3. **Support youth development and engagement.**
4. **Enhance technology and data capacity for community partners.**
5. **Foster collaboration among nonprofits and stakeholders.**

Earth's Remedies will lead coordination, with ER Data Solutions developing the platform. Earth's Remedies youth will help input data and educate seniors and residents who are not as technically literate, ensuring inclusivity and community ownership. Local nonprofits, youth leaders, and QLP partners will contribute data and promote adoption, making the tool community-driven, sustainable, and impactful.

Westside Rising is an intergenerational, multi-issue, nonprofit organization that serves as a regional hub for social justice, community organizing, and civic engagement for Chicago's West Side communities. It unites and trains residents and organizations to activate and leverage our collective power and shape our communities.

The work includes:

- Issue-based social justice and organizing campaigns
- Cohort-based Power Labs: Intergenerational Organizing and Civics Engagement
- Young Leaders Power Academy (YLPA)
- Outreach & Community Engagement
- Voter Education & Activation
- Community-based Participatory Research

The YLPA prepared emerging adults 18-26 to engage as informed, self-sufficient, independent leaders that can advocate for themselves, their families, and their communities.

The organization supports youth growth, development, and transition into adulthood by providing life skills and work-readiness training. These trainings are based on hands-on, real world community organizing and civic engagement strategies that provide youth engagement, representation, and leadership in decision-making spaces.

The Planning Process

The Garfield Park Quality-of-Life Plan is the product of perseverance, brainstorming, community experience, outreach, hard work, and growing relationships. Bridging two community areas unified by Garfield Park, the planning process drew input from hundreds of residents and dialogue among dozens of stakeholders over more than a year. Together, they explored how Garfield Park can move forward—distinct in its voices, yet united in its vision.

This process builds on years of engagement and was co-led in partnership with longstanding community stakeholders to support the direction of the Garfield Park Rite to Wellness Collaborative. That partnership, focused on addressing the life expectancy gap, began in January 2020 with the Chicago office of the LISC to create a Quality-of-Life Plan for the Garfield Park community.

In 2023, Garfield Park re-launched an unprecedented effort to bring residents and local leaders together, creating synergy and shared purpose. By October 2024, leaders signed on as the Advisory Committee—community stakeholders and experts who met regularly for nearly a year to develop strategies aligned with and committed to the plan's core values:

- **Respect for ourselves and our community**
- **Authentically showing up and creating inclusive space for all in Garfield Park**
- **Centering integrity, accountability, and transparency in our work**
- **Honoring our collective history, culture, and community**
- **Being resilient in our commitments and continuing to show up**
- **Prioritizing clear and consistent communication**
- **Building trust among ourselves and the Garfield Park community**
- **Faith in ourselves and each other**

Building on earlier planning efforts, the community established nine focus areas. On July 23 and August 13, 2025, more than 200 Garfield Park residents, elected officials, and representatives from local organizations and businesses gathered at Beidler Elementary School and St. Michael Missionary Baptist Church for community roundtables. These sessions centered on visioning workshops focused on actions that, over the next five years, could restore access to hope and health in the community.

Ideas from the working groups were presented at two additional community summits—on September 8 and September 25, 2025—where more than 100 participants reviewed proposed programs and actions. Residents identified which initiatives they were most eager to launch immediately and which held the greatest potential for transformation.

Based on this input, the working groups finalized a set of strategies and projects, presented at the seventh summit on October 28, 2025, along with an initial call for Implementation Partners. Over 100 stakeholders committed to ensuring support and provided feedback.

In addition to these public meetings, the Garfield Park Rite to Wellness Collaborative staff, Advisory Committee, and other leaders held numerous one-on-one conversations with local stakeholders and presented the plan at community gatherings to support implementation.

In total, more than 1,500 people contributed their time, ideas, and energy to the Garfield Park Quality-of-Life Plan—refining strategies and deepening relationships. We are now ready to activate these strategies and use those relationships to bring the programs outlined in this document to life, preserving and uplifting our residents while transforming Garfield Park into a culturally rich, thriving community for all.

Community Attendees

Ahamaya Ross
Aisha Oliver
Al Stinson
Alana Hodgins
Alees Edwards
Alfred Beard
Alice Viana
Alicia Mooney
Alicia Serna
Alicia Simmons
Alisha Johnson
Allen Batts
Allie Gonzalez
Ally Schwinke
Alyssa Lehman
Amari Samuels
America McClure
Ameria Young
Amanda Reamer
Amber Hunt
Amelia Smith
Ana Martinez
Anayanci Calderon
Andre Goode
Andrea Lewis
Andrew Ulrich
Angela Delacueva
Angela Taylor
Angel Collins
Angel Ollison
Angelina Griggs
Angelique Orr
Annet Miranda
Anthony Maloni
Antoinette Crofford
Ant Jones
Antwon Jennings
Arielle "A.T" Tyler
Armoni Blake
Arterea Jackson Redmond
Aretha Serdell
Ariana Miller
Ariana Perkins
Arnisa Schaffer
Ashley Black
Ashley Howard
Ashley Pipes
Ashley Wells
Asharee Simpson
Azarius Williams
Barbara Grayer
Barbara Meschino
Barbara Raphoon
Barbra Stewart
Bartholomew Allen
Basia Braboy
Bettey Jean Miles
Benjamin Johnson
Beth Tumiel
Brekamia Johnson
Briana Kelly
Briana Patrice
Brian Ward
Britney Robbins
Brooklyn Henry
Bryan Ramson
Camille Hamilton
Camille Joy
Candace Hayden
Candace Young
Candice Collins
Carmen Ard
Carmen Santoyo
Carla Anora
Carl Hurlick
Carlos Reyes
Carmelita Satterwhite
Caroline Marzec
Carol Johnson
Cassie F. Juste
Cassandra Walker
Cassandra Walton
Catherine Kozisek
Cecelia Blue-Ford
Celeste Parker
Chakyla Parker
Chaundra VanDyk-McGee
Cherry Guise
Cheryl Kirkwood
Cheryl Scott Donegan
Chloe Williams
Chrissy Graves
Christel Ward
Christopher Kruger
Christyn Freemon
Claire Kormanik
Claude Robinson
Cloe Jones
Connie Mitchell
Cortez Williams
Crystal Torres
Cynthia Davis
Cynthia Rectenwal
Daevon Reynolds
Daivion Brooks
Dakota Brown
Damaje Carter
Damari Thomas
Danasia Brooks
Danielle Bell
Danielle Crayton
Danielle Evans
Danielle Hamilton-Goldsmith
Danielle Monninger
Danny B. Weatherby II
Dan Rooney
Danyale Pollard
Darius Jones
Darius Williams
David Ansell
David English
David Kozisek
David Miller
Dayquan Rollins
Deborah Crawford
Deja Brown
Dejari Spencer
Demya Davis
Deniah Hill
Derrion Barnes
Destiny Young
Devontae Lomax
DeWayne McClain
Diane Warren
Dillon Carer
Domonique Harris
Dominique Richardson
Donterius Holman
Drea Slaughter
Dylan Robers
E. Pews
Edward Braboy
Elena Carr
Elena Perez
Elena Torres Bollar
Ellen Andrews
Ellen Chalstrom
Elizabeth Gilmore
Elizabeth Holzman
Ellen Thompson
Emina Rebronja
Emma Hill
Eric Blunt
Eric Davis
Eric Hendricks
Erica Pierce
Erika Quezada
Erin Olson
Esteban Lopez
Ethan Williams
Fabian Robles
Farhan Khan
Felisa Brown
Fermina Keating
Fred Eaton
Gabriel Quinones
Geri Cox-Smith
Geraldine Blair
George Almanza
George Meier
George Sarantos
Gina Jamison
Gladys Hunt
Grace Robinson
Gregory Galotta
Gregory Matthews
Hannah Jefferson
Herman Wilkerson
Heaven Rankins
Henry Cotton
Howard Frye
Ibrahim Sall
Iris McKinzie
Isaiah Frandsen
Ivan Ortiz
Izel McDonald
J. Williams
Jackie Hoffman
Jacquee Coffer
Jacqueline Canty
Jada Jones
Jada Shorter
Jahj Meadows
Jakahira Harris
Jakayla Lyons
Jalyn Roberts
Jaylin Sanders
Jamal Cooper-El
Jamaya Frierson
James Dorrell
James McDonagh
Janae Thomas
Janaila Thompson
Janaya Simpson
Janelle Miler
Janiae Miller
Janiya Blake
Janiya Smith
Jasmine Edwards
Jasmine Jones
Jazmin Means
Jasmine Michaels
Jashawnna Tillis
Jashyra Hughes
Jason Ferguson
Jay Burnett
Jayda Harris
Jaylin Brown
Jeanette Butala
Jeffery Heard
Jeffery Kelly
Jelisa Liggins
Jeranaya Simmons
Jerome Dowdy
Jerome Scott
Jessie Hudson
Jertheus Butts
Jibran Baber
Jim Mjenzi
Jim Ortiz
Jim Rojahn
Jocelyn Wilcox
Jocelyn Woodards
Jodi Richardson
Johnetta Robins
John Hansen
John Lewis
John Shorter
John Shorter II
John Stachelski
John Trager
Johnny Jones
Jomekia Davis
Jona May Gimeno
Jonathan Mathis
Johnathon Dowdy
Johnathon Kelly
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Jorge Cruz
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Joseph Johnson
Joseph Williams
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Joshua Simmons
Joy Baguio
Joyce Champs
Joyce Scott
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Karen Barnard
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Karen Washington
Katrice Barber-Fisher
Kathleen Freeman
Kathleen Gipson
Katie Owens
Kayla Tillis
Kedar Tillis
Keisha Fillmore
Keith Muhammad
Keisha Thomas
Keveon Davis
Keyanna Baker
Keyontae Sykes
Keyonna Little
Khudeja Ameer Ansari
Khalid Oluewu
Kimbrolee Patton-Manuel
Kimberly Campbell
Kimberly Minor
Kimberly Reynolds
Kimyata Davis
Korin Wethersby
Kori Taylor
Krissandra Taylor-Walker
Krystal Bryant
Kwame Johnson
Kyle Warner
Kyla King
Kyla Lavon
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Maria Iannantuoni
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Marcus Eckhols
Marcus Mitchell
Marcus Pass
Marcus Suggs
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Marian Towns
Marisha Ecford
Marissa Smith
Markieta Wright
Marshall Hatch Jr.
Marshall Hatch Sr.
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Mary Fran Riley
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Matthew Geesaman
Matthew Wendel
Maurice Brown
May Henderson
Megan Adsmond
Megan Boyer
Megan Gorman
Melody Brooks
Mercedes Pinkett
Meredith Stevenson
Michael Dowdy
Michael Wolk
Michelle Newman
Michelle Nunez
Mikaela Walker
Miriyah Miller
Molly Corbitt
Monica Howard
Monika Thompson
Mya Harris
My'Kayah Brazelton
Naomi Buford
Nastajia Sauls
Nate Simpson
Nayeli Keller
Nellie Bailey
Nia King
Nicholas Reynolds
Nicole Miodonski
Nikki Crowder
Nusirat Olaniran
Nyla King
Octavius Davis
Okia Patton
Olivia Jones
Osman Qureshi
Paige Etheridge
Patricia Lewis
Patricia Martinez
Patricia Robinson
Patricia Rodgers
Patricia Starnes
Patrica Lyles
Pearl Tellmann
Pierre Monegan
Porsche Cook
Princess "Ya-Ya" Beecham
Priscilla Hatch
Quentaveon Slaughter
Quentin Harris
Quinn Alfred
Rachel Gorski-Caine
Rashad Lyons
Ray James
Rebecca MacDonald
Rebecca Woods
Reginald Berry Sr.
Remel Terry
Renita Carter
Renee Kallok
Renee Mayes
Riyale Garron
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Roynetta Tripp
Ruby Taylor
Sabrina Gougis
Sabrina McMullen
Sadie Watkins
Sally Ann Joanis
Sam Smith
Samantha Moore
Sandra Murphy
Sandra Rance
Sarah Houlihan
Sarah Simanskey
Sarah Spadoni
Sasha Thomas
Shemmer Lesley
Shaliyah Beckwood
Shaniya Peterson
Shannon Clark
Shaquisha Clark
Shaunte Goins
Shayla Graves
Sheena Fulton
Sheila McNary
Sheila Vinson
Sherin Thomas
Sherisse Freeney
Shirin Rezai
Shirley McLaurine
Shnia Davis
Sikara Freeman
Simone McCary
Skylar Analise Clark
Snezana Vujicic
Sofia Carmona
Sonja Dorsey
Spencer Dunbar
Stella Wambugu
Sumaiya Clark
Swathi Stanley
Tacnetti Harris
Taj Fatima
Tamari Lacy
Tamiya Spencer
Tamiya Wilborn
Tammy Spencer
Tanesha House
Tanya Clark
Tashonda Pickett
Tashunda Hall
Taschaunda Hall
Tawana Williams
Terrence Lang
Terrent Pearson
Teny Gross
Teresa Cullen
Theresa Braboy
Theresa Griggs
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Tia Jones
Tiffany Claiborne
Tiffany Nava
Tiffany Hoffman
Tiffany Overton
Tiffany Tillman
Tiera Willis
Tiwanda Parker
Tommie Johnson
Tonia Hatcher
Tony Raggs
Tory Towers
Tosheika Thomas
Traci Ortiz
Traci Simmons
Trecole Carr
Trey Knighton
Tyeria Rice
Tyler Robinson
Tyrone Britton
Ursula Hoskins
Valerie Brown
Vanessa Cadenhead
Vera Pleas
Victor Gulley
Victoria Stapleton
Vivian Hearn
Walter Halls
Willie Scott
William Browns
Wynetta Fowler
Yahdna Yisrael
Yolanda Fields

Convening Agencies: Garfield Park Rite to Wellness Collaborative

Fourteen organizations came together after acknowledging the need to engage community and a call to action from Dr. David Ansel's book author of The Death Gap: How Inequality Kills: Life, Death and Politics and numerous papers and book chapters on health disparities. change a horrifying statistic: residents of Garfield Park have a thirteen-year lower life expectancy than residents living in areas. This "death gap" is the result of conditions including poverty and lack of economic opportunity, lack of access to quality health care and wellness opportunities, substance use, gun violence, lack of high-quality food, the psychological impact of multi-generational trauma, and decades of systemic disinvestment and racism.

GPRWC began meeting informally in 2019, bringing together residents, non-profit, healthcare, and faith leaders that work and live in Garfield Park. In 2021, the group formally organized, created an executive board, and hired its first staff member. Now, just three years later, the Collaborative has full-time staff members plus contracted experts, and can boast of several major successes, with more in progress – all built on collaborative initiatives with nonprofit, business and government partners.

We thank the **more than 3,000** residents, community leaders, business owners and service providers of Garfield Park, as well as our West Side neighbors in Austin, Humboldt Park, Near West, North Lawndale, and supporters from across the city who shared their stories and dreams and expertise with us and with each other. Their ideas, time and effort were invaluable in developing this plan, and this community will be much richer because of their contributions.

LISC Chicago

With residents and partners, LISC forges resilient and inclusive communities of opportunity across America—great places to live, work, visit, do business and raise families. Since 1979, LISC has invested $20 billion to build or rehab 400,500 affordable homes and apartments and develop 66.8 million square feet of retail, community, and educational space. For more information, please visit lisc.org/chicago.

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

As of 2022, 29 QLPs have been created, garnering more than $1B in new investments aligned in support of community visions in neighborhoods across Chicago.

The Garfield Park Rite to Wellness Collaborative and LISC thank the major funder of the Quality-of-Life Planning process:

United Way of Metro Chicago

Data Sources & References

Sources:

Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP): Community Data Snapshot: East & West Garfield Park, Chicago Community Area Series, July 2025 Release.

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Pritzker Traubert Foundation – Chicago Prize: Award details for Sankofa Wellness Village.

City of Chicago Department of Planning and Development (DPD) Madison Street Corridor Plan: Engagement Materials.

Chicago Public Schools (CPS) Data: School performance and graduation rates for East & West Garfield Park.

Cook County Assessor's Office: Property tax reassessment data for West Garfield Park (2025).

Chicago Department of Housing: Missing Middle Housing Initiative and Harvest Homes II project details.

Chicago Transit Authority (CTA): Workforce Training and Control Center project details.

Garfield Park Conservatory Alliance: Visitor statistics and cultural programming.

WTTW News: Coverage of Legler Regional Library and artist residency.

National Register of Historic Places: Garfield Park Conservatory listing and historical significance.

The Death Gap: How Inequality Kills by Dr. David Ansell: Referenced for health disparity context.

Design Credits:

Photo Credits:

WTTW: Artist Alexandra Antoine will have her work displayed at the Legler Regional Library in West Garfield Park, where she works as the artist-in-residence. (Credit: Alexandra Antoine)

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Photographer: Zechariah Wallace
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