

## The Future of Work and Health: Ethical Investments in Communities

On May 14, 2019, 60 Chicagoans of the public health community came together at the University of Illinois at Chicago School of Public Health for “On The Table” conversations around the Future of Work in Chicago. Participants composed memos on the Future of Work to Mayor Lightfoot to let her know what issues we want her to prioritize for action.

**Describe the Topic:** Ethical Investments in Communities

**Neighborhoods/Communities of Focus:** All neighborhoods

**Who was at the table:** Susan Altfeld, UIC School of Public Health; Clifford Helm, Chicago Lawyers’ Committee for Civil Rights; Ann Cibulskis, Chicago Department of Public Health; Anna Yankelev, UIC School of Public Health; Jonathan Lopez, UIC School of Public Health; Michele Taylor, UIC School of Public Health; Mona Strahan, UIC School of Public Health; Sharyn Dyer, UIC School of Public Health; Terry Williams, University of Illinois at Chicago; Yadira Herrera, UIC School of Public Health.

*Views and opinions represented in this document are those of individuals not the organizations.*

**What about the topic or issue should be a priority for the mayor?**

Economic and health disparities between Chicago neighborhoods have widened over recent decades. Some communities have flourished and benefitted from investment, while others have struggled, lost population and seen the number and diversity of their businesses decline and the value of housing diminish. In some neighborhoods, increased investment has meant gentrification and the long-time residents and neighborhood businesses have been forced to move to due rising rents. In order to have a diverse and vibrant city, Chicago needs a thoughtful approach to plan for development in a manner that stabilizes neighborhoods and benefits all of its residents of Chicago.

Partnerships with and between existing community organizations that are already doing important work, such as workforce development affordable and accessible housing, should also be prioritized as a strategy to build on existing strengths

More investment, and more equitable investment, will be needed to truly make an impact on under resourced neighborhoods. A racial equity lens should be used to guide decisions on how, with whom and where these investments are made.

We must also ensure accountability and transparency in how investment are chosen and how funds are awarded and spent.

**We recommend that Mayor Lightfoot:**

1. Recognize that people, rather than real estate, are our most important assets.

2. Look at existing neighborhood business as assets and untapped resources.
3. Use a race equity lens or race impact assessment to revisit private development policies and what they have done for underserved individuals and communities.
4. Re-emphasize the holistic approach of inclusivity, affordability, equitability and accessibility.
5. Look at partnership based models, which always engage with the community.
6. Follow the ILO (International Labor Organization) tripartite government model – which unites government, business, and workers
7. Consider rent control policies should be considered to maintain neighborhoods while encouraging growth. “Right of first refusal” should be offered to neighbors to help to encourage home ownership by local residents. The City may want to explore strategies to encourage the development of housing cooperatives as another means to enhance residential communities.

### **What are the suggestions from the conversation for Chicago’s new mayor to consider?**

In order to help the city of Chicago realize its potential as a center of economic opportunity and racial equity for all its residents, the Lightfoot Administration should prioritize investing in historically underserved neighborhoods, especially communities of color, marginalized ethnic and racial minority groups, immigrants and refugees, limited English proficient/non-English speakers, and people with disabilities by doing the following:

- Engaging multi-sectoral partnerships in efforts that leverage their respective assets, strengths, and interests to craft comprehensive collaborations that address intersecting barriers and opportunities to economic development (including factors, such as the affordability, accessibility, inclusivity, and quality of housing, transportation, and education)
- Increasing opportunities for local economic development by offering local businesses resources through publicly funded resources, such as support for workers’ collaboratives
- Encourage private businesses to recognize their potential to create shared value with the communities they serve by equipping them to function as ethical employers through incentives

These efforts will help stabilize and revitalize communities that have experienced economic divestiture in recent decades by bringing in high-quality, stable jobs and other opportunities, thereby increasing racial equity in the City of Chicago.

### **How could the ideas and suggestions presented in this memo help make the Chicago region better for all Chicagoans?**

Ensuring that all Chicagoans have the opportunity to have their voices heard and their interests represented in a meaningful way will help to ensure that Chicago grows as a diverse, equitable and vibrant city.