

# McKinley Park Neighborhood Plan

## Existing Conditions Report | May 2019

### Executive Summary

McKinley Park is a working-class neighborhood on Chicago's southwest side. Its proximity to multimodal transportation options, parks and open space, as well as employment centers bolsters its potential as a desirable location for residential and commercial investment. However, like many other Chicago neighborhoods, McKinley Park faces housing affordability challenges, disinvested corridors, and unattractive vacancies.

### About the Neighborhood Plan

McKinley Park has not had its own plan to guide development in ways that align with community priorities. The McKinley Park Neighborhood Plan will establish a shared vision of the community's desired physical environment and outline the process by which the community can realize that vision. The neighborhood plan will serve as a guide for elected officials, city staff, residents, business owners, potential investors, and public agencies, allowing each to make informed decisions about community development that affects land use, transportation, infrastructure, and capital improvements in McKinley Park. In addition to serving as a framework for future reinvestment and development in the community, the plan will explore and promote new opportunities that reflect changes in the community and the surrounding socioeconomic landscape.

The Existing Conditions Report (ECR) documents eight months of research, analysis, and outreach activities. It is an overview of the current conditions in the study area, and will be used as a tool to provide direction for the recommendations in the final neighborhood plan.

### Community Engagement

To-date, more than 675 residents and stakeholders have contributed their input to the neighborhood plan. The outreach process has included meetings with the steering committee, confidential interviews with key community leaders, a public kick-off meeting, a focus group with property owners and local businesses, an online survey and social media campaign, as well as other targeted outreach activities.

The engagement process has highlighted a number of recurring themes that include a need to maintain a variety of housing options, commercial corridors revitalization, a shared community vision for the Central Manufacturing District (CMD), and active transportation investments. Most participants expressed a desire to maintain the industrial heritage of the neighborhood but had also expressed health and nuisance concerns related to those uses. The new asphalt plant rose as a major concern related to environmental quality and highlighted the need for improved transparency in the development approval process. The community envisions a new direction for industrial uses and sees public engagement in the development process essential to realizing that vision.

Longtime residents reported their desire to preserve the close-knit and diverse culture that exists in their community. Gentrification and displacement were identified as a priority concern with the need to maintain housing affordability. Stakeholders mentioned the need to support local businesses, particularly along 35<sup>th</sup> Street, and prioritize economic development along main commercial corridors.

Safety for those walking and biking in the neighborhood is a primary concern, particularly along high traffic corridors like Archer Avenue. Many people would like see designated bike lanes and trails for active transportation, as well streetscape improvements for pedestrians. Community-based programming for all ages was also a key priority for many residents.

## Key Findings

- *Diversity.* Residents value the diversity of the community. Over the last decade, McKinley Park has experienced a significant increase in its Asian and Latino population. To maintain the neighborhood's ethnic diversity, preserving a wide range of housing options for various income levels is desired.
- *Reinvestment.* Adding new residential units and rehabilitating older structures to provide additional housing will strengthen the community and help spur economic development along Archer Avenue, Ashland Avenue, and 35<sup>th</sup> Street. Recommendations in the neighborhood plan will focus on ways to promote equitable mixed-used development, with a focus on areas with access to transit and amenities.
- *Mobility.* Residents want more walking destinations and a safer walking environment. Research in this report and commentary by stakeholders has identified a number of challenges in the pedestrian network. The recommendations in the plan will identify missing connections and infrastructure improvements so that pedestrians, bicyclist, commuters, and drivers can easily get around.
- *Modernize.* McKinley Park has historic ties to manufacturing and maintains a significant number of manufacturing and industrial uses. While the CMD has had a long presence and remains a strong economic asset, residents are concerned about the close proximity of industrial uses to residential areas. Targeting sustainable renewal projects, like the city's participation in the C40 Reinventing Cities competition, will help maintain jobs locally and ensure the health and well-being of residents.
- *Resilience.* One-inch rain events typically yield ten million gallons of runoff per block in McKinley Park, particularly along Archer Avenue and the industrial districts. The frequency and intensity of large storms is expected to increase in the future, which will continue to put the community at risk. The plan will explore ways to achieving resilience, which require making infrastructure, natural systems, and social structures more durable.

## Looking Forward

McKinley Park's location and strong sense of community makes it ideal for residents and businesses alike. The strategies to be developed in the neighborhood plan aim to improve the vitality and mobility of the community, while also ensuring safety and resilience for everyone in McKinley Park. The ECR is an interim document that will be presented to the McKinley Park Development Council (MPDC), the Steering Committee, and the public for review and discussion. The next step in the planning process will be for the community to develop a shared vision for the study area. Based on the results from the next phase of outreach and the existing conditions analysis, MPDC, in partnership with the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP) and the Chicago Department of Planning and Development (DPD), will draft plan recommendations.