APPLICATION FORM

RTA Community Planning Program and CMAP Local Technical Assistance Program

Deadline: Noon on Friday, October 26, 2018

This application form is online at www.rtachicago.org/applications. You may submit the form by email to applications@rtachicago.org. Please submit one application per project as a PDF package. Please avoid submitting multiple PDFs for the same application.

Name: Naomi Davis
Applicant

Name: Naomi Davis
Main Contact of Application

Title: Executive Director

Phone: 773-678-9541

Email: naomidavis@blacksingreen.org

TYPE OF APPLICANT
(please check all that apply)

☐ Local Government
☐ Multijurisdictional group*
☒ Nongovernmental organization*

*Applications submitted by multijurisdictional groups and nongovernmental organizations must include a letter indicating support from each relevant local government. See the FAQs for more information. Nongovernmental applicants are strongly encouraged to contact CMAP or the RTA prior to submitting their application to discuss their project and the demonstration of local support.

Please list the members of the group (including government and nongovernmental organizations):
1. **Project Location.** Please provide a brief description of the location of your project. You may include a map if that helps to describe location, but this is not required. If your project helps to implement a past plan, please include a link to that plan.

BIG is focused on developing innovative urban planning programs to the underserved communities of Woodlawn, Avalon Park Auburn Gresham, Bronzeville, Chatham, Douglass, Grand Boulevard, Greater Grand Crossing, Oakland, Englewood, Hyde Park, Kenwood, Pullman, Roseland, South Shore and Washington Park. We will begin implementing our programs in Woodlawn and scale up one community area at a time and sustain an ongoing presence over the course of 4 years.

We live and work in Woodlawn, and support collective work to protect the heritage, ecosystems, and architecture of Chicago's historic South Lakefront Region. Woodlawn is the regional epicenter, and in many ways is prototypical of the results of the degenerative cycle of real estate development which traditionally uproots and displaces African American families suffering the effects of America’s extreme and ever-widening racial wealth gap.

Woodlawn is directly south and west of the University of Chicago and a mile from Chicago's world renowned lakefront. Since 2010, the neighborhood has experienced a lower population growth rate than the rest of the City of Chicago. Out of this population, 92.69% self-identifies as a minority with 87.79% of the total population self-identifying as African American ascendency. The housing unit breakdown in Woodlawn is only 15.7% owner-occupied, with the remaining housing stock comprised of 61.8% rental, and 22.4% vacant homes. For household income, Woodlawn's census shows that 72.95% of the households have an income of $49,999 or less, with approximately 30% of the total households living below the poverty level. The median income of Woodlawn households is $22,184. Approximately 17.3% of Woodlawn's population is currently unemployed. All of these factors lead to neighborhood tensions and persistent crime. These classify Woodlawn as an area in dire need of investment in the form of small and medium businesses, grocery stores with healthy options, professional business services for the local community, and mentoring and business training opportunities for the fledgling minority entrepreneur business owners found in Woodlawn.
2. Project Description. Please tell us what you would like to do in your community, and what assistance is needed. If you have more than one idea, please submit a separate application for each project. Please be specific, but also brief (less than two pages per project idea)—we simply want to have a basic understanding of what you want to do. For plan updates please tell us how you will be building upon (or replacing) the previous work. Program staff will follow-up with you if we need any additional information to fully understand your proposed project. (Please limit your responses to 6000 characters including spaces).

Our mission is to create self-sustaining black communities everywhere by reducing systemic poverty and pollution through a whole-system solution: The Sustainable Square Mile - where every household can walk to work-shop-learn-play, circulate neighborhood dollars and reduce greenhouse gases. We produce education and training programs, advocacy campaigns, community events and policy adoption strategies. We define success by increased local household income and ownership of businesses and land. We are looking to develop a comprehensive plan to track economic development effectiveness in Woodlawn, reverse the health/wealth gap, garner local/national government support, and continue to implement and scale our Sustainable Square Mile model.

We believe our implementation will be the first in world to track economic development effectiveness by measuring an "increase of household income of present residents" inside a discreet zone of engagement activity -- the Sustainable Square Mile!

Our project, the West Woodlawn Sustainable Square Mile launched in 2013 as a initiative to develop green spaces in blighted areas. We've planted almost 300 trees and completed a tree inventory with 4 gardens in our pipeline and 12 more planned. Our detailed plan includes goals in 4 measurable outcomes; maps; phased expansion through garden installations, strategic partners, neighbor engagement/training; negotiations with the city, county and water district for land; municipal financing and potential grant funders; and a development team – architect, general contractor, development manager.

A key component of the Sustainable Square Mile is our project, the West Woodlawn Botanic Garden, Arboretum & Village Farm Initiative for Neighborhood Beautification and Violence Reduction. Launched in 2013 as a initiative to develop green spaces in blighted areas, we've planted almost 300 trees and completed a tree inventory with 4 gardens in our pipeline and 12 more planned. Our detailed plan includes goals in 4 measurable outcomes; maps; phased expansion through garden installations, strategic partners, neighbor engagement/training; negotiations with the city, county and water district for land; municipal financing and potential grant funders; and a development team – architect, general contractor, development manager.
2. Project Description (continued)

With a high incidence of violence in Woodlawn, we want to couple our initiative to innovative violence reduction strategies. We've engaged hundreds of neighbors in visioning, planning, and implementation. We're producing a business plan for a social enterprise anchor: The Green Cathedral™ - our worker-owned nursery, landscaping service, garden supply, and gift café.

Woodlawn is a community on the south side of Chicago consisting of 27,000 residents with 88% identifying as African-American.

A 2015 study from Charles Branas, who is part of the Urban Health Lab, and other researchers found fixing up abandoned buildings in Philadelphia led to significant drops in overall crimes, total assaults, gun assaults, and nuisance crimes. According to Branas, when space appears cared for, criminal activity is reduced. Also, the neighbors get more invested in the space.

According to the Urban Health Lab, to the best of their knowledge, there have been no prior experimental trials of vacant lot stabilization that related to the process of cleaning and greening blighted communities. They are currently conducting a trial to determine whether this discourages illegal dumping. In Youngstown, OH, they conducted a study on Urban land reuse with trees, gardens and farms and found that by using a quasi-experimental analysis to assess the four year impact of this land reuse program, there was a significant impact on select crime outcomes.

The above tells us two things 1) More localized data is needed and 2) There can be significant positive outcomes for these types of trials. With the building of the Obama Presidential Library Center, this project can have a huge impact on the Woodlawn economy as it will give tourists additional reasons to hang out in the community.

The above plan is very comprehensive and has many moving components. BIG is seeking from CMAP to develop a streamlined and structured approach to the to our Sustainable Square Mile Model. We envision that the Technical Assistance received will give us the ability to develop a funding plan that will allow our organization to implement this model and then prove its scalability to other communities. The expertise offered by CMAP will allow BIG to reduce the time of implementation for our various programs.

We would like for the research to include at minimum:

1. A comprehensive overview of our target area including granular demographic data that is not available through normal sources such as the US Census Bureau.
2. Assistance with access and analysis of already collected data along with proper data evaluation techniques.
3. A review of our Sustainable Square Mile plan with recommendations of how to properly implement and execute the program.
4. Recommendations for additions or changes to the program to ensure a better match with other related programs in the communities we serve.
5. Identification of economic epicenters in the communities of the Sustainable Square Mile.
7. Any other recommendations based on evaluation of our program goals.
3. Additional Strategic Partnerships. Please list any additional partners you may want to include in this planning project, and specify if you have made contact with them in advance of submitting this application. (Please limit your response to 1400 characters).

We work in partnership with the Illinois and Chicago Environmental Justice Networks to strengthen BIG's Clean Power program and Black Power Network. Navitas Solar, in partnership with other industry experts, will now offer Installer training and other vertical market services throughout the Chicagoland area in partnership with Blacks in Green, with support expected from future grants of the Illinois Future Energy Jobs Act. In addition, we are receiving funding from ComEd Corporation for Energy Efficiency Training Initiatives and the Chicago Community Trust for Capacity Building. Green infrastructure partners include Chicago Department of Forestry, Morton Arboretum, Openlands, and Chicago Park District, with collaborations such as donation of ecological materials/services, scholarships to training classes, and collaborations on media communications. Educational partners include University of Chicago, DePaul, and University of Illinois/CUPPA in presenting BIG's curricula. SPARCC via Enterprise Community and CNT is an e-TOD partner/funder in our Greenline South project.

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**PLAN CHARACTERISTICS**

My project involves:

- ✔ The preparation of a plan.
- ✔ Updating an existing plan.
- ✔ Implementation of a previous plan.
- ✔ My project has direct relevance to public transit and supports the use of the existing transit system.
- ✔ My project is not directly related to transportation or land use, but addresses ON TO 2050 and/or Invest In Transit in other ways.

**ON TO 2050 ALIGNMENT**

(Please check all that apply)

- ✔ Inclusive Growth
- ✔ Prioritized Investment
- ✔ Resilience

**RTA INVEST IN TRANSIT ALIGNMENT**

(please check all that apply)

- ☐ Deliver Value on our transit investments
- ☐ Build on the strengths of the transit network
- ☐ Keep transit competitive
October 26, 2018

C MAP Local Technical Assistance Program
C MAP Offices
233 South Wacker Drive, Suite 800
Chicago, Illinois 60606

Re: Letter of Support – Blacks in Green

To Whom It May Concern:

Naomi Davis, the Executive Director of Blacks in Green (BIG), has been instrumental in the transformation of the Woodlawn community since 2013. Naomi has been a long-time Woodlawn resident and has demonstrated the passion and drive to build successful and sustainable programs in Woodlawn and the surrounding communities.

Woodlawn, which is included in my ward, is the regional epicenter, and in many ways is prototypical of the results of the degenerative cycle of real estate development which traditionally uproots and displaces African American families suffering the effects of America’s extreme and ever-widening racial wealth gap. As an Alderman, I fully support the collective work of BIG and their mission to protect the heritage, ecosystems, and architecture of Chicago’s historic South Lakefront Region.

BIG has been very active in the Woodlawn community and some of the latest accomplishments focused on community resilience and economic development that I have noted are listed below:

1) WESTFEST - combines black-owned (economic development) heritage tourism with ecological land stewardship and youth recreation and placemaking with public art and small business empowerment with Made in West Woodlawn branded products.

2) Solar Career Fair - announcing and creating a pipeline for hiring neighbors for high-wage/low-tech jobs inside their Sustainable Square Mile with what will be America’s first black-run solar panel assembly plant with training classes set to launch next year.

3) West Woodlawn Village Community Land Trust – thought leader on tools to prevent wealth disparity displacement – and promoting ways to build the capacity of neighbors to root in place and experience belonging again – BIG calls it “Trust as a Way of Life” and to own, develop, and manage the property in their community.

4) BIG’s emerging West WOODLAWN Botanic Garden, Village Farm & Arboretum Initiative was featured at the Soulful Chicago Book Fair - and they’ve done an inventory of trees in Woodlawn and designed strategic infill by planting about 300 trees - including 66 on Michelle & Barack Obama Scenic Drive.

Based on the numerous accomplishments of this organization and my confidence that they will continue to deliver, I place my support behind Blacks in Green’s application for the Local Technical Assistance Program. BIG has been very instrumental in developing sustainable and safer communities and I believe the assistance offered by CMAP will enhance BIG’s ability to rapidly build upon the work they are doing.

Sincerely,

Willie B. Cochran
Alderman, 20th Ward