

Elevated Chicago at the Pink Line California: A Workplan for Equitable Transit-Oriented Development

January 2019

Opportunities & Challenges

“This is a beautiful community — a very hardworking, entrepreneurial, very proud area,” says Adrian Soto, Chief Strategy Officer for Esperanza Health Centers. Esperanza is one of the numerous strong community institutions that make up the Marshall Square Resource Network (MSRN), a groundbreaking collaboration of social service, arts, education, and environmental organizations; businesses, and healthcare providers in the Marshall Square area of the Little Village neighborhood. MSRN originally came together ten years ago to reduce competition for resources during the economic downturn, and have since worked together to create a healthier, greener, safer, and more prosperous neighborhood. The visionary leadership that led to the MSRN’s founding is characteristic of the neighborhood as a whole, which residents have celebrated for its strong family businesses, and the entrepreneurial spirit of its predominately immigrant and Mexican American community and culture.

Within the past year and a half alone, local leaders and organizations that are part of the Elevated Chicago collaborative have accomplished great things in the ½ mile radius around the California Pink Line station. Latinos Progresando was awarded one of the City of Chicago’s Neighborhood Opportunity Fund grants, to support the conversion of an abandoned library into their Community Resource Center, which will provide the organization a more adequate space to continue providing essential immigration legal and social services, as well as healthcare. It will also serve as a much-needed community and cultural gathering place. Says Luis Gutierrez, Latinos Progresando’s CEO and Founder, “There isn’t really space where you can convene that’s open to the public, particularly on the Cermak corridor.” In April, residents led a walkability study, which identified recommendations to the Chicago Department of Transportation for making the area safer and more accessible for pedestrians. A new mural designed by OPEN Center for the Arts, with support and input from the community and showcasing the work of local artists,

has created an inviting path under the rail viaduct which divides the community at California Avenue and 21ST Street.

Yet Marshall Square and Little Village face considerable challenges. Community members have expressed their frustration with being viewed as expendable. They often feel passed over for investment in community-based businesses and infrastructure, and have been subjected to environmental racism and injustice.

At the same time, community members have begun to feel threatened by the potential for future development and investments that may cause displacement of current residents and businesses through rising property taxes and rents. Displacement of people of color is one of the Chicago region’s most urgent problems. This includes displacement triggered by a lack of investment, when residents leave a neighborhood due to a lack of opportunities, as well as displacement triggered by gentrification in real estate markets that are beginning to be seen as more desirable. Disinvestment and displacement are not random, but the result of a century of racially motivated practices. Residents still endure this legacy, as well as exclusion from various decisions that affect the future of their neighborhood.

Marshall Square and Little Village face multiple pressures, including those coming from the rapidly gentrifying neighborhood of Pilsen to the east, and the “rails to trails” El Paseo project to the south, which, like the similar 606 project further north, could contribute to a serious increase in housing costs if the city’s decision-makers fail to respond to community members’ concerns and manage this process differently. Residents’ anxieties have been further heightened by the current climate of aggressive immigration enforcement, with some community members afraid to leave their homes in order to access services and participate in the community engagement programs and services provided by the Marshall Square Resource Network partners.

Elevated Chicago

Elevated Chicago is an innovative collaboration of community leaders and organizations, regional nonprofits and planning agencies, funders, public officials, and others, who have come together to create a more racially equitable city and region. Its goals include preventing further resident and business displacement by helping to develop more prosperous, healthy and resilient communities. The initiative also aims to transform the power dynamics that determine how neighborhoods are built in Chicago. To accomplish this, we are using an approach called Equitable Transit Oriented Development, or eTOD. The City of Chicago's Transit Oriented Development ordinance and policy make areas surrounding transit stops especially attractive for development: eTOD helps ensure that these news assets and wealth will be enjoyed equitably by the area's existing and longtime residents.

Elevated Chicago has started its work around seven CTA stations, including the California Pink Line stop. Elevated Chicago partners invest resources in programs and projects within the ½ mile radius circle around each station to advance racial equity in health, climate, and cultural indicators. These transit-rich circles are called equitable hubs, or eHubs. Community-based organizations represented in Elevated Chicago's Steering Committee serve as bridges and connectors to the eHub and lead Community Tables in collaboration with other partners and residents.

The Elevated Chicago Workplan for the Pink Line California eHub has been developed by a Community Table led by the Marshall Square Resource Network, with Latinos Progresando and Esperanza Health Centers. Pink Line California is one of four Community Table sites, along with Green Line South, Logan Square Blue Line, and the Kedzie Corridor. All these Community Tables share visionary resident leaders, concerns regarding the threat of displacement, and the desire to see the region and its decision makers better appreciate their neighborhood's established assets, strengths, and culture.

Elevated Chicago envisions equitable, responsive, transparent decision making and investment, as part of a regional agenda for just, healthy, and climate resilient communities.

An Activate Marshall Square festival supported by Elevated Chicago was held near the future Latinos Progresando's Community Resource Center.



Making Our Workplan Happen in the Pink Line California eHub

The vision for the Pink Line California eHub is focused on shifting the narrative, or story, that shapes how Marshall Square and broader Little Village are perceived: from residents being viewed as expendable — whether through the lack of investment, or threat of gentrification — to an emphasis on residents' ownership of homes, businesses, land, and future development. The Community Table plans to create new spaces for community to gather and amplify their power, like the Latinos Progresando Community Resource Center, and a community arts center being developed by OPEN Center for the Arts. These spaces will be connected to the transit station, one another, and other community resources such as health centers, schools, and businesses via safe, accessible pedestrian pathways and improved and newly created green spaces.

Says Adrian Soto, “Business owners want to grow, people want to buy homes, people want to start businesses, and nonprofits want to expand.” Through Elevated Chicago, the Community Table’s leadership are advocating for the additional investment that is needed not just in Marshall Square and Little Village, but in similar neighborhoods, as well as for policy changes to remove barriers to this investment, and to prevent displacement of the area’s longtime residents and families.

In June 2018, Community Table members Open Center for the Arts, Esperanza Health Centers, and Latinos Progresando hosted a site visit of Grantmakers for Health during which 30+ funders toured the California Pink Line eHub and learned about the Table’s priorities.



Pink Line California eHub Asset Map



Community, Arts + Culture

1. Latinos Progresando
2. Open Center for the Arts
3. Taller de José Community Center
4. Tepochcalli Community Education Project
5. Union Boys & Girls Club North Lawndale
6. Community Care Center
7. Instituto del Progreso Latino
- Community, Arts + Culture Organization/Project

Health-related

1. Esperanza Health Center
2. St. Anthony Hospital
3. Mt. Sinai Hospital
4. Schwab Rehabilitation Hospital
5. Pilsen Wellness Center
- ◆ Grocery Store

Green Space + Climate Resilient Infrastructure

1. Douglas Park
2. Marshall Boulevard
3. California Boulevard
4. Washtenaw Park
- Community Garden

Education

1. Latino Youth HS
2. Out Lady of Tepeyac HS
3. Hammond Elementary
4. Octavio Paz Elementary
5. St. Marks School
6. Tepochcalli Elementary
7. Maria Saucedo Scholastic Academy
8. St. Casimir HS
9. Our Lady of Tepeyac Elementary
10. William F. Finkl Academy

Economic Development + Workforce

1. Instituto del Progreso Latino (CWF)

Affordable + Social Housing

1. Albany Terrace (CHA)
2. Casa Queretaro (The Resurrection Project)

Elevated Chicago – Projects in Capital Pipeline

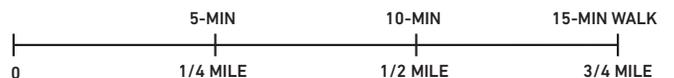
- A. Latinos Progresando Community Resource Center
- B. Open Center for the Arts – Youth Cultural Center
- C. Esperanza Health Center – Administrative Expansion

INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS

- D. Los Caminos Verdes – Pathways Projects (Location TBD)
- E. Walkability Infrastructure
- Study Area 1
- Study Area 2

Other Catalytic Projects / Investment

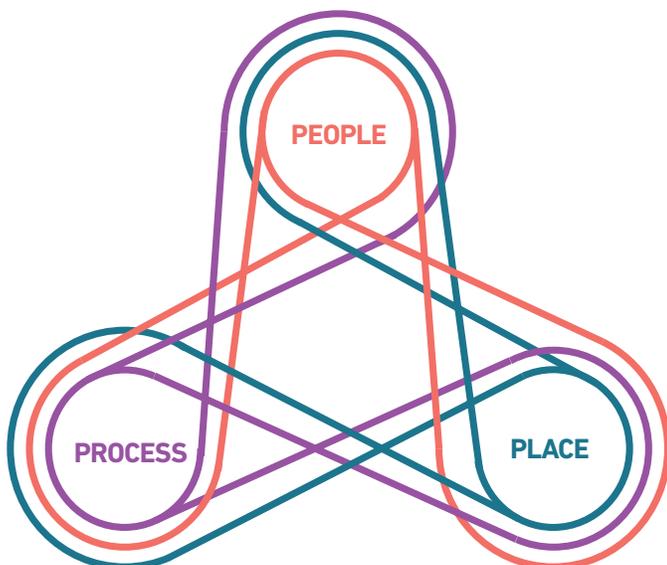
- A. El Paseo
- B. Little Village Industrial Corridor Modernization
- C. Ogden Commons



Priorities

Across Elevated Chicago's eHubs, residents have already participated in multiple planning efforts for which there was little implementation. Elevated Chicago has identified priorities that build on those prior efforts and conversations. When selecting those priorities, we avoided making promises upon which we cannot deliver, and focused on projects that are feasible with resources that are currently available, or can be realistically supported by reaching out to Elevated Chicago's broader network.

These priorities represent projects taking place within the ½ mile radius around the California Pink Line station, as well as cross-site initiatives that aim to transform how decisions about neighborhood development are made in Chicago. They are organized into three themes: Those that engage and develop the community's **people**, projects that improve the neighborhood as a **place**, and goals for changing the **process** for how decisions get made. This list should not be interpreted as comprehensive and final, but as an invitation for further resident participation and ownership.



People — Programs that Engage Residents & Build Community Leadership & Ownership

- **Green Space Programming: Community Gardens**
Residents will continue to be involved in the design and creation of new green spaces, and in ongoing improvements at the Hammond and Roots of Hope gardens, including a garden event series, and the Garden for a Changing Climate summer installations.
- **Los Caminos Verdes/Pathways Project**
Using murals and other artforms, Los Caminos Verdes is creating pathways that radiate from the California Pink Line station to Douglas Park, two proposed community centers, local businesses, community gardens, and other green spaces. The project includes apprenticeships for youth to create community murals.
- **Promotoras de Salud Initiative**
Promotoras de Salud are Community Health Workers who provide culturally and linguistically relevant, resident-led education about health, nutrition, exercise, and connections to community assets that promote wellness, including transit.
- **Resident Leadership in Elevated Chicago Advocacy Agenda**
Elevated Chicago will seek opportunities for resident leadership in its policy platform and other advocacy efforts, including a comprehensive policy agenda focused on preventing displacement of residents and businesses.
- **Walkability Assessment & Advocacy**
In partnership with the Consortium to Lower Obesity in Chicago Children (CLOCC), local partners and residents conducted a walkability assessment and provided a report to the Alderman's office and City departments requesting infrastructure upgrades and budget priorities to make the eHub more walkable. A second walkability assessment is being planned to expand into a larger area of the community.

Place — Projects that Affect the “Built Environment” (e.g. Housing, Transit, Green Space)

- **Latinos Progresando Community Resource Center**
A former Chicago Public Library will be redeveloped as a community center, where Latinos Progresando will provide their immigration legal, cultural, and educational services, as well as partner with Esperanza Health Centers to provide health services.
- **OPEN Center for the Arts**
An unoccupied former firehouse will be turned into a community arts center run by OPEN Center for the Arts, including youth and family workshop spaces and classrooms, and studio space for local artists.
- **Walkability & Streetscaping Improvements**
Working with the Chicago Department of Transportation, the Alderman, and other City officials, the Pink Line California Community Table is advancing infrastructure investments to improve neighborhood sidewalks, lighting, safety features, and green spaces, informed by the resident-led walkability study conducted in spring 2018.

Latinos Progresando’s Community Center, planned on the site of a former Chicago Public Library, will offer immigration, legal, cultural, and educational assistance, as well as health services in partnership with Esperanza Health Centers.



Process — Goals for Transforming How Decisions About Neighborhood Development Get Made

- **Designation of Elevated Chicago eHubs as Priority Areas for Investment**

Elevated Chicago is advocating that its eHubs be designated as priority areas for various federal, state, and nonprofit initiatives that could attract further capital dollars for investment, such as Opportunity Zones, potential future Illinois State capital bills, and regional planning efforts.

- **Diversity, Equity & Inclusion (DEI) Framework**

Elevated Chicago partners are working together to build a common DEI framework for government agencies, developers, and other organizations working in neighborhoods to ensure that their leaders, staff, and contractors are representative of the community, and that their practices reflect the views and needs of people of color.

In partnership with CLOCC, local partners and residents conducted a walkability assessment and provided a report to the Alderman's office and City departments requesting infrastructure upgrades and budget priorities to make the eHub more walkable.

- **El Paseo**

The “rails-to-trails” project presents an opportunity for Elevated Chicago to advocate for more meaningful community engagement in City land use, and for policies to ensure resident retention and prevent displacement.

- **Policies to Retain Community Residents & Small Businesses**

Our partners are advocating for policies that expand housing affordability, including property tax reform, promotion of community driven home and business ownership models, rent control, affordability preservation ordinances, and preservation of affordable units.

- **Principles for Meaningful Community Engagement & Ownership**

Elevated Chicago partners are recommending a set of principles and recommendations for City and regional agencies, as well as private and civic sector developers and investors, drawn from a review of “best” and innovative practices locally and nationally. A recent study sponsored by Enterprise Community Partners has identified opportunities for community ownership in current and future eHub developments.



“This is a beautiful community — a very hardworking, entrepreneurial, very proud area.”

—Adrian Soto, Esperanza Health Centers



CONNECTING PEOPLE,
BUILDING EQUITY



Images were provided by Latinos Progresando, Sara Pooley, Raquel Venado Bolaños, and Kimberley Rudd. Graphic image support was provided by Cathy Lange and design by Foresight Design Initiative.

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