

The Corridor Development Initiative (CDI) is a participatory planning process that allows communities to pursue development that is grounded in the real world. This three-part exercise helps residents understand issues such as density, affordable housing, and the true cost of development, while creating a set of priorities to guide community leaders as they plan for future development in their neighborhood.

Integral to CDI is the hands-on opportunity for residents to “build” what they would like to see and test whether their projects are financially feasible. The CDI process allows residents to consider development options and to explore how their ideas might pan out on the ground. CDI is not a master planning process but can be integrated with such efforts.

How does the CDI work?

The CDI process consists of three community meetings that occur two to three weeks apart. The process is facilitated by the Metropolitan Planning Council, Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning, and a lead community-based organization or public official.

Before the community meetings, a steering committee of engaged community members convenes to discuss development opportunities and challenges, identify specific parcels that have (re)development potential, and develop an outreach strategy that will connect as many community members as possible to the process.

Meeting 1: Existing Conditions and Goal Setting

The goal of the first meeting is to provide an overview of current land use policies and demographic and commercial changes in the community, and give residents a chance to discuss some of the (re)development opportunities and challenges in their community.

Meeting 2: Block Exercise

At the second meeting, community members explore economic and design options for their community through a hands-on building block exercise. During the block exercise, residents create hypothetical development options for three sites using wooden blocks that represent retail and housing units. As community members build their proposals, they are sketched by design advisors stationed at each table and a real estate advisor calculates development costs and revenues.

Meeting 3: Development Recommendations

The final meeting features a panel of real estate experts and/or developers who respond to the outcomes of the block exercise in light of current market trends. These recommendations are then compiled into a report that community leaders can present to potential developers to provide them with a community-led vision.

Final outputs

- Development guidelines or principles report developed by the steering committee, aimed at helping developers understand local opportunities and values.
- Neighborhoods better prepared to negotiate with developers.

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