



LITTLE VILLAGE ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE ORGANIZATION (LVEJO) GUIDELINES FOR FUTURE PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT

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INTRODUCTION

In June 2017 The Chicago Department of Planning & Development (DPD) released an action plan aimed towards the goal of addressing issues of land use, environmental justice, economic development, cultural assets, industry, housing and open space in the Little Village and Pilsen communities. In March of 2018, DPD began the industrial corridor process with the goal of evaluating the employment and land use trends and relevance of current industrial corridor boundaries. However, to properly address and tackle this topic, there needs to be an intentional reframing of context.

There is a critical piece absent from DPD's Action Plan for the Little Village community. Environmental Justice ("EJ") Principles should be implemented to ensure that the land use decisions do not pose an environmental and safety risks to Little Village, a community that was recognized as a low-income neighborhood. EJ elements should be used in land use planning to improve environmental health and advance social justice in the Little Village community.

This document will give an overview of intersections between land use plans and various aspects of environmental justice, economic justice, health impacts, and other and key approaches for holistic community-based land use planning in Little Village. These include:

- The Little Village Industrial Corridor in Relation to the North Branch Industrial Corridor
- Environmental Justice in Urban Planning, Including Land Use and Industrial Planning
- Reframing the Context: Planning Pilsen and Little Village Separately
- Population in Little Village
- Education as a tool for Community Development

- Little Village as a Disadvantaged Community (DAC)
- Sensitive Land Use Populations in Little Village
- Youth-Led Policy and Planning
- Food Justice in Urban Planning, Including Land Use and Industrial Planning
- Green Spaces, Recreation, and Health in Industrial Zones
- Economic Development and Reimagining the Industrial Corridor
- Labor Justice
- Housing Affordability and Preventing Displacement by Land Use Planning
- Community Engagement and Outreach

THE LITTLE VILLAGE INDUSTRIAL CORRIDOR IN RELATION TO THE NORTH BRANCH INDUSTRIAL CORRIDOR

With the size of the Little Village Industrial Corridor being significantly larger in size to its North Branch counterpart there needs to be a serious reconsideration into how the process is developed, especially in relation to how the ICMP for the North Branch was handled. According to DPD, the Little Village Industrial Corridor is 1,252.2 acres and located approximately three miles southwest of the Loop. It is generally bounded by 26th and 31st Streets on the north, Cicero and Kenton on the west, I-55 on the south, and Western Ave on the east. The corridor is home to 65 businesses, 2685 jobs and four TIF districts are located in it. As of right now the Little Village ICMP is being outlined as a 8 month process with three neighborhood meetings.

Whereas, the North Branch Industrial Corridor is 760.8 acres, located in the north east side of the city and bordered by Fullerton on the north, Kingsbury St and the North Branch of the Chicago River on the east, and Kinzie on the south, and I-90/94 on the west. The ICMP for the North Branch was a 13 month long process that included: six public meeting (50-100 attendees), nine published meeting materials, six neighborhood meetings, 62 emails and letters from stakeholders, 53 maps created via sMAP, and 192 original sMap comments.

This context is important when redeveloping a new framework for the Little Village ICMP that includes slowing down and extending Little Village ICMP. With the Little Village Industrial Corridor being significantly larger than the North Branch corridor we recommend that the first three neighborhood meetings be focused on presenting facts and data about the industrial corridor and hearing back from the community on their experiences, priorities and concerns and should then be used as the basis for the recommendations that will be set forth in the plan. On top of the three neighborhood meetings, we recommend three follow up report back meetings. This will give the community a sense of how their voice, concerns, feedback and ideas were received and incorporated into the ICMP. Finally, we strongly encourage that all meetings are fully translated into Spanish.

In order to, accommodate the recommended meetings, we suggest that the timeline for the Little Village ICMP is extended in order to make sure that this process is thorough and just for the residents of Little Village.

ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE IN URBAN PLANNING, INCLUDING LAND USE AND INDUSTRIAL PLANNING

Developing new EJ elements, adhering to already established EJ principles are vital and will vastly improve local land use planning efforts to reduce disproportionate environmental, health and displacement impacts in Little Village by ensuring that the city of Chicago includes an EJ element in industrial land use plan when they are updated. This is prime time to incorporate an EJ policy within the land use plans, because Chicago's industrial land use policies have not been updated in the past 25 years. This presents an opportunity to change the process of what might be developed in the industrial corridor.

This EJ language will help Little Village and enforce more inclusive regulations that reduce pollution exposure, and promote better food access, healthier homes, improved air quality and economic justice. Industrial land use plans that include environmental, health and youth justice can and should be implemented in Little Village as it is the most equitable solution as far as land use development plans in Little Village should go.

An EJ element allows local governments to identify disadvantaged and vulnerable areas within its jurisdiction; develop plans for addressing the needs of overburdened and under-resourced neighborhoods; and be more competitive in accessing state resources targeted for environmental justice communities.

— California Environmental Justice Alliance, 2017

REFRAMING THE CONTEXT: PLANNING LITTLE VILLAGE AND PILSEN SEPARATELY

Little Village was recognized as a low-income neighborhood that represents cost-burdened homeowners and renters, spending over 30% of their income on housing. While this is relevant, it is equally critical to also acknowledge the growing inequities of the Tax Divide, as coined by the Chicago Tribune in June of 2017. The tax burden for low-income communities are high, as the residents are receiving property taxes which are disproportionately overvaluing their homes. The average effective tax rate in North Lawndale and Little Village was 2x higher than wealthy

areas like the Gold Coast and Lincoln Park. Little Village has the 2nd highest property taxes in the City, lacks impactful resources for mitigating poverty, yet contributes to the 2nd highest revenue behind the Magnificent Mile. This imbalance is one that is not reflected in the Pilsen neighborhood. These perspectives on tax incidence are not reflected within the Action Plan, and would help reframe the planning conversation, one that is not planned jointly with Pilsen. Pilsen, like Little Village, has experienced a concentration of environmental burdens and in many ways would also be best served by planning that incorporates environmental justice elements. However, Little Village and Pilsen are two separate communities, with two different varying demographics, and economic burdens. To reflect this, moving forward, there should be two distinct community planning processes developed for both Little Village and Pilsen.

POPULATION IN LITTLE VILLAGE

Located within the community area of South Lawndale, Little Village is both one of the most total populated, as well as densely populated areas in the city. The current population in South Lawndale is 73,826 people, according to the American Community Survey 2011-2015 5-Year estimates. While it remains heavily populated, the area has experienced significant population loss since 2000, decreasing by roughly 12,000 people between 2000 and 2010, which was the 3rd highest total in the city after Austin and South Shore. Total population reached a peak of 91,071 in 2000, decreased to 79,288 in 2010, and has further decreased by roughly 5,500 people since 2010. While population decline in the area is significant, it reflects a similar trend of population loss throughout the city. It also reflects a similar pattern of population loss in Latino neighborhoods that have either already gentrified (West Town, Logan Square), in the process of gentrifying (Lower West Side (Pilsen), Humboldt Park), or at risk of future gentrification (South Lawndale (Little Village)). While there is not an exact causation of the population decline in the area, preventing further population decline is crucial to the future vitality and prosperity of the neighborhood.

In addition to being one of the largest neighborhoods in the city in terms of total population (5th according to the official 2010 U.S. Census count), Little Village is one of the most densely populated areas outside of the central core of the city. While the neighborhood's residential density has been previously identified as being significant, the official number is skewed due to the existing land uses in the community area. Currently, the population density is 16,611 people per square mile, which is higher in comparison to the city's average of 11,922.7 people per square mile. However, when accounting for the significant amount of space occupied by the the Cook County Jail facility (96 acres), and the 42% of total land located within the industrial corridor, the actual population density in the neighborhood where people reside is significantly higher. In fact, with a population density of 27,203.6 people per square mile, Little Village has a higher population density than New York City, NY, which has a total of 27,016.3 people per square mile. Additionally, it is the 5th most densely populated area in the city after Edgewater, Lakeview, Rogers Park, and the Near North Side. Little Village's overall population density must be considered in any land use or industrial corridor plans for the area.

Little Village has been a port of entry for immigrants since the arrival of Germans and Irish in the aftermath of the Chicago Fire of 1871, who were then followed by Polish immigrants. Beginning in the 1960's, it became a main port of entry for Mexican immigrants, and has remained a crucial entry point as the city's Latino population has grown both in population, as well as geographically throughout the city. According to the most recent ACS estimates, 43% of the

population is foreign-born, which ranks as the 7th highest percentage of any community area in the city. However, with more than 34,000 people in the area, Little Village has the largest total foreign-born population in the city. It is important to consider the impacts of future development on a very vulnerable and sensitive population in the area.

Little Village also has one of the youngest overall populations in the city. The median age in the neighborhood is 29.3, which is lower than the city's average of 33.7. This is also reflective of Latinos in comparison to other racial/ethnic groups in the city. The average age of Latinos in Chicago is 30.2, in comparison with non-Latino Whites at 36.1, African-Americans at 37.3, and Asians at 34.0. In Little Village, 29% of the population is under the age of 18, 37% is under the age of 21, and 43% is under the age of 24. The significant amount of young people in the area must be considered in any land use or industrial corridor planning process.

EDUCATION AS A TOOL FOR COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Education is a key topic for consideration when planning for the future of a neighborhood, and should be a major component of the final LV ICMP. There are several physical factors that must be accounted for such as the location of schools in relation to the LVIC, the types of industries that are located nearby the schools and identifying hazardous exposure, and traffic patterns of both pedestrians and automobiles related to the schools and the LVIC. In addition to the physical factors, key social factors to determine include the overall educational attainment of the population, as well as access to early childhood education, adult education and vocational education, all of which are key to best incorporating the current population into future plans for growth and development.

According to the 2011-2015 ACS 5-Year estimates, 51% of the population over the age of 25 did not have a high school diploma, 28% had at least a high school diploma, 16% had some college completion, and 6% had a Bachelor's degree or higher. The fact that more than half of the adult population did not have a high school diploma and only 6% had a Bachelor's or higher is significant for a number of reasons, a key reason being access to quality employment. Many studies have shown that obtaining a college degree increases the likelihood of increasing your income over time, and also increases employment options. While issues of affordability and access remain prevalent for young people wanting to pursue higher education, it is important to continue promoting efforts to increase the amount of people that ultimately complete a college degree.

Educational access and attainment is important for healthy communities, however the path of pursuing a higher degree is not for everyone. Vocational education has increased in importance as a shortage of qualified tradespeople and skilled laborers has been realized throughout the country. There is a demand for skilled industrial, construction, and service tradespeople, of which most employers do not require more than an Associate's degree, and often provide on the job training. This is important to consider in the LVIC plan, ensuring that there is a qualified local labor force, as well as quality employment options for that labor force, is key to best incorporating the educational needs of the current population.

Labor and Education are inherently connected due to the implications of economic outcomes related to both. Educational attainment often determines labor outcomes, and plays a role in

maintaining class structures. Therefore, in order to have labor justice, education justice must be a major component, and is a key tool for moving communities forward.

IDENTIFYING LITTLE VILLAGE AS A DISADVANTAGED COMMUNITY (DAC)

Identifying disadvantaged communities (DACs) within land use plans is essential when it comes to identifying Little Village's role and identity not only in the city of Chicago's action plan, but in the city in general. A disadvantaged community is defined as being an area that is a low-income area that is disproportionately affected by environmental pollution and other hazards that can lead to negative health effects, exposure, or environmental degradation. Using that definition, we can clearly conclude that Little Village should be classified as a DAC.

SENSITIVE LAND USE POPULATIONS IN LITTLE VILLAGE

"Sensitive populations" are populations with characteristics such as age and health conditions that make them more vulnerable to pollutant exposure. Sensitive land uses include schools, parks and playgrounds, daycare centers, nursing homes, hospitals and medical facilities, and residential communities that deserve special attention when siting new residences because sensitive populations are especially vulnerable to the adverse health risks of pollution.

For example, Little Village has an industrial corridor, ever present diesel truck traffic, and houses the largest jail in the United States. These are just several of the environmental, social and economic stressors imposed on the community. Unilever plans to increase their parking of up to 800 trucks a day next to Zapata Elementary School. The intersection of 31st and Kostner where Little Village Lawndale High School is located can see up to 80 diesel trucks an hour. This is an example of a sensitive land use population, because this community has a prominent level of residents with asthma or other respiratory issues due to air pollution and the emissions from the diesel trucks contribute to that. Issues entrenched in economic, youth and environmental justice further highlights Little Village's sensitive populations vulnerability to adverse health risks and displacement impacts in the community.

One of the key existing sensitive populations are those that are incarcerated in the Cook County Correctional Facility. The county jail, which is the largest single-site jail in the country, and occupies 96 acres and 8 total city blocks within the neighborhood, is also the largest landowner in the area. This population is also included in the total population count of the area, yet does not have a voice or any input on any neighborhood plans. The facility averages a daily population of 9,000 people, with roughly 100,000 people passing through the facility annually. This population has also historically been exposed to hazardous environmental conditions due to previous industrial uses, and could further be negatively impacted should any new industrial uses enter the area without their consideration.

The youth population in the area is also a key sensitive population in the neighborhood. As was previously mentioned, young people account for a significant portion of the total population. Little Village has the 3rd largest total population under the age of 18, after Austin and Belmont Cragin, with roughly 23,000. Additionally, it has the largest total population between the ages of 18 and 21 in the city, and 6th largest total population of people between the ages of 22 and 29 in the city. Little Village has one of the largest total populations of young people in the city,

therefore their input is necessary to any neighborhood plans that address development in the area considering they are the population that would be most impacted in the near future.

A key sensitive population are those without health insurance, which is an issue that Latinos experience disproportionately citywide. 32% of the total population does not have basic health insurance coverage. Additionally, 43% of people between 18 and 24 did not have health insurance coverage, and 58% of people between 25 and 34 also did not have coverage. The significant amount of foreign-born and/or undocumented population must be considered as well, as they do not have access to health insurance.

YOUTH-LED POLICY AND PLANNING

Youth involvement is not only key, but it is absolutely vital when planning for a major development project that will significantly impact every resident in Little Village. In many development plans, the voice of the youth is absent, especially on issues that affect them more than any age group in the community. A direct youth voice is lacking and needs to be injected into the conversation when we are discussing air quality, safe school zones, open space, etc. These are issues where our youth are typically experiencing the disproportionate impacts of land use decisions at ground zero. The fact that youth account for so much of the population is precisely why their input is fundamental to any future plans for the area. Direct youth input can be in the form of a youth community liaison, a youth leadership board, youth input into all community meetings, youth-focused strategies for land uses. This will spark the creation of youth-led policies on issues that impact the entire community led by a voice that has been historically disenfranchised when these processes are being developed.

FOOD JUSTICE IN URBAN PLANNING, INCLUDING LAND USE AND INDUSTRIAL PLANNING

A key component glaringly absent from the ICMP and land use planning process, is food justice. It has been well documented that most, if not all development projects that are not driven by LVEJO do not have a food justice angle. This issue should be highlighted when developing an ICMP for Little Village, because food justice is intrinsically rooted in what environmental and economic justice means in Little Village. There is not enough infrastructure for sustainable food systems that are not contaminated with pollutants in the soil or in areas where air pollution is running rampant. In the effort to revitalize the industrial corridor, as it was highlighted as a study area, goal by the city of Chicago there is a need to identify opportunities to incorporate environmental best practices for new development within the industrial corridor. Why not create a vision that includes commercial gardens in the industrial corridor? This has the potential to further boost the local economy, creates more food hubs that the community can control, and allows the community and city to address green and open space from a bottom up point of view.

Due to changes made to the Chicago Zoning Ordinance, the Urban Agriculture Ordinance allows for commercial gardens or greenhouses to be located and operate in industrial corridors or planned manufacturing districts as long as it is an indoor operation. Commercial farms being placed in the industrial corridor will further bolster Little Village's already growing economy and at the same time, increase employment, as it will take advantage of the community's extensive knowledge of agriculture. The farms will grow sustainable and locally sourced food that is intended to be sold, either on a nonprofit or for-profit basis. Adding greenhouses will drastically

shift the land use trends in the industrial corridor. Due to their commercial purpose, urban farms require a business license. This business license will be key to laying the groundwork for the community to move beyond access and into food hubs that we control.

This gives us opportunities to do large scale growing and selling, not create farmers markets, as the community is concerned that such a format brings in participants from outside of the community and could provide unnecessary competition with local abundant fresh food providers. Urban agriculture that is not driven by the priorities and decisions of Little Village community members, can put Little Village in a precarious situation, running the risk of causing “environmental” gentrification. This is described as:

Environmental Gentrification describes the convergence of urban redevelopment, ecologically-minded initiatives and environmental justice activism in an era of advanced capitalism. Operating under the seemingly a-political rubric of sustainability, environmental gentrification builds on material and discursive successes of the urban environmental justice movement and appropriates them to serve high-end redevelopment that displaces low income residents.

— Checker, 2011

With food and agriculture being so intimately entwined in the culture of the residents of Little Village, the city would be extremely remiss if they fail to honor that knowledge and culture that is highlighted in the food practices that are central to the neighborhood.

GREEN SPACES, RECREATION, AND HEALTH IN INDUSTRIAL ZONES

La Villita Park has been a huge victory in the fight for brownfield redevelopment, and we are proud to have lead the effort in this strategy. Yet there is still an untreated symptom of industry that impacts our beloved park: the foul smells from the Collateral Channel. We understand the benefits of greenspace and access to public space, however, we also understand the impacts of industry on our health, as this has been a prime example of the contradictions in land uses currently experienced by neighborhood residents. Green space is direly needed in the Little Village community, which had an average of 0.3 Open Space Acres per 1,000 people, compared to the Chicago’s average of 3.9 per 1000, prior to the construction of the 21-acre La Villita Park

at the Celotex site. However, the location of green space development must account for the surrounding land uses.

Recreational and commuting transit in and around green spaces are also key considerations. Conversations on green space and health must also begin long before discussing the possibility of biking, which is not a primary method of transit for our community members with so many environmental barriers, but for those who bike through the community, transiting the environmental corridor presents health and safety risks.

As health and environment are critical priorities for the Little Village community, air monitoring and other air quality and environmental monitoring measures should be incorporated to track the ongoing impacts of industrial activities. For example, Little Village is already being impacted by excessive diesel particulate pollution that is associated with respiratory risks and health conditions. This particulate matter irritates the eyes, nose, throat, and lungs, contributing to respiratory and cardiovascular illnesses and even premature death. Although everyone is susceptible to diesel pollution, three distinct sensitive populations, children, the elderly, and individuals with pre existing respiratory conditions are the most vulnerable. Diesel pollution leads to over 20,000 asthma attacks, 680 heart attacks and about 570 premature deaths in Illinois each year. In 2016, LVEJO partnered with a local high school to conduct truck counting. Students collected 5 hours and 42 minutes of video footage of trucks passing by the intersection of 31st St. and Kostner Ave. The local high school survey found that on average 1.3 trucks pass through that intersection per minute. Through the continuation of truck counting on 31st and Kostner Ave, in 2018 students at the same local high school collected 6.87 hours of video footage and counted a total of 604 trucks. This new data averaged a total of 1.47 truck passing by 31st and Kostner aves intersection.

Air monitoring to track the baseline risks in key community areas would better characterize the current industrial activities and inform management of traffic and siting moving forward in light of the health impacts. Consequently, planners should be aware of the clear priorities of current community members, who are uninterested in attracting inappropriate recreational uses for open space in industrial areas and want to have an ongoing understanding of health risks instead. No green space designed for recreation of community members should be sited in the industrial corridor and planners are important partners in realizing a vision for integrating health impacts into planning decisions.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND REIMAGINING THE INDUSTRIAL CORRIDOR

As was previously mentioned, Little Village has the 2nd highest grossing commercial district in the city along 26th St., after the Magnificent Mile along Michigan Avenue. 26th St., however, significantly outcompetes the Magnificent Mile in the amount of local small businesses, which is a factor that is imperative to future economic development in the area. In addition to the main strip, there are several other areas where commercial activity is abundant such as Cermak Rd., Kedzie Ave., Central Park Ave., Pulaski Rd., Kostner Ave., 25th St., 28th St., and 31st St. The significant amount of concentration of commercial activity, combined with high population density in the area, as well as the neighborhood's central role to Mexican culture in the city, makes the area "Downtown Mexican Chicago." The area's significance to commercial activity in the Mexican community not only in the city, but throughout the entire region, further exemplifies

the amount of pedestrian, public transit, and automobile traffic that enters and exits the neighborhood daily. This factor needs to be considered both in land use planning, as well as in industrial corridor planning. The impacts of current land uses such as warehousing, distribution, and transportation logistics uses have already negatively impacted the quality of life for those who operate within the neighborhood daily.

Economic development in both land use and industrial corridor planning, should therefore continue to be aimed at cultivating small businesses in the area. Small business incubation is not only key to building wealth in the community, but also to maintaining and preserving the culture and heritage in the area. Little Village has developed into a haven for Mexican entrepreneur's, and has contributed to the creation of a Mexican merchant class in the city. This is further indication of the importance of Little Village to the overall economic health of Chicago's Mexican population of roughly 600,000. Furthermore, creating the conditions for big box retail to enter the area would have a detrimental effect on the neighborhood's roughly 500 local businesses. A small business incubator would be extremely beneficial for startup's, as well as other street vendors, who would be able to rent space at an affordable price while they build their clientele, and master their craft.

A fundamental aspect of the 500 local businesses are the 160 restaurants in the area, as well as food-cart vendors. The food economy that currently exists contributes significantly to the roughly \$900 Million in annual sales taxes. It also provides the opportunity to create a sustainable food production cycle in the neighborhood, which begins first and foremost with the cultivation of greenhouses, different scales of urban farming, access to clean water, and the ultimate production of countless food items for distribution. A sustainable food production system would go hand in hand with the creation of a commercial kitchen to support small food businesses. While there is currently a commercial kitchen located in the North Lawndale community to the north, the sheer quantity of food vendors in the neighborhood requires a commercial kitchen that primarily serves Little Village. Most importantly, it will contribute towards achieving true food justice in neighborhood.

Additionally, foreign-born and undocumented business owners must also be a consideration of economic development in the neighborhood. Understanding that cash transactions account for a significant portion of the total daily economic activity is crucial to developing economic strategies that will benefit this population, as well as the continue to overall economic vitality of the neighborhood.

There is potential for economic development within the ICMP. We recognize this is beneficial towards maintaining and growing high quality job opportunities. Specific recommendations within these Opportunity Sites should be drawn from the working proposal towards the Energy Council Collaboration as implemented by the Illinois Chamber of Commerce. This would allow for a start in transitioning to clean energy programs, which is not currently represented in our corridor. LVEJO also suggests promoting training and recruitment with the Arturo Velasquez West Side Technical Institute to achieve an efficient pipeline of trained students to employees.

Economic development as a broad goal should consider more value towards homeownership, as 26th Street still thrives. We will continue to request more information on the Owner-Occupied Repair Programs and Land Trusts, while simultaneously engaging in more conversations around

education or impactful institutions to be the anchor of our community rather than big box shopping retail.

The Industrial Corridor Plan could bring a great opportunity to cut down the pollution and bring different opportunities to work in the community. We are interested in making a transition that is just. This requires the changes of industry to be for members of our community who will work safely in our Industrial Corridor. In order to do this, we demand the conversation to shift from the economy based on fossil fuels to one that supports clean energy.

LABOR JUSTICE

Industrial production is one of the key reasons why Latinos initially migrated to the Chicago metropolitan area, and was fundamental in establishing early patterns of settlement in several parts of the city. Mexican labor was recruited by the railroad (1916), steel (1919), and meatpacking industries, which led to the establishment of settlements near where these industries were located in the Near West Side, South Chicago, and Back of the Yards. Migration was small in size comparison with later streams, however, a precedent was established and cemented as these would be the key ports of immigrant entry for decades. Therefore, to understand the significant presence of Latinos in Chicago, it is crucial to understand the significant role Latinos filled in the industrial powerhouse that was 20th century Chicago. This excerpt from the “Latino Neighborhoods Report: Issues and Prospects for Chicago,” best describes this role:

Latinos have been critical to Chicago’s manufacturing economy, as evidenced by higher concentrations being employed in manufacturing compared to other racial/ethnic groups. In fact, during the time period that Chicago was at its height in terms of number of employees in 1960, 56% of the Latino labor force was employed in manufacturing compared to 37% of non-Latino White, and 33% of the African-American labor force. Following decades of industrial restructuring fueled by automation and the movement of manufacturing jobs to suburban areas, southern U.S. states, and to countries with low wages, Chicago’s manufacturing base shrunk to employ considerably fewer Chicagoans. In 2015 in Chicago, the manufacturing industry

employed just 16% of the Latino labor force, 6% of the white, and 5% of the Black labor force.

– (Acosta-Córdova, 2017)

In addition to playing a key historical role, Latinos continue to play a key current role in Chicago's manufacturing economy. In Little Village, manufacturing employment accounts for the highest percentage of employed residents at 24.3%. The second highest percentage of industry by occupation is Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation, and Accommodation and Food Services at 14.3%, followed by Professional, Scientific, and Management, and Administrative and Waste Management Services at 13.1%, Retail Trade at 10.2%, Educational Services, and Health Care and Social Assistance at 10%, Construction at 8%, Other Services, Except Public Administration at 6.3%, Transportation and Warehousing, and Utilities at 4.7%, Wholesale Trade at 4.3%, Finance and Insurance, and Real Estate and Rental and Leasing at 2.9%, Public Administration at 1.1%, and Information at 0.5%. The employment characteristics of the area imply that the majority of people are employed in low-wage sectors.

HOUSING AFFORDABILITY AND PREVENTING DISPLACEMENT BY LAND USE PLANNING

Housing is a fundamental aspect of any neighborhood redevelopment plan, including an industrial corridor plan. There are significant housing concerns that already exist in Little Village, that will be exacerbated further should a plan for maintaining housing affordability not be incorporated into the industrial corridor modernization process. Primary existing concerns include access to homeownership, cost-burdened renters, increasing property values and rising rents, housing overcrowding, as well as an older overall housing stock. It is imperative that these issues be further analyzed not only to identify the root causes, but more importantly to identify solutions. Stable and healthy housing conditions correlate with stable, healthy and prosperous communities.

The Chicago City Council has recently approved a pilot program aimed at "preserving housing affordability in appreciating neighborhoods on the North, Northwest and West sides of the city." Known as the Preservation of Existing Affordable Rental (PEAR) program, the primary purpose will be to "refinance private sector debt on residential properties with six or more units, ensuring at least 20 percent of the units will be affordable to tenants earning up to 80 percent of area median income over a 30-year term." The Department of Planning and Development is tasked with administering the program, and funding will be provided by the City's Affordable Housing

Opportunity Fund. The city is providing \$2 million in initial funding to the Chicago Metropolitan Housing Development Corporation, which will be used to refinance a portion of an existing bank loan. The non-profit development corporation has already acquired and rehabilitated 18 foreclosed and vacant apartment buildings in 2017 alone, all of which are between one- and four-units, and are located in either Albany Park, Austin, Belmont Cragin, Lincoln Square, or West Ridge. While this program does not address South Lawndale as a community area, it is a pilot program that can be retrofitted to fit the needs of the neighborhood. In terms of rehabbing buildings that have between two- and four-units, Little Village is an ideal area due to the housing stock that currently exists. Residential buildings that contain between two- and four-flat units account for 67% of total housing types in Little Village, compared to 30.6% of Chicago housing types. Additionally, 85% of all housing was built before 1940. This is indication that a program similar to PEAR could be extremely beneficial for the physical conditions of residential buildings in the area.

While a program such as PEAR may address the physical conditions of many older buildings in the area, the criteria for “affordability” in the current pilot program would not meet the needs of the majority of current renters in the area. The program states that households earning up to 80% of the area median income (AMI) would qualify for affordable housing units. By this criteria, a single-occupant household earning up to \$47,400 annually, a two-person household earning up to \$54,200 annually, a three-person household earning up to \$60,950, and a four-person household earning up to \$67,700 annually would qualify for an affordable housing unit. For contextual purposes, the median income in Little Village is \$30,603 annually. Additionally, the average household size in Little Village is 3.7, which is higher than the city’s average of 2.6. Therefore, if this criteria of affordability were applied to a Little Village housing plan, current renters may be priced out of the market. The current economic conditions in the neighborhood must be considered if a meaningful supply of affordable housing is desired.

Furthermore, a program aimed at stabilizing the renters of Little Village would be extremely beneficial for a vulnerable population. Currently, 64.3% of occupied housing is renter-occupied, compared to 55.7% in the city. 35.7% of occupied housing units are homeowners, which is lower than the city average of 44.3%. While not always an indication of prosperity, homeownership has traditionally been linked with neighborhood stability, and wealth creation. Although homeownership has in fact been a crucial tool for wealth creation in non-Latino White communities, historically this has not been the case for African-American and Latino communities, who have either not had similar access to federally-backed mortgages, or who have been the target of predatory practices by real estate agents. Little Village is a community where the majority of people do not own their home, and therefore are not building any equity or wealth through housing.

In addition to the vulnerable state of the majority of households, there is a city-wide correlation between neighborhoods with majority Latino populations, below-average homeownership rates, and widespread displacement due to increasing housing costs and property values. While homeownership alone may not prevent the market forces of gentrification, in theory, homeowners have more control and input over the process of neighborhood redevelopment. Homeowners cannot be evicted by a landlord seeking to sell their property, nor can a landlord increase the rent on a tenant. While homeowners may still fall victim to increasing property taxes, they will still be in a better financial situation to benefit from increased property values overall. Therefore, a program such as PEAR can be a positive start, however, Little Village

requires a housing plan that best fits the context of an area with significant and complex housing issues.

Initiatives that provide access to affordable homeownership should be encouraged as a primary source of building equity. Given that the vast majority of the current housing stock was constructed before 1940, it is important to prioritize improvements to existing infrastructure as opposed to simply designating the area a historical landmark district.. The consideration of Little Village as a landmark district presents a great opportunity, yet a reasonable concern for the appropriation of our culture. This effort is valuable; it allows our buildings to be preserved in a way that maintains the character of the neighborhood. However, this should not be the primary tool aiding in economic development considering the increased risk of capitalizing on our culture in a way that would outprice and displace our people. We will continue to enter ourselves into this conversation as well as that of the mural preservation efforts.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND OUTREACH

The next steps towards engagement should be extensive community engagement and outreach. Working with 571 people over the course of 3 years shows a significant lack of outreach in the the Action Plan released in June 2017, considering that Little Village alone has a population of 73, 826. This process must include more community input from those who know their environment well and intend to continue valuing and improving it for future generations. It is important to fill in the gaps of health and communicate where our efforts may be inserted, especially in the list of our community's priorities. This improved outreach effort will prove that urban planning, including land use plans and industrial plans, will not be entirely driven by outside interests and investment, but will respect community and culture in Little Village.

The Industrial Restructuring and the Continuing Impact on Youth Employment in Illinois report from the Great Cities Institute summarizes this by saying:

Tax policies, wage structures, land development priorities, etc. should all be carefully considered in light of the extent to which they create an economy for all to benefit.

— Wilson & Córdova, 2018

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