

LOOKING FORWARD

Impact & Insights Report 2016–2023

GREATER
Chatham
INITIATIVE

Issued August 2024



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75th Street Boardwalk
on Restaurant Row

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The impact we celebrate in this report reflects the continuity of character of the Greater Chatham community. The Greater Chatham Initiative (GCI) grew out of a civic response to gun violence in 2016. Since then, Auburn Gresham, Avalon Park, Chatham, and Greater Grand Crossing have moved through other storms, and other nights.

Over the last seven years, the creativity, entrepreneurial spirit, and civic savviness of community leaders found new expression and generated new opportunities. Today, we are witnessing waves of investment directly into the Greater Chatham community and onto the balance sheets of Black businesses and property owners. We continue to build upon what brings our neighborhoods together, and amplify the distinct value each brings to our city and region.

On behalf of the Greater Chatham Initiative board of directors and staff, we gratefully acknowledge the founding contributions of the following individuals and institutions:

- Michael J. Sacks, Chairman and Chief Executive Officer, Grosvenor Capital Management
- Sally Armbruster, Executive Director, Grosvenor Holdings
- Bobby Rush, Former U.S. Representative 1st Congressional District
- Alicia Spears, Business and Economic Revitalization Association
- Robert Weissbourd, RW Ventures, LLC
- City of Chicago
- John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation
- ComEd, an Exelon Company

LETTER FROM THE BOARD CHAIR AND EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

What is a neighborhood’s relationship to the regional economy? The Greater Chatham Initiative (GCI) began with this bold question. Then we looked at the data. And we asked why.

Why is it that a community where there was relative stability in the real estate market now in decline? Why were economic development solutions not tailored to the economics of Black mixed-income communities? And why do Black-owned businesses not reach their growth potential given their creativity, talent, and considerable customer base?

While gun violence is part of our origin story, we did not linger there. Back in 2016, our vision was to focus on the antecedents and not the consequences of violence. Today, we can point to the impact of a market-based approach for creating a neighborhood of economic opportunity and choice. And we can reaffirm our ambition—to demonstrate that this approach will build a secure and resilient community for everyone.

Greater Chatham Initiative is more than a vision—it is a market-focused nonprofit corporation whose mission is to increase investment in **Avalon Park, Auburn Gresham, Chatham, and Greater Grand Crossing** so they are communities of opportunity and choice in the city of Chicago. We look forward to generating new ideas and investment in collaboration with you, so that we continue doing well together!

Teresa Rufaro Prim
Board Chair

Nedra Sims Fears
Executive Director



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Greater Chatham Initiative is a market-focused nonprofit corporation whose mission is to increase investment in Auburn Gresham, Avalon Park, Chatham, and Greater Grand Crossing, so that these neighborhoods continue to be a community of opportunity and choice.

The organization began as a core strategy in an ambitious plan. Published in 2016 as the Comprehensive Plan for Economic Growth and Neighborhood Vitality (“the Plan”), it envisioned a vibrant future for the Greater Chatham neighborhood by generating economic growth that built upon existing community assets and that strengthened the social bonds between Greater Chatham and its neighbors.¹ The purpose of the Impact & Insights Report is to document the outcomes of the Plan’s comprehensive strategies from 2016–2023, and describe the innovative work that the Greater Chatham Initiative is leading today.

Implementing the Plan has lifted up new impacts and insights into what it takes for a market-based approach to have a positive impact on urban communities like Greater Chatham. These underscore the importance of the people, ideas, and access to investment that GCI’s diverse network of partners has achieved for the community. The impact of the Plan is evidenced by the \$229.4 million investment in twenty signature strategies that have been the distinct roles GCI plays. These roles range from collaborating with partners supporting their projects and serving as a core leader of

The impact of the Plan is evidenced by the \$229.4 million investment in twenty signature strategies advanced and the distinct role GCI serves in these projects.

programs, which means GCI raises funds, hires talent, coordinates partners, and executes the work directly.

Place keeping is an economic strategy that centers the social bonds people have with their neighborhood and their neighbors to generate growth. We aim to complement, rather than compete with, other comprehensive plans and public works investments. Looking forward, our ambition is to weave into the Plan’s six-pillar strategy our nationally recognized place keeping work. In its place keeping work, GCI will invest in the businesses that feed the body and the soul to support the next generation of South Side commerce and cultural icons. We will help our community be a place where neighbors can move from renter to homeowner, without changing their zip codes. And we will attract investment to meet the environmental challenges that impact the community. If done well, together, meeting each of these challenges will preserve and create community value.

The future for Chatham, and our neighbors, Auburn Gresham, Avalon Park, and Greater Grand Crossing, is indeed bright.

CONTEXT

The Greater Chatham Initiative began in 2016 to change the troubling trajectory of the Greater Chatham community. In response to the public call for more jobs and violence prevention programs, a different strategy was taken. The strategy—backed by data—was that the market stability that had long characterized Greater Chatham as a middle-class community could provide a framework for its future.

One of the first steps in implementing the Plan was the formation of a new coordinating entity to attract investment, align strategies, and generate new ideas. Today, Greater Chatham Initiative is an award-winning nonprofit corporation whose mission is to invest in Auburn Gresham, Avalon Park, Chatham, and Greater Grand Crossing so they are communities of opportunity and choice in the city of Chicago.

The purpose of this Impact & Insights Report is to document the outcomes of the Plan’s comprehensive strategies from 2016–2023, and describe the innovative work that the Greater Chatham Initiative is leading today.

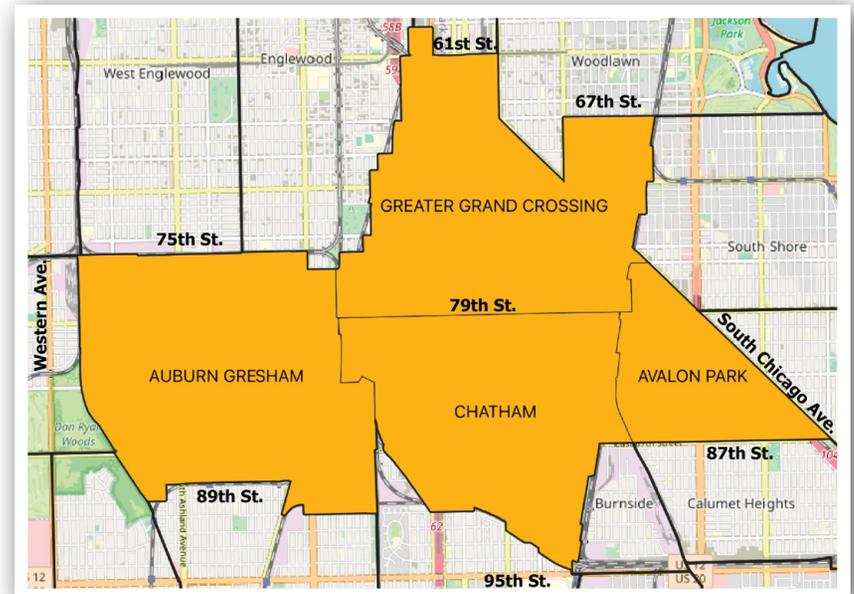
Implementing the Plan over the past seven years has lifted up new learnings about what it takes for a market-based

Together, almost 50,000 households and more than 5,000 businesses call this region home, and many have done so for generations. Together, these businesses employ close to 30,000 people and attract two million visitors annually.

approach to have a positive impact on urban communities with similarities in neighborhood decline and civic engagement. These learnings underscore the importance of the people, ideas, and access to investment that the GCI network has achieved for Greater Chatham.

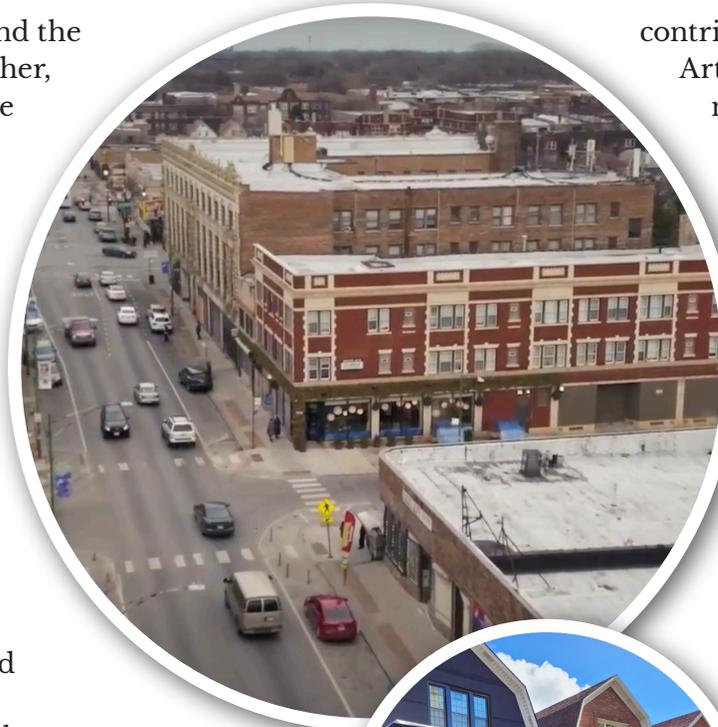
AUBURN GRESHAM, AVALON PARK, CHATHAM, AND GREATER GRAND CROSSING

Greater Chatham is defined by our relationship with our neighbors and region. The four Greater Chatham neighborhoods of Auburn Gresham, Avalon Park, Chatham, and Greater Grand Crossing comprise 15 square miles in the center of the South Side of Chicago. Official boundaries are 61st Street to the north, 95th Street to the south;



South Chicago Avenue to the east and the Dan Ryan Woods to the west. Together, almost 50,000 households and more than 5,000 businesses call this region home, and many have done so for generations. Together, these businesses employ close to 30,000 people and attract two million visitors annually. During a dynamic time—from 2016 to 2021—Greater Chatham’s overall population gained more than it lost. Property values and start-ups also have climbed, and continue to do so, compared to the city as a whole. The uptick in housing value, business receipts, and population gives us some cause for optimism, as we have experienced the negative impact of decades of decline.

Chatham’s dynamic history can be traced through its people, housing, and cultural institutions. The dramatic changes in population during the 1950–1960s from White to Black households destabilized many Chicago neighborhoods as evidenced by the change in homeownership, educational attainment, business ownership, and working population data.¹ Chatham’s trajectory was different. Property ownership and household composition maintained a level of stability, contributing to the neighborhood’s creative, entrepreneurial, and civic capacity. Greater Chatham residents were also artists and entrepreneurs who



contributed to the Civil Rights and Black Arts Movements. Indeed, the list of notable Black businesses, artists, and political leaders with ties to the community is a source of pride and inspiration.²

Middle-class homeowners became aging homeowners, and housing ownership did not often transfer as family wealth or continuity of owner-occupied housing. Greater Chatham experienced a significant population loss through the 1990’s into 2020. Against the backdrop of these demographic changes, the community narrative began to change. Chicago’s public housing authority was transforming its footprint, resulting in the movement of families with rental vouchers. And while the perception caused some to link this policy with Chatham’s decline, the data tells a clearer picture. The addition of new families in rental housing helped stem the net losses in population and maintain the housing stock. There were less people, less income, and less owner occupied properties, all of which frayed the Greater Chatham community fabric. Greater Chatham’s middle-income roots produced civic and

¹ See the 2016 Comprehensive Plan for Economic Growth and Neighborhood Vitality for Greater Chatham historic data

² For more on Greater Chatham’s business and cultural icons please visit the [GCI website](#).

business capacity more than social service capacity. To support our elderly homeowners and new renting families, more investment was needed.

By 2010 the four neighborhoods were still in population decline. There was higher unemployment, more homicides, and more foreclosures than the city of Chicago as a whole. Disinvestment in Black communities has historically been met with large-scale federal government programs targeting the poor, or time-limited private philanthropic initiatives meant to revitalize a place.

Since Greater Chatham was a mixed-income area that was largely left out of targeted government and philanthropic investments, the work of GCI argues for a different approach—one that first builds a shared outlook on the market strengths, then contributes where needed or invited, to increase civic and social service capacity.

And while our core geographic footprint continues to be the four neighborhoods, we have learned that as Greater Chatham gets stronger, other South Side residents are increasingly opting for our distinct amenities, businesses, schools, and relatively affordable housing stock. We see ourselves as part of a growing Chicago ecosystem committed to building and transferring intergenerational Black wealth.



DOING WELL TOGETHER

The Comprehensive Plan for Economic Growth & Neighborhood Vitality is grounded in an understanding that the economics of Greater Chatham and adjacent neighborhoods on Chicago’s South Side are interconnected with the regional economy. And by increasing the wealth of residents and businesses in Greater Chatham, we might turn a ‘vicious cycle’ of disinvestment into a ‘virtuous cycle’ of new investment and economic growth. Critically, it aims high in its vision for leadership, governance, and accountability capacity at the community level. The Plan identifies sixteen strategies, both new and existing for economic growth, organized under six pillars:

- Employment
- Business Development
- Housing
- Safety
- Public Services
- Civic Capacity

The Plan further identifies the institutions ready to drive new strategies and align existing ones as part of its implementation. Building on the history of other comprehensive planning initiatives, the core design principles for the Plan’s implementation include:

- A focus on local and regional stakeholders,
- Accountable to the community and market,
- Decision making and management infrastructure; and
- Distributed work among network partners.

Our Impact Summary (exhibit 1) provides details on the \$229.4 million investment in signature real estate projects and community programs of which \$42.7 million is from GCI core investment advanced from 2018–2023. GCI’s role in these projects ranges from congratulating GCI network partners which are leading initiatives, collaborating to implement a project, and serving as core leader of a

program, where GCI raises funds, hires talent, coordinates partners, and executes the work directly.

The GCI network has been guided by the pillars of the Plan to achieve positive impact. The impact generated has aimed to complement, rather than compete with, other comprehensive plans and public work commitments. In fact, the Plan has provided continuity and collaboration with other regional planning efforts such as Greater Auburn-Gresham Development Corporation’s quality-of-life plan, the Chicago Transit Authority’s Red Line Extension, and the Chicago Neighborhood Recovery Program.



“We believe the Greater Chatham Initiative exemplifies how the City of Chicago can effectively impact communities by focusing on adding value and stabilizing neighborhoods through strategic housing and economic development.”

**Mary O’Connor, City of Chicago
Department of Planning and Development**

EXHIBIT 1. IMPACT SUMMARY OF \$229.4 MILLION IN TOTAL INVESTMENT, INCLUDING \$42.7 MILLION GCI CORE INVESTMENT

	Project	GCI Role	Investment	Impact
EMPLOYMENT	Chatham Education and Workforce Center		\$3.5 MM	The Chicago-Cook Workforce Partnership was one of GCI’s first collaborations that led to the opening of the Chatham Education and Workforce Center in 2021. The Partnership has collaborated with more than 2,000 employers and placed more than 70,000 people in jobs since its inception.
	St. Sabina Employment Resource Center		—	Started as a ministry of St. Sabina Church, the impact of this community driven employment and financial counseling program is evidenced by the strong employment data from Auburn Gresham. In the past six years the Employment Resource Center has secured job placements for 9,095, (5,715 adults, and 3,380 youth). The majority of participants are residents of Auburn Gresham and the South Side.
BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT	Business Support Services FoodLab Chicago		\$7.9 MM	GCI’s Business Support Services have connected 300 businesses to financial and technical resources. In addition to its core services, GCI has built distinct capacity in the food industry. FoodLab Chicago has worked with 62 established Black-owned businesses and provided \$5.1 million in public grants, and \$2.8 million in private loans. Supported businesses are generating \$16.7 million in annual revenue and employ 279 Full Time Equivalent workers.
	Discover Chatham		\$30 MM	Discover Chatham Shine Bright Center hired 600 workers, the majority community residents. It also includes a 25,000 sq ft. community center constructed out of a closed big-box retail center.
	Entrepreneurship and Cultural Districts		\$8 MM	Mahalia Jackson Cultural District is an award-winning, arts-anchored commercial corridor along 79th Street from State Street to Cottage Grove Ave.
			\$220,000	Artists on the 9 is the outcome of the renovation of retail space on 79th Street into a 1,200 sq ft. artist studio. Studio includes multipurpose space and provides exhibitions and events.

GCI ROLE:  COLLABORATE  CORE  CONGRATULATE

EXHIBIT 1. IMPACT SUMMARY OF \$229.4 MILLION IN TOTAL INVESTMENT, INCLUDING \$42.7 MILLION GCI CORE INVESTMENT

	Project	GCI Role	Investment	Impact
HOUSING	Neighborhood Housing Services Chatham		\$13.2 MM	Greater Chatham serves as the Neighborhood Housing Services South Side Office. From 2018–2020 NHS data demonstrates the collaboration has exceeded its goals, in creating new homeowners, stabilizing existing homeowners, and investing \$13.2 MM in mortgage capital to 584 residents.
	Community Investment Corporation		\$37 MM	Community Investment Corporation, in collaboration with the South Side Investors Association, is working on multi-family rental housing preservation and reinvestment strategies. The outcomes include the preservation of 63 buildings with 998 units of rental housing.
	Chicago Neighborhood Recovery Program		\$490,000	GCI serves as the City of Chicago Department of Housing delegate agency for the Chicago Neighborhood Recovery Program. This housing stabilization project is focused on a 67-block area from 71st Street to 82nd Street; MLK Drive to Cottage Grove Ave. The impact includes 173 properties returned to occupancy and 14 purchasers receiving \$15,000 each in down payment assistance grants for a total of \$210,000.
SAFETY	Business + industrial development		\$750,000	GCI has trained more than 25 Commercial Corridor Ambassadors who engage residents and visitors between State Street and Cottage Grove Ave, in support of Mahalia’s Mile, 79th Street Redline and Bus Line commercial nodes, as part of a City of Chicago delegate agency contract.
	Youth violence programs		\$1.3 MM	GCI works with the City of Chicago and the State of Illinois and 23 organizations, focused on Restorative Practices. 125 training sessions for 5,831 adults and youth, and 111 certified ‘Circle Keepers’ are bringing the evidence-based model to Chicago Public Schools and nonprofit partners.
	Public space		\$600,000	Mahalia Jackson Court Public Plaza completed by GCI in September 2022 generating foot traffic of 3,000 with more than 52 events.
			\$17.9 MM	Place Keeping Strategies include working with the City of Chicago on Streetscapes, the State of Illinois to designate a new Cultural District Mahalia’s Mile, 0-800 E 79th Street, and Restaurant Row, 203-328 E 75th Street.

GCI ROLE:  COLLABORATE  CORE  CONGRATULATE

EXHIBIT 1. IMPACT SUMMARY OF \$229.4 MILLION IN TOTAL INVESTMENT, INCLUDING \$42.7 MILLION GCI CORE INVESTMENT

	Project	GCI Role	Investment	Impact
PUBLIC SERVICES	CPS education and youth trauma partnerships		—	See Safety - Youth violence programs.
	Whitney Young Library		\$12 MM	Chicago Public Library - investment into remodel and new technology in the neighborhood branch. Strong advocacy by Chatham and Avalon Park Block Club Association.
	Transportation		\$35 MM	Greater Auburn-Gresham Development Corporation led the campaign to secure new investment and reopening of the Metra 79th Street Stop, increasing regional access to Greater Chatham.
CIVIC CAPACITY	Institutional infrastructure and governance		\$5.5 MM	Greater Chatham Initiative – established as a nonprofit corporation in 2018. GCI board affiliations connect the new entity to 5 private sector, 4 non profit sector, 5 community entities and leaders.
	Seaway Self-Help Credit Union		\$14 MM	Seaway Bank Repurpose - in addition to taking the former bank building, and bringing a Credit Union to the community, the facility is now a Collaboration Space that includes NHS, and GCI.
	The Auburn Gresham Healthy Lifestyle Hub		\$21 MM	Healthy Lifestyle Hub - Greater Auburn-Gresham Development Corporation led the campaign for 839 W 79th Street transformation and received public and private support, including a \$10 million Chicago Prize from Pritzker-Traubert Foundation. The site includes a mix of nonprofit, corporate and local businesses, including a health clinic, bank, and support services.
	Anaerobic Digester		\$41 MM	Greater Auburn-Gresham Development Corporation, Urban Growers Collective, and Green Era Sustainability are partners in the Green Era Campus, transforming 9 acres of brownfield in the Auburn Gresham neighborhood into a vibrant hub in the green energy ecosystem through the conversion of cooking oil into natural gas. This project is part of the Chicago Prize.

GCI ROLE:  COLLABORATE  CORE  CONGRATULATE

BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

Soul, Caribbean, and African food share more than spicy flavors and rich stews. They share a South Side home in Greater Chatham, a culinary destination for Chicagoland. It was clear to former GCI board member, Victoria Lakes-Battle from IFF, that more could be done to accelerate the growth of these small businesses. The idea was to adapt a Detroit-based food business accelerator to Chicago's South Side. Data from the Association of Enterprise Opportunity backs up the strategy— that the right wrap-around support for “microbusinesses” enables a local ecosystem to increase food access, food security, and economic opportunity while building community wealth.³

FoodLab Chicago was launched with an initial investment of \$185,000 from the Chicago Community Trust in 2020. Today, it is a core initiative for GCI, providing a rigorous cohort program including business planning, technology training, and coaching. What are we learning? Fifty percent of FoodLab Chicago participants took over a family business, and more than 60% are owned by Black women who do not own their restaurant location. The impact? Revenues have increased from 3% to 38% for a cohort of restaurateurs who used “menu engineering” and eighty-five percent of participating restaurants operate at break even or better.



Stephanie Hart, owner of
Brown Sugar Bakery

Revenue provides the primary earnings for food business owners and their workers alike. Increased revenue has enabled local businesses to acquire property in the community, hire new staff, and in some cases, add health benefits. FoodLab collaborators include local chambers of commerce, Chicago Public Schools, and Food Hero Culinary School.

BROWN SUGAR BAKERY

Growth brings growth. Brown Sugar Bakery needed more space to fill the caramel cake orders coming from around the world. Stephanie Hart, the bakery's owner, began to work with John Handler, GCI's Industrial Cluster Manager, on a growth strategy for the famous bakery in the Park Manor neighborhood. As a business client and FoodLab Chicago graduate, Stephanie Hart was ready when GCI connected her to Cupid Candies, whose owner was looking for a successor. With GCI support, Brown Sugar Bakery purchased the Cupid Candies facility in 2020 and retained 10 former-Cupid employees. Today, Stephanie Hart is known not only for her cakes, but for “making history” as being the only Black-owned U.S. chocolate manufacturer.

³ See AEO's 2020 Report, [Microbusiness: A Community-Centered Solution to Inequitable Food Systems](#).

HOUSING

Black urban communities like Greater Chatham are shaped in part by their housing and their people. Greater Chatham is home to 120,000 people. While other communities saw a net loss of population in recent years, we are net positive. According to GCI housing data analysis, from 2016 to 2021, housing sale prices in Greater Chatham rose considerably, even after accounting for inflation, as the median sales price for all of Greater Chatham increased by 63%. While there were a number of factors leading to these trends, GCI uses insights from the data to understand who benefits from appreciation in property values, and how to help return value to community residents.

According to the Urban Institute, our communities are experiencing the market effect of disparities of investment flow in housing.⁴ Home ownership rates range from a high of 46% to a low of 24% across the four neighborhoods. Every housing asset that comes on the market is an opportunity to increase that margin. For example, looking at the data, 25% of Greater Chatham renters have the income needed to transition to homeownership.

GCI is collaborating with the City of Chicago’s Neighborhood Recovery Program and Neighborhood Housing Services (NHS), Community Investment Corporation (CIC), and the South Side Investors Association to market Greater Chatham as a community of choice for homeownership. We are also coordinating new partnerships, such as with Argonne National Labs, to understand climate change at the neighborhood level. We are also investigating what green infra-



structure might mean for mitigating the flooding that Chatham—a low-lying area between infrastructure canals—experiences at greater rates than other parts of the city.

⁴ Urban Institute, [Neighborhood Disparities in Investment Flows in Chicago](#), May 2019.

CIVIC CAPACITY

Taking a market-based approach to neighborhood economic development sometimes means making the invisible, visible.

“Just because you can’t see them doesn’t mean they are not there,” offers GCI Executive Director, Nedra Sims Fears. “The City wanted data on the visitors coming to Mahalia Jackson Court, and where they were coming from. We wanted to give Black business owners data about their customers. Corporate partners had the big data,” she continues, “and we had the deep partnerships and local knowledge.”

A self-described “Daughter of Chatham,” Fears brings a balance of business skill and design savvy to her leadership role at GCI. Healthy markets feed on good information. Therefore, GCI understands data and technology are key to civic capacity. “As local leaders, we still need to challenge our own assumptions about who is shopping, eating, and living in our community, and make sure the data tells our story, about our prosperity and our potential for more.”

Big data tells a compelling local story, but so does perseverance. Fears is rightly proud of closing a new deal with Mastercard, for example. Having seen the power of data shared by The Chicago Community Trust through the We Rise Chicago collaborative, Fears reached out to build a direct relationship for Greater Chatham. Three years later, Mastercard said yes, and soon will be providing credit card purchase data that will inform GCI strategy, enable the organization to share insights with its network, and push its purpose of supporting economic growth. “GCI’s ambition is to increase our capacity to connect stakeholders, increase trust and accountability between them, and provide a neighborhood infrastructure that supports distributed work.”

In addition to serving as executive director for GCI, Fears is a 2024 Leader for a New Chicago and a Loeb Fellow. She also serves on several boards of directors and civic tables, including: Middle Neighborhoods Community of Practice, Metropolitan Planning Commission, We Rise Together Committee, Neighborhood Housing Services of Chicago Steering Committee, Self-Help Credit Union Marketing Committee, and Bigger Table Fund.

Investing her time with city, regional, and national institutions brings benefits back to Greater Chatham. Fears has helped bring new ideas and practices to Chicago, which supports its ability to benchmark efforts against other communities. As part of the Middle Neighborhoods work, in 2019 GCI partnered with the Federal Reserve Bank of Chicago to document Greater Chatham Initiative, leading to new publications and convenings on the impact of GCI’s regional approach. We continue to learn from the research, as we share our innovative practice. Together we are taking the strengths and diversity of our Black and African culture to model an economic growth strategy where we can come together, collaborate, celebrate, complement, and drive the work of others.



Governor JB Pritzter and Lt. Governor Juliana Stratton at the ribbon cutting for Brown Sugar Bakery in October 2023.

LOOKING FORWARD

Back in 2016, the Comprehensive Plan for Economic Growth & Neighborhood Vitality created a vision of four South Side neighborhoods thriving as part of a regional economic growth strategy. When the COVID-19 pandemic bore down, GCI’s response focused on its four neighborhoods.

Invested in local businesses and a thriving local food culture, GCI launched the Boardwalk on the two-block stretch along 75th Street known as Restaurant Row by activating a modest 400 square feet of outdoor space. The activation of this stretch of Restaurant Row into the Boardwalk served as an early demonstration of GCI’s civic capacity and place keeping work. The Boardwalk was created in collaboration with Site Design, Westbrook Architects, Krueck Sexton Partners, and the City of Chicago’s Department of Planning and Development and Department of Transportation.

Drawing more than 125,000 visitors and boosting sales by up to 10% during the summer season, in 2021, the Boardwalk received several awards including:

- Merit Award for Design—Illinois Chapter of the American Society for Landscape Architects
- CityArts Project—City of Chicago Dept. of Cultural Affairs and Special Events (DCASE)
- Creative Place Making Award—Chicago Neighborhood Development Awards
- Charter Award—Congress for New Urbanism
- Urban Land Institute Vision Award

Today, our place keeping work has grown. In 2024, GCI secured a State-Designated Cultural District for Mahalia’s Mile, from 79th and State Street to 79th Street and Cottage Grove Avenue. Mahalia’s Mile is an important commercial corridor, including a dozen cultural institutions and 93 businesses, generating millions of dollars of annual spending along the corridor. In 2023, the short film “Making Mahalia Jackson Court” received an Emmy for Midwest Documentary.⁵

Place keeping is an economic strategy that centers the social bonds people have with their neighborhood and their neighbors to generate growth. Looking forward, Greater Chatham Initiative’s ambition is to weave our nationally-recognized place keeping work throughout the Plan’s six pillar strategies.



Mahalia Jackson Court aerial view

⁵ For more information please watch the emmy-award winning [documentary](#) produced by Prime 312 +Nedra Sims Fears + Mark Sexton, or go to the GCI [website](#).

In doing so we will invest in the businesses that help make Greater Chatham a destination for discerning diners, and an exporter of Black commerce and culture. We will help keep our community a place where our neighbors can move from student to contributor to renter to homeowner, without changing their zip codes. And we will advocate for investments to transform flooding challenges into green technology collaborations. We will catalyze Mahalia's Mile as a national showcase for neighborhood resilience.

If done well, together, meeting each of these challenges will preserve and create more community value and positive health outcomes.

The future for Chatham, and our neighbors, Auburn Gresham, Avalon Park, and Greater Grand Crossing, is indeed bright. With more than \$229.4 million in new investment and a stronger civic and social service capacity in place, we are looking forward to increasing the resilience and sustainability of GCI as a community partner on Chicago's South Side.



Rendering for Auburn Park Metra Station

2024 GCI NETWORK

The Greater Chatham Initiative continues to benefit from its founding network of leadership, board of directors, funders, public officials, business and nonprofit partners. Here, we acknowledge the individuals and institutions that are investing their time, talent, and treasure into GCI as a nonprofit organization and the Greater Chatham community's civic capacity in 2023–2024. Members with an asterisk also served within its founding network.

Of the twelve current board members, 66% live on the South Side of Chicago, 83% are Black.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

- Micheal Bennett, DePaul University*
- Urie Clark, Law Offices of Urie Clark
- Donna Clarke, Neighborhood Housing Services
- Anthony Hardy, Keller Williams Commerical Real Estate, and South Side Investors Association
- John Levi, Sidley Austin
- Carlos Nelson, Greater Auburn Gresham Development Corporation*
- Allison Porter-Bell, BMO Harris Bank
- Teresa Rufaro Prim, Prim Lawrence Group, Board Chair*
- Alicia Spears, Founding Board Chair*
- Darlene Tribue, Park Manor Neighbors' Community Council
- Stacie Young, Community Investment Corporation
- Terri Young, IFF
- Nedra Sims Fears, GCI, Executive Director

ADVISORS

- Gretchen Kleinert
- Robert Weissbourd

PUBLIC OFFICIALS

- U.S. Senator Tammy Duckworth
- U.S. Senator Dick Durbin
- U.S. Representative Jonathan Jackson
- Illinois Senator Elgie Sims
- Illinois Representative Nicholas K Smith
- Alderman Anthony Beale
- Alderman Derrick Curtis
- Alderman William Hall
- Alderman Michelle Harris
- Alderman Gregory Mitchell
- Alderman David Moore
- Alderman Jeanette Taylor
- Alderman Desmon C. Yancy

GCI PARTNERS

- Argonne National Laboratory
- Association for Enterprise Opportunity
- Betty Shabazz International Charter School
- Bigger Table Fund
- Bop Biz Investments
- Brown Sugar Bakery
- Carter Temple Church
- Chicago Cook Workforce Partnership
- Chicago Public Schools
- Chicago Police Department's Chicago Alternative Policing
- Chicago State University
- Chicagoland Food and Beverage Network
- City of Chicago Department of Business Affairs
- City of Chicago Department of Cultural Affairs
- City of Chicago Department of Planning and Development
- City of Chicago's Mayor's Office
- City of Chicago Police Department
- City of Chicago Whitney Young Public Library

*Founding network member

- Community Investment Corporation
- Dixon Elementary School
- Dorian Sylvain Studio
- Emerald Empire (formerly Pangea)
- Flowers Unlimited
- Greater Auburn Gresham Development Corporation
- Griffin Bourdeau Design Center
- IFF
- Inner City Underwriting
- Institute for Housing Studies at DePaul University
- Institute of Positive Education
- Joyce Foundation
- Juana Guzman, I Juana Know
- KIPP Bloom College Preparatory School
- Krueck Sexton Partners
- Landmarks Illinois
- Lawlor Consulting Group
- The Law Offices of Marc Lane
- Metropolitan Planning Council
- Neighborhood Housing Services
- Park Manor Association
- Pigment International
- Providence Bank and Trust
- R.A.G.E
- Ruggles Elementary School
- RW Ventures
- Site Design
- Steps, Inc.
- The Black Mall
- University of Chicago, Office of Civic Engagement
- University of Chicago, Polsky Center
- Sean Williams, Menu Engineering
- Dr. Douglas Williams, Landscape Architecture Fellow
- World Business Chicago

FUNDERS

- AARP
- Argonne National Lab/U.S. Department of Energy
- Chicago Community Trust
- Chicago Region Trees Initiative
- City of Chicago Business Affairs and Consumer Protection
- City of Chicago Department of Cultural Affairs
- City of Chicago Department of Planning and Development
- Chicago Monument Project
- Coleman Foundation
- Discover
- Greater Chatham Initiative Board Members
- Enterprise
- Field Foundation
- Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority
- Local Initiative Support Corporation
- MacArthur Foundation
- Mars Wrigley Foundation
- Morton Arboretum
- Polk Bros. Foundation
- Providence Bank
- State of Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity
- State of Illinois Department of Human Services
- Walmart
- We Rise Together, a Fund of The Chicago Community Trust

STAKEHOLDERS

Key stakeholders who have complemented GCI's work by investing \$186.7 million in 11 programs and projects.

- State of Illinois
- City of Chicago
- The Chicago Workforce Partnership
- St. Sabina Employment Resource Center
- Discover
- Neighborhood Housing Services
- Community Investment Corporation
- Chicago Public Library
- Seaway Self-Help Credit Union
- Greater Auburn-Gresham Development Corporation
- Anaerobic Digester



GREATER
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