

# 2025-27



# w o r k p l a n

This workplan outlines our priorities. Aligned across **people**, **place**, and **process**; each category of focus describes our **purpose** and our **practice**, all working together to help us live up to our values.

## people — place — process

our three categories of focus and impact all share distinct priorities that outline what we stand for & want to see in the world

## purpose — practice

is how our work shows up through our **external** initiatives and offerings

is our intentional **internal** work to maintain strong bonds and relationships and to ensure accountability



still leading with **purpose**

# purpose

ETOD

Every Chicagoan should be able to live in a healthy, walkable, vibrant community connected to transit and all its benefits.

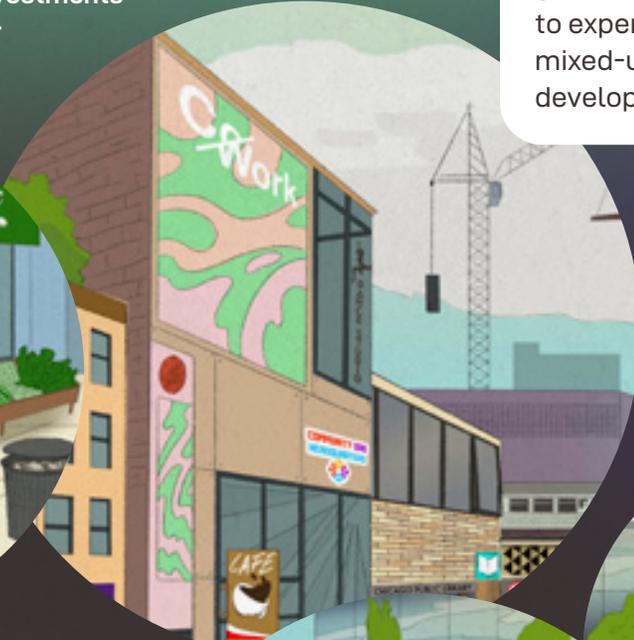
ETOD happens when City departments and communities work together.

It's urban planning done with, not to, community members. It's capital investments that bring jobs, and ETOD is climate-resilient development.

**Equitable TOD (ETOD)** is community-driven development that enables all people regardless of income, race, ethnicity, age, gender, immigration status or ability to experience the benefits of dense, mixed-use, pedestrian-oriented development near transit hubs.



It's locally owned businesses that build wealth for Black, Brown and Indigenous people. ETOD is easy access to healthy food and health resources.



It's affordable housing near public transit that reduce household expenses. ETOD is options for getting around, including public transit, bus and rail.



It's streets, sidewalks and paths that encourage exploration, promote health and feel safe.



It's vibrant spaces where artists work in ways that reflects the community.



**our values** Adaptability • Impact • Inclusion • Innovation • Transparency

## Elevated Chicago looks at ETOD through the lenses of racial equity, health, climate resilience, and arts and culture

Elevated Chicago is dedicated to creating equitable transit-oriented development that benefits everyone, especially **those impacted by inequities** in the built environment across the City of Chicago.

As a dynamic multi-sector collective and convener of people, Elevated Chicago promotes equitable development of public spaces, buildings, and vacant land around the city's transit hubs. We seek to increase resident engagement and remove barriers through advocacy, direct investments, arts and culture, and using creativity as a bridge to connect and amplify the local power in neighborhoods.

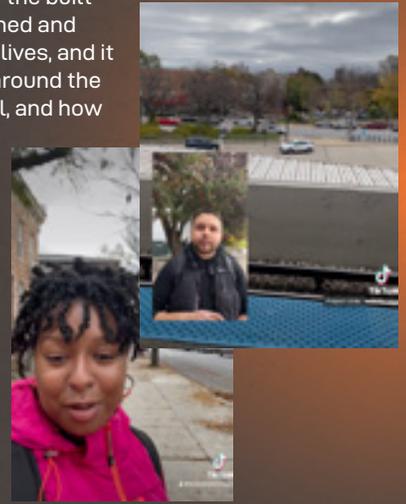
By 2027, we envision making meaningful progress to our vision of a Chicago where every community is vibrant and inclusive and connected to frequent, safe and accessible transit. We envision improved infrastructure across the city, ribbon cuttings by community leaders and emerging developers, the passage of equitable policies and investments, and new processes that represent and uplift all voices inclusively.

### What is "built environment?"

**Built environment** is the human-made design and creation of our surroundings that impact our everyday life.

Think about your neighborhood: the streets you walk on, the stores you visit, and even the playgrounds and parks—all of these are parts of the built environment. It's designed and built to help us live our lives, and it affects how we move around the world, how safe we feel, and how our communities look, function, and interact with one another.

*Our "Can You Walk There?" social media series navigates and investigates the built environment.*



## people — place — process

We support neighborhood residents, especially Black, Brown, and Indigenous residents, business owners, aspiring developers and artists, who live and work within ½ - mile radius of transit hubs. *We adapt our internal processes to create conditions for our members to thrive as individuals, organizations, and as part of the collective.*

We transform the built environment in the ½ - mile radius around public transit (e.g., Chicago Transit Authority, Metra, Pace). *We build partnerships with regional and national movements to address the challenges faced by disinvested, segregated, and gentrifying neighborhoods and improve quality of life for their residents.*

We push public, private, and civic organizations to create processes that are more accountable, transparent, and inclusive. *Internally, we will redesign transparent and inclusive processes to strengthen our collective tissue and ensure we are building collective power for driving transformative change.*

# our purpose



# our practice

**Uniting ETOD Champions** We will continue amplifying residents' power by focusing on increasing engagement in community and decision-making tables. We will foster a sense of ownership and unite residents and other stakeholders who see the benefits of ETOD to drive change throughout our neighborhoods.

**ETOD Education Boost** We will share information and tools about urban planning and development and continue providing technical assistance and support to residents, emerging developers, and other leaders to enhance their ability to influence local projects and policy decisions effectively.

**Amplifying Community Culture** We will partner with residents to ensure they and their communities have the tools they need to participate in decision-making processes and the built environment through a cultural amplification and protection lens. We will uplift the vibrancy and local culture in neighborhoods by promoting inclusivity, connection and community pride and increasing economic opportunities for local artists.

*Youth redesigning vacant lots in partnership with artists and developers at the Undesign Redlining Youth Summit; Residents design a bioswale in East Garfield Park in partnership with Garfield Park Community Council and FarmWorks; the Butterfly Flower Peace Project beautification near transit in the East Garfield Park community in partnership with local artist Brian Keith Ellison.*

**Smooth Transitions, Strong Continuity** We will ensure the continuity of our collaborative efforts by setting a clear and transparent onboarding and off-boarding process. We will foster seamless transitions for new and departing members, enhancing continuity and memory, while also continuing to nurture our members' bonds, relationships, and trust.

**Teamwork Remix** We will continuously assess the size and structure of membership across our governance body to ensure they are appropriately staffed to meet our goals. We will foster a supportive and connected environment where members do not feel isolated. We will also ensure our teams reflect the diversity of the people we serve to enhance our ability to engage and collaborate effectively

**Intentional Partnerships for Collective Power** We will increase collaboration with organizations and people aligned with our vision to advocate for equitable development, policy and research. Utilizing our platform and resources, we aim to amplify diverse voices and unify our efforts towards advancing ETOD.

## Coalition through Partnership



# our purpose



# our practice

**Bricks and Mortar Investments** We will continue to invest capital and provide technical assistance/ support to brick-and-mortar projects that lead to a more equitable built environment, and that directly address racial equity, public health, climate resilience, and cultural vitality.

**Cultural Place Making, Place Keeping** We will continue to invest in campaigns and activations that transform overlooked spaces (e.g. empty lots, underpasses) into cultural spaces and positive programming that uplift the neighborhood's culture and values.

**Walkability and Mobility Justice** We will continue to promote efforts and improvements that increase pedestrian safety and accessibility for all, with holistic enhancements from infrastructure to beautification, so that residents have an abundance of options for connecting to assets, amenities, opportunity and each other.

**Natural and Climate Resilient Places** We will continue to partner with local organizations to create and maintain green spaces and projects that address climate change and promote sustainable healthy climate-resilient spaces.

*ETOD happening across Chicago as of 2024. Please visit: [elevatedchicago.org](http://elevatedchicago.org) to explore our interactive map more deeply.*

**Locally active in Chicago** Leaning on our coalition members, we will continue focusing our efforts in Chicago neighborhoods affected by displacement and other forms of inequity in the built environment, while also supporting equitable development efforts in communities citywide.

**A thought partner across our region and state** Across our region and state, we will be thought partners working to bring equitable transit-oriented development to an expanded footprint.

**Nationally, a member of the growing ETOD community of practice** Nationally, we will continue efforts to shift the narrative around ETOD, share lessons learned with peer cities, and participate in national coalitions to contribute to federal systems change.

*Opening Ceremony by Ollin Kuikath at the March for Racial Equity in Logan Square, organized by Palenque LSNA; vacant lots planted with sunflowers provide beautification, inspiration, and environmental improvements in Washington Park; Lucy Gonzalez Parsons apartments; Sunshine Community Center.*

## Coalition through Geography



# our purpose



# our practice

**Equitable Policy Leaders** We will co-lead the refinement and implementation of Chicago's ETOD Policy Plan and Connected Communities Ordinance to ensure accountability and maximize community impact by working with city officials, emerging and established developers, policy experts, and neighborhood leaders

**Advocate, Amplify, and Advance** We will continue advocating for increased public, private, and philanthropic funding and policies that support equitable development near transit hubs. We will collaborate with regional and national partners to advance a federal ETOD policy agenda, promoting best practices and securing resources for local initiatives.

**Principled Community Engagement** We will continue to amplify community power and foster deeper participation in decision-making processes. We will bring our community engagement principles to life through the diffusion of tools and processes (e.g., In.Field Kit) that facilitate delightful community engagement and improve information sharing.

*The Connected Communities Ordinance one-pager; bringing community and government together to advance ETOD through the ETOD Working Group; Steering Committee co-chairs Christian Diaz and Leslie 'Honore' amplifying partners and community voice at decision-making tables; The Elevated Chicago Rules of Engagement During Meetings grounds us in our values and how we work.*

**Governance Refresh** We will establish clearer and more transparent decision-making processes, including guidelines for activities, votes, succession planning, and expected commitment from members. We will decide the best legal structure to achieve our mission. We will deepen our relationships through iteration, cross-collaboration, navigating lines of difference, and improving communication across our many members to foster a unified implementation of our work plan.

**Set, Follow, and Reflect on Our Chosen Path** We will regularly evaluate and refine our activities to ensure they align with our purpose and values. We will set clear goals to work towards and remain responsive and accountable to residents' needs.

**Coalition Cohesion** "Everyone's projects are everyone's projects!" Our work is a group effort, and one that is led by the individuals in our coalition—from policy advocacy to brick-and-mortar openings. Our commitment to advance our work also extends to members' work and the shared pipeline of projects we create. We will ensure the coalition is building power and adaptively moving towards our goals by keeping all members informed of moving pieces and how they add up to the whole.

## Coalition through Governance and Power Distribution



# 2025-27

ELEVATED Chicago

## w o r k p l a n b a c k g r o u n d



Elevated started as the Chicago collaborative table of SPARCC\*, a national initiative with a 10-year theory of change. This workplan is aimed to set our intentions for the next 3 years, as we arrive to the final years of SPARCC's theory of change, reflecting on Elevated's path thus far, and acknowledging our successes and our gaps to continue working towards equitable development.

**\*What was SPARCC?** The Strong, Prosperous and Resilient Communities Challenge (SPARCC) was a multiyear initiative investing in and amplifying local efforts in six regions (Atlanta, Chicago, Denver, Los Angeles, Memphis, San Francisco Bay Area) to ensure that public investments in the built environment reduce racial disparities, build a culture of health, and respond to the climate crisis.

This workplan sets our intentions for the next 3 years

We hope this workplan shares insights into effective practices with our external network, holding us to our vision, mission and shared values like inclusion and transparency.



# 2025-27

**ELEVATED** Chicago  
w o r k p l a n

## Steering Committee

Center for Neighborhood Technology  
City of Chicago Department of Public Health  
Emerald South Economic Development Collaborative  
Enterprise Community Partners  
Endeleo Institute  
Garfield Park Community Council  
Foundation for Homan Square  
IFF  
Leslé Honoré  
LUCHA  
Metropolitan Planning Council  
Palenque LSNA  
Sunshine Enterprises  
The Chicago Community Trust  
UChicago Arts, Arts + Public Life

## Thank you funders!

Builders Initiative MacArthur Foundation Metlife Foundation  
Polk Bros Foundation Square One Foundation The Chicago Community Trust

© 2024 Elevated Chicago. This workplan's content was developed by Duo. Development Group, steering the contributions of Elevated Chicago's steering committee and working group from 2022-2024. Special Thanks to Rudd Resources and City of Chicago. Workplan design by Janell Nelson of JNJ Creative, LLC. All images courtesy of Elevated Chicago or royalty-free procured by design team.



people • place • process • still leading with purpose