

# ELEVATED Chicago

CONNECTING PEOPLE,  
BUILDING EQUITY

# 2024 Highlights

2024 was a transformative year for Elevated Chicago that brought changes to our organization, including a new executive director and coordinator. We're also proud to highlight even greater impact, including expanding support for our ETOD project pipeline through Elevated Works and more visibility in media and public forums. We invite you to explore our 2024 highlights and reflect on our impact.

[elevatedchicago.org](http://elevatedchicago.org)

*Esta información está disponible en español en nuestro sitio web.*

## PEOPLE

*About our people*



Lisette Castañeda,  
Department of Housing  
Commissioner

**Lisette Castañeda Appointed as Department of Housing Commissioner:** In January, Lisette Castañeda began her role as Commissioner of the Department of Housing, appointed by Mayor Brandon Johnson. Commissioner

Castañeda, formerly a member of the Elevated Chicago Steering Committee as Executive Director of LUCHA, now serves as Co-Chair of our Leadership Council.

### **Roberto Requejo Appointed to the Chicago Transit Authority Board:**

Former Elevated Chicago ED Roberto Requejo was appointed to the CTA Board by Mayor Brandon Johnson in March.

### **Marly Schott and Roberto Requejo Speak on ETOD at UCLA and DePaul University:**

In March, former ED Roberto Requejo spoke on ETOD at UCLA, while Manager Marly Schott spoke at DePaul University. Requejo addressed ETOD's role in equitable transportation and Schott spoke to its role in sustainable urban design.



Attendees at the ETODay Party

### **ETODay Party Celebrates 2024 City ETOD Grant Recipients:**

In April, we hosted about 150 attendees, including developers, funders, policymakers, elected officials, and community advocates, for a day party celebrating the local developers who received ETOD grants from the Department of Planning and Development in 2024. Informational poster boards showcased more than 20 ETOD projects while guests networked, bringing attendees together from across sectors and organizations.



Juan Sebastian Arias, Elevated Chicago Executive Director

### **Juan Sebastian Arias Joins Elevated Chicago as Executive Director:**

Juan Sebastian Arias joined Elevated Chicago as ED in May. Arias came to Elevated Chicago after 15 years working in affordable housing, community development, and urban policy, including roles in both the Lightfoot and Johnson mayoral administrations and having previously worked with Elevated Chicago across multiple roles. He joined as ED following the departure of the founding Executive Director Roberto Requejo. Arias shared his vision for the next chapter of Elevated Chicago's work and ETOD in the city in an inaugural [interview](#) with Streetsblog Chicago.

### **Marly Schott and Chandra Christmas-Rouse Complete CUE Fellowship:**

In May, Elevated Chicago Program Manager Marly Schott and then-Steering Committee Co-Chair Chandra Christmas-Rouse completed a year-long policy fellowship with Chicago United for Equity (CUE). Schott's fellowship project focused on building out Elevated Chicago's arts and culture strategy.

### **Elevated Chicago Joins RTA Panel on Right-Sizing Minimum Parking Mandates:**

In June, ED Juan Sebastian Arias participated in a Regional Transportation Authority (RTA) panel discussion about the impact of minimum parking requirements on land use, housing, and development. Arias emphasized how parking mandates make an area less walkable and affect the feel of the built environment.

### **Juan Sebastian Arias Joins Abundant Housing Illinois and Alderman Bennett Lawson for a Discussion on ETOD:**

In August, ED Juan Sebastian Arias joined Abundant Housing Illinois and 44th Ward Alderman Bennett Lawson for a community discussion on ETOD. Arias

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# 2024 highlights

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From left to right: Alderman Bennett Lawson (44th Ward), Adam Drakulic (Abundant Housing IL), and Juan Sebastian Arias (Elevated Chicago)

emphasized the importance of ensuring equity in ETOD and how ETOD can play a role in alleviating Chicago's housing crisis.



Audrey Rutter, Elevated Chicago Coordinator

## Audrey Rutter Joins Elevated Chicago as Coordinator:

In September, Audrey Rutter joined Elevated Chicago as Coordinator (after the departure of longtime coordinator Jannice Newson.)

Audrey has interned at the NHP Foundation (focusing on affordable housing development), was a Qualitative Research Assistant at the University of Chicago Crime Lab (interviewing participants of the Heartland Alliance READI Chicago initiative) and is a proud City Year Chicago AmeriCorps alum.



Crain's Chicago Business' homepage

## Traolach O'Sullivan and Juan Sebastian Arias Co-Author Crain's Op-Ed Supporting Northwest Side Housing Preservation Ordinance:

In October, ED Juan Sebastian Arias and Traolach O'Sullivan from Palenque LSNA, part of our Logan Square Blue Line Community Table, co-authored an [op-ed](#) in Crain's Chicago Business supporting the Northwest Side Housing Preservation Ordinance, the anti-gentrification bill

passed by the City Council in September. The piece was a rebuttal to an earlier Crain's op-ed criticizing the ordinance.



From left to right: Jason Campbell (Field Museum), Juan Sebastian Arias (Elevated Chicago), Geoff Smith (Institute for Housing Studies), 47th Ward Alderman Matt Martin

## Geoff Smith and Juan Sebastian Arias Join 47th Ward Green Council and Alderman Matt Martin for Discussion on Housing Affordability:

In October, ED Juan Sebastian Arias and Geoff Smith, Executive Director of the Institute for Housing Studies at DePaul University and Co-Chair of Elevated Chicago's Knowledge Sharing Working Group, joined 47th Ward Green Council and 47th Ward Alderman Matt Martin for a discussion on building a more affordable, livable Chicago. The discussion was co-hosted by Strong Towns and the League of Women Voters of Chicago.



Panelists at City Civic Day

## Elevated Chicago Invited to Moderate Panel on ETOD and the Red Line Extension at City Civics Day:

In November, ED Juan Sebastian Arias moderated a panel discussion on the opportunity for ETOD as part of the Red Line Extension project at the 2nd annual City Civics Day conference organized by the Department of Planning and Development and Department of Cultural Affairs and Special Events. Panelists discussed the role ETOD can play in supporting development on the Far South Side.

**Elevated Chicago Convened 500+ People Around ETOD in 2024:** This year we convened more than 500 people across our regular Working Group meetings, community conversations, and events like our ETODay Party and ETOD Walking Tour. Many of the people we engaged were new to ETOD and to

our network, including both community members and elected officials, and we've worked to continue building on these new relationships.

## Transitions on Elevated Chicago Steering Committee:

Partners Juan Carlos Linares (Association House of Chicago/LUCHA) and Robert Wordlaw (Endeleo Institute) joined Elevated Chicago's Steering Committee, Christian Diaz (Palenque LSNA) became Co-Chair, and Audrey Wennink replaced Chandra Christmas-Rouse as the representative for Metropolitan Planning Council.

## PLACE

*About places we're impacting*

### Chicago Tribune Runs Front Page Story on Elevated Chicago Research on Vacant Lots Near Transit:

In March, the Chicago Tribune ran front page coverage of our research on vacant lots near transit. Our research, conducted in partnership with the Institute for Housing Studies at DePaul University, Endeleo Institute, and Garfield Park Community Council, examined the over-concentration of vacant lots near transit in Black and Brown neighborhoods on Chicago's South and West Sides.

### WBEZ Covers Palenque LSNA's Work to Advance ETOD in Logan Square:

In May, WBEZ covered Palenque LSNA's advocacy for development of more affordable housing near public transit in Logan Square. The article featured Elevated Chicago Steering Committee Co-Chair Christian Diaz.



Foundation for Homan Square celebrates its ribbon cutting in July.

### Foundation for Homan Square Opens New Permanent Supportive Housing:

In July, the Foundation for Homan Square celebrated the ribbon cutting for its Permanent Supportive Housing and Home Sweet Homan initiatives. The projects brought 21 units of permanently supportive rental housing and 20 affordable single-family homes to formerly vacant lots.



Oji Eggleston of the Renaissance Collaborative speaks on the organization's planned intergenerational housing complex near the Garfield Green Line in Washington Park during the ETOD Walking Tour.

**Elevated Chicago Hosts ETOD Walking Tour in Bronzeville and Washington Park:** In September, Elevated Chicago hosted nearly 30 attendees – policymakers, elected officials, funders, and developers – for a walking tour of ETOD sites in Bronzeville and Washington Park. Attendees got to see and hear about ETOD in context, on the ground, at sites including 43 Green, the Overton Center of Excellence in Bronzeville, the Green Line Performing Arts Center, the Arts Lawn at the University of Chicago Arts Block, and the forthcoming site of Abrams Intergenerational Village in Washington Park.



Rafael Robles of Duo Development in front of Starling in North Lawndale, then still under development

**Elevated Chicago Awards \$300,000 in Grants to Local ETOD Projects:** In 2024, Elevated Chicago awarded \$100,000 grants to three ETOD projects, including The K, a business incubator in West Garfield Park; Starling, a new community center in North Lawndale; and Bandwidth Chicago which provides free performing arts programming in East Garfield Park. The grants covered pre-development costs.

**Three Elevated Works-Supported Projects Reach Successful Ribbon Cuttings:** Three projects supported by technical assistance from Elevated Works reached successful ribbon cuttings in 2024. These included Wild Onion co-op

grocery store in Rogers Park, Starling community center by Duo Development in North Lawndale, and a design and print shop lead by Chicago Printworks in East Garfield Park.

### Nature Near Transit Installations Completed at Five City Sites:

Nature Near Transit is an initiative to bring nature-based solutions and green infrastructure to public transit hubs throughout Chicago, particularly disinvested areas with a need for cultural and climate resilience. In 2024, installations were completed at Trinity United Church of Christ in Washington Heights (site managed by the Endeavor Institute); the Palenque LSNA office green roof in Logan Square; the Overton Center for Excellence rain garden in Bronzeville; a refresh of the Chicago FarmWorks' bioswale in East Garfield Park; and bus stop seating and planters in Albany Park.

## PROCESS

### About our systems-change work

**City Awards Grant Funding to Six ETOD Projects:** In January, the City awarded \$1.3 million in grant funding to six local ETOD projects. These included projects in North Lawndale, Rogers Park, West Town, Grand Boulevard, East Garfield Park, and Albany Park to improve commercial spaces, create affordable homes, and bring new cultural spaces near public transit.

**Launching the Elevated Chicago Newsletter:** In January, we launched our bimonthly newsletter which includes updates on our work and local ETOD-related news and events. The newsletter is currently received by more than 700 people. Sign up at [elevatedchicago.org](http://elevatedchicago.org).



Elevated Chicago ETOD Working Group members at the retreat

**ETOD Working Group Holds First-Ever In-Person Retreat:** In June, our ETOD Working Group, co-convened with the Mayor's Office, held its first-ever in-person retreat. The retreat brought together

about 50 members of the working group to explore strategies for streamlining development of ETOD projects throughout the city and related policy priorities, such as right-sizing minimum parking mandates.



From left to right: Juan Sebastian Arias, Nneka Onwuzurike, Vickie Lakes-Battle, and Leslé Honoré

**Elevated Chicago Partners Tapped for Mayor's Cut the Tape Task Force:** In July, several Elevated Chicago partners were tapped by the Brandon Johnson administration to serve on the mayor's Cut the Tape Task Force which will develop recommendations for reducing administrative barriers to development in Chicago. Task Force members included partners Kate Ansorge (IFF), Kendra Freeman (MPC), Veronica Gonzalez (NHP Foundation), Steven Vance (Chicago CityScape), Phil Beckham (P3 Markets), Joy Aruguete (Bickerdike Redevelopment Corp.), and Kemena Brooks (The Community Builders).



A screenshot from our explainer video on right-sizing parking

**Elevated Chicago Launches Our ETOD Explainer Video Series:** In September, we launched our ETOD video explainer series, breaking down ETOD-related concepts with the aim of shifting the narrative around ETOD in Chicago and beyond. The topics of our video explainers so far include ETOD 101 for small and first-time developers, how ETOD benefits Black and Brown communities, and the case for right-sizing parking in Chicago.

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# 2024 highlights

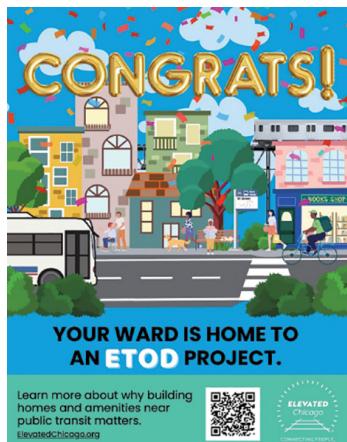
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Elevated Chicago at the Connected Communities Impact Table conference in Los Angeles

## 2nd Connected Communities Impact Table Convening in Los Angeles:

In September, Elevated Chicago members Juan Sebastian Arias, Marly Schott, Mike Tomas (Garfield Park Community Council), Christian Diaz (Palenque LSNA) and Pam Jones (Center for Neighborhood Technology) travelled to Los Angeles to learn about local ETOD policy and transit justice advocacy efforts. We met with our peer coalition leaders from Atlanta and Los Angeles as part of a national Connected Communities Impact Table.



ETOD educational poster created for ward offices with ETOD projects

## ETOD Outreach Campaign:

In September, we launched an ETOD outreach campaign, mailing ETOD info packets to Chicago's 50 alderpeople. This outreach facilitated several new introductions and conversations — some materials were designed mainly for the alderperson and their staff, while others, such as posters and handouts celebrating the ETOD projects in specific neighborhoods, were designed to be displayed and shared.



A breakout session at the National Economic Recovery Alliance (NERA) conference in Denver

## Juan Sebastian Arias Attends Final NERA Convening in Denver:

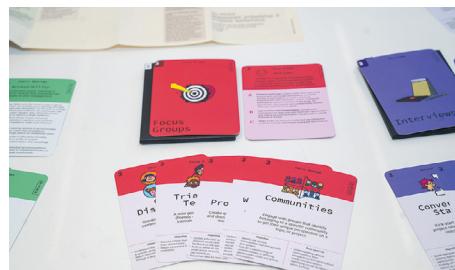
In October, Juan Sebastian Arias attended the final convening of the National Economic Recovery Alliance (NERA) in Denver to reflect on lessons learned and next steps for collaborative community leadership with peer leaders from the SF Bay Area, Memphis, Los Angeles, and Denver.



Panlists at the Mpact Conference in Philadelphia

## Elevated Works Presents at Mpact Conference in Philadelphia:

In October, Elevated Works partners Phil Beckham (P3 Markets), Jessica Nepomiachi (IFF) and Emily Laflamme (CNT) sat on a panel with ETOD advocates from Santa Clara and San Jose, California. Entitled "Tales from Two Cities: Empowering Communities with Resources to Achieve ETOD," the panel addressed essential roles in facilitating equitable development.



The In.Field Kit is a how-to guide for community engagement.

## Duo Development and Elevated Chicago Launch the In.Field Kit:

In December, we launched our In.Field Kit, developed with our partner Duo

Development. The kit is a step-by-step guide for how to execute deeper, more meaningful community engagement by incorporating Elevated Chicago's eight Community Engagement principles. The kit is available at [www.infieldkits.com](http://www.infieldkits.com).



Elevated Works partners at a technical assistance event

## Elevated Works Delivers Over 2,000 Hours of Technical Assistance to Local ETOD Developers:

The Elevated Works program closed the year delivering over 2,000 hours of technical assistance and nearly 850 hours of real estate coaching to ETOD developers throughout the city. TA providers supported developers with services ranging from understanding zoning requirements to legal support to development of marketing materials for project fundraising.

## More Than \$1 Million in Total Grants, Half-Million in Contracts:

In 2024 we made \$1,036,700 in total grants, with 80% (\$826,700) going to BIPOC-led organizations. Our total contracts amount was \$645,700, with 96% (\$620,700) going to WMBE organizations.



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## BE SOCIAL WITH US

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