



CITY OF CHICAGO • OFFICE OF THE MAYOR



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MAYOR BRANDON JOHNSON ANNOUNCES BUILD BETTER TOGETHER

This new initiative showcases and advances economic development, including growth, quality housing, businesses, jobs, lifestyle and cultural improvements for Chicagoans

CHICAGO – Today Mayor Brandon Johnson announced [Build Better Together](#), a comprehensive economic development strategy to drive inclusive and sustainable growth throughout Chicago at the groundbreaking for the adaptive reuse of 79 W. Monroe St. as 117 units of mixed-income housing. Under Mayor Brandon Johnson's leadership, **Build Better Together** is transforming programs, policies and process improvements that are making Chicago better, stronger and safer together.

Build Better Together is designed to bolster public-private partnerships and strengthen cross-collaboration among the city's Departments of Planning and Development (DPD), Housing (DOH), Cultural Affairs and Special Events (DCASE) and Business Affairs and Consumer Protection (BACP), as well as World Business Chicago (WBC), the city's public-private economic development agency.

"To drive development, growth and meaningful achievement in a city as large and diverse as Chicago, we must include all sectors and citizens—from businesses, institutions and government to the residents of all 77 community areas. **Build Better Together** will maximize the connections between all stakeholders and accelerate the development of infrastructure and assets that will not only enable successful change and progress in the near term but also foster a culture of continuous improvement," Mayor Johnson explained.

This initiative is based on three foundational pillars—quality and affordable housing for all, business innovation and job growth, and neighborhood investments and vibrant communities. **Build Better Together** is designed to provide Chicagoans with access to

what they need to live, work and thrive and prioritizes breaking down barriers to progress and making investments that directly improve people's lives.

"Build Better Together is a critical next step in our citywide effort to deliver lasting, neighborhood-level economic progress," Deputy Mayor of Business and Neighborhood Development Kenya Merritt said. "This encompassing strategy brings cohesion to the work that has been happening across departments—housing, planning, business development and culture—and focuses our efforts on creating meaningful, measurable outcomes in communities that have been overlooked historically. By deepening our partnerships, removing structural barriers and strategically investing in neighborhoods, we're ensuring that every resident and business has a stake in—and benefits from—Chicago's economic future."

Build Better Together Will Strengthen Chicago's Existing Assets

Build Better Together will enable Chicago's proactive city departments to build on and maximize recent improvements and advances brought to fruition due to [the Cut the Tape](#), a program Mayor Johnson initiated in [December 2023](#), and the \$1.25 billion [2024-2028 Housing and Economic Development \(HED\) bond](#) he constructed and funded in June 2024.

"The holistic approach is expediting project approval timelines by more than 40% while creating more opportunities for as-of-right construction through proactive zoning changes that support density, vitality and transit-oriented investments," DPD Commissioner Ciere Boatright said. "Meanwhile, the bond and other incentives are strengthening residential markets and encouraging population growth while enabling catalytic investments that attract and retain new business, support workforce development and preserve the buildings and institutions that make Chicago neighborhoods so unique."

"**Build Better Together** represents a turning point in how we connect resources, policies and communities to accelerate the development of affordable housing and thriving neighborhoods. With programs like Rebuild 2.0, City Lots for Working Families, and soon, Green Social Housing, we're able to direct funding and development resources where they're needed most," DOH Commissioner Lissette Castañeda said. "Programs like Cut the Tape are eliminating unnecessary barriers and making it easier to build affordable and mixed-income housing across Chicago. Reducing bureaucracy means developers can move from concept to construction faster, ensuring families get the homes they need without unnecessary delays. By increasing access to homeownership and preserving existing affordable housing, we are not just constructing buildings—we are building the future of Chicago's neighborhoods."

"Small businesses are the foundation of our economy, and **Build Better Together** is a game-changer in how we support them," BACP Commissioner Ivan Capifali said. "Chicago's

50,000-plus businesses are engines of job creation, innovation and economic mobility. Build Better Together is enabling us to build on our newly streamlined business licensing process powered by Cut the Tape, which offers transparent guidance and vastly reduced wait times. It also adds to the value of our 65 Neighborhood Business Development Centers that provide free, hyper-local assistance to entrepreneurs. This type of support ensures that Chicago will remain one of the best cities in the nation for small businesses to start, grow and scale."

"Chicago's cultural identity is one of our greatest economic strengths. The depth and breadth of our arts, music and creative industries not only enrich our communities but also attract businesses, top talent and investment. Our city's festivals, art exhibitions and public events are more than just celebrations—they are economic engines that drive tourism, create jobs and generate revenue for local businesses," DCASE Commissioner Clinée Hedspeth noted. "Our cultural scene is a key pillar of our economic future, and **Build Better Together** will enable us to expand our commitment to supporting and showcasing the artists, organizations, cultural experiences and creative economies in all our neighborhoods and strengthen our city's global reputation even further."

Build Better Together Positions Chicago for Success

"Chicago is a world-class city that offers its residents and businesses exceptional advantages and its visitors exceptional and singular experiences. **Build Better Together** will allow us to maximize all our city's unique and varied assets, attract more businesses and residents and strengthen our investments in housing, culture and business support and creation to make our city more compelling, attractive and welcoming to all who experience it," Mayor Johnson said.

"Chicago's economic success is driven by bold ideas, targeted investments, and strong public-private collaboration," World Business Chicago President & CEO Phil Clement said. "The **Build Better Together** strategy reflects this momentum—connecting businesses, investors, and communities to opportunities that generate inclusive, sustainable growth across the city and region.

"In 2024 alone, 140 companies chose to expand, relocate or launch in Chicagoland—including 10 on the South and West Sides. That momentum helped earn Chicago the distinction of Top Metro in the U.S. for Corporate Relocation by *Site Selection Magazine*," Clement continued. "Business attraction remains a core focus for our team and board, with every member actively recruiting and managing a pipeline of high-potential companies. We're also building on global engagement, with ongoing foreign direct investment efforts tied to the UK, Japan and Germany.

"On the innovation front, Chicagoland's emergence as a quantum hub is the result of over \$5 billion in investment and alignment at every level—from federal and state partners to

academic leadership at institutions like the University of Illinois and the University of Chicago. And through our development of an economic plan for the city, we've convened over 200 executives to align around six core growth sectors and the industries driving Chicago's vibrancy," Clement noted. 'All of this reinforces our commitment to keeping the central business district—and all 77 community areas—competitive, thriving and future-ready.'

For more information, please visit

https://www.chicago.gov/city/en/progs/build_better_together.html

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