

## **Department of Planning and Development**

**2025 Budget Hearing – November 8, 2024**

### **Commissioner Ciere Boatright**

Greetings and thank you, Chair and members of the City Council, for this opportunity to provide a brief overview of the Department of Planning and Development's budget request for 2025, along with a quick recap of recent accomplishments and near-term goals.

For the record, my name is Ciere Boatright, and I am the commissioner for DPD. I'm joined on the dais by First Deputy Commissioner Patrick Murphey. In the box we have:

- Deputy Commissioner Alessandra Budnik
- Deputy Commissioner Kathy Dickhut
- Deputy Commissioner Jim Harbin
- Managing Deputy Commissioner Tim Jeffries
- Assistant Commissioner Paul Moody
- Deputy Commissioner Mary O'Connor
- Deputy Commissioner Cindy Roubik
- Managing Deputy Commissioner Dawveed Scully
- Assistant Commissioner Noah Szafraniec
- and Assistant Commissioner Chris Jang

As you know, DPD administers the City's economic development, zoning, planning and historic preservation initiatives, as well as numerous inter-agency efforts that support our schools, parks, natural resources, arts and culture, and other quality-of-life amenities that your constituents expect and deserve.

The department's \$132.7 million budget request for 2025 supports our collective goals for equitable and resilient neighborhoods and Mayor Johnson's planning priorities for Chicagoans citywide.

In 2024, we welcomed 25 new employees and promoted staff to fill five critical vacancies, bringing our payroll to 162 professionals, including an Operations Bureau that we share with the Department of Housing.

The remainder of my remarks will focus on priority initiatives and projects before I welcome questions.

I'll start with zoning. I am happy to share that, through October, DPD has shepherded more than \$5 billion in new projects through the Plan Commission process that leads to City Council. That's almost 25 percent more than all of 2023 and 40 percent more than all of 2022. And this does not

include the entitlements filed this fall for the United Center expansion and the Illinois Quantum Microelectronics Park that are conservatively valued at more than \$12 billion in total investment.

I am also pleased to report that 2024 saw a significant reduction in the time it takes for new projects to be heard at Plan Commission. We are down from 131 days to 79 days for typical projects – and that’s a direct response to the business community’s desire for an efficient review process.

In short, DPD’s development pipeline is growing and our approval time is shrinking.

I will pivot to our business assistance efforts and the grant funding we provide for neighborhood investment projects, starting with the new financial tool that City Council approved this spring. It’s the Housing and Economic Development Bond that we’re in the process of allocating based on project geography, eligible costs, and financial needs.

Approximately \$50 million has been advanced by DPD to date, including \$5 million each for the HOPE Center in Austin, the Growing Home expansion in Englewood, and the Quantum Park in South Chicago.

It also includes up to \$25 million for the Community Development Grants that will be announced this fall, and up to \$10 million for the Missing Middle housing initiative that I’ll return to shortly.

For awareness, DPD grants use a variety of sources such as TIF and the Neighborhood Opportunity Fund. Our grants are categorized as small, medium and large, with medium and large grants ranging from \$250,000 to \$5 million, and \$5 million and above, respectively.

Our medium and large allocations in 2024 involve more than 100 redevelopment agreements using \$350 million in City funds, plus 24 sister agency agreements using \$100 million in City funds. Collectively they represent about \$1.6 billion in neighborhood investments.

In terms of small grants, DPD support is at an all-time high – with more than 500 active projects valued at \$125 million that are announced, underway or nearing completion in virtually every ward.

Our next small funding round through the Neighborhood Opportunity Fund opens next week for projects on the West, Southwest and South sides, and appropriate aldermanic offices will be receiving promotional materials for the three-month application period.

Our business and zoning initiatives are closely aligned to our neighborhood planning efforts, a few of which I will mention now, starting with the unprecedented commercial vacancies in the Loop.

Five anticipated adaptive re-use projects valued at \$763 million are moving through the review and approval process for the LaSalle corridor, which is poised to absorb more than 1,400 new, mixed-income apartments. Collectively, the projects include more than 50 floors and 1.6 million square feet of vacant space, which will put eyes on the street, support the tax base, and add to much needed Loop vitality.

DPD's commercial area support will be further reinforced by the new Business Improvement District legislation that will open for applications later this year, as well through community-led planning and best practices. For example, our new Ground Floor Residential Design Guidelines are helping property owners repurpose their vacant storefronts for residential uses. And we will continue to propose that ground-floor residential conversions be allowed to move forward as-of-right in most retail corridors, which would create new housing opportunities for residents and provide new revenues for building owners.

Another residential initiative we recently launched involves Missing Middle homes on vacant City lots. It started in North Lawndale, where we are selling six clusters of City lots for one-to-six-unit buildings that have gone "missing" in recent decades. We will be incentivizing construction through the HED bond as we expand this initiative to additional neighborhoods next year and beyond.

Also note that an additional 300 City lots are currently available through ChiBlockBuilder land sale portal for purchase as side-yards, affordable housing, market rate commercial construction, and other uses through November 15th or January 3rd, depending on the location.

Other planning initiatives that were either initiated or finalized this year include:

- The Englewood Agro-Eco Land Use Plan that is guiding investments near the \$90 million Englewood Nature Trail.
- The Harlem Avenue Visioning Study that is guiding public realm improvements on the Northwest Side.
- The 95th Street Corridor TOD Plan in Roseland and Washington Heights
- The 79th Street Corridor Plan in Auburn Gresham
- And updated industrial land use plans for the Armitage and Lake Calumet area industrial corridors.

All these efforts are leveraging the power of planning and community members' insights to achieve local goals and a healthier and more vibrant city overall. We aim to take each of them to Plan Commission by early 2025.

I will conclude my formal comments by inviting you all to our second annual City Civics Day tomorrow at Malcom X College, where we will be co-hosting more than a dozen panel discussions and seminars to help civic-minded residents become more engaged in their communities and learn how to effectively collaborate with the City on neighborhood goals.

This is one of several DPD engagements efforts in 2024 to reach unique constituencies, such as the citywide Black History Harvest and the Preservation Expo events we hosted this spring. City Civics Days will include great presenters, entertainment, art, and free lunch so, please, feel free to join us.

On behalf of the entire Department of Planning and Development, thank you for your time, consideration and partnership as we work toward our collective goals.

Thank you.