ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Steering Committee

10th Ward:

Alderwoman Susan Sadlowski Garza (2021 - 2023)
Alderman Peter Chico (2023 - Present)

Hegewisch Business Association:

Bob Wisz (2021 - 2022)
Kevin Beauchamp (2023 - Present)
Jason Highland (2023 - Present)

Community members:

Karina Ayala-Bermejo, Resident/Instituto del Progreso Latino
Olga Bautista, Resident/Southeast Environmental Task Force
Levi Bray, William Powers State Recreation Area
Sheila Chandler, Harbor Point Estates
Jesse Diaz, Hegewisch Nutrition
Dan Lira, Resident/ONT Media
Oscar Sanchez, Resident/Southeast Youth Alliance
Lisa Sowa-Downs, Resident/Cub Scouts/Hegewisch Times

Cover photo credit: Lisa Sowa-Downs
## CONTENTS

**INTRODUCTION: A PATH FORWARD**

The first plan focused solely on the Hegewisch neighborhood.

- Background 7
- Planning process 7
- Community engagement activities 10

**GOAL: BRING THE COMMUNITY TOGETHER**

Objective: Get everyone in the same room, and on the same page.

- Create a new “Hegewisch Coalition.” 15

Objective: Create a new town square to bring the community together throughout the year.

- Establish the purpose of the new town square, and then identify all the possible places it could go. 17
- Determine approximate costs of new town square and identify viable funding options. 22
- Carry out an inclusive community planning process to design the new town square. 23

Objective: Explore the potential role of a new Hegewisch community center.

- Identify the potential programs and services of a new Hegewisch community center, and then develop a feasible plan. 25

**GOAL: MAKE HEGEWISCH’S YOUTH A PRIORITY**

Objective: Provide great spaces and activities for Hegewisch’s young residents.

- Create a youth advisory council led by young Hegewisch residents to advise on neighborhood issues and programming of activities, events, and services. 28
- Make sure the new town square offers outdoor programming, activities, and events targeted to Hegewisch’s teenage residents. 30
- Transform Clay’s play areas by applying to make it a “Space to Grow” schoolyard. 31
GOAL: MAKE BALTIMORE AVENUE AND BRANDON AVENUE A PLACE WHERE PEOPLE AND BUSINESSES WANT TO BE

Objective: Attract shops and restaurants to Hegewisch.
› Focus on attracting neighborhood-supported retail that serves the needs of Hegewisch residents.
› Evaluate the feasibility of mixed-use transit-oriented development at the underutilized Metra parking lot near the South Shore train station.

Objective: Improve the appearance and pedestrian infrastructure of Hegewisch’s commercial corridors (Baltimore Avenue, Brandon Avenue).
› Prioritize filling vacant storefronts.
› Pursue façade improvement programs to improve the appearance of commercial properties along the corridors.
› Repair and improve sidewalks along Brandon Avenue and ensure pedestrian safety.
› Improve street lighting for pedestrians within Hegewisch’s central business area.
› Commission high-quality murals within the central business area that celebrate Hegewisch’s history and its residents, both yesterday and today.
› Plant more trees and provide more seating options to improve the appearance and enjoyment of Hegewisch’s commercial streets.

Objective: Create public spaces in the central business area where people will want to spend time.
› Pursue funding opportunities to help create a town square in the Baltimore commercial corridor.
› Host events like a farmers’ market, concerts, and other community programming in the central business area.
› Ensure that there are places, activities, and events for Hegewisch’s youth in the central business area.

Objective: Maintain a supportive business environment.
› Take the next step toward creation of a Special Service Area (SSA).
› Make services a main component of the SSA.
› Support existing commercial businesses and help attract new ones.
› Market existing neighborhood businesses through special events and marketing initiatives.
GOAL: MAKE HEGEWISCH A RECREATION DESTINATION AND AN EVEN MORE ATTRACTIVE PLACE TO LIVE

Objective: Complete and improve Hegewisch’s pedestrian and bicycle networks.
› Identify key projects that promote complete streets via physical infrastructure improvements.
› Improve bicycle parking, both within the neighborhood and out in Hegewisch’s natural and recreation areas.
› Install attractive signs throughout the neighborhood that provide maps of bicycle and pedestrian networks, as well as clear directions to key destinations in Hegewisch.
› Install benches and seating areas to break up the walking distance between destinations and create spaces for socializing.

Objective: Improve Hegewisch’s natural and recreation assets and programming.
› Form a Park Advisory Council at Mann Park that can support and promote ways for the community to better utilize programs and facilities offered at Mann Park and more.
› Improve existing marketing and promotion strategies for recreation programs and events.
› Work with William Powers State Recreation Area to explore adding regular recreational activities at Wolf Lake.

Objective: Promote community efforts to “green” and beautify the neighborhood and expand environmental stewardship and education opportunities.
› Help residents and local organizations keep Hegewisch’s streets clean and attractive.
› Promote opportunities for residents to join and support local environmental organizations and nonprofits for a sustainable and clean neighborhood.
› Preserve and replenish the urban tree canopy in Hegewisch by planting new trees along commercial corridors and city parkways.

Objective: Turn a community hazard into a community asset.
› Work closely with EPA as a community to identify and assess possible future uses of the Schroud property following remediation.

GOAL: MAKE HEGEWISCH’S ROADS SAFER FOR ALL AND LIMIT TRUCK TRAFFIC IN RESIDENTIAL AREAS

Objective: Explore options to limit truck traffic in residential areas.
› Identify options for new truck routes that will limit truck traffic in residential areas while supporting businesses.

Objective: Improve safety at especially hazardous intersections.
› Explore potential ways to increase safety at key intersections.
INTRODUCTION

A PATH FORWARD

PRIORITIES
The first plan focused solely on the Hegewisch neighborhood.

The Hegewisch Business Association (HBA) worked with the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP) over the past two years to develop a neighborhood plan for Hegewisch that will help guide choices and decisions that are made in the future.

Background

Who initiated the project?

The Hegewisch Business Association, with support from then-10th Ward Alderwoman Susan Sadlowski Garza, applied for assistance from CMAP’s technical assistance program, which provides planning assistance to municipalities, counties, nonprofits, and intergovernmental organizations to plan across jurisdictions.

What were the main objectives of the project?

- To provide wise guidance that reflects and addresses the community’s priorities and vision for the neighborhood’s future.
- To engage and bring together Hegewisch’s residents in common purpose.

What is CMAP?

The Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP) (est. 2005) is responsible for comprehensive regional transportation planning in Cook, DuPage, Kane, Kendall, Lake, McHenry, and Will counties in northeastern Illinois.

The agency developed and now guides implementation of ON TO 2050, the long-range plan to help the seven counties and 284 communities of northeastern Illinois implement strategies that address transportation, housing, economic development, open space, the environment, and other quality-of-life issues.
Map 2: Study area
Planning process.

The planning process to create the Hegewisch Neighborhood Plan included multiple steps and lasted over two years from when the project was launched during the pandemic. The process was crafted in consultation with the HBA and, despite challenges caused by the pandemic, was designed to include extensive input from Hegewisch’s residents, business owners, community leaders, and other stakeholders.

To inform the plan’s recommendations and provide additional guidance to HBA, CMAP contracted with Valerie S. Kretchmer Associates, Inc. (VSKA) to complete a commercial market analysis and economic development strategy. VSKA presented their findings and recommendations to HBA and the 10th Ward office in Fall 2022. (Their report was shared with the entire community during community review and prioritization of plan recommendations.)

Community review and prioritization of the plan’s recommendations was rescheduled to occur following the runoff election for the 10th Ward’s new alderman, in Spring 2023.

- Project initiation (Late Winter 2021)
- Existing conditions analysis (Summer - Fall 2021)
- Visioning and plan development (Late Fall 2021 - End of 2022)
- Commercial market analysis and economic development strategy by VSKA (Fall 2022)
- Community Review and Prioritization (Spring 2023)
- Implementation (Late Summer 2023)

Community engagement activities.

To better understand and address the community’s needs and vision for Hegewisch’s future, a number of community engagement activities were conducted to gather public feedback. In addition to the ongoing input of the project’s Steering Committee, this included conducting confidential interviews with key stakeholders throughout the community as well as online engagement activities, surveys, and public workshops to identify the primary concerns of local residents. Some key highlights include:

Community engagement website (engage.cmap.illinois.gov/hegewisch-neighborhood-plan)

The project’s community engagement website provided extensive information about the planning process, including answers to Frequently Asked Questions and various project documents such as the Existing Conditions Report, meeting presentations, VSKA’s commercial market analysis and economic development strategy, and the plan’s draft recommendations.

But perhaps most important, the project website offered residents and other stakeholders multiple opportunities to provide input to the project team. In addition to various surveys, the website offered an activity titled What are places we should focus on? (please see screenshot of activity on following page)

This activity gave community members the opportunity to “drop a pin” on a location within an interactive map of Hegewisch to show the project team where there was:

- a good thing to preserve
- something that could be better
- an important problem to address
- a future opportunity

This activity proved to be very popular throughout the planning process, providing the project team—and the entire community—with a tremendous amount of insight into the community.
Figure 1: Screenshot of engagement website activity *What are places we should focus on?*

Figure 2: Screenshot of engagement website activity *What are places we should focus on?, showing detail of community input along Baltimore Avenue.*
Community-wide workshop
At the mid-point of the project, as pandemic restrictions on public gatherings began to ease, the team held its community-wide workshop in the banquet room at Steve’s Lounge. Approximately 70 residents and other stakeholders braved the bitterly cold weather to attend the interactive workshop, which included anonymous live polling on key neighborhood issues, a visual preference survey to help reveal community preferences for a future town square, and lots of spirited discussion and feedback from the community.

The community input gathered that evening deepened the project team’s understanding of the priorities of the community, as well as revealing new insights and ideas for the future—all of which were vital to developing the plan’s recommendations.

Best of all, people seemed to enjoy the event, especially seeing the instant results of the anonymous live polling. At the end of the evening and following the event, many remarked that they couldn’t remember a time when such a diverse group of community members gathered together and were asked for their opinions and ideas for the future.

Youth issues workshop
The concerns and ideas of young residents—especially teenage residents—are often overlooked. One reason for this is that they are often not consulted. After the project team heard from several parents that there are relatively few activities for Hegewisch’s teenage residents, team members searched for ways to reach these residents and get their input.

Fortunately, teachers and staff at Grissom Elementary offered to work with the project team, successfully recruiting over 50 teenage students to a youth issues workshop, held on Zoom. It was a boisterous event, the students in high spirits, often building on each other’s insights and ideas—especially in their rapidly flowing written comments in the chat. This event rewarded the project team with a better understanding of Hegewisch’s young residents, which influenced several plan recommendations.

Community review and prioritization of plan recommendations
In Spring 2023, following the runoff election for the 10th Ward’s new alderman, the project team provided the members of the project Steering Committee with the draft plan recommendations for their review. After two weeks for review, the project team met with the Steering Committee (including newly-elected Alderman Peter Chico) to present and review the draft plan recommendations together as a group, answering questions and receiving feedback from Steering Committee members. While some recommendations were more popular than others, the Steering Committee’s review revealed that the plan recommendations addressed the challenges and opportunities that were identified by the community as priorities.

Taking the next step, the project team shared the plan recommendations with the entire community. In addition to posting the plan recommendations on the project’s website for all to read, the project team created a survey on the website that asked residents to rank their top five plan objectives from the plan. This survey replicated an activity that the project team conducted outside of Grissom Elementary School during afternoon dismissal. By placing dot stickers next to their favorite objectives, parents, students, teachers, and several community members told the project team which objectives were the highest priority for implementation. The results of the in-person dot voting and the online survey were very similar and consistent with what the project team had been hearing throughout the development of the plan.

The last event was held at Katalyst Music Gallery and Coffee Shop, and focused on the prioritization of plan recommendations most relevant to Hegewisch’s central business area and local small businesses. The votes of attendees (using dot stickers) indicated priorities for Hegewisch’s central business area that were consistent with what the project team had been hearing during development of the plan, including at a focus group targeted to local business owners that was held in 2022. (For folks who may have missed the event, HBA sent an online survey replicating the in-person event to its entire mailing list.)
What should be the highest priority?

Through a variety of in-person events and online surveys at the end of development of the Hegewisch Neighborhood Plan, the project team asked the community to identify which objectives and recommendations should be the highest priority.

Looking at the entire scope of the plan, the community consistently indicated that the following objectives should be tackled first (in order of appearance in plan):

- Explore the potential role of a new Hegewisch community center.
- Attract shops and restaurants to Hegewisch (by having HBA and the 10th Ward office connect property owners and prospective entrepreneurs regarding available retail spaces, including encouraging pop-ups and temporary stores).
- Complete and improve Hegewisch’s pedestrian and bicycle networks (and install attractive signs throughout the neighborhood that provide maps of bicycle and pedestrian networks and clear directions to key destinations).
- Turn a community hazard into a community asset (prevent the unsafe use of the Schroud property/“Coal Hills” and plan for its future role in the community).
- Explore options to limit truck traffic in residential areas (by designating new truck routes, and by increasing enforcement and reporting of violations by large trucks using 134th Street/Boy Scout Road).
- Improve safety at especially hazardous intersections.

And looking at the specific recommendations relevant to Hegewisch’s central business area and local small businesses, the community indicated the following recommendations should be tackled first (in order of appearance in plan):

- Focus on attracting neighborhood-supported retail that serves the needs of Hegewisch residents.
- Prioritize filling vacant storefronts.
- Pursue façade improvement programs to improve the appearance of commercial properties along the corridors.
- Repair and improve sidewalks along Brandon Avenue and ensure pedestrian safety.
- Improve street lighting for pedestrians within Hegewisch’s central business area.
- Support existing commercial businesses and help attract new ones.
- Market existing neighborhood businesses through special events and marketing initiatives.
GOAL

BRING THE COMMUNITY TOGETHER
Get everyone in the same room, and on the same page.

**OBJECTIVE**

To implement the recommendations of the Hegewisch Neighborhood Plan, as well as address unforeseen challenges and opportunities in the future, Hegewisch needs to “get everybody in the same room,” even if just a few times a year, and “get everyone on the same page” to ensure coordinated action.

**RECOMMENDATION**

Create a new “Hegewisch Coalition.”

**Why is it needed?**

One resident told us that Hegewisch is “a place where people will come together and help each other.” From the 10th Ward office to the Hegewisch Business Association to the Hegewisch Community Watch Association to the local congregations to the Southeast Environmental Taskforce to the Local School Councils of Clay and Grissom Elementary Schools and many more, its devoted leaders, groups, and residents are lending a hand to make Hegewisch the best neighborhood it can be.

But to reach its potential, Hegewisch needs to create a new structure for community involvement and collaboration that is inclusive, united, and sustained. And no single group or individual can do it alone.

**What needs to be done?**

A new umbrella “Hegewisch Coalition” should be formed, bringing together the community’s broad and diverse stakeholders to meet every three months to address and coordinate action on (a) recommendations from the Hegewisch Neighborhood Plan considered top priority and/or “low-hanging fruit” and (b) new challenges or opportunities requiring immediate, coordinated action. While the effort will require designated leadership and formal agendas, the quarterly meetings should be open to all in the community and emphasize transparency and accountability.

Provided that individuals serving in leadership roles in the Hegewisch Coalition are willing to serve on a voluntary basis, and sufficient space for the quarterly meetings can be found, implementing this recommendation should not require special funding.
It should be noted that some communities across Chicago and the United States have begun compensating participants for the time and expertise, in order to reduce barriers to participation as well as demonstrate that the knowledge and dedication of community members is valued. This can range from honorariums for community members who have committed to provide long-term assistance and leadership to smaller-scale gestures such as gift cards for all participants. At a minimum, providing free onsite childcare at community meetings can remove one of the most common barriers to resident participation.

How do we get it done?

As the first step of implementation of the Hegewisch Neighborhood Plan, the members of the Steering Committee should recommend a broad and diverse selection of community stakeholders who will commit to providing leadership at quarterly community-wide meetings—which could be called the “Hegewisch Coalition.” As discussed above, these quarterly meetings will address and seek coordinated action on priority plan recommendations as well as new challenges or opportunities requiring immediate action.

The leadership of these quarterly meetings should also create a single source of information to keep residents well informed of the schedule and agenda for upcoming meetings, along with thorough and easy-to-understand summaries of past meetings (covering the meeting’s discussion, comments, and decisions on next steps). Most likely this will be a website—or at least a webpage on the 10th Ward office’s website—with information accessible to all, without need to register or be a member.

First steps could include:

1. Identify a leadership team of approximately 7 to 9 people who will carry out the Hegewisch Coalition’s meetings and take responsibility for any follow-up actions that need to be taken (based on consensus reached at the meetings).

It will be essential that the community agrees that the leadership of the new Hegewisch Coalition is representative of the variety of experience and perspectives in Hegewisch. This will be difficult to accomplish. As the sponsors of the Hegewisch Neighborhood Plan, the 10th Ward’s alderperson and a designated representative from the Hegewisch Business Association should occupy two of the slots. However, the remaining slots should be filled with dedicated community stakeholders, including—but not limited to—any of the following:

- Representatives of formal local groups such as the Hegewisch Community Watch Association, the Calumet Area Industrial Commission, the Southeast Environmental Task Force, etc.
- Residents of Harbor Point Estates and the Senior Suites community
- Teenage residents
- Representation from Local schools (Clay, Grissom, and George Washington HS)
- Leadership at Mann Park and William Powers Recreation Area
- Leaders or members of local religious congregations

3. Schedule quarterly meetings, preferably occurring every three months at the same time (for example, the first Tuesday of every third month at 6:00 p.m.), preferably in the same location (a community school such as Clay or Grissom would be ideal). After scheduling, the leadership team should enlist help to successfully promote the meetings.

4. Determine how best to carry out the first meeting, attempting to balance inclusivity with the need to reach consensus and make measurable progress implementing plan recommendations and addressing immediate neighborhood challenges or opportunities.
Create a new town square to bring the community together throughout the year.

OBJECTIVE

Hegewisch would benefit from a new town square, which would serve as a permanent, central gathering spot for events and daily activities, as well as a source of pride for the neighborhood.

RECOMMENDATION

Establish the purpose of the new town square, and then identify all the possible places it could go.

Why is it needed?

There appears to be broad support for a new town square in Hegewisch and for it to be located at the corner of Baltimore Avenue and 133rd Street.

While the actual needs, goals, and specific uses of the proposed town square have not yet been identified thoroughly, the community has a head start. As part of the community-wide workshop, residents were asked to respond to a visual preference survey, which provided some insight into community preferences regarding amenities and uses for the new town square (please see Community feedback on potential town square uses and amenities on the following page).

And while the four contiguous empty lots at the corner of Baltimore and 113rd seem like a natural and ideal location, the individual lots have different owners, and there are indications that the owner of one of the lots in the middle is less interested in selling their property at this time. Viable alternatives should be considered.

What needs to be done?

The community should carefully consider the purpose of the new town square: the overall goals of creating one, as well as the specific uses of the town square that will be popular and enjoyed. While the answers to these questions should be thoughtful and thorough, they are not intended to represent a formal and final “program” for the new town square. Once these questions are answered, the community should identify all the locations in the neighborhood which could fulfill any or all those needs, goals, and specific uses.
At this early stage, identifying the purpose of the new town square can be done by residents, and would not require anything more than their time, focus, and dedication. By establishing the goals and specific uses of the new town square, the community will be able to identify and evaluate potential alternative locations in case the location at Baltimore and 133rd does not work out. And whatever location is ultimately chosen, the community will be in a stronger position to secure funding and then plan and design the new town square.

How do we get it done?

A working group, designated by either HBA or the Hegewisch Coalition, should expand on the good work done thus far by a few members of HBA. It should determine the structure and schedule of the next steps of the process, which should begin with identification of the goals and specific uses of the new town square, then proceed with identification and assessment of all viable locations.

First steps could include:

1. Determine who will lead. Since HBA has spearheaded this effort, it should decide who will lead these efforts: a working group of HBA members or one formed through the activities of the Hegewisch Coalition.

2. Plan—and then fully carry out—the process to identify the purpose of the new town square and prepare report of results.

3. Decide whether to conduct property search for potential locations through the working group or through professional real estate assistance.

Community feedback on potential town square uses and amenities

As part of the community-wide workshop, residents were asked “If Hegewisch gets a new town square, what do you want?” and presented with a series of images. Below are the results of the survey, with the number of votes each image received in blue:
How to create a great place

Hegewisch should hire a design firm with experience creating great public spaces (see recommendation below). But to inspire and prep the community for the creation of its town square, it should take advantage of the wisdom, insights, and best practices that have been gathered and made available by some of the leading creators of great public spaces, including the Project for Public Spaces and Gehl Architects.

The Project for Public Spaces has developed and continued to refine the following graphic diagram identifying What makes a great place? Before the community identifies the actual needs, goals, and specific uses of the proposed town square, it would be wise to consider the qualities identified in the diagram.

Similarly, Gehl Architects has developed the following chart they use to evaluate existing public spaces—which can be used to anticipate the fundamental needs and considerations for Hegewisch’s new town square:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Protection</th>
<th>Comfort</th>
<th>Enjoyment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Protection against traffic and accidents.</td>
<td>Options for mobility.</td>
<td>Options for seeing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protection against harm by others.</td>
<td>Options to stand and linger.</td>
<td>Options for talking and listening/ hearing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protection against unpleasant sensory experiences.</td>
<td>Options for sitting.</td>
<td>Options for play, exercise, and activities.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
RECOMMENDATION

Determine approximate costs of new town square and identify viable funding options.

Why is it needed?

The Hegewisch Business Association has already been working with local elected officials and other partners to secure funding to purchase land for the creation of a new Hegewisch “town square.” But not only will it be necessary to nail down the details of that funding, the community needs to determine the full range of likely costs for the new town square.

What needs to be done?

The town square working group should learn the likely costs of the new town square: land acquisition, essential infrastructure improvements, design, installation of desired amenities and other physical features of the town square. They should then identify feasible sources of funding to satisfy these costs.

These steps would typically be part of the work of a hired landscape architecture or design-build firm. However, it appears that the community may need to pursue a more economical approach, relying on research by community volunteers, aided by assistance by City and regional partners and others sharing their expertise on a pro-bono basis. With some effort, Hegewisch can get a rough estimate of likely costs and identify several options for funding.

Once the community knows those costs, it can move forward with greater confidence and be in a stronger position as it seeks—and competes—for funding.

How do we get it done?

The town square working group should seek the expertise of similar communities—or similar organizations—that have created community spaces like the town square Hegewisch seeks to create.

City partners like DPD and the Chicago Park District and regional partners like CMAP can help locate communities or organizations who would be good to talk to. Additionally, the Illinois Chapter of the American Society of Landscape Architects may be able to match Hegewisch with pro-bono assistance to help it gain a better understanding of what to expect and how to proceed.

(NOTE: While HBA wants Hegewisch to own and program the new town square—not the City—DPD and the Chicago Park District should be consulted for their expertise and assistance.)

First steps could include:

1. Schedule a meeting with appropriate staff from DPD, Chicago Park District, and CMAP to identify communities and organizations who may be able to provide guidance (and lessons learned) to help Hegewisch.

2. Ask City or regional partners to assist with connecting them with the pro-bono service program of the Illinois Chapter of the American Society of Landscape Architects.

3. Research and identify all potential funding sources that are relevant and feasible. Schedule meetings with funders.
Why is it needed?

HBA should be commended for initiating and leading the effort to create a new Hegewisch town square. Building on input from this plan’s community workshop (regarding community preferences for uses and amenities in the new town square), the town square working group should determine the initial goals and specific needs for the new town square. But for the town square to be truly successful—to be well used and loved and meet the potential of the idea—it needs broad input from residents.

What needs to be done?

Part of the funding acquired for the creation of a new town square should be reserved for hiring a design firm that can lead a community engagement process that will determine the final “program” for the new town square, to ensure the creation of a new community space worthy of Hegewisch.

The cost to do this will depend on the extent of services and expert assistance sought by the community. The Chicago Street Corridor Plan, prepared for the City of Joliet in 2018 (discussed below), focused on the creation of a larger city plaza and cost $120,000. If Hegewisch is unable to acquire the needed funding, the community may need to be resourceful and enlist the help of City and regional partners, as well as pro bono assistance from the Illinois Chapter of the ASLA. While this assistance is unlikely to result in a full, buildable design for the new town square, it could help Hegewisch develop a high-quality community engagement process that would help identify what the community actually wants.

There is no substitute for the work of professionals with extensive experience creating great public spaces. But regardless of how the community gets there, it is vital to know what the community wants and what will make Hegewisch’s new town square truly successful.

How do we get it done?

The town square working group should ensure that an engagement process takes place that comprehensively explores the community’s needs and preferences—as well as its ideas—for the new town square.

First steps could include:

1. Reserve sufficient funding to hire a design firm with extensive experience creating great public spaces, including conducting meaningful and successful community engagement. If sufficient funding is not available, they should obtain assistance from City and regional partners, including the Illinois Chapter of the ASLA.

2. Work either with the design firm or partners to develop a meaningful community engagement process, including at least one event open to all.

3. Ensure that community engagement events are attended by as many residents and other members of the community as possible, including new residents and those not traditionally involved in civic affairs in Hegewisch, such as teenage residents.
Example:

Although larger in scale and scope, the City of Joliet’s Chicago Street Corridor Plan offers a good example of how to plan for the creation of a new town square. Prepared for the City of Joliet by an expert team of planners, landscape architects, engineers, and even graphic designers (for new street signage), the 2018 plan focused most of its attention on the creation of a new city plaza alongside Chicago Street, Joliet’s primary commercial corridor.

Building on existing assets in the immediate area, detailed concepts for the city plaza were developed over a period of 14 months through several working meetings with City Staff and stakeholders, an advisory committee, and a community-wide public forum. In addition to providing many visual examples of a wide variety of options, the project team created a rough scale model of the plaza site and immediate area, so that residents and other stakeholders could explore options in a hands-on fashion.

Key elements of the design for the new city plaza included a large green space, flexible stage/raised seating platform, “red carpet” pavement connecting the square to the Rialto Square Theatre across the street from the plaza, a library garden that would include a storyteller corner for children, a water feature, unique lighting, seating nooks, and space for future large-scale public art.

In 2022, the City Council authorized the City to apply for a State grant of up to $3 million—which would require the City to match the amount of the State grant—to fund construction of the new city plaza.
Explore the potential role of a new Hegewisch community center.

Hegewisch already has many amenities that can be enhanced to better serve community needs. But there is significant resident interest in the idea of a new Hegewisch community center, and the Hegewisch Business Association is in the process of acquiring a building for this purpose. There should be a focused effort to explore the potential programs and services that could be offered, and what it would take to make it happen.

**OBJECTIVE**

Hegewisch already has many amenities that can be enhanced to better serve community needs. But there is significant resident interest in the idea of a new Hegewisch community center, and the Hegewisch Business Association is in the process of acquiring a building for this purpose. There should be a focused effort to explore the potential programs and services that could be offered, and what it would take to make it happen.

**RECOMMENDATION**

Identify the potential programs and services of a new Hegewisch community center, and then develop a feasible plan.

**Why is it needed?**

One idea that came up again and again through the community engagement process is that Hegewisch should develop a new community center, preferably in one of several buildings currently vacant in the neighborhood. When CMAP staff included “community center” as an option in live anonymous surveys during meetings with various community residents, it has consistently been ranked near the top.

Ideally, residents would like a community center that serves the whole community, but teenage and especially senior residents have been identified as the groups most in need of an indoor facility providing daily activities and a space to gather and socialize. Some have observed that a new community center and a new town square could complement each other, with the community center providing space for activities and events during the cold weather months and on days with inclement weather.

**What needs to be done?**

While there appears to be significant resident interest in a new Hegewisch community center, creating one would be a major undertaking. The Hegewisch Coalition should identify a working group which will thoroughly study the need for a new community center and, if warranted, proceed to explore feasible options for leadership, programming, and location.

By developing a thorough understanding of the actual need for a new community center, Hegewisch can determine whether it should be a priority for the neighborhood. If it is, the community will be in a stronger position to make it happen.
Why is it needed?

One idea that came up again and again through the community engagement process is that Hegewisch should develop a new community center, preferably in one of several buildings currently vacant in the neighborhood. When CMAP staff included “community center” as an option in live anonymous surveys during meetings with various community residents, it has consistently been ranked near the top.

Ideally, residents would like a community center that serves the whole community, but teenage and especially senior residents have been identified as the groups most in need of an indoor facility providing daily activities and a space to gather and socialize. Some have observed that a new community center and a new town square could complement each other, with the community center providing space for activities and events during the cold weather months and on days with inclement weather.

What needs to be done?

While there appears to be significant resident interest in a new Hegewisch community center, creating one would be a major undertaking. The Hegewisch Coalition should identify a working group which will thoroughly study the need for a new community center and, if warranted, proceed to explore feasible options for leadership, programming, and location.

By developing a thorough understanding of the actual need for a new community center, Hegewisch can determine whether it should be a priority for the neighborhood. If it is, the community will be in a stronger position to make it happen.

How do we get it done?

The Hegewisch Coalition should identify a working group led by a diverse group of residents. Ideally this should include both people who are enthusiastic about creating a new community center and others who are interested in maximizing existing community resources and amenities. It will also be important to include residents who represent key interests—such as youth and senior residents.

The working group should first determine what important needs are not currently being met, and then assess whether they can be met by existing community institutions and resources. If not, then Hegewisch should explore the feasibility of a new community center, especially who could lead the effort and where it could be located.

First steps could include:

1. Identify a diverse working committee to lead the effort.
2. Survey Hegewisch residents on what services, programming, and amenities they would like to see provided in a new community center.
3. Determine which of these services, programming, and amenities are already provided, which could be provided by existing resources and community amenities, and which would require a new community center.
GOAL

MAKE HEGEWISCH’S YOUTH A PRIORITY
Provide great spaces and activities for Hegewisch’s young residents.

OBJECTIVE

The youth of Hegewisch would like to see new spaces and activities targeted towards pre-teens and teens in the community. There are few spaces for the neighborhood’s young residents to gather, socialize, and engage in healthy activities, and current programming provided through the park district and library could be better.

RECOMMENDATION

Create a youth advisory council led by young Hegewisch residents to advise on neighborhood issues and programming of activities, events, and services.

Why is it needed?

There are relatively few programs for teenage Hegewisch residents, and few formal channels for them to voice their needs and interests in ways that meaningful create opportunities for them. Entities such as the Chicago Park District want to create more teen programming but need specific input on what teens want to see.

What needs to be done?

A youth advisory council could act as an opportunity for youth to develop leadership skills while also contributing to the community. By locating the activities of the youth advisory council within the 10th Ward office, participants would have greater proximity to local elected officials and their staff, allowing them to develop leadership and communication skills, represent youth voices on neighborhood issues, and lead efforts on youth activities or initiatives.

A youth advisory council would allow youth themselves to create and lead local programming efforts and ensure that such programming represents the actual interests of young residents in the neighborhood, thereby increasing the odds of success.

How do we get it done?

Youth advisory councils exist throughout Chicago, including at the 49th Ward office in Rogers Park, where youth “meet once a week to check-in with each other, receive legislative updates, and develop community projects.” Other examples across
Chicago include the Mayor’s Youth Commission, the Logan Square organization Palenque LSNA, and the Chi-Nations Youth Council.

The 10th Ward office should lead the effort to create the youth advisory council. In addition to providing necessary administration and adult guidance, the 10th Ward office is best equipped to help connect participants with local and City partners—such as the Chicago Park District at Mann Park and Chicago’s Department of Cultural Affairs and Special Events (DCASE)—to assist with the development of youth programming and events, and youth will be able to learn leadership and communication skills from proximity to local community officials.

Teachers and other staff who regularly teach and engage with middle school students at Clay and Grissom Elementary or students at George Washington High School should also be asked to serve in an advisory capacity. These individuals often have a lot of familiarity and insight—whether a trusted administrator, dynamic social studies teacher, empathetic counselor, or a librarian conversant with the reading passions of teens.

First steps could include:

1. Identify an adult coordinator for the youth advisory council. The 10th Ward office will need to determine who within the Ward office will convene and organize the youth advisory council. An option could be the office’s Coordinator of Constituent Services and Youth Engagement. This early stage could also be a good time to recruit one or two teachers or other staff from Clay, Grissom, or George Washington to serve in an advisory role and help plan next steps.

2. Determine the fundamentals. Next, the 10th Ward office’s youth advisory council coordinator (along with any other individuals assisting the coordinator) will need to determine the fundamentals of the activities of the new council. Details could include how many youth advisory council members to have, what ages the youth advisory council will comprise of, and options for how the members might be compensated for their time (such as through stipends or subsidized Chicago Park District programming).

3. Recruit members. The 10th Ward office could then recruit youth advisory council members, perhaps by soliciting recommendations from school principals for students who demonstrate leadership qualities and interest in public service. (Any teachers or staff from local schools assisting with the youth advisory council are likely to have good ideas about recruitment strategies as well as a few potential students to recruit.)
Why is it needed?

In the youth focus group conducted during the planning process, participants most wanted “a new hangout place” and expressed interest in having more sitting areas or open spaces within the neighborhood to gather. Several of Hegewisch’s young residents also asked for more activities in the neighborhood, such as music concerts and food truck days, arts activities, or a farmers’ market.

What needs to be done?

A town square serves as an accessible public space that can host regular programming and events as well as casual gatherings and informal meetings. The Project for Public Spaces notes that young people are not often included in the design process of public spaces, which often leads to loitering. By intentionally engaging youth in the design process, young people can feel ownership and investment in spaces and can meaningfully contribute to the space’s success.

How do we get it done?

The Hegewisch Business Association has already discussed the opportunity for a new town square and have begun raising funds for its construction. Additionally, work has been underway to identify potential sites for its placement. The Hegewisch Business Association should be sure to recruit the assistance of teenage residents to help with the design of the new town square or other public space. Please see Objective: Create a new town square to bring the community together throughout the year for the recommended planning process for the new town square. But steps focused on youth input could include:

1. Create and conduct surveys of local youth to identify what design aspects could be included in the town square.

2. Ask that the contracted architect/landscape architect conduct a charette with members of the Hegewisch Youth Advisory Council during the design process to incorporate youth ideas into the town square’s design.

3. Look for examples of how community spaces in Chicago have been designed with youth in mind, such as the new Northcenter Town Square.

RECOMMENDATION

Make sure the new town square offers outdoor programming, activities, and events targeted to Hegewisch’s teenage residents.
Example:

POPCourts! is a project by local design firm Lamar Johnson Collaborative in the Austin neighborhood. Previously a vacant lot, the corner has since been activated using street paint to serve as a space for “activity, gathering, and commerce.” The space is specifically designed to be flexible and transform over time to cater to different events and community programs.

Why is it needed?

While education policy is not a focus of this plan, several residents brought up that the play areas provided for students at Clay Elementary are noticeably inferior to those provided for students at Grissom Elementary. Some improvements have been made to Clay’s play areas in recent years, they are considerably smaller in size overall compared to Grissom’s, even though Clay has approximately 80% more students.

What needs to be done?

In 2014, Hegewisch’s Grissom Elementary was one of the first four schools selected for the creation of a “Space to Grow” schoolyard. Space to Grow “transforms Chicago schoolyards into beautiful and functional spaces to play, learn, garden and be outside,” and “also use special design elements to help reduce neighborhood flooding.” Grissom’s Space to Grow schoolyard features outdoor classroom areas, vegetable gardens and native trees, a jogging track and more. In consultation with principals and the Local School Council (LSC) at Clay Elementary, a group of Clay parents should inquire to see if the school may be eligible for the Space to Grow program. If not, it should seek suggestions for other potential programs from staff at Space to Grow and other government and nonprofit schoolyard improvement experts.

The volunteer assistance of a group of current Clay parents—in close consultation with school leadership—should be sufficient to carry out the research and potential grant writing tasks in this recommendation.

RECOMMENDATION

Transform Clay’s play areas by applying to make it a “Space to Grow” schoolyard.
While play areas in Chicago public school can be upgraded through conventional CPS programs, most of the best are the result of parents working with their school to determine potential improvements and then identify and apply for grants or other funding. Not only do Clay’s many students deserve better play areas, but there is the potential to create a great amenity that can be enjoyed by the whole surrounding community.

How do we get it done?

This sort of effort is typically initiated by a school’s parent organizations, LSC, and administrative leadership. Considering the value of Clay’s play areas to many Hegewisch families and the surrounding community, the Hegewisch Coalition could recruit a group of Clay parents to pursue this recommendation and keep the community updated on their progress.

First steps could include:

1. Highlight the need for improved play areas at Clay Elementary, and seek to recruit a working group of current Clay parents—and, if possible, school leadership—to pursue the recommendation.

2. Work with Clay’s school leadership, LSC, and parent organizations to identify potential improvements and reach out to the Space to Grow program to determine Clay’s eligibility.

3. Report back to the Hegewisch Coalition on eligibility and planned next steps, including research into other programs and grants that could assist with improving Clay’s play areas.
GOAL

MAKE BALTIMORE AVENUE AND BRANDON AVENUE A PLACE WHERE PEOPLE AND BUSINESSES WANT TO BE
Attract shops and restaurants to Hegewisch.

Residents and workers often leave the neighborhood to shop, but if Hegewisch attracted more businesses, people could eat out or shop in the community more often. Throughout the outreach process, community members expressed a desire for businesses like a family oriented sit-down restaurant, a laundromat, or a bike shop.

**OBJECTIVE**

Why is it needed?

Because of its physical isolation from other Chicago neighborhoods and proximity to Indiana, where sales taxes are lower, Hegewisch is not a retail destination. People who shop and dine in Hegewisch likely live or work there. The average Hegewisch household will spend more than $34,000 this year on shopping and restaurants. Attracting neighborhood supported retail can tap into that spending potential and add vibrancy to the main commercial areas along Baltimore and Brandon Avenues, roughly centered around 133rd Street (hereby referred to as “the central business area”).

What needs to be done?

Because there are several options for shopping nearby, new retail in Hegewisch should meet the daily needs of local residents and workers. At the same time, given the unique character of Hegewisch, there may be opportunities for businesses that also attract visitors from outside the neighborhood. The neighborhood’s relatively low rents ($10 per square foot for small storefronts) make it possible for small, independently owned businesses to lease space.

But which businesses? Residents had some requests and suggestions. A few examples include a bike shop, a laundromat, and a brewpub. Given the neighborhood’s proximity to parks and trails, in addition to a lack of nearby bike stores, a bike shop could be a viable option for the central business area. Similarly, given the presence of several older rental buildings that may not have laundry onsite, a laundromat could be supported. While Hegewisch already has a handful of bars, some residents suggested that a brewpub, ideally offering food in...
addition to beer brewed on-site, could complement other neighborhood scale retail options as well as serve as a destination for both residents and visitors to the neighborhood.

How do we get it done?

HBA and the 10th Ward office should:

1. Conduct outreach and maintain relationships with building owners, to connect property owners with prospective entrepreneurs.

2. Notify potential entrepreneurs of available retail spaces via the HBA and 10th Ward websites. Information should include the retail space size, zoning designation, rent per square footage, and the property owner’s contact information.

3. Encourage pop-ups and temporary stores in available retail spaces to provide local entrepreneurs with an opportunity to test out a product before committing to a longer lease. More information on pop-up businesses can be found under Objective: Improve the appearance and pedestrian infrastructure of commercial corridors (Baltimore Ave, Brandon Ave).

RECOMMENDATION

Evaluate the feasibility of mixed-use transit-oriented development at the underutilized Metra parking lot near the South Shore train station.

Figure 8: Parking lot of the South Shore Metra train station at the intersection of Brainard Avenue and Avenue O/Burnham Avenue.

Why is it needed?

The pandemic has reduced ridership at the Hegewisch South Shore train station, which has called attention to the fact that the large Metra parking lot near the intersections of Brainard Avenue and Avenue O/Burnham Avenue is mostly unused. Even before the pandemic in 2016 (the most recent year recorded), only 43% of parking at the station was in use. This presents an opportunity for new commercial and
residential development at this prime location adjacent to the Metra station and two of Hegewisch’s busier roads (Brainard and Avenue O/Burnham Avenue).

What needs to be done?

The parking lot is currently owned by Metra, and the agency is open to considering the potential redevelopment of a portion of the 6.2-acre lot. Chicago’s Department of Planning and Development (DPD) policy also supports equitable transit-oriented development (ETOD) generally. The amount of parking spaces is excessive for what is needed. But the South Shore station has significant ridership, suggesting that this site has development potential. HBA leadership and the 10th Ward should further explore the opportunity with Metra and DPD.

If both HBA and the 10th Ward are interested in pursuing an ETOD at the underutilized lot, options for the City to facilitate redevelopment with public financing should be evaluated.

How do we get it done?

HBA and the 10th Ward office should:

1. Hold a meeting with Metra and DPD to further explore the potential for redevelopment at this site.

2. Have a discussion with DPD about options for the City to facilitate redevelopment with public financing.

3. Hold a neighborhood meeting to discuss the ETOD opportunity and potential pros and cons with the larger community.
Improve the appearance and pedestrian infrastructure of Hegewisch’s commercial corridors (Baltimore Avenue, Brandon Avenue).

**OBJECTIVE**

The neighborhood’s commercial corridors, especially Brandon Avenue, could benefit from beautification and pedestrian infrastructure improvements, to create a more vibrant commercial district, and attract potential customers to the corridors.

**TOP BUSINESS PRIORITY**

**RECOMMENDATION**

*Prioritize filling vacant storefronts.*

**Why is it needed?**

Currently, several retail properties within Hegewisch central business area are vacant. Vacant storefronts, especially in key locations like Baltimore and Brandon Avenues, can negatively affect the appearance of the commercial corridors, and discourage both residents and potential visitors from patronizing businesses in the area. (Please see Map 3: Vacant sites)

**What needs to be done?**

A relatively low-cost solution is to “activate” vacant storefronts by displaying temporary art in their windows. These displays can improve the pedestrian experience along the commercial corridor and be an opportunity for local artists to promote their work.

Another way to activate Hegewisch’s vacant storefronts is through “pop-up” (or temporary) businesses, such as a small-scale restaurant or retail shop. In addition to providing a temporary use for vacant commercial spaces, they can help entrepreneurs test a new product before making a long-term investment. Even more, they can encourage foot traffic in the area, benefitting other businesses on the block while showcasing the potential of the vacant space.

**How do we get it done?**

To fill the neighborhood’s vacant storefronts with art, HBA and the 10th Ward should:

1. Identify vacant properties suitable for art window displays.
2. Identify potential funding sources, such as the City’s Small Business Storefront Activations Program, to commission window art displays.
3. Issue a request for proposals from local artists interested in beautifying underutilized or vacant properties along the commercial corridors. HBA should help connect and match local artists with available vacant spaces.
Example:

Through its Window Works program, the Wicker Park SSA commissioned window displays from local artists to activate vacant spaces in the neighborhood. These window displays included property information as well as the artist’s contact information, so that both the space and the artist could be promoted to the public.

Chicago’s Pop-Up Initiative, offered through the Department of Business Affairs and Consumer Protection (BACP), is one program that can be used to temporarily fill vacant commercial spaces. This program offers short-term pop-up licenses that allow businesses to temporarily operate in commercial locations in the city.

The BACP website provides examples of the different pop-up businesses allowed under the three license tiers. These could include general pop-up retail businesses such as holiday markets, or food pop-ups that offer pre-packaged goods or food prepared onsite. HBA could build on the Holiday Pop-Up event sponsored by the Katalyst Coffee Lounge and Music Gallery to encourage more pop-up events in the neighborhood’s vacant commercial spaces.

To utilize the BACP Pop-Up Initiative to fill vacant storefronts, the following steps should be taken by HBA and the 10th Ward office:

1. Identify vacant properties suitable for a pop-up establishment.
2. Promote the BACP Pop-Up Initiative to property owners and local entrepreneurs.
3. Connect entrepreneurs interested in pop-up establishments to available vacant spaces.

Example:

During the 2021 holiday season, three pop-up locations within Albany Park offered unique holiday gifts from local entrepreneurs. The three pop-up spaces offered local artists and small business owners an opportunity to sell their goods and market their businesses to the public. The holiday pop-ups were part of a Holiday Stroll event that offered additional marketing opportunities for local businesses.
Why is it needed?

Throughout the outreach process, community members have emphasized the need to improve the appearance of older commercial properties in Hegewisch’s central business area. The lack of signage or updated storefronts for existing businesses led one resident to say that “With a lot of Hegewisch businesses, you can’t tell if they’re open or closed.” Several stakeholders, including some local business owners, suggested that improving building facades could help attract visitors and potential customers to the area. Even a few targeted improvements in the appearance of local businesses could have a big impact, by demonstrating that positive change is underway.

What needs to be done?

To improve the look of existing businesses and vacant storefronts, as well as promote a unified community character, HBA should work with the 10th Ward office to find ways to finance façade improvements. One way is to apply for funding made possible through the Rebuild Illinois Main Street and Downtown Capital Program. This program, which is administered through the Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO), provides funding for the restoration of public buildings, street improvements, sustainability upgrades, and structural repairs.

If Hegewisch had a Special Service Area (SSA), it could create a façade improvement rebate program. This type of program requires a business to first foot the bill, but then be reimbursed through the SSA fund. This would require coordination between HBA and the City’s Department of Planning and Development (DPD) to award and implement the funding. On average, an SSA will fund 5-10 façade rebates. The rebate dollar amount and share of costs varies. While a 50% rebate can be effective in some cases, a higher rebate—such as 75%—may be necessary to get interest from business owners. The dollar limit per rebate can be $5,000-$15,000, depending on demand and the program’s priority.

How do we get it done?

To take advantage of DCEO’s Rebuild Illinois Main Street program, HBA should:

1. Monitor future funding opportunities on the DCEO website.
2. Identify which properties are the highest priority for façade improvement.
3. Work with the 10th Ward and DPD on a future application for façade improvements in Hegewisch.

To incorporate a façade improvement rebate program as part of a potential SSA in the neighborhood, HBA should:

1. Review façade rebate design programs implemented by other SSAs and discuss with City staff to customize the program.
2. Research typical business signage costs and determine a reasonable budget for the program, along with award caps and terms. City staff can offer helpful input based on best practices.
3. Prioritize which commercial properties should be part of the façade improvement rebate program, based on the current condition of visible features such as awnings, windows, tuckpointing, and signage.
Why is it needed?
Throughout the outreach process, residents have identified Brandon Avenue as a street that needs sidewalk improvements. Many noted that walking along Brandon Avenue is difficult due to uneven and missing sidewalk segments. Business owners along the corridor also noted that a lack of foot traffic, in part due to poor sidewalk conditions, limits their customer base.

What needs to be done?
To ensure pedestrian safety and accessibility, and to encourage more residents to visit Brandon Avenue, the 10th Ward should work with property owners to implement sidewalk improvements along this corridor. This is particularly important for businesses along Brandon Avenue that may have a harder time attracting customers compared with businesses on nearby Baltimore Avenue, Hegewisch’s primary commercial corridor, which receives more traffic and is also in better condition due to recent streetscape improvements. (Please see Map 4: Sidewalk improvement priority areas)

How do we get it done?
To address poor sidewalk conditions along this corridor, the 10th Ward office is already allocating aldermanic menu money for sidewalk improvements along Brandon Avenue. For example, sidewalk improvements along 13501 - 13509 Brandon Avenue and along 13400 Brandon Avenue are already underway (with other sidewalk improvements planned along the 13400 and 13500 blocks of Brandon Avenue).

Another source of funding for repairing sidewalks is the City’s Shared Cost Sidewalk Program. This program allows property owners to share the cost of sidewalk repairs with the City. The approximate cost to an owner of an average mid-block property will range from $600 to $1,500, which is lower than what a private contractor would charge. The 10th Ward should advertise this program to property owners along Brandon Avenue. To access funding through this program, property owners would need to take the following steps:

1. Access the program application at the beginning of the calendar year on the City’s 311 website.
2. Specify the property owner’s name and address where sidewalk improvements are being requested.
3. If CDOT determines that the property is eligible for the Shared Cost Sidewalk Program, the property can commit to the program and send payment to the City’s Department of Finance.

Once sidewalks along Brandon Avenue are repaired, the community should monitor the sidewalk conditions to ensure that they are in a good state of repair. To facilitate this, the 10th Ward could set up a process for residents to flag sidewalk segments that need repair.
Map 4: Sidewalk improvement priority areas

Source: Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning, 2023
Why is it needed?

Community members and business owners stated that they would like to see improved pedestrian level sidewalk lighting in Hegewisch’s central business area, which “looks like it shuts down at night” due to its dark sidewalks, discouraging people from visiting local businesses in the evening hours.

What needs to be done?

Adding more pedestrian level sidewalk lighting could improve the perception of safety, increase foot traffic for local businesses, and add vibrancy to the central business area. The 10th Ward should work with the Chicago Department of Transportation (CDOT) to improve pedestrian level sidewalk lighting along Baltimore and Brandon Avenues and primary East-West/numbered streets. In the short term, the focus of pedestrian level sidewalk lighting improvements should be on Baltimore and Brandon Avenues from 132nd Street to 134th Street. In the long term, lighting improvements should extend to Brainard Avenue and focus on areas in front of all local commercial businesses. (Please see Map 5: Priority areas for pedestrian lighting improvements)

How do we get it done?

As part of the City’s five-year Capital Improvement Plan, CDOT is allocating $188.8 million for street lighting improvements. One way that the City will be funding street light improvements is through additional Aldermanic menu money.

The 10th Ward should do the following:

1. Split up pedestrian level sidewalk lighting improvements into two phases, focusing on short term priority areas within the neighborhood’s commercial corridors first.

2. Set up a survey for community stakeholders to weigh in on prioritized areas for pedestrian level sidewalk lighting improvements and suggest specific locations for new or upgraded light posts.

3. Allocate a portion of Aldermanic menu money for pedestrian level sidewalk lighting improvements for the prioritized locations of the Hegewisch central business area.
Map 5: Priority areas for pedestrian lighting improvements

Source: Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning, 2023
RECOMMENDATION

Commission high-quality murals within the central business area that celebrate Hegewisch’s history and its residents, both yesterday and today.

Why is it needed?

Community members stated that they would like to see murals within the neighborhood’s central business area that celebrate Hegewisch’s diverse history and the residents who have contributed to the neighborhood’s past, present, and evolving identity. When done well, murals can add color and energy to commercial areas, enhancing a neighborhood’s sense of identity and community pride, which can additionally help attract visitors to the area.

What needs to be done?

One way to create high quality murals in the central business area would be for HBA and the 10th Ward to collaborate with non-profits like Chicago Public Art Group, which has created many public art projects throughout the city. The cost of creating murals can range from $5,000 to $50,000, depending on the size and location of the work. Available funding could be used to pay a portion of the cost, through grants like the Individual Artist Support grant from the Illinois Arts Council Agency, which supports individual artists with up to $4,000.

In addition to artist led murals, a lower-cost option for creating murals is for HBA and the 10th Ward to engage the neighborhood’s youth in creating murals. Funding programs such as the Neighborhood Access Program, which offers direct grants of $5,000 - $50,000 to neighborhood groups through the city’s Department of Cultural Affairs and Special Events, can help fund the creation of a community-led mural.

How do we get it done?

HBA, in partnership with the 10th Ward office, can take the following steps:

1. Identify potential mural locations within the central business area, as well as the property owners of the selected buildings.

2. Work with the property owners to get the necessary permissions to install a mural on their building.

3. Engage an artist from the Chicago Public Art Group in creating murals celebrating Hegewisch’s past and present identity in...
the identified locations and then use funding sources like the Individual Artist Support grant to commission the murals.

Alternatively, to involve the neighborhood’s youth in creating some of the murals, HBA and the 10th Ward should:

1. Advertise the mural creation opportunity to the neighborhood schools to encourage participation from students.

RECOMMENDATION

**Plant more trees and provide more seating options to improve the appearance and enjoyment of Hegewisch’s commercial streets.**

**Why is it needed?**

At the plan’s main community workshop, participants indicated that improving the appearance of the street and properties in Hegewisch’s central business area should be a top priority for the neighborhood’s economic development efforts. This includes upgrading seating options and adding trees along commercial corridors, which could encourage more pedestrian activity in Hegewisch’s central business area. Specifically, Brandon Avenue currently does not have any street trees, and both Brandon and Baltimore Avenues could use additional seating options.

**What needs to be done?**

To enhance the pedestrian environment in these areas, HBA and the 10th Ward should focus on adding street trees in locations that currently have a low tree canopy cover, especially along Brandon Avenue and 133rd Street. HBA and the 10th Ward should coordinate with business owners to use the city’s 311 service to submit requests to the Department of Streets and Sanitation’s Bureau of Forestry to plant parkway trees in agreed upon locations. To plant additional trees in the central business area,

2. Engage the Henry Clay Elementary School arts liaison in creating a mural idea for the central business area.

3. Apply for funding opportunities like the city’s Neighborhood Access Program (NOTE: Hegewisch is one of the priority neighborhoods identified for this program).

   d. To apply, HBA (in collaboration with the Henry Clay Elementary arts liaison) can submit a mural idea to the city’s CyberGrants site.

   a potential funding source for tree plantings is the Openlands’ TreePlanters Grant.

   To improve seating options, HBA and the 10th Ward should focus on adding seating in locations near street trees (which provide shade) and local businesses. In addition to offering more seating options like benches, Baltimore Avenue has wide sidewalks that could accommodate outdoor café seating. Encouraging businesses to offer outdoor seating could add to the vibrancy of the central business area. HBA and the 10th Ward should share resources with business owners that guide them through the process of obtaining a café seating permit.
How do we get it done?

In addition to submitting requests to the Department of Streets and Sanitation’s Bureau of Forestry to plant parkway trees, HBA could apply for funding through the Openlands TreePlanters Grant by following these steps.

1. Complete the online application form.
2. Identify potential locations for street tree planting.
3. Recruit volunteers to help with planting day (Openlands provides promotional materials and assists volunteers with planting trees).

In order to encourage local businesses to provide sidewalk café seating, HBA and the 10th Ward should share city resources with local businesses about the sidewalk café permit application process, which is as follows.

1. Create an account on the city’s permit, inspection, license, registration portal.
2. Select “permit” and clicking the “create permit / application” button.
3. Select “BACP Sidewalk Café Permits” under the application type.

Additionally, HBA and the 10th Ward could also provide business owners with resources information on the city’s sidewalk café rules and regulations and share about assistance programs like the city’s temporary reforms to the sidewalk I permit process, which reduce permit fees by 75 percent.
Create public spaces in the central business area where people will want to spend time.

OBJECTIVE

Many residents consider the area near Baltimore Avenue and 133rd St to be the heart of Hegewisch. Currently it lacks a public space that could strengthen the identity of the neighborhood as well as host activities and events which would draw people into the area—all of which could benefit local businesses. With this in mind, residents and business owners are interested in creating a “town square.” In addition to this exciting possibility, the community should explore other options to create public spaces in Hegewisch’s central business area that are inviting and attractive.

RECOMMENDATION

Pursue funding opportunities to help create a town square in the Baltimore commercial corridor.

For more information on pursuing funding opportunities to help create a town square in the Baltimore commercial corridor, please refer to the recommendation listed later in the plan under GOAL: BRING THE COMMUNITY TOGETHER.

RECOMMENDATION

Host events like a farmers’ market, concerts, and other community programming in the central business area.

Why is it needed?

Many residents and business owners have expressed a desire for more community programs, ideally in the currently vacant lots at the intersection of 133rd and Baltimore Avenue, which many consider the heart of the neighborhood. Community events could include seasonal farmers markets and concerts, among other events.

What needs to be done?

HBA (in partnership with the 10th Ward) should organize community programs and events, such as
a seasonal farmers’ market and summer concerts, in the central business area. Community events should be advertised to residents through social media, newsletters, flyers, and other local news outlets. Not only would this help bring the community together, but it also would likely attract potential customers to existing local businesses and encourage entrepreneurs to set up temporary “pop-up” businesses.

In addition to a seasonal farmers market, a summer concert series, featuring a variety of music that reflects the diversity of the neighborhood, would also be another way to bring the community together and increase activity in the central business area. As with a seasonal farmers market, the vacant lots at 130th Street and Baltimore Avenue could be a suitable place for a concert series. A potential funding source for summer concerts is the Chicago Presents grant from the city’s Department of Cultural Affairs and Special Events, which offers funding ranging from $25,000 - $75,000 for individual events or event series.

How do we get it done?

**Farmers’ market:**
HBA should build on the success of Hegewisch Fest to organize more community programming and events. To create a seasonal farmers market within the central business area (likely in the currently vacant space at 133rd Street and Baltimore Avenue), HBA should:

1. Consult the Department of Cultural Affairs and Special Events’ resource guide for starting a farmers market, which outlines potential first steps, such as:
   a. Engaging the local Ward in planning a seasonal farmers market.
   b. Conducting a community survey to find out what types of vendors the community would like to see at a farmers market.
   c. Joining the Chicago Farmers Market Collective to connect with other market managers throughout the city and get more information on starting a seasonal farmers market.

2. Fundraise for any essential expenses the farmers market may incur. Potential revenue sources include vendor/stall fees, sponsorships, and grants. Special Service Areas are another funding mechanism for these types of events.

3. Recruit potential vendors, including local food establishments that can use the farmers market as an opportunity to market themselves to the community.

**Summer concert series:**
To organize summer concerts within the central business area, HBA and the 10th Ward should:

1. Monitor the schedule of annual grant funding provided by sources like the Chicago’s Department of Cultural Affairs and Special Events.

2. Seek sponsorship opportunities from sponsors involved in Hegewisch Fest.

3. Engage the Katalyst Coffee Lounge and Music Gallery in helping identify local musicians for a concert series and promote concerts to the community.
RECOMMENDATION

Ensure that there are places, activities, and events for Hegewisch’s youth in the central business area.

Many young stakeholders—as well as some of their parents and grandparents—have noted that there is a lack of places and events for the Hegewisch’s youth. Providing places and activities that cater to young residents, especially near Hegewisch’s central business area, can enhance their sense of community belonging, and can attract additional customers to the area’s local businesses.

More information on the development of spaces and programs for the neighborhood’s youth can be found in later in the plan under GOAL: MAKE HEGEWISCH’S YOUTH A PRIORITY.
Maintain a supportive business environment.

**OBJECTIVE**

The neighborhood is home to a vibrant local business community, with some long-standing businesses. But many business owners have said that the neighborhood’s proximity to Indiana poses significant challenges for them. Hegewisch’s businesses need more marketing and increased access to assistance programs.

**RECOMMENDATION**

**Take the next step toward creation of a Special Service Area (SSA).**

**Why is it needed?**

Most agree that more business support is needed to create a thriving business district in Hegewisch. As part of the development of this plan, CMAP contracted with Valerie S. Kretchmer Associates, Inc. (VSKA) to do a commercial market analysis and develop a commercial economic development strategy for Hegewisch (The full report is available on the project website [here](#)).

After thorough research and consideration of options, VSKA determined that it will be difficult for Hegewisch—and specifically the Hegewisch Business Association—to have the resources and staff needed to provide the needed business support without the creation of an SSA, especially given the fact that the neighborhood lies outside of zones of other City programs that can provide needed support to commercial areas.

SSAs are a tool used in many commercial areas across Chicago to finance ongoing services and offer programs that support local businesses, as well as handle challenges in a coordinated way. While SSAs use taxation as a funding mechanism, funds raised by the SSA stay within the district from which they were raised and always benefit the district directly, unlike tax revenue collected by the City. These funds can pay for things such as street and sidewalk maintenance, beautification, district marketing and advertising, business retention and attraction, special events and promotions, expanded transportation, security, and façade improvement programs, among others.

**What needs to be done?**

An SSA is a local tax district that funds expanded services and programs in a specific area, such as a commercial corridor. Property owners within the area pay a small percentage in extra taxes. The amount
each property pays is based on a percentage of its usual tax bill. For example, in the Mount Greenwood SSA example detailed below, businesses contributed about 2.11% of their annual taxes to the SSA fund, with single-story storefronts paying an average of $100 to $200 a year.

Creating an SSA requires a public process and the agreement and support of property owners. While the number of properties included within the boundaries of an SSA may vary, an SSA often includes both commercial and residential properties. When this is the case, it is important to balance commercial and residential interests when developing the assistance, resources, and initiatives of the SSA, which can be a challenge. It is very important to ensure reasonable costs for property owners and visibly demonstrate immediate benefits in the first year, building trust and strong relationships with property owners by clearly addressing their top priorities.

How do we get it done?

To form an SSA for the neighborhood’s commercial area, HBA and the 10th Ward office would need to take the following steps:

1. Review DPD’s guidance for new and renewing Special Service Areas to determine whether HBA has the capacity to go through with the process at this time. If so, HBA would take the initial steps. If not, HBA could plan to increase capacity for a future application.

   Discuss forming a SSA with the City’s Department of Planning and Development (currently Assistant Commissioner Mark Roschen), and secure support for an SSA from the 10th Ward office.

   The next step would be to submit the SSA “Feasibility Study” form to DPD, which is a relatively easy process. The form functions as an initial application to help DPD determine whether the organization is ready to complete a full application to create an SSA. The next opportunity for Hegewisch to submit the Feasibility Study form will be September 1 - November 1, 2023.

2. Evaluate if HBA has—or can generate—the funds ($20,000-$60,000) to hire a consultant for the larger study that would be required later in the process. The City does not require the funds to be committed until after the Feasibility Study is approved by DPD and the organization (i.e. HBA) decides to make a full application. It is also important to note that these funds would be refundable if HBA’s SSA application was approved.

3. Decide on a SSA boundary. HBA should consider whether to focus initially on the core of Baltimore Avenue or whether to include Brandon Avenue, as well as properties along Brainard Avenue. While it might make sense to include businesses along Brandon Avenue or Brainard Avenue, including them would entail including more residential properties, which can present additional challenges.
Why is it needed?

If property owners are to pay an additional tax levy for an SSA, it is essential that they see immediate benefits. The quickest improvements can be made through service offerings, which can benefit both residential and commercial property owners.

What needs to be done?

While it is not necessary to have everything worked out for the initial Feasibility Study form, it will eventually be necessary to define the program clearly for the full SSA application. Service costs can vary widely based on the size and offering of the SSA. For example, Mount Greenwood SSA’s annual budget of $31,000 is one of the smallest annual budgets for a Chicago SSA, while South Chicago’s SSA is much larger at about $535,000.

To understand what will be required, during the Feasibility Study phase HBA staff should begin outlining what services an SSA would provide. Then later they can gather input from DPD and the 10th Ward office, as well as the broader community, so that HBA can supply the necessary detail that will be required by the full SSA application.

How do we get it done?

Service costs can vary widely based on SSA size and the services it offers. It is important to be realistic and transparent from the start, clearly spelling out the proposed program of services and the amount of funding that is needed. Keep in mind that HBA staff will be responsible for SSA management (and, eventually, re-certification). The following services should be included:

1. Snow removal. According to an experienced SSA manager in Chicago, most districts trigger snow removal at 1-2 inches of snowfall and pay approximately $30,000 annually.

2. Additional trash abatement. Litter abatement costs depend on frequency and intensity. Twice weekly visits are standard, and organizations like Clean Slate are an example of additional trash abatement options.

3. Salaries for a full-time staff person and for a part-time Spanish-speaking business liaison/outreach coordinator. This will free up existing HBA funding for traditional activities and operations. While staff are not part of services, they are necessary for effective service delivery and for building a strong relationship with the business community.

Examples:

Two local examples of nearby SSAs include the Mount Greenwood SSA (#55), which is centered around 111th Street from Sacramento Avenue to Central Park Avenue, and the South Chicago SSA, which runs along Commercial Ave from 87th St to South Chicago Avenue. Both of these areas feature a wide mix of businesses and have installed streetscaping and special signage along commercial corridors aimed at enhancing their comfort, attractiveness, and identity.

Each year, businesses within the Mount Greenwood SSA contribute an additional tax levy, approximately equal to about 2.11% of their annual taxes, direct to the SSA fund. For example, single-story storefronts typically paid $100-$200 a year. A building with 5 storefronts paid $383, while a large restaurant with parking paid $1,000 and Walgreens paid $1,634.
Why is it needed?

Throughout the community engagement process, many residents and businesses owners discussed the challenges of operating a business in Hegewisch, especially given the neighborhood’s close proximity to Indiana. As one business owner put it, “Everything is just across the border in Indiana, and it’s cheaper. So what’s the incentive for a small business?” HBA and the 10th Ward office can help Hegewisch’s local economy to thrive by connecting local entrepreneurs to existing business assistance programs and resources, as well as provide opportunities for them to network and learn from experts on ways to strengthen or expand their business.

What needs to be done?

One way to provide guidance to local business owners is for HBA (in partnership with the 10th Ward office) to host monthly small business networking events and workshops to encourage entrepreneurship and support the growth of local businesses. These informal networking opportunities, hosted at different establishments around the neighborhood, could help local business owners build relationships, as well as discuss shared challenges and lessons learned.

In addition to networking opportunities, these events could include workshops focused on different topics, with guest speakers providing expert advice on topics such as business marketing and navigating the City’s business logistics (including obtaining permits, opening a business, or applying for various licenses). For example, guest speakers could include staff from the Calumet Area Industrial Commission’s new Chicago Business Centers (CBC) program, which focuses on helping entrepreneurs with licensing support, financing, and professional assistance. HBA should survey local business owners to find out what they need help with, and which topics would be most helpful.

How do we get it done?

The HBA and the 10th Ward office should:

1. Survey local business owners—as well as local entrepreneurs and other potential business owners—to find out which workshop topics would be most useful to them.

2. Work with local business owners to secure venues for monthly networking or workshop events (a different venue could be utilized every month). Advertise these events to local entrepreneurs through social media platforms, newsletters, and flyers.

3. Invite guest speakers, such as staff from CAID’s Chicago Business Centers program and the City’s Department of Business Affairs and Consumer Protection, who can inform business owners about key resources that are available to them, as well as offer guidance on matters such as applying for a business license. Any workshop materials should be offered in English and Spanish.
**Why is it needed?**

Several local business owners said that attracting customers to their businesses is one of their biggest challenges. Some mentioned that more advertising is needed to help their businesses grow. One way that Hegewisch’s businesses can get more exposure to potential customers is through neighborhood events like Hegewisch Fest and other special events and marketing strategies.

**What needs to be done?**

The neighborhood’s annual Hegewisch Fest is a great way to promote and market local businesses to residents and visitors. HBA should make sure to focus on recruiting participation from Hegewisch’s restaurants and businesses, to provide them an opportunity to showcase their establishments to festival attendees.

Building on the success of Hegewisch Fest, HBA and the 10th Ward office should organize other events throughout the year to help promote local businesses. These could include events like a “Taste of Hegewisch” or a “Shop Local” event. Using neighborhood festivals and special events to market existing neighborhood businesses can help advertise and expand awareness of Hegewisch’s local businesses.

**How do we get it done?**

To use Hegewisch Fest to promote local businesses, HBA should:

1. Seek partnerships with potential sponsors that can help provide financial support for local establishments interested in becoming festival vendors.

2. Market local businesses in email campaigns, flyers, or posters advertising the fest. This could include a Hegewisch Fest guide that offers profiles of local businesses, highlighting the products, services, or dishes offered by these local establishments.

3. Create a map of the central business area that can be used by festival attendees to visit local establishments.

To build on the success of Hegewisch Fest and organize other events that can promote the local economy, HBA and the 10th Ward should:

1. Recruit businesses interested in participating in special events, such as a “Taste of Hegewisch” restaurant crawl.

2. Recruit potential sponsors for the event, whose sponsorship could cover costs related to event marketing and subsidize incentives for restaurant participation. (If Hegewisch decides to establish a Special Service Area, funding collected through the SSA could be another potential funding source for this type of event.)

3. Market the event to Hegewisch residents through social media platforms, flyers, and community newsletters

**Example:**

An example of a special event that showcases local restaurants is the Flavors of Albany Park restaurant crawl. During this event, attendees purchase a ticket and receive a “passport,” which allows them to taste sample-sized portions of dishes from participating local restaurants. This type of event is a low-cost way for businesses to market themselves to local customers.
GOAL

MAKE HEGEWISCH A RECREATION DESTINATION AND AN EVEN MORE ATTRACTIVE PLACE TO LIVE
COMPLETE AND IMPROVE

ARCHITECTURAL

COMPLETE

AND IMPROVE

Hegewisch’s pedestrian and bicycle networks.

OBJECTIVE

Why is it needed?

Hegewisch has potential to become a highly walkable community—as well as one that is great for biking—with access to its central business area, Wolf Lake and other recreation destinations, and even Indiana on the neighborhood’s eastern border. But improvements are needed.

A particular concern, expressed by several residents, is ensuring accessibility for residents with limited mobility. One resident observed that as Hegewisch’s population ages, it will become even more vital to fix local sidewalks and make other improvements to ensure compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act.

RECOMMENDATION

Identify key projects that promote complete streets via physical infrastructure improvements.

Why is it needed?

During the planning process, residents identified problem spots:

- Many feel unsafe walking along 134th Street east of Avenue O (locally known as Boy Scout Road), which provides access from Hegewisch’s Harbor Point Estates community to the central business area. They feel unsafe due to excessive speeding by cars and by the presence of some large trucks which use the road even though are legally prohibited from doing so.

- Avenue O is a main route from Hegewisch’s residential areas to job and shopping destinations located to the north. But without sidewalks north of 130th, workers, parents with strollers, and people with mobility devices often have no choice but to use the median.
Torrence Avenue and Brainard Avenue are two major streets with a high-volume of fast-moving traffic, limited sidewalks, and a lack of access to safe crossings and proximity, making walking and biking uncomfortable, sometimes dangerous.

Hegewisch’s existing bike network mainly consists of off-street trails, with a few miles of on-street bike lanes (buffered or shared). And while Hegewisch has an extensive sidewalk system within the neighborhood, the outskirts of the neighborhood have gaps along routes used by pedestrians trying to access parks and recreation areas. Gaps were identified through community input during the planning process as well as through a map analysis of routes to important recreational and natural destinations. (Please see Map 6: Sidewalk and biking network)

What needs to be done?

Community members said they want new paths and trails, better-maintained crosswalks and sidewalks, and other safety improvements. The map below identifies individual bikeway and sidewalk gaps that should be prioritized. But it is also important to look holistically at where improvements are needed and identify areas of overlap where multiple opportunities for improvement could be addressed simultaneously through a single project. Such coordination can be more cost-effective, save time, and limit disruption for the public. (Please see Map 7: Recommended projects)

A. A shared-use path is recommended along the Avenue O corridor (from 118th Street to 130th Street) due to the road’s high vehicle speeds. The shared-use path can provide an alternative safe route for pedestrians and bicyclists while the portion of the Burnham Greenway Trail that passes through the Eggers Grove Forest Preserve is closed. The shared-use path can also provide a shortcut for those traveling from the north end of the neighborhood (which includes some commercial businesses and larger employers) to the south end (where most residential homes are located).

B. Adding a new high-visibility crosswalk, signage, and ADA curb ramp is recommended at the intersection of 118th Street and Avenue O. High-visibility crosswalks are more visible to drivers than standard parallel crosswalks lines. In addition, ADA curb ramps are recommended at each of the intersection’s crossings to allow people with mobility limitations to safely and comfortably cross.

C. Adding a new high-visibility crosswalk, signage, and ADA curb ramp is recommended at the intersection of 122nd Street and Avenue O. High-visibility crosswalks are more visible to drivers than standard parallel crosswalks lines. In addition, ADA curb ramps are recommended at every crossing to allow people with mobility limitations to safely and comfortably cross. Improvements at this intersection are also key for the safety of people accessing or departing the CTA 30 bus from the east side of Avenue O.

D. The intersection of 126th Place and Avenue O is a direct route into William Powers State Recreation Area, and some residents have expressed feeling unsafe when walking or biking across this intersection due to high vehicle speeds. A new high-visibility crosswalk and signage can create a safer and more accessible crossing. An alternative would be to provide a “leading pedestrian interval” (LPI), which allows pedestrians to enter and establish their presence in the crosswalk at an intersection 3-7 seconds before vehicles are given a green light.

E. About a quarter mile of shared bike lane along 118th Street east of Avenue O is recommended to connect to the neighborhood greenway and shared bike lane that runs south along Ewing Avenue between 118th Street and Avenue O.

F. Expanding the sidewalk on the western side of Avenue O near Brainard Ave would benefit the Senior Suites community and residents residing along Avenue O and promote walking to and from the South Shore Line station. Avenue O is also a direct pathway into William Powers State
Recreation Area. Last, expanding the sidewalk along the western side would benefit a CTA 30 bus stop which currently has no sidewalk access, located next to the Avenue O entrance to Burger King (and marked only by a CTA sign affixed to a telephone pole).

G. Currently there is no marked crossing at the intersection of Brainard Avenue and Avenue O. A new commercial plaza has been completed at the northeastern corner of the intersection, which is also the location of a CTA 30 bus stop. A marked crossing is recommended to promote walking to the new development and the bus stop.

H. Filling the sidewalk gap along 135th Street (between Avenue O and Mackinaw Avenue) is crucial to help build connectivity from the east end of the Hegewisch to the central areas of the community located on the west side of Avenue O. Sidewalks are needed on the south end of the street and a small portion on the north end.

I. Throughout the engagement process, community members expressed great concern about the safety of pedestrians and bicyclists traveling along 134th Street (also known as Boy Scout Road), especially those traveling to and from Harbor Point Estates, the City of Chicago’s only mobile home community, who have the least amount of park access compared to other areas of the community. The road currently does not have sidewalks, but recently a shared-use path was added to the north end of the street as part of the Powderhorn Wolf Lake Connection project, but gaps remain on 134th Street east of Avenue K, effectively cutting off the residents of Harbor Point Estates who are walking or biking from the rest of Hegewisch. Filling in gaps in the sidewalk on the north side of 134th Street is recommended.

J. Addressing sidewalk gaps along Carondolet Avenue between 126th Place to 128th Street is recommended in order to improve pedestrian safety along this key route between Hegewisch’s residential areas and the neighborhood’s heavily used Little League and Babe Ruth baseball fields.

K. A shared-use path along 122nd Street (between Torrence Avenue and Stony Island Avenue) is recommended to ensure Hegewisch residents and visitors can access Big Marsh Park via multiple modes of transportation. Currently, 122nd Street west of Torrence Avenue does not have sidewalks or on-street bike lanes. In addition, existing on-street bike lanes along Stony Island Avenue are not protected by a physical barrier, making it extremely unsafe due to heavy truck traffic.

L. A crossing is recommended at the intersection of 122nd Street and Torrence Avenue, which currently has no marked crossings, making it unsafe for pedestrians seeking to access natural areas and parks located to the west of Torrence Avenue.

M. Addressing sidewalk gaps along Torrence Avenue is recommended to improve safety for pedestrians, including those seeking to access nearby natural areas.

The recommended projects referenced in the map are high-cost projects which would require partnerships with local and state agencies. For example, the average cost for a mile of a paved shared-use path is roughly $481,000 according to the U.S. Department of Transportation. In the City of Chicago, sidewalk costs for roughly 250 square feet of sidewalk typically ranges from $7,000 to $10,000 (although costs vary substantially based on materials used, right-of-way costs, and other factors).

A **shared-use path** is a multi-use path designed primarily for use by bicyclists and pedestrians, including pedestrians with disabilities, for transportation and recreation purposes. Shared-use paths are physically separated from motor vehicle traffic by an open space or a barrier.
Map 6: Sidewalk and biking network

Source: Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning, 2023
Map 7: Recommended projects

[Map showing recommended projects in Hegewisch Neighborhood Plan]
How do we get it done?

One program that could help implement these recommendations is the Illinois Transportation Enhancement Program (ITEP), through which IDOT works jointly with other state agencies, local governments, interest groups, and citizens to improve the transportation system. Pedestrian and bicycle facilities, such as shared use paths and sidewalks, are eligible funding categories. ITEP is a reimbursable grant program.

First steps could include:

1. First, the 10th Ward office, working with interested groups in the neighborhood, would need to learn about the ITEP program’s requirements, eligibility, and the application process.
2. Second, a project sponsor will need to be identified to ensure that ITEP program criteria is met.
3. Last, once a project sponsor is identified, the applicant must be registered through the Grant Accountability and Transparency Act (GATA) grantee portal.

Other options to consider include aldermanic menu money used for sidewalk expansion and the City’s Shared Cost Sidewalk Program (please see Recommendation: Repair and improve sidewalks along Brandon Avenue and ensure pedestrian safety for how to access these programs).

Why is it needed?

Improving Hegewisch’s bike network will increase biking in the neighborhood. To encourage and support biking, it is important to provide sufficient parking for bikes in appropriate locations. Limited bike parking is currently offered in central areas of the community, with even less provided near neighborhood amenities such as Mann Park and William Powers State Recreation Area.

What needs to be done?

Hegewisch should assess where existing bike parking should be improved and where it should be added. While the community should focus on ensuring sufficient bike parking near and within natural and recreational areas, it is likely that bike parking in the central business area and at the South Shore Line station will be most used—and therefore should remain the highest priority. (Please see Map 8: Bike racks)

Not only does bike parking provide bicyclists with a secure place to lock their bikes, it can promote the spaces as cycling destinations and create a cycling culture. Ample secure bike parking works best when developed in tandem with a network of protected bicycle lanes and a bike share system.

**RECOMMENDATION**

**Improve bicycle parking, both within the neighborhood and out in Hegewisch's natural and recreation areas.**

Bike racks come in an array of styles to meet the demands of a community. A few general styles of bike racks are the following: U-rack, wave, grid, spiral, bollard, innovative, and decorative.

On-street bike parking corrals are a low-cost way to provide parking for 10 or more bicycles in the same space typically occupied by a car.
How do we get it done?

Community members, organizations, and businesses interested in adding bike racks or bike corrals would need to work directly with the Chicago Department of Transportation (CDOT). Bike racks and bike corrals are relatively low-cost and easy to provide compared to other bike infrastructure. Bike racks cost about $200 per rack and are offered by CDOT. A standard red 10-bike corral can be furnished and installed by CDOT for $3,300, which includes the rack, installation, city permits, and delineator posts (traffic marker posts). Businesses, SSAs, and other sponsors also have the option to purchase and install a customized corral for an additional $700.

In addition to helping facilitate the installation and maintenance of bike racks and bike corrals throughout Chicago, CDOT’s Bicycle Program provides free consulting services to building owners who are interested in providing bike parking next to their property. Interested individuals or groups (organizations or businesses) must file a bike parking request online that specifies the location of the desired bike rack or bike corral. CDOT will then review the request, conduct a field assessment (a process that can take several months), and provide a status update on the program’s online interactive map.

First steps could include:

1. Understand the criteria. Anyone interested in requesting bike parking should become familiar with the criteria used to determine if a bike rack can be installed and the best locations for bike racks in their community.

2. Learn the range of options. Those interested should visit www.ChicagoCompleteStreets.org to be better informed before submitting a formal bike parking request. Those interested in bike corrals should also visit the site for more information or email the CDOT Bike Parking Manager at bikeparking@chicagocompletestreets.org.

3. Submit a request. After a thorough review of CDOT’s Frequently Asked Questions and guides, an individual or group can submit a request for bike parking at https://bikeparking-chicago.hub.arcgis.com/. A few details, such as name, email, and location, are required in the short request form. This site is open to all Chicago residents, and business owners year-round.

Example:

Several businesses in Chicago have recognized that bike corrals are a low-cost way to provide parking for ten bicycles, within the same space that would be occupied by a single car, including Café Jumping Bean, which has had a bike corral outside of their Pilsen business for nearly ten years.

Figure 16: Café Jumping Bean Bike Corral (Photo credit: Chicago Complete Streets)
RECOMMENDATION

Install attractive signs throughout the neighborhood that provide maps of bicycle and pedestrian networks, as well as clear directions to key destinations in Hegewisch.

Why is it needed?

Residents and other stakeholders noted that Hegewisch’s parks and natural areas are among the best things in the community, yet they are underutilized. This is especially true for harder-to-access places, such as Hegewisch Marsh, the focus of an upcoming restoration made possible through a $500,000 grant from the National Coastal Resilience Fund. In addition to wanting to improve the ease of access to these natural and recreational destinations, residents want to increase awareness of them. (Please see Map 9: Bike routes to and from key destinations)

What needs to be done?

Hegewisch should install a series of signs throughout the neighborhood that guide people through “You Are Here” maps and signs that point the way to the community’s natural and recreation destinations, as well as its unique central business area, where visitors can grab a bite to eat or have beer after some biking or hiking. (Please see Map 10: Recommended locations for bike/pedestrian network signs)

The cost of new signs will vary depending on the design of the sign itself (including the size, materials, design, and manufacturing costs) and the number of signs erected. Still, signs are usually low-cost, ranging from approximately $200 to $450 per sign. But it is important to invest in a series of signs that share an attractive, consistent design—doing so will help to foster trust in the guidance provided by these signs as well as demonstrate that Hegewisch takes pride in its community (which is likely to increase its appeal to both residents and visitors).

How do we get it done?

The new signs should align with Chicago Park District, City of Chicago, and Illinois Department of Natural Resources sign guidelines. Although no unified system exists, each agency has sign design guidelines that could work together to ensure a seamless experience for parkgoers and other visitors. In the past, such agencies have worked together in other areas of Chicago to develop comprehensive design guidelines for recreational areas.

Whichever group of residents leads this initiative, it should closely consult the guidelines outlined in the Calumet & Southeast Chicago Lakefront Region Wayfinding Concept. While intended for a larger area, this 2016 document identifies many relevant strategies for effective messaging, community engagement, and on the ground improvements.

First steps could include:

1. Gather together local partners focused on things such as parks and biking to explore options (alternatively, the Hegewisch Coalition could designate a working group to tackle the idea). They should first review recommendations outlined in the Calumet & Southeast Chicago Lakefront Region Wayfinding Concept document and assess relevant strategies.

2. Meet with the 10th Ward office to assist with convening regional and state partner agencies to discuss possibilities for design, funding, and implementation.

3. Identify a leading agency and next steps.
Map 9: Bike routes to and from key destinations
Map 10: Recommended locations for bike/pedestrian network signs

Source: Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning, 2023
Examples:

Chicago’s Bloomingdale Trail, also known as the 606, is a 2.7-mile elevated trail linear park that is situated on Chicago’s northwest side. To ensure a good “wayfinding” experience along the trail, the City of Chicago worked with the Chicago Park District, the Forest Preserve of Cook County, and partners in neighboring suburban communities to develop a unified series of signs to guide visitors to other parks and recreational areas. The multi-agency partnership also led to the development of a “one-stop shop” website that helps provide information about events, volunteer opportunities, and other relevant information such as construction projects and historical information.

Another example of a multi-agency wayfinding system is the Regional Transportation Authority’s new system map (2021) which indicates full routes for all three transit operators, accessibility information, ticket prices, and points of interest across the RTA region. By including a wide range of useful information—such as system maps, route diagrams, and schedules—this is a great example of a wayfinding approach that could be adapted for Hegewisch.
Install benches and seating areas to break up the walking distance between destinations and create spaces for socializing.

Why is it needed?

Community residents have expressed the desire for an enhanced sense of community. Creating spaces for socializing can aid this effort, and providing convenient, pleasant places to sit can be part of the solution. Increasing outdoor seating can also increase foot traffic and activity along sidewalks in central commercial areas, benefitting local small businesses.

Street furniture such as benches can serve as rest facilities and break up walking to key destinations such as Mann Park and William Powers State Recreation area, making walking a viable option for some residents who might otherwise stay home. Currently, Hegewisch only has a handful of benches. Especially considering the growth of Hegewisch’s older population, adding public seating in the community makes sense.

What needs to be done?

Adding benches or seating areas to places where there is more pedestrian activity is recommended. Priority locations include Baltimore Avenue, the South Shore Line station, and locations outside of public buildings such as schools and park buildings. (Please see Map 11: Benches)

How do we get it done?

The HBA or a small working group identified by the Hegewisch Coalition should convene with the 10th Ward office to discuss funding and implementation. One option may be the 10th Ward’s “menu money,” funding allotted to each ward in the City of Chicago to be used for a “menu” of infrastructure maintenance and improvements every year:

1. Any group interested in adding new benches throughout the neighborhood should contact the 10th Ward office to formally submit a request and highlight it as a priority for menu money.

Example:

Since 1996, the Bronzeville neighborhood has maintained over a dozen public sculptures that also serve as benches, funded through commercial revitalization dollars granted by the City of Chicago. The City’s Department of Cultural Affairs and Special Events (DCASE) has supervised the project, which was aimed at celebrating black history and creating gathering spaces that serve multiple purposes.
Map 11: Benches

Source: Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning, 2023
Improve Hegewisch’s natural and recreation assets and programming.

OBJECTIVE

Many residents believe that Hegewisch’s parks and recreational areas are the neighborhood’s best kept secret and underutilized. Many also feel that there is room for improvement, including increasing community involvement. In addition to creating a new series of signs to guide people to Hegewisch’s parks and recreational areas, the community can improve promotion of existing programming and events—and create expanded or new programming—guided by community input.

RECOMMENDATION

Form a Park Advisory Council at Mann Park that can support and promote ways for the community to better utilize programs and facilities offered at Mann Park and more.

Why is it needed?

Several residents said that they would like to see new programs and amenities at Mann Park. A few examples include new youth and senior programs, a new splash pad for children, and a dog park. At the same time, there seems to be little awareness that there are ways for the community to provide helpful feedback that can improve Hegewisch’s parks.

What needs to be done?

One option would be to form a “Park Advisory Council” at Mann Park. Advisory Councils are led by volunteers and raise funds through fundraisers. A new Advisory Council could provide constructive feedback and work together with the park supervisor and staff at Mann Park to help identify and prioritize improvements to the park, as well as help guide programming so that it better corresponds with community needs and interests. Overall, an Advisory Council could help establish and implement a vision for Mann Park’s future that would further enhance its vital role in Hegewisch.

How do we get it done?

First steps could include:

1. Form a Park Advisory Council, led by a working group identified by the new Hegewisch Coalition. However, the minimum requirement for initiating the formation of a Park Advisory Council is for a group of at least three community members to arrange a meeting with the park supervisor of Mann Park to discuss forming a park advisory council.
2. Submit a letter of intent to the park supervisor.

3. Post a notice of the initial meeting. This is done by the park supervisor, who then works with interested community members to notify the entire community of the intent to form a new Park Advisory Council.

More information can be found on the Chicago Park District website, but the standard process for forming a Park Advisory Council is in the image below:

---

**RECOMMENDATION**

**Improve existing marketing and promotion strategies for recreation programs and events.**

**Why is it needed?**

During key stakeholder interviews, when asked what could make Hegewisch better, a resident responded that better promotion of events and programming at Mann Park and William Powers State Recreation Area would strengthen not only awareness and participation, but also the bonds between residents. While events and programming are currently promoted through the 10th Ward office’s weekly newsletter and the Hegewisch Community Facebook page, several residents suggested that there is room for improvement.

**What needs to be done?**

There are a variety of options to better market and promote park programming to the community. Promoting programs and events can cost little to no money and be extremely successful if there is a plan of action. Word of mouth is the strongest tool, but to gain traction, park representatives need to find creative and low-cost ways to get the word out. But just as important, there is a need to improve the organization, coordination, and consistency of how park events and programming are promoted.

---

Example:

There are several Park Advisory Councils formed acknowledged by the Chicago Park District. Two nearby parks with Park Advisory Councils are Big Marsh Park and Calumet Park. It is recommended that interested individuals reach out to those contacts for guidance and advice. Contact information can be found [here](#).
How do we get it done?

The table below outlines some initiatives that park supervisors—assisted by community partners such as the new Mann Park Advisory Council recommended earlier—can do:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Initiative</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social Media</td>
<td>Mann Park and William Powers State Recreation Area: Have an active presence on social media, specifically on Facebook. During programs and events, use social media to post pictures and share highlights. Join active Facebook groups, such as the Hegewisch Community page, and engage with community members. Use this form of promotion to demonstrate that you are actively running successful programs for the community.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Websites</td>
<td>Mann Park: Work with the Chicago Park District to discuss the possibility of including community parks, such as Mann Park, on their Chicago Southeast Parks website. The website highlights urban parks in the area, promotes programs and events, and houses a calendar of events and volunteer opportunities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local Media</td>
<td>Mann Park and William Powers State Recreation Area: Build relationships with local media outlets, such as the Hegewisch Times newspaper and the SxSE podcast, to provide quarterly seasonal program calendars.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Newsletters      | Mann Park and William Powers State Recreation Area: Start a newsletter that keeps the community updated on seasonal programs and events—including highlights from seasons just ended and updates and reminders about upcoming registrations and ways residents can lend a hand.  
                    10th Ward office: On their website, the 10th Ward office can create an online submission form for local parks and organizations to submit program events and information to be included in the 10th Ward newsletter. |
| Flyers           | Mann Park and William Powers State Recreation Area: All programs offered should have a flyer. Flyers can be posted online or printed and posted around the park(s) and the central business area. |
| Signs and Banners| Mann Park and William Powers State Recreation Area: To promote large community events or programs, large signs and banners should be ordered and placed around the community. |
| Partnerships     | Mann Park and William Powers State Recreation Area: Partner with local community organizations (such as the HBA and the Hegewisch Times) and institutions (Clay Elementary School, Grissom Elementary School) which could support with the distribution of program calendars and flyers. |
| Community Calendars| HBA or the Hegewisch Times: Create a community calendar that serves as a “one-stop shop” for up-to-date, comprehensive listings of programs and events at any of Hegewisch’s parks and recreation areas. |
Last, the National Recreation and Park Association has developed a communications toolkit aimed at helping parks with attracting families to youth sports programs. Mann Park and William Powers State Recreation Area representatives should use the toolkit to learn more about the core messaging, social media resources, and more.

First steps could include:

1. Schedule a first meeting, including the park supervisor at Mann Park, the superintendent of William Powers State Recreation Area, the 10th Ward office, and community partners such as the new Mann Park Advisory Council, area school representatives, and others. At the meeting, identify the range of events and programming to be promoted, discuss the potential approaches listed in the table above, and assigning who is responsible for next steps. (If necessary, this meeting could be organized and led by a working group identified by the new Hegewisch Coalition.)

2. Develop a comprehensive and consistent system for gathering events and programming to be promoted.

3. Promote upcoming events and programming through the approaches listed in the above table, along with any others identified by the participants of the initiative's first meeting.

RECOMMENDATION

**Work with William Powers State Recreation Area to explore adding regular recreational activities at Wolf Lake.**

Why is it needed?

Residents highlighted that Wolf Lake is one of Hegewisch’s most important assets and has the potential to host a variety of enhanced and new recreational activities.

What needs to be done?

One of Hegewisch’s most important assets is the William W. Powers State Recreation Area. This 419-acre lake has a visitor center and offers activities such as boating and recreational fishing.

Wolf Lake is undergoing a variety of physical improvements, including a newly accessible kayak launch and fishing pier, a bike repair station, new site signage, and boat access improvements. New parking spaces have been added at the site. Additionally, work is underway to route the Burnham Greenway Trail through the Recreation Area by 2025 or 2026. These improvements are expected to increase use of the Recreation Area by residents as well as visitors.

While people may engage in activities within the Recreation Area, they are not guided, monitored, or programmed. Equipment such as kayaks or paddle boards is not provided. By making this equipment available and providing programming, the Recreation Area can build upon already planned investments and improvements, making Wolf Lake truly a one-of-a-kind natural destination in Chicago.

How do we get it done?

IDNR should explore developing new programmed activities at Wolf Lake, such as kayaking, sailing, paddle-boarding, along with boat rental and possibly a snack shop.

First steps by IDNR could include:

1. Work internally to incorporate activities and equipment in future budget planning.

2. Consider hosting educational events that teach visitors about environmental stewardship.
3. Connect with Heather Kelly, the park supervisor of Mann Park, to discuss potential local partnerships between IDNR and the Chicago Park District.

Examples:

At [Clark (Richard) Park](#), visitors can rent canoes and kayaks to explore the North Branch of the Chicago River. Similarly, there are also several private companies around Chicago that offer various water-based equipment rentals, including kayak, canoe, and paddleboard rentals.

For an educational experience, the Field Museum’s [Calumet in My Backyard](#) program engages teenagers in learning more about the natural areas of Chicago and teaches about environmental stewardship. Participating youth conduct water testing, assess environmental conditions, learn more about natural plants and wildlife, and explore how they can engage in environmental issues.
Promote community efforts to “green” and beautify the neighborhood and expand environmental stewardship and education opportunities.

OBJECTIVE

Many residents want Hegewisch to become a leader on sustainable development, work toward environmental justice, and continue the restoration of its natural and conservation areas.

RECOMMENDATION

Help residents and local organizations keep Hegewisch’s streets clean and attractive.

Why is it needed?

Some residents have expressed concern that there are not enough trash cans and bins along Hegewisch’s commercial corridors and in its parks. Some observed that many of the trash cans along Baltimore Avenue frequently seem to be overflowing, while some parkgoers believe that Mann Park would benefit from additional trash bins. Meanwhile, the HBA hosts seasonal street cleanups which, despite the admirable efforts of several dedicated volunteers, could benefit from additional community involvement.

What needs to be done?

One strategy to help reduce littering and boost beautification efforts is to formalize a community-led neighborhood litter campaign that targets key destinations across the neighborhood, perhaps expanding the focus beyond the central business area to include areas around neighborhood parks and marshes. In addition, neighborhood groups could work with the local 10th Ward office to request additional trash bins along major corridors and in areas near parks. Trashcans could be painted to fit a neighborhood branding campaign.

How do we get it done?

Improved marketing efforts and new partnerships can help expand HBA’s current community cleanup efforts. HBA could also partner with organizations like the Southeast Environmental Task Force to divvy up efforts.

Cleaning efforts can receive additional support from the City of Chicago, such as through the Department of Streets and Sanitation “Clean & Green” program, which offers local community organizations assistance with local efforts to upkeep and maintain
Hegewisch residents have faced decades of legacy pollution due to the industry that surrounds the neighborhood. Organizations like the Southeast Environmental Task Force have remained rooted in the community and have won major victories in the Southeast area. Meanwhile, another organization—Three Little Birds Gardens—has more recently formed to promote healthy and sustainable eating by overseeing a community garden at Hegewisch’s Senior Suites community.

Although there are several improvements and local initiatives aimed at improving the environment, many challenges remain, and the community continues to demand that the Southeast area, including Hegewisch, remain a center of environmentalism. (Please see Map 12: Industrial corridors in the area)

RECOMMENDATION

Promote opportunities for residents to join and support local environmental organizations and nonprofits for a sustainable and clean neighborhood.

Why is it needed?

Residents and businesses should take an active role in preserving and enhancing the natural environment in the area, promoting environmental stewardship and sustainability, and building momentum that can lead to community-wide change. A place to start would be for the Southeast Environmental Task Force and Three Little Gardens to seek input from residents to identify what types of workshops and events that would be of most interest and benefit to the community (and also identify effective ways to promote these workshops and events).

How do we get it done?

First steps could include:

1. Get community input. The Southeast Environmental Task Force and Three Little Birds Gardens should solicit guidance, input, and feedback from community members when developing programs or events.

2. Promote events. Other local groups, such as HBA and Hegewisch Times, and the 10th Ward office should make it a priority to help promote such events.

Example:

After several efforts to add additional trash cans along commercial corridors, North Lawndale received more than 70 trash cans from the city’s Department of Streets and Sanitation in 2021. Their local alderperson worked with Streets and Sanitation to procure trash cans, using their aldermanic menu program to make local improvements.

Example:

their streetscapes. Upon requests via the City’s 311 portal, the department will loan tools and provide trash bags to community groups interested in clean-ups.
Map 12: Industrial corridors in the area

Source: Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning, 2023
RECOMMENDATION

Preserve and replenish the urban tree canopy in Hegewisch by planting new trees along commercial corridors and city parkways.

Why is it needed?

Although Hegewisch is surrounded by parks and marshes, residents expressed particular concern over lack of trees along 134th Street leading to Harbor Point Estates, as well as along Baltimore and Brandon Avenues. (Please see Map 13: Tree cover)

What needs to be done?

For Baltimore and Brandon Avenues, please see Recommendation: Plant more trees and provide more seating options to improve the appearance and enjoyment of Hegewisch’s commercial streets.

In other areas, particularly along Hegewisch’s residential streets, the community should plant shade trees and native landscaping along streets, especially in areas shown on the map. (Please see Map 14: Tree grades)

Through the Our Roots Chicago initiative, the City of Chicago has committed to equitably expanding the city’s tree canopy. At no cost, residents and business owners can request trees planted on the parkway via the Chicago 311 app or website or by reaching out to the local 10th Ward office.

There are several benefits to trees, including improved air quality, provide shade and cool air, and reduce pollution.

How do we get it done?

First steps could include:

1. Request a tree planting through 311. Any Chicago resident or business owner can request trees on a parkway by submitting a request on Chicago’s 311 app or website.

2. Or submit a request through the 10th Ward office. Since the 10th Ward office supports and works with the appropriate city departments to plant trees in 10th Ward communities, interested individuals may reach out to the 10th Ward office to submit requests.
Map 13: Tree cover

Source: Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning, 2023
Map 14: Tree grades
Hegewisch Neighborhood Plan

The Schroud property, also known as “Coal Hills,” is a US EPA Superfund site located in a prime spot in Hegewisch. People—including children—use this area for recreation. Working together with the EPA, Hegewisch needs to prevent the site’s use today and plan for its future role in the community.

OBJECTIVE

Why is it needed?

The Schroud property, better known as “Coal Hills,” was formerly used to store and dump slag material from the former steel manufacturing operations located about a mile away on the southeast side of Chicago. Soil and waste at the property and in nearby Indian Creek are contaminated. Despite fences and signs prohibiting use, it is popular with ATV and dirt bike enthusiasts, including children. Occupying 67 prime acres between the center of Hegewisch and the William Powers State Recreation Area, the Superfund site not only is a community hazard, it is a wasted opportunity.

Following a community engagement process, the EPA completed the Schroud Property Community Involvement Plan (2020), intended as a guideline for EPA communication with the community. The next steps are to prepare a remedial investigation/feasibility study. Meanwhile, the EPA and the 10th Ward office have also worked together to erect fencing and signage to prohibit and prevent use, but unfortunately this has not prevented some people from continuing to use the site.

What needs to be done?

As the remedial investigation/feasibility study is prepared—and remediation moves forward—the community should ensure that the EPA prevents persons from using the hazardous site, through a combination of more effective barriers and enforcement of trespassing. But during the time that will be necessary to study and implement remediation, the community should plan and carry out a process that engages the entire Hegewisch community in collaboration with the EPA, regional
partners, and design professionals to identify the site’s best future use—which could be anything, although the site seems well-suited for recreation.

By preventing use of this hazardous site today, Hegewisch can protect the long-term health of people who might otherwise use the site, including children. And by taking full advantage of time now, the community can engage in an inclusive and state-of-the-art planning process that ensures that this community hazard is replaced with something great.

How do we get it done?

The Hegewisch Collaborative should establish a Schroud property working group to work with the 10th Ward office and the EPA. Together they should do everything they can to ensure that people do not enter the contaminated site. Meanwhile, they can lay the groundwork for a planning process to determine and design the best future use of the site.

The first steps could include:

1. Establish a Schroud property working group to work with the 10th Ward office and the EPA.

2. Schedule quarterly meetings, to occur at least one month before Hegewisch Collaborative quarterly meetings (so that progress can be reported at the Hegewisch Collaborative meetings).

3. Hold the first quarterly meeting, identifying their objectives for the year and first tasks to be completed, which are then assigned to individual team members to complete.
GOAL

MAKE HEGEWISCH’S ROADS SAFER FOR ALL AND LIMIT TRUCK TRAFFIC IN RESIDENTIAL AREAS
Explore options to limit truck traffic in residential areas.

OBJECTIVE

Residents are concerned about the number of trucks traveling through the community. To minimize trucks traveling through Hegewisch’s residential areas, the community should explore designated truck routes that would maintain necessary access to local businesses while routing trucks more effectively between the Interstates and their destinations.

A goal of the recent We Will Chicago plan is for the City to "Balance the economic benefits of moving goods with negative impacts on communities, eliminating, then equitably distributing burdens," as well as "prioritizing the safety of people walking, using transit and biking."

RECOMMENDATION

Identify options for new truck routes that will limit truck traffic in residential areas while supporting businesses.

Why is it needed?

All streets have some truck traffic. Streets in Hegewisch’s central business area have greater delivery needs than residential areas—and, as a result, higher volumes of truck traffic. These streets need truck access, but any street with too many trucks is unlikely to be welcoming to pedestrians—or as a place to spend time, which is what Hegewisch’s central business area needs to become.

Several roads on the periphery of Hegewisch have over 500 trucks traveling on them each day, including Torrence Avenue and 130th Street near the Ford Assembly Plant, 126th Street leading to the Ford Supplier Park, Brainard Avenue, and Avenue O north of 126th Street. High numbers of tractor-semi-trailer combinations are a particular concern. (Please see Map 15: Truck routes with daily traffic volumes)

What needs to be done?

While trucks under 65ft in length—the type that typically make deliveries to commercial businesses in Hegewisch—have wide latitude in using local roads. Still, improvements are possible. Working with IDOT, the City of Chicago can regulate trucks by either prohibiting use on specific roads or by designating routes for trucks to follow. This is a relatively low-cost implementation effort that will require ongoing communication between the 10th Ward office, IDOT (which designates truck routes), CDOT and the local industrial sector. Designating truck routes, if enforced, can help keep the biggest trucks away from sensitive areas, especially those most likely to be used by vulnerable road users, such as seniors, children, people using mobility devices, and bicyclists.
The following routes would provide access to local industry while keeping trucks off residential streets:

- 130th St from I-94 to Torrence Avenue (providing access to the Ford Assembly Plant and Torrence Avenue)
- Torrence Avenue from 106th St to 136th St (providing access to the Illinois International Port District and 126th Street)
- 126th Street from Avenue O to Torrence Avenue (providing access to the Ford Supplier Park)

(Please see Map 16: Proposed truck routes)

Burley Avenue industrial corridor:
A new road along Burley Avenue is proposed to accommodate increased development near the Calumet River, which could provide all the truck access that is now provided by Avenue O from 106th Street to 126th Street. To keep the trucks off Avenue O, the creation of the Burley industrial corridor should be expedited, and a long-term Class II truck routing plan should be considered. Fortunately, this is now underway, as CDOT is moving forward with the engineering and design of Burley Avenue as a freight street between 106th and 126th.

134th Street / Boy Scout Road:
During the planning process, many residents complained about trucks traveling along 134th Street east of Avenue O (also known as Boy Scout Road). The truck weight limit on 134th Street east of Avenue O is five tons, and all trucks are prohibited beyond the Indiana state line, regardless of size. Thus, the Boy Scout Road truck traffic cited by many concerned residents is primarily an enforcement concern, which may be addressed by reporting violations to local police. Additionally, CDOT could consider a “except local deliveries” exception to the five-ton regulation and install additional signage.

How do we get it done?

The 10th Ward office can work with IDOT, CDOT, and local industrial businesses responsible for truck traffic to better understand origin, destination, and routes being used by trucks, including Boy Scout Road, as well as impacts such as noise and safety. Once current conditions are better understood, these parties should consider the viability of the truck routes proposed above, along with options for expediting creation of the Burley industrial corridor and implementing effective enforcement along 134th Street (Boy Scout Road).

First steps could include:

1. Hold a first meeting with IDOT and CDOT. The 10th Ward office, in collaboration with CMAP staff, could hold an initial meeting with staff from IDOT and CDOT assigned to this area to discuss community concerns and relevant data (such as existing routes, traffic counts, and truck restrictions), as well as identify missing data and important questions that need to be answered (and who can answer them). This group can also begin to consider the viability of proposed truck routes and options to expedite the creation of the Burley industrial corridor.

2. Meet with industry. As part of gathering information necessary to establish a comprehensive understanding of local truck traffic, this group should organize a meeting with representatives from local industrial businesses responsible for significant truck traffic as well as the Calumet Area Industrial Commission. In addition to discussing the concerns of residents, the meeting should focus on any local transportation challenges experienced by these important industrial businesses. Last, the meeting should consider the viability of the truck routes proposed above, along with options for expediting the Burley industrial corridor.

3. Make initial recommendations. Based upon the previous two meetings, this group (including representatives from Hegewisch’s industrial sector) should identify a limited set of recommendations to improve truck routing, prioritizing easy-to-implement recommendations.
Map 16: Proposed truck routes
Improve safety at especially hazardous intersections.

**OBJECTIVE**

Hegewisch’s streets are used by large numbers of pedestrians, as well as bikes, automobiles, and trucks. Public feedback helped identify intersections where pedestrians—especially children and those who rely on public transportation—feel especially unsafe. Hegewisch should study ways to alert drivers, slow down traffic, and guide pedestrian safety.

**RECOMMENDATION**

**Explore potential ways to increase safety at key intersections.**

**Why is it needed?**

Residents identified the following locations as being especially uncomfortable and unsafe for pedestrians:

- 134th Street intersections, especially in dense residential areas (which have experienced a high volume of accidents).
- Brainard Avenue from train station to Baltimore Avenue
- Torrence Avenue/Brainard Avenue/130th Street

**What needs to be done?**

In order for Hegewisch to be an attractive, enjoyable place to live and visit, it needs to ensure that pedestrians feel comfortable walking in the neighborhood. The safety and comfort of pedestrians can be increased by slowing down vehicular traffic at busy intersections and along arterial roads, as well as by installing safety features at marked and unmarked crossings. Specifically, the following safety improvements should be considered (please see following page):
1. **134th Street intersections, especially in dense residential areas.** Intersections along 134th Street have experienced a relatively high volume of accidents, despite many four-way stop signs, speed bumps, and marked pedestrian crossings. Residents have identified 134th Street intersections such as Green Bay Road, Avenue N, and others as especially busy and unsafe, with vehicles often speeding and disobeying stop signs. Since this is an especially sensitive area, frequented by children, additional traffic calming treatments should be employed.

2. **Brainard Avenue between the South Shore train station and Baltimore Ave.** There is a need to improve the illumination, cleanliness, and appearance of Brainard Avenue between Avenue O and Baltimore Avenue. When large-scale improvements are next scheduled for the area near the Hegewisch train station, the community should work with CDOT to ensure that traffic calming, bicycle accommodations, and beautification are included as part of the improvements.

3. **Torrence Avenue/Brainard Avenue/130th Street.** Hegewisch residents repeatedly said they feel unsafe at this complex intersection. This includes drivers, but especially pedestrians and bicyclists—due to missing sidewalks, unmarked and unsignalized crossings, and disconnected bicycle infrastructure. In addition, residents mentioned drivers speeding and often running red lights from all directions.

   While this intersection was specifically designed and recently constructed to separate rail freight traffic from road traffic, additional improvements are possible. At a focus group with teenage Hegewisch residents, several mentioned that they wanted safe walking and biking connections between the residential areas of the neighborhood and nearby natural and recreational destinations, such as Hegewisch Marsh Park.
Please note that the safety improvements recommended above are meant to be conceptual. Feasibility level planning—including any traffic analysis—was not conducted and would need to be undertaken. These concepts are only meant to show potential ways that each of these locations could be repurposed to provide greater access and connectivity, as well as improved safety.

How do we get it done?

The 10th Ward office should explore traffic calming interventions at these priority locations, which are complex and will require extra attention and collaboration between the 10th Ward office, CDOT, IDOT, and residents, institutions, and landowners in the immediate vicinity.

First steps could include:

1. Meet with CDOT and IDOT. The 10th Ward office, in collaboration with CMAP staff, could hold an initial meeting with staff from CDOT and IDOT assigned to this area to discuss community concerns and data relevant to these problematic intersections, as well as identify missing data and important questions that need to be answered (and how they can be answered). As the group considers potential ways to improve safety at these intersections, it should discuss the suggested safety improvements listed above.

2. Obtain missing data. Next, CDOT and IDOT can follow up to obtain any missing data, such as through site visits and traffic analysis.

3. Identify next steps. The initial group should meet again to evaluate any additional information or data gathered since the first meeting and identify potential next steps.
The Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP) is the region’s comprehensive planning organization. The agency and its partners developed and are now implementing ON TO 2050, a long-range plan to help the seven counties and 284 communities of northeastern Illinois implement strategies that address transportation, housing, economic development, open space, the environment, and other quality-of-life issues.

See cmap.illinois.gov for more information.