



Metropolitan Planning Council

May 10, 2016

Cook County Finance Committee
Testimony of MarySue Barrett, President of the Metropolitan Planning Council
Cook County Hospital Redevelopment (16-2198)

In the fall of 2014, the County designed an unusually proactive and thoughtful Charrette process that invited five teams convened by civic organizations to design concepts for the redevelopment of the former Cook County Hospital Central Campus. The Metropolitan Planning Council was pleased to lead one of those teams and put together an exciting design—including many of the elements reflected in the proposal before you today.

The Metropolitan Planning Council—a longtime leader on solutions to improve prosperity, equity, and livability across our region—is supportive of many facets of this master plan. Particularly, we are enthusiastic about a mixed-use renovation (including a hotel, residential and retail on currently vacant land) to a vibrant urban village.

Cook County's plan for 579,000 square feet of residential (approx. 470 units) includes 20% affordability on site, or 90 units. This area is just west of the West Loop which is booming in population and land value. On-site affordable homes is a proactive way to ensure long-term neighborhood viability while expanding housing supply—important in a city and region that is losing population.

The Illinois Medical District (IMD) and Rush University Medical Center both have recently developed master plans to make the area a more attractive destination for its 30,000 daily workers and 50,000 daily visitors. This investment has the potential to create job opportunities for residents throughout Chicagoland, especially if coupled with smart transit investments. MPC's research found that a proposed Bus-Rapid Transit Line (BRT) on Ashland Avenue would be a powerful job connector: For example, residents commuting from 31st and Ashland to the IMD would see a 50% reduction in travel times with BRT. Residents coming from 63rd and Ashland to the IMD would see a 42% reduction in travel time. Along with my testimony, I am submitting a map which details travel time savings and urge Cook County

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Commissioners to actively support BRT on Ashland.

We commend Cook County for being part of this exciting vision that rejects a car-centric medical complex and embraces a vision for an innovation district set forth by both IMD and Rush. You are setting out a path to ensure maximum benefit for residents throughout the County. Insisting on strong on-site affordability and nearby transit investments are two key ways to ensure this project has a positive ripple effect on the vibrancy of our entire region.