



**COOK COUNTY COMMISSION  
ON SOCIAL INNOVATION**  
2022 Annual Report



**ALMA E. ANAYA**  
CHAIR  
COOK COUNTY COMMISSION ON SOCIAL INNOVATION

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June 26, 2023

Dear Honorable President Toni Preckwinkle & Cook County Board of Commissioners:

In 2022, the Cook County Commission on Social Innovation ("SI Commission") focused its research and strategic efforts on providing support and policy recommendations to ensure a full recovery from the jarring effects of the pandemic. Because the past few years had a tremendous effect on the social and economic life of the region, especially in such a vital hub as Cook County, the SI Commission has intentionally partnered with entities such as the Obama Foundation, Chicago Southland Economic Development Corporation, and the University of Chicago to advance our mandated responsibility.

In 2016, the Cook County Commission on Social Innovation was established to develop policy recommendations focused on strengthening the capacity of the inner city and Southland of Cook County. The pandemic has taught us that an entity such as the SI Commission, a body that works to promote economic and workforce development in Cook County, is needed in finding solutions to how we move forward as a society. The Commission has dedicated itself to identifying priority areas to support Cook County in incorporating long-term sustainability in services and programs. These priorities include re-imagining our approach to equitable housing, wealth building, addressing the racial wealth gap, and supporting access to government services in a way that is streamlined and accessible.

Moving ahead, the SI Commission looks forward to strengthening relationships with both Cook County agencies and external partners to achieve its goals. It seeks to be a thought partner in pandemic relief and beyond to support the communities most in need of government services. Through these efforts, the Commission aims to develop, support, and advance policy efforts at Cook County and other levels of government with shared priorities.

Please find below the 2022 Annual Report of the Social Innovation Commission that highlights the work and priorities of the SI Commission.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Alma E. Anaya", is written over a white background.

Alma E. Anaya  
Chair, Cook County Commission on Social Innovation  
Cook County Commissioner, 7<sup>th</sup> District

## 2022 MEMBERS

### ALMA E. ANAYA

7TH DISTRICT COOK COUNTY COMMISSIONER  
CHAIR OF THE COMMISSION ON SOCIAL INNOVATION

### MARC J. LANE

ATTORNEY AT LAW, VICE CHAIR OF THE COMMISSION ON SOCIAL INNOVATION

### PETER CRETICOS

EX-OFFICIO, PRESIDENT AND EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF INSTITUTE FOR WORK & THE ECONOMY

### VERNARD ALSBERRY JR.

MAYOR OF HAZEL CREST, ILLNOIS

### HARRY ALSTON

VICE PRESIDENT OF STRATEGIC PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT, SAFER FOUNDATION

### SOL ANDERSON

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, I GROW CHICAGO

### PATRICK BRUTUS

COORDINATOR OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, BUREAU OF ECONOMIC  
DEVELOPMENT, SPECIAL SERVICE AREA DIVISION

### KATHELEEN S. CALIENTO

PRESIDENT & CEO OF CARA COLLECTIVE

### RODGER COOLEY

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, CHICAGO FOOD POLICY ACTION COUNCIL

### KRISTI DE LAURENTIIS

SOUTH SUBURBAN MAYORS AND MANAGERS ASSOCIATION, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

### WENDY DUBOE

BOARD CHAIR, THE INSTITUTE FOR NON-VIOLENCE CHICAGO

### XOCHITL ESPINOSA

FOUNDER, THE CO-OP ED CENTER

### XOCHITL FLORES

BUREAU CHIEF, COOK COUNTY BUREAU OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

### CHRISTYN FREEMON

FOUNDER & CHIEF SOLUTIONIST, PROJECT FORWARD

### ANA GUAJARDO

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, CENTRO DE TRABAJADORES UNIDOS

**MARIA HADDEN**

49TH WARD ALDERWOMAN, CITY OF CHICAGO

**JENNIFER "SIS" KILLEN**

SUPERINTENDENT, COOK COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION & HIGHWAYS

**HOWARD MALES**

PRESIDENT, RESEARCH PROS

**MORGAN MALONE**

DIRECTOR OF DEVELOPMENT & EXTERNAL AFFAIRS, FARPOINT DEVELOPMENT

**WENDY RAYMER**

DIRECTOR OF COMMUNITY RELATIONS, BMO HARRIS

**HAROLD RICE**

PRESIDENT AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER, COMMUNITY AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ASSOCIATION OF COOK COUNTY (CEDA)

**CARRIE THOMAS**

FORMER EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, CHICAGO JOBS COUNCIL

**GERI SANCHEZ-AGLIPAY**

REGION V ADMINISTRATOR, U.S. SMALL BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION

**WILLIAM SCHLEIZER**

CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER, THE DELTA INSTITUTE

**JOHN YONAN**

PREVIOUS BUREAU CHIEF, COOK COUNTY BUREAU OF ASSET MANAGEMENT

**BACKGROUND**

In April 2016, the Cook County Board of Commissioners enacted Ordinance #19-1382, establishing the Cook County Commission on Social Innovation to address issues of unemployment, economic distress and disparities in the inner city and Southland of Cook County.



The Ordinance, entitled “The Cook County Commission on Social Innovation for Job Creation, Workforce Development, Entrepreneurship, Community Revitalization, and Industrial Development” aimed to address inequities in the South and South Suburbs.

Our purpose and mission as a Commission is to make actionable policy recommendations to help achieve the following purposes:

- (1) To strengthen the capacity of the inner city and the Southland and, generally, of the County to work cooperatively with relevant stakeholders to create, scale, and sustain innovative social programs;**
- (2) To build the capacity of nonprofit organizations and government agencies to pursue entrepreneurial ventures in the inner city and the Southland and in the County; and**
- (3) To attract investment and philanthropic funding to the inner city and the Southland and to the County to support these ventures.**

Furthermore, the Commission serves as a resource for the County’s agencies and departments in a common cause to promote the Southland’s and the County’s data-driven social innovation ecosystem in collaboration with other relevant actors. The Commission is a laboratory that convenes a broad and diverse array of interests and expertise within and across sectors to facilitate cooperation and the co-creation of innovative solutions to social problems.

This annual report captures the work that was accomplished in the 2022 calendar year and highlights the goals set forth by the SI Commission members and their working groups.



## 2022 UPDATES & POLICY PRIORITIES

**COMMUNITY INVESTMENT VEHICLES (CIVS)** – *John W. Haines, Executive Director of Portland, Oregon’s Community Investment Trust with Mercy Corps Global Initiative Team | Ianna Kachoris, Executive Senior of Policy and Advocacy at the Chicago Community Trust & Ja’net Defell, Director for Community Desk Chicago*

CIVs allow residents to collaborate and pool their financial capital to buy and manage neighborhood real estate assets. CIVs have been a model to empower communities to create equitable development, inclusive financial growth, energizing civic engagement, and community wealth. The SI commission has begun engaging in discussion when the City of Chicago released an RFP for community wealth-building ecosystems. The City has released \$2 million in funding and has allocated \$15 million for the building community wealth-building ecosystem. This funding will be used to build the infrastructure for the community investment vehicles. The SI Commission is interested in engaging and proving recommendations to the City and will be meeting with the Cook County Land Bank to help support efforts of expanding to other commercial retail real estate CIV opportunities.



**DEVELOPING A DIVERSE TALENT PIPELINE** – *Michael Strautmanis, Executive Vice-President of Civic Engagement, Obama Foundation on Building and Empowering a Diverse Workforce*

As Cook County looks to address the inequities, it is important to acknowledge and help close the gaps that exist in workforce development. Many residents find themselves with barriers to obtaining training, technical support, and employment. These barriers can jeopardize the job security of a sector of our residents and impact their quality of life. As part of the County’s Policy Road Map’s Vital Communities, we have taken a commitment to “open[ing] access to economic prosperity for all by investing in the workforce and talent development.” The SI Commission also hopes to support this effort by providing recommendations to address gaps that exist in the talent pipeline. The SI Commission has partnered up with the Obama Foundation to look at opportunities to empower the next generation of leaders and build a diverse workforce and diverse procurement.



**TRANSITION OPPORTUNITIES FOR UNUTILIZED CHURCH PROPERTY** – *Rev. Mark Elsdon, Author of We Aren’t Broke: Uncovering Hidden Resources for Mission and Ministry, and Kristi DeLaurentis, Executive Director of South Suburban Mayors & Managers Association (SSMMA)*

There are approximately 350,000 church properties, thousands of which are closing or will close by 2025. Churches are utilized about 12% of the week and are spaces that can be used by the community residents. For those churches that may be under foreclosure, there are opportunities for communal ownership and conversion of these spaces into “social goods” such as affordable housing, food pantries, or other community spaces. There have been steps in this direction, including the Southland Reactivation Act, SB No. 3189 that established a pilot program that allows the Southland municipalities to “reactivate” tax-exempt parcels. This is



done with hopes to attract private sector investments and new jobs to the region, not to mention that it may create an inducement limited to distressed properties located in many communities. The SI Commission will continue to explore the impact of SB 3189 and look for the expansion and strengthening of this effort in Cook County.

**ADVANCING LOCAL REPARATIONS** – *Daniel Biss, Mayor of Evanston & Robin Rue Simmons, Founder and Executive Director of FirstRepair & Chairperson of the City of Evanston’s Reparations Committee*

Reparations have been discussed at length for decades but FirstRepair along with other advocacy groups have made it their mission to move towards actionable steps in local and national legislation. In January 2022, the City of Evanston began disbursements to its residents after the



passage of the nation’s first municipally funded reparations legislation for Black residents. The program aimed to support the Black communities that have been affected by institutionalized racism and segregation that has created wealth, health, and educational gaps between Black and white residents in Evanston. The goal is to process repairing, healing, and restoring those who have been negatively affected by government(s), corporation(s), institution(s), or individual(s) due to their racial identity. The SI Commission members have partnered with the National African American Reparations Committee to provide support and guarantee that communities are heard in the process of the creation of reparation efforts. Mayor Biss will be working with the SI Commission to give benefit from the Evanston experience. We hope to provide concrete next steps and recommendations to the Board of Commissioners in the upcoming year.

**ELECTRIC VEHICLE SUPPLY CHAIN IN ILLINOIS** – *Reggie Greenwood, Executive Director of the Chicago Southland Economic Development Corporation*

Electric Vehicles (“EV”) are the future of our country and Cook County must have the infrastructure necessary to keep up with the advancements in the horizon. Some of the EVs that are of interest in Cook County include cars, buses, delivery cranes, passenger cranes, locomotives, and passenger drones. We know that within the next few years drone delivery systems will be tested and within



the next year, the first passenger drone will be launched in Texas. Both Cook and Will Counties are an integral part of the U.S. Largest logistics hub with intermodal operations that include UP, CN BNSF, CSX, and NS. Our next goal is the development of logistics and passenger drones, electric cargo, and EV charging stations. Cook County could become the center of manufacturing throughout the supply chain and ensuring the smooth transition of EV is crucial to accomplishing this. A few policy ideas have been discussed in the SI Commission including: (1) expansion of the Electric Vehicle Energy Storage (EVES) training program at Heartland Community College in Bloomington, Illinois to other community colleges – this program will prepare our workforce with the training and tools necessary for these advancements; (2) supporting OAI and Mhubs to create training but to also sustain technology incubators; (3) investing in new Level 3 charging stations across the region – to help with the transition and build the infrastructure needed to sustain the technology advancements.

**CRIME AND CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM** – Jens Ludwig, Director of the University of Chicago’s Crime Lab & Co-Director of the Education Lab | Ishanu Chattopadhyay Ph. D Assistant Professor of Medicine, the University of Chicago

The SI Commission heard a few presentations regarding inequities and the impacts of crime and the criminal justice system. As homicide rates in the U.S. and the City of Chicago have increased throughout recent years, it is our duty to focus on swift and intentional solutions. Because crime is the leading cause of death for 15 - 49 years old, crime is now a global issue, and there has been significant investment in programs and research to decrease the violence and incarceration rate.



The SI Commission has discussed the concerns about loss of privacy, bias, over-policing, and the role of data collection. The SI Commission has also engaged in conversations regarding the tools that aim to address response to violence, including Artificial Intelligence (AI) in the criminal justice field which attempts to address bias and improve data science in law enforcement. Members of the SI Commission continue to discuss safeguards in this area since there could be a

bias that can further criminalize a segment of the population and be counterproductive. The SI Commission members also proposed the development of recommendations that are both actionable and interdisciplinary for this large intersecting problem. They are prioritizing equity, community-led input, and developing community assets, rather than just focusing on race and gender. In 2023, the goal is to collaborate with the Justice Advisory Council (JAC).

**ADDRESSING THE “DESERTS” IN OUR COMMUNITIES** – Ameya Pawar, Senior Advisor Chicago Director for the First Midwest Group & Paul Williams, Founder & Executive Director of Center for Public Enterprise

Many residents in Cook County face “deserts” - 25% of residents lack access to high-speed internet; 760,000 are food insecure; 30% are underbanked/unbanked; and 58% live in areas where there is



no childcare support. In addition, banks are denying over 80% of small business loans in these areas. All of these “deserts” create further inequities that must be addressed. The SI Commission recommends that Cook County look into launching public development companies, public enterprises, and childcare centers which could offer income-sensitive pricing & be structured as for or non-profits. It was also recommended to address food deserts, which is why in 2022,

SI Commission members worked with Commissioner Donna Miller and provided a letter of support for a tax incentive that aimed to address food deserts. Additionally, the SI Commission has a significant interest in addressing the equitable and affordable housing issue in Cook County. The SI Commission recommends that when building mixed-income housing, especially with public housing authorities, it is important to expand rental subsidy programs that can improve the affordable mix as well as public lending facilities. Finally, the SI Commission is aware that there are federal programs and funding opportunities under Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP) through the U.S. Federal Communications Commission (FCC) that will provide support to increase access to connectivity. Cook County must ensure participation and work with local partners to address the gaps in communities of color.



**FACILITATING VOLUNTEERISM** – Scott Mcfarland *Director of the National Service for the led for America (LFA)*

25.6% of Chicago metropolitan residents expressed that they volunteer. It is known that communities that see more of their residents volunteer, experience less crime, see more economic growth, increase employment opportunities, increase civic engagement, and live a longer happier life. Volunteer engagement can be increased in Cook County given the pipelines that we aim to foster for our residents and our youth. Unfortunately, there are barriers such as not enough opportunities posted, lack of transportation, no volunteer centers, applying barriers, and no partners with private and public sectors. Across the country, we have seen intentional efforts to facilitate volunteer opportunities and the SI Commission has engaged in these efforts. There are a few barriers that have been explored such as the background checks and the disadvantage that it creates for some residents and better, cohesive coordination between different sectors. The SI Commission hopes to bring recommendations in the following year.



**SEGREGATION IN COOK COUNTY** – Steven Durlauf, *Director of the Stone Center for Research on Wealth Inequality and Mobility at the University of Chicago Harris School of Public Policy*

Cook County is one of the most segregated geographic areas. The SI Commission acknowledges that this segregation leads to many inequities and economic, health, and prosperity disparities in our society. We understand that this affects the lives and trajectories of our children and future generations. Breaking these segregation patterns can reduce unfair inequalities as well as having early childhood investment and improving educational outcomes for those at a disadvantage. The SI Commission will prioritize compiling ideas and policy recommendations that will address this issue. Dismantling segregation while keeping intact the identity of a community is a delicate balance and will need collaboration. In addition, the SI Commission understands that to fully help tackle the negative impacts of segregation, it will take addressing many of the other previously mentioned areas such as affordable housing, healthcare access, workforce development, and access to opportunities and resources.

