



**COOK COUNTY COMMISSION
ON SOCIAL INNOVATION**
2023 Annual Report



ALMA E. ANAYA
CHAIR
COOK COUNTY COMMISSION ON SOCIAL INNOVATION

April 2, 2024

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

In 2016, the Cook County Commission on Social Innovation ("SI Commission") 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 to find solutions to how we move forward as a society. The SI 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, supporting innovative approaches to violence prevention efforts, and supporting access to government services in a way that is streamlined.

In 2023, the SI Commission followed this mission by focusing its research and strategic efforts on providing support and policy recommendations to ensure revitalization of the County especially after the lasting impact caused by the pandemic. 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, and the SI Commission has intentionally partnered with entities such as the Justice Advisory Council (JAC), the Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago, National Coalition for Community Capital (NC3) and many more to discuss solutions and recommendations.

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 2023 Annual Report of the Social Innovation Commission, which highlights the SI Commission's work and priorities.

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, 7th District

2023 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, ILLINOIS

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 FLORES

BUREAU CHIEF, COOK COUNTY BUREAU OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

CHRISTYN FREEMON

FOUNDER & CHIEF SOLUTIONIST, PROJECT FORWARD

JENNIFER "SIS" KILLEN

SUPERINTENDENT, COOK COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION & HIGHWAYS

HOWARD MALES

PRESIDENT, RESEARCH PROS, EDAC CHAIR

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

WILLIAM SCHLEIZER

CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER, THE DELTA INSTITUTE

BACKGROUND

In April 2016, the Cook County Board of Commissioners enacted Ordinance #19-1382, establishing the Cook County Commission on Social Innovation to address 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 the County; and**
- (3) To attract investment and philanthropic funding to the inner city, the Southland, and 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 Southlands 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 co-create innovative solutions to social problems.

This annual report captures the work accomplished in the 2023 calendar year and highlights the goals set forth by the SI Commission members and their working groups.

2023 PRESENTATIONS & POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

ADDRESSING PUBLIC SAFETY CHALLENGES



Over the past several decades, public safety has become a priority in Cook County. Subsequently, researching violence prevention efforts and addressing barriers in the communities has become a focal point for researchers and policymakers. Private and public financial contributions have played an instrumental role in establishing efforts for this type of research. The presentation by Dr. Vargas brought forward the challenge that private-funded research may introduce bias into the publications. It was also established that certain data usage agreements may significantly impact data analysis, depending on the information presented, omitted, or disregarded. The presence of such obstructive barriers does not serve communities' interests, nor do they facilitate data interpretation. Policy recommendations have been proposed to address this issue, including; (1) implementing a new public safety metric outside the purview of law enforcement, (2) investing in a diverse public safety workforce, and (3) focusing on harm rather than crime.

Presentation & Recommendations by: **Dr. Robert Vargas, Professor of Sociology**



Dr. Patton reported the barriers to using social media and artificial intelligence (AI) as “tools” in addressing public safety issues, especially during a time when law enforcement has moved to use them to predict incidents that may put residents’ well-being and safety in jeopardy. Typically, it is argued that understanding and preventing the underlying causes of violence can be accomplished with the use of social media, but while many are starting to embrace artificial intelligence (AI) as a tool to address this problem, there is no doubt that more work and studies need to be done before AI is wholly utilized in this space. Technology can help in some instances but understanding things such as knowing and interpreting particular dynamic language and lingo regularly used on the internet. A study on this topic is another essential undertaking. It is recommended to research to follow the progression of violence through these mediums. For this research, it is essential to comprehend the types of data that can be gathered and how to gather them. The SI Commission will keep exploring the relationship between social media and artificial intelligence (AI) and research related to violence, as well as how these two might be used to comprehend better what violence implies and how individuals can intervene in these circumstances and hope to see these changes enacted and the community's voice incorporated and heard.

Presentation & Recommendations by: **Dr. Desmond U. Patton, Professor at Brian, Randi Schwartz University and the thirty-first Penn Integrates Knowledge University Professor, Chapin Hall**



With increased social media usage comes an increase in bias incidents. Bias can be a dangerous thing that can harm society. Modern media quickly turns into local events on the national news, which depending on the circumstances, can lead to incidents of racism, bias, and bigotry and produce mass panic. This can have devastating impacts on the relationships within communities and the living conditions of one. Leaders should be prepared for any circumstances they

face when tackling these issues. With social media being, for many, the most used form of communication, law enforcement, and policymakers need to be cognizant of the multiple uses including to aid and to target residents just based on bias. Convening with the public, corporate, and social sector leaders across Cook County to develop a bias and social crisis response plan and team is recommended to examine this further because using online platforms without understanding the bias that could exist is more harmful than helpful. The SI Commission has committed to continuing to promote the importance of creating such a plan and ensuring that communities work together to prevent bias/social crisis from expanding to reduce its effects on society.

Presentation & Recommendations by: **Steve Ginsburg, Founder of Augustine Strategic Communications and expert in bias-related crisis management.**



It is essential to provide services for black fathers to improve their quality of life and that of their children, families, and communities. Community Violence Intervention (CVI) programs focus on reducing homicides and shootings by establishing relationships with people at the center of gun violence in our communities. Having this type of resource available for fathers to learn and grow is essential because it allows these fathers to grow and thrive in their communities. Becoming a father can serve as a turning point for many individuals. There are many times when fathers face challenges such as interpersonal violence, punitive and biased legal systems, and professional bias within the child-serving systems. These situations create trauma within them and can lead them to fall victim to violence. By having more resources for fathers, such as re-entry opportunities and trauma-specific services, they can continue with their lives and engage in the community. Creating a pathway for social and economic mobility is a must. Some recommendations were using unspent ARPA funding to integrate fatherhood services into CVI programs and having Cook County Community programs initiatives allocations to target healthy communities, vital communities, and safe and thriving communities. Investing in research is also essential to evaluate whether programs are being implemented as intended, the expected outputs are being produced, and whether short-term outcomes are trending in the right decision.

Presentation & Recommendation by: **Dr. Clinton Boyd, Jr., Executive Director of Fathers, Families & Healthy Communities (FFHC) Researcher at Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago**

THE INTERSECTION OF PUBLIC SAFETY AND PUBLIC HEALTH



It has been well documented that there are great deficits in access to trauma centers in Cook County especially in the south/southwest sides of Chicago and in the south suburban areas. The lack of trauma centers has adverse effects on the life expectancy of the residents that live and work in these trauma center “deserts”. It has been noted that in these same areas, there are substantial overlaps in many other social determinants of health such as economic hardships & high unemployment rates, higher shooting victims, lack of accessible food, and so on. This further causes trauma in the communities but plays a role in the intersectionality of public safety and public health. Dr. Roger provided many policy solutions including (1) investing in the south/southwest sides, (2) improving access to health & mental health services, (3) investing in the critical social determinants of health, and (4) partnering up with a Cook County Health (CCH) or another trauma center to be used as a hub to capture data and provide opportunities for

interventions to victims of violence. Through these recommendations, the hope is to help through multi-dimensional methods in addressing the most vulnerable communities.

Presentation & Recommendations by: **Dr. Sewly Rogers Jr., Executive Vice President, Community, Health Engagement, Founding Director, Trauma Center Chief, Section of Trauma and Acute Care Surgery**

COMMUNITY WEALTH BUILDING AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



Wealth inequities in Black and Brown communities is an issue that the Cook County Policy Road Map has identified as a priority. The SI Commission also has committed to uplifting initiatives and efforts that close the wealth gap in communities of color. True and intentional investments (such as community capital) are crucial to achieving this and to promote growth. Investing in communities can be done by providing more resources, access to capital, and eliminating structural barriers, to name a few. The Neighborhood Safety Initiative (NSI) aims to enhance public safety by supporting resident networks and their ability to organize for change, influence policy change, and transform public spaces into equitable, lively, and safe public spaces. Cook County can provide opportunities for communities to access available resources that increase local investment and ownership by all residents. The SI Commission will continue exploring ideas for promoting community growth and expanding the resources necessary for residents.

Presentation & Recommendations by: **Chris Miller, Board Chair/Founding Member, National Coalition on Community Capital (NC3)| Courtney Bryan, Executive Director of the Center for Justice & Layman Lee, Director of Neighborhood Safety Initiatives at the Center for Justice Innovation**

INEQUITIES IN ENVIRONMENTAL & ELECTRIFYING INITIATIVES



In 2022, Cook County announced its Electric Vehicle Station program, a 4-year initiative to install 75 dual port public EV charging stations. EV charging stations can be costly. As of February 2024, Cook County has approximately 26,244 Electric Vehicles (EVs). Petrol or diesel vehicles are highly polluting and are being quickly replaced by fully electric vehicles. With the EV numbers growing, the need for charging stations needs to increase. In charging “deserts” in Black and Brown communities where there is already a disproportionate exposure to air pollution, opportunities for more charging stations and workforce development in this field continue to grow. Potential solutions discussed were promoting Level 2 Chargers, using existing interconnects, designing for neighborhoods, establishing property-owner, community-led partnerships, and providing incentives and rebates. Along with that recommendation, it is important to take into consideration the gap in workforce development in historically impacted environmental justice communities for the future. Some states also offer types of rebates/incentives.

Presentation & Recommendations by: **Bob Greenlee, COO of Tusk Holdings & Acting President of Tusk Holdings**