

THE GREATER CHATHAM INITIATIVE

A Comprehensive Plan for Economic Growth,
Neighborhood Vitality, and Regional Prosperity

INTRODUCTION

The Greater Chatham Initiative is a collaboration among local and regional stakeholders to develop a comprehensive set of new activities and enterprises tailored to help set the communities of Chatham, Auburn Gresham, Greater Grand Crossing and Avalon Park on a prosperous and vital path as they establish their place in the twenty-first century economy.

Our goal is to enhance and promote these communities as places of opportunity and choice.

GCI pilots a new, replicable model: “neighborhood business planning.” This approach is grounded in economics, market-based development and business discipline for driving linked neighborhood and regional economic growth.





*GCI connects residents, businesses and other neighborhood assets to emerging workforce, supply chain, and development **opportunities** across the Chicagoland region.*



*Through this model, GCI aims to enhance housing, retail, quality of life and other amenities to strengthen Greater Chatham's position as a community of **choice** for middle- and working-class African-American families.*

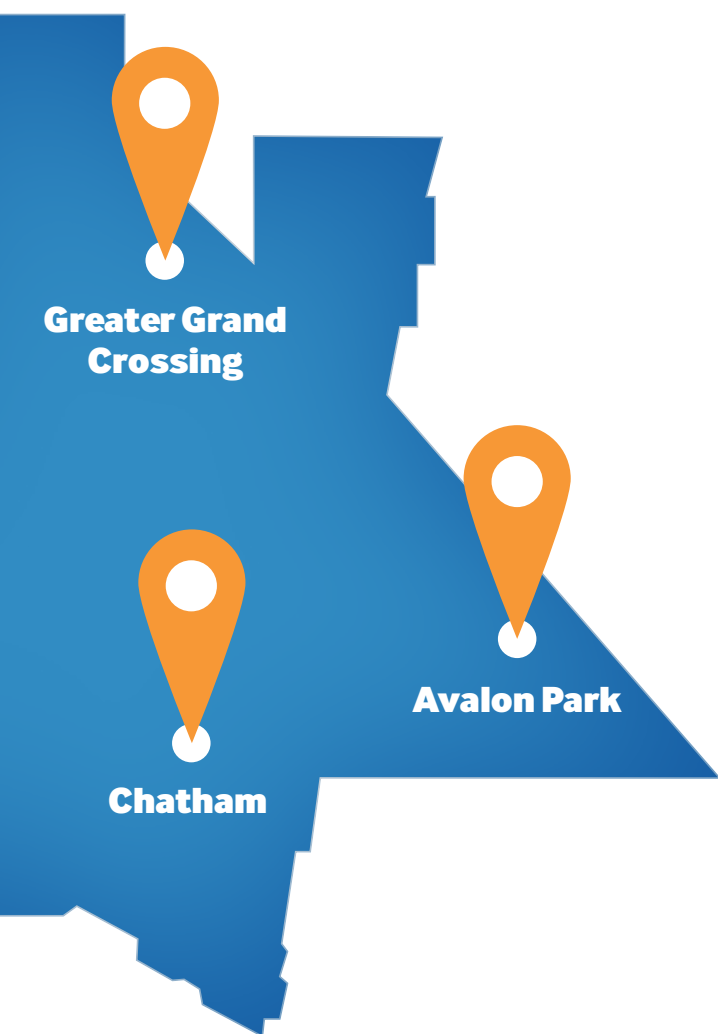


WHY GREATER CHATHAM?

The neighborhoods of Greater Chatham have long been communities of opportunity and choice for Chicago's middle- and working-class African-American families.

Cultural icons like Mahalia Jackson and Gwendolyn Brooks as well as African-American businesses like Johnson Products and Seaway National Bank have called Greater Chatham home. A bastion of thriving households, tightly-knit social bonds, good schools and safe streets, the Greater Chatham community has a legacy of greatness. Greater Chatham still boasts a strong business base—both as a regional center of consumer services and in key regional growth industries like business services, transportation, distribution and logistics and food manufacturing. Its residents are highly skilled in a wide range of occupations that are in demand by regional businesses. Greater Chatham also offers incredible real estate options—beautiful single-family homes and a variety of small and mid-sized multi-family buildings, with attractive parks, transportation and other amenities nearby.





Nevertheless, the community is on the cusp, challenged by the larger trends of declining middle-skill jobs, frozen housing markets and changing demographics. The time is right to set a new course, investing in and reconnecting the considerable economic assets of Greater Chatham to establish its place in the changing economy, driving prosperity for its residents and business, as well as Chicagoland as a whole.

Building from the market strength of Greater Chatham will also boost efforts and opportunities in surrounding, more distressed communities. In addition, the partnerships and programs established within GCI are designed for easy adaptation and replication to address the similar challenges and opportunities of other Chicagoland neighborhoods.

With participation from these communities and commitment from the public, private, and civic sectors, there is enormous energy and potential. Greater Chatham is the right place to start something big, ambitious, and new.

HOW?

Based on in-depth market analysis, neighborhood and regional stakeholder engagement and national expertise, GCI specifies strategies for six areas of investment:

Human Capital & Workforce Development



- Return middle-skill adults to middle-class jobs through employer engagement and specialized, industry-driven training.
- Connect job-ready youth with employment opportunities and employer-driven training.
- Increase the job-readiness of youth who face barriers to employment.

Business Development



- Target business and industrial land development toward high-priority regional clusters.
- Grow Greater Chatham's concentration of Business-to-Consumer (B2C) firms.
- Develop retail and consumer service amenities tailored to desired residents.
- Support entrepreneurship and innovation districts.

Housing



- "Unfreeze" the for-sale, single-family housing market.
- Stabilize and improve the quality of multifamily rental properties.
- Revitalize concentrations of troubled properties through transformative "priority zone" investments.

Public Safety



Target public safety challenges through heightened community engagement.

Reduce youth violence through prevention, intervention and interruption efforts.

Create more “safe spaces” where youth, families and seniors can learn, play and socialize.

Support Services & Amenities



Improve educational options that are attractive to middle-class families and responsive to residents.

Expand health and other support services for youth, families and seniors.

Civic Capacity & Institutional Environment



Build next-economy institutional infrastructure and governance.

IMPLEMENTATION

Within the six areas of investment, over thirty programs and initiatives have been proposed and are being developed by GCI Implementation Committees and Partners.



ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

In order to be successful, GCI needs a robust, but flexible organizational form that is accountable to the community and marketplace, engages local and regional stakeholders from all sectors, and is capable of enabling and coordinating a myriad of initiatives by relatively independent partners through a distributed work model.

Leadership Committee

The Leadership Committee is comprised of community leaders and regional stakeholders.

Public Officials Committee

The Public Officials Committee provides a vehicle for participation by state, county, city and locally elected officials.

Implementation Committees

Implementation Committees are responsible for identifying, developing and vetting initiatives and partners; monitoring current initiatives; and providing overall input to the plan and advice on its implementation. The five committees are: Business Development, Workforce Development, Housing, Youth and Support Services and Public Safety.

Implementation Partners

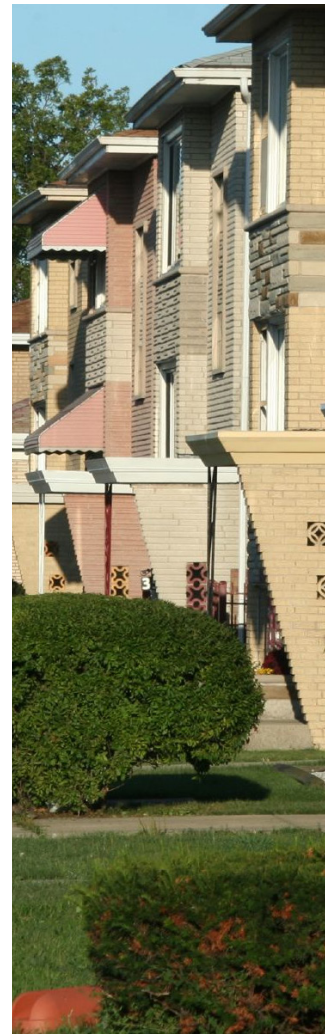
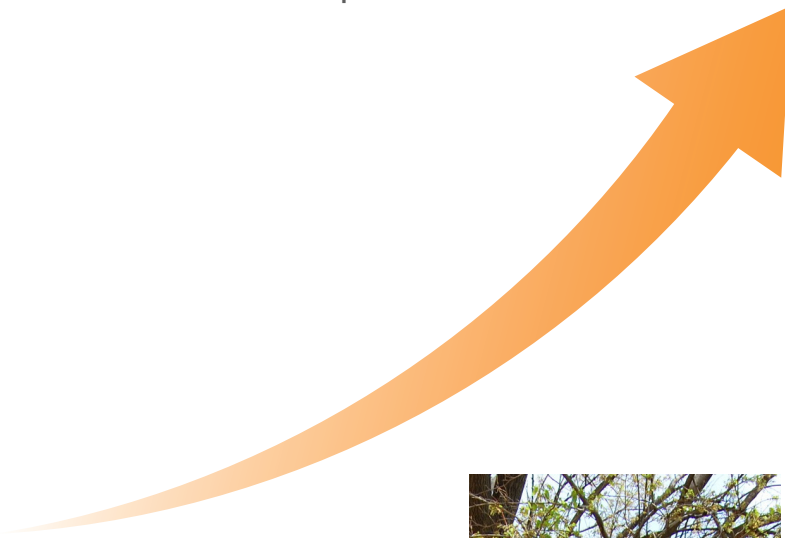
Implementation partners are organizations responsible for implementing particular initiatives prioritized by the plan. Current partners include regional workforce training providers, non-profit and for-profit housing developers, local chambers of commerce, local and regional businesses, business development resource centers, and local and regional human service agencies.

Core Staff

An executive director and lean staff will lead and coordinate the work of the Committees and Implementation Partners.

MEASURING SUCCESS

GCI believes being conscientious stewards of performance is paramount. As such, we are putting specific systems in place to measure outputs, success, and areas in need of improvement.



The Greater Chatham Initiative is a collaboration among more than 250 individuals and organizations—representing the community and the region and including members from the public, private, and civic sectors. The work of GCI takes place through Executive Director Nedra Fears, five Implementation Committees, and the Leadership Committee. The Leadership Committee is co-chaired by: Marlow Colvin, ComEd; Terry Peterson, Rush University Medical Center; and Alicia Spears, Business and Economic Revitalization Association.

Please join GCI in strengthening the Greater Chatham community! Join an Implementation Committee, engage as an Implementation Partner, and learn about the resources available to businesses, homeowners, renters, youth, families, and everyone with a stake in Greater Chatham.

CONTACT

Nedra Fears, Executive Director
nedra@greaterchathaminitiative.org
(773) 644-1451

VISIT OUR WEBSITE

www.greaterchathaminitiative.org

