

A Plan for Older Chicagoans

Seniors living in Chicago are Chicagoans – they deserve the ability to stay in their homes. After a lifetime of working hard, playing by the rules, raising the next generation, and contributing to our economy and community, we must ensure that every older adult has the opportunity to age well regardless of gender, color, sexuality, income, or zip code.

It is imperative that Chicago join the ranks of cities that have publicly committed to work towards becoming age-friendly. It is embarrassing that our city is missing among the ranks of AARP's Network of Age-Friendly States and Communities. New York, Los Angeles, Houston, Dallas, Cleveland, Boston, and Philadelphia are among our peer-cities that are currently members of the network.

It will take work to be a participating member. We'll need to establish and implement a plan for improvement and publicly report our progress. . We will have a good start since my principles that will guide my administration align fully with AARP's:

- Age-friendly communities are inclusive and considerate of the perspectives of all residents, of all ages, and all persuasions.
- Age-friendly communities encourage and benefit from diverse citizen engagement by including residents in a process to identify the community's needs, and develop and implement an action plan to address those needs (AARP)

As Mayor, I will:

- Direct the Department of Family and Support Services, in conjunction with the Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities, and other relevant agencies to form an interagency and inter-governmental working group on an Age-Friendly City. The working group will be guided by a citizens' advisory council on an Age-Friendly Chicago.
- Commission an updated baseline assessment of older adult needs and wishes, and incorporate spatial and functional analyses of public and private investments where older adults are concentrated, and of essential services, including food and grocery services, pharmacies, banks, broadband, and city and county health services. The prior assessment was supported through philanthropic help. We will seek similar assistance.
- Conduct a scan of the plans and progress of Age-Friendly cities comparable to Chicago to help guide Chicago's planning efforts
- Conduct an assessment of the ongoing senior programs operated or supported by the City of Chicago.
- Housing. Property Tax Relief - No homeowner should lose their home because they can't afford their property taxes. **Our proposed emergency property tax relief program will provide immediate relief for the owners of residential properties and small businesses**

through means-tested grants paid directly to the County Treasurer. This can be done now. In Chicago. **It doesn't require action by the General Assembly, as do exemptions and rental credits. Also, abatements, governed by State Statute, are case by case and cannot be done on a wholesale basis.** And it is constitutional, unlike schemes that put payment caps on individual properties.

- The campaign has laid out plans for my administration as they pertain to affordable housing. People with disabilities and older Chicagoans may also require housing renovations to incorporate adaptive technologies and building changes to accommodate their needs. I will work with philanthropic, government, and corporate partners, and make use, where possible, of Chicago infrastructure resources to help those requiring assistance continue to live comfortably in their homes. Also, efforts at increasing the city's housing stock will be directed at making new or rehabilitated homes both affordable and accessible.
- Workforce Development and Economic Security. Many adults continue to work beyond age 65. For some, this is a necessity; for others, it may be an encore career or a continuation of their life's work. Much of the attention of the public workforce system is focused on new entrants or younger adults who are making transitions from one job or career to another. Adults who are separated from regular employment at 55 or older face seemingly insurmountable barriers to continue in jobs for which their experience and knowledge are most suited. My administration will ask the Chicago Cook Workforce Partnership to establish an initiative to attend directly to the needs of older adults who wish to continue working.
- Older adults are also prolific entrepreneurs and will be included in my administration's efforts to establish a vibrant entrepreneurship ecosystem.
- My administration will leverage federal broadband infrastructure money to bring all Chicago neighborhoods up to the highest performance levels. It will provide digital technology training and access to digital devices and adaptive technologies so that all residents may make full use of broadband and digital resources.
- Community Mental Health. As Mayor, one of my priorities will be to expand access to comprehensive health care including mental health services in all 24 City of Chicago health clinics. I will also work with the County Health and Public Health system with its 14 clinics to integrate and coordinate resources so that the entire City and County can insure access to health care and mental and behavioral health services at all local clinics.
- Transportation. Transportation investments are necessary to keep residents and businesses in the city (both neighborhoods and downtown) and grow our tax base. To accomplish this, we need to better integrate and manage our community development and investment funds to link transportation, housing, parks/recreation, and commercial areas. I will direct that relevant city departments integrate their efforts with CTA, Metra, Pace, and the RTA to ensure that communities grow and that downtown and neighborhood businesses can thrive with workers and customers from across the city. I

will help lead the efforts to reform the RTA, CTA, Metra, and Pace to increase service and ridership and expand funding to the regional paratransit system.

- Transportation investments need to produce increased access and mobility and grow the vitality of all Chicago communities and neighborhoods. I will look to integrate CTA planning with the City Departments of Housing, Planning, and Transportation, in order to secure needed investments in conjunction with affordable housing and commercial area improvements to make Chicago the pedestrian and transit infrastructure accessible to all.