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Compounded Housing Crisis in Chicago Demands Urgent Action: Impact for Equity Releases *Building on Opportunity* Report

Chicago, Illinois – Chicago faces an intensifying housing crisis caused by decades of disinvestment and uneven development in communities across the City. Launched in 2000, the Plan for Transformation sought to revitalize distressed public housing sites as mixed income communities on Chicago Housing Authority (CHA) land. The Plan set an ambitious goal of rehabilitating or redeveloping 25,000 units of housing within a decade, but progress has been uneven, slow, and met with institutional challenges. Despite some progress over the 20 years since the Plan was announced, there are still large stretches of vacant land and multiple blocks of vacant buildings on several mixed income development sites owned by CHA.

Impact for Equity published [*Building on Opportunity*](#), a report that takes a deep dive into six of the approximately twelve CHA mixed income sites. The site profiles represent different communities with CHA owned land and highlight some of the unique challenges and existing opportunities to rapidly increase housing production and deliver long-term benefits to communities across the City.

One of the most significant findings within the report is that the six profiled sites have over 110 acres of vacant land and an additional 22 acres of land with vacant buildings. Taken together, this land is equivalent to approximately 25 Chicago city blocks, or about five times the area of Chicago's Millennium Park.

“This vacant land could provide urgently needed housing but is instead a painful reminder of what is missing for people who have spent decades waiting and hoping for investment in their communities,” said Cara Hendrickson, Executive Director of Impact for Equity. “The City and CHA have an incredible opportunity to this work forward at a faster pace to meet the urgent demand for housing and healthy communities.”

Impact for Equity presents a comprehensive four-pronged policy recommendation to address these challenges while centering community members. We call on the city of Chicago and CHA to:

1. **Update and Prioritize Community Plans:** Initiate an authentic community planning process for CHA sites lacking up-to-date, community-driven development plans

involving community engagement from the planning stage through construction. Plans should be completed for all sites by the third quarter of 2024.

2. **Streamline Approval Processes:** Appoint a high-level coordinator to proactively oversee the City's approvals and necessary permits for development on CHA mixed income sites. The coordinator should be appointed by the end of the first quarter and a streamlined approval and oversight processes to complete the CHA mixed income sites should be announced by the end of the second quarter of 2024.
3. **Direct Funding for Completion:** Prioritize CHA communities for existing and new funding and support other public and private financing until they are completed. Require clear timelines for completion and ensure CHA follows community-driven plans. This priority focus should be announced by the end of the first quarter of 2024.
4. **Enhance Transparency:** Provide transparency on development priorities across the City to avoid competition between sites and to help focus funding on developments that will proceed first. The City and CHA should announce a timeline for completing the CHA mixed income communities after community plans are completed or by the end of 2024, whichever is sooner.

Building on Opportunity notes that, while progress has been made, the unfinished redevelopments undermine efforts to invest in safe, accessible communities. Undeveloped land of this scale also contributes to the acute housing crisis that disproportionately affects low-income residents, communities of color, and disabled individuals, especially amid the compounding challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic, economic slow-down, and migrant crisis. CHA mixed income communities deserve immediate attention and comprehensive solutions.

Building on Opportunity emphasizes that it is crucial for the City and CHA to prioritize development at mixed income sites with inclusive processes that center communities most impacted by decades of marginalization and exclusion. By focusing on these communities, Chicago has a unique opportunity to fulfill an overdue obligation to their residents and address the affordable housing crisis.

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About Impact for Equity:

*Impact for Equity, formerly known as BPI, is a public interest law and policy center that has worked at the front lines of racial, economic, and social justice in the Chicago region and Illinois for over 50 years. As counsel for public housing plaintiffs in *Gautreaux v. Chicago Housing Authority*, we focus on ensuring that CHA redresses the harms of historic racial discrimination in public housing.*

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