


# THE WOODLAWN HOUSING DATA PROJECT


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SUMMARY - SEPTEMBER 2019

WECAN

*Woodlawn East Community and Neighbors*

 The Woodlawn Neighborhood & Project Background


 Key Finding 1: High Vacancy

 Key Finding 2: At-Risk Renters

 Key Finding 3: At-Risk Homeowners

 Key Finding 4: Increasing Market Activity

 Key Finding 5: Inadequate Resources

 WECAN's Summary of Recommendations

# PRESENTATION OVERVIEW

# THE WOODLAWN NEIGHBORHOOD & PROJECT BACKGROUND

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## WOODLAWN: A GENERAL OVERVIEW

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1. Woodlawn is located six miles south of the Loop and is a **primarily residential** neighborhood. Local **anchors** include the University of Chicago, Apostolic Church, Mt Carmel High School, and Sunshine Gospel.
2. Population: **25,207**. Woodlawn has lost **70%** of its population since its peak of 81,292 residents in 1960.
3. The Woodlawn community covers **1.52** square miles made up of **4,875** parcels of property, including Parkway Gardens.
4. Median household income is **\$22,500**; for Chicago, **\$53,000**. **Over 37%** of households report **no earnings**.
5. Of households, **22%** own their home, compared to **44%** in Chicago, and **41%** are housing cost-burdened.



# WECAN

"We address the changing needs and issues of Woodlawn and its residents."

## PROJECT BEGINNINGS

WECAN (Woodlawn East Community and Neighbors) is a non-profit organization dedicated to serving Chicago's Woodlawn community and its residents. Since 1980, WECAN has operated a resource center for the Woodlawn community. The center connects residents with housing assistance and other assistance programs, serves as a liaison to elected officials and other policy makers on housing and related issues, and acts as a property owner and developer of affordable housing.

*"In recent years, WECAN and longtime Woodlawn residents have seen first-hand that our community has been struggling more than in the past. **We've seen homeowners and renters with deep roots in Woodlawn lose their homes or struggle to make ends meet. Our property taxes have risen. Government assistance programs have been reduced or eliminated. Increasingly, we observe outsiders buying up properties on our blocks. And we have a strong sense that many more residents may soon be pushed out...**"*

*--Ms Mattie Butler, WECAN Founder and Executive Director*

# WOODLAWN HOUSING DATA PROJECT

The Woodlawn Housing Data Project was an **unprecedented** effort to collect and analyze detailed data and information about Woodlawn's existing housing landscape. The goal was threefold:

1. Develop and complete the Woodlawn Parcel Survey (WPS), a point-in-time building-and-land conditions survey;
2. Collect and analyze additional property data related to Woodlawn to better understand the housing related-issues;
3. Develop and plan for tangible, proactive policies to address concerns about housing affordability and other issues that might impact Woodlawn residents.

# FIVE KEY FINDINGS

1.

## **HIGH VACANCY**

An estimated 27% of Woodlawn properties are inactive (vacant buildings & lots). Many are owned by local government, presenting an opportunity for development without residential displacement.

2.

## **AT-RISK RENTERS**

Woodlawn is predominantly (78%) a neighborhood of renters, many of whom are already rent-burdened.

3.

## **AT-RISK HOMEOWNERS**

Many longtime homeowners are financially vulnerable, and as these cost-burdened owners face rising property taxes and home repair costs, they risk losing their homes.

4.

## **INCREASING MARKET ACTIVITY**

Development activity is accelerating in Woodlawn – activity that will put more financial pressure on longtime residents, homeowners and renters alike.

5.

## **INADEQUATE RESOURCES**

Over time, government housing programs have been reduced or eliminated, leaving an inadequate amount of resources to address the issues noted above.



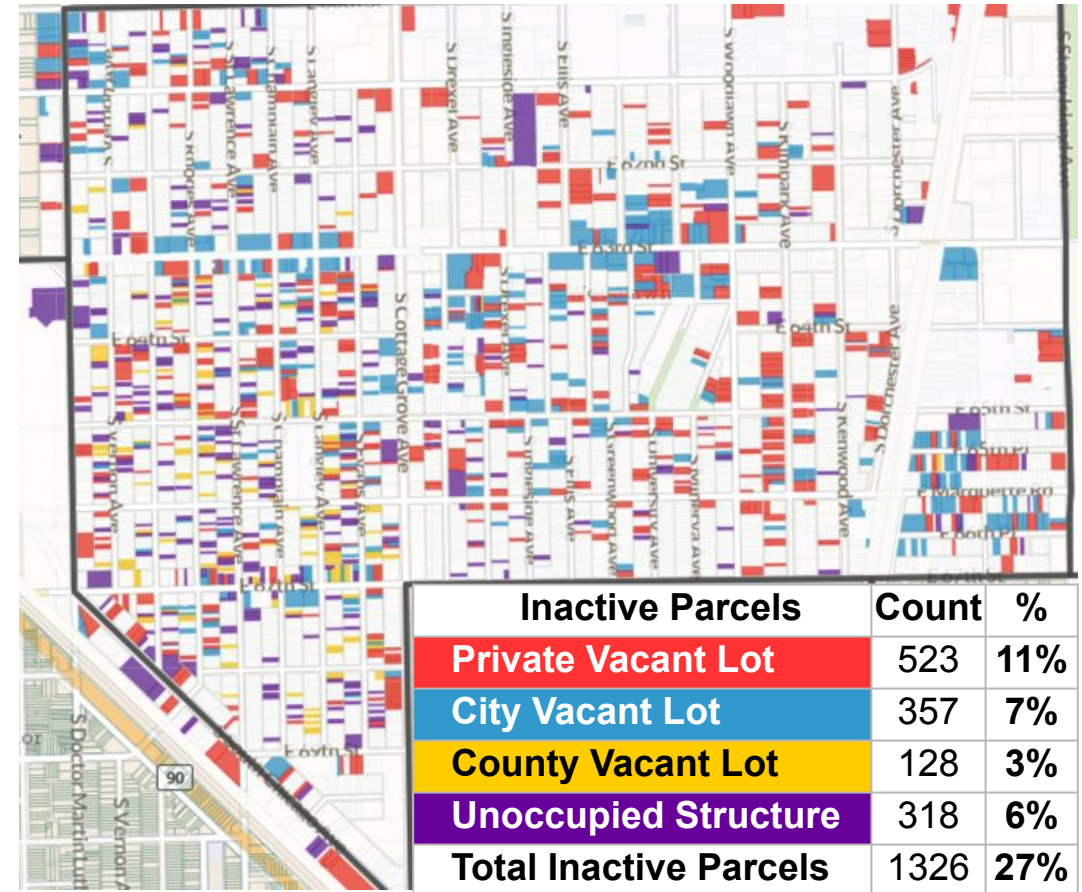
## KEY FINDING 1: HIGH VACANCY

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- Of **4,875** parcels in Woodlawn, over **1000** are vacant lots (**21%** of parcels). For comparison, Hyde Park has only **90** vacant lots (**3%** of parcels).
- WPS shows that at least **10%** of buildings in Woodlawn (**318** structures) are vacant and include **residences**, **school buildings**, churches, public safety institutions, and **commercial spaces**.
- **Relatively few commercial properties exist** in Woodlawn and those that do are **often in need of repairs**.

## KEY FINDING 1: HIGH VACANCY

- An estimated **27% of properties are *inactive***--either a vacant lot or a vacant building.
- **Nearly half** of Woodlawn's **vacant lots** are **publicly-owned**.
- Many of the **City-owned** vacant lots are located on Woodlawn's major thoroughfares, most of which are zoned for **commercial use**.
- **County-owned** properties are concentrated west of Cottage Grove on primarily **residential blocks**.





## KEY FINDING 2: AT-RISK RENTERS

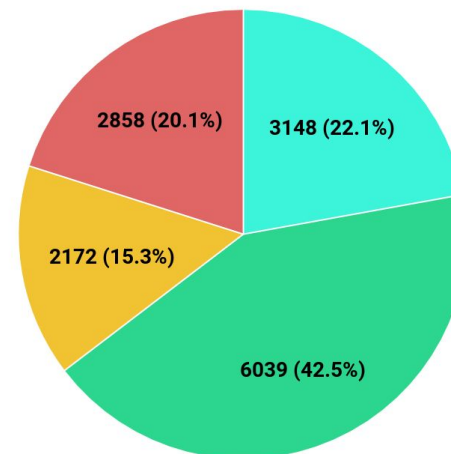
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- **Neighborhood of renters:** 78% of households in Woodlawn (8,019) are renter households compared to 56% in Chicago.
- Median household income for **Woodlawn renters** is \$19,685; For Woodlawn homeowners, it's \$61,919.
- **Rent-burdened households:** 60% of Woodlawn's rental households are "rent-burdened."
  - 4,280 out of 8,019 households pay 30% or more of their income for rent, and an additional 518 report having no income.
- **Concern about shortage of affordable housing for seniors:**
  - Over 1,000 of the government subsidized affordable rental units are designated for seniors and/or people with disabilities, while 1,701 renter households have seniors heads of households.



## KEY FINDING 2: AT-RISK RENTERS

- **Shortage and concern about loss of government-subsidized housing:** 93% of Woodlawn's existing affordable rental units (HCV and Project-based) are temporary in nature. These units are vulnerable to market conditions.
- **Evictions:** Data from Princeton's Eviction Lab shows **Woodlawn's 6% eviction rate is 54% higher than the City of Chicago's rate.**



Woodlawn Chicago Illinois United States

- **Outsider-Owners:** Preliminary estimates from 2018 County Tax Bill Data indicate **over 75%** of Woodlawn's housing units are **owned by private individuals or companies from outside of Woodlawn.**



## KEY FINDING 3: AT-RISK HOMEOWNERS

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- **Low homeownership rate:** only **22%** of Woodlawn's occupied housing units are owner-occupied, far below the city average of **44%**.
- **Deeply invested:** the average homeowner has resided in Woodlawn over 18 years.
- **Cost-burdened:** more than **60%** of Woodlawn homeowners spend **30%** or more of their income on housing costs.
- **Property tax burden:** Woodlawn owner-occupants feel the burden of property taxes, which have increased **23%** over the last six years and could rise by **30%** in the coming six years.



## KEY FINDING 4: INCREASING MARKET ACTIVITY

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- **Significant increase in building permits:** from 2016 to 2018, **811** new construction, demolition, renovation and easy permits were issued in Woodlawn, compared to **601** between 2013 and 2015.
- **Increasing median home sale price:** Woodlawn's property sale prices have risen by **8%** annually since 2016. Homes in 2019 have sold for record prices at \$700,000 and above--in a community where over 50% of households earn under \$35,000 annually.
- **New & planned developments:** Woodlawn is experiencing increasing development, particularly between Cottage Grove and Stony Island: **Obama Presidential Center, UChicago's Midway Plaisance buildings, new charter high school** and Study Hotel, Jewel-Osco, POAH housing and more.



## KEY FINDING 5: INADEQUATE RESOURCES

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In an era of **declining government resources**, a variety of **housing assistance programs have been cut**. With annual funding allocations from the City of Chicago, WECAN previously served as a housing resource center; however, **it no longer has that dedicated funding**. Additional challenges:

- **No public plan** for the reuse of Woodlawn's vacant land--a valuable community resource
- **Insufficient resources for renters** in the City
- **Inadequate mechanisms to protect longtime residents from unaffordable property tax hikes**
- **Too few resources** to address **resident housing repairs** and weatherization.
- **Nonprofits**, too, **lack the resources** to take on these housing challenges alone.

# Massive public investments lead to rapid, dramatic neighborhood change

## Two Chicago examples

### 606 Bike/Pedestrian Trail (2.7 miles)

#### Logan Square Neighborhood, Chicago

\$95 million project, opened in 2015

#### Medium profile (local, national audience)

- Housing prices in two adjacent neighborhoods rose dramatically from groundbreaking to one year after opening (14% and 48%).
- In one of the neighborhoods, home values rose 22% within 1/8 mile of the trail in the first year.
- Two years after opening, \$1 million+ homes are being built near the trail.

### Millennium Park (24.5 acres)

#### Downtown, Chicago

\$475 million project, opened in 2004

#### High-profile (global audience)

- Prior to opening, nearby buildings were being sold for twice the price as five years prior.
- Within one year of opening, 7 new condo buildings were announced at record high prices.
- 2 million visitors within 6 months of opening, prompting restaurant, hotel and retailer openings.
- Led to creation of East and South Loop neighborhoods, now two of Chicago's priciest.

# WECAN'S SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

## SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

**To ensure adequate  
housing resources are  
available &  
accessible to current  
Woodlawn residents**



**1. Fund a centralized Housing Resource Center in Woodlawn.**



**2. Establish a new 5-year \$25M Host Community Housing Fund to invest in housing needs of existing residents.**



**3. Conduct a door-to-door Community Census to better understand housing and other needs of existing residents.**

## SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

**To bring vacant land  
back to productive  
use in Woodlawn in a  
way that benefits  
current residents**



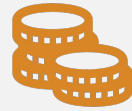
**1. Implement a collaborative community process to establish a collective vision for utilization of vacant land in a way that supports the needs and interests of longtime residents.**



**2. Re-purpose the Woodlawn TIF, which expires in 2022, with uses to include investment in affordable housing and home repairs.**

## SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

**To protect long-time  
Woodlawn  
homeowners at risk of  
displacement**



**1. Establish property tax relief for income-eligible longtime Woodlawn homeowners.**



**2. Provide property repairs assistance, as well as pro-bono legal and property tax assistance.**



**3. Collaborate with local community land trusts to identify a strategy to permanently preserve affordable housing units in Woodlawn.**

## SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

**To protect long-time  
Woodlawn renters at  
risk of displacement**



**1. Collaborate with the Preservation Compact to develop and implement a focused Woodlawn strategy, utilizing a variety of tools to preserve existing affordable rental housing units.**



**2. Ask the City of Chicago to monitor condo conversion activity and protect residents of Woodlawn from displacement.**

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Woodlawn East Community and Neighbors (WECAN) is a Chicago, Illinois-based 501(c)(3) organization. The recommendations in this report are solely those of WECAN and do not reflect the views of POAH, Loveland Technologies, the University of Chicago or any entity of, or person employed by, the University.

**THANK YOU**