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'WILD MILE' PLAN APPROVED FOR NORTH BRANCH CANAL

A plan to improve the North Branch Canal with a public boardwalk, natural landscaping and educational resources will move forward through a funding plan approved today by City Council.

"This initiative will improve the North Branch Canal as a truly unique waterfront for the entire city, where visitors will be able to engage and appreciate the city's ecosystem through unprecedented public access," Mayor Emanuel said.

To be financed by \$250,000 in Open Space Impact Fees, the plan will create a framework for the development of a "wild mile" along the canal that includes habitat improvements, pedestrian walkways, fishing stations, vegetative islands, viewing platforms, canoe launches and other amenities that cater to the public and wildlife.

The plan will also include cost estimates and best practices for implementation, including cooperation with private property owners and developers. The plan will focus on the east side of the canal between Division Street and North Avenue and is scheduled to be completed by the end of the year.

The enhancements are identified among the strategic goals of the "North Branch Framework Plan," adopted by City Council in May 2017 to revitalize the North Branch Industrial Corridor with a variety of land use, open space and transportation improvements.

An additional \$250,000 in Open Space Impact Fees will be used to construct a public pier or platform along the shoreline at Eastman Street, which will serve as a prototype for other access improvements along the canal's length. The project will be designed to include educational resources for area students and children.

Open Space Impact Fees are generated by new residential development projects to improve and expand public open spaces within the City's 77 community areas.

The development of the canal plan and construction of the pier is scheduled be completed by the end of the year.

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NEW PILOT PROGRAM TO PRESERVE AFFORDABILITY IN GENTRIFYING AREAS

A new pilot program approved today by City Council will preserve housing affordability in appreciating neighborhoods on the North, Northwest and West sides.

The Preservation of Existing Affordable Rental (PEAR) program refinances private sector debt on residential properties with six or more units, ensuring at least 20 percent of the units will be affordable to tenants earning up to 80 percent of area median income over a 30-year term. The program will be administered by the Department of Planning and Development with funding provided by the City's Affordable Housing Opportunity Fund.

Two million dollars of initial funding will be used to refinance a portion of an existing bank loan for the non-profit Chicago Metropolitan Housing Development Corp., which completed the acquisition and rehabilitation of 18 foreclosed and vacant apartment buildings in 2017. Consisting of 42 units, the one- to four-unit structures are in Lincoln Square, Albany Park, Belmont Cragin, West Ridge and Austin.

The refinanced portion of the loan will have a zero percent interest rate, enabling 15 units in nine buildings to be preserved as affordable through 2047. The savings on the loan's financing costs are estimated at \$125,000 annually.

The pilot program will be made available to other eligible properties in gentrifying areas citywide.

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LAND SALE WILL SUPPORT SOUTH SIDE COMMUNITY SERVICE CENTER

The former Avalon Branch Library building in Calumet Heights will be sold to the True to Life Foundation for continued use as a community service center through a plan approved today by City Council.

The nonprofit organization, which serves children, youth and seniors as a delegate agency of the Department of Family and Support Services, is currently leasing the 13,300-square-foot structure at 8828 S. Stony Island Ave. from the City.

Valued at \$325,000, the building will be sold for \$1. The sale will ensure its continued operation as a community resource for a period of 20 years, during which it will offer after school and early childhood programs, job readiness services and senior workshops.

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LANDMARK STATUS APPROVED FOR A PAIR OF HISTORIC LAKE VIEW HOMES

A pair of Lake View houses that date to the community's early development were approved as official City of Chicago landmarks by City Council today.

Daniel O. Hill House, 448 W. Barry Ave.

Completed in 1902 for silk merchant Daniel O. Hill, the American Four Square-style mansion is typical of the single-family homes that dominated the North Side lakefront at the turn of the last century. The two-and-a-half-story building features Roman brick with Prairie-style proportions and Classical-style stone ornament designed by architect Frederick W. Perkins, who was known for high-style mansions for wealthy businessmen throughout the Midwest. More recently, the building served as the Serbian American Museum St. Sava.

Charles M. Netterstrom House, 833 W. Aldine Ave.

Completed in phases in the 1870s and 1890s by immigrant Charles Magnus Netterstrom, the Italianate and Queen Anne-style building represents the historic significance of Swedish citizens to Lake View's growth in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The three-story structure's varied architectural details include pressed metal cornices and pediments, a corner tower, a gable front, and brick window hoods with cast keystones. While living in the home, Netterstrom established himself as a community leader, businessman and builder, later becoming a county commissioner and state senator.

Both properties received final recommendations for Landmark designation by the Commission on Chicago Landmarks in February 2018. The designations will protect all building elevations, including rooflines, from significant alteration or demolition.

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OPEN SPACE PROJECTS APPROVED FOR NORTH, NORTHWEST, AND WEST SIDES

Four neighborhood open space projects will be made possible through financial measures approved today by City Council.

Veteran's Peace Garden, 5413 W. Madison St.

A Veteran's Peace Garden will be developed in Austin with a walking path, ornamental plantings, shade trees, two gazebos and flags representing all five branches of the military. Planned in coordination with community stakeholders, the \$245,000 project is intended to be a sanctuary of peace and tranquility for former military personnel and the public. Up to \$155,000 in Open Space Impact Fees will be used for the garden's acquisition and construction costs, with the balance paid by 29th Ward aldermanic funds. Following completion, NeighborSpace land trust will own and manage the 0.15- acre property.

Open Space Impact Fees are generated by new residential development projects to improve and expand public open spaces within the City's 77 community areas.

Grow Uptown, 4525 N. Kenmore Ave.

Grow Uptown Garden will be developed on a vacant, City-owned lot through approximately \$375,000 in Open Space Impact Fees. The funds will be used by NeighborSpace land trust for the installation of raised garden beds, seating, a walking path, signage, trees, a shade structure, and bike racks. The .26-acre site, adjacent to Uptown's former Graeme Stewart School, will be managed by the Peterson Garden Project in partnership with NeighborSpace.

4546 N. Kedvale Ave.

Open Space Impact Fees in the approximate amount of \$49,000 will support the acquisition of a 0.29-acre property bounded by Kasson, Wilson, and Kedvale avenues in Albany Park for redevelopment as a public park. Additional funding will include \$341,488 from the Chicago Park District and \$10,000 in 39th Ward Aldermanic funds.

1544 N. Larabee St.

A new access point to the athletic fields at Near North High School will be created through the acquisition of a 0.04-acre property currently occupied by closed fast food restaurant. The site will be assembled with adjacent land to create a new entrance for nearby residents and visitors. Acquisition will be entirely funded with \$300,000 in Open Space Impact Fees.

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