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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

September 9, 2020

CONTACT:

Mayor's Press Office

312.744.3334

press@cityofchicago.org

CITY COUNCIL PASSES THE WOODLAWN HOUSING ORDINANCE

Ordinance to Preserve Affordable Housing, Protect Residents from Displacement and Expand Homeownership Opportunities in Woodlawn

CHICAGO – City Council today approved the Woodlawn Housing Ordinance, an affordable housing preservation ordinance that will protect existing residents of Woodlawn from displacement, expand homeownership opportunities and ensure inclusive economic growth for the historic South Side neighborhood.

“Since day one, our efforts have been focused on building economic growth and cultural enrichment in the Woodlawn community while also ensuring that every neighborhood resident is able to stay in their homes and share the transformative promise by the Obama Presidential Center,” said Mayor Lightfoot. “This groundbreaking ordinance is a testament to our partnership with Ald. Hairston, Ald. Taylor and Woodlawn’s residents in a collective effort to prevent displacement and further opportunity for this community.”

The Woodlawn Housing Ordinance and other planned efforts by the City are designed to ensure the Woodlawn community and other Chicago residents can benefit from the unprecedented economic and cultural opportunities created by the future Obama Presidential Center.

The ordinance earmarks an initial commitment of more than \$4.5 million from the city, while leveraging another \$5 million or more from banks and lenders, for new and expanded housing programs and includes a suite of initiatives that will protect existing residents from displacement while creating more opportunities for middle class wealth building. The ordinance includes bold new tenant protections, enhanced local hiring requirements and turning City-owned vacant land into affordable housing for both renters and home buyers.

“From the beginning we have been committed to making residents the focal point of this legislation – bringing hundreds of renters, homeowners and other stakeholders to the table,” said DOH Commissioner Marisa Novara. “And together we have created an ordinance to ensure that everyone who lives in Woodlawn – both renters



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and homeowners - are able to stay and share in the unprecedented potential offered by the Obama Presidential Center.”

Key components of the ordinance include:

- Affordability for Chicago’s lowest earners: On 25% of city-owned vacant land, 30% of units in each project must be affordable at 30-50% AMI
- \$1.5 million for the Preservation of Existing Affordable Rental (PEAR) - This apartment building refinance program would help existing owners refinance their property to keep tenants in place and rents affordable.
- \$1.175 million for Renew Woodlawn. \$500,000 in city funding and pending grant request for an additional \$675,000 from HUD’s Choice Neighborhoods Initiative. Renew Woodlawn is a rehab homeownership program tailored for low to moderate income households.
- \$1.52 million for the Woodlawn Loan Fund to supplement \$5 million from banks and other lenders. This is a program to purchase and rehabilitate vacant units to create new affordable housing.
- \$1 million for the Woodlawn Long-term Homeowner Home Improvement Grant Program. The program will assist homeowners with 5 or more years of residency in their home with a grant of up to \$20,000 for home repairs.
- Enhanced local hiring requirements - Residential developments that receive City land for development of rental housing would be required to meet enhanced local hiring requirements.
- Tenant Right of First Refusal pilot program for larger apartment buildings - Gives renters the right of first refusal if a landlord seeks to sell his/her building. Rather than tenants being automatically displaced from the sale of a building, tenants would have the right to form a tenant’s association and enter into an agreement with a not-for-profit affordable housing developer to purchase the building and maintain it as affordable.

The Woodlawn Affordable Housing Preservation Ordinance marks the latest step by the Lightfoot administration to preserve and expand access to safe, decent and affordable housing across the City. The ordinance was drafted after months of robust community engagement and input, including more than 20 Woodlawn community meetings with the Department of Housing (DOH) and a wide range of neighborhood stakeholders – renters, homeowners, elected officials, religious leaders, civic organizations, block club presidents and many more.

“With the Woodlawn Housing Ordinance, our neighborhoods, especially those on the South and West sides will be able to grow with long term residents, and not displace them,” said Alderman Leslie Hairston (5th). “This is comprehensive and thoughtful legislation that will serve communities throughout the city and I’m glad that today we made this ordinance a reality.”



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“I want to thank my fellow City Council members for passing this very important ordinance today,” said Alderwoman Jeanette Taylor (20th). “This legislation will not only be a key first step in keeping long-term residents in place in Woodlawn but will serve as a model for the rest of Chicago as we advocate for additional development needed to transform all our neighborhoods.”

Last summer, Mayor Lightfoot initiated a robust series of community engagement meetings with Woodlawn stakeholders to create a two-way dialogue around community priorities related to the Obama Presidential Center project and to inform legislation for a Woodlawn-specific housing ordinance. Since then, City staff has been working closely with community leaders to craft a proactive, feasible housing and development ordinance that sets the foundation for equitable growth and development in the future.

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