



CITY OF CHICAGO • OFFICE OF THE MAYOR



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**ICYMI: MAYOR JOHNSON MOVES FORWARD WITH AFFORDABLE HOUSING AND
BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT AGENDA**

CHICAGO - Last week, Mayor Johnson rolled out a series of major announcements as part of his housing and economic development agenda for working Chicagoans. At the Monday ribbon-cutting for Lawson House, a redevelopment that will preserve over 400 affordable apartment units in the heart of the Gold Coast, Mayor Johnson announced Sedy Soto as Chicago's first Chief Homelessness Officer.

On Wednesday, Mayor Johnson announced that his administration would be moving forward with the conversion of empty Loop office space into 1,000 apartment units including hundreds of affordable units. Mayor Johnson made \$151M in TIF funds available for this vital conversion, a boost to Chicago's downtown which has been struggling to rebound since the pandemic.

On Friday, at a gathering of hundreds of business leaders at the Chicago Cultural Center, Mayor Johnson unveiled his '[Cut the Tape](#)' initiative, proposing over 100 reforms to make development faster, easier, and less burdensome for those seeking to build in Chicago.

Late Friday afternoon, the news broke that Mayor Johnson proposed a deal with United and American airlines to fast-track the long-awaited airport revitalization plan. The Global Terminal and satellite concourses are vital to maintaining Chicago's competitive edge and ensuring the long-term viability of O'Hare as an economic engine for the city.

Selected coverage below:

CHIEF HOMELESSNESS OFFICER



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Chicago Tribune: “Johnson unveils Chicago’s first chief homelessness officer”
Alice Yin; April 1, 2024

“As a lifelong Chicagoan who has experienced housing insecurity, I understand firsthand the challenges zero-to-low income individuals face in overcoming systemic barriers,” Soto said. “Furthermore, as someone who has sought stable housing at the age of 18 to escape violence, I also know that housing needs are complex.”

Chicago Sun-Times: “Chicago’s first chief homelessness officer is named”
Kaitlin Washburn; April 1st, 2024

“My ask to each of you is simple: Share your ideas and hold me accountable,” Soto said Monday during the re-opening of an affordable housing complex in the Gold Coast.

“The Gold Coast is not just for those with gold,” said Tracy Scott, CEO of the Chicago Housing Authority. “Lawson House is another example of CHA’s vision of a thriving city where every neighborhood has quality, affordable housing and everyone feels welcome.”

Block Club Chicago: “Chicago’s 1st Chief Homelessness Officer Will Be Sendy Soto”
Kelly Bauer; April 1, 2024

Soto has also worked as the managing deputy commissioner for the Chicago Department of Housing, and she served on the state commission that helped create an affordable mental health center for neighbors in Logan Square, Avondale and Hermosa.

The position will be funded by a multi-year grant from Chicago Funders Together to End Homelessness, according to the Mayor’s Office.

Listen:

WBBM: “New mayoral appointee tapped to alleviate Chicago's homelessness crisis”

WBEZ: “Sendy Soto announced as Chicago’s first chief homelessness officer”

Watch:



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WGN: “Chicago introduces city’s first chief homelessness officer”

FOX32: “Sandy Soto appointed Chicago's first-ever Chief Homelessness Officer”

LOOP CONVERSION PROJECTS

Crain’s Chicago: “Johnson to greenlight four Loop office-to-residential conversions”

Danny Ecker; April 2, 2024

The move stands to be Johnson's most substantial effort to date to inject new life into the vacancy-ridden Loop. Weak demand for office space with the rise of the remote work movement over the past few years has slashed regular foot traffic in the central business district, fueling a historic run of distressed properties and sapping the vibrancy of the city's urban core[...]

As part of a larger effort to revitalize the Loop, Johnson also announced in late February a series of small-business improvement fund grants to several restaurants within steps of the LaSalle Street corridor as well as one for a Chicago Board of Trade Museum.

Chicago Sun-Times: “Mayor Johnson seeks more than \$150M in TIF assistance for La Salle Street revamp”

Fran Spielman, Abby Miller and David Struett; April 3, 2024

Mayor Brandon Johnson’s office is making good on its promise to not let the city’s record tax increment financing surplus interfere with transforming La Salle Street office buildings to residential use.

He announced four projects on Wednesday that he plans to formally propose for a combined \$151.2 million in TIF assistance this spring. Johnson said the projects include a total of \$528 million in investments.

“My union is over 100 years old. And it is the first time in the history of our city where a janitor who works in a commercial office building who gets done, usually at 12:30 or one o’clock [in the morning] may be able to walk across the street to their home, instead of



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commuting an hour,” said Kastrup, whose union was among Johnson’s staunchest financial supporters[...]

Michael Edwards, president and CEO of the Chicago Loop Alliance, welcomed Johnson’s decision to recommend TIF assistance for the projects.

“It’s an important street in the Loop. We were very involved with the [Urban Land Institute] and the whole idea of creating these projects that need to be funded because the conversion of office to residential is expensive and a challenge anywhere in America, especially here in Chicago on La Salle Street,” Edwards said.

Watch:

[ABC7](#): “Mayor Brandon Johnson moving forward with plan to convert downtown offices to housing”

[Fox32](#): “Chicago mayor unveils plan: Revamp Loop buildings into affordable housing”

CUT THE TAPE

[Chicago Sun-Times](#): “Fast-tracking Chicago’s housing, commercial development”
Abby Miller, April 5, 2024

Mayor Brandon Johnson took the first step Friday to overhaul Chicago’s bloated development processes, making more than 100 recommendations on how to streamline licensing, permitting and development plans[...]

The report aims to answer the question: What does the city need to do to enable development?

Phillip Beckham III, principal at P3 Markets, heralded the report as “the new good book for developers” and the city of Chicago.



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Beckham III sees an important common thread in Johnson's signature recommendations: slashing bureaucratic red tape to get to a "yes" faster. He said that's crucial for minority and women-owned development firms and thanked Johnson for listening to their concerns.

"Time is absolutely money that, typically, Black and Brown developers do not have," Beckham III said. "Capital is always a barrier, and as things are drawn out so long, it absolutely crushes your cash flow."

Block Club Chicago: "How Can Chicago Make It Easier to Build Housing, Start Businesses? New Report Shares Details"
Melody Mercado, April 5, 2024

The report highlights three priorities: build faster, build everywhere and build together. This encompasses speeding up development timelines, allowing more housing and businesses to be developed in more places and partnering with a variety of stakeholders to make that happen.

Crain's Chicago: "Johnson unveils plan to cut red tape for real estate developers"
Justin Laurence, April 5, 2024

One immediate step is included in the report and is likely to be welcomed by developers: cutting down the number of required meetings, from three to one, developers must have with the city's design review panel, a creation of former Planning Commissioner Maurice Cox that developers griped slowed down their projects[...]

The report is the result of interviews with 100 city staffers across 14 departments and six focus groups with outside developers, architects, lenders, attorneys and community organizations.

Watch:

ABC7: "Mayor Johnson announces 'Cut the Tape' report to streamline construction development approvals"

CBS2: "Chicago's 'Cut the Tape' report hopes to connect developers with the city"



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O'HARE REVITALIZATION PLAN

Chicago Tribune: “City proposes key change to O’Hare airport rebuild, after months of negotiations with airlines”

Jake Sheridan and Sarah Freishtat; April 5, 2024

After months of negotiations with airlines over the massive, delayed rebuild of O’Hare International Airport, city officials are proposing a path forward with a key change[...]

“The City has indicated that they are looking at all options to get an on-budget (terminal project) moving forward, one being sequencing the project to deliver the most impactful elements the quickest. The Global Terminal has always been the centerpiece of this program and the most critical piece needed to ensure Chicago maintains its status as a global hub,” the carriers said.

Crain’s Chicago: “Johnson offers to fast-track new terminal at O’Hare to keep rebuild on track”

John Pletz; April 5, 2024

Mayor Brandon Johnson has proposed a deal with the airlines at O’Hare to change the order of construction of new terminals without eliminating any of the key pieces of the airport’s revitalization project[...]

“The city has indicated that they are looking at all options to get an on-budget (terminal program) moving forward, one being sequencing the project to deliver the most impactful elements the quickest,” United and American said in a statement. “The Global Terminal has always been the centerpiece of this program and the most critical piece needed to ensure Chicago maintains its status as a global hub. We look forward to reviewing their latest proposal.”

“For the past year, we have been working closely with the Johnson administration to advance an on-budget terminal development program that not only delivers the modernized airport envisioned in the 2018 lease contract but also helps ensure O’Hare’s future financial stability and competitiveness for years to come.”



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“Both satellites and the global terminal will move forward. We’re going to phase it, which is in collaboration with what our airline partners would like to see,” said Ald. Matt O’Shea, 19th Ward, who chairs the city’s Aviation Committee[...]

“Credit needs to be given to Mayor Johnson for recognizing how important this is and being committed to it.”