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PROVIDING INFORMATION ON RESOURCES AND EVENTS THAT IMPROVE THE LIFESTYLE OF INDIVIDUALS AND FAMILIES IN OUR COMMUNITY

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A Place to Heal, Gather and Grow: Lawndale Christian Health Center Opens New Family and Senior Center



Lawndale Christian Health Center's new Family and Senior Health Center located at 3814 W. Ogden Avenue.



Dr. James L. Brooks, CEO of Lawndale Christian Health Center, holding scissors to cut ribbon for new Family and Senior Health Center located at 3814 W. Ogden Avenue.

On a piece of Ogden Avenue where families once operated neighborhood businesses, children bought penny candy and residents built their lives block by block, a new chapter in North Lawndale's history is taking shape.

Lawndale Christian Health Center celebrated the opening of its new Family and Senior Health Center, a facility designed not only to provide medical care but also to create a gathering place for seniors, train a new generation of physicians and deepen an

institution's decades-long connection to the community.

The opening brought together health care leaders, residents, elected officials, financial partners, donors and people whose personal histories are tied to the neighborhood.

Throughout the celebration, one message surfaced repeatedly: This is more than a new building. For Dr. James L. Brooks, CEO of Lawndale Christian Health Center, it is an extension of a mission that began more than four decades ago.

Lawndale Christian Health Center grew out of Lawndale Christian Community Church in 1984 with a mission of promoting wellness and providing quality, affordable health care in Lawndale and surrounding communities. "Our belief [is] that health

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District 5B School Board Candidates Face Questions on Black Student Success, School Investment and Accountability



Chicago Westside Branch NAACP President Remel Terry, moderating the 2026 Chicago School Board District 5B Candidate Forum North Lawndale Community News and Austin Voice, Johnny Daniels educator and mentor, and Michael Romain Publisher of the Culture Newspaper and Podcast



Chicago Board of Education District 5B candidates Michilla "Kyla" Blaise and Anthony Hargrove faced questions about Black student achievement, career opportunities, school discipline, attendance and

investment in West Side neighborhood schools during a Sept. 17 candidate forum at Collins Academy STEAM High School. Blaise, the current appointed District 5B board member, and Hargrove, a

longtime former Chicago Public Schools employee, are competing for one seat in the Nov. 3 election. The election is part of Chicago's transition to a fully elected Board of Education. The current board

combines elected and mayoral-appointed members, but the board is scheduled to become fully elected in January 2027. The forum was moderated by Remel Terry, president

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Visit us on our website at www.nlcen.org for more articles, photos, information and more.

The North Lawndale Community News

The North Lawndale Community News is published weekly by Strategic Human Services. Our purpose is to help inform the communities we serve on resources, events, and issues relevant to them. Our community includes those who live, work, worship in, and/or care about North Lawndale and its neighboring communities. Our focus is on positive, productive solutions, that will improve the lifestyle of community members.

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LCHC from front page

is rooted in community,” Brooks told those gathered. “The health of an individual cannot be separated from the health and well-being of the surrounding community.” That philosophy shaped the design of the new center.

A Place for Seniors — Even Without an Appointment

On the second floor is a clinic dedicated specifically to seniors. But Brooks said the vision was always larger than creating another place where older adults could see a doctor. The inspiration came from his father, Rev. James Brooks Sr. Brooks recalled that his father sometimes went to the Veterans Affairs hospital even when he did not have an appointment. “He didn’t have a doctor’s appointment,” Brooks said. “He just wanted to go and hang out.” That memory sparked an idea. “What if we created a space in our community where seniors, they may not have a doctor’s appointment, but they just wanna hang out?” Brooks asked. “So we have created that space, and I’m excited for y’all to use it.”

Downstairs, the first floor houses an expanded optometry clinic. Brooks said the larger space is intended to make eye care and eyewear more accessible and more visible to residents passing the building. “When you walk past the building, you’ll see nice frames,” he said, joking that people might be enticed to walk in and say, “I wanna try those on.”

Training Doctors on the West Side The building is also now home to the Lawndale Christian Family Medicine Residency. Dr. Ben Preyss, program director, said the residency began in 2022 without a permanent home clinic or dedicated teaching space. What the program did have, he said, was a clear mission.

“We had no idea where our home base would be,” Preyss said. “We didn’t know where our home clinic would be. We didn’t know where our teaching spaces would be.”

But its purpose was established from the beginning: to train family physicians to provide accessible, affordable, high-quality and whole-person care on Chicago’s West Side, particularly for people who are vulnerable or too often overlooked. “With this beautiful building, we now have a home,” Preyss said. The residency now includes 24 residents and 15 faculty members.

Preyss said sharing a building with the senior and optometry clinics also reinforces what the residency is trying to teach future physicians. “You cannot separate the eye from the body any more than you can separate the heart or your leg from your body,” he said. “We are to provide whole person care, mind, body, and spirit.”

From a Pool Hall to a Health Center

Few speakers could connect the new building to the history of the property as personally as LCHC Board Chair Chelsea Johnson. For Johnson, 3816 W. Ogden Ave. is not simply the address of a new health center. It is part of her family story.

During the 1970s, her grandparents



Chicago Mayor Brandon Johnson addressing audience during the opening of the new Family and Senior bldg located at 3814 W. Ogden Ave

operated a four-table pool hall and three-seat shoeshine stand on the property. Her grandmother sold homemade hot tamales and pig-ear sandwiches from a food cart. Nearby was the neighborhood grocery store where residents could buy food — and children could buy penny candy. “This very ground holds some of my earliest memories,” Johnson said. “This is where I learned to walk.”

Those memories, she said, remind her of a history that can sometimes be overlooked. “Ogden Avenue has always been a business incubator,” Johnson said. “It has always been a place where people dreamed, worked, served, created, and built something for their families and their neighbors.”

Decades later, Johnson returned to the same property as chair of the board of an organization opening a multimillion-dollar health facility there. “Some may look at this building and see bricks, walls, examination rooms, and offices,” Johnson said. “I see a legacy.”

She described the center as “the continuation of a community that has always found ways to take care of its own.” “The village raises a child,” Johnson said, “and sometimes that child grows up and comes back to lead the village.”

Public Investment in Health

Chicago Mayor Brandon Johnson joined the celebration. He pointed to LCHC’s long-standing role on the West Side and said the new facility expands access to family medicine, senior care and optometry. “Today’s opening is another investment in reaching that goal,” Johnson said, referring to efforts to expand access to affordable, quality health care.

The mayor emphasized that large community projects require cooperation among government, community organizations and private partners. “Projects like this don’t happen in a vacuum,” Johnson said. “It happens because of partnership and collaboration between elected officials, community partners, and organizations with a shared goal of investing in communities and most of all, loving people.”

Chicago Department of Planning and Development Commissioner Ciere Boatright also framed the project as an investment in the people of North Lawndale. Boatright currently leads the city’s planning and development department. She described the center as a “\$24.5 million step forward for Ogden Avenue in North Lawndale.” “Health is wealth,” Boatright said, “and there is no greater investment that we can make as a community than investment in people, our families, our neighbors, and our seniors.”

Boatright said an \$11 million New Markets Tax Credit allocation from the Chicago Development Fund was among the funding sources supporting the project. “The Senior and Family Health Center is a community anchor,” she said. “It’s not an island.”

‘More Than Bricks and Mortar’

State Rep. Yolonda Morris, who represents Illinois’ 9th House District, spoke not only as a legislator but as someone born and raised in North Lawndale. She said she has watched the neighborhood experience both challenges and transformation. “Today, we are witnessing what happens when we make a real investment in our community,” Morris said.

She emphasized that the new center should function as a place where people form relationships as well as receive medical services. “This center is more than bricks and mortar,” Morris said. “It is a place where families will find support, where our seniors will have a place to gather, connect, and thrive.” For Morris, that represents something deeper. “This is what investment looks like,” she said. “It looks like opportunity. It looks like dignity.”

Giving Seniors Care Close to Home

State Sen. Lakesia Collins, who represents Illinois’ 5th Senate District, brought her own experience in health care to the ceremony. The Illinois General Assembly identifies Collins as a former certified nursing assistant who spent years working in health care before entering the legislature.

At the ceremony, Collins said she spent about 14 years as a CNA, including work in nursing homes and at Mount Sinai. “I was right there with our elders,” Collins said. “I wiped their brows, held their hands, and I saw firsthand how a system too often forgets about them.” She said seniors should not have to leave their communities or struggle through complicated systems to receive

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West Side Tree Initiative Spurred by Science

By Todd Thomas

Trees do far more than beautify a neighborhood. They provide shade during increasingly hot summers, improve air quality, help reduce flooding, and contribute to healthier communities while supporting both mental and physical health. Yet, historically underserved communities, including much of Chicago's West Side, have significantly fewer trees than wealthier neighborhoods, leaving residents more vulnerable to the impacts of climate change and environmental pollution.

Morton Arboretum's Chicago Region Tree Initiative priority map shows the percentage that an area is covered by mature tree foliage. On the West Side Austin's canopy is 19 percent, East Garfield Park 18 percent, West Garfield Park 18 percent, and North Lawndale 18 percent. These numbers contrast sharply with neighboring Oak Park which has a tree canopy of 31 percent.

<https://mortonarb.org/plant-and-protect/chicago-region-trees-initiative/priority-maps/>

In response to this research, a coalition of grassroots organizations and city-led programs are planting trees in areas around the city with low tree canopy coverage. With the help of the Our Roots Chicago Program, run by the City of Chicago, the Chicago Tree Equity Group was formed and over the past few years it is estimated that 68,000 trees have been planted, with the final goal of planting 75,000 trees by the end of this summer.

"Initially we prioritized 22 community areas that had the lowest canopy and also the highest social vulnerability, the highest heat, the highest asthma, the highest flooding - that is how we prioritized where we targeted for planting," said Our Roots Chicago founder Raed Mansour.

North Lawndale has had the most trees

planted during the tree planting initiative and groups that were already involved in greening activities like urban gardening and beautification have spearheaded the efforts. Through Our Root's Tree Ambassador program they have helped educate the community about trees, determine the sites where the trees will be planted and helped insure the trees will be maintained.

Homan Grown, a North Lawndale based group that specializes in urban gardening has helped with the tree planting effort, and director AnnaMaria Leon said that she has a natural appreciation for trees, having been born in the Philippines with a lush tree canopy and traveling the world where many cities place a high value on trees. "Many places I have visited place a high value on trees and all their streets are lined with trees. And Oak Park has a good tree canopy. Who wants to walk in the hot sun with no shade," she said.

And Lindsay Darling of the Morton Arboretum Tree Initiative agrees that regulating heat is the biggest benefit trees provide for people, while also providing habitat for wildlife. "I believe the most important thing that trees do is lower the urban heat of the Island. And there is a very strong relationship between the abundance of tree canopy and temperature. Chicago is also a stopping point for hundreds of species of migratory birds. Those birds eat bugs and snacks from trees and rest on their branches before moving on their migratory path," she said.

Research by the NOAA Heat Watch Project, a citizen-science project that empowers communities to map the hottest, most vulnerable neighborhoods in their cities, also found that the West Side is hotter in summer than some other areas. There are areas of the South Side that are hot, but the West Side tends to be the hottest,



Healthy tree canopies like this in Columbus Park can benefit both mental and physical health.

said Terry Horton of Northwestern University's Diffusing Disasters Program. She said the NOAA found differences of up to 21.0 F between different parts of the city on July 28, 2023.

In addition, a new study by Northwestern University scientists tracked death rates and fluctuations in tree canopy cover across an 11-year period in Chicago. They found that areas experiencing greater losses in tree canopy also experienced higher mortality rates, particularly in the city's hottest neighborhoods.

<https://news.northwestern.edu/stories/2026/08-2/as-urban-tree-shade-shrinks-mortality-rises>

The study's lead author Harrison Garcia described his impressions after visiting the North Lawndale and Douglas Park communities. "I noticed how much more exhausting it felt to walk through areas with little tree cover compared to nearby blocks lined with mature trees. I remember thinking

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Trees from page 4

that if the heat was affecting me so noticeably during a short walking tour, it must be shaping people’s health over the long term,” he said in a recent interview.

And these differences can have consequences for health, especially in communities that lack enough trees, parks and public swimming pools that can mitigate the effects of summer heat.

The West Side does have three large parks, Douglass Park 173 acres, Garfield Park 180 acres, and Columbus Park 140 acres, that have an abundance of mature trees, but the goal of the tree planting initiative is to plant trees closer to people’s homes so they don’t have to travel to reap the benefits.

“Greenspace like the parks is really important,” said Tom Ebeling, Director of Forestry for Openlands, a non-profit tree advocacy group. “But we want to protect nature where people live. We want to help get you a tree in front of your house so you don’t have to walk to Garfield Park to experience the benefits that these trees are providing.”

The Tree Ambassadors from Stone Temple Baptist Church in North Lawndale have also been actively advocating and planting trees over the past few years as part of the Our Roots Chicago program, but also on their own. To date they have planted 40, mostly fruit trees in the community.

Stone Temple’s Executive Pastor Reshorna Fitzpatrick is concerned about the environment and trees and has tried to spread this passion to others in the community through canvassing, workshops and informal discussions. “The reason we got into trees is because there is a low tree canopy in North Lawndale, and a lot of people don’t really understand the benefits of trees and the value of trees. We try to teach them that trees really do help out the environment and our health and it also helps when we look at crime in our



Blocks like these in Austin are likely locations for tree planting.

community. Some people don’t think these things are true, but there are statistics that prove these things,” she said. And for the most part, people in the North Lawndale community have welcomed trees being planted, although some people have expressed concerns that trees can be difficult to maintain, and that they might collapse onto their homes during severe weather. Leon said that on a few rare occasions people have actually cut down trees that have been planted. But those instances are indeed rare. “If trees were a vitamin, everyone would be lining up taking it - the benefits are enormous,” Monsour said. He also said that the whole idea behind the Our Roots Chicago Program was to educate people in the community so they could make informed decisions. And for a long time, initiatives like this were data-driven and community informed. “I tried to flip that script,” Monsour said “Our approach was community driven and data-informed.” Ways to get involved to help the environment on the

Chicago Region Trees Initiative Priority Maps

See where trees are needed most urgently in the Chicago region.

Use the map layers below and the combined interactive map to see your community's tree canopy cover and how trees impact your neighborhood.

Trees improve quality of life, but their benefits are not enjoyed equally across the region. To identify where trees are needed most urgently, The Morton Arboretum's Chicago Region Trees Initiative combined canopy cover, surface temperature, air quality, flood risk, health, and social vulnerability data into the map layers below.

Tree Canopy

Surface Temperature

Flood Risk

Air Quality

Asthma Rates

Vulnerable Populations

Priority Areas

View combined map

Vulnerable Populations

Trees can also improve people's quality of life. They increase property values, and people who live around trees are healthier and happier. The benefits that trees provide are especially needed in underserved, vulnerable communities. This data set identifies which tree census block groups are the most vulnerable by distinguishing those with low incomes, non-English-speaking, and a high proportion of minority populations.

Map of Chicago showing vulnerable populations and tree canopy cover. Legend: Very high, High, Medium, Low, Very low.

TAKE ACTION

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West Side.
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Education from front page

of the NAACP Chicago Westside Branch, and included questions from panelists Isaac Lewis, publisher of North Lawndale Community News and Austin Voice; Michael Romain, publisher of The Culture; and educator and mentor Johnny Daniels. Organizers said the purpose was to help voters understand who wants to represent the community, what candidates believe the responsibilities of the office are and how residents should measure their performance.

Much of the discussion centered on Black students because of District 5B's demographics. Organizers said approximately 62.5% of students attending the 63 schools assigned to District 5B are Black. Forty-two of those schools have student populations that are at least 75% Black, while 21 are at least 90% Black. Those figures also were reported in a recent 15 West examination of the race.

Candidates outline different approaches to student success

Asked what successful representation should mean specifically for Black children, Blaise said a representative must understand both the community and the governmental systems that influence CPS. Blaise said her experience working in city and county government and lobbying at the state level has helped her navigate CPS bureaucracy.

She identified a "joyful," academically rigorous and culturally sensitive school experience as priorities for students. Blaise also pointed to her role as co-chair of the board's Black Student Success Committee, saying the committee is examining systems that contribute to unequal outcomes rather than placing responsibility solely on students and families.

Hargrove argued that CPS needs to reconsider the traditional way schools operate and develop programs that better respond to individual students. "We got to reimagine how we do school," Hargrove said, arguing that education cannot be

approached as "one size fits all."

Hargrove identified three priorities: access, accountability and pathways. He said students should have access to quality schools regardless of ZIP code, taxpayers should be able to see how education dollars are being spent, and students should have pathways to college, skilled trades, entrepreneurship and careers. His current campaign similarly lists access, accountability and pathways among its central themes.

Neighborhood schools and advanced opportunities

Candidates also were asked about differences between neighborhood schools and highly sought-after selective-enrollment and magnet schools.

The question focused on whether students in neighborhood schools should have access to advanced courses and career opportunities comparable to those available at schools such as Whitney Young and Westinghouse.

Hargrove said students at neighborhood schools should have access to rigorous and advanced classes and suggested examining ways for students to participate in such courses at other schools while also finding money to bring more advanced programming directly into neighborhood schools. Blaise pushed back against the idea that West Side neighborhood schools lack strong programming, citing programs at Collins Academy and Manley High School.

She also pointed to a significant difference in schools' ability to raise private money. Parent and "Friends of" organizations at some highly sought-after schools can raise hundreds of thousands of dollars for additional programming, she said, while schools in lower-income communities may not have the same fundraising capacity.

Career education becomes major issue
Preparing students for life after graduation was another major theme.

Blaise said college should not be considered the only measure of success and called for stronger



Chicago School Board Candidates Forum2 - 5B.jpg

Career and Technical Education programs. "Not everybody is going to college," she said. Blaise argued that programs in areas such as construction, electrical work, the arts and other career fields can cost more to operate and therefore should not necessarily receive the same per-pupil funding as less expensive programs.

"Equity doesn't mean everybody gets the same amount," she said.

Hargrove said career exposure should begin before high school.

He said elementary school students should learn about occupations ranging from entrepreneurship and the trades to culinary careers, and high school students should have opportunities to explore college, historically Black colleges and universities, business ownership and skilled trades.

"We have to expose our kids to the various careers," Hargrove said.

Discipline and student safety

The candidates also addressed racial disparities in student discipline.

Blaise emphasized restorative justice, men-

torship, calming spaces and specialized classrooms as tools schools can use to address behavior while keeping students in school.

She said restorative practices can help students learn conflict resolution and emotional regulation but acknowledged that implementation varies from school to school.

Hargrove said schools need clinicians, social workers, case managers and individualized behavior-management plans to address students' social and emotional needs.

He argued that schools must look beyond discipline alone and determine what is causing behavioral problems.

What happens to under-enrolled schools?

The future of schools with declining enrollment produced another significant difference in emphasis.

Blaise said under-enrollment on the West Side cannot be separated from decades of disinvestment and previous school closings. She opposed allowing enrollment numbers alone to determine whether schools receive investment.

She pointed to the former Henson Elementary

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care. "Our seniors built our families, they built our blocks, and our city," Collins said. "They gave us their whole lives." For that reason, she said, the center carries meaning beyond its physical structure. "This ribbon cutting isn't just for a new building," Collins said. "It is for legacy. It's about love, it's about respect."

Bringing Health Professionals to Communities That Need Them

State Rep. La Shawn K. Ford, an Illinois House member representing the 8th District, focused his remarks on the physicians who chose to train and practice on Chicago's West Side. Ford thanked the medical residents for making that choice deliberately. "This is a choice, and it is deliberate for you to be here on the West Side of Chicago," Ford said, tying their presence to efforts to address health disparities. "This is how you do it," he said. "You come to the communities that need you the most, and you serve."

Building a Pipeline of Physicians

Melissa Pillars of JPMorgan Chase's Community Development Banking team said the project brings together two priorities: expanding access to medical care and training the next generation of health care providers. "When we talk about building a pipeline of doctors, we're really talking about creating opportunities for people to learn, to train, to build relationships here, and hopefully choose to stay here," Pillars said. "What I love most about this project is that it brings those two goals together: expanding access to healthcare while investing in the future healthcare workforce."

Pillars also spoke about the importance

of trust between physicians and patients. She shared the example of her own father, whose first language is Spanish, to illustrate how intimidating medical appointments can become when patients have difficulty understanding medical terminology or communicating with their provider. "Having a physician that understands your experiences, your background, or even speaks your language, can help build trust and create a better healthcare experience," Pillars said. "And that's why building a diverse pipeline of physicians is so important, because representation matters." Pillars said JPMorgan Chase supported the project through a \$5.9 million New Markets Tax Credit investment.

A Relationship Built Over Years

Donor John Schreiber also reflected on his family's relationship with Lawndale.

He recalled asking Brooks several years ago about the health center's priorities. One concern was attracting and supporting strong medical residents; another was creating better facilities for patients. Schreiber said the goal was "new modern, effective facilities" focused not simply on physicians, "but for the patient."

Looking around at the completed building and the medical residents gathered for the celebration, Schreiber said he and his wife were proud to have supported the effort. "We're proud of the vision and leadership," he said, pointing to what that vision had produced in the new facility and residency program.

As the formal remarks concluded, the program moved toward the dedication and ribbon cutting. Dr. Jess was invited forward to offer the dedication in English and Spanish, beginning her portion of the ceremony with a simple, "Amen."

Celebration Comes With Challenges



Audience attending the Lawndale Christian Health Center opening of its new Family and Senior Health Center

Even amid the celebration, Brooks reminded those gathered that the health center faces significant challenges.

More than a quarter of LCHC's patients are currently uninsured, he said, and he expressed concern that changes affecting Medicaid coverage could increase that number.

"The financial strain this will put on community health centers like ours is immense," Brooks said, calling for continued support as LCHC works to maintain access to care.

But the day was ultimately centered on what North Lawndale had gained: a larger eye clinic, a health center designed specifically for seniors, a place for older residents to gather, a teaching home for young physicians and another major investment along Ogden Avenue.

For Chelsea Johnson, all of it connects back to the history beneath the building.

The ground that once held her grandparents' pool hall, shoeshine stand and her grandmother's food business now holds a health center intended to serve another generation of North Lawndale families.

"1973 gave me memories," Johnson said, "but 2026 gives us an opportunity to build the next chapter of the legacy."

Her hope for that chapter was simple.

"May this building always be filled with healing, hope, joy, compassion, and genuine care," Johnson said. "And may everyone who walks through these doors feel what I have felt my entire life standing on this ground: You are home, you are valued, you are loved, and your community will always care for you."

60 Years Later, Chicago Marches Again in Honor of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

By Ms. Chevette M. Conley Writer/Photojournalist



Even though it rained a large crowd attend the National March into Marquette Park

CHICAGO — Sixty years after Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. marched through Chicago in the fight for fair housing and racial justice, thousands gathered once again at 63rd Street and Kedzie Avenue to retrace the historic route into Marquette Park.

The event, known as “The Fierce Urgency of Now: A National March into Marquette Park,” commemorated the 60th anniversary of the Chicago Freedom Movement and Dr. King’s historic 1966 march. The original demonstration challenged housing segregation and discriminatory practices that prevented Black Chicagoans from freely buying or renting homes in many neighborhoods.

Despite overcast skies and steady rain, the weather did not keep people away. Participants came from throughout Chicago and beyond, gathering for a morning rally filled with music, speeches and calls for continued community action. Performers energized the crowd with singing, dancing, rap, spoken-word presentations and instrumental music. A group of talented young musicians also performed with a live band, helping create an atmosphere that was both celebratory and reflective.

Among the community and civic leaders attending the rally were the Rev. Dr. Janette Wilson, senior adviser to Yusef Jackson and national director of PUSH for Excellence; Alvin C. Bibbs Sr., president and CEO of the Justice Journey Alliance Leadership Foundation of Chicago; and 17th Ward Ald. David Moore, who addressed participants with words of encouragement.

Mayor Brandon Johnson also joined marchers as they traveled south along Kedzie Avenue toward Marquette Park. Johnson was among several prominent Chicago leaders who participated in the commemorative event. One of the most anticipated speakers was Dr. Bernice A. King, daughter of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and CEO of The King Center.

Standing near the same ground where her father marched six decades earlier, King reminded participants that many of the struggles that shaped the Civil Rights Movement remain relevant today. She spoke about what her father described as the “triple evils” of poverty, racism and militarism, warning that those forces continue to affect communities in different forms. She called upon those gathered to respond to injustice with courage and sustained action. Her speech served as one of the emotional high points of the day. For many in attendance, it felt as if the message of Dr. King had been carried directly into a new generation.

Chicago’s own Grammy- and Academy Award-winning artist Common also took

part in the commemoration. Common marched alongside Bernice King, Mayor Johnson and community leaders before performing for the crowd at Marquette Park. Organizers had announced Common as one of the event’s featured performers, and his appearance added another powerful cultural element to the day.

The significance of the gathering was impossible to ignore.

On August 5, 1966, Dr. King and other civil rights demonstrators marched into the Marquette Park area as part of the Chicago Freedom Movement’s campaign against housing discrimination. They were met by an angry white crowd, and King was struck by a rock during the demonstration. The violence surrounding that march became one of the defining moments of the struggle for open housing in Chicago.

Sixty years later, the atmosphere was dramatically different. People of different races, religions, backgrounds and generations marched together peacefully. Some wore shirts declaring the message of the day: “Sixty years later, we’re still marching.” And there are still many reasons people believe marching and community organizing remain necessary.

Participants raised concerns involving affordable health care and housing, access to healthy grocery stores, quality schools, safer neighborhoods, good-paying jobs, equal pay, voting rights, civil liberties and fair treatment under the law. The national event itself focused on voting rights, economic justice, human dignity and opposition to mass criminalization and detention.

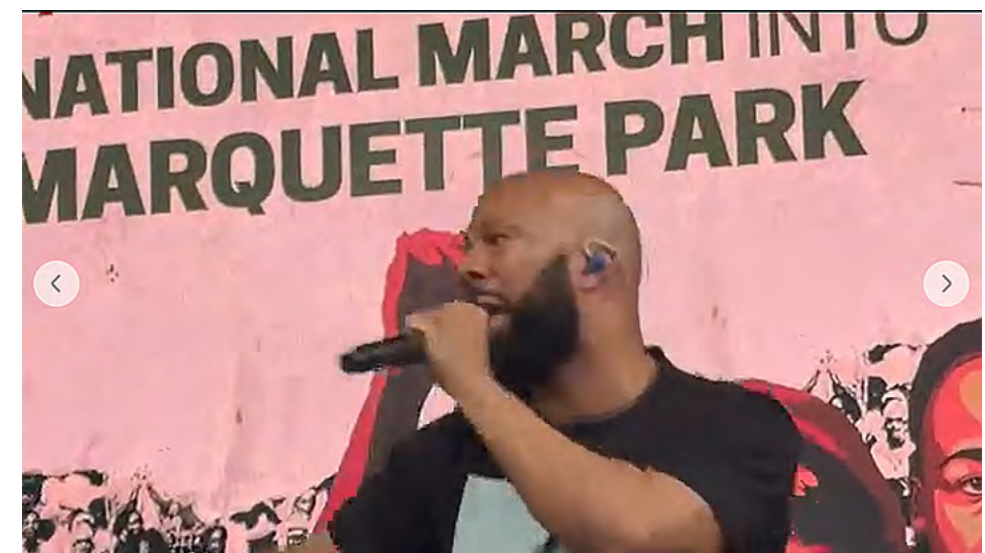
For the young people who attended, the march also became a living history lesson. They were able to walk a route connected directly to Chicago’s Civil Rights Movement while hearing from people who challenged the to think about what role their generation will play in shaping the city’s future. For older participants, the gathering was also a reminder that progress requires continued involvement.

The message throughout the day was clear: communities cannot simply wait for change. Residents must participate, organize, vote, mentor young people, support their neighborhoods and use their voices to address the issues affecting their families.

Hopefully, when another generation walks this historic route, it will be able to celebrate even more victories. Until then, the march from 63rd and Kedzie into Marquette Park remains both a remembrance of where Chicago has been and a challenge to consider where the city still needs to go. Sixty years later, Chicago is still marching. And on this rainy August day, another chapter was added to the city’s civil rights history.



Chicago Mayor Brandon Johnson attending the National March into Marquette Park



Rapper, actor, and activist Common performing at the Marquette Park March event.jpg

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Education from page 6

School in North Lawndale, which she said is being redeveloped for affordable housing after sitting vacant for years, as an example of finding new uses for closed school properties with community input.

Hargrove said investment decisions should consider both quantitative and qualitative information, budgeting practices and community participation.

"I don't think we should do anything with schools without including bringing all stakeholders to the table," he said, specifically naming students and community residents.

Both candidates have publicly said they oppose school closings, according to a joint Chicago Sun-Times, WBEZ, Chalkbeat and Block Club Chicago voter guide.

Voters asked to measure results

Accountability became a recurring theme throughout the forum.

Hargrove said school performance data should be reviewed regularly to determine whether interventions are working and

changed when they are not.

Blaise said the Black Student Success Committee is bringing together educators, organizers, researchers and data analysts to examine existing CPS information and develop ways of tracking progress.

When candidates were asked how residents should personally judge their performance, both returned to accessibility.

Blaise said residents should consider whether she responded to phone calls and requests for information and whether she was able to help move issues important to the community.

Hargrove's answer was shorter: voters should ask whether he was accessible to parents and students.

The race will give District 5B voters a choice between an incumbent already

serving on the board and a challenger whose campaign emphasizes more than two decades of experience working in and around CPS. Blaise currently serves as District 5B's appointed board member and is chief of staff to Cook County Commissioner Frank J. Aguilar. Hargrove has worked in CPS positions including culinary instructor, dean, operations manager and compliance specialist. (Chicago Board of Education)

The District 5B election will be held Tuesday, Nov. 3, with newly elected board mem-

bers beginning their terms in January 2027. (WTTW News)

As Terry reminded residents at the forum, the election is only part of the public's responsibility. Voters, he said, also should continue watching board votes, budgets and school outcomes after Election Day and keep asking what has changed for children as a result of their representative's service. To view full video recording of the forum go to North Lawndale Community News Youtube channel.

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