



**CHICAGO PREP**  
CHARTER MIDDLE SCHOOL

## Chicago Preparatory Charter Middle School

A proposed Chicago Public Schools Charter School  
Tier III Application

Respectfully submitted by the Chicago Preparatory Charter Middle School Design Team and Founding Board:

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## DOMAIN 1: COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND SUPPORT

### SECTION 1.6: CONTINUED COMMUNITY OUTREACH AND SUPPORT MATERIALS

The proposal has improved its compelling rationale for why the proposed school is a good fit for the targeted community(ies) and will effectively serve the targeted student population(s).

- Evidence demonstrating that the applicant has continued to engage the community
- Evidence that the applicant conducted significant, authentic outreach in the targeted community(ies) to inform and seek community input about the application, including: Evidence that the design team participated in various meetings, events, and/or volunteer opportunities to become more familiar with the targeted community and develop an outreach plan
- An open acknowledgement of opposition to the proposed school
- An updated vision for how the proposed school will positively contribute to the community, outlining any services, resources, programs, or volunteers that the school will offer to families and/or community members
- Applicant has provided additional letters of support.

The Chicago Prep design team remains committed to our mission of preparing 5<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> grade scholars to succeed in college and positively impact the world. We believe that fulfilling this mission and creating a truly excellent middle school requires collecting and incorporating authentic community feedback. Bronzeville is a beautiful, historic neighborhood with a highly engaged community, and we are grateful to learn from its diverse stakeholders about what students and families need and want in a new school. Throughout August and September, we have continued to engage deeply in the community, building connections, spreading the word about Chicago Prep, and learning from residents and families, community organizations, and businesses. Figure 1.24 provides a list of meetings held and events/volunteer opportunities attended since the submission of the Tier II application on July 31, 2020.

**Figure 1.24: Meetings, Events, and Volunteer Opportunities Designed to Learn and Build Connections, August – September 2020**

Date	Engagement
8/4	Formally presented the mission and vision of Chicago Prep to approximately 35 community members at The GAP Community Organization monthly meeting; answered questions and received feedback.
8/6	Attended University of Chicago School of Social Service Administration information session on the Community Programs Accelerator to learn about eligibility for Chicago Prep and application process.
8/6	Attended the Greater Bronzeville Community Action Council (GBCAC) Leaders Conversation to Introduce University of the Potomac.
8/7	Met with Michelle R. Wall, Bronzeville resident, and member of The GAP Community Organization.
8/7	Met with Joan Emerson, Bronzeville resident and Vice Chair of The GAP Community Organization.
8/10	Attended “So, You Want to Be Antiracist. Now What?”, a virtual webinar hosted by Chicago Beyond Founder and CEO Liz Dozier and featuring Maurice Swinney, CPS Chief Equity Officer, and Dr. Ibram X. Kendi.
8/13	Spoke with Jimi Orange, Director of Youth and Student Development, Chicago Urban League.
8/16	Met with Tanya Griggs, Bronzeville resident.
8/18	Met with Veryl Britton Boykin, CPS graduate and educator.

8/25	Participated in Mandrake Park Advisory Council Meeting.
8/29	Met with Philip Denne, CPS graduate.
8/29	Met with Ray Parnell, CPS graduate.
8/29	Met with Norm Neely, CPS graduate.
9/1	Spoke with South Side Community Federal Credit Union (SSFCU) about possible partnership to help Chicago Prep students open savings accounts.
9/1	Met with Dana London, CPS graduate.
9/3	Met with Evan Watson, real estate and architect professional and Bronzeville resident.
9/4	Spoke with Dr. Regina Williams, special education teacher and consultant, Founder of Diverse Learning with Doc, and Bronzeville resident.
9/8	Attended Zoom Webinar hosted by Illinois Leadership for Educational Equity (ILEE) to learn about free internet access for CPS students.
9/11	Spoke with Allison Jack, Director of Charter Growth and Support at Illinois Network for Charter Schools.
9/15	Spoke with Cosette Nazon-Wilburn of LUV Institute to discuss possible partnership for after-school programming.
9/18	Spoke with Providence Bank about possible partnership to help Chicago Prep students open savings accounts.
9/19	Participated in Pitch In for the Parks at Mandrake Park; helped clean up the park with a team of approximately twenty volunteers.
9/21	Met with Pastor TJ Grooms at New Beginnings Church. Learned about the church's supervision of virtual learning and shared information about Chicago Prep.
9/22	Met with Ashley Smith, Founder and CEO of Haute Society.
9/22	Spoke with Aisha Lee of Hyde Park Bank to discuss possible partnership to help Chicago Prep students open savings accounts.
9/22	Attended the Community Programs Accelerator's meeting on Optimizing the Board/CEO Relationship.
9/26	Met with Lee Smith, Bronzeville resident.
9/26	Attended the GBCAC Virtual Parent Breakfast.

A theme we have heard repeated throughout our community engagement, including at the August GAP Community Organization meeting, is the desire for Chicago Prep scholars to open savings accounts as part of our financial literacy program. As a result, we have continued outreach and dialogue with multiple possible community banks. Although no partnership has been finalized, Hyde Park Bank in particular has expressed interest in partnering; we discussed the possibility of bank employees visiting Chicago Prep in the fall to lead an assembly on banking that ends with helping scholars, with parent support, to open savings accounts.

Also at the August GAP Community Organization meeting, a GAP resident asked whether Chicago Prep planned to provide any agricultural education, a question that had come up before. We believe that agricultural education fits in well with our focus on entrepreneurship and could provide another meaningful way to engage our scholars in active, community-based learning. As a result, the team spoke with Wheeler Kearns Architects Principal Larry Kearns about the possibility of building hoop houses in the lot in front of St. Ambrose School so that our scholars could garden each summer, fall, and spring. This vision is reflected in the initial floor plans created by Wheeler Kearns. We have continued to describe the gardening idea in subsequent community conversations, and it has been met with excitement.

During the Second Annual GBCAC Parent Breakfast, there was widespread agreement among parent attendees that parents need more resources and support in navigating virtual learning. This theme resonates with our plan to build an active Parent Advisory Council and host at least two family events per month at Chicago Prep. With the ongoing parent outreach and leadership of our Parent Advisory Council, the Chicago Prep team will be able to keep our pulse on the resources and supports parents need most and plan our recurring events accordingly. For example, if parents express wanting support helping scholars complete homework assignments, we can make one of our events an aligned Parent University. If parents want support with social and emotional well-being for their children, we could host an event at school with tables and resources from local community organizations. Our goal is to be as flexible, responsive, and creative as possible to ensure that our families have the support they need.

In addition to listening and learning, the design team has continued our efforts to inform the community of our plans for Chicago Prep. We are committed to openness and transparency, sharing details and seeking feedback from as many stakeholders as possible. Figure 1.25 captures our methods of formal outreach since the submission of the Tier II application.

**Figure 1.25: Methods of Informing the Community**

Method of Notification	Details	Evidence
Facebook	17 posts since July 31, 2020; 318 followers as of September 27, 2020.	Chicago Prep’s Facebook page, facebook.com/chi.prep.middle; sample posts attached in <b>Appendix 1.6</b>
Instagram	8 posts since July 31, 2020; 150 followers as of September 27, 2020.	Chicago Prep’s Instagram page, Instagram.com/chi.prep.middle; sample posts attached in <b>Appendix 1.6</b>
Virtual community meeting	Lead Founder Mary Griffin and Board Members Mitch Newsome and Michele Williams hosted a conversation on Facebook Live with 516 people reached; 344 views and 241 engagements as of September 27, 2020.	Photo from Chicago Prep Facebook page attached in <b>Appendix 1.6</b>
Tabling at community events (see <b>Figure 1.26</b> for detailed list)	Tabled at a total of six events in August and September 2020, reaching an estimated 600 community members.	Sample social media posts and photos attached in <b>Appendix 1.6</b>
Direct mail campaign	Sent flyers to 1,634 addresses in ZIP code 60653.	Copy of direct mailer attached in <b>Appendix 1.6</b>

Figure 1.26 provides a list of community events that we have tabled and/or presented at since July 31, 2020.

**Figure 1.26: Presentations and Tabling Events Designed to Inform the Community, August – September 2020**

Date	Event and Details
8/15	Tabled at the Chicago Urban League’s Back-to-School Festival; gathered five intent-to-enroll forms.

8/16	Tabled at the H.O.O.D. Foundation’s Paint and Play in Bronzeville.
8/16	Tabled at Bronzeville City Market.
8/30	Tabled at the Urban Hearts Foundation’s Back-to-School Backpack Giveaway at Boxville; gathered three intent-to-enroll forms.
9/5	Tabled at The Free Black Children’s Library, organized by Brown Books and Paintbrushes, at 2423 E 75 <sup>th</sup> Street, the Quarry Event Center. Gathered five intent-to-enroll forms.
9/21	Hosted Facebook Live via Chicago Prep Facebook page.
9/27	Tabled at Haute Society’s Feed the Homeless event; collected three intent-to-enroll forms.

In addition to the design team tabling and attending community events, Lead Founder Mary Griffin hosted a third session of Online Financial Literacy from August 10 – August 20. Three participating students experienced a well-rounded introduction to personal finance, covering such topics as budgeting, saving, spending (cash vs. credit vs. debit) and investing. In September, Ms. Griffin created a survey to ask families what supports they might want for their students this fall, from various virtual courses to virtual one-on-one tutoring to small-group in-person tutoring. Ms. Griffin emailed the survey to parents who had completed intent-to-enroll forms, parents whose students had participated in virtual financial literacy, and parents who had signed our petition or completed a feedback survey; it was also shared at the GBCAC Parent Breakfast. A sample outreach email is attached in **Appendix 1.6**. One hundred percent of parents surveyed expressed interest in virtual writing and grammar instruction, so Ms. Griffin will teach a “Foundations of Writing” course in October. Other potential supports will depend on parent interest and student availability.

The design team’s outreach throughout August and September has built additional connections and supporters of Chicago Prep. In addition to the 35 letters of support submitted with the Tier II application, Chicago Prep has collected 5 additional letters of support, including 3 from potential partners. Although we have not finalized our partnership agreements, Teach for America is a potential partner for teacher recruitment, hiring, and professional development. The Community Builders, with its Cornerstone Apartments less than half a mile from our proposed site at St. Ambrose, is a potential partner for providing after-school programming for our scholars as well as family and community support services. In addition, Ashley Smith, the CEO of Haute Society, has a goal of providing after-school enrichment programming on site at a middle school. This could create a great partnership as our goal is for scholars to be able to remain on campus for after-school programming, creating convenience for families and providing a safe space for scholars to continue learning, building community, and having fun after the school day ends. Figure 1.27 provides a list of the letters of support, attached in **Appendix 1.6**, collected since July 31, 2020.

**Figure 1.27: Additional Supporters of Chicago Prep**

Name	Position	Affiliation
Patricia Akuamoah	Community Life Specialist	The Community Builders, potential partner for Chicago Prep
Orlando Burns	Owner/Operator	The Barber Suite, a Bronzeville barber shop
Nashaun Lee	Freshman majoring in Secondary Education Chemistry	Augustana College; former CPS student who attended CICS Avalon with Board Member Brandon Kimble as Principal and Lead Founder Mary Griffin as Writing Teacher
Ryan Osborne	Managing Director, Partnerships and Onboarding	Teach for America: Chicago-Northwest Indiana, potential partner for Chicago Prep

Ashley Smith	Chief Executive Officer	Haute Society, potential partner for providing after-school programming
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Since the submission of the Tier II application, the Chicago Prep team has collected 16 additional intent-to-enroll forms (attached in **Appendix 1.6**), bringing our current total to 53. To ensure that we collect more intent-to-enroll forms throughout the remainder of 2020, the design team will continue to conduct virtual outreach, including posting on social media about the opportunity for enrollment, hosting Facebook and Instagram Live community meetings, and advertising our upcoming Foundations of Writing course. In addition, we will continue outreach via phone and email to potential community partner organizations that may be able to help spread the word to families with age-eligible students. We will also continue to participate in in-person events to the extent that we can do so safely under COVID-19 guidelines.

At community events and meetings, the response to Chicago Prep has generally been positive. Many parents and community members express excitement at the opportunity for students in Bronzeville and surrounding neighborhoods to attend Chicago Prep. However, Dr. Eve Ewing, sociologist and author of *Ghosts in the Schoolyard: Racism and School Closings on Chicago’s South Side*, learned about Chicago Prep during a tabling event at the Bronzeville City Market and expressed opposition to the school to team members at the event and on Twitter. Specifically, she expressed concern about the sustainability of a new school in Bronzeville in the context of declining population, under-enrollment, and the history of school closures in the community. The Chicago Prep design team has heard similar concerns expressed during the course of our community engagement, including from the Greater Bronzeville Community Action Council (GBCAC). The GBCAC has expressed respect and admiration for our community engagement efforts as well as our school model, but shared concern about the declining enrollment in Bronzeville schools.

Chicago Prep understands and takes these concerns seriously. However, given recent population trends in Bronzeville as well as what we have learned through community engagement, we remain optimistic about our ability to open Chicago Prep successfully while minimizing any negative impact to existing schools. Bronzeville’s population decline came to a halt in 2010 and, in some areas of the region, notably reversed. According to the Community Data Snapshots published in June 2020 by the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP), targeted recruitment neighborhoods Douglas, Oakland, Grand Boulevard, and Hyde Park all experienced a population increase from 2010-2018. While the city of Chicago experienced a 0.9% population increase in that period, Grand Boulevard grew by 3.9%, Hyde Park grew by 7.1%, Oakland grew by 15.7%, and Douglas grew by 16.6%.<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, the city’s INVEST South/West program launched in October 2019 under Mayor Lori Lightfoot aims to “catalyze redevelopment of commercial corridors in 10 neighborhoods on the South Side and West Side,” including Bronzeville, a particularly promising neighborhood for continuing revitalization and attracting new residents.<sup>2</sup> The design team also hopes that Chicago Prep will encourage some of the 27% of elementary school students in Greater Bronzeville who are currently leaving the region, to remain in the region for school.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> “Community Data Snapshots.” CMAP, July 2020. <https://www.cmap.illinois.gov/data/community-snapshots>.

<sup>2</sup> Zotti, Ed. “Rebuilding Bronzeville: Black Chicago’s post-pandemic future starts on the south lakefront.” *Chicago Sun-Times*, May 8, 2020. <https://chicago.suntimes.com/crossroads/2020/5/8/21248475/bronzeville-south-shore-neighborhood-development-african-americans-coronavirus-zotti-city-crossroads>.

<sup>3</sup> 2019-20 Annual Regional Analysis: Bronzeville/South Lakefront. Chicago Public Schools, 2020. <https://ara.cps.edu/bronzeville-southlakefront.html>.

### **Update to Section 1.2 Facilities (1.2.3 Management of Proposed Site)**

During our collaboration with Illinois Facilities Fund (IFF), Associate Lender Jocelyn Velazquez and School Services Consultant Andrea Poole suggested that we explore other architectural firms, as those with more experience working with schools may be able to help drive renovation costs down significantly for our proposed site at St. Ambrose. In particular, IFF recommended Wheeler Kearns Architects, which has not only worked on many projects with IFF, but also has a lot of experience with charter schools, including both small single-site charters and large networks. We connected with Wheeler Kearns as well as Brook Architecture, a Black- and woman-owned architectural firm that also has experience with schools; both firms are on the CPS List of Approved Architects. We reached out to both firms to explain our project, gauge their interest in working with Chicago Prep, and discuss the possibility of providing a new construction budget proposal. If authorized, we plan to go through a formal bidding process with these two firms and at least one other to determine which firm we will work with. For now, Wheeler Kearns has provided first-generation floor plans, an architectural fees proposal, and a preliminary project schedule; they also connected us with general contracting firm Bulley & Andrews, who prepared a new construction budget proposal for St. Ambrose. A significant update that has already arisen from this new facilities work is that the construction budget proposal and architectural fees proposal together total \$1,003,156, a difference of \$621,774 from the initial proposal we received from Techno Ltd. Our updated facilities and financing documents, including revised Sources and Uses of Funds and revised budget reflecting loan repayments, are available upon request.

### **Update to Section 4.4 Governance (4.4.1 Governance Start-up)**

The Chicago Prep team has updates to our Founding Board membership, including changed officer roles and two new Board members. Our proposed Board officers are as follows: Mitchell Newsome is Proposed Board Chair; Ken Dickerson is Proposed Vice Chair; Michele Williams is Proposed Treasurer; and Jack Pritchett is Proposed Secretary. Our two new Founding Board Members are Vic Howell and Michele Williams; the biographies below outline their experience and qualifications. Mr. Howell filled the Board's vacancy for a member with facilities expertise, and Ms. Williams filled the open position left by the previous Proposed Treasurer, Julia Strauch. Mr. Howell's and Ms. Williams' resumes are attached in **Appendix 4.4**, along with their Board member application forms, conflict of interest forms, and charter school assurances statements.

**Terry Lee "Vic" Howell** is a development manager with Focus, where he oversees the design and construction of commercial buildings with project costs between \$75M - \$100M. He brings to this role a diverse background in the commercial real estate industry, having worked in construction and as a licensed architect in Chicago prior to his current role. This experience helps to improve the quality and efficiency of the entire development process as he guides the team from concept through completion of construction, managing the design consultants, municipal approval, lender/investor relationships, contractors, and budgets. Vic believes strongly in developing confidence in young people and uses his career as a model for children and teenagers to follow as a mentor and advisor in youth empowerment programs. His ultimate desire is to use his talents to contribute to equitable development in underserved communities in Chicago. Vic holds a Bachelor of Architecture from the University of Notre Dame.

**Michele Williams**, CPA, is Founder and CEO of Williams and Associates, LLC, a woman- and black-owned accounting firm. Williams and Associates tailors financial and tax solutions to meet the needs and demands of entrepreneurs and small to mid-sized businesses in education, not-for-profit and, most recently, the entertainment and media sector. After earning her Bachelor of Science degree in Accounting at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, Michele started her career as a financial analyst at



Abbott and worked as a tax associate for PricewaterhouseCoopers. With over 25 years of experience designing financial systems, increasing efficiencies, and building successful teams Michele has worked in various senior and executive management positions: She was the Controller at LEARN Charter School; Controller of the accounting department for the Illinois Housing Development Authority, and the Chief Financial Officer for the Chicago Center for Arts and Technology. Michele is currently Vice-Chairman of the Trinity Senior Housing Board for Long Range Planning and Treasurer of the Board for Revolution Workshop. She regularly volunteers her time and talents within her community as a member of Trinity United Church of Christ where she serves as a Trustee, and as a member of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Incorporated and The Links, Inc., where she has served in various leadership roles.