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MAYOR JOHNSON HIGHLIGHTS YEAR OF BUILDING AND PRESERVING AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Day four of countdown to first-year anniversary focuses on the Mayor Johnson's work to address the affordable housing crisis in Chicago

CHICAGO – Throughout the first year of his administration, Mayor Johnson's administration has made significant progress toward building and preserving affordable housing by reducing cumbersome bureaucracy, converting underutilized office space into housing, and making generational investments in Chicago's affordable housing stock.

This is the fourth in a series of releases counting down to the one-year anniversary of the Johnson Administration.

"In the past year, we have shifted from patchwork solutions to pioneering a sustainable, equitable framework for housing in Chicago, ensuring that our city thrives for all residents," said **Mayor Brandon Johnson**. "These transformative efforts are not just about building units, but about building hope and homes for thousands of Chicagoans."

Mayor Johnson's time in office has seen a range of policies that will speed up the development of affordable housing across the city, and which has already brought forth a number of ribbon cuttings and ground breakings.

Housing Policy

In making the development of affordable housing a more efficient process, Mayor Johnson signed the 'Cut the Tape' executive order, which aims to cut down bureaucratic obstacles and foster more efficient collaboration between departments to speed up development.

As part of the executive order, Mayor Johnson released the ['Cut the Tape' report in April 2024](#), outlining over 100 recommendations for development process improvement including enhancements in internal and external communication, accountability, resource



optimization, and the elimination of redundant processes – thus setting a clear roadmap for actionable steps to optimize development procedures and initiate progress.

“I am proud of the work of the Mayor’s Office, Business and Neighborhood Development team, and the 14 City departments that listened to feedback from community leaders and development stakeholders to co-create bold, systems-changing solutions that will result in more development in communities all across the city,” said **Kenya Merritt, Deputy Mayor of Business and Neighborhood Development**.

The Cut the Tape report highlights the Johnson administration’s “10 Big Bets” or signature recommendations to improve processes. These include:

1. **Cross-department coordination** through the creation of a new Director of Process Improvement role in the Mayor’s Office
2. **Policy improvements** to enable expedited reviews for affordable housing projects
3. **Zoning** changes that include collaborating with City Council to eliminate minimum parking requirements and streamline special use permits, and more
4. **Improve boards and commission processes** by evaluating the feasibility of streamlining the Community Development Commission (CDC) and the Chicago Planning Commission (CPC)
5. **Streamline design and construction requirements** by revisiting the Department of Housing’s (DOH) Architectural and Technical Standards (ATS) manual
6. **Reduce the number of design review meetings** within the Department of Planning and Development (DPD) from three to one, and reassess the role of the Committee on Design
7. **Eliminate Phase 1 and 2 environmental reviews** as a requirement for sale of environmentally cleared City-owned parcels
8. **Expand the finance pilot** for cash advance payment options
9. **Create an online “City wallet”** account to improve options for customer billing, online payments, and debt check
10. **Work to reduce** the administrative burden of the City’s Economic Disclosure Statement (EDS), including expanding expiration dates, allowing exemptions for select projects that receive an allocation of Low-Income Housing Tax Credits, and more

In addition to the Cut the Tape executive order and report, Mayor Johnson recently announced Sedy Soto as the City’s first [Chief Homelessness Officer](#) to help coordinate efforts across City departments and sister agencies to combat and prevent homelessness.



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“Chicago joins a small group of cities that have taken the bold step of creating a dedicated position that ensures every resident has access to safe, stable, and affordable housing,” said **Soto**. “I am humbled by the opportunity to lead this work and I am ready to dream big.”

To address homelessness on a national level, Mayor Johnson has collaborated on the ALLInside program with the US Interagency Council on Homelessness and 19 federal agencies. This initiative targets unsheltered homelessness, focusing on individuals using infrastructure as last-resort shelters.

Ribbon Cuttings & Groundbreakings

Since Mayor Johnson took office, the City has seen 571 affordable units completed with another 488 under construction, 271 under rehab, and five ribbon-cuttings.

"Under Mayor Johnson's leadership, we've launched groundbreaking initiatives that have already made a significant impact on Chicago's housing landscape," said **Department of Housing Commissioner Lissette Castañeda**. "Our commitment is clear: to ensure every Chicagoan has access to affordable, quality housing as a fundamental right."

The Johnson administration has made progress in developing housing on the South and West Sides to prevent displacement of long-term residents. The recently announced Austin United Residential project will create 78 one-, two-, and three-bedroom rental units, of which 50 units will be affordable to tenants earning 60% or less of the Area Median Income (AMI).

Another notable ribbon cutting that took place since Mayor Johnson took office is Lawson House, a redevelopment project that preserved over 400 units of affordable housing in the Gold Coast neighborhood.

In addition to ribbon cuttings, the Johnson administration has had a number of projects break ground, including [Grace Manor Apartments](#), a \$40 million project that is 100 percent affordable units in Chicago's North Lawndale neighborhood. The ground floor will be utilized for community and commercial tenants, including health and wellness service providers, as well as job training and wealth-building classes, while the second through the sixth floors will include 65 affordable housing units with a unit mix of 31 one-bedroom and 34 two-bedrooms, complete with a rooftop deck on the sixth floor.

More recently, Mayor Johnson and the Department of Housing announced 13 transformative affordable housing developments to receive Low-Income Housing Tax Credits (LIHTC) through the department's Qualified Allocation Plan (QAP). The 13 developments, to be built over the coming years, will create and preserve over 1,300



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affordable rental units across the city. Total development costs including public and private sources are estimated at \$562 million.

The LIHTC projects will be joined by further development, such as the four recently announced LaSalle Street adaptive re-use projects within the Loop's historic financial district to convert underutilized office buildings to housing.

Representing more than \$528 million in total investments, four projects will repurpose 1.3 million square feet of vacant space, creating housing for all. The four projects will create more than 1,000 homes, including more than 300+ affordable units. To date, there are only 32 completed ARO units in the Loop. With the additional 319 affordable units through this initiative, there will be a nearly 1000% increase in total affordable units in this community area.

"This year marks a historic shift in how we envision and execute urban development in Chicago, particularly with the revitalization of our downtown area," said **Department of Planning and Development Commissioner Ciere Boatright**. "Through strategic investments in historic buildings and innovative planning, we are setting the stage for a city that not only grows but thrives inclusively, creating vibrant, accessible communities in the heart of Chicago."

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