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## Officials Working To Prevent Displacement In Woodlawn

By [Natalie Moore](#)

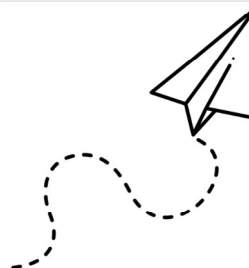
Jan. 17, 2020, 9:04 a.m. CT



City officials are considering an ordinance to address displacement in Woodlawn and other areas near the site of the Obama Presidential Center. Community members say residents are already being pushed out. They want the city to take immediate action. Photo illustration by Paula Friedrich / WBEZ News

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## Officials Working To Prevent Displacement In Woodlawn

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The city of Chicago Department of Housing is working on an ordinance to prevent displacement in the Woodlawn neighborhood.

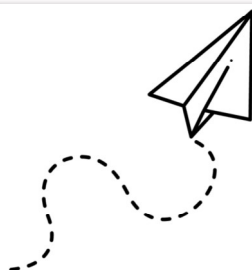
“Everyone who lives in Woodlawn now should be able to stay in Woodlawn,” said Housing Commissioner Marisa Novara. “And that if we are proactive and deliberate, Woodlawn can grow in a way that’s inclusive, that provides opportunities for people at a broad range of incomes and that provides the opportunity to build wealth through increased homeownership.”

Novara said a working group has been meeting since October to hammer out details. She noted that Woodlawn is a complex community, one without a single narrative.

“Our job has been to balance a range of voices, and it’s admittedly a big range,” Novara said. Those stakeholders include the University of Chicago, the Obama

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Other elements would help owners refinance properties to keep them affordable; provide a repair grant program for long-term homeowners; support the creation of rental and for-sale units by helping finance the rehabilitation of vacant buildings; set guidelines for the disposition and development of city-owned vacant land for affordable housing; and lastly, enhance local hiring requirements for residential developments on city-owned land.

Community members called the proposal a step in the right direction, but they say it doesn't go far enough.

The Obama CBA Coalition issued a statement in response to the city's announcement about an ordinance to prevent displacement in Woodlawn. The group formed to advocate for a community benefits agreement for residents of Woodlawn and other communities that could be affected by the Obama Presidential Center (OPC) to be constructed in Jackson Park.

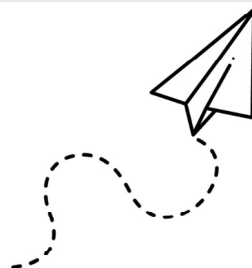
The coalition is calling for immediate action to address displacement in Woodlawn and demanding a meeting with Mayor Lori Lightfoot.

"We cannot wait. We are being pushed out now," the coalition said in its statement.

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But that proposal stalled in City Council.

Novara said she doesn't see the ordinances in competition with one another, but she doesn't know how the ordinance the housing working group is considering will impact the previous measure.

Further discussion will take place during an open house on Jan. 30 from 5 p.m. to 8 p.m. at Hyde Park Academy High School, 6220 S. Stony Island Avenue. The meeting will be hosted by the department of housing along with the city's department of planning and development.

"The open house is important because we can't talk about economic development in our community without the actual community," said Taylor, who represents much of Woodlawn and played a pivotal role in the stakeholder-city meetings to draft a plan. "This is a great opportunity for stakeholders to come to the table and decide what policies look like that protect folks in our community. It shows that we're moving in a real progressive way."

Researchers have been monitoring housing sales in Woodlawn.

Last year, a [report](#) by the University of Illinois at Chicago examined the area within a two-mile radius of the OPC site. The report indicated that there was clear evidence of rising housing prices and rising rents among newly constructed and rehabbed apartments.

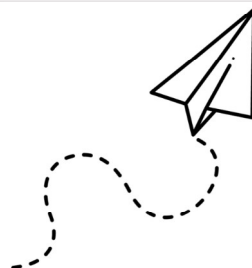
The Institute for Housing Studies at DePaul University has produced an [online mapping tool to measure housing displacement](#) throughout the city, including Woodlawn. The Institute says the area now has a mix of affordability, vacancies and rising home sale prices.

Researchers say there's an opportunity to create affordable home ownership for vulnerable residents. The northern and eastern parts of the Woodlawn neighborhood are a mix of affordability and rising home sale prices, according to researchers — not just because the OPC is coming in nearby Jackson Park, but also because the University of Chicago and public transit options are nearby.

Whatever direction the city takes, community members say it's critical to preserve affordability for low-income Woodlawn residents who are making less than \$40,000 a year. "The rent levels ... must be set at levels affordable to minimum wage workers, security guards, home care workers and lunch ladies," the Obama

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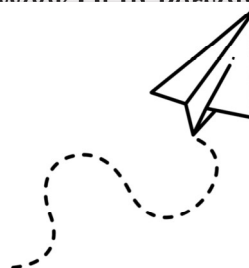
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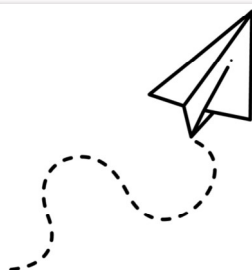
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