



# NORTH LAWNSDALE: OGDEN AVENUE CORRIDOR IMPROVEMENTS PROJECT

*Reconnecting Communities and Neighborhoods Capital Construction Grant Application 2023*

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## List of Appendices

All Appendices and supporting documents are located on the Reconnecting Communities application website:

[ReconnectingOgdenAve.cnetchicago.com](http://ReconnectingOgdenAve.cnetchicago.com)

- Appendix A: Letters of Support
- Appendix B: Letter of Funding Commitment
- Appendix C: Study Area Maps
- Appendix D: EJ Screen Report
- Appendix E: FHWA HEP GIS Map
- Appendix F: Project Community Advisory Group
- Appendix G: CDOT Mobility and Economic Hardship (MOBEC) Index
- Appendix H: Corridor Photo Exhibits





## Overview

Ogden Avenue is a relic of a bygone era when it served as a major artery into downtown Chicago for both motor vehicles and streetcars. It follows a route that has been in use since pre-colonial times when Native Americans used it to access Lake Michigan. In the 1800's, it was "paved" with wood planks. In 1926 with motor vehicle traffic booming, Ogden Avenue was designated as a part of Route 66, the country's first continuously paved link between Chicago and Los Angeles. Around this time, it was also widened to accommodate streetcars. The streetcars were decommissioned in the 1950's, and construction of I-55 in the 1960's replaced Route 66 as the primary route for intercity travel between Chicago and the southwest.

Ogden Avenue currently carries fewer than 20,000 vehicles per day, yet it is a barrier to the community and still includes two to four vehicular lanes in each direction and additional one-way service drives in both directions. According to the Federal Highway Administration, the capacity for a highway with half the number of lanes is 31,000 vehicles. This wide car-centric design encourages speeding and poses a barrier to pedestrians, cyclists, and transit riders, compromising safety for all roadway users. Approximately 1/3 of the public right-of-way could potentially be repurposed to other uses. See **Appendix H** for aerial imagery and photos.

Ogden Avenue prevents people from moving freely through a high-need community. The roadway has a highway-like feel, very long pedestrian crossings, safety issues at intersections, service drives that create multiple conflict points, bus stops that are located in narrow medians with fast-moving vehicular traffic on either side, and outdated traffic signal equipment without current accessibility and safety features. Despite all of these challenges, and the excessive 150' right-of-way width, it is a dense commercial corridor. Similar typical commercial rights-of-way in the City of Chicago are typically 66' wide. According to the City's Mobility and Economic Hardship index (MOBEC), North Lawndale is rated as a high need community. See **Appendix G** for more information on MOBEC.

The *Ogden Avenue Corridor Improvements Project* will reverse this barrier, enhance safety, and bolster equitable development between Pulaski Road and Kedzie Avenue. The project will reconfigure Ogden Avenue, bringing it into alignment with the Chicago Department of Transportation's (CDOT) [Complete Streets Guidelines](#), [Streetscape and Sustainable Design Guidelines](#), and [Vision Zero](#) goals. This project is driven by community interest to improve multi-modal traffic operations, safety, and public space within the North Lawndale community area. Despite its uninviting design, many pedestrians travel on

*Photo 1. Ogden Avenue looking east*





and across Ogden to access nearby businesses, bus stops, a Chicago Transit Authority (CTA) Pink Line train station at Central Park Avenue, and Douglass Park. Multiple bicycle routes also intersect Ogden Avenue. Residents and visitors cross the street on foot or bike to access community services that front the corridor, including healthcare, childcare, dense housing developments, and grocery stores.

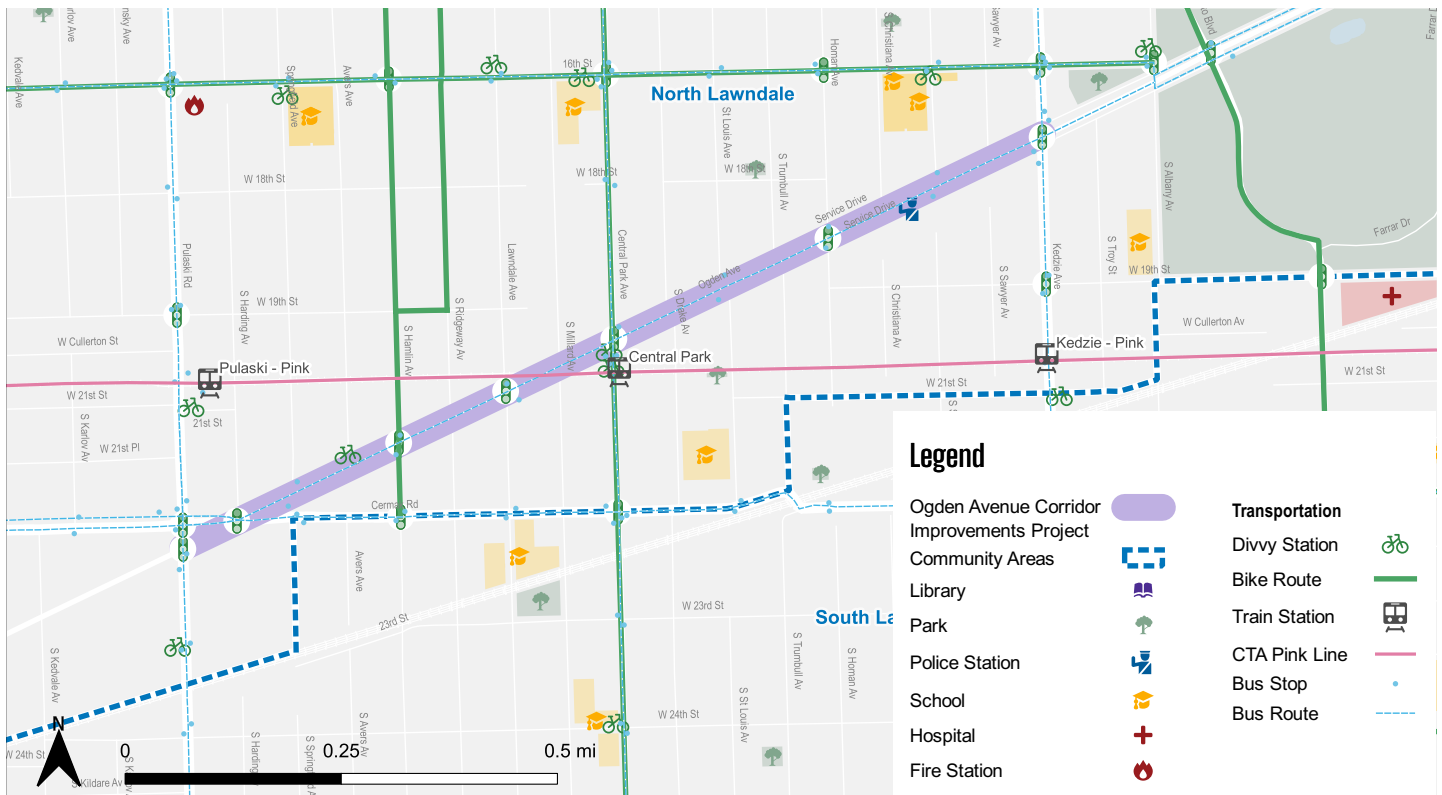
A second phase of the *Ogden Avenue Corridor Improvements Project* is planned for the section of Ogden Avenue that begins at Kedzie Avenue and extends east through Douglass Park to Roosevelt Road. The second phase is not part of this application; however, it is being designed concurrently and is scheduled to start construction in 2028. Once built, Ogden Avenue will be revitalized from Pulaski Street to Roosevelt Road.

The City is applying for \$52 million for a Capital Construction grant to transform Ogden Avenue from a barrier to the centerpiece of North Lawndale. This project will reduce vehicle lanes, right-size the road to accommodate current traffic volumes, repurpose space for non-vehicular uses and community activity, simplify intersections, and shorten crossing distances. It will provide pedestrian refuge medians, curb extensions, raised crosswalks, wider sidewalks for comfortable pedestrian experience, protected bike lanes, and safety improvements at transit stops. North Lawndale will gain more green space with tree planting and landscaping, and more safe and accessible transportation options for all modes of travel. This project is an opportunity to create a cohesive identity and develop a community-oriented aesthetic for the corridor.

## Project Location and Map

The *Ogden Avenue Corridor Improvements Project* includes the full 150-foot Ogden Avenue right-of-way between Pulaski Road and Kedzie Avenue in the North Lawndale community of Chicago. Mainline Ogden Avenue is under Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) jurisdiction, but is maintained by the City of Chicago. Service drives in both directions are under City jurisdiction and maintenance.

Figure 1. Ogden Avenue project location map





North Lawndale is one of eight community areas identified as high crash areas in the [Vision Zero Chicago Action Plan](#). The [Vision Zero Chicago West Side Plan](#) update confirmed through community outreach that improving safety for all modes of travel on Ogden Avenue is a priority for North Lawndale stakeholders. This section of Ogden Avenue is also a priority corridor for ongoing economic investments which aim to reverse decades of disinvestment and revive commercial districts. North Lawndale generally, and the census tracts around Ogden Avenue specifically, are majority Black and economically disadvantaged communities.

Ogden Avenue cuts diagonally across Chicago's street grid, providing direct access from downtown to neighborhoods on the west and southwest sides of the City of Chicago and beyond. It leads to and through Douglass Park, one of Chicago's many large historic public green spaces. North Lawndale Christian Health Center, Mount Sinai Hospital, and Saint Anthony's Hospital are all on or near the project limits.

Chicago Transit Authority (CTA) bus route 154 runs along Ogden Avenue, although the bus stop infrastructure is inadequate as described in **Criterion #3: Facility Suitability**. There are no bike lanes on Ogden Avenue, although several bike routes intersect the project. [The North Lawndale Community Coordinating Council \(NLCCC\) Quality of Life Plan](#) and [Vision Zero Chicago West Side Plan](#) both identify expanding the bike network in North Lawndale as a community priority. The CTA's Central Avenue Pink Line train station is located in the center of the project limits.



Photo 2. Ogden Avenue corridor

## Response to Merit Criteria

### *Criterion 1. Equity, Environmental Justice, and Community Engagement*

#### **Harmful Historic Policies**

Ogden Avenue holds key historic significance to both the community of North Lawndale and the City of Chicago as it served as a major artery into downtown Chicago. It follows a pre-colonial route that various local Native American tribes used as a trade route. In 1847, the route was paved with wood, and later with bricks. In 1872, the route was renamed to Ogden Avenue after the City's first mayor who oversaw the forced and deadly expulsion of Native Americans from the Chicago region. In 1926 with motor vehicle traffic booming, Ogden Avenue was designated as a part of Route 66, the country's first continuously paved link between Chicago and Los Angeles. Around this time, the road was also widened to accommodate streetcars.

At the beginning of the 20th century, the neighborhood was home to many of the City's poor European immigrants, including a quarter of the City's Jewish population. Throughout the 1950s, a large number of African

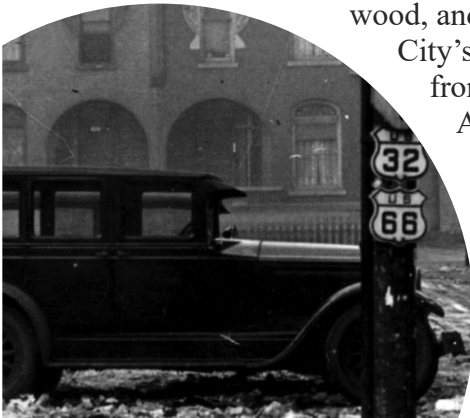


Photo 3. Historical photo of Ogden Avenue



Americans moved into the community; many who were displaced by the City's urban renewal policies and the construction of the interstate expressways. During this time, many of the white residents moved out of the neighborhood. As the process of redlining and urban renewal was underway in the 1950s, the streetcars running down Ogden Avenue were decommissioned. Due to overcrowding and lack of investment, North Lawndale was recognized by the City as 'near-blighted' and 'stable' and eligible for funds to further urban renewal policies. By 1960, North Lawndale was 90% Black.

Construction of the I-55 interstate expressway in the 1960's replaced Route 66 and Ogden Avenue as the primary route for intercity travel between Chicago and the southwest. However, no investments were made to redesign Ogden Avenue as a neighborhood corridor. During the race riots of 1968, many of the commercial corridors, including Ogden Avenue were targeted. The two key employers in North Lawndale, Sears and International Harvester, left the community in the 1970s and those jobs were never replaced. Today, Ogden Avenue carries fewer than 20,000 vehicles per day, yet due to a history of disinvestment in the area, it remains in its 1940s car-centric form.

## Existing Needs

North Lawndale continues to be a majority Black community and over 95% of its population identifies as a person of color. The community continues to struggle with access to high quality jobs as 57% of the community is low income compared to the 35% city-wide average. The community faces serious environmental justice hardships as well. The community near the project corridor experiences the effects of high exposure to diesel particulate matter at 92nd state percentile and toxic released to air at 95th state percentile. See **Appendix D** for full EJSscreen Report. The City aims to mitigate these conditions by prioritizing active, low-emission modes of travel through projects such as this.

The Ogden Corridor ends just west of the 162-acre Douglass Park, a key regional park with programming ranging from fishing lagoons to a newly renovated soccer field. However, park access in North Lawndale is lower than the City's average. According to the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP), the accessible park acreage per 1,000 residents in North Lawndale is 2.01, while the overall park accessibility for Chicago is 2.42. Through the projects' public engagement, the community has identified Douglass Park as a key community asset. The Ogden Avenue Corridor Improvements team will work with the community to enhance access to Douglass Park and to extend green infrastructure to Ogden Avenue.

## Efficient Construction

CDOT ensures that safety improvements are built as efficiently as possible by considering every project a safety project. The City's annual Arterial Resurfacing program includes analysis, design, and construction of new pedestrian refuge medians, curb bump-

Photos 4-6. Ogden Avenue corridor assets





outs, raised crosswalks on side streets, bus bulbs, and other measures to improve safety for all road users before each street is resurfaced. CDOT's [Office of Underground Coordination \(OUC\)](#) ensures that construction projects of all kinds in the public way are managed efficiently. As part of the permit process for construction in the public way, OUC staff review project limits and schedules for conflicts. They coordinate project scopes and schedules before permits are granted to prevent repeated digging and restoration in the same location.

During construction, the Chicago Transit Authority bus and train service will continue to operate. Pedestrian access and access to properties will be maintained throughout construction. The City will hold weekly construction meetings open to the public for addressing any community concerns and impacts to properties.

There is no expected construction-related displacement in the community. The city recognizes that the Ogden Ave Corridor is of historical significance to North Lawndale and to the Chicago, and the project will undergo the necessary Section 106 process to identify any historic sites and develop a robust mitigation plan.

## Criterion 2. Access

Reallocating street space to serve the North Lawndale community is the core objective of the Ogden Avenue project. Planning and engineering are in progress, and ongoing community engagement will inform the final designs. Barriers to access are described in **Criterion #3: Facility Suitability**. Based on preliminary feasibility studies, the following elements are expected to be included in the project.

### Access and Safety Improvements

Maps showing potential locations for safety improvements are found in **Appendix C**, and the below details some of these safety improvements.

- A full vehicular lane in each direction will be eliminated, and frontage road access will be closed or limited at intersections where feasible. This creates space for new protected bike lanes while shortening crossings, reducing vehicular speeds, and reducing conflict points at intersections.
- Service drive access will be closed or limited at intersections where feasible. Eliminating conflict points at intersections, both by removing service drive access points and by eliminating vehicular lanes, will reduce all road users' exposure to potential crashes. Reducing conflict points also simplifies the decision-making required of road users navigating through an intersection, which in turn reduces crash risk.
- New accessible bus stops will provide room for passengers to safely wait, board, and exit buses out of the path of moving traffic.
- Sidewalks, crosswalks, traffic signals, and bus stops throughout the corridor will be built to current American with Disabilities Act (ADA) standards. All traffic signals will include accessible pedestrian signals and countdown timers.

Figure 2. Potential access and safety improvements





- Pedestrian islands will be installed where feasible to break up long crossings, make pedestrians more visible, and provide a refuge space so pedestrians can cross two-way traffic in two stages.
- Curb bump-outs will be included at most of the cross streets along Ogden, with specific locations to be determined as the design and community outreach process progresses. These will reduce pedestrian exposure to crashes by shortening the crosswalks, reducing speeds of turning traffic, and increasing visibility between drivers and non-motorized road users.
- Protected bike lanes will be built along the entire corridor, where no bike facilities currently exist.
- Raised crosswalks will be installed across side streets where feasible. These help to slow vehicles and visually identify crosswalks as pedestrian-first spaces.

## Placemaking Improvements

The *Ogden Avenue Corridor Improvements Project* will make Ogden Avenue an attractive destination through art, landscaping, seating areas, and community identifiers. Preliminary conversations have begun to discover the community’s vision for Ogden Avenue, and close coordination between the City, the project’s Community Advisory Group, and other community stakeholders will continue throughout the design stage of the project. Placemaking elements will support other investments Chicago is making to spur housing and economic development along the Ogden Avenue Corridor. The **Criterion #4: Community-Based Stewardship, Management, and Partnerships** section describes ongoing community engagement, and the **Criterion #5: Equitable Development** section details more information on economic development initiatives.

## Criterion 3. Facility Suitability

The car-centric design of Ogden Avenue separates North Lawndale residents from goods and services, economic opportunities, and green space while contributing to poor health outcomes and environmental harm. Ogden Avenue’s right-of-way is a 150-foot-wide swath containing asphalt and concrete pavement that divides Chicago’s North Lawndale community. Ten to eleven lanes are dedicated to vehicular travel or parking. These include two to four vehicular lanes in each direction, one-way service drives on both sides, and parking lanes. This design relegates pedestrians to 10 feet of sidewalk on the outside edge of each service lane, and typical crosswalks from one side of Ogden to the other are 130 to 140 feet long without refuge medians. No facilities are provided for bicyclists.

Bus Route 154 carries passengers along Ogden Avenue and to the CTA’s Pink Line train station at Central Park Avenue within the project limits. This route had been discontinued within the project area, but it was reinstated in 2020 as a pilot after community advocates made it clear that Ogden Avenue buses are vital to residents traveling to work and to seniors accessing medical care, particularly at Mount

Photo 7. Existing landscaping on Ogden Avenue



Photo 8. Wide roadway for pedestrians to cross





Sinai Hospital and Lawndale Christian Health Center which are both on Ogden Avenue. The CTA made the extension permanent in 2022. Buses travel in the main Ogden Avenue lanes, so passengers must board and alight from narrow raised concrete spaces between Ogden Avenue and the adjacent service drives. Many of these spaces at bus stops are six feet or less in width with moving vehicular lanes on both sides, and they are not accessible according to Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) guidelines

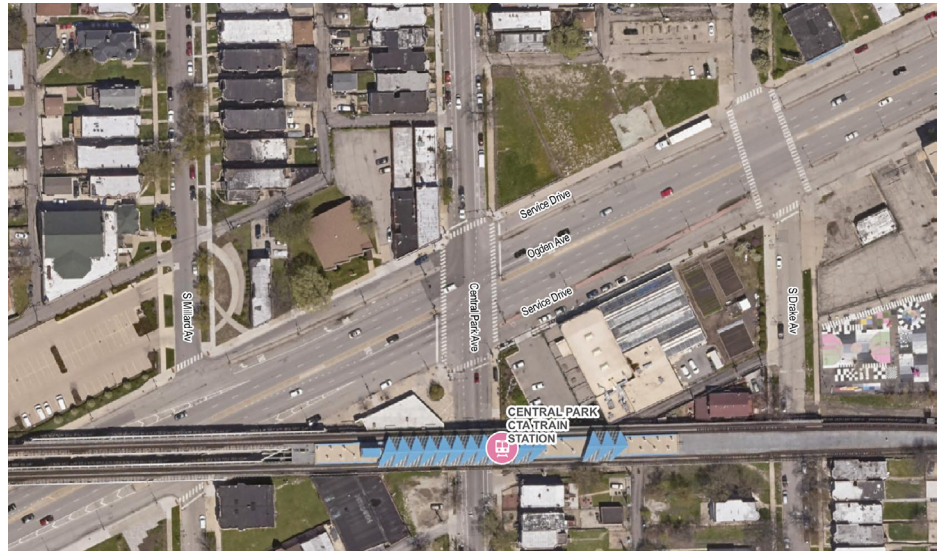


Photo 9. Aerial of Ogden corridor highlighting the Central Park CTA train transit

Near the eastern project limit, Ogden Avenue continues through Douglass Park. Douglass Park is a 162-acre community resource offering gyms, computer facilities, meeting spaces, and a ballroom in the field house, plus various outdoor sports fields and courts, a pool, lagoons, gardens, and walking paths. It also contains North Lawndale College Prep and Collins Academy High Schools. Shared use trails and on-street protected bike lanes run through the park, yet there are no bike lanes on Ogden Avenue connecting to these resources.

Similarly, Mount Sinai Hospital and Lawndale Christian Health Center are less than two miles apart and they share staff and patients. This would be an easily bikeable distance in a straight line along Ogden Avenue if bike lanes were available, but none are provided.

Throughout the Ogden Avenue corridor, the distance required to cross the roadway hinders everyday tasks. Buying groceries, picking up children from daycare, visiting a friend, or accepting a job across the street all prompt the same question: Is the danger and inconvenience of crossing Ogden Avenue worth it? Businesses lose access to customers who might otherwise visit, which depresses the local economy.

Community members miss opportunities to work or shop near home. Residents with access to cars may choose to drive more often, which increases pollution and adverse health outcomes for the entire community. Residents who cannot drive, and especially those who rely on ADA accessible paths, have fewer options.

Lack of tree canopy makes walking, biking, or rolling uncomfortable in the summer, and it contributes to the heat island effect. Census tracts that border or cross the project area were identified as High or Very High priority level locations to improve tree canopy coverage, according to the [Trust for Public Land](#). All of Ogden Avenue within the project limits received at least a Moderate rating



Photo 10. Typical bus stop condition, Ogden Avenue between Pulaski and Roosevelt





for daytime heat island effect, and most of it rated High or Very High. More detail on these issues can be found in **Criterion #1: Equity and Environmental Justice** and **Criterion #6: Climate and Environment**.

North Lawndale is one of eight High Crash Areas identified in the City's [Vision Zero Chicago Action Plan](#). The [Vision Zero Chicago West Side Plan](#) updated and refined roadway safety goals for three of the High Crash Areas with a heavy emphasis on community engagement. North Lawndale community members focused on expanding bike networks throughout the community and improving safety for all

modes of travel along Ogden Avenue. Within the *Ogden Avenue Corridor Improvements Project* limits, 22 fatal and serious injury crashes were reported from 2017-2021; 11 of these involved bicyclists, and pedestrians were killed or injured in 15 of the crashes. See Appendix D for a map of serious crashes. These two priorities are reflected in the *Ogden Avenue Corridor Improvements Project*. Among dangerous driving behaviors contributing to crashes, the action plan identified speed as the highest priority of Vision Zero, and it advised that "Reducing lane widths, decreasing the number of traffic lanes, and adding elements like street trees and parking that emphasize the limits of the roadway can help reduce speeds." The Vision Zero West Side plan lists speeding on Ogden Avenue as a common theme reported throughout the engagement process.



Photo 11. Lack of biking facilities along Ogden Avenue

The *Ogden Avenue Corridor Improvements Project* will address the barriers described above by completely reconfiguring the roadway. Vehicular lanes will be removed to provide space for trees, landscaping, and bike lanes. Service drive access will be closed or limited where feasible at intersections. Improved bus stops and upgraded traffic signals will better serve pedestrians. The geometric design of the roadway will discourage speeding and shorten crossings. All of these improvements will be built to current ADA standards. **Criterion #2: Access** describes the improvements and their effects in further detail.

## *Criterion 4. Community-based Stewardship, Management, and Partnerships*

### **A Community-Centered Approach**

North Lawndale is a majority Black community in Chicago, and 83% of census tracts along the corridor are identified as USDOT Disadvantaged Census Tracts. The City recognizes that North Lawndale has experienced decades of disinvestment and the residents have not had an opportunity to shape their neighborhood to meet their needs and priorities. For this project CDOT took a community-centered approach and considered the public input from recent local planning efforts, such as the [Vision Zero Chicago West Side Plan](#) completed in 2019 and the North Lawndale Community Coordinating Council (NLCCC) [Quality of Life Plan](#) completed in 2018, to inform the project. For example, several suggestions for an improved Ogden Avenue in the Quality of Life Plan include transit access, safety improvements, and green infrastructure.

### **A Community-Centered Approach**

CDOT continues to prioritize community-based stewardship and has developed a Community Participation Plan that prioritizes meeting community members where they are at. The Plan calls for a Community Advisory Group (CAG), one-on-one stakeholder meetings, two public meetings, two public



surveys, and a public hearing. The plan goes beyond IDOT and NEPA public involvement requirements and also outlines a series of four workshops throughout the design process.

The CAG was formed to guide the *Ogden Avenue Corridor Improvements Project* and is comprised of local organizations and stakeholders. For a complete list, see **Appendix F**. The CAG will work hand-in-hand with the project team and provide insights on public outreach and the Ogden redesign.

Homan Grown, a local organization, is partnering with the City on community engagement as part of the project team. Leveraging Homan Grown’s strong local relationships, the project team is constantly

Figure 3. Community engagement timeline



improving public outreach to increase the visibility of public input opportunities. Opportunities for community participation include visiting key locations along the corridor at project milestones and participating at local events to provide project updates. At key project milestones, Homan Grown distributes paper flyers along the corridor and has one-on-one conversations with community stakeholders to engage the community members most impacted by Ogden Avenue.

The Community Participation Plan recognizes that every community has its own unique set of challenges and needs. To engage hard-to-access community members, all project materials are available through the [project website](#), and paper communications are distributed along the corridor at key project milestones. A small percentage of the community are Latinx and Spanish-speaking. All public facing communications, project materials, and public surveys are also available in Spanish.

### Community Engagement to Date

CDOT remains committed to fostering a partnership with the community by prioritizing transparency and meaningful public involvement throughout the design process. To this end, public engagement started at the onset of the design process, before any concepts were developed. The CAG first met in February 2023, and is expected to meet two more times at key design stages.

In April 2023, the public was invited to learn about the project and to provide insights at the first public



Photo 12. Public Meeting attendees filling out a survey (April 2023)





meeting and through a public survey. The community provided input regarding their experiences on Ogden Avenue and their vision for the corridor. The project team has continued conversations with the community through a series of workshops over summer / fall 2023. At these workshops, the community will be invited to provide targeted feedback on every component of the project including corridor identity, placemaking, and street design. The first workshop, which focused on corridor identity, was held in August 2023, and the second workshop, which will obtain input on placemaking, is planned for early October 2023. A third workshop in November 2023, will gather community feedback on street design. Following the workshops, two additional public meetings will take place in 2024 and 2025, and an additional youth workshop is planned for 2024.

Figure 4. Comments about Ogden Avenue from various Community Advisory Group (CAG) members

***“Ogden, as it was originally designed to be a highway, and so part of [NLCCC] thinking has been ... to keep the service drives in a way that works for everybody. Where there is still parking, maybe create bike lanes, widen the islands for better infrastructure for bus stops, now that we have bus stops back.”***

*- Rochelle Jackson of North Lawndale Community Coordinating Council*

***“North Lawndale is generally a business desert. We are looking to strategically engage in building the economic infrastructure to include all of our major thoroughfares.”***

*- Rodney Brown of New Covenant CDC*

***“The light poles need to be replaced. Most are rusted and electrical wires are exposed.”***

*- Richard Townsell of Lawndale Christian Development Corporation*

***“I’d like to see deliberate development which supports small business owners. Route 66 is heavily traveled, this can support North Lawndale economically...”***

*- April Campbell of North Lawndale Community Coordinating Council*

***“Sinai Health System is excited to be a part of this important project ... [and discuss] pedestrian safety and our Caregiver, patient, visitor safety as they navigate and cross Ogden to access different Sinai facilities and nearby housing.”***

*- Brandon King of Sinai Health System*

***“Improved pedestrian infrastructure and lighting is definitely needed, as our kids walk [on Ogden].”***

*- Julissa Cruz of Carole Robertson Center for Learning*

***“The intersection on Homan and Ogden has frequent vehicular accidents. The turning lanes going south and north should have turning signals to prevent accidents. The road should also reinforce this. Currently all the lanes look like normal travel lanes. This is IDOT. The intersection at Kedzie and Ogden is similar.”***

*- April Campbell of North Lawndale Community Coordinating Council*





## Criterion 5. Equitable Development

### Placemaking

One of the goals of the Community Participation Plan is to work closely with the community to develop a sense of place that aligns with their priorities. The City is in the process of engaging stakeholders to develop a corridor identity that celebrates the community. During the first public meeting in April 2023, the City heard that a cohesive corridor identity that reflects the community is desired. At the project's first workshop, the project team worked with the community to develop a corridor identity that celebrates the corridor's long history and the people who have called North Lawndale their home. The City plans to continue to develop a corridor identity with the community, and plans to have a youth workshop where corridor identity will be discussed. The City's Department of Cultural Affairs and Special Events (DCASE) plans to work with the community to develop public artwork in coordination with the Community Advisory Group.



Photo 13. Further placemaking potential

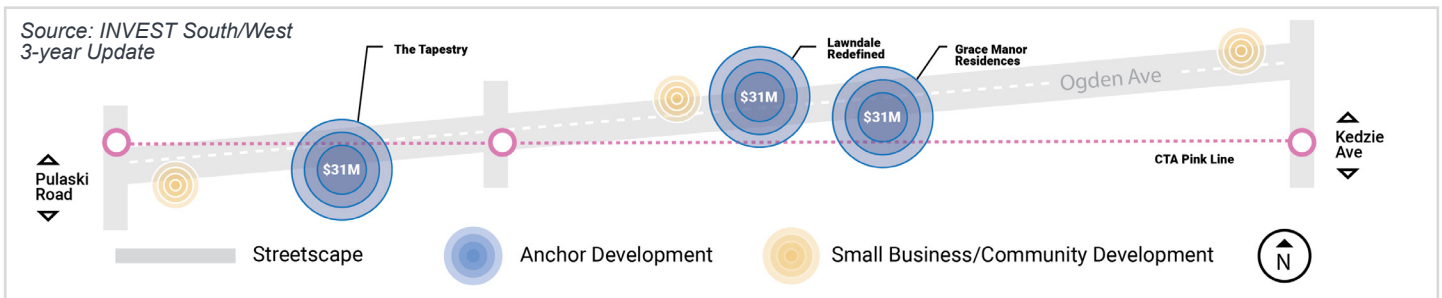
Ogden Avenue has up to ten lanes of traffic that accommodate fewer than 20,000 vehicles per day; and as much as one third of the space could be allocated to other uses. This presents an incredible opportunity to introduce placemaking elements along the corridor. The City plans to meet with the community in October 2023 for the project's second workshop. During the workshop, North Lawndale residents will identify placemaking opportunities and elements that meet their needs and will be incorporated in the final design.

### Local Equitable Development Plan

The EJ Screen shows North Lawndale experiences a 13% unemployment rate, is identified as a disadvantaged community under DOTs Justice40 initiative, and is housing burdened. The City identified Ogden Avenue as one of 12 neighborhood economic cores that have historically suffered from disinvestment. Over the last five years, the City has marshaled public and private resources to reverse decades of disinvestment in these areas. The City has prioritized funding to support community wealth-building by prioritizing affordable housing and rebuilding the neighborhood economic cores.

The project corridor falls under the Ogden / Pulaski TIF which is designed to promote new commercial development along Ogden Avenue. Job training, day care and relocation assistance programs are also supported by the TIF. The total redevelopment project investments in the area are over \$32M, with over \$6M in approved TIF investments.

Figure 5. Planned streetscape and developments along the Ogden Corridor





The City leverages funds generated in comparatively affluent neighborhoods to invest in locally owned small businesses through the [Neighborhood Opportunity Fund](#). Through the Neighborhood Opportunity Fund, the City has funded four local businesses for over \$207,000 in total. The *Ogden Avenue Corridor Improvements Project* will further the previous and ongoing efforts to reverse decades in disinvestment in North Lawndale. The corridor improvements will enhance the transit, bike, and pedestrian connectivity in the community, bringing existing and future community resources closer to residents.

Chicago passed the most comprehensive, equity-focused update to its TOD policies in July 2022 through the [Connected Communities Ordinance](#) to prioritize equitable transit-oriented development (ETOD). One of the many goals for this ordinance is to advance Chicago's ongoing effort to bring [ETODs](#) to disinvested and low-income neighborhoods while addressing the negative impacts of a car-centric built environment. The ordinance's zoning reforms will catalyze investment near transit, make streets safer for all Chicagoans who walk, roll, bike, or drive, and promote affordable housing options near transit. Under Connected Communities, new development and rehabilitation projects near the Pink Line Central Park train station on Ogden Avenue will have access to greater flexibility in parking minimums and potential additional density. The ordinance also provides significant incentives for additional affordable housing and pedestrian-friendly designs.

### Community Restoration, Stabilization, and Anti-Displacement Strategies

In 2019, the City completed the [Vision Zero West Side Plan](#). [Vision Zero Chicago](#) is the commitment and approach to eliminating fatalities and serious injuries from traffic crashes. The West Side Plan focuses specifically on the Garfield Park, Austin and North Lawndale areas. Identified improvements from the Vision Zero West Side Plan in North Lawndale include a reconfiguration of Ogden Avenue into one that is multimodal and safe for all its users. The community is involved in every stage of the process as the City intends the final design to address the needs and reflect the vision of the longstanding and current residents in North Lawndale.



A safer and multimodal Ogden Avenue is crucial to ensure that the new housing and multi-use developments are easily accessible to North Lawndale residents. It is also anticipated that this project would bring economic vitality to the area that aligns with the USDOT Strategic Plan priority of Economic Strength and Global Competitiveness. These improvements would likely increase foot traffic, improve access to existing jobs, and develop local jobs. Ogden Avenue connects West Side communities to critical services and employment centers such as the Illinois Medical District and the Central Business District. The NLCCC [Quality of Life Plan](#) notes that nearly 33% of North Lawndale residents use public transit to access employment, many along Ogden Avenue. Furthermore, the MPC [Reconnecting Communities: Mitigating Community Harms of Transportation Infrastructure Plan](#) recommends bike lanes on Ogden Avenue to improve access to jobs. The addition of bike lanes and transit access improvements as part of this project will improve connectivity to jobs and community resources in North Lawndale and the rest of the City.

Photo 14. Potential for multimodal improvements along Ogden Avenue



## Criterion 6. Climate and Environment

The [2022 Chicago Climate Action Plan \(CAP\)](#) provides a strategic framework to “reduce Chicago’s contribution to global climate change, prepare our communities for the effects of a changing climate, and support a just transition to a thriving green economy.” One CAP strategy is to make walking, biking, or transit viable options for all trips, with the recommendation to “prioritize sidewalk and road maintenance by using an equity lens along with condition assessments to address historic imbalances in the upkeep of City infrastructure.”

Improving bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure along Ogden Avenue as detailed in this application, is aligned with this recommendation. Building protected bike lanes and improving pedestrian infrastructure is also consistent with CDOT’s [Strategic Plan for Transportation Year 1 Update](#) goal of implementing Complete Streets design and prioritizing transportation equity.

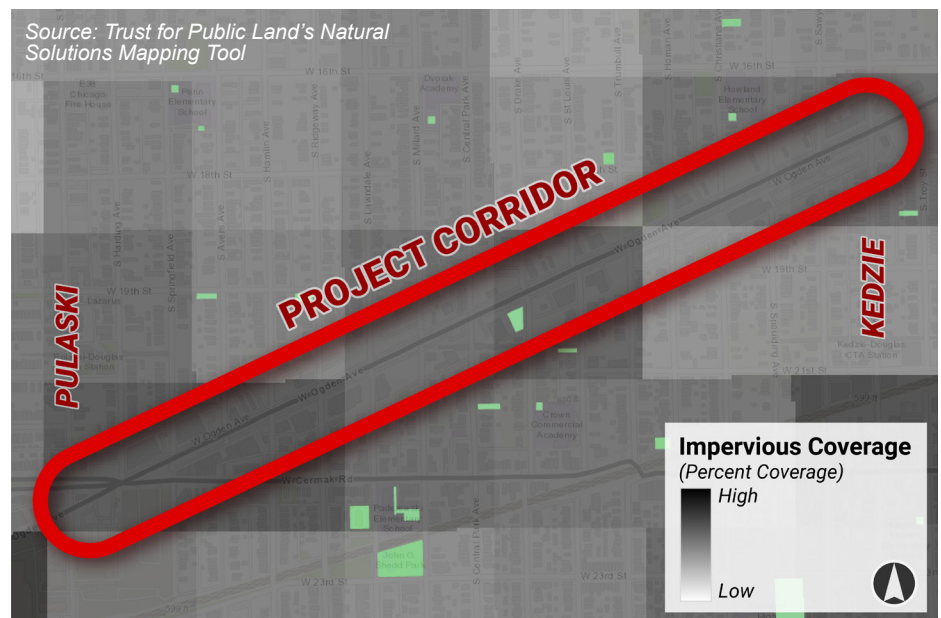
North Lawndale is a majority-minority community that faces serious environmental justice hardships. The community near the project corridor experiences the effects of high exposure to diesel particulate matter (EJ index is 98) and traffic proximity (EJ Index is 90) daily. See Appendix D for full EJ Screen Report. The City is moving with urgency to help mitigate this problem with this project.

Ogden Avenue is a major thoroughfare in the community and is served by both public bus and train. Bus stops at Pulaski Road and Central Park Avenue are among the top 10% highest ridership bus stops in the City. Bus stops on Central Park Avenue provide a connection to the City’s public train network. The *Ogden Avenue Corridor Improvements Project* will enhance multimodal connectivity by improving safety at bus stops, improving pedestrian facilities, and providing new protected bicycle infrastructure. These measures will encourage lower-carbon travel modes and reduce air pollution related to motor vehicle greenhouse gas emissions.

Throughout the *Ogden Avenue Corridor Improvements Project*, CDOT will follow priorities and policies outlined in its [Sustainable Urban Infrastructure Guidelines](#). The roadway design will incorporate sustainable design features such as LED upgrades at traffic signals and landscaped curb bump-outs wherever feasible. LED signals result in substantial energy savings. Reduced energy use promotes a sustainable environment by limiting the consumption of non-renewable fuels and thus the release of carbon emissions. Adding pervious areas such as landscaped areas wherever feasible will reduce stormwater runoff and water pollution. Recycled materials will be used where appropriate.

According to Trust for Public Land’s [Natural Solutions Mapping Tool](#), the Ogden Avenue corridor has between 60-75% impervious surface coverage contributing to increased flooding, which may negatively impact the experience for people traveling along this corridor using any mode of transportation. Most of the corridor was also identified by this tool as a “high” priority level to improve impervious surface cover. The Ogden Avenue project would reduce the width of the pavement, which reduces impervious surface.

Figure 6. Impervious coverage along the Ogden Avenue corridor





Trees in the Chicago region are not distributed evenly or equitably. According to the Natural Solutions Tool, the Chicago region has 23% canopy cover, far below the national average. Census tracts that border or cross the Ogden Avenue study area have tree canopy coverage between 8-23%. These Ogden Avenue census tracts also were identified as “high” or “very high” priority level locations to improve tree canopy coverage. Reducing the width of the corridor that is dedicated to vehicular lanes will provide more space for streetscape features, including trees and other green infrastructure. The final street design will increase the total area of green space along the corridor, and the trees and landscaping will be curated to support and enhance the diversity of local flora and fauna.

*Photo 15. Limited trees and expansive swaths of concrete across Ogden Avenue may lead to increased flooding*



## **Criterion 7. Workforce Development and Economic Opportunity**

The *Ogden Avenue Corridor Improvements Project* will provide opportunities for small businesses in the transportation sector. At minimum 30% of the project will be required to be performed by Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE) firms.

City of Chicago construction projects bring economic benefits to local communities wherever possible. In the past, the City of Chicago has used local hiring agreements when permitted by the funding agency. They have also required contractors to maximize use of U.S. Department of Labor-registered apprenticeship programs and have negotiated labor agreements that ensure graduates of Chicago Public Schools (CPS) and City Colleges of Chicago have access to apprenticeships for these good-paying jobs. This apprenticeship program benefits low-income students of color; 22% of CPS students are bilingual, and 73% qualified for free or reduced lunch in the 2021-2022 school year. At the City Colleges, nearly 70% of students identify as students of color.



*Photo 16. The Farm on Ogden serves the Lawndale community by bringing food, health, and jobs together in one location*



## Project Readiness

The *Ogden Avenue Corridor Improvements Project* is currently in the Preliminary Engineering stage and is expected to receive all environmental and design approvals and authorization to let by the September 2026 obligation date. This application covers the first of two phases in a larger project identified in the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning’s Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), see <https://tinyurl.com/ogdentip>. Both sections are being designed concurrently, and the section described in this application is well positioned to obligate funds before September 30, 2026. Construction of the second phase of the project, from Kedzie Avenue to Roosevelt Road, is scheduled to begin in 2028 and is not included in this application.

As shown in the schedule, project activities are already underway with the initiation of environmental coordination, public involvement, and preliminary geometric design. The proposed design will adhere to all applicable state and local standards. Right-of-way acquisition, other than temporary easements for construction, will not be required. While water main and sewer work is expected, relocation of private utilities is not anticipated which reduces the risk to the project schedule. There are no wetlands or floodplains adjacent to Ogden Avenue between Pulaski Road and Kedzie Avenue, thus environmental impacts are likely to be limited. The *Ogden Avenue Corridor Improvements Project* is anticipated to qualify for a Categorical Exclusion under 23 CFR 77.1.117 C.

Table 1. *Ogden Avenue Corridor Improvements Project* schedule, Pulaski to Kedzie

Project Milestone	Status	Completion Date
CMAP TIP approval	Complete	October 2022
Coordination with Illinois DOT	Ongoing	October 2022 (first meeting)
Environmental Survey Request	Complete	December 2022
Coordination with FHWA	Ongoing	March 2023 (first meeting)
Public Meeting 1	Complete	April 2023
Public Meeting 2	Pending	March 2024
Public Hearing	Pending	February 2025
Geometric Approval	Underway	March 2025
Section 106 Approval	Underway	July 2025
Section 4(f) Approval	Pending	Sept 2025
Preliminary Design Approval	Pending	December 2025
Final Plans and Specifications	Pending	Q1 2026
Authorization to Let / Funds Obligated	Pending	Q2 2026*
Construction Notice to Proceed	Pending	Q4 2026*
Construction Start	Pending	Q2 2027*
Construction End	Pending	Q2 2029*

\*All quarters reported in this table are calendar year quarters.



CDOT has extensive experience in managing federal-aid highway program funds. In a typical year, CDOT manages a federal program valued at approximately \$100 million but which can exceed \$200 million. These programs include STP, CMAQ, TAP, Major Bridge, HPP, NHFP, and TIGER. Projects range from resurfacing arterial streets to reconstructing major structures such as the 43rd St Pedestrian/Bike Bridge over Lake Shore Drive, the Navy Pier Flyover, and the 606 Trail. CDOT also manages a state funded program of over \$100 million per year and a local program in excess of \$200 million. The department works closely with its partners at IDOT, Cook County Department of Transportation and Highways, and the FHWA to ensure projects are delivered on time and within budget. As a priority project for the City of Chicago, we are prepared to obligate funds for the Ogden Avenue Improvements Project by September 30, 2026.

