



COOK COUNTY GOVERNMENT



ARPA
COMMUNITY

VOICES

MARCH
2025

SURVEY RESULTS ON POLICY PRIORITIES FOR ARPA INITIATIVE SUSTAINABILITY PLAN

Table of Contents

1	Introduction
2	Overview of Survey
3	Overview of Community Engagement
4	Key Findings
14	Conclusion

Introduction

In March 2021, President Joseph R. Biden signed the \$1.9 trillion American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) to stimulate the American economy, support residents, and curb the spread of the COVID-19 virus. Cook County received more than \$1 billion through ARPA.

In the summer and fall of 2021, Cook County and our partners conducted broad community engagement through surveys, town hall meetings, and listening sessions. The results from that process were published in a [Cook County Community Engagement Report: State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds](#). We then used that feedback to inform a robust process to develop a responsible, comprehensive, and equitable spending plan to use ARPA one-time resources to support both immediate recovery needs and long-term transformative initiatives. Those 73+ initiatives were organized across the [Cook County Policy Roadmap's](#) six policy pillars.

The U.S. Treasury rules provided that ARPA funding had to have been allocated before the end of 2024 and must be spent before the end of 2026. Looking to the future, Cook County is now considering which ARPA programs should be maintained beyond 2026, using alternative funding sources. We once again went out into the community in 2024 for feedback through a process we called ARPA Community Voices. The goal of this report is to describe the ARPA Community Voices survey design and methods of distribution, provide an overview of community events, and discuss key findings.

Similar to our community engagement process in 2021, the ARPA Community Voices feedback was considered alongside internal planning with our bureaus and departments.

Overview of Survey

The ARPA Community Voices process included a survey, available online and via paper, and a series of community meetings held in the summer and fall of 2024.

Survey Questions:

Due to the 73+ County community-based initiatives funded by ARPA, which are diverse in size, scope, and geography, it was impractical to ask participants to rank the importance of each program individually. Instead, programs were categorized into five broader policy priorities, which were further subdivided into specific focus areas. These policy priorities included Health and Wellness, Economic Development, Safety and Justice, Climate Resiliency, and Infrastructure and Technology, which align with our [Cook County Policy Roadmap](#).

Participants were first asked to rank these policy priorities by importance. Following that, they were asked to rank focus areas within each of the policy priorities. Focus areas corresponded to programs or groups of programs that are currently being funded by ARPA.

Demographic Questions:

Participants were required to provide their zip code. Optional demographic questions were also included at the end of the survey, with the intention of:

- Understanding the needs of residents through a geographic lens;
- Identifying disparities among demographics or geography;
- Improving program design and effectiveness; and
- Guiding policy and program decisions.

Distribution:

Online and paper surveys were distributed in several ways including via:

- Community engagement events;
- Posters/flyers;
- Cook County's social media accounts; and
- Email distribution lists.

Overview of Community Engagement

A key feature of the engagement strategy was a set of regional community meetings designed to inform residents about Cook County's ARPA funding and programs, foster dialogue, and solicit feedback. These meetings were held in accessible locations across Cook County, including the Chicago Loop, the north suburbs in Palatine, the South Side in Chicago's Englewood neighborhood, and the south suburbs in Harvey. Each location was chosen with careful consideration of public transportation access, parking availability, and ADA compliance to ensure broad participation.

Participants at these events included residents, representatives from community groups, and other stakeholders. Discussions centered on the County's ARPA-funded programs, their impact on the community, and residents' priorities for program continuation. Materials provided at these meetings included translated documents and visual aids to enhance accessibility for attendees who speak other languages or require accommodations. The format combined a brief presentation and breakout group discussions, enabling meaningful interactions between attendees and County representatives.

Collaboration and Promotion

The success of these events was made possible through collaborations with local institutions, such as Kennedy-King College, South Suburban College, and Harper College, which hosted the meetings. Outreach efforts were led by the County's Communications and Intergovernmental Affairs teams, who utilized social media, press releases, and partnerships with community organizations to maximize event visibility and attendance. ARPA program leads, and the leadership of Cook County's Offices Under the President including President Toni Preckwinkle, our Chief of Staff Lanetta Haynes Turner, Cook County Board of Commissioners, our General Counsel, Bureau Chiefs, and department heads – many of whom attended the community meetings to answer questions and provide information about ARPA funds and programs.

Outcomes

These meetings provided qualitative insights to complement the survey data. Residents shared their lived experiences and priorities, helping to contextualize and deepen the County's understanding of the survey findings. We were reminded of the importance of building relationships with community members and fostering a sense of shared responsibility in shaping Cook County's future. The information gathered during these meetings, combined with the survey results, have guided the County's decision-making process as it evaluated which programs will continue to be supported by alternative funding sources beyond 2026. This collaborative approach underscores Cook County's commitment to transparency and accountability in serving its residents.

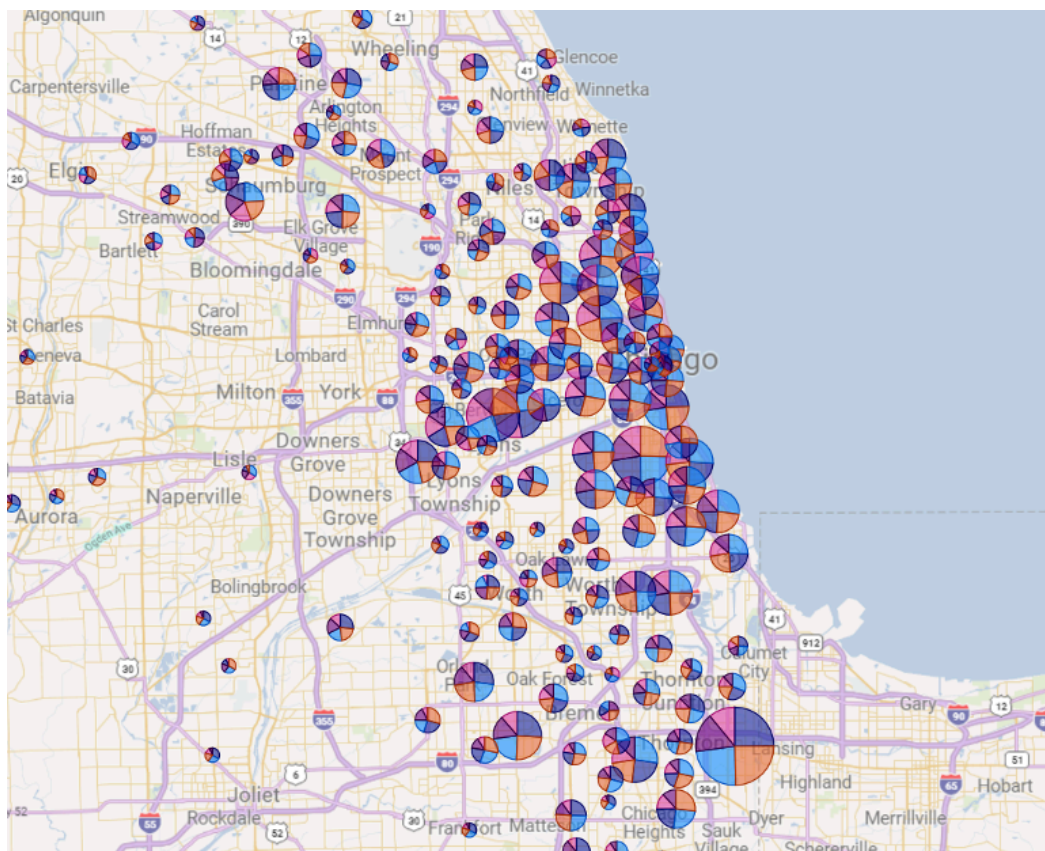
Key Findings

Respondents

In total, 1,977 Cook County residents responded to the ARPA Community Voices survey.

- Of those, 1,529 (77.3%) were over the age of 35, while 59 respondents (3.0%) were between the ages of 18 and 24.
- Residents who identified themselves as white made up the largest portion, with 771 responses (39.0%), compared to 478 (24.2%) responses from residents who identified themselves as Black/African American. Residents who identified themselves as Hispanic/Latine totaled 294 (14.9%), and 55 respondents (2.8%) identified as Asian.
- 1,252 respondents (63.3%) identified as women, compared to 557 who identified as men (28.2%).
- Responses came from across Cook County, with especially high densities coming from downtown Chicago, the Northern and Western suburbs, and Southern and Western suburbs like Lansing, Berwyn, and Oak Forest.

Fig. 1: Response Density by ZIP Code



While all 1,977 respondents filled out every demographic question, not every respondent filled in every ranking question, however. The number of responses for each question is indicated in the tables below.

Data

1. Rank the Five Policy Priority Areas: All Respondents

When asked to rank the following five policy priorities, the overall pool of respondents ranked Health and Wellness highest, with an average score of 3.75 out of five; Economic Development second, with an average score of 3.54; Safety and Justice third, with an average score of 3.45; Infrastructure and Technology fourth, with an average score of 2.17; and Climate Resilience last, with an average score of 2.09.

Fig. 2: Rank the Five Policy Priorities: All Respondents

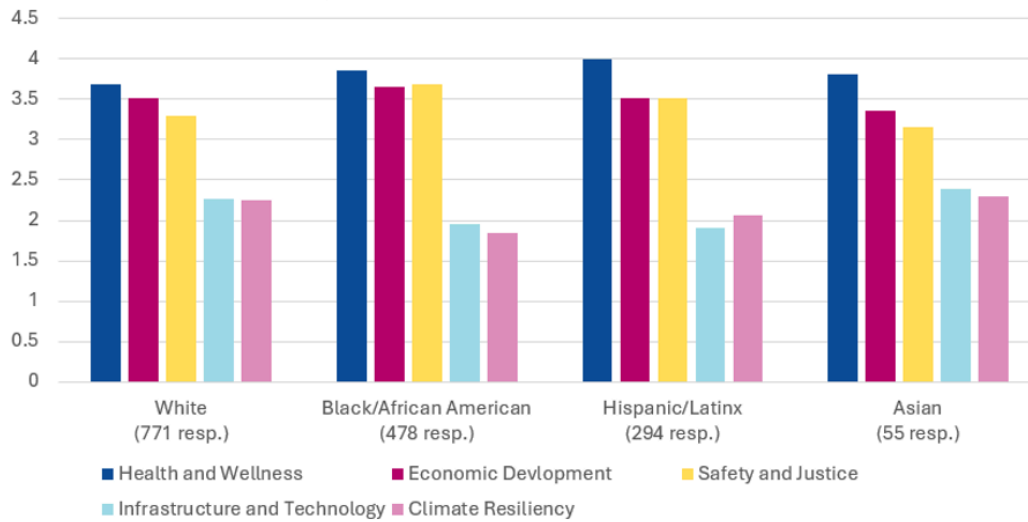
Policy Priority	Average Score (1,820 responses)
Health and Wellness	3.75
Economic Development	3.54
Safety and Justice	3.45
Infrastructure and Technology	2.17
Climate Resilience	2.09

In short, Health and Wellness, Economic Development, and Safety and Justice were the clear top three policy priorities.

a. Rank the Five Policy Priorities: By Ethnicity

Rankings for the five Policy Priorities across ethnicities remained relatively consistent with the overall pool, with Health and Wellness, Economic Development, and Safety and Justice making up the clear top three priorities. Safety and Justice ranked slightly higher among Black/African American and Hispanic/Latine respondents, relative to white and Asian respondents.

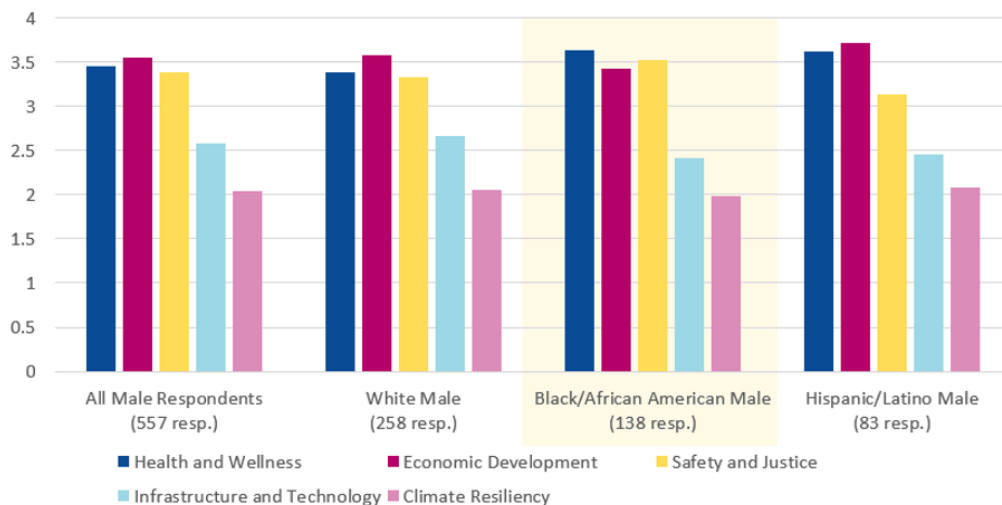
Fig. 3: Policy Priority Rankings by Ethnicity



i. Rank the Five Policy Priorities: By Gender and Ethnicity

Overall, respondents’ priorities exhibited consistency within gender categories. However, while the pool of all male respondents—as well as white male and Hispanic/Latino male respondents—ranked Economic Development as the top priority, Black/African American male respondents ranked Health and Wellness first.

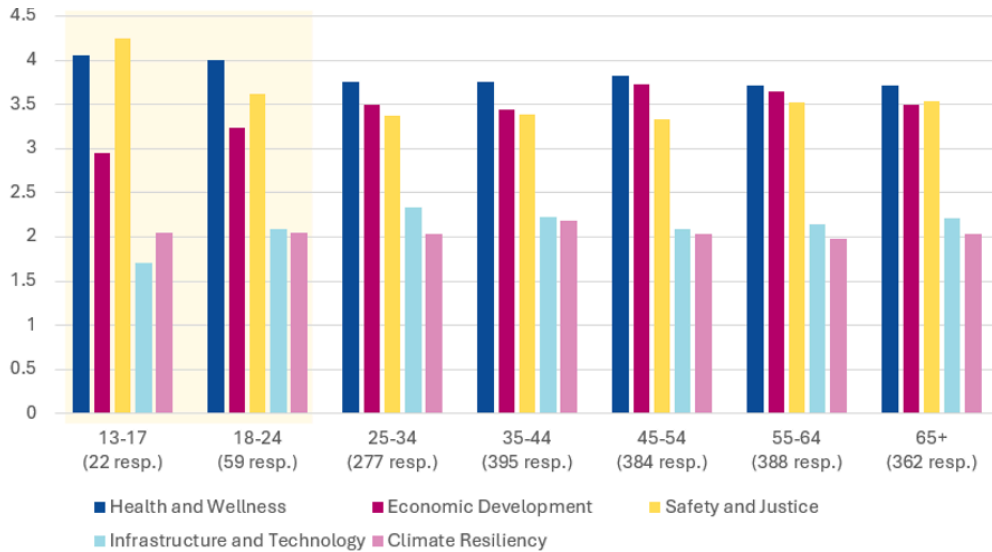
Fig. 4: Policy Priority Rankings by Ethnicity Among Male Respondents



b. Rank the Five Policy Priorities: By Age Range

As indicated below, respondents between the ages of 13 and 24 ranked Safety and Justice significantly higher than their older counterparts. Respondents over the age of 25 were in line with the overall pool, ranking Health and Wellness first, Economic Development second, and Safety and Justice third, with a sharp drop-off for the other two.

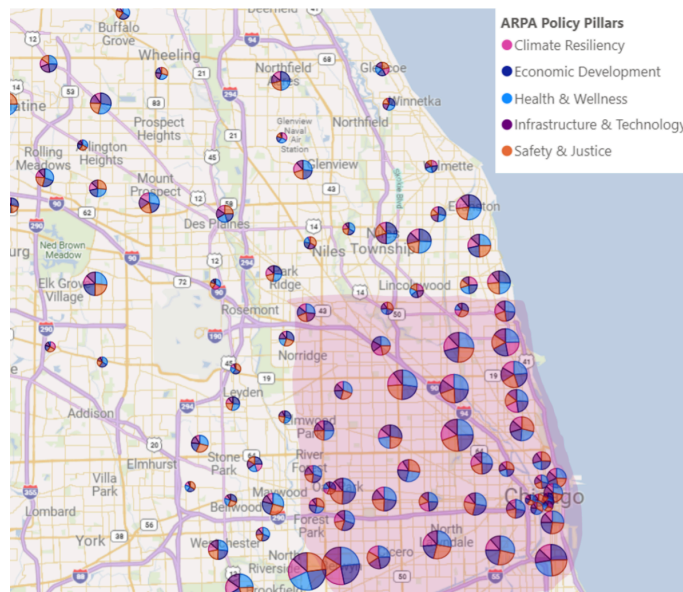
Fig. 5: Policy Priority Rankings by Age Range



c. Rank the Five Policy Priorities: By Zip Code

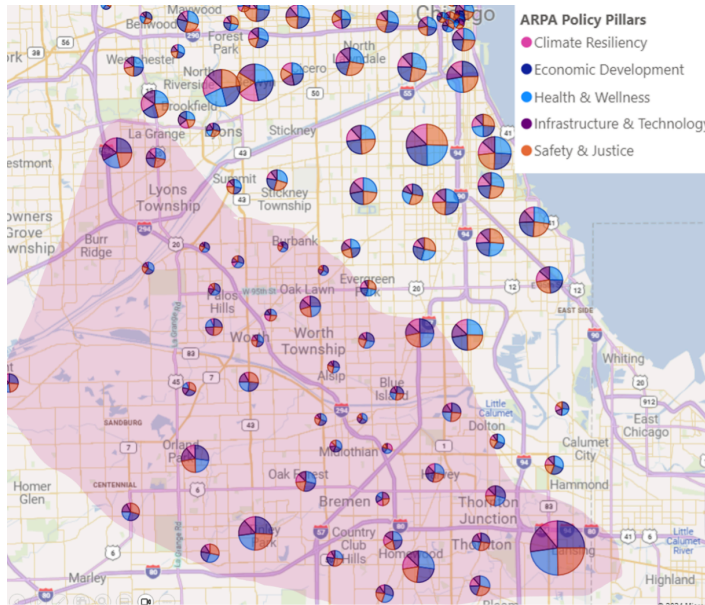
For the most part, no strong correlation between geographic location and policy priorities emerged. However, the area highlighted below, stretching from Berwyn to Lincolnwood and then eastward to the lake, is composed of 42 total zip codes, and 28 of them (67%) ranked Health and Wellness first. Not by a wide margin, however, and not uniformly—the top right corner of each pie chart shows the top-ranked priority.

Fig 6. Policy Priority Rankings by ZIP Code: North



In contrast, a loose grouping of southwestern suburbs and municipalities, indicated in the highlighted area below, tended to rank Economic Development higher; 21 of the 41 highlighted zip codes (51.2%) ranked it first.

Fig 7. Policy Priority Rankings by ZIP Code: South.



Despite these variations, the three highest-ranked priorities from the overall pool—Health and Wellness, Economic Development, and Safety and Justice—received roughly equivalent scores across zip codes.

2. Within Health and Wellness, Rank the Following Focus Areas: All Respondents

In ranking the following four focus areas within Health and Wellness, the overall pool of respondents ranked Mental and Behavioral Health highest, with an average score of 3.09 out of four; Food Security second, with an average score of 2.55; Patient Housing Access for Health Equity third, with an average score of 2.40; and Public Health Education and Outreach last, with an average score of 1.96.

Fig. 8: Within Health and Wellness, Rank the Following Focus Areas.

Focus Area	Average Score (1,882 responses)
Mental and Behavioral Health	3.09
Food Security	2.55
Patient Housing Access for Health Equity	2.40
Public Health Education and Outreach	1.96

In short, Mental and Behavioral Health was far and away the highest-ranked focus area, across nearly every demographic category. The only significant variance came from respondents aged 18-34, as well as Black/African American respondents, both of whom ranked Patient Housing Access ahead of Food Security.

3. Within Economic Development, Rank the Following Focus areas: All Respondents

Of the following five focus areas within Economic Development, the overall pool of respondents ranked Housing the highest, with an average score of 3.64 out of five; Household Assistance and Social Services second, with an average score of 3.55; Small Business Assistance third, with an average score of 2.97; Worker Support and Workforce Development fourth, with an average score of 2.93; and Regional Manufacture Support last, with an average score of 1.92.

Fig. 9: Within Economic Development, Rank the Following Focus Areas.

Focus Area	Average Score (1,896 responses)
Housing	3.64
Household Assistance and Social Services	3.55
Small Business Assistance	2.97
Worker Support and Workforce Development	2.93
Regional Manufacture Support	1.92

Across most demographic categories, Housing was ranked highest, with Household Assistance and Social Services a close second. Only Hispanic/Latine respondents had Household Assistance and Social Services ahead of Housing. Respondents over the age of 65, and especially white male respondents over the age of 65, ranked Small Business Assistance first.

4. Within Safety and Justice, rank the following focus areas: All Respondents

When asked to rank the following four focus areas within Safety and Justice, the overall pool of respondents ranked Violence Prevention and Reduction highest, with an average score of 3.36 out of four; Emergency Preparedness and Response second, with an average score of 2.39; Services to Justice-Involved Residents third, with an average score of 2.20; and Alternatives to Incarceration and Policing last, with an average score of 2.05.

Fig. 10: Within Safety and Justice, Rank the Following Focus Areas.

Focus Area	Average Score (1,896 responses)
Violence Prevention and Reduction	3.36
Emergency Preparedness and Response	2.39
Services to Justice-Involved Residents	2.20
Alternatives to Incarceration and Policing	2.05

Violence Prevention and Reduction was overwhelmingly the highest-ranked focus area, across all demographic categories. The Alternatives to Incarceration and Policing focus area was significantly more important to respondents between the ages of 18 and 34, who ranked it second after Violence Prevention and Reduction.

5. Within Infrastructure and Development, rank the following focus areas: All Respondents

Of the following four focus areas within Infrastructure and Technology, the overall pool of respondents ranked Transportation Infrastructure Improvements highest, with an average score of 2.92 out of four; Stormwater Management and Lead Pipe Replacement second, with an average score of 2.85; Access to Internet and Computers third, with an average score of 2.15; and Capital Infrastructure Improvements last, with an average score of 2.08.

Fig. 11: Within Infrastructure and Development, Rank the Following Focus Areas.

Focus Area	Average Score (1,896 responses)
Transportation Infrastructure Improvements	2.92
Stormwater Management and Lead Pipe Replacement	2.85
Access to Internet and Computers	2.15
Capital Infrastructure Improvements	2.08

Transportation Infrastructure Improvements narrowly edged out Stormwater Management and Lead Pipe Replacement across most demographic categories. The latter focus area was somewhat more important to older respondents, with those aged 45-54 as well as those over 65 ranking it first. Breaking from the overall trend, Black/African American respondents between the ages of 25 and 34 ranked Access to Internet and Computers first.

6. Within Climate Resiliency, Rank the Following Focus Areas: All Respondents

In ranking the following four focus areas within Climate Resiliency, the overall pool of respondents ranked Hazard Mitigation and Pollution Prevention highest, albeit by a very narrow margin, with an average score of 2.74 out of four; Residential Property Improvements second, with an average score of 2.73; Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy third, with an average score of 2.52; and Climate Resiliency itself last, with an average score of 2.01.

Fig. 12: Climate Resiliency, Rank the Following Focus Areas.

Focus Area	Average Score (1,896 responses)
Hazard Mitigation and Pollution Prevention	2.74
Residential Property Improvements	2.73
Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy	2.52
Climate Resiliency	2.01

Hazard Mitigation and Pollution Prevention and Residential Property Improvements essentially tied for first in the overall pool. There was a distinct split between white and Black/African American respondents' first-ranked focus area, however; white respondents ranked Hazard Mitigation and Pollution Prevention squarely first, while Black/African American respondents had Residential Property Improvements first by a wide margin.

Conclusion

Results of the survey and feedback during community engagement events clearly show Health and Wellness, Economic Development, and Safety and Justice as the top three policy priorities. Climate Resiliency was a lower priority of respondents across demographic categories.

Within Health and Wellness, Mental and Behavioral Health was firmly the most important focus area; within Safety and Justice, Violence Prevention and Reduction was most important; and within Economic Development, Housing and Household Assistance and Social Services were essentially tied as the highest-ranked focus areas.

The priorities of the residents of Cook County, as identified through the results of this ARPA Community Voices process, have already provided crucial support for continuing some of the transformative initiatives that the ARPA funding allowed us to develop. These findings, as well as an ongoing dialogue between the County and community stakeholders, will continue to inform the County's decision-making as we proceed with the transition from ARPA funding to alternative funding sources. We are grateful to survey respondents, community meeting attendees, volunteers, county staff, and municipal staff who made such robust engagement possible.



Toni Preckwinkle
Toni Preckwinkle
Cook County Board President

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