



September 19, 2018

West and South Side Development will Help ALL of Chicago

Economic development on the West and South Sides of Chicago has long been neglected and overlooked. In 1964, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. observed in his Nobel Prize speech, “Just as nonviolence exposed the ugliness of racial injustice, so must the infection and sickness of poverty be exposed and healed—not only its symptoms but its basic causes.” Dr. King focused even more on economic justice in the last years of his life. In his 1967 book, Where do We Go From Here: Chaos or Community?, Dr. King noted that many of the War on Poverty programs were not bad, but “all have a fatal disadvantage. The programs have never proceeded on a coordinated basis.... At no time has a total, coordinated and fully adequate program been conceived.”

So, I have introduced the idea of placing this referendum question on the ballot for the city’s February 26, 2019 election: “Must the mayor of the city of Chicago elected in 2019 work with community stakeholders, financial institutions, not-for-profit agencies, and federal, state and county government departments and agencies to create a 2020 Community Economic Development Plan before January 1, 2020 for the South and West Sides of Chicago to grow businesses, create jobs, reduce violence, eliminate vacant and abandoned buildings, and improve social well-being?”

My commitment is to circulate petitions for this referendum throughout the city of Chicago. Promotion of economic development on the West and South Sides of Chicago will help ALL of Chicago. When communities are vibrant, when people are working good jobs, when businesses are thriving and serving their customers, when music and culture are supported in all communities, when schools are hubs of community activity, the whole city thrives. When communities are vibrant, we don’t spend taxpayer money on costs associated with violence or imprisoning people. When communities are vibrant, we create customers who want to buy services and goods, and that can only benefit ALL of Chicago.

If you can, join us in the effort to circulate petitions to get this referendum question on the February 2019 ballot. Petition papers will be available by texting Ford to 77292.

I have also introduced three different pieces of legislation that can be part of a 2020 Economic Development Plan to help revitalize the West and South Sides of Chicago.

HB5199, which creates the Blight Mitigation Act, will help us deal with the abandoned properties on the West and South Sides. It provides that a property owner who lives within one-fourth of a mile of and on the same street as an abandoned residential property that has been continuously abandoned for 12 months may petition the court for title to the property, allowing them to rehabilitate the property and invest in their own community.

HB4035 appropriates funding from the General Revenue Fund to the Chicago Public Schools. Chicago Public Schools is the nation’s third largest school district that serves more than 300,000 students with around 78

percent from low-income families. We've had too many schools shut down, have outdated education materials and provide inadequate learning conditions. Chicago Public Schools need more assistance from the state to provide better conditions for learning.

HB4152 provides that the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity shall administer the Business to Business Revolving Loan Fund to make revolving loans and grants to new and expanding businesses in the state. This is going to help people who may have never had the opportunity to start a business to excel, and will also help to start or expand existing non-profits. They will have the ability to work in the neighborhoods that need these services the most.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'LSF', written in a cursive style.

La Shawn K. Ford
State Representative-Eighth District