

# Expanding Services on Chicago's South Side

## Chatham Education and Workforce Center

In May 2014, Dr. Betty Howard, the beloved head of the special education department at Gwendolyn Brooks College Preparatory Academy, was killed by random gunfire. In response, Congressman Bobby L. Rush (D, IL-1) led an effort to revitalize Chatham and surrounding communities gripped by violence. During a special convening to galvanize community leaders and stakeholders, the concept of the Chatham Education and Workforce Center was born. Years later, Congressman Rush would say the Center was “hope restored” to a community seeking to regain its luster.



That initial convening gave way to what would become the Greater Chatham Initiative—a comprehensive community planning effort rooted in areas critical to neighborhood stability and vitality such as public safety, housing, economic and workforce development. The Partnership’s then-CEO Karin M. Norington-Reaves, a Chatham resident and participant in the original convening, co-led the workforce development committee.

The road to the Center’s creation was long. It would be a five-year journey to secure funding. While The Partnership, with the assistance of the Alderman, Roderick T. Sawyer, worked to persuade the owner to sell the building at 640 East 79th Street in Chicago’s Chatham community for the Center’s use, the search to secure funding continued in earnest.

Eventually, Ms. Norington-Reaves engaged IFF and philanthropists Jessica and Steve Sarowitz, and a multi-party deal was negotiated, which included IFF purchasing the building for The Partnership’s use. IFF is a mission-driven lender, real estate consultant, and developer that helps communities thrive by creating opportunities for low-income communities and people with disabilities. IFF leveraged funds from JPMorgan Chase’s \$40 million three-year investment in Chicago’s South and West Sides. Ultimately, the Sarowitzes, through their company 4SBay Partners LLC, purchased the



building outright from IFF and contributed more than \$3 million towards the purchase, build-out, and furnishing of the Center.

While the 4S Bay investment was critical to the Center’s existence, other private sector contributions enabled the provision of essential services. Blue Cross Blue Shield donated \$50,000 for the multipurpose room’s state-of-the-art audio-visual equipment; Com Ed donated \$45,000 and all the computer equipment in the Resource Room/ Computer Lab; Verizon contributed \$10,000 in support of virtual programming made necessary due to the pandemic; Discover Financial Services sponsored two training classrooms for \$50,000, and the Weinberg Foundation provided \$150,000 for the Maker Lab and remaining capital costs.

In January 2021, The Partnership celebrated one of the culminations of Congressman Rush’s efforts with the grand opening of the Chatham Education and Workforce Center. Congressman Rush; Chicago Mayor Lori Lightfoot; Cook County Board President Toni Preckwinkle; Alderman Roderick Sawyer (6th Ward); Alderman Michelle Harris (8th Ward); Cook County Commissioner Stanley Moore (4th District); the family of the late Dr. Betty Howard; and philanthropist and investor Jessica Sarowitz of 4S Bay Partners LLC, came together to mark the culmination of nearly seven years of collaboration that brought the Center to life. The video, “Chatham Rising,” tells the emotional and impactful story of the Center’s creation.

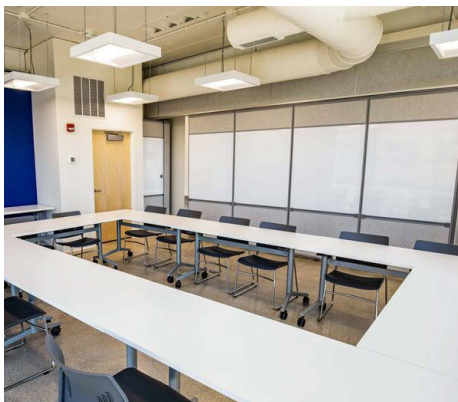


# Chatham Center Programs and Services

The 11,000 square foot space conceptualized by The Partnership truly lives up to its name as a place for education and occupational advancement. The first floor is home to office, classroom/group meeting spaces, and a state-of-the-art Maker Lab where instruction is provided by the Jane Addams Resource Corporation (JARC) and Richard J. Daley College, one of the City Colleges of Chicago. Courses offered in the Lab include 3D and laser printing, blueprint reading, introduction to electrical circuitry, Computer-Aided Design (CAD), and metrology (the science of measurement)—an important aspect of advanced manufacturing.



The second floor boasts a Career Center, offering an array of services for job seekers and businesses, including resume preparation and training to job screening and placement. This floor also houses a computer lab/resource room and a large, sun-soaked multi-purpose room with a capacity for more than 100 people for hiring events or community gatherings. The room can be subdivided into two or three classrooms as well.



All services provided at the Center are free of charge and the Center offers weekend hours to facilitate community use.

The Center is home to a variety of programs created and implemented by The Partnership, which offer occupational training resulting in industry-recognized credentials, access to career coaching, and employment opportunities.

- AARP Foundation Back to Work 50+ program for unemployed workers over 50
- Digital literacy training
- Chicago Housing Authority resident training
- The Road Home: Reentry Navigation program for formerly incarcerated residents
- The Partnership's sector-driven initiatives including our skilled trades portfolio, which include:



### **Chicago Transit Authority Red Purple Modernization (CTA RMP)**

*To help economically disadvantaged individuals and/or dislocated workers get access to job and skills training, the CTA is partnering with the project's contractor, Walsh-Fluor Design-Build Team, and The Partnership to link interested individuals with training and apprentice opportunities.*



### **Chicago Works**

*Chicago Works is Mayor Lori E. Lightfoot's five-year capital plan to Invest in Communities Through Infrastructure. To help City residents obtain jobs and take advantage of the opportunities created by Chicago Works, the City of Chicago teamed up with The Partnership to fill positions created by City investments by working directly with contractors to identify job candidates.*



### **ConstructionWorks**

*ConstructionWorks Powered by the Illinois Tollway and administered by The Chicago Cook Workforce Partnership. It is a free program designed to link job seekers with opportunities for rewarding careers in Illinois' high-demand transportation-related construction industry.*



### **Jackson Park Transportation Improvements**

*The City of Chicago, through the Department of Planning and Development (DPD) and the Chicago Department of Transportation (CDOT), is working on several roadway changes and transportation improvement projects in Chicago's Jackson Park that will support the Obama Presidential Center and the Chicago Park District's South Lakefront Framework Plan. CDOT is partnering with The Partnership to connect local residents with construction jobs for the project.*