



For immediate release

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Alderman Santiago Hosts Infrastructure Expo

Ward Residents invited to review proposals for their vote on spending

Alderman Milly Santiago is a step closer to bringing a campaign promise of public participation closer to happening. **Participatory Budgeting (PB)** is a process where residents of the ward take part in deciding how one million dollars will be spent in the 31st Ward. Alderman Santiago has brought this process to the Ward to bring constituents closer to the decision making process.

“This is a great opportunity for our residents to be part of an inclusive process on how to spend our menu money on projects they want”, said Alderman Santiago. “Dozens of volunteers and residents from all parts of the ward have worked very hard on selecting a number of project ideas that will improve the infrastructure of our ward. This Participatory Budgeting program has been an educational experience and an effort in community building.”

The residents of the 31st Ward will vote on how to spend this chunk of City money allocated to the Ward for infrastructure improvements. Although \$1 million would go a long way if allocated to just a single project, there are many improvements and repairs that are needed. On **Saturday, April 16 from 1 – 3 p.m.**, community representatives of the 31st Ward will showcase a **Public Expo** of these various projects, which were suggested by the residents themselves at two community meetings this past January. The Expo will take place at **Foreman High School, 3235 N. Leclair Avenue in Chicago.**

This Expo is the culmination of 2 ½ months of meetings, research and – albeit infrequent – arguments. The projects range from street resurfacing, on which residents will vote a percentage of the funds be allocated, to improvements in lighting, traffic calming and aesthetics. There is a fairly even distribution of safety-related and aesthetic projects.

PB is a rare democratic oasis in a city where, to be candid, decisions are questioned. The process of PB gives the residents themselves, rather than any shadowy “1%-ers” a definitive say in how the funds will be allocated. It is up to the residents to cast their votes for the projects they feel would most benefit themselves and their communities. Another rarity is that anyone age 14 or over can vote. It is an excellent opportunity for

teens to get involved and experience the voting process first hand. This is the first time the 31st Ward has had an opportunity to be a part of this process; previous successful experiences in PB have already been enjoyed by the 22nd, 45th and 49th Wards. This year PB has expanded to seven wards in Chicago.

Tables will be set up in the Main Hallway at Foreman where the volunteer community reps will show photos, explain the need for their projects, and hand out sample ballots. The voting process itself will take place during the week of April 23 – April 30. The “headquarters” for voting will be the 31st Ward office, 2521 N. Pulaski during regular hours, and to accommodate residents not in the immediate area, pop-up locations for voting will be scattered throughout the Ward. Detailed information on additional voting locations and times will be disseminated at the Expo, on the Alderman’s Facebook page and at www.PBChicago.org.