The Austin Neighborhood Network was formed in 2010 after a group of like-minded community leaders, identifying as Austin Coming Together (ACT), joined forces to discuss how to better coordinate efforts to create systemic change in their community. In 2016, in partnership with United Way, ACT released Thrive 2025, a strategy which sets bold “impact goals” to help Austin improve early childhood education outcomes, community revitalization efforts, and access to living wage employment opportunities for residents.

Austin was once considered a country village. By 1950, Austin had grown into a dense urban neighborhood—featuring an advanced streetcar system, architecturally significant churches, and the noted Columbus Park. Austin’s demographic profile began shifting in the late 1960s. By the 1980s, Austin experienced housing disinvestment, vacancy, and demolition, as well as loss of jobs and commerce as its white population moved to the suburbs and to Chicago’s Northwest Side. Today, Austin is a predominantly Black community whose residents are joining forces to promote safety and trust in their neighborhood.

BUILDING STRONGER COMMUNITIES: A DUAL APPROACH IN AUSTIN

- Food
- Stable Housing
- Individual Health and Wellness
- Early Learning
- Safe Neighborhoods
- Living Wage Careers

Responding to Immediate Basic Needs of Austin Residents

Building Neighborhood Systems Stronger and More Equitably in Austin

COMMUNITY VISION
Create a thriving Austin community.

LEAD AGENCY
Austin Coming Together

United Way of Metro Chicago
neighborhood network
INITIATIVE
Neighborhood Network in Action

Austin is moving towards its goal of providing high-quality learning opportunities to children from low-income households and ensuring residents have access to living-wage employment and a pathway to homeownership. The Austin Neighborhood Network, in partnership with Westside Health Authority (WHA) and By the Hand Club for Kids (BTH), launched the Aspire initiative. The plans include:

- New state-of-the-art early learning, health, and recreation center called The Aspire Education & Wellness Campus
- New programs and support to increase enrollment at Austin’s only neighborhood-serving public high school, the Aspire Austin College and Career Academy (ACCA)
- Renovation of the vacant Emmet School into the Aspire Center for Workforce Innovation
- Aspire Housing, a multi-tiered approach to provide homeownership assistance, plus new or renovated units for sale

JOIN US! Together, we can build neighborhoods like Austin stronger and more equitably. Direct your United Way gift to “Neighborhood Networks” to be a part of this critical strategy. Learn more at LIVEUNITEDchicago.org/neighborhood-networks

COALITION HIGHLIGHTS

Partnered with the City of Chicago to launch COVID-19 response efforts that included hosting COVID-19 testing and vaccine events and providing immediate and direct relief via cash assistance, food distribution, and PPE supplies

Provided free internet access to CPS students though Chicago Connected

$10 million BMO Harris Bank investment to help deepen impact in the Chicago community with a specific focus on resident-led efforts guided by ACT

Pritzker Traubert Foundation Chicago Prize finalist

Opened the Austin POPCourts! as a public space for activity, gathering, and commerce

BUILD Chicago opens new youth and community hub

Austin Forward. Together. Quality-of-Life Plan received the Burnham Award for Excellence in Planning from the Metropolitan Planning Council, the Outstanding Community Plan Award by LISC Chicago, the Opportunity and Empowerment Award from the Illinois Chapter of the American Planning Association, and the Equity with Impact Award from The Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning

Austin Coming Together and Westside Health Authority break ground on Aspire Center for Workforce Innovation