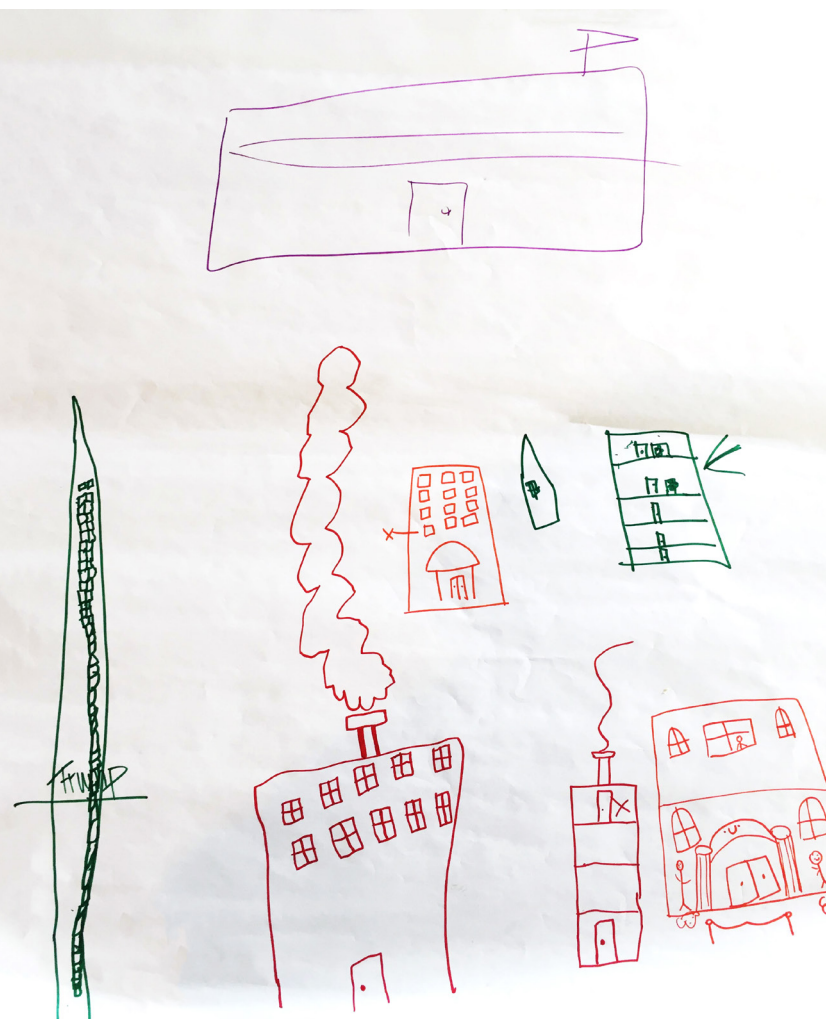


- | | |
|--|--|
| 1 McCutcheon Elementary | 4 Pedersen-McCormick Boys and Girls Club |
| 2 McCutcheon Annex | ■ Castlewood Terrace Association |
| 3 Proposed gym site (unknown specifications) | ■ Margate Park |



Racial Equity Impact Assessment:

MCCUTCHEON ELEMENTARY SCHOOL GYM PROPOSAL

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Executive Summary

CURRENT PROPOSAL

In 2018, McCutcheon Elementary School in the Uptown community was awarded \$10 million to support the construction of a gym and out-of-school-time programming. McCutcheon is currently one of five Chicago Public Schools (CPS) elementary schools without its own on-site gym, which has called into question issues of inequity and unfairness among many school community members. The school serves overwhelmingly low-income students of color, many students who are immigrants or refugees, high numbers of students experiencing homelessness, and disproportionately high numbers of children with disabilities. The policy under question is a proposal to construct a gym on the south side of McCutcheon Elementary. In March of 2019, a neighborhood association on the same block as the school, Castlewood Terrace Homeowners Association, filed a lawsuit to block this construction.

PROCESS

In the spring of 2019, Chicago United for Equity (CUE) was approached to conduct a Racial Equity Impact Assessment (REIA) on the proposal to build a gym. An REIA is a tool for evaluating a proposal's potential or actual benefits and burdens. It intentionally focuses on advancing racial equity, which can only be done by actively bringing those most impacted to the table. CUE hosted five community discussions centered on the specific gym construction proposal at hand while also engaging an overarching question of, "How can Uptown neighbors work together to find equitable solutions for local challenges?" This report offers both a summary of the community input collected through the REIA process, as well as analysis by the CUE team based on historical data, team observations, and comparative research in similar communities. Both the report and the process acknowledge the ways in which the gym construction proposal can impact many issues and groups but the focus on racial equity requires centering the students of McCutcheon, the group most directly impacted by the proposal to build a gym.

COMMUNITY RESPONSES

- No participant disputed that students would benefit from a gym. However, participants disagreed on how or if a gym should be built based on their affiliations with the school or within the community. Generally, students, families, educators prioritized gym construction, while residents without children attending the school raised concerns about other school needs and neighborhood considerations that they prioritized above gym construction.
- Residents noted that Uptown is "diverse but not integrated," identifying that many residents avoid discussions of racial and economic disparities in the neighborhood. While community members were clearly interested in engaging on topics of common interest, they brought mixed readiness levels into conversations about racial equity, collaboration, and organizing. Many of the white participants avoided naming or displayed discomfort in discussing observable racial and class differences, including within current neighborhood data. Centering

those who are or have been most impacted, particularly those who have historically been underserved and not been engaged or heard by institutions, was a challenge for many.

- Not only is there a lack of trusting relationships between different groups in the Uptown community, but there is also a lack of trusting relationships between community members and institutions (e.g. CPS, aldermen). The lack of trust is exacerbated without transparency or engagement, as has been the case for much of the McCutcheon gym proposal and process. In the absence of transparency and engagement from CPS and the community's aldermen, community members and affected individuals do not understand what decisions have been made nor what process led to decisions made and actions taken. The number of questions generated and number of attendees at community meetings hosted by CUE indicate the community's wish for more information, conversations, input in decision-making, and accountability.

RESULTING RECOMMENDATIONS:

Recommendations resulting from the REIA process are divided into three categories:

1. **Recommendations for protecting McCutcheon policy equity:** The REIA determined that the current proposal for construction of the McCutcheon gym advances racial equity.
2. **Recommendations for protecting McCutcheon process equity:** The REIA determined that decision-making institutions, community organizations, and individuals all bear the responsibility and opportunity to:
 - Intentionally involve those most affected
 - Be transparent and hold oneself and others accountable
 - Create spaces for two-way communication
3. **Recommendations for deepening Uptown equity efforts:** The REIA determined that individuals should consider where on a continuum they are in their journey with racial equity and should engage in different activities accordingly. The community as a whole also needs to determine in which phase of racial equity work it is and identify opportunities moving forward to build racial equity "muscles." Given the community's diversity, different parts of the community would benefit from taking different opportunities to engage in this work.

Introduction

The issue

McCutcheon Elementary School is located in the neighborhood of Uptown on the north side of the City of Chicago. It currently has a main building housing students in grades Pre-K to 5 and an annex, located two blocks away, housing students in grades 6 to 8. The infrastructure of the elementary school is lacking in a number of ways, including the lack of an on-site gym. In 2018, however, McCutcheon was awarded \$10 million to support the construction of a gym and out-of-school-time programming.

Community and school leadership have advocated for a gym on site at McCutcheon for the school's students. The former principal of McCutcheon spearheaded this effort and asked Alderman Cappleman, in whose ward the school falls, to advocate for the project.⁸ The school previously fell within Alderman Osterman's ward, and students and McCutcheon advocates live in both wards. Both aldermen are on record as supportive of a McCutcheon gym. At the same time, others have expressed significant concern about the specific proposal to build a gym on the south side of the school.⁹ Most notably, members of Castlewood Terrace Homeowners Association, on the street adjacent to the school, have filed a lawsuit against the City of Chicago to block construction, citing a historical covenant protecting their property and street block.

Citywide nonprofit organization Chicago United for Equity (CUE) became involved in the issue in the spring of 2019. Alderman Cappleman approached CUE to conduct a Racial Equity Impact Assessment (REIA). An REIA is a tool for evaluating a proposal's potential benefits and burdens for the explicit sake of advancing racial equity. When Alderman Cappleman originally requested an REIA on the specific gym proposal, CUE identified a group of community residents, parents, organizers, and nonprofits/service providers with which to discuss the idea, in order to gauge overall community appetite and interest for an REIA on the topic. Based on the encouraging input received, CUE moved forward with REIA process implementation to support community dialogue. CUE's role would not be that of making decisions, organizing the community, or reconciling race relations; rather, CUE would act as facilitator, bringing people to the table together for their shared reflection and organizing, and as an external assessor of the policy and the community's readiness to engage in an REIA. In order to make the REIA most meaningful to the community for the long term, the process would not only focus on the McCutcheon gym issue but also be grounded in a core question for Uptown at large: "How can Uptown neighbors work together to find equitable solutions for local challenges?"

The racial equity context

In the 2019-2020 school year, McCutcheon Elementary School had 357 students enrolled. The McCutcheon student population is made up of:

8. Source: <https://patch.com/illinois/lincolnsquare/elementary-school-uptown-get-new-10m-gym>

9. Source: Block Club Chicago article published June 12, 2019: <https://blockclubchicago.org/2019/06/20/alderman-pledge-their-support-for-mccutcheon-elementarys-new-gym-despite-a-lawsuit-from-nearby-homeowners-association/>

- **overwhelmingly low-income students** (92.7% are low-income, compared to a district average of 77.9%),
- **mostly students of color, primarily Black students** (42% Black, 25.8% Hispanic, 15.4% Asian, 9.5% white, and 7.3% Other),
- **many students who are immigrants or refugees** (40.9% are Limited English, compared to a district average of 19.4%),
- **high numbers of students experiencing homelessness** (there is a 25.3% mobility rate compared to a district average of 3.5%, and the state estimates that McCutcheon has 9.2% students experiencing homeless in the school in comparison to 3.5% for the district), and
- **disproportionately high numbers of children with disabilities** (36.4% have Individualized Education Programs for special education services, compared to a district average of 14%).¹⁰

McCutcheon is designated as a Commendable School by the Illinois State Board of Education and in the 2019-2020 school year received a Level 1 rating through the CPS school rating system.¹¹ The school is a fixture of the broader Uptown community.

In many ways a microcosm of Chicago, Uptown is a very diverse yet not fully integrated neighborhood. Although Uptown has historically been a gateway for immigrants and refugees, the neighborhood has also been undergoing significant gentrification, causing fear for some neighbors.¹² Residents report “us” versus “them” dynamics existing around a number of community issues, including transit, housing, and grocery stores. One such example is of the closure of a CPS elementary school, Graeme Stewart Elementary School, in 2013. Although there were workshops held to determine what would happen to the school, ultimately the building went to the highest bidder, who turned the school into luxury lofts.¹³ The controversy surrounding the school closure and what occurred afterward provides context for the current debate over the gym at McCutcheon, as do the overarching neighborhood conditions.

The Racial Equity Impact Assessment (REIA)

An REIA is a tool for evaluating a proposal’s potential benefits and burdens for the explicit sake of advancing racial equity. Ideally, an REIA is conducted before decisions are made in order to mitigate benefits and burdens from the outset. In reality, since racial equity concerns are often not prioritized in initial decision-making, however, REIAs are just as often leveraged to evaluate the results of a policy decision on the backend or even to inform mid-course correction opportunities. In this case, a policy decision to build a gym and allocate dollars had already been made before CUE got involved, and the REIA would assess the potential racial equity impacts of the gym proposal with the potential for shaping future decision-making on the subject.

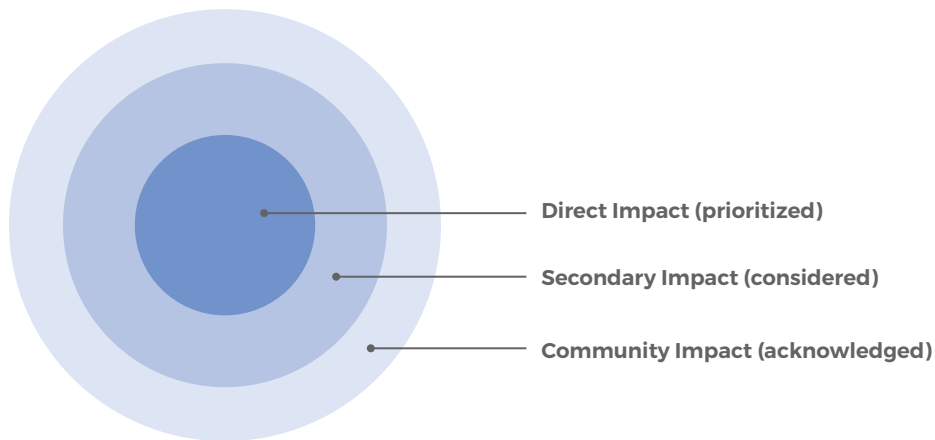
10. Source: School-specific data found at https://cps.edu/Schools/Find_a_school/Pages/findaschool.aspx. District data found at <https://www.illinoisreportcard.com/>. Mobility rate is defined by the Illinois State Board of Education as “percentage of students who experienced at least one transfer in or out of the school between the first school day of October and the last school day of the year, not including graduates.”

11. Source: Commendable School designation at <https://www.illinoisreportcard.com/>, Level 1 rating at https://cps.edu/Schools/Find_a_school/Pages/findaschool.aspx. Commendable is the second-highest designation out of a possible four designations; Level 1 is the second-highest rating out of a possible five ratings.

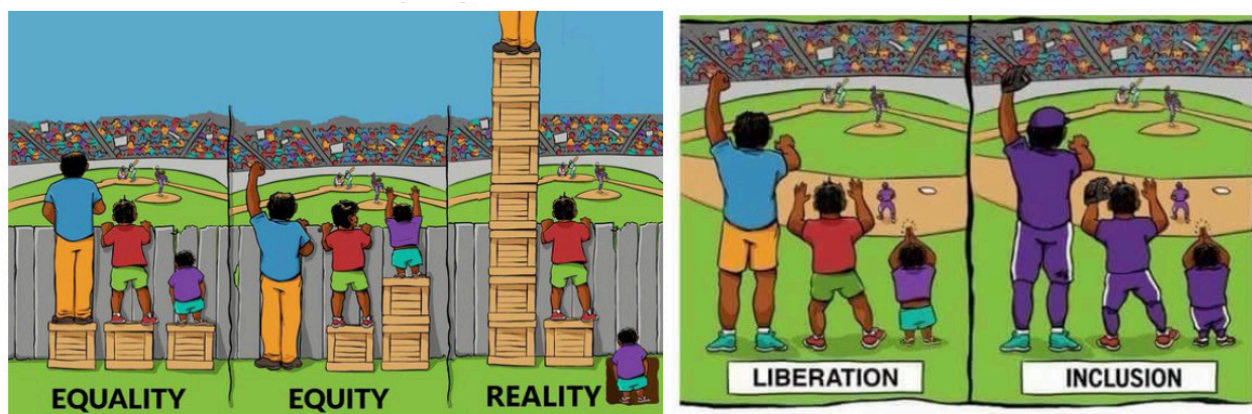
12. For additional resources on the neighborhood’s changing demographics, the importance of diversity to neighbors, and hopes and fears for its sustainability, see Alderman Cappleman’s [46th Ward Master Plan](#) as revised in 2013, a [2019 WBEZ photo report](#) on the Argyle Night Market, and Teresa Neumann’s [“Sustainable Diverse Communities: A Comparison of Hammond, Indiana and Chicago’s Uptown Neighborhood”](#) (2013). Master’s Theses. 1820.

13. Source: Block Club Chicago article published February 13, 2019, [“Uptown Elementary School-Turned Luxury Lofts A Symbol Of Neighborhood Reckoning. Gentrification.”](#)

Using an REIA helps reveal who benefits and who is burdened via the proposal, unintended consequences of the proposal, and possible approaches to a public policy challenge without revisiting harm on the same groups that have historically been burdened. An REIA process recognizes that the magnitude of impact is different for different groups and intentionally focuses on those groups that are most impacted – as indeed any effort to advance racial equity must. As policies are not color-blind, nor made in a vacuum, the REIA process obligates people to look at history, context, and lived experiences. In this case, the REIA process would examine the specific gym construction proposal for which the city had allocated dollars and against which Castlewood Terrace Association had filed a lawsuit.



For the work of an REIA and elsewhere, CUE and other organizations define racial equity as a process that leads to life outcomes that can no longer be predicted by race. The process of equity requires: 1) acknowledging historical context, 2) shifting power to groups most directly impacted by historical and current inequities, and 3) being accountable to outcomes. In accordance with these criteria, equity is action, not simply a goal. A common image used to demonstrate the difference between equity and equality is shown here and was used in the community dialogues that CUE hosted for this project.¹⁴



14. As with any image, these pictures do not fully capture a complex idea. Instead, CUE typically uses them to support a conversation, because they are regularly referenced by community participants in dialogues about equity, and because they offer a place to start, critique, and celebrate what works and doesn't about these images as compared to our real world.

To guide the McCutcheon and Uptown community through an REIA examining both the proposed school gym and the neighborhood's overall capacity to find equitable solutions to local challenges, CUE facilitated a series of community discussions that followed the four basic steps of an REIA, comprising 15 questions total. Where the questions presupposed that no policy decision had yet been made, CUE facilitators adjusted the steps to adapt to the McCutcheon case, in which a policy decision has been made but not yet fully implemented.

Step 1: Determine Outcomes and Stakeholders

- Q1. What is the policy and what problem is it trying to solve?
- Q2. What other issues can this proposal impact?
- Q3. Who are the key groups impacted by this issue?
- Q4. How will these groups be involved in decision-making?

Step 2: Look at Numbers and Narratives

- Q5. What data will we collect and look at? Why?
- Q6. Where do we see disparities in the numbers?
- Q7. What can we learn from histories and narratives to better understand these numbers?
- Q8. What questions still remain? What information do we wish we had?

Step 3: Measure Benefits and Burdens

- Q9. What are the benefits, and who is most likely to receive them?
- Q10. What are the burdens and who is most likely to bear them?
- Q11. What are different options to make this policy racially equitable?

Step 4: Evaluate and Be Accountable

- Q12. How will we evaluate the impacts of your solution?
- Q13. How will our stakeholders engage in ensuring equitable outcomes?
- Q14. How will we report back on these outcomes?
- Q15. How will our evaluation impact improvements to the policy?

CUE hosted five community discussions with a total of 78 participants (duplicated count) to explore these questions, with space generously donated by community organizations.

Date	Community Discussion Type	# Participants	Location
September 6, 2019	Community Dialogue, community organizations with ties to Uptown schools	16	Alternatives, Inc.
October 5, 2019	Community Dialogue, open to public	12	Alternatives, Inc.
October 7, 2019	Community Dialogue, open to public	30	Third Space
November 21, 2019	Community Dialogue, most impacted groups	10	Salvation Army
December 9, 2019	Community Dialogue, most impacted groups	10	Chinese Mutual Aid Association

At each of the community discussions, REIA facilitators shared core concepts and data as well as the key questions from the four steps. At the community dialogue for organizations with ties to Uptown schools, participants who represented agencies and institutions in the community attended and discussed what racial equity is and the need to focus on it, why structural solutions are needed, and what an REIA is and the steps involved. They then practiced an abbreviated REIA, using the proposal for a gym for McCutcheon as the test case.

The first two open community meetings were designed to welcome the public and experienced the greatest diversity in terms of an understanding of the key concepts of equity and core values to this work. After seeing limited engagement of most impacted groups in these initial conversations, additional community-specific conversations were designed to more deeply engage most impacted groups, who included McCutcheon students, McCutcheon families experiencing homelessness, McCutcheon staff, community members with a primary language other than English, and other immigrant and refugee community members. While engagement supports such as childcare, meals, and interpretation in Spanish and Vietnamese were offered in the initial public meetings, it was clear that other barriers to engagement continued to persist. These barriers were addressed by creating spaces solely for the engagement of the most impacted groups.

In all community dialogues, participants discussed what racial equity is and the need to focus on it, and what an REIA is and the steps involved. CUE also shared background information on the gym proposal and its intent, related issues, existing concerns from community members, and demographic data on students, the immediate neighborhood, and the larger community. Facilitators documented comments both directly related to the McCutcheon gym proposal and to

Uptown's capacity to work together to find equitable solutions for local challenges.

This report is a summary of the community input collected through the REIA process, organized by the steps of an REIA. It also identifies recommendations for addressing the specific proposal for a gym at McCutcheon, as well as items for consideration if the Uptown community wishes to build its capacity for difficult conversations and joint problem-solving in service of a more equitable community.

Authors' Note

An REIA is not the same as a community engagement process. Community engagement at large might involve any number of ways to engage with an issue: general listening sessions, open feedback opportunities, one-way or two-way communication, etc. An REIA can acknowledge any of these processes as critical to civic engagement and democratic harmony. Yet these processes on their own rarely reach the level of specificity and urgency necessary to reach the people who are most impacted and most structurally disadvantaged. As such, readers will observe that the next pages are most densely populated by the ideas and concerns of students, parents, and staff and by analyses of racial equity.

An REIA is also not a racial reconciliation or healing process. Specific tools exist for the latter purpose, some of which are listed in the Recommendations section to honor the ways in which Uptown residents may grow together. In contrast, an REIA is, as the name indicates, an assessment. It amplifies the voices of those *most* affected by a proposal to evaluate benefits and burdens and issue recommendations accordingly on the basis of racial equity.

This particular REIA arrived on the Uptown scene at a critical juncture. Chicago Public Schools had already allocated funds in support of gym construction; the city was proceeding with plans to build the gym on the south side of the school's main building; and Castlewood Terrace Association had filed a lawsuit to block construction in the specified location. Within this context and taking its cue from the wishes of community representatives who advocated for the REIA, the scope of this REIA is focused narrowly on the current gym proposal. It does not specifically treat what may have been possible before any funds were allocated, although it does point to process errors that led to the current situation of confusion and contentiousness. In blunt terms, the lawsuit interrogates the legality of the gym construction proposal; the REIA interrogates the racial equity impacts of the gym construction proposal.

Finally, although this REIA process treated the missing McCutcheon Elementary gym specifically, it also inspired significant reflection upon Uptown's current readiness to work together to find equitable solutions for local challenges. Examination of McCutcheon's situation may help reveal community barriers and equip residents to begin addressing them. These reflections and recommendations are shared at the end of the report in the Community Analysis and Recommendations sections.

Racial Equity Impact Assessment

STEP 1: DETERMINE OUTCOMES AND STAKEHOLDERS

Q1: What is the policy and what problem is it trying to solve?

Chicago Public Schools (CPS) has awarded McCutcheon Elementary School with \$10 million to build a gym. The school also received a five-year grant to become a Community Learning Center through the CPS Community Schools Initiative, which—enabled by a new gym—will provide programming before and after school as well as on the weekends.⁸ The specific construction proposal under discussion would position the new gym as a new wing of the main elementary school building on North Sheridan Road, immediately south of the current building. This award seeks to resolve a current inequity and its related negative effects.

McCutcheon is one of only five CPS elementary schools without its own gym.⁹ The school pays the nearby Boys and Girls Club \$35,000 annually for use of its gym. The Boys and Girls Club gym is not accessible for children with physical disabilities, some of whom need to be carried to the space. The transition from McCutcheon to the Boys and Girls Club contributes to lost instructional and physical education time, raises health and safety concerns (e.g., students with inadequate clothing for the weather), leads to canceled physical education classes during inclement weather, and poses particular challenges for diverse learners (e.g., students with ADHD or physical disabilities). The Boys and Girls Club is not open on weekends for programming. Without a gym, McCutcheon contains no space large enough to accommodate the entire student body and no space available for parent programming. The dollars allocated for a McCutcheon gym are intended to resolve these issues and create more opportunities for school and community engagement, with direct benefits for a student population composed of overwhelmingly low-income students of color, many students who are immigrants or refugees, high numbers of students experiencing homelessness, and disproportionately high numbers of children with disabilities.

The student makeup heightens the equity implications behind the policy. McCutcheon students expressed awareness of what resources other schools and students have, both when others have more and when others have less. Community members and parents specifically characterized not having a gym as an equity issue (“It seems wild to me as someone who went to public school that someone wouldn’t have a gym. It seems unfair”) and stated that building the gym will bring McCutcheon up to the standard of what is provided in other areas.

“It makes me feel special in a bad way we don’t have a gym. We are 1 of 1,000 that do not have a gym in the city!” —McCutcheon Middle School Student participant

8. Source: Tribune article May 20, 2019. [“Uptown mansion owners sue to stop nearby public school from adding gym.”](#)

9 Ibid.

TAKEAWAYS:

- McCutcheon is one of five CPS elementary schools without its own gym.
- Building a gym will improve access for students, including those with physical disabilities, and will save instructional time.
- McCutcheon received \$10 million for a gym and out-of-school time programming.
- Students and community members saw the gym as one way to combat inequity and unfairness.

Q2: What other issues can this proposal impact?

Schools are enmeshed in the ecosystem of their communities. Any changes to them, including to their physical structures, will have ripple effects throughout the entire ecosystem. While this proposal seeks to address the specific problem of McCutcheon Elementary School's lack of a gym, it may also impact a significant number of other issues if implemented as currently planned on the south side of the school's main building. Some of these issues are tightly tied to racial equity and therefore explicitly within the REIA scope. Other issues may be of great concern to individual community members or groups but fall outside of the REIA scope; they are listed in the appendix.

In a number of cases, REIA participants agreed that an issue may be impacted by the gym but disagreed on the nature of the possible impact. For example, REIA participants agreed that gym construction could affect the property values of Castlewood Terrace. Yet they disagreed on whether that impact would be positive (because a gym would make the neighborhood school more attractive) or negative (because it would decrease green space or risk the block's historical designation).

As another example, three different groups of REIA participants raised public safety as an issue but came to opposite conclusions about the likely impact. A Castlewood resident in one group characterized the gym as a public safety risk constituting a "danger to character of neighborhood," while another Castlewood resident stated that the concern was with regard to the loss of the north sidewalk and the opportunity for a mugging or other attack on the south side of the school. The third group, made up of a mix of Castlewood residents, school community members, and aldermanic representation, characterized the lack of gym as the public safety risk. A member of this group noted that the Boys and Girls Club is closed on the weekends and that a new gym at McCutcheon could provide a safe space and a community hub.

Other potentially impacted community-level issues raised by residents and relevant to racial equity include:

- **Jobs:** Any new construction could generate jobs.
- **Development and investment:** Construction could generate not only jobs but also further development and investment opportunities in the area. These opportunities could have positive economic impacts and/or could increase segregation or gentrification of the area.
- **Parent, family, and community engagement with McCutcheon Elementary:** A gym could support increased programming for children and families before school, after school, and/or on the weekends. Increased opportunity to engage could increase actual engagement in addition to ownership.

- **Parent employment and community investment:** Increased McCutcheon programming afforded by a new gym could allow parents and guardians more opportunity and peace of mind to entrust their children to the school. The increase in time and flexibility could, in turn, allow parents to work longer hours and generate more income, some of which would be spent within the community.

In addition to potential community-level impacts of this proposal, participants also talked about how trust in institutions (e.g., Chicago Public Schools, aldermen, City of Chicago) will be affected based on how these institutions treat the issue and whether residents feel heard. At stake is the trust of students, parents, and staff of McCutcheon as well as those living in the surrounding area and the entire Uptown community. Any positive or negative effect with regard to institutional trust may ripple out beyond the McCutcheon and Uptown communities to the rest of the city, as the few other schools without their own gyms look to the McCutcheon example and as other school communities consider their own issues for which they might advocate.

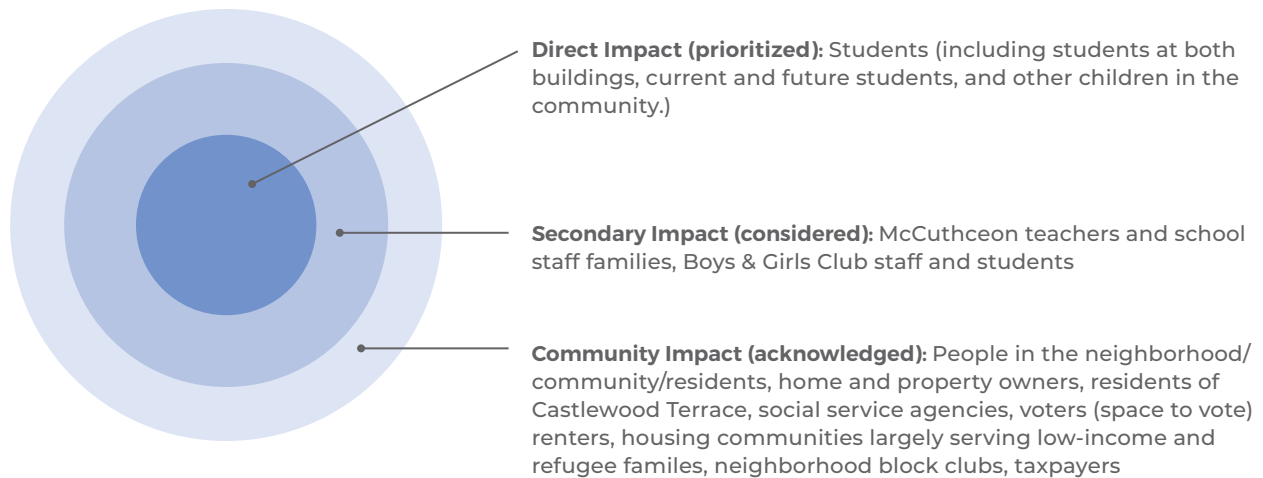
“There are a lot of shootings where I live, not far from here, by Wilson. There might be gang activity near here. The gym can be a good thing, though. It could be a safe haven. I don’t think it would be bad for the community.”
—McCutcheon 7th Grade Student Participant

TAKEAWAYS:

- Construction of a gym will have impacts on the surrounding area and community, though not all potential impacts are relevant to racial equity. Participants did not agree on whether these impacts would be positive or negative.
- Potential relevant impacts include jobs generated by construction, gentrification and/or segregation from economic development, and increased engagement for McCutcheon students and families.
- Institutional trust will be impacted by how the community’s decision-makers handle this process.

Q3: Who are the key groups impacted by this issue?

Across all community discussions, participants listed students, McCutcheon staff and teachers, and parents as key groups impacted by this issue. This REIA puts the students of McCutcheon at the center of the assessment as they will be using the gym the most. McCutcheon teachers, school staff, and parents were secondarily impacted. Others in the community may also be impacted, though not as directly. The graphic below lists other potential stakeholder groups that various REIA participants identified as potentially affected by decisions relating to the school.



“I have already made up my mind, we want it. I have been waiting since Pre-K. I play basketball.” —McCutcheon 7th Grade Student Participant

TAKEAWAYS:

- Participants agreed that McCutcheon students will be most directly impacted by the new gym.
- McCutcheon staff, McCutcheon parents, and Boys & Girls Club staff and students will be secondarily impacted. Others in the community may be impacted as well.

Q4: How will these groups be involved in decision-making?

REIA participants responded to this question with thoughts on how they wished that they had been involved. Over the course of multiple community discussions, community members repeatedly indicated that what should have happened was transparency from the key institutions who made decisions on their behalf, including Chicago Public Schools and the aldermen.

From a general civic engagement perspective, this lack of information and communication is concerning. From a racial equity perspective, it is doubly problematic. First, whiter and more affluent neighborhood constituencies tend to have and leverage greater access to institutions and influencers, creating engagement opportunities for themselves that are not open to others to the same degree. Castlewood Terrace Homeowners Association responded to the absence of information and communication by filing a lawsuit in an attempt to use the courts to gain more information and to take decision-making into their own hands. Any school community member attempting to take the same action would face greater barriers of cost and access. Nor were students and families aware of what was happening or able to organize a collective response. As one community dialogue participant said, “I didn’t know that they had gone that far, to sue.”

Second, lack of engagement specifically with those who stand to be most affected and who are most historically burdened could interfere with the success of a proposal intended to benefit those groups. Even families who were excited about the prospect of the gym worried that the gym might not actually meet their needs if they were not consulted. The largely absent communication stoked those fears. REIA participants pointed to the voices not represented

in the proposal, especially students and refugee families who could face language barriers. One community meeting participant stated, “The students haven’t been given a voice...Because of the students’ situation, their voice isn’t valued.” It was unclear how much student or family voice had been solicited and incorporated into the process of obtaining a gym at McCutcheon beyond the REIA process.

More poignantly, the lack of engagement also meant that neighbors missed out on opportunities to come together to hear and better understand each other in a hotly contested issue that, if mediated, could foster racial healing in the community. Overall, responses to this Question 4 of the REIA revealed an Uptown community hungry for engagement and discussion of racial impacts but A) not necessarily organized to act or re-convene outside the designated space and B) not yet equipped to engage productively in multi-racial contexts. Moreover, institutional leadership did not appear fully prepared to facilitate productive conversations in multi-racial contexts, nor to increase engagement specifically focusing on those most directly impacted and/or historically most marginalized by virtue of their race and other identities.

“It solves a problem for us because we have an opportunity to have a gym. It would be a blessing for us; some schools don’t even have a gym.”

—McCutcheon Middle School Student Participant

“Goudy has 3 gyms, a football field, soccer field, and their own playground.”

—McCutcheon Middle School Student Participant

TAKEAWAYS:

- Due to lack of transparency and engagement, the proposal may not realize benefits for those who stand to be most affected and who are most historically burdened.
- The number of questions generated and number of attendees at community meetings indicate the community’s wish to be engaged, to know more, and to be involved in decision-making.

STEP 2: LOOK AT NUMBERS AND NARRATIVES

Q5. What data will we collect and look at? Why?

For the purpose of focusing the REIA on equity and on the specific proposal at hand, the core data presented for REIA participants’ consideration focused on the student population, the impact on students of not having a gym, and the surrounding community. CUE facilitators shared data on the student body of McCutcheon, including statistics on race, income, English Learners, refugee status, Diverse Learners, mobility rate, chronic truancy, and homelessness. Facilitators brought forward the impacts of not having a gym through research on the value of physical education and the value of time for learning (which is currently lost in transitions to the Boys and Girls Club); parents and community members augmented these data points, educating REIA participants and facilitators on other reasons why a school gym is important. For example, the time involved in children walking to the gym does not include time also spent on putting on jackets and bundling up in the winter. Finally, facilitators shared some basic context for the community in which McCutcheon is located, using demographic data on Margate Park, which includes Castlewood Terrace and the area immediately surrounding the school, as well as data

on the Uptown neighborhood at large. Demographic data for Margate Park included race and ethnicity by block and household income distributed by race. Demographic data for Uptown included race and ethnicity, household income, household income distributed by race, and languages spoken at home (in relation to English).

Local residents expressed having been offered few opportunities to learn about and engage in the development of this proposal. As a result, some raised a variety of overarching, race-agnostic data questions and curiosities that fall outside the scope of a REIA; these are listed in the appendix. Here and elsewhere during the REIA process, Uptown neighbors displayed different levels of comfort and preparation to discuss race and racial impacts. Some participants appeared to focus on “race-blind” data questions to avoid potentially uncomfortable discussions about race.

“I would love to tell them, seriously: it’s for the children. Just stop thinking about yourself and your property values. Think about the children who live in the neighborhood. It’s not just your block here.” —McCutcheon Parent Participant

TAKEAWAYS:

- Core data presented focused on students, the meaning of not having a gym to students, and the surrounding community.
- Participants raised a variety of data questions that fall outside the scope of a REIA and displayed different levels of comfort and preparation to discuss race and racial impacts.

Q6. Where do we see disparities in the numbers?

This REIA was grounded in an initial statement of disparity that has started off every discussion and news article about this case: McCutcheon is one of five CPS elementary schools without its own gym. With over 600 schools in the CPS district, not having a gym is a notable anomaly. The disparity is felt particularly by McCutcheon students, with a middle schooler stating in a community discussion, “[It] makes me feel special in a bad way we don’t have a gym.”

Disparities in demographic data also caught participants’ attention. They noted the racial disparities between the student population of McCutcheon, the population of Margate Park, and the Uptown neighborhood overall. McCutcheon serves primarily students of color, predominantly Black and Hispanic students, and is only 9.5% white.¹⁰ Although it is immediately adjacent to McCutcheon, Margate Park (which includes Castlewood Terrace) is majority white.¹¹ Uptown as a whole is fairly evenly split between white residents and residents of color.¹² Multiple participants were struck by this contrast between Margate Park and the school it borders.

The data also revealed income disparities alongside the racial disparities. Students attending McCutcheon are predominantly low-income, with 92.7% qualifying for free/reduced price lunch.¹³ Meanwhile, households that earned \$100,000 and above in Margate Park are 63–100%

10. The student population is 42% Black, 25.8% Hispanic, 15.4% Asian, 9.5% white, and 7.3% Other. Source: https://cps.edu/Schools/Find_a_school/Pages/findaschool.aspx

11. Data at the block level indicates the area is somewhere between 54% to 90% white.

12. 44.9% white, 28.0% Black, 12.9% Hispanic, 11.5% Asian, 2.1% Mixed, and 0.6% Other. Source: <https://statisticalatlas.com/neighborhood/Illinois/Chicago/Margate-Park/Race-and-Ethnicity>, Uptown data found at <https://www.cmap.illinois.gov/data/community-snapshots>

13. Source: https://cps.edu/Schools/Find_a_school/Pages/findaschool.aspx

white and in Uptown are 76-94% white.¹⁴ The mismatch between race and income between McCutcheon and its neighbors was obvious to participants; white residents living in the community immediately around McCutcheon earn more, and students who attend McCutcheon come from families who earn significantly less. This geographic proximity set up troubling dynamics of whose voice might be heard versus who would most frequently use and benefit from a gym: Those with greater amounts of discretionary time, resources to engage in legal battles, and other privileges are better equipped to gain the attention of civic institutions than is the typical McCutcheon household.

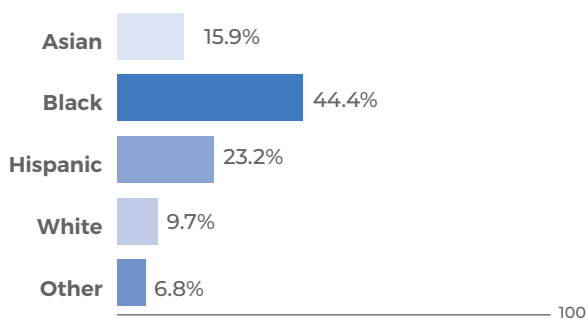
REIA participants observed these disparities and raised questions of the data and of the power systems at play. Who is being served? Which / Whose children are or are not attending McCutcheon? Is census data available specifically for Castlewood Terrace? How many families on Castlewood Terrace are sending their children to McCutcheon? The lawsuit from members of the Castlewood Terrace Association prompted McCutcheon parents to believe that residents in Margate Park do not send their children to McCutcheon.

The data disparities between McCutcheon, its immediate neighborhood, and its larger community provide compelling evidence for why racial equity belongs at the center of any proposal to address McCutcheon's lack of a gym. The discussion that unfolded among REIA participants demonstrated the ways in which it can be difficult for Uptown neighbors from different backgrounds to unpack data together or find equitable solutions together.

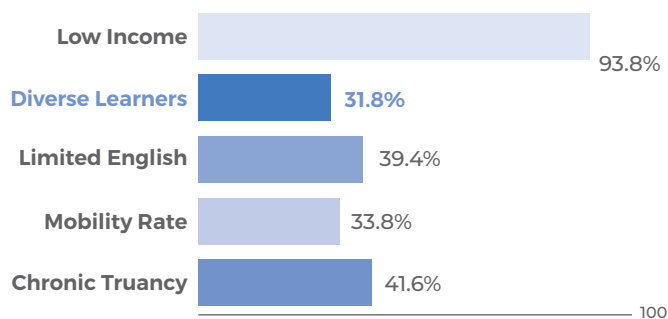
I think, if they're complaining, that means their kid doesn't go there. If their kids [went] there, [it] wouldn't matter if the brick wall was covering their apartment; they wouldn't care at all.

14. Source: <https://statisticalatlas.com/neighborhood/Illinois/Chicago/Uptown/Overview>

McCutcheon Demographics



McCutcheon Statistics



Source: FY19 data available through https://cps.edu/Schools/Find_a_school/Pages/findaschool.aspx

Uptown Demographics

RACE AND ETHNICITY, 2000-2017

	2000	2010	2017
White non-Hispanic	42.1%	50.2%	54.5%
Hispanic or Latino	19.9%	15.5%	14.4%
Black non-Hispanic	21.1%	19.0%	18.1%
Asian non-Hispanic	12.9%	13.1%	10.0%
All other categories	3.9%	2.3%	3.0%

Source: 2000 Census, 2006-2010 and 2013-2017 American Community Service five-year estimates

LANGUAGE SPOKEN AT HOME AND ABILITY TO SPEAK ENGLISH, 2010-2017

	2010	2017
English Only	61.7%	63%
Language other than English	38.3%	37%
Speak English less than "very well"	18.2%	16.8%

Source: 2006-2010 and 2013-2017 American Community Survey five-year estimates

HOUSEHOLD INCOME, 2013-2017

	Uptown		City of Chicago		CMAP Region	
	Count	Percent	Count	Percent	Count	Percent
Less than \$25,000	8,667	29.5	279,153	26.7	587,549	18.7
\$25,000 to \$49,000	6,067	20.7	220,794	21.1	601,926	19.4
\$50,000 to \$74,999	4,416	15.1	164,936	15.8	511,185	16.5
\$75,000 to \$99,999	3,100	10.6	114,428	10.9	392,259	12.7
\$100,000 to \$149,999	3,565	12.2	132,548	12.7	499,882	16.2
\$150,000 and Over	3,526	12.0	134,930	12.9	511,294	16.5
Median Income	\$49,681		\$52,497		\$67,619	

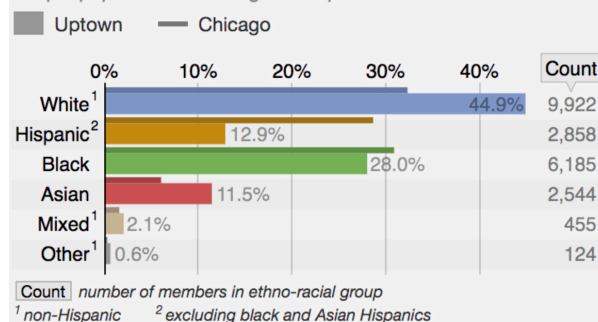
Source: 2013-2017 American Community Survey five-year estimates
Source: <https://www.cmap.illinois.gov/data/community-snapshots>

Uptown Demographics

RACE AND ETHNICITY

Percentage of the total population.

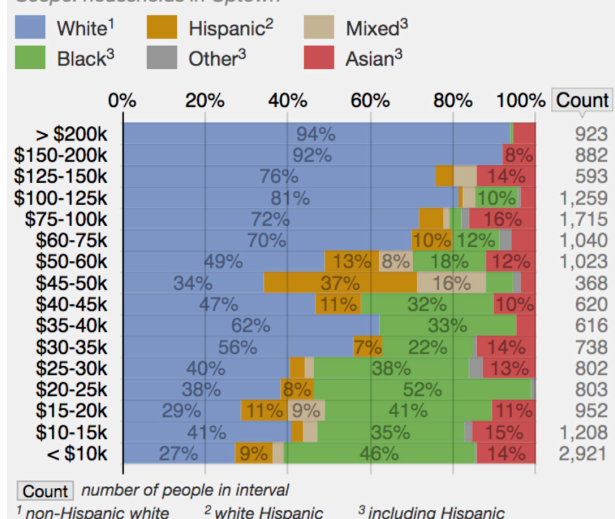
Scope: population of Chicago and Uptown



HOUSEHOLD INCOME DISTRIBUTION BY RACE

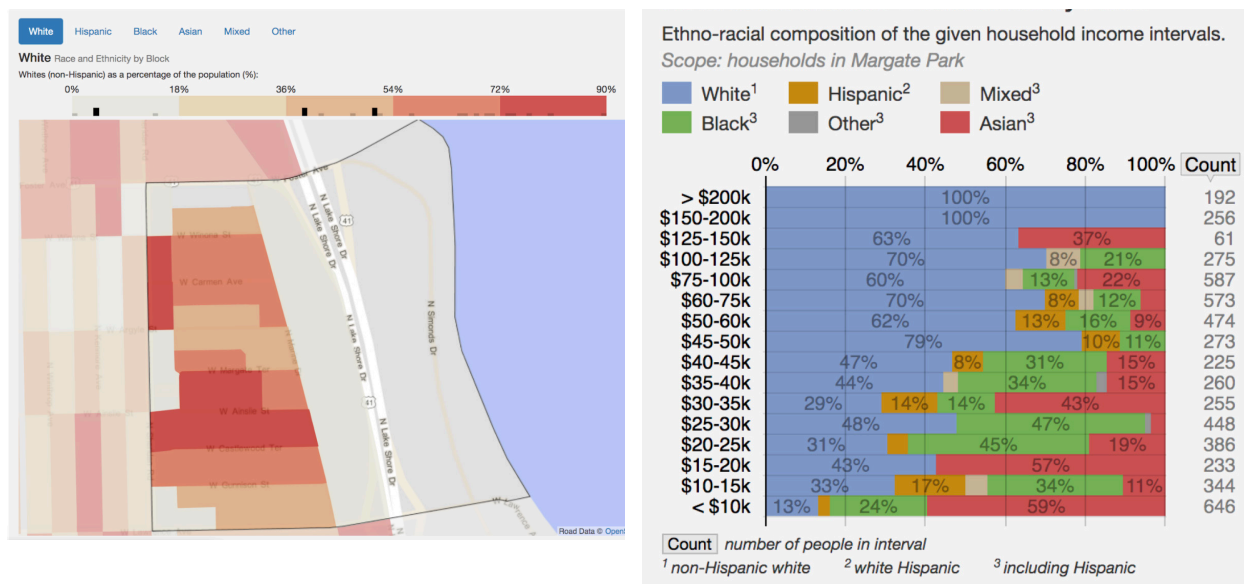
Ethno-racial composition of the given household income intervals.

Scope: households in Uptown



Margate Park Demographics

Inclusive of Castlewood Terrace



"I think, if they're complaining, that means their kid doesn't go there. If their kids [went] there, [it] wouldn't matter if the brick wall was covering their apartment; they wouldn't care at all." —McCutcheon Parent Participant

TAKEAWAYS:

- REIA participants were struck by the racial and income disparities between McCutcheon's student population and the neighboring area, which includes Castlewood Terrace.
- After observing these disparities, participants raised questions and concerns about the power systems and dynamics at play between the low-income students of color who stood to benefit from a gym, and the higher-income, majority-white neighbors objecting to the gym's construction.

Q7. What can we learn from histories and narratives to better understand these numbers?

While looking at data is a key part of conducting an REIA, it is crucial to look at the data within a wider historical and cultural context and to consider community reactions to the data. Do the data match the experiences of community members? What has happened in the past that is impacting how people are viewing the current situation?

In response to this question, community members offered a historical perspective to place McCutcheon's renovations into context. There have been efforts to have McCutcheon renovated in the past, such as by using Tax Increment Financing (TIF) money. A community member stated there was such a push previously, but ultimately Buttercup Park, immediately north of McCutcheon, was renovated instead. Several community members stated that advocacy for McCutcheon to have a gym has been going on for some time.

Castlewood Terrace residents attending the public REIA community dialogues offered their own narratives and histories to explain their concerns. They spoke of their homes with pride and

a sense of belonging. Residents prized the block's character and its designation on the National Register of Historic Places, obtained in 2009. A resident stated that the Illinois Supreme Court decision upheld a covenant stipulating that Castlewood Terrace only contain single family homes. Castlewood Terrace residents who participated in community meetings brought forward their narratives based on their position on the gym. Many Castlewood residents participating in the REIA expressed concerns about the risk the current proposal poses to their homes. They may not represent how all individuals on the block feel, however, and there may be residents on the street who hold different views.

Some participants questioned the accuracy of Castlewood Terrace residents' narratives about the covenant and historical designation. For example, some community residents asserted that the green space that would be used by the proposed gym had not always been there, and that the street used to go all the way through to Sheridan Road; the location's cul-du-sac was put in within recent history. They stated that there are townhomes on the street that are newer than the mansions on the double lots, built within the past 30-40 years. The townhomes went up in lots where families used to grow food. This led to questions from participants about whether the covenant existed when the townhomes were built, and whether the covenant was only invoked when convenient.

While historical records may illuminate the specific history of the covenant and its effects, the debate over its meaning illustrates the divergent interests and levels of mistrust within the community, despite the engagement of many Castlewood Terrace residents at McCutcheon through the Local School Council and volunteering. Indeed, the neighborhood's tension over the proposal for a gym at McCutcheon exemplifies larger historical, geographical, racial/ethnic, and cultural issues at play in Uptown. Despite being known as a diverse neighborhood, Uptown's diversity has not always translated into integration. The neighborhood's proximity to Lake Michigan and public transportation has meant increased interest in developing Uptown in recent years; with more private investment has also come an increase in gentrification and the white population, with many people of color and immigrant/refugee communities getting priced out of the area.¹⁵ A newspaper covering the issue summarized it as follows: "McCutcheon, a school that sits between million dollar homes to the east and low-income housing to the west, is a microcosm of the larger class divide in the neighborhood."¹⁶ REIA participants described increasing tensions between different groups of residents as the population of Uptown changes.

McCutcheon is not the first local school to become a focal point in the middle of these trends, systems, and power dynamics. Three schools in Uptown and nearby Andersonville closed in recent years, causing an uproar amongst some neighbors, a protracted struggle over what would happen to the closed schools, and ultimately what one resident described as "community trauma."¹⁷ The specter of these closed schools hung over the REIA process. In multiple sessions, community members explicitly brought up these other closed schools, evidently wondering if McCutcheon might be next and if a gym investment would impact the school's fate.

15. Source: Block Club Chicago article published February 13, 2019, "[Uptown Elementary School-Turned Luxury Lofts A Symbol Of Neighborhood Reckoning, Gentrification.](#)"

16. Source: Block Club Chicago article published on June 20, 2019, "[Uptown Kids Need A New Gym, And Aldermen Say They'll Fight Mansion Owners 'Tooth And Nail' To Make It Happen.](#)"

17. Recent research and sociological analysis supports the traumatic impacts of school closures on communities in Chicago. Perhaps most prominent is Dr. Eve L. Ewing's *Ghosts in the Schoolyard: Racism and School Closings on Chicago's South Side* (2018).

McCutcheon advocates who wanted the investment hoped that it would help safeguard the school. Some Castlewood Terrace residents argued that piecemeal investment would not prevent a school closing and that any decreased enrollment at McCutcheon would more likely be the deciding factor.

“If you put the resources in, it’s hard for the city to later rationalize getting rid of the school. Investing in a school can ensure its longevity.” —Participant

TAKEAWAYS:

- Advocacy for McCutcheon to have a gym has been going on for some time.
- Accounts differ on how at-risk and how significant the Castlewood Terrace covenant and historical designation are.
- Uptown is diverse but not integrated, and it has experienced multiple school closings. How neighbors experience this reality and history informs their opinions.

Q8. What questions still remain? What information do we wish we had?

Community residents had many unanswered questions and wished that they had significantly more information about the proposal. A core unanswered question arose continuously: “Why a gym?” Students, parents and school personnel overwhelmingly support the proposal to build a gym and see it as an equity issue, but they also pointed to other concerns regarding lack of investment in the school and wondered why the larger inequities were not being addressed.

Many community members asked if the funds for the gym were flexible and expressed concern about the timeline for using the funds and any potential risk of losing the funds. They also raised questions about what services would be provided at the gym and about the sustainability of funding for programming. Community members expressed curiosity about the building plans, as well as fear of potential unintended consequences due to lack of engagement of the intended beneficiaries. These concerns included:

- What are the projected specifications for the construction?
- What is the cost? Will money need to be borrowed?
- How much time would the construction take? When would students be able to start benefiting?
- Generally, what is the building plan? What does the building look like?
- Would they take out the garden if it goes directly south of the school? Would they be giving students one thing but taking another thing away?

A final set of unanswered questions related to the process behind the decision. Without clarity and transparency, community residents communicated feeling a lack of ownership about the project. Specific remaining questions included:

- Who made the request for funding? What did that decision process look like?
- What were the politics behind the decision?
- How was the location chosen?

- Was the perspective of students included? Have stories been collected from those most impacted by the proposal?

“I don’t care because we’re in 8th grade, and we’re going to go to high school. For younger students, they should have a gym, because it’s sad for them to walk all the way over there. Sometimes it’s freezing, sometimes you get wet...it should just be right next to them.” —McCutcheon 8th grade Student Participant

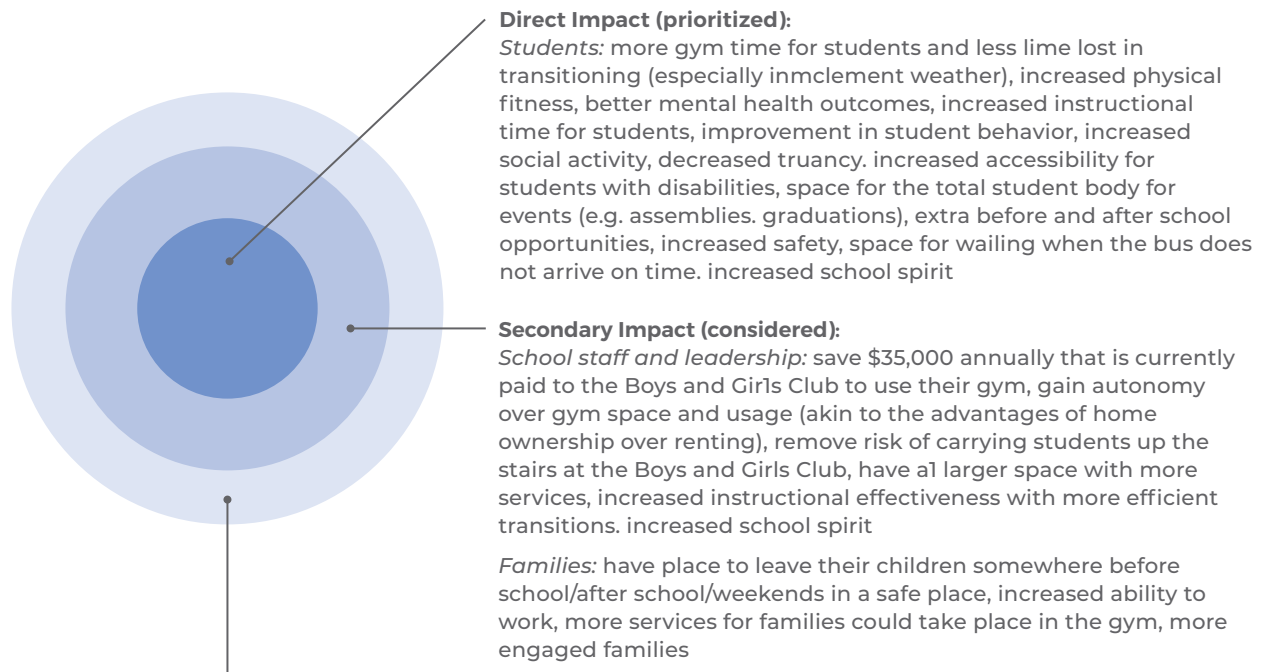
TAKEAWAYS:

- Community residents have many unanswered questions and wished they had significantly more information about the proposal.
- These questions relate to details about the proposed gym (ex. specifications, cost, time) as well as to the process behind the decision to build a gym.

STEP 3: MEASURE BENEFITS AND BURDENS

Q9. What are the benefits, and who is most likely to receive them?

In REIA discussions, all participants agreed that students would be directly impacted and that, overall, students would benefit from a new gym. School staff and leadership as well as parents generally share in many of the benefits that students would accrue, plus additional ones. Others in the “community impact” circle could benefit from construction of the gym, too. Overall, REIA participants shared a sense that the benefits from building a gym would be for those traditionally left behind - youth, people of color, people earning less - and that this is an equity issue. Adding space tells the community that they are worth investing in and cements the school’s place in the community. One parent spoke of the opportunity that the gym’s construction created for “literal community building.” Other specific potential benefits identified by REIA participants are included in the graphic on the next page.



Community Impact (acknowledged):

Community (people in the neighborhood/community/residents, home and property owners, residents of Castlewood Terrace, social service agencies, voters, renters, housing communities largely serving low-income and refugee families, neighborhood block clubs, taxpayers): access to gym as community hub, increased community space open on weekends with programming, increased community access and ownership, increased public safety, space that could be rented out with money going back into the community, increased jobs, increased business, increased stability of McCutcheon as neighborhood Institution and increased stability of neighborhood, increased community spirit

“They’re cutting programs left and right. When I was coming up, there were no schools without gym rooms. I believe McCutcheon got cut \$200K this year. I can assure you that Lane Tech didn’t lose any funding this year. We are conditioned to ignore racial issues, [but] you can’t move past it until you discuss it and address it. If there’s no solution and no talking, it’s never going to get fixed. There’s such a big fight going on for this gym; that tells you a lot about the quality of the people that are here. You may have money, but you’re not quality people if you’re keeping children from having what they deserve. This is a basic human right, education and health. It’s a basic human right, and they’re not getting it.”

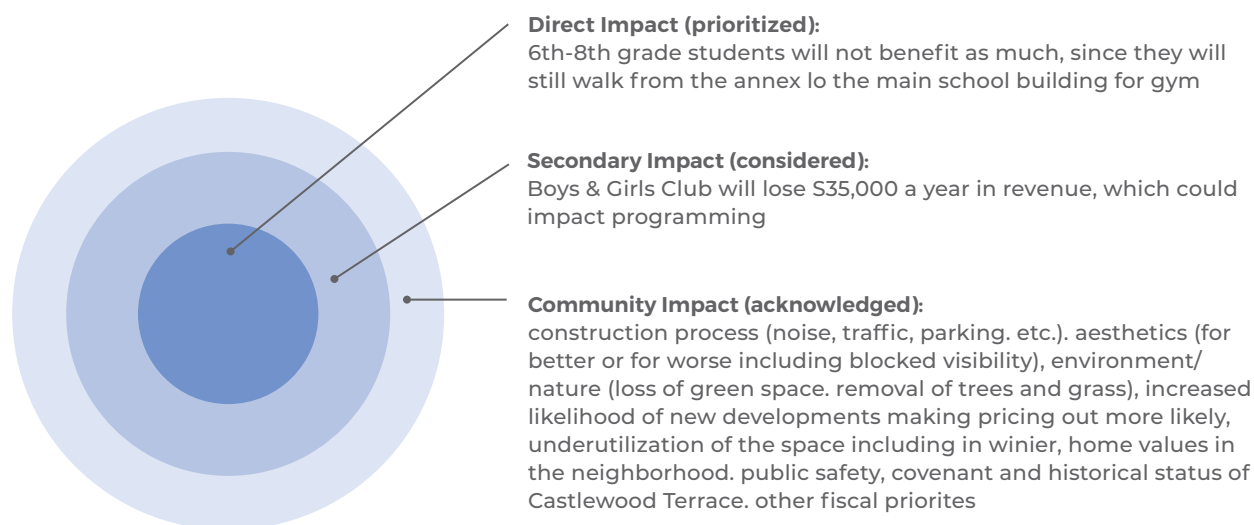
—McCutcheon Parent Participant

TAKEAWAYS:

- All participants agreed that students would be directly affected, particularly those traditionally left behind. Other groups who would benefit significantly include school staff and parents.

Q10: What are the burdens and who is most likely to bear them?

Beyond the above frequent answers submitted by REIA participants brainstorming potential burdens, other concerns listed related to overall fears. A few participants raised concerns over if McCutcheon's receiving a gym would mean that the school would lose out on something else in the future and whether the proposed gym would be large enough because there isn't enough space for a full-size basketball court, and so it might be "too small" and just "window dressing."



How much time REIA groups spent on this question varied in direct relation to the makeup of the group. Groups at the public community dialogues, which were the most heterogeneous in participants' incoming opinions about the gym, spent significant time exploring the potential burdens, with a disproportionate amount of time spent on the burdens for neighboring residents. One positive result of this time allocation was community members' opportunity to learn from each other; multiple group members reflected positively that they better understood others' perspectives by the end of the REIA. One negative result of this time allocation was its implicit centering on Castlewood Terrace residents rather than students, even though participants agreed that students were the group directly impacted by the proposal. This negative result ran contrary to the primary purpose of an REIA.¹⁸ The community dialogues for most impacted groups, on the other hand, brainstormed fewer burdens; indeed, some simply answered, "No one will be hurt," when presented with Question 10. These group members were all directly engaged at McCutcheon and in some way represented groups historically underrepresented in policy decision-making. They may have missed the opportunity to hear others' perspectives, but they also successfully remained centered on students. Moreover, their perspectives were the ones most likely to get lost in any larger group setting due to logistical (e.g., linguistic) or socio-historical (e.g., implicit silencing) barriers.

"My mom didn't have to send me to school with toilet paper like we have to now. The budget cuts are absolutely ridiculous. I get on that kick about the

18. As discussed in the Introduction and Authors' Note, an REIA is not interchangeable with other community engagement processes. While racial harmony and communal understanding may in some cases be secondary effects of the REIA process, they are not the primary purpose of an REIA. Indeed, in many instances, validating "all sides" of an issue in pursuit of harmony is an impediment to achieving justice.

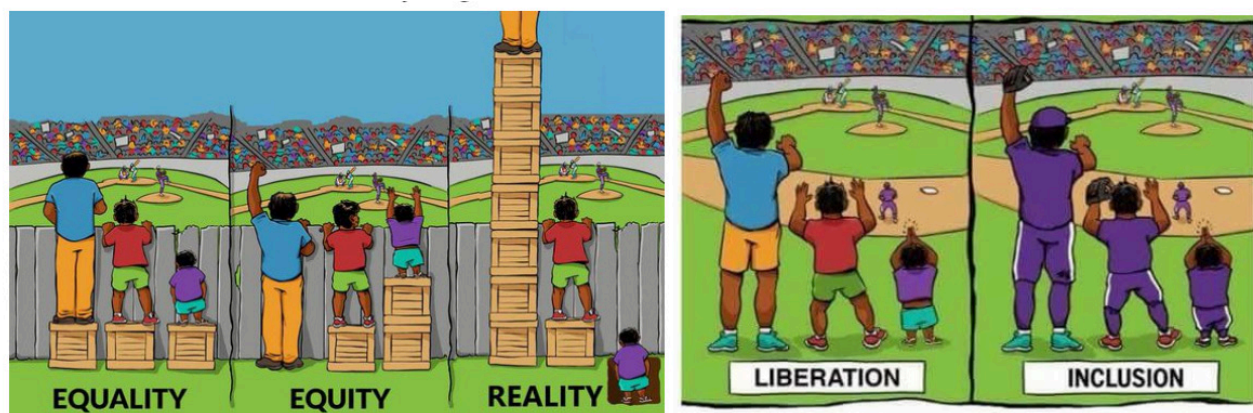
schools on the south side and the west side, the water and the lead pipes that they're not fixing. I hate how it depends on what color your skin — that that's the deciding factor of what your education is going to be. This is how they keep the wealth disparity: by keeping the level of education at the bare levels for certain people, and everyone else gets a leg up.”—McCutcheon Parent Participant

TAKEAWAYS:

- Groups at the public community dialogues, which were the most heterogeneous, spent significant time exploring the potential burdens, with a disproportionate amount of time spent on the burdens for neighboring residents.
- The community dialogues with most impacted groups, who were all directly engaged at McCutcheon, brainstormed fewer burdens as they centered students.

Q11: What are different options to make this policy racially equitable?

Community dialogue participants began considering the racial equity of the proposal with the help of a graphic designed to illustrate the concept of equity. Multiple participants immediately made connections between the middle figure in the illustrative graphic (in “reality”) and McCutcheon students, describing the proposed gym addition as an additional “box” onto which students could step in order to mitigate other burdens that they carry (illustrated in the graphic by the hole in which the child stands). Through this lens, the proposed gym addition would overall increase the racial equity in the community, as shown in the graphic for “equity.” As one community member stated, “The kids’ getting a gym puts them on a level playing field with other students in CPS.” Some participants further drew parallels between the middle figure in the illustrative graphic (in “reality”) and Castlewood Terrace residents, indicating that the concerns of the largely white and affluent residents came from a position of having many more “boxes” than the students. In this analogy, the proposed gym addition would “cost” Castlewood one box in order to raise students out of a societally-dug hole.



Within the context of the already defined proposal, community group participants brainstormed ways to increase, emphasize, or change the gym addition's positive racial equity impact.

REIA Participant Ideas for Increasing Racial Equity*

<i>Community involvement</i>	<i>Transparency & information-sharing</i>	<i>Longer-term equity opportunities available for further assessment</i>
<p>Conduct more community engagement centered on benefiting McCutcheon middle schoolers</p> <p>Expand the gym's benefits by offering services for the whole community and creating opportunities for low-income people, people of color, and refugees</p>	<p>Open up avenues for neighbors to actively support the project</p>	<p>Build a new state-of-the-art school with a single campus for all McCutcheon students</p> <p>Co-locate McCutcheon students in Uplift Community High School, a high school with more building amenities half a mile away</p>

*Not all REIA participants supported the gym addition, but their arguments and alternatives (see the appendix) were largely based on concerns other than racial equity. Two exceptions, both originating with Castlewood residents, proposed not adding a gym and instead either co-locating McCutcheon students in another building or building an entirely new school. The potential for these ideas' racial equity will only be borne out, however, if the ideas are desired and informed by the McCutcheon community, if McCutcheon community voices lead advocacy efforts, and if either idea in fact comes to fruition. The third point is of some concern, given the structurally weak fiscal solvency of CPS and the plethora of other major facilities needs¹⁹ among the district's 600-plus schools. In the meantime, these ideas would temporarily decrease racial equity during the delay for advocacy, construction, and design. They would also decrease racial equity if nothing were implemented and the opportunity to build a gym had been lost.

Some members of most impacted groups also identified larger equity issues in play that would go beyond a gym addition, but unlike the Castlewood participants, they did not see a contradiction between those larger issues and the current focus on the gym. Rather, in their telling, the gym became one step on the path toward greater equity: "Yes, the proposal would solve the problem because we would get the space. We need the space. But I hope that the larger conversation of equity for McCutcheon students doesn't disappear. We are a high poverty, high diversity school, and one of 10 [sic] schools without a gym. I don't want the discussion of resources to end there."

Regardless of their position on the gym, REIA participants agreed that the process of enacting a solution for McCutcheon could be done in a manner that better upheld racial equity and got closer to the core question of this REIA: how can Uptown neighbors work together to find equitable solutions to local issues? Most participant suggestions focused on increasing community involvement in the decision-making process, especially making a greater effort to engage underrepresented communities and the students, parents, and staff of McCutcheon.

All participants agreed that greater transparency and information sharing would be helpful. For example, one participant stated, "Let's make CPS' process more transparent and slow it down. At my son's school, there was an annex being proposed, but it got a lot of people riled up for

19. The school district's Capital Plan webpage provides an overview of major infrastructural work already in progress and/or budgeted for for the future. As of April 2020, there were over 300 active projects in the district. <https://cps.edu/CapitalPlanFY20/Pages/CapitalPlanFY20.aspx>

no reason. Eventually, they got input from community.” Lack of engagement simultaneously fed people’s fears about institutional decision-making (e.g., fear that McCutcheon would not be treated equitably, suspicion that a gym may not be the wisest financial investment, fear of another neighborhood school closing) and provided the basis for common interest: everyone could unite around hoping for a better process that would directly engage decision-makers and residents. Some also wished for decision-making power to shift to communities whose voices are historically excluded.

“We look forward to a school with no racism, with 2-3 Vietnamese teachers who love our children and treat them fairly. Our children are equal with others.” —McCutcheon Parent Participant

“Yes, the proposal would solve the problem because we would get the space. We need the space. But I hope that the larger conversation of equity for McCutcheon students doesn’t disappear. We are a high poverty, high diversity school. I don’t want the discussion of resources to end there.” —Participant

TAKEAWAYS:

- Participants raised several ideas for how the process could be done in a manner that better upheld racial equity.
- Participant ideas to increase racial equity centered around increasing community involvement, improving transparency and information-sharing, and addressing longer-term equity concerns.

STEP 4: EVALUATE AND BE ACCOUNTABLE

Q12: How will we evaluate the impacts of your solution?

Without necessarily agreeing upon a single solution for implementation, REIA participants brainstormed a variety of metrics and angles by which the solution could be evaluated. These measures ranged from possible direct impacts for students to indirect impacts for students, staff, and families to possible indirect impacts on the whole community.

According to REIA participants, if the solution is working well, students and the community could see the below effects. All of them could be evaluated through a combination of qualitative and quantitative measures. In centering students throughout this REIA, more weight should be given to the effects on students as they are the most directly impacted by the proposed gym.

- Students and teachers will gain instructional time
- Students will more frequently attend physical education classes
- Student behavior may improve
- Students’ academic performance and/or student wellness outcomes may improve
- Teacher turnover rates may decrease
- The school’s short- and long-term financial outlook will remain stable and/or improve

- School staff and neighbors will enjoy adequate parking
- Students, families, and community members will feel increased school pride, including students who will get to play on their own “home turf”
- Family engagement may increase
- Family incomes may increase, perhaps from the extra working hours that the new before- and after-school gym space makes possible
- Overall rates of parent and/or youth satisfaction may increase
- Crime rates may decrease and overall sense of community safety may improve

As another form of metric, participants in community dialogues with the most impacted groups painted an oral picture (or, in the case of the youngest student participants, a literal picture - see the appendix) of what they envision for life after successful solution implementation. Some participants described seeing evidence of an improved P.E. experience for kids: “Students running into the gym, smiles on their faces,” “No more students going back and forth,” “People playing dodgeball, people doing jump rope, trampolines and jumping.” Others outlined the equipment and features of a new gym and its adjacent areas: a rack for hanging up jackets, water fountains, bathrooms, nurses available, seating and chairs, vending machines, an art space, tumble mats, running games, obstacle course, basketballs, soccer, kickball, downstairs and upstairs areas, a homework room, and specifically enough sports materials to show that the school was able to fund equipment in addition to the gym construction. Parents imagined asking their children at home, “How was gym?” and hearing feedback, then going to cheer at basketball games and seeing benches full of community members. Groups laughed imagining the screaming of kids having fun, people talking inside, and pep rallies and assemblies. One group acknowledged that they would also probably hear people complaining if the gym got built. A student described feeling mixed emotions when thinking of eventual resolution: “I’d be happy but annoyed that we have been waiting for so long; it is just a gym, it shouldn’t be such a big deal.”

Overall, community dialogue participants envisioned a successful solution as one that left them feeling and seeing evidence of school and community pride: feeling happy and joyful for their children being cared for, excited by the new gym, feeling like they had contributed to the new construction, seeing its cleanliness, seeing school teams able to host games at the gym (“that’s a big deal”), seeing pennants decorating the gym “like the high schools with the colleges or other schools in the conference,” seeing artwork on one side of the building, seeing people of all colors and types gathering, and perhaps even seeing Castlewood neighbors at games.

“We could help other people understand, and maybe their minds would change about being against it. Maybe they would remember when they were kids, and they would think about what it is good for the kids.”

—McCutcheon Middle School Student Participant

TAKEAWAYS:

- REIA participants brainstormed ways to evaluate the solution with measures ranging from possible direct impacts for students to indirect impacts for students, staff, and families to possible indirect impacts on the whole community.
- All of the measures could be evaluated through a combination of qualitative and quantitative

measures, with more weight given to the effects on students as they are most directly impacted by the proposed gym.

Q13: How will our stakeholders engage in ensuring equitable outcomes?

As REIA participants considered how to get from the school's current state to their vision for McCutcheon students and the community, they most often thought of immediate next steps or angles to consider in the current community dispute. Many participants raised ideas for further outreach to parents and community members, hoping to organize power and/or deepen community engagement around the issue. Ideas included flyering during school arrival and dismissal in the nearby public park, circulating a survey or petition (with emphasis on the latter as a language-inclusive instrument), reaching out through the McCutcheon Local School Council or school staff, having the school principal make a speech, reaching advocates at parent-teacher conferences, learning from parents who had opted out of sending their children to McCutcheon, leveraging neighborhood organizations like the Chinese Mutual Aid Association and Alternatives, going to the nearby shelters, highlighting the issue in the news, and students spreading the word amongst themselves.

REIA groups frequently circled back to the desire for more conversations, input, and organized advocacy.

Group 1	"If more parents are involved in trying to build the gym, it will be successful." The desire for more parents connected to the needs to share information in other languages and to offer translation.
Group 2	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. We write to support the proposal. All of us have the same hearts and minds to promote it sufficiently2. We introduce other parents within our group to the proposal to build the gym so that many people can know information3. We call for support from others in our community of people; we tell them how good the gym would be for students4. We tell children about this proposal and connect them to each other.
Group 3	Make a Community Action Plan: the community would gather with every stakeholder group represented to come up with an agenda and alternate proposals and then invite the aldermen and Chicago Public Schools to discuss.
Group 4	Host small group meetings and build alliances.
Group 5	Go to the alderman with the results of a community conversation; engage in mediation, including talking to the neighbors who filed the lawsuit; and produce one-pagers with pros and cons and a contact sheet for decision-makers.

Participants wanted a fuller hearing of options, public organized voice, and greater input of community and insight into the political process. It was noted that, although conversations about the need for a gym had been occurring for years, officials had devoted little time specifically to community engagement, and participants called for increased engagement and transparency in the process going forward. Some participants were against the current proposal for gym

construction on the south side of the school and were still looking for alternatives; others were in favor of the gym but were concerned about the lack of concrete plans shared with them. Many groups dedicated time to specifically strategizing how to gain more transparency: “[Let’s] see a blueprint of the new gym.” “We need to get CPS to share their plans. How have people in other parts of the city gotten CPS to answer...questions?” “Let’s tap into the community assets. Who on the block knows construction and can look at the budget?”

In these discussions, REIA groups lifted up not only individual strategies for ensuring outcomes in this instance but also overall philosophies of community action. Transparency, accountability, involvement of those most affected, solidarity, communication, and shared humanity were common themes across many groups. One group talked about the community needing to “recapture the power.” Another hit on the “unity and solidarity” necessary to “work together with the same voice.” Adjacent groups spoke to the value of “humaniz[ing] the outcomes on both sides.” A few participants called out the REIA process as one that specifically upheld both accountability and inclusion.

Overall, participants demonstrated significant interest in organizing for the public good and in collaboration with their neighbors, though not all were ready to take on that work. Many participants expressed gratitude for the opportunity to sit with their neighbors and learn, while also recognizing that more work would be ahead if they continued to engage with the issue.

“It’s not fair that everyone else has a gym except us. No one planned for us to have a gym. It makes me feel bad.” —McCutcheon Elementary School Student participant

TAKEAWAYS:

- REIA groups frequently circled back to the desire for more conversations, input, and organized advocacy, though not all were ready to take on that work.
- Transparency, accountability, involvement of those most affected, solidarity, communication, and shared humanity were common themes.

Q14: How will we report back on these outcomes?

In facilitated REIA discussions, not every group reached this question. Participants who did brainstormed a number of ideas, including both reporting actions and communication mechanisms. Possible actions included inviting stakeholders to McCutcheon’s graduation; connecting with the aldermen’s offices; sharing news with Chicago Public Schools, the city, and nearby schools; and direct communication between the school and its stakeholders and parents. Possible communication mechanisms brainstormed included flyers, website, survey, translated materials, printed materials, and polished storytelling. Also noted was the potential value of continuing the REIA process.

“I appreciate this process of focusing on outcomes rather than perception or favorability.” —Participant

TAKEAWAYS:

- Not all groups reached this question but the ones who did brainstormed ideas primarily around reporting actions and communication mechanisms.
- Participants noted the value of continuing the REIA process.

Q15: How will our evaluation impact improvements to the policy?

As in Question 14, not every group reached this portion of the REIA during facilitated discussion. Overall, the participating respondents hoped that the REIA process or any further evaluations would lead to more voices being included in order to learn more about the various interests at play and to further elevate the voices of youth and educators. They also hoped that any solutions in this case could inform future needs for solutions in other instances.

“We need unity and solidarity, to work together with the same voice. We don’t want our children to get less benefit compared with others.”

—McCutcheon Parent Participant

TAKEAWAYS:

- Not every group reached this question but the ones that did focused on including more voices, particularly of youth and educators.
- Participants hoped that improving the process by which decisions were reached would inform future solutions in other instances.

Community Analysis

As discussed throughout this report, the process of engaging in a Racial Equity Impact Assessment for the McCutcheon gym also offered a snapshot of Uptown's current readiness to work together as a community to find equitable solutions to local problems. This section highlights the key takeaways in hopes that they fuel the neighborhood's growth and position Uptown to face future issues with a strong commitment to equity in both word and action.

Uptown neighbors who engaged in the REIA process were passionate about their homes and their community. They wanted opportunities to learn, speak, and act together for a common cause. They easily identified students as an impacted group for the specific issue of the McCutcheon gym, and many tied their later comments back to students. This kind of energy, commitment, and conceptual understanding are necessary preconditions for any future community organizing effort that could put equity at the center of future community problem-solving.

The community's readiness for such problem-solving is hampered, however, by two significant obstacles. First, *individuals'* current readiness to move from understanding racial equity as a concept to applying it varies widely. At the open public REIA community dialogues in particular (as opposed to at the initial community dialogue or later community dialogues with most impacted groups), facilitators noted that readiness levels generally broke along class and color lines, with white participants more likely to dispute that racial equity should be a factor in decision-making and more likely to draw the focus back onto themselves, minimizing the contributions of others. Future productive engagement in multi-racial spaces will be made more difficult without individuals' furthering their personal equity journeys and encouraging their neighbors to do the same. It will take time and effort to translate shared words into a shared understanding of historical and persistent inequities and eventually into shared courses of action.

Second, little community infrastructure appears to be in place to support these equity journeys or any future multi-racial space focused on discussion of racial impact. Prior to the REIA, many Castlewood Terrace neighbors and some involved McCutcheon advocates reported having actively engaged their elected officials and Chicago Public Schools, but other individuals and community organizations had not mobilized. During the REIA, participants often looked to Chicago United for Equity to lead next steps and only sometimes brainstormed actions that they or their affiliated groups could take. Some participants recommended banding together under a shared agenda, but there currently appear to be few points of common consensus strong enough to undergird an effective organizing coalition.

Policymakers and elected officials hold responsibility to convene, facilitate, and engage, but communities also hold power amongst themselves to rally and organize for engagement and accountability. For truly effective and equitable solutions to local issues, common community interest will eventually need to comprise more than what neighbors want from their elected and institutional officials; it will need to comprise a common vision for what neighbors who are committed to racial equity and strengthening community cohesion in Uptown want for each other and themselves.

Recommendations

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PROTECTING MCCUTCHEON POLICY EQUITY

On the grounds of racial equity alone, the recommendation to maintain the current gym construction proposal proves out. Students, who both constitute the directly impacted group and are a historically marginalized and burdened group due to their race and other identities, are anticipated to benefit directly. School leadership, staff, and parents will also benefit. In the qualitative data gathered through REIA community discussions, these populations overall favored the gym construction proposal.

This recommendation in support of a gym constructed on the southern side of the main McCutcheon building is made within the current context of already-allocated dollars and a lawsuit challenging the legality of the specific proposal in question. This recommendation does not exclude other options from also being racially equitable. However, any other option would need to be measured for its racial equity impact on McCutcheon students and, if relevant, other students (for example, if further school construction would mean fewer resources available to other schools). In all cases, REIA participants wanted to know whether the proposal for a gym would equitably address the problem in the way desired by the intended beneficiaries—acknowledging that the only way to answer those questions is to engage with the intended beneficiaries directly.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR INCREASING MCCUTCHEON PROCESS EQUITY

For the actual design and implementation of any proposal to uphold the principles of racial equity, it must deeply engage the community and especially those who would be most impacted. This REIA should not represent the extent of civic engagement on this particular issue. To this point, REIA participants and facilitators provided copious action and process recommendations for their elected officials, Chicago Public Schools, and community leadership for moving forward. Common themes among the recommendations were:

- Intentionally involve those most affected
- Be transparent and hold oneself and others accountable
- Create spaces for two-way communication

Organized below by actor are ways to operationalize the recommendations and their relevant themes, both for the gym proposal and more broadly for any future issue.

All stakeholders	<p>Speak directly with students as the group that stands to gain or lose the most on the issue and are currently least institutionally supported by virtue of their race and other identities.</p> <p>Reach out to parents and community members to increase engagement around the issue with specific focus on engaging those most directly impacted and/or historically most marginalized by virtue of their race and other identities.</p>
McCutcheon community (including students, school staff and teachers, and parents)	<p>Communicate expectations for institutions and leaders on how to engage community and hold them accountable accordingly.</p> <p>Strengthen existing community organizing efforts and organizations.</p>
Uptown residents at large	<p>Consider where on a continuum you and your community are in a racial equity journey and engage in education to further build “equity muscles” (see below for further details).</p> <p>Communicate expectations for institutions and leaders on how to engage community members and communities and hold accountable accordingly.</p> <p>Strengthen existing community organizing efforts and organizations to be grounded in racial equity.</p>
Uptown community organizations	<p>Host more conversations, gather more input, and actively solicit further feedback and perspectives, particularly from those historically most burdened.</p> <p>Within community conversation contexts,</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set norms and expectations for how people will engage with one another that honor different racial identities and lived experiences. • Discuss values and issue alignment so that people can see their shared humanity and experience a feeling of solidarity across racial groups and other identities; any later disagreements can still be grounded in respect and honesty as a result of these upfront efforts. <p>Build strong community organization infrastructure grounded in racial equity that provides leadership and coordination so that it becomes easier for community members to engage and hold others accountable.</p> <p>Engage trusted networks to reach those who may mistrust public institutions or do not have easy access to information about ways to engage (e.g., no Internet or a primary language other than English).</p> <p>Gather qualitative and quantitative data and conduct power analyses to identify who may be most affected and least immediately accessible.</p> <p>Remove barriers to engagement by providing food, child care, translation and interpretation, transportation, variable meeting times to accommodate working schedules, accessible meeting locations (including no ID requirement for access), and incentives such as stipends or gift cards. Consider what participants may be giving up in order to lend their expertise and lived experience and acknowledge accordingly.</p> <p>Help community residents gain more community input and insight into the political process so they are empowered to participate and lead in the process.</p>

Aldermen and Chicago Public Schools	<p>Publicly document and share processes on multiple methods of communication (e.g., social media, flyers, TV ads) so community members are aware of what is happening from the beginning rather than after something has been decided or done.</p> <p>Acknowledge inequities and disparities openly as the basis for engagement before discussions about how to achieve a community goal in an equitable and inclusive manner. The process of striving for racial equity can be as impactful as any proposals made.</p> <p>Host community meetings for facilitated conversations with key stakeholders present, including those historically most marginalized due to race and other identities, discussing alternatives and the viability of those alternatives. Within these community meetings, hosts should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Affirm their commitment to transparency in future decision-making. • Set norms and expectations for how people will engage with one another. • Discuss values and issue alignment so that people can see their shared humanity and experience a feeling of solidarity across racial groups and other identities; any later disagreements can still be grounded in respect and honesty as a result of these upfront efforts. • Define key terms like “equity” to build shared understanding . <p>Engage trusted networks to reach those who may mistrust public institutions or do not have easy access to information about ways to engage (e.g., no Internet, a primary language other than English).</p> <p>Gather qualitative and quantitative data and conduct power analyses to identify who may be most affected and least immediately accessible.</p> <p>Remove barriers to engagement by providing food, child care, translation and interpretation, transportation, variable meeting times to accommodate working schedules, accessible meeting locations (including no ID requirement for access), and incentives such as stipends or gift cards. Consider what participants may be giving up in order to lend their expertise and lived experience and acknowledge accordingly.</p> <p>Help community residents to gain more community input and insight into the political process so they are empowered to participate and lead in the process.</p>
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RECOMMENDATIONS FOR DEEPENING UPTOWN EQUITY EFFORTS

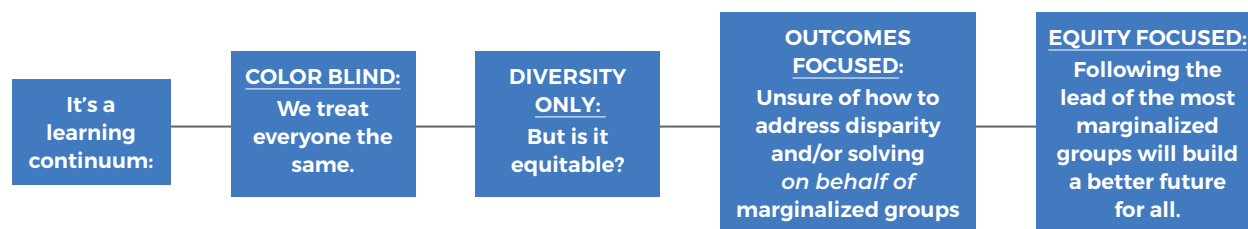
As powerful as transparency, communication, and engagement can be, however, they may not provide all of the necessary tools for Uptown neighbors to center the voices of the most marginalized groups and reliably find equitable solutions to local issues, whether at McCutcheon or elsewhere. Recommendations in an REIA tend to focus on systems, institutions, and policies as the sources of inequity or equity. In this particular REIA, while there are improvements recommended for institutional actors like Chicago Public Schools and aldermen’s offices, a dominant theme also arose concerning the role that individuals play in promoting or inhibiting racial equity within their neighborhood. As a result, this REIA also yielded recommendations related to increasing individuals’ readiness — especially white individuals’ readiness - to join

together on behalf of racial equity.

The individual experiences and education that each neighbor brings into the efforts to center on equity in problem-solving will significantly influence the success of any given effort. REIA community dialogues revealed a range of readiness to center community conversations and activism on the people most affected and most historically disadvantaged among community members. Facilitators reflected that REIA participants ranged from a “diversity only” orientation to an “equity focused” orientation (see graphic below), with a solid foundation for future growth. In addition, they noted that some participants’ overall orientation or intent may have been “outcomes focused” or “equity focused,” but when matters of individual concern were at hand, they resorted to “color blind.” Facilitators reflected that the community at large would benefit from further education and scaffolding before engaging in an REIA open to all members of the public (or a similar effort) again. This education might be individual or communal and will likely vary based on one’s identity and “fluency” in understanding and acting upon issues of equity. Individuals should consider where on a continuum they are in their journey with racial equity and engage in different activities accordingly; the community as a whole also needs to determine in which phase of racial equity work it is and identify opportunities moving forward to build racial equity “muscles.”²⁰

This REIA adapted to meet these different needs by creating distinct spaces for the populations most impacted by the gym proposal and least traditionally represented in decision-making. Discussing policy in diverse neighborhoods requires a fundamentally different approach to facilitation, especially within the context of Chicago’s history of civic exclusion, which has resulted in deep civic trauma. In future civic dialogues, it may be useful to use the methodology of “caucus groups” to set aside some spaces exclusively for communities who have experienced historical harm, while also allowing for other spaces for conversation across groups. If staggered to start with the most impacted groups first, the mixed space dialogue can become a powerful space to share perspectives. However, this first requires a space exclusively designed for groups who have experienced greatest civic trauma to share vulnerability and build trust in the larger civic discussion.

Opportunities for individuals and the community include:



20. Graphic on learning continuum adapted from <http://www.ruthdesouza.com/2019/05/20/cultural-safety-on-healing-the-health-system-in-partnership/>

- Actively seeking out diverse perspectives to learn more about the social-historical context and power dynamics behind inequities in the community, the state, and the country.
- Joining or forming affinity groups to take on challenging equity topics appropriate to group members' current equity readiness levels. These more homogeneous groups can support individuals' equity journeys and build the neighborhood's capacity to eventually engage productively in multi-racial spaces under a united front.
- Joining or forming a racial healing circle.
- Applying the "four levels of racism" to analyze personal and community contexts.
- Asking who is not around the decision-making table.
- "Calling in" (as opposed to the more divisive action of "calling out") those with racial privilege to raise awareness and contribute to others' equity journeys.
- Looking for and creating opportunities to be an ally or accomplice to people of color (and not always the leader), leveraging individual privilege to widen the circle for others.
- Understanding the difference between intent and impact. A policy may be well intended but still cause harm. Similarly, an individual's words or actions may be harmful even if the thought behind them was well meaning. For both harmful policies and individual actions, it is important to acknowledge mistakes and accept responsibility to address the harm caused (e.g. moving from "That's not what I meant, I'm not racist" to "I accept the impact" and evaluate it accordingly).

These recommendations recognize that every community member bears responsibility for educating themselves while also acknowledging that equity journeys take a lifetime and draw upon the expertise and lived experience of others. Equity muscles are strengthened through exercise both by individuals and by communities. Everyone will make mistakes, but acknowledging that while the intent was not to cause harm, that the impact of what was said or done must be owned. Accepting accountability for the harm that was caused, and working to repair relationships with those who were harmed will help people learn how to distinguish "intent" from "impact." This also refers to institutions, systems, and policies. In all cases, outcome matters more than intention.

Though the community currently needs a path to reconciliation around the issue of the gym, Uptown has a promising foundation upon which to build. The energy that participants brought into the community meetings and their interest in engaging with each other on topics of common interest indicates that the community wants to work together but requires further practice and opportunities to do so in equity-centered ways. The different stakeholder groups listed above have the responsibility and opportunity to build the future together and create respect and belonging for each other. Doing so will move Uptown forward on its journey to becoming a more equitable and inclusive community organized to advocate for and uphold a common vision of racial equity.

Conclusion

CUE engaged community residents in an REIA exploring the question of how Uptown neighbors can work together to find equitable solutions for local challenges, using the proposal to build a gym at McCutcheon Elementary as an example. An REIA aims to intentionally focus on advancing racial equity, which can only be done by actively bringing those most impacted to the table and centering those who are most impacted by current and historical inequities. This REIA centered students, since they would be the most directly impacted.

The REIA examined a core equity issue at McCutcheon: the school is one of only five CPS elementary schools without its own gym. The school received \$10 million to build a gym and a five-year grant to support out-of-school-time programming as enabled by the gym. Building a gym will benefit McCutcheon students, who are overwhelmingly low-income and students of color. Participants agreed that students would be directly affected, particularly those traditionally left behind. Participants also identified school staff and parents as indirect beneficiaries.

REIA participants acknowledged that neighboring residents would be impacted, though they did not always agree on whether these impacts would be positive or negative. Throughout the REIA, participants were struck by the racial and income disparities between McCutcheon's student population and the neighboring area. This led to a discussion about the power systems and dynamics at play between the low-income students of color who stood to benefit from a gym, and the higher-income, majority-white neighbors objecting to the gym's construction.

Despite these differences, community members were unified in their desire to be engaged, to know more, and to be involved in the decision-making process. Virtually all stakeholders in this REIA identified transparency as a key theme. Lack of transparency and engagement has characterized much of the process of applying for and receiving funding for a gym thus far. Community participants in the REIA process repeatedly cited a lack of transparency from institutions (e.g., CPS, aldermen) as a key issue impacting the proposal for a gym. Participants also raised several ideas for how the process could be done in a manner that increased community involvement, improved information-sharing, and engaged longer-term concerns about racial equity. There is still opportunity to do so with this proposal and significantly more opportunity for future proposals.

The identities of REIA participants and manners in which they participated provided a glimpse into the current readiness of Uptown to engage in racial equity discussions and to problem solve across stakeholder groups. In this REIA, community members sometimes interpreted data and disparities differently, depending on their stance on the gym, and sometimes had difficulty coming together. While community members were clearly interested in engaging with each other on topics of common interest, they brought different readiness levels into racial equity conversations. Due to these varying levels of readiness, Uptown as a community may benefit from further education and scaffolded equity engagement experiences before undertaking a full-scale REIA in the future.

If neighbors are able to harness their current strengths and build their capacity to take on brave equity work as a whole community, Uptown will be positioned to truly work together to find equitable solutions to any local problems. In the process, it may become a model of how, when a commitment to racial equity grounds decision-making and community engagement from the beginning, the process of striving for racial equity can be as impactful as any proposal itself.

Appendix: Additional Community Input

Over the course of the REIA, participants in community discussions shared significant input outside of the focused scope of this REIA. This appendix collects that input as a testament to the willingness and depth with which participants engaged in the opportunities made available to them. The input is organized by the REIA step in which it was contributed.

Q2: What other issues can this proposal impact?

REIA participants listed immediate physical impacts that building a gym for McCutcheon would have on the surrounding area. Parking may change, green space might decrease, and city services may need to be adjusted (e.g., trash pick-up). There would be construction collateral for the duration of the project, such as noise and traffic, and an impact on neighborhood aesthetics with an addition of a new feature to the landscape.

Q4: How will these groups be involved in decision-making?

Beyond a specific racial equity lens, the number of questions generated and the number of community members who attended different community discussions demonstrated the community's overall wish to be engaged, to know more, and to be involved in decision-making that did not depend upon pitting groups against each other. A community meeting participant indicated, "There weren't community meetings. CPS didn't say much. I'm a CPS parent, and I have issues with CPS, because they don't talk." In response, another participant stated, "Agreed. The homeowners' point of view wouldn't have crossed my mind, but it does need to be taken into account."

Q5. What data will we collect and look at? Why?

Data requested that fell outside of the racial equity REIA scope included:

- What is Castlewood Terrace's historical value and how would building a gym change that value? Would they lose their historical designation?
- What would the impacts on homeowners be? For example, will property values change or how will the green space and/or view change?
- What is the benefit of one location over another? For example, what would it cost to build the gym on the roof?
- How will parking for teachers (on the north side of the school) be impacted, under this or other proposals?
- Where are families sending their children if they are zoned to McCutcheon but their children do not attend McCutcheon?
- What is the level of parent involvement at McCutcheon? What is the level of neighborhood community organizations' involvement at McCutcheon?
- How might a gym impact what the future population of McCutcheon will look like?

Q11: What are different options to make this policy racially equitable?

Within the context of the already defined proposal, community group participants highlighted ways to increase or emphasize the gym addition's positive racial equity impact and promote inclusion. For example, Alderman Capplemen's office mentioned that the lawsuit had halted the engagement process but that there could be additional opportunities for community involvement and discussion of how the gym could benefit older students, who would otherwise still have to travel from their "annex" classrooms to the main site gym. Multiple groups discussed the potential for using the gym for a variety of purposes, including offering services for the whole community. Some commented on the gym's ability to create opportunities for low-income people, people of color, and refugees. Community group participants were interested in showing the neighborhood's support for the project, with one participant stating, "I'd be willing to come in and pitch in an hour on the weekends, help with construction." Occasionally, discussion of the gym's inclusivity sparked broader comments on inclusivity within the full school, as when a group of parents of color named how much they value a school without racism, and how their children were loved and treated fairly at McCutcheon.

Some public community dialogue participants advocated for modifications to the gym addition proposal for the sake of minimizing the proposal's burdens (e.g., moving the gym's location to the north side or roof of the school). As one woman described, "Everything has a positive and a negative. Someone is going to lose. Can you make the gym small enough so there's still room? Maybe compromise? Maybe we could all have something to look forward to." These suggestions could be appropriate for consideration in general decision-making about the project. Within the context of an REIA, however, they fall short because they fail to center those who have historically experienced the greatest burdens.

Some Castlewood resident participants went beyond proposing modifications to the gym proposal and advocated for a more apparently radical solution altogether. The most frequently suggested alternative was to build an entirely new state-of-the-art school with a single campus for all McCutcheon students. One participant said, "They should just build a bigger school instead of a gym, because the school is really tiny, and the walls are not walls. They're just plastic, and I could knock them down." Another opined that McCutcheon lacks "real classrooms." Yet parent and student respondents, far from considering the current McCutcheon Elementary to be inherently flawed, described a school that students traveled from up and down the Red Line to attend, with multiple students stating that they liked McCutcheon more than previous schools.

Racial equity requires centering the voices of the most impacted populations in the decisions made for and about them. According to this definition, the alternative proposals originating with Castlewood residents alone do not increase racial equity for McCutcheon students, at least not in their current iterations. At the same time, the alternatives are not inherently racially inequitable, and they could merit further consideration if positively led by and centered on those most impacted. In such a case, the central racial equity question would shift away from McCutcheon's unique inequity - its lack of a gym in the middle of a school system that otherwise provides gyms for nearly all students, regardless of need - and would instead become a matter of systemic inequity. In a district as structurally under-resourced as CPS, many CPS schools and communities could lay claim to deserving a brand-new building. Any advocates for alternatives

involving wholesale relocation or construction of a new school would have to make the case for McCutcheon, rather than any other school, and would face greater resource challenges: a brand-new school would cost significantly more than a gym addition (for which funds have already been allocated) and would likely require greater and more sustained advocacy to achieve. Solely advocating for a new school would also mean turning down currently available resources, failing to make a substantial improvement to the McCutcheon student experience even as larger improvements are necessary to address the systemic needs of CPS. Overall, consideration of building a new school using an REIA framework would necessitate different data and context to examine the core questions of benefits, burdens and policy alternatives across an under-resourced school district.

Q12: How will we evaluate the impacts of your solution?

The youngest student participants in the REIA drew a picture of how they envisioned their school community if the gym problem were fixed. Significant features of the picture include the McCutcheon school house at the top of the frame, Trump Tower on the left for geographical orientation, multiple neighborhood buildings containing many residences (as evidenced by the many windows) in the middle of the frame, and a red velvet rope cordoning off access to a neighborhood mansions on the right.