

# \$10 million Chicago Prize finalists want to revitalize 6 South, West side neighborhoods

Teams from Auburn-Gresham, Little Village, Englewood, North Lawndale, Austin and South Chicago pitched new development programs boosting economic development in their neighborhoods.

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Bryan Traubert, trustee of the Pritzker Traubert Foundation, before announcing the six finalists on Wednesday for a \$10 million community development grant supporting South and West side neighborhoods. *Jake Wittich / Sun-Times*

Teams from six South and West side neighborhoods are in the running for \$10 million to fund a variety of proposals — from clean-energy projects to affordable housing initiatives — that would create economic opportunities in their areas.

More than 80 teams pitched their project ideas to the Pritzker Traubert Foundation for its Chicago Prize Challenge. The competition's six finalists — who all won \$100,000 planning grants — were announced Wednesday evening at the Hatchery in East Garfield Park.

“We invited every community on the South and West sides to tell us what they think should happen in their neighborhoods,” said Bryan Traubert, a foundation trustee and husband of former Commerce Secretary Penny Pritzker. “We wanted to be more equitable, expand our reach and be open to new ideas and organizations we didn’t know and haven’t worked with before.”

The finalists included teams of grassroots organizations from Auburn-Gresham, Little Village, Englewood, North Lawndale, Austin and South Chicago. The \$10 million prize winner will be announced in the spring.



The Auburn-Gresham community development team accepts its Chicago Prize Challenge finalist award from Bryan Traubert and Penny Pritzker of the Pritzker Traubert Foundation on Wednesday. *Jake Wittich / Sun-Times*

Fourteen other teams will each receive a \$10,000 grant from the foundation supporting their proposals.

The Auburn-Gresham team proposed turning a long-vacant office building into a health center; converting a nine-acre brownfield into a renewable energy and urban farming campus; and repurposing a former school into a center with affordable housing, job training and business incubation services.

“Bringing these projects to life will bring living-wage jobs and build wealth for residents in our community,” said Carlos Nelson CEO of the Greater Auburn-Gresham Development Corporation.

Finalists from Little Village proposed redeveloping a vacant fire station into a commercial kitchen for food entrepreneurs, community meeting space and urban farming center.

“Little Village is such a food-centric neighborhood, so this allows us to focus on what we’re good at as a community,” said Kim Wasserman, executive director at the Little Village Environmental Justice Organization.



Bryan Traubert and Penny Pritzker of the Pritzker Traubert Foundation award a team of Englewood community organizations as finalists in their Chicago Prize Challenge on Wednesday. *Jake Wittich / Sun-Times*

Rami Nashashibi, executive director of the Inner-City Muslim Action Network, said his team’s proposal for the neighborhood would help advance the grassroots work that’s been done in the neighborhood for decades.

His team proposed transforming the intersection of 63rd and Racine by turning a two-story building into a food co-op, building a new mixed-use development and repurposing a vacant school into a local recycling center.

The North Lawndale team proposed multiple developments, including a new Mount Sinai surgical center, affordable housing on vacant lots and a community hub of workforce programs, social enterprises and pop-up retail spaces.

“This could revitalize North Lawndale with a really thoughtful way, and I’m proud of our collective action toward our future,” said Brenda Palms Barber, president and CEO of the North Lawndale Employment Network.



team of North Lawndale community organizations are recognized as finalists Wednesday by Bryan Traubert and Penny Pritzker in their foundation's Chicago Prize Challenge. *Jake Wittich / Sun-Times*

For the Austin neighborhood, groups proposed creating a new early learning center; a health and recreation facility; education opportunities at Austin College and Career Academy; affordable housing and a business incubator. Many of the developments would be built on vacant and scattered city-owned lots.

The final team, of South Chicago, proposed several projects to revitalize stretches of east 91st and 92nd streets near the lakefront. The nine projects would create new affordable housing, multi-family units, a grocery store, arts and recreation centers and a workforce development cafe.

“Our community has long been seen as the forgotten land, so this support will reinvigorate a small-but-mighty section of our neighborhood,” said Angel Hurlock, executive director of Claretian Associates.

Mayor Lori Lightfoot congratulated the six finalists, praising each team for bringing various community groups together to solve problems in their neighborhoods.

“This is about revitalizing and capturing the energy of a community and thinking about how to have open spaces, intergenerational gatherings, affordable housing and the support that’s essential to uplift and sustain its quality of life,” Lightfoot said.