



AUSTIN, GARFIELD PARK, NORTH LAWNSDALE

Garfield Park Residents Tell Developers They Want A Grocery Store To Replace Closed Aldi

Two developers met with Garfield Park neighbors to discuss plans for the former Aldi's, which left in 2021.



Trey Arline

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Credit: Trey Arline/Block Club Chicago

Developers listening to community feedback regarding a new grocery store proposal in the area.

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GARFIELD PARK — Developers looking to bring a grocery store to the West Side met with neighbors this week, asking what they'd like to see at a vacant Aldi location now owned by the city.

Two potential development teams met with residents Monday at the Golden Dome, 100 N. Central Park Ave., where neighbors overwhelmingly said getting a grocery store is their top priority.

Aldi, which was at 3835 W. Madison Ave., abruptly closed two years ago, angering neighbors who depended on it. The city bought the property to convert it into another grocery store.

Two teams are vying for the city's blessing to develop the site: Community Builders with architecture firms Canopy & Brook Architecture; and WestGate Partners with architect Valerio Dewalt Train and Latent Design. Monday's meeting focused on introducing them to neighbors and getting feedback on what should replace the Aldi.

Residents told officials and the potential developers they'd prefer the Aldi be replaced by a traditional supermarket, as opposed to a specialty market or public market.

Ayesha Jaco, executive director of West Side United, said a grocery store will complement plans to build the Sankofa Wellness Village along the Madison and Pulaski corridor. The \$50 million community project aims to address health issues in Garfield Park by providing better health care, grocery options and education.

"This all could be the most substantial investments in these communities since the '68 riots," Jaco said. "I hope to outlive my grandparents and see my grandkids blow 85 candles out of their birthday cake."

Residents said they hope developers continue to show up and actively engage with the community.

"Our people are hurting. Our community ain't no joke," resident Tamara Draper said. "I want to hear from more young people. They need to be recognized and a part of these meetings."

Developers told neighbors their input is paramount to the success of the project — and said many of them have a personal stake in the area. Jaime Torres Carmona, of Canopy, and Jim Webb, of TruDelta, grew up in North Lawndale and Garfield Park, respectively.

Webb was also one of the developers on the Hub32 project, a \$47.2 million affordable housing development near the Kedzie Green Line station.

"We are from this community. If we are going to build, why not build it ourselves?" Webb said. "We are actually about this. I don't get paid to be at these tables. We are out here because this is our community."

Canopy is a Chicago-based architectural firm that focuses on designing affordable homes with a positive environmental impact.

Brook Architecture is a Chicago-based firm that provides designs for homes and commercial properties, such as Roosevelt Square on the Near West Side. Valerio Dewalt Train is a firm that has designed various projects ranging from academic buildings such as the Gordon Parks Art Hall to housing in Chicago, Denver, San Francisco, and Palo Alto.

Latent Design is a Chicago-based firm that focuses on urban design in underserved neighborhoods. It created a grocery store on the West Side called the Forty Acres Fresh Market in Austin.

James Harris, supervising planner for the Department of Planning and Development, said the next community meeting on the project will be in June.

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