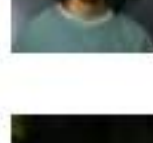


HYDE PARK, WOODLAWN, SOUTH SHORE

# This South Shore Initiative Aims To Get Neighbors Invested In Projects Along 71st Street

South Shore's CorridorLive plan will encourage developments led and owned by locals. "If you don't have ownership, you can't really control what your neighborhood looks like," business leaders said.



By Maxwell Evans

5 hours ago



Pedestrians walk along 71st Street in South Shore on Aug. 19, 2021. Credit: Colin Boyle/Block Club Chicago

**SOUTH SHORE** — Diverse architecture, solid transit options, health and wellness services and civically engaged residents all find a home along 71st Street in South Shore.

Those features make the corridor prime for neighbors to invest in as local business leaders push for revitalization, they said while announcing a development plan Thursday.

The CorridorLive plan to guide 71st Street's development is set to be unveiled this summer. It's led by the South Shore Chamber, the chamber's community development corporation and the neighborhood's special service area, Special Service Area No. 42.

The full plan will lay out a framework for resident-led and -owned business developments along 71st Street from Stony Island Avenue to Yates Boulevard. It will also propose a consistent branding identity for the corridor, similar to Special Service Area No. 61's Downtown Hyde Park initiative.

"This strategy is really designed to strategically acquire the commercial assets, because what happens is, if you don't have ownership, you can't really control what your neighborhood looks like," said Jonathan Scott, director of real estate development for the chamber's community development corporation.

The plan is expected to include a formal land use strategy; a brand guide with a new district name, logo and other identifiers; and renderings for up to six potential redevelopments at "catalyst sites" in the corridor.

Some elements of the project — such as breakdowns of the corridor's available retail space, walkability and existing visual character — were shared Thursday at an open house announcing the plan.

The full plan will be unveiled Aug. 24 at the [South Shore Summer Fest](#), officials said.

About 40 residents attended Thursday's open house to give feedback on various things, such as how land should be redeveloped or where building and storefront improvements should take place.

To complete a survey to inform the CorridorLive strategy, [click here](#).

The plan's top priority area is centered on Jeffery Boulevard and is home to a [long-delayed proposal for an entertainment center](#), the existing [Jeffery Plaza shopping center](#) and a Walgreens that [closed earlier this year](#).

The former Walgreens site is under contract to be sold, while the pharmacy chain maintains its lease at the property through 2031, chamber Executive Director Tonya Trice said Thursday.

The second priority area runs from Paxton Avenue to Yates Boulevard, while the third covers Stony Island to Constance avenues.



South Shore residents Lydia and Royce Strahan (foreground, in white) place pins on where they would like to prioritize building and storefront improvements along 71st Street during an open house Thursday on the CorridorLive development plan. Credit: Maxwell Evans/Block Club Chicago

South Shore is no stranger to similar planning efforts. Locals have for years strategized on how to fill commercial vacancies, deal with absent landlords and capitalize on nearby megadevelopments like the Obama Presidential Center and the Illinois Quantum and Microelectronics Park.

The stretch was key to the neighborhood's [quality of life plan released in 2022](#), while the Plan Commission approved [a corridor study for 75th and 79th streets](#) in 2020.

"The difference [from past plans] is, this time, we are bringing in external partners to help move this initiative along, and having conversations about raising dollars to implement and execute this plan," Trice said.

CorridorLive is being developed with help from nonprofit Community Desk Chicago. The South Shore Chamber also announced a [community investment vehicle](#) in 2023 with support from the nonprofit, which aims to raise about \$15 million from neighbors to buy and control real estate in the neighborhood.

The development plan "is intended to gain control of vacant and blighted buildings and support an orchestrated effort to get these entrepreneurs, who may not be able to do it without us, into these spaces," Community Desk CEO Ja'Net DeFell [told the Center for Community Investment last year](#).

Residents pooled their money to [buy and renovate a vacant mixed-use building](#) at 71st Street and Bennett Avenue in 2021. An 11-unit, mixed-use building at 1735 E. 71st St. is also under contract to be "owned, managed and controlled" by South Shore residents, Trice said last week.

CorridorLive, as presented to neighbors Thursday, is an "amazing" and "definitely needed" project, said Marcia Wade Talbert, a South Shore resident who lives near 79th Street.

Consistent communication with residents and leaders across the neighborhood — not just along 71st Street — will be needed to ensure the effects of development and investment are felt as widely as possible, Wade Talbert said.

"They've broken South Shore into so many different wards, it's difficult to communicate plans from place to place," Wade Talbert said. "What [the CorridorLive backers] are saying is correct. What happens here needs to be under the control of the residents — not big businesses, not landlords who aren't trying to work with the residents."

"These folks need jobs invested in the community. These folks need something to do in order to bring back to their community a sense of pride."

Participation in CorridorLive or in the community investment vehicle "can be used to refine their business acumen in a way where they don't feel like they're forced to participate in the underground economy," said Tewodros Josef Crawford, director of Black Culture Wellness.

"It's just about engaging [them] and making sure that folks know there's a pathway for them to participate at a real level — at an ownership level, at a boss level — and then providing them the supports that they need, if they need any, to be able to sustain."



A sign for South Shore along 71st Street on Aug. 19, 2021. Credit: Colin Boyle/Block Club Chicago

Several attendees on Thursday called for people who loiter and sell drugs and loose cigarettes at 71st Street and Jeffery Boulevard to be removed, saying their presence could scare away the business investments and foot traffic the plan aims to attract.

When asked to consider how the people hanging around 71st and Jeffery are also community members, some attendees said the plan could offer them opportunities to participate in the corridor's development.

"Economic development is all tied up in this," said South Shore resident Royce Strahan. "There needs to be more activations so people in the community have something to do on a regular basis, as opposed here to what we see now, where people are just hanging out for hours and hours on the corner."

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