

RENEWAL



A POAH CHICAGO NEWSLETTER

From the POAH Chicago Office

While Woodlawn's revival and future are the subject of so much media interest, too often what's missed are the efforts and achievements of those who have shouldered the latest successes. It's time to change that.

Among those who need to be remembered and honored is Mattie Butler. Long before the Obama Presidential Center came along, before the Community Benefits Agreement debates, Woodlawn East Community and Neighbors (WECAN) founder and leader Mattie Butler was fighting for affordable housing here. Decades later, she's still at it.

Over the decades WECAN transformed four buildings (that are now in the shadow of the planned presidential center) into 135 apartments for people who otherwise would likely be relegated to substandard housing, or even homelessness.

In 2017, ever concerned with the future of Woodlawn and its people, Butler took several important steps. WECAN sold 106 of its apartments to POAH, knowing that our organization is committed to long-term affordability of our housing. At the same time, the proceeds from the sale assured WECAN that it could continue its advocacy work long into the future on stable financial footing.

Most recently, Butler led the University of Chicago's Harris School of Public Policy in creating a parcel-by-parcel survey of all land publicly or privately owned in Woodlawn.

The resulting [“Woodlawn Housing Data Project”](#) provides a treasure trove of data that is already informing Chicago's approach to development in and around Woodlawn. The project, designed by Butler to allow for development without displacement, proposes nearly a dozen policy recommendations to protect long-time homeowners and renters, while charting a path for redeveloping Woodlawn's many vacant parcels of land.

Because of her inspiring vision and work, POAH will soon be renaming the properties we purchased from WECAN at 6146 S. Kenwood and 6230 S. Dorchester — The Mattie Butler Apartments. Currently undergoing extensive renovations, the buildings will be completed and celebrated in Spring 2020 with a ribbon cutting and plaque attachment in her honor. Before and after that, though, Butler's Woodlawn Housing Data Project will continue WECAN's successful efforts to maintain diversity and affordability within development.

WECAN has been a tremendous ally for POAH since our arrival in Woodlawn 10-plus years ago. It is our great pleasure to honor that partnership.

- Bill Eager

Senior Vice President, Chicago Area,
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