

## **University and former Chicago Mayor Daley launch new collaboration with City of Gary**

The University of Chicago, the University of Chicago Harris School of Public Policy, Chicago Harris Distinguished Senior Fellow Richard M. Daley and Mayor Karen Freeman-Wilson of Gary, Ind. on Sept. 25 announced an innovative collaboration among public officials, scholars and students to develop and apply creative public policy initiatives to help revitalize Gary.

Growing out of the relationship between Mayor Daley, who led Chicago for 22 years, and Mayor Freeman-Wilson, the new collaboration will apply University scholarship and research, along with student energy and ideas, to the distinctive public policy obstacles that Gary faces. Chicago Harris graduate students will be directly engaged in the process — a unique opportunity to get hands-on experience tackling real-world issues.

“The University of Chicago’s commitment to this project is part of its larger program for engaging with surrounding communities, to both benefit the community through our expertise and enhance the education of our students and the work of our faculty,” said University President Robert J. Zimmer. “As a major urban research university, we can bring our scholarship to bear on issues of great importance to our cities and advance the work of faculty and students committed to understanding and helping to address urban concerns. The partnership with Gary and the engagement of two eminent leaders of American cities offers particular promise.”

Located just 20 miles from the University, Gary is fighting to reverse declines in employment, population and infrastructure brought on by the diminished presence of the steel industry that once helped it thrive. The collaboration will give Chicago Harris students, under the guidance of Daley, Chicago Harris faculty and Gary officials the opportunity to directly contribute to the research, design, implementation and analysis of policies.

To support this work and related initiatives, a new fund is being created that will be held and managed by the University.

The idea for the project began to take shape after Freeman-Wilson reached out to Daley last winter for his counsel on some of the Gary’s difficulties. Their discussions led to Freeman-Wilson’s participation in Daley’s speaker series at Chicago Harris on urban policy. Engaging Chicago Harris students to work with Gary officials seemed like a natural collaboration to both mayors.

“As a new mayor, I consider myself very fortunate to have the wise counsel of a distinguished public servant such as Mayor Daley,” said Freeman-Wilson. “From the city’s perspective, we are fortunate to have the energy and innovative ideas of students at the University of Chicago’s Harris School of Public Policy. This is another partnership that assists us in our efforts to move Gary forward, while providing students with an opportunity for practical application of theory. It also allows the University to extend its work beyond the confines of its walls. This is a prime example of a scenario where everyone wins.”

“I try to convey the importance of how business, civic and academic leaders can work together to shape a city’s future when I’m with my students,” said Daley, who is leading a class of graduate students as part of his distinguished senior fellowship, a five-year appointment started in 2011 after leaving office. “Mayor Freeman-Wilson’s deep-seated passion for turning around her city is inspirational. It is invaluable for future public policy leaders to learn from such a highly respected and dedicated public servant, while also garnering first-hand experience in helping tackle the challenges facing Gary.”

Students have already started some initial work on a number of different policy issues this spring and summer, including the development of data collection strategies and policy research to help address the thousands of abandoned buildings in Gary. They have also examined Gary’s transportation issues, waste conversion, its airport and provided background research to help guide the city as it prepares to develop its 2013 budget.

“The Revitalization Project, like other experiential learning opportunities at Chicago Harris, gives our students a chance to develop and implement policies in the real world, outside the academic setting,” said Chicago Harris Dean Colm O’Muircheartaigh. “We are grateful to both Mayor Daley and Mayor Freeman-Wilson for providing this extraordinary and unique opportunity. Experiences like those offered through the Revitalization Project will prove invaluable for our students — the public leaders of tomorrow — as they learn how to forge evidence-based policies that address contemporary urban challenges.”

This new collaboration project with the City of Gary joins the University’s growing roster of initiatives in urban education, urban health, economic development, the arts and similar topics of importance to cities everywhere.