



**ULI Chicago YL Small Group Discussion Series**  
**INVEST South/West: Englewood Connect**  
**August 24, 2021**

ULI Chicago Young Leader's hosted their third and final session of a three-part Small Group Discussion Series, "INVEST South/West: Englewood Connect." INVEST South/West is a community improvement initiative under Mayor Lori E. Lightfoot to direct resources toward 10 communities on Chicago's South and West Sides. Guest speakers were Zeb McLaurin, *CEO & Founder*, McLaurin Development Partners and Dawveed Scully, *Associate Director & Senior Urban Designer*, Skidmore, Owings & Merrill LLP (SOM).

Zeb McLaurin kicked off the final series with introductions and a high-level overview of Chicago's INVEST South/West initiative. Zeb and Dawveed took a deeper dive into the initiative, RFP for Englewood Phase II, community impact and the overall pros and cons of taking on this RFP as a developer. The release for Englewood Phase II was in August 2021 with a completed RFP submission date right before Thanksgiving. With the short timeline provided, this caused an expedited process of creating a solid team, strategy, and plan to present on how to further reactivate the Englewood area with city resources. This team, that consisted of McLaurin Development Partners, Farpoint Development, SOM Architects and TnS Studio, came together to create "Englewood Connect LLC," winner of Englewood Phase II RFP.

Englewood Connect LLC strategized and presented an innovative and unique approach to reactivate the Englewood Phase II, ultimately being the Englewood fire station adjacent from Englewood Phase I development consisting of Whole Foods, Chipotle and Starbucks. As opposed to going with the city's initial want for housing at the Englewood Phase II site, Englewood Connect LLC proposed use for "Eco-food hub and Pop-Up Development consisting of renovating the historic Firehouse into a Commercial Kitchen and Event Space with addition: and new build Community Space featuring local businesses framing a lively year-round plaza with ample gathering and open space." This was a plan created from the interaction with the community and community leaders to see the true need of Englewood to build capacity and resources for businesses to help create other developments and mixed housing stock in the area.

In conclusion, Englewood Connect LLC is in the final stages of finalizing Englewood Phase II project with current projected renovation completion for 2<sup>nd</sup> half of 2022. To say the least, there's a lot of excitement around this need for reactivating Englewood and its entrepreneurs with this Englewood Fire Station renovation. We look forward to hearing and discussing more about future Chicago initiatives on the South/West sides for the 10 designated communities selected.

*Summary written by Ja'Shar Hartley, CEO, Property Blessings LLC and Financial Analyst, Cinnaire*