2025 Impact Report

WOOD ST COLLECTIVE

Confronting Food Insecurity on the South Side

Since 2020, fifteen national grocery chains like Aldi, Whole Foods, and Walmart have closed permanently on Chicago's South Side. When folks are further isolated from big-box grocers, alternatives like fast food and corner stores become the most convenient options for a meal.

Food apartheid is a health crisis that has worsened since 2020, leading to malnourishment, obesity, and child hunger. In 2024, it was reported that one in six children on the South Side experienced malnourishment, and this year federal legislation will cut SNAP funding for over 2.5 million people nationwide, likely impacting thousands if not tens of thousands of Chicagoans. Increased food security is urgently needed in low-income neighborhoods.

Wood St. Collective believes that the local food movement – one that is empowered by urban agriculture – can provide reliable, affordable fresh produce.

A Year of Breaking Ground: Englewood's Newest Urban Farm

We began construction of our urban farm and greenhouse at 6234 S. Wolcott Ave., completing a commercial-size greenhouse, a brick pavilion area and pathway.

2025 Key Milestones:

- Completed ChiBlockBuilder process and received deed from City of Chicago.

- Raised over $350,000 for site construction.

- Organized 2 "Neighborhood Open Forums" to hear resident feedback on site design.

- Hired 5 Englewood-based contractors for site work including landscaping, masonry, fencing, and install of municipal water and electric.

Co-Creation with Englewood Residents

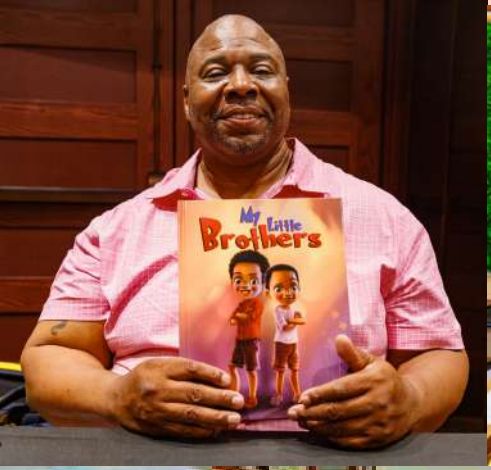
Understanding the community's wants and needs was a key part of the design of our Urban Farm. Wood St. Collective hosted four Neighborhood Forums from 2024 to 2025 and asked for input from residents and community leaders.

With attendance from over 120 residents and 19 community organizations, we curated the site design for safety, community activity, and shared power.

A Pillar of Connection: An Inviting, Colorful Space

In 2026, we will further enhance the urban farm with additions like murals, mosaics, family seating, and shaded areas. When finished, Wood St. Collective will invite neighbors and families to relax at the green space and attend upcoming events.

Physically located within one block of a high school, elementary school, and Chicago Public Library, we want to foster unity and neighborhood connection.



First Annual Englewood Summer Book Fest

Achieving Literary Excellence for All

Located at Lindblom Math and Science Academy, the Englewood Summer Book Fest works with community partners to promote a love of reading and fill up to 2,000 student backpacks with age-appropriate books. The event includes a book vendor market of children's books authors, Chicago-based authors, and independent bookstores; and a programming stage offer a robust schedule of panel discussions, poetry readings, and children's programming.

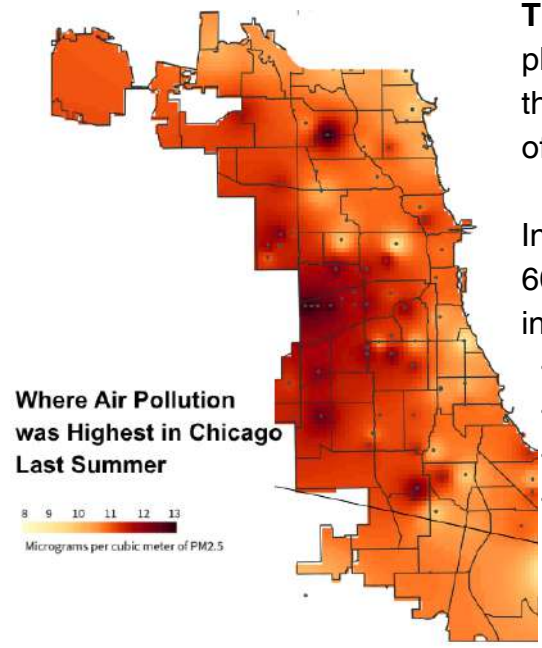
Our impact:

- Reach students at the age when they are developmentally ready to read independently + nurture a love for reading.
- Improve reading scores among Chicago youth by enhancing their cultural and educational experience.
- Build relationships of mutual support with schools, libraries, parents, and literary and community orgs.
- Introduce students to published authors and the world of literature.
- Prevent summer 'brain melt' with stimulated creative thinking.
- Connect students to literary orgs they can engage after the Book Fest.
- Host programs that teach students to write creatively.

Success Story: Recent Launch of Urban Forestry Campaign

The South and West Side Communities of Chicago have worse health outcomes because of a larger industrial footprint, fewer parks, and less tree cover. *There are summer days when you see and feel the smog.*

The map below shows where people are most affected:



Trees are critical infrastructure that, planted in mass, will clean the air, reduce the temperature, and remove metric tons of CO2 from the air annually.

In 2025, Wood St. Collective planted over 60 trees with over 15 community partners including:

- The Montessori School of Englewood
- Earle STEM Elementary
- St. Benedict Academy
- Inter-city Muslim Action Network (IMAN)

We also offered 7 scholarships to youth to become take the Openlands Treekeeper Course and Certification.

Our goal is to plant 1,000 trees by 2028.

Thank you to Our Sponosors!

- City of Chicago Department of Business Affairs and Consumer Protection
- City of Chicago Department of Cultural Affairs and Special Events
- Neighborspace
- Chicago Region Food System Fund
- Morton Arboretum
- Illinois Food Movement Fund
- Association of Urban Agriculture
- Faith in Place
- University of Illinois Extension School
- Conagra Food Brands
- Chicago Food Policy Action Council
- Lumpkin Family Foundation
- United Way of Metro Chicago

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www.woodstcollective.org