Seven miles west of the Loop on the western border of Chicago, Austin is the largest community area in the city in terms of both size and population. Long a middle-class community with many residents who commuted to work downtown, Austin’s demographic, like those of other West Side neighborhoods, began to shift in the 1960s from mostly white to mostly African American, although its population has not declined as much as others’. A neighborhood centerpiece, Columbus Park, drew people to the area after its opening in 1920, deteriorated through the 1960s and was extensively restored in 1992.

In 2015, the Austin Coming Together network of residents and business owners released its “Agenda 2025” plan for coordinating community development and improving Austin’s quality of life over the next decade. The plan aims to improve four indicators of community well-being: the percentage of third-grade students in Austin public schools who meet or exceed state reading and math standards; the number of families living below the federal poverty line; the rate of violent crime; and median residential property values.

We are a very strong community. We are a small business-based community in that we have quite a few vibrant small businesses within the ward. We also host one of the largest corporations in the country... Mars, the makers of M&Ms.

— RUMC focus group participant from Austin
Who lives here?

- **97,997** people live in Austin. The average household size is **3.0** people, compared to an average Chicago household size of **2.6** people.¹

- Austin is more densely populated than Chicago overall, with a population per square mile of **13,711.0** people compared to **11,841.8** people per square mile in Chicago.²

- Between 2000 and 2010, Austin’s population decreased by **19.3%**, placing it in the highest quartile of population decline among the communities served by Rush. In Chicago overall, the population decreased by **6.9%** during the same period.³

**RACE AND ETHNICITY⁴**

The population in Austin is mostly African American.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race/Ethnicity</th>
<th>Austin</th>
<th>Chicago</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>0.9%</td>
<td>1.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
<td>5.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic/Latino</td>
<td>9.4%</td>
<td>28.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>4.5%</td>
<td>32.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>84.7%</td>
<td>31.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**AGE³**

The population in Austin is very slightly older than the city of Chicago average, with a median age of **34.1** as compared to the citywide average of **33.3**.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>Austin</th>
<th>Chicago</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>19-0</td>
<td>30.5%</td>
<td>25.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-34</td>
<td>20.5%</td>
<td>27.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35-49</td>
<td>19.2%</td>
<td>20.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50-64</td>
<td>18.5%</td>
<td>16.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65-79</td>
<td>8.6%</td>
<td>7.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>80+</td>
<td>2.6%</td>
<td>2.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

HIC survey participants asked how much neighbors trust and look out for each other: **53.4%** said “a little/none/not at all.”
What are the potential barriers to good health?

HARDSHIP INDEX
Austin’s hardship index is 73, based on the following statistics (Austin at left, Chicago at right):

CHILD OPPORTUNITY INDEX
The Child Opportunity Index (COI) assigns a “low” ranking to Austin’s educational opportunities; “low” to health and environmental opportunities; and “very low” to social and economic opportunities. This gives the neighborhood an overall COI ranking of “very low.”

LACK OF HEALTH INSURANCE
Austin residents have health insurance at a lower rate than residents of the rest of the city. Chicago’s percentage of people without insurance is significantly higher than the percentage in the U.S. overall, which is 13.3% of the population.

CRIME
Austin is in the second quartile of communities served by Rush for its rate of crimes against people, including simple assault, aggravated assault and homicide.

Obamacare and CountyCare did a lot for opening doors for people who previously didn’t have those types of services.

– RUMC focus group participant from Austin
What is the impact of the barriers?

YEARS OF POTENTIAL LIFE LOST

Austin ranks 13th among Chicago’s 77 neighborhoods in total number of years of potential life lost annually. Annual years of potential life lost per 100,000 residents aged 75 and younger due to selected causes of death: 14,206.

What resources make life better?

COMMUNITY ASSETS

Some of Austin’s community assets include the following:

**Hospital**
- Loretto Hospital

**Grocery store**
- Aldi

**Public parks**
- Austin Park
- Austin Town Hall Park
- Columbus Park
- Cottonwood Playlot Park
- Moore Park
- Hubbard Playlot Park
- Kinzie Parkway Park
- Levin Park
- Sweet Clover Playlot Park

**Pharmacy**
- Walgreens

**Schools**
- Little Folks Cottage Kindergarten & Nursery (Private, PK, K)
- Little Leaders of Tomorrow (Private, Daycare, PK, K)
- West Austin Development Center (Private, Daycare, PK-K)
- George Rogers Clark, Depriest, Ellington, Howe, Leland, Spencer (Public, PK-8)
- Plato Learning Academy (Contract, K-8)
- Catalyst-Circle Rock (Charter, K-8)
- Chicago Jesuit Academy (Roman Catholic, All Boys, 6-9)
- Michele Clark Magnet High School (Magnet, 6-12)
- Douglass (Public, 9-12)
- Austin Poly, Austin Business and Entrepreneurship Academy, VOISE (Magnet, 9-12)
- Christ the King Jesuit College Preparatory School (Roman Catholic, 9-12)
- Academy of Scholastic Achievement (Charter, 10-12)

**Churches with which Rush has affiliations**
- Helping Hand M.B. Church
- Hope Community Church
- No. 2 New Mt. Sinai M.B. Church

**Neighborhood organization**
- Austin Coming Together
ENDNOTES

1 MetroPulse Community Data Snapshot, Austin. www.cmap.illinois.gov/.
3 MetroPulse Community Data Snapshot, Austin.
4 MetroPulse Community Data Snapshot, Austin.
5 MetroPulse Community Data Snapshot, Austin.
6 data.cityofchicago.org/Health-Human-Services/hardship-index/792q-4jtu.
8 www.chicagohealthatlas.org/place/austin.
9 www.chicagohealthatlas.org/place/austin.
11 data.cityofchicago.org/Health-Human-Services/Public-Health-Statistics-Selected-underlying-cause/6cj-r444.