

Shehara Waas

Civic Engagement. Participatory Action
Research. Policy Analysis

3616 N Pine Grove Ave, Chicago, IL 60613
www.linkedin.com/in/swaas
sheharamwaas@gmail.com
734-709-6567

EDUCATION

Aug 2014 - Jun 2016

Master of Public Policy (MPP)
University of Chicago Harris School
of Public Policy
Chicago, IL

Sep 2009 - May 2013

B.S., Environmental Science
Concentration in Environmental
Justice
University of Michigan
Ann Arbor, MI

LEADERSHIP & CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

Jan 2020 - Present

2020 Fellow
Chicago United for Equity (CUE)
Selection to 9 month cohort-based
racial equity fellowship; will
advance a project that explores the
development of a community-
informed reparations policy
framework for the City of Chicago

Jan 2019 - Present

Working Group Lead
**Equity Committee, Metropolitan
Planning Council**
Leadership on organizational
change working group to foster
professional development
opportunities for staff to increase
awareness of
race/identity/privilege

WORK EXPERIENCE

METROPOLITAN PLANNING COUNCIL (MPC) **Research Manager**

Jun 2019 - Present

Lead visioning, scoping and execution of participatory action
research projects in service of MPC's programmatic areas; focus on
racial justice and community development

- *Our Great Rivers Chicago*: Calumet Industrial Corridor
Databook
 - Alongside Southeast Chicago community partners,
produce a "Databook" synthesizing environmental justice
data to inform the Department of Planning and
Development's Industrial Corridor Modernization
Process
 - Manage data analysis, stakeholder facilitation,
and communications strategy for the Calumet
Industrial Corridor Working Group

Research Associate

Nov 2016 - Jun 2019

Executed data collection, analysis, and dissemination of research
findings in service of MPC's programmatic areas; focus on affordable
housing and racial justice

- *The Cost of Segregation* (joint research project of MPC and the
Urban Institute)
 - Extrapolated from national-level analyses to quantify the
negative impacts of residential and economic segregation
on Chicagoland residents
 - Led qualitative and quantitative research efforts
informing the production of *Our Equitable Future*: MPC's
equity policy "roadmap"
 - Analyzed and coded output of stakeholder
interviews and regional survey to gauge attitudes
on combating segregation long-term
 - Conducted analyses modeling impacts of policy
implementation
- *Impact Evaluation Study* for Chicago Neighborhood Initiatives
 - Managed quantitative and qualitative analyses to
determine the impact of a local community development
organization's work within the Pullman community area

LEADERSHIP & CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

Jun 2018 - Present

Auxiliary Board Member Gardeneers Non-profit Organization

Racial justice strategic visioning lead for Gardeneers non-profit auxiliary board. As a direct service nonprofit largely serving communities of color, Gardeneers is poised to make a strategic shift towards anti-racist/anti-oppressive community building

Oct 2017 - Present

Alumni Liaison Minorities in Public Policy (MiPPS), University of Chicago

Alumni liaison for MiPPS student group at the Harris School of Public Policy. Collaborate with current students to host dialogues and events around the need for a more diverse and equity-based policymaking field

SKILLS

- Participatory action/human-centered design processes
- Spatial data visualization (ArcGIS/GeoDa)
- Intergroup dialogue facilitation
- Impact evaluation
- Public speaking
- Blog writing
- Project management
- Statistical analysis (SPSS/R/Python)
- Survey methodology
- Focus group facilitation

- Analyzed 30+ years of data on topics including workforce resilience, home values, and retail development
- Translated research findings into a comprehensive report shared with funders

FRESH TASTE FUNDERS NETWORK

Research Fellow

Jun 2015 – Aug 2016

- *Regional Food Systems Study* for Chicago Community Trust
 - Conducted research on initiatives supporting local food justice movements in a 36-county area spanning Michigan, Indiana, Illinois, and Wisconsin
 - Managed scope of policy section, including quantitative research on disparities in food access by demographic group, and funding inequities by geography
 - Conducted interviews and built relationships with county/state government employees, urban planners, and nonprofit food justice champions
 - Conveyed and disseminated findings in written form for the Michigan State University Center for Regional Food Systems study team, and other stakeholders

PUBLICATIONS

Research Briefs

- *A Framework for Estimating the Health Returns of Comprehensive Community Development Investments*, July 2018
 - [Whitepaper](#) jointly produced by the Metropolitan Planning Council, Chicago Department of Public Health, and University of Chicago Center for Spatial Data Science

Blog Posts

- Sample of “Data Points” blog posts, published in MPC’s biweekly newsletter, *The Regionalist*
 - [Data Points](#): *Why some neighborhoods in Chicago have lots of affordable housing—and others don’t*, December 2018 (Featured on WBEZ’s All Things Considered)
 - [Data Points](#): *What does suburban poverty look like in Chicagoland?*, September 2018 (Featured on WBEZ’s All Things Considered)
 - [Data Points](#): *A Tale of Two Cities (and why inclusive prosperity in both really matters)*, February 2018 (Featured on Chicago Tonight/WTTW)