

An illustration of the front of a grey car. The dashboard area is filled with several orange and white parking tickets. The car is parked on a surface indicated by vertical lines. The background is a solid orange color.

475,106 Mistakes:

The Cost of Erroneous Parking Tickets



**Institute for Research on
Race and Public Policy**

Research that Makes a Difference

475,106 Mistakes: When Tickets are Issued Under False Pretenses

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Tens of thousands of Chicagoans are routinely issued parking tickets under false pretenses each year. **After reviewing nearly 3.6 million parking tickets issued between 2012 and 2018, we leveraged multiple sources of administrative data against one another to identify more than one in eight tickets (13.2%) were issued under conditions when restrictions did not apply.** More specifically, we narrowed our attention to seven different types of parking violations where compliance is circumstantial according to factors of space, time, and weather.

Our investigation took advantage of the rich administrative data made available by the City of Chicago to recreate the proverbial scene of the crime. Data from the Office of the City Clerk, for example, allowed us to cross-reference whether residential parking only tickets were issued within restricted residential zones. Ward schedules maintained by the Department of Streets and Sanitation allowed us to triangulate whether street cleaning tickets were issued within the designated times of restriction. Registered permits maintained by the Department of Transportation allowed us to verify if special events tickets were issued nearby a special event. The list of restrictions we considered goes on, but the logic of our analysis remains the same.

Where were erroneous tickets written?

The short answer is everywhere. They show up in every one of Chicago's 77 community areas, albeit in unevenly distributed ways. We counted a couple hundred in some. In others, we counted tens of thousands. **The highest volumes of flawed tickets were issued in community areas that cluster around the Central Business District.**

Who was issuing these wrongful tickets?

Two primary actors issue most of the citations in Chicago. These include city workers who answer to the Departments of Finance or Streets and Sanitation as well as patrol officers who work for the Chicago Police Department. **Patrol officers write fewer tickets overall (18.5%), but they commit a higher rate of errors (24.8%). By contrast,**

their administrative peers write more tickets overall (80.9%) but commit a lower rate of errors (75.1%). Both these ticketing officials aren't just hitting any targets, however.

Errors committed by patrol officers tend to be concentrated in majority Black community areas. Of the 11 community areas where patrol officers committed more than half the errors, nine of them had majority Black populations. **Administrative workers committed over half of all errors in 66 of Chicago's 77 community areas.** Their highest percentage of mistakes came in the community areas located mostly on the northwest side.

Who was least likely to contest their contestable ticket?

Only 7% of tickets written under false pretenses are contested, and it's even lower among many Latinx community areas. Nine of the 10 community areas with the lowest appeal rates had proportionally more Latinx residents than their city-wide representation. Seven of these were made up of populations where more than three-quarters of residents identify as Latinx.

Whose communities are most devastated by errored tickets?

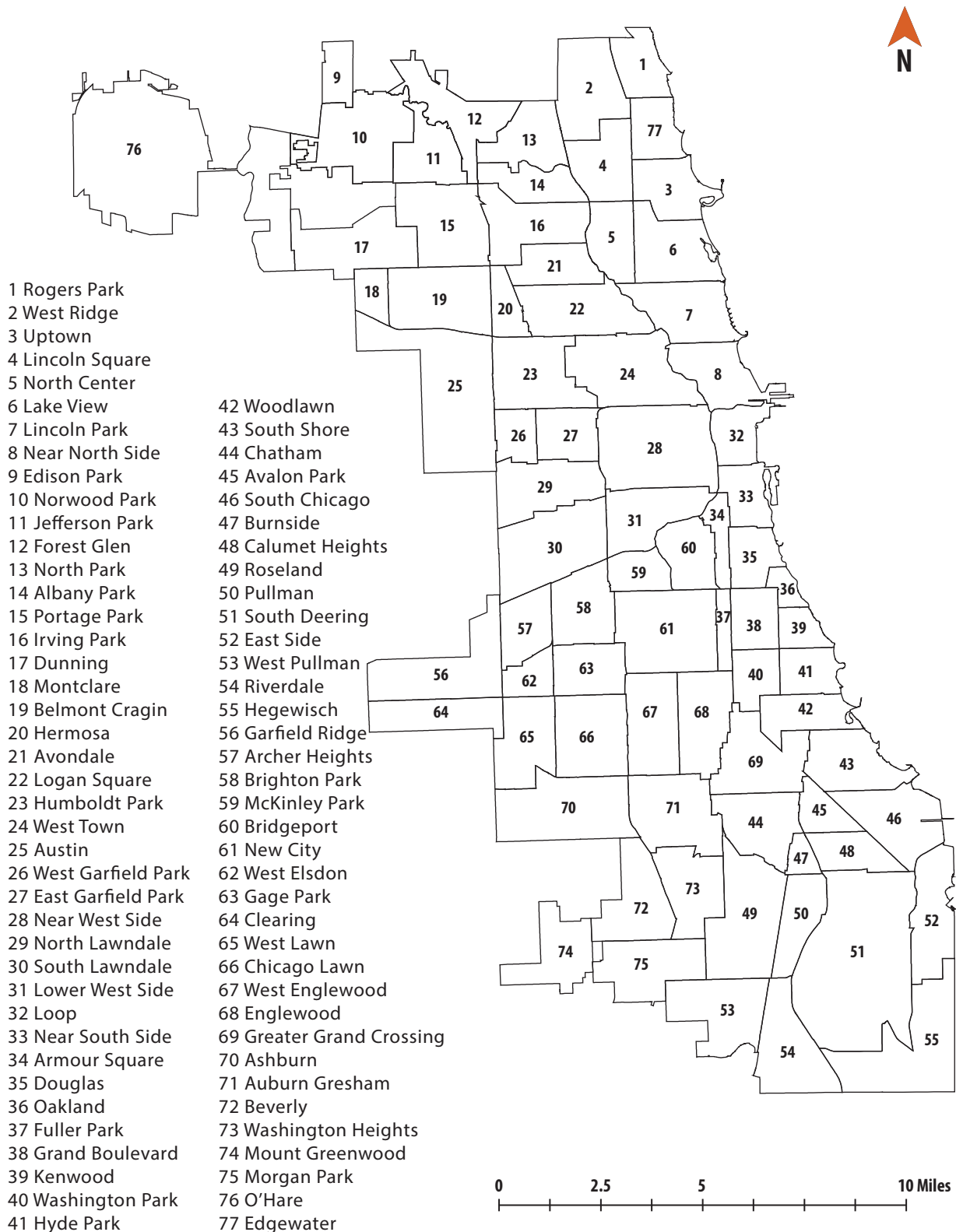
Parking tickets have a way of amplifying vulnerability among the already vulnerable. As many as 22% of errored tickets are subject to late penalties, which result either from not paying the fine within 14 days or setting up an in-person appeal within 21 days. The original fine doubles, and another 22% in collections fees can be added. Most of these escalating penalties fall on Black community areas. **Majority Black spaces represent the twenty community areas with the highest percentage of late penalties tied to errored tickets.**

Beyond late penalties, we identified 2,313 erroneous tickets that were tied to someone's financial ruin. **That figure approximates, on average, slightly more than one errored ticket per day ending in bankruptcy. More than four in five (84%) of these tickets can be geo-referenced to cars wrongfully ticketed in majority non-white communities.** Three of the five communities with the most errored tickets connected to bankruptcy are majority Black.

How much money was tied to tickets issued under false pretenses?

Erroneous tickets are a multimillion-dollar industry for the City of Chicago. **During the six years we reviewed, they generated \$27,543,807 in revenues while another \$8,034,666 remains as unsettled debt. Together, that's \$35,578,473.** That's enough money to pay for a third of what Chicago owes IBM each year for processing bogus tickets its technology was supposed to reduce.

CHICAGO COMMUNITY AREA MAP



INTRODUCTION

Like any other hot summer day, Mia Wills drove to work at Mount Sinai Hospital on the west side of Chicago. She parked her car across the street from Ambrose Plamondon Elementary School. Upon her return, she found the windshield decorated with part of an orange parking ticket. The car was resting in a restricted school zone, but this restriction only applies while school is in session. It was summer break.

Ms. Wills assumed the ticket had been ripped up after the ticket-writer had caught the error. She assumed wrong. Weeks later, official notification from the City of Chicago stated she owed \$100 for violating local ordinance §9-64-080B, which prohibits parking or standing in marked areas for a limited time. Ms. Wills parked in an area limited to school personnel from 7am to 7pm on school days. She was issued the citation on June 25, 2019. School ended for the year on June 21.

After taking pictures of the scene and drafting a statement, Ms. Wills contested the ticket. The photos captured signage showing how parking was off-limits only on school days, while the accompanying explanation made it clear that school was out of session. A Hearing Officer¹ ruled in the City's favor on August 15. To make bad matters worse, Wills learned it would cost an additional \$367 if she wanted to initiate the appeals process. Even then, there were no guarantees the ticket would be overturned.

Ms. Wills turned to Dorothy Tucker at CBS-2 for help. The station had several exchanges with the Department of Finance. Some negative press ensued. Finally, the course of events changed. In an email, Finance Commissioner Kristen Cabanban wrote the following:

"The Department of Finance has reviewed the evidence submitted by Ms. Wills and also confirmed that school was not in session on the date the violation was issued. DOF will submit a petition to vacate the liable judgment to the Department of Administrative Hearings for ticket #70543479. The process to dismiss this ticket may take up to a couple of weeks."²

While the ticket was eventually dismissed, it should never have been issued in the first place. It was an “accident” committed by the City.

The word “accident” is marked by quotations because it implies an unexpected harm. However, City Officials have long known that numerous tickets are issued under false pretenses every year. In 2012, the City joined into a new 10-year, \$188 million partnership with IBM to handle the City’s ticket-processing needs. As reported by Fran Spielman of *The Chicago Sun-Times*, the technology was “designed to cut down bogus parking tickets.”³ Yet, there are still tens of thousands of people who are issued erroneous tickets on an annual basis.⁴

HOW MANY ACCIDENTAL TICKETS ARE WE TALKING ABOUT?

How many tickets are issued under false pretenses in Chicago? We estimate that more than 1 in 8 tickets are issued when they otherwise should not have been. And our number is likely conservative for reasons we spell out in the methods appendix.

We came to our estimate after comparing ticketing data from ProPublica against other sources of administrative information maintained by the City of Chicago. Our strategy was to cross-examine multiple sources of data with the goal of confirming whether a citation was warranted in the first place.

The investigation began with a series of simple questions, including some of the following:

- How many “no parking in the Loop” tickets were actually issued outside the Loop?
- How many snow route tickets were issued on days of no recorded accumulation?
- How many special events tickets were issued when there were no registered special events?

All these questions allude to how parking in Chicago involves a lot of moving parts.

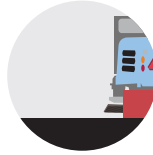
Many of the City’s compliance restrictions are not hard-and-fast rules. The dizzying maze of signs that read park here, but not there, say as much. These signs specify who belongs in what spaces and under which conditions, telling drivers where they can park and when. They substitute for trees in this treeless land on the prairie.

We imagine Chicagoans know exactly what we’re talking about when it comes to the ever-bending rules of parking. They know that some streets are plow routes and parking is restricted when there’s at least two inches of snowfall. They know to keep an eye out for the orange signs that announce a 9am to 2pm parking ban on days of residential street sweeping. And they know that some neighborhood streets are reserved for residential parking only. The list could go on, but we suspect you get the picture.

We identified seven different types of violations that specify conditions of parking compliance which are circumstantial.⁵ These rules change according to factors of

WHICH TICKETS DID WE ANALYZE? THOSE WITH CIRCUMSTANTIAL CONDITIONS OF COMPLIANCE

§09-64-5020* **Street Cleaning**
*An additional street cleaning ordinance is specified at §09-64-040B



§09-64-041 **Special Events Restrictions**



§09-64-060 **3 - 7am Snow Route**



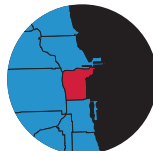
§09-64-070 **2" Snow Route Ban**



§09-64-090 **Residential Parking**



§09-64-180 **No Parking in Loop**



§09-64-190B **Expired Meter in the Central Business District**



space, time, and weather. Some of them include parking limitations that exclusively apply in the downtown area (ex: no Loop parking). Others regard restrictions that are in effect for certain months of the year (ex: street cleaning). The weather-related bans apply only when there is a certain amount of snowfall (ex: 2" snow route).

The calculus behind our quantification

The City of Chicago makes public extensive data that speak to the circumstances of parking tickets. By consolidating and comparing these data, it is possible to recreate the proverbial "scene of a

crime." To verify if a snow route ticket was issued when there was actual accumulation, for example, we cross-referenced records from the Department of Streets and Sanitation that documents when plows were operated.⁶ For violations of restricted residential parking, we triangulated these tickets against boundaries of all residential zones maintained by the Office of the City Clerk. When we looked at whether special events tickets were issued nearby a special event, we turned to registered permits maintained by the Department of Transportation. Some of these data were obtained through Freedom of Information Act requests. Others were pulled from online spaces such as the Chicago Data Portal.⁷

If a ticket was issued outside one or more designated restrictions, then we marked it as being issued in error. We reviewed 3.6 million tickets written between August 1, 2012, and May 18, 2018. This timeline aligns our investigation with the contractual start date of the ongoing partnership between IBM and Chicago and the most recent tickets made available in the ProPublica data. Our analysis suggests almost half a million were issued in error.

In other words, there is not just one Mia Wills in Chicago. There are many.

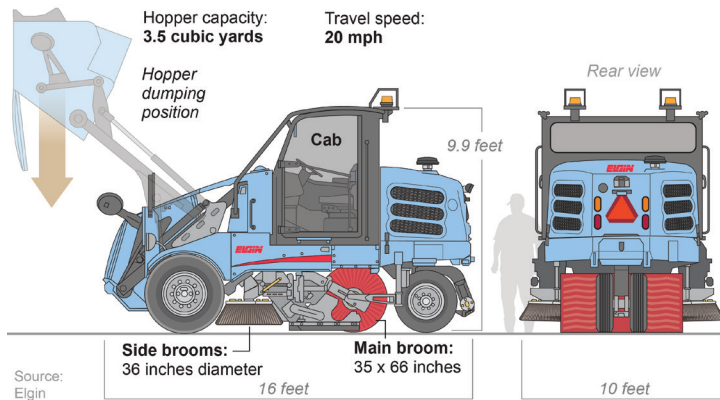
Which tickets are driving the error?

March may leave like a lamb, but April hits Chicago like a street sweeper. Not only are these \$60 tickets among the most frequently issued in Chicago, but they had the largest volume of errors among the ordinances we reviewed. A total of 313,983 street cleaning tickets were issued outside the: 1) April-November months of scheduled cleaning, 2) designated cleaning days (which vary by ward-section), or 3) reserved cleaning times for commercial (7-9am) or residential (9am-2pm) streets. Two out of every three tickets we identified as erroneous were citations for street cleaning parking violations.

Parking in a restricted residential zone makes up the next largest number of erroneous citations. These restrictions apply to specific residential zones where curbside parking requires an additional \$25 permit on top of the annual city sticker. Out of the ordinances we considered, these came with the steepest penalty: a \$75 fine. We found 101,286 of these tickets were written in error, issued outside of any of the 1,763 unique residential zones that altogether cover about one-quarter of the city.

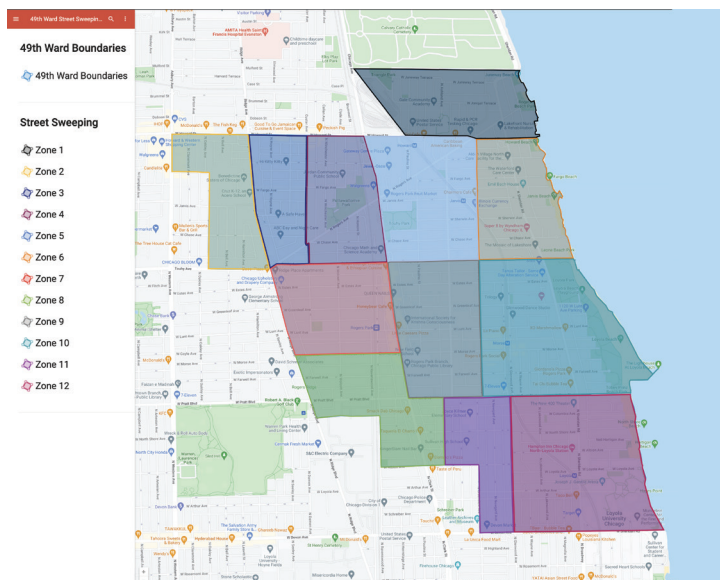
The third largest number of erroneous tickets includes parking at an expired meter in the Central Business District (CBD). These are more expensive than your more general expired meter tickets that apply in the remainder of the city. They come with a penalty of \$65 as opposed to the typical \$50. After plotting these tickets on a map, we found that 38,292 of them landed outside of the CBD.⁸ Even if every one of these tickets was rightfully issued to a car parked at an expired meter, the \$15 upcharge nets Chicago another \$574,410 in revenue. The difference would be even larger today since the expired meter parking ticket in the CBD has since increased to \$70.

HOW DOES STREET CLEANING WORK? AN EXAMPLE FROM THE 49TH WARD



How? Pictured at left is a diagram of the Elgin Street Sweeper that cleans some 250,000 miles of Chicago's commercial and residential streets from April to November between the hours of 7am and 2pm.

Image reproduced from *The Chicago Tribune* (Bentle and Vivanco 2016).



Where? Pictured at left is a zone map for the 49th Ward, which includes Rogers Park and parts of West Ridge. Each zone identifies a section of the ward (i.e., ward-section) that follows its own unique street cleaning schedule. All wards in Chicago are divided in a similar fashion to coordinate where street sweeping occurs.

Zone-map can be found at the Office of the 49th Ward (<https://www.49thward.org/street-sweeping>).

(PARTIAL) 2021 49TH WARD STREET SWEEPING SCHEDULE

Section	Boundaries	Month	1st Date	2nd Date
01	EAST / WEST BOUNDARIES	April	15	16
		May	19	20
	Lake Michigan 1000 West	June	23	24
		July	28	29
	Haskins 1800 West	August	31	
		September		1
	NORTH / SOUTH BOUNDARIES	October	5	6
		November	9	10
	Juneway 7734 North			
	Howard 7600 North			
02	EAST / WEST BOUNDARIES	April	19	20
		May	21	24
	Ridge 2100 West	June	25	28
		July	30	
	Western 2400 West	August		2
		September	2	3
	NORTH / SOUTH BOUNDARIES	October	7	8
		November	11	12
	Touhy 7200 North			
	Howard 7600 North			
03	EAST / WEST BOUNDARIES	April	21	22
		May	25	26
	Damen 2000 West	June	29	30
		July		
	Ridge 2200 West	August	3	4
		September	7	8
	NORTH / SOUTH BOUNDARIES	October	12	13
		November	15	16
	Touhy 7200 North			
	Howard 7600 North			

When? Pictured at left is a partial chart of the 49th Ward's 2021 street sweeping schedule. Each ward-section from the zone-map above is assigned particular days for street cleaning. These days can and often do change on a monthly basis. All wards in Chicago are organized in a similar fashion to coordinate when street sweeping occurs.

The schedule can be found in the Chicago Data Portal (<https://data.cityofchicago.org/Sanitation/Street-Sweeping-Schedule-2021/wvjp-8m67>).

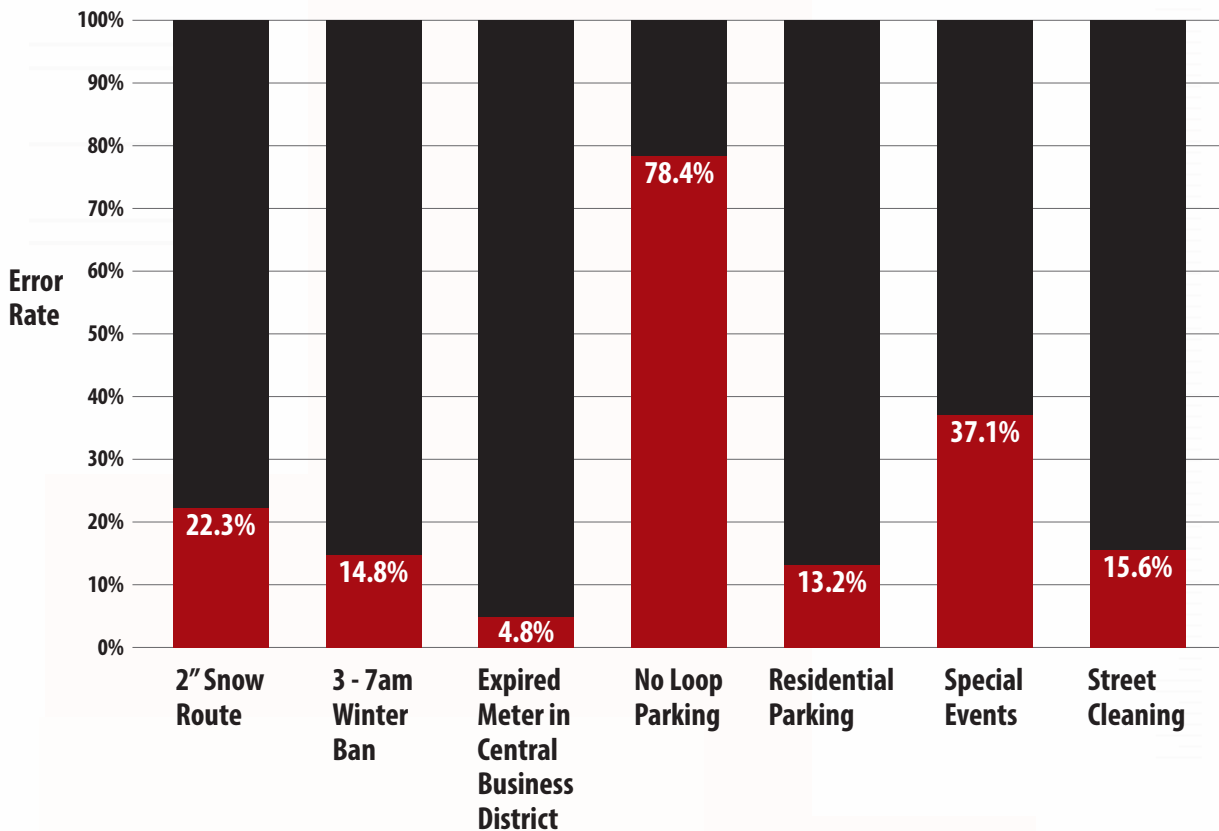
THE SCOPE OF THE PROBLEM IN CHICAGO: OVERVIEW OF ERRONEOUS TICKETS, AUG 2012 - MAY 2018

Erroneous Tickets as a Percentage of All 3,590,005 Tickets



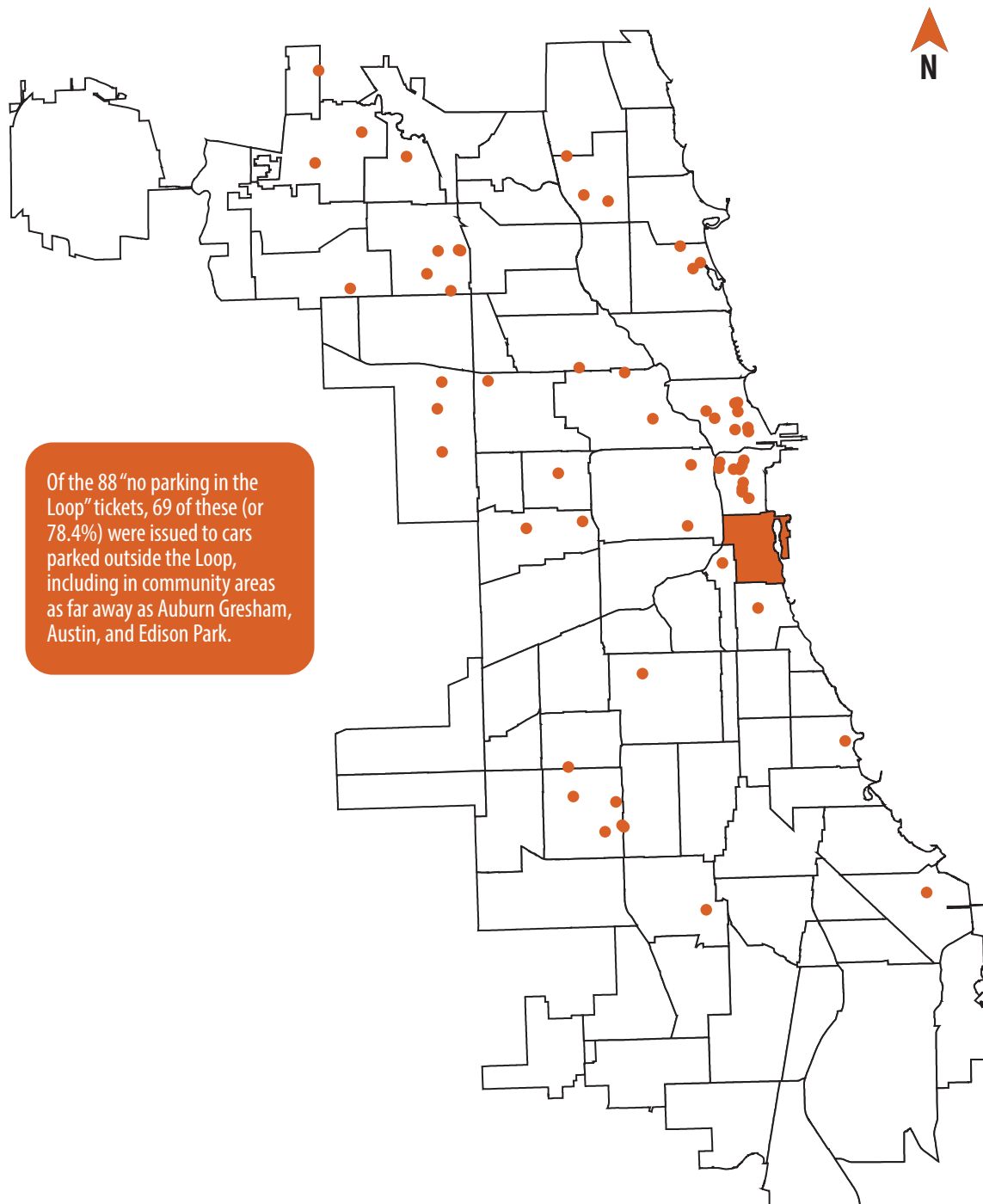
Rate of Error by Ticket Type

Total Tickets	11,269	41,350	794,551	88	1,107,920	35,235	1,599,592
Erroneous Tickets	2,345	6,045	38,292	69	101,286	13,086	313,983



Special event violations make up the fourth largest number of erroneous tickets. These regard parking restrictions setup for specific time periods for street impacts like construction projects, special events, and roadway moratoriums. With a penalty of \$60, we found 13,086 of these tickets were erroneously issued. Included in this number is any citation written at least one city block, or 660 feet, from a special event

WHERE ERRONEOUS “NO LOOP” PARKING TICKETS WERE ISSUED, AUG 2012 - MAY 2018



Note: All tickets are violations for ordinances §09-64-180 or §09-64-180A.

0 2.5 5 10 Miles

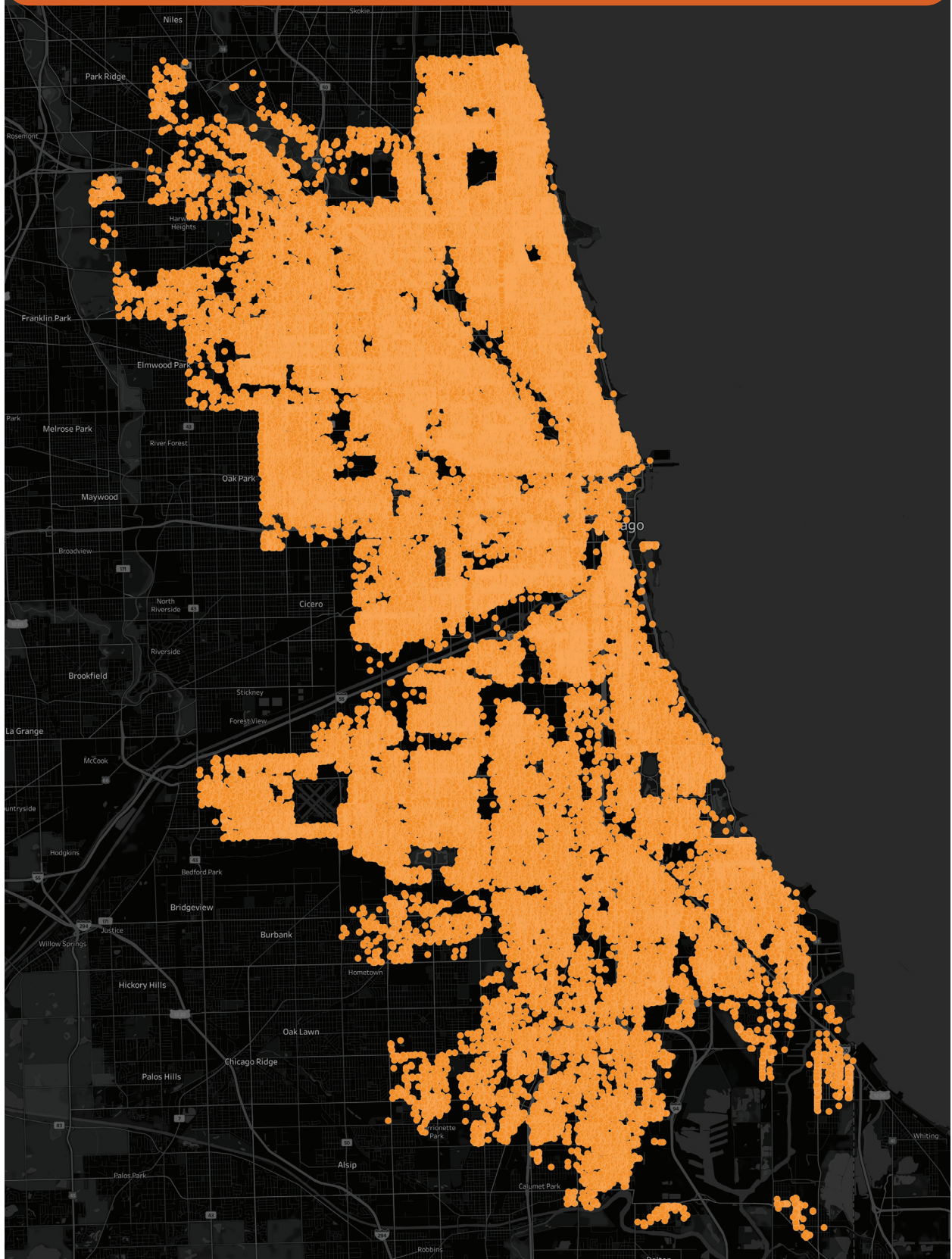
approved by the Department of Transportation. The reasons behind these restrictions range broadly too, from annual block parties to the filming of popular Chicago-centered shows like “Shameless” to running events like “The Chicago Marathon.”

Coming in at fifth are what Chicagoans know as winter ban tickets. The policy, itself, is a residue of Jane Byrne’s mayoral campaign that waged a “war on snow” in 1979 – the same year a 20-inch blizzard shut down the town that Billy Sunday could not – so sang Sinatra. Soon after her election, Mayor Byrne passed two controversial parking bans that, she claimed, would preemptively lock down the city before the next blizzard could wreak havoc.⁹ Even other snow-heavy Midwestern cities, like Minneapolis and Milwaukee, don’t enforce such blanket bans. The ban spans from December 1 to April 1 between the hours of 3-7am. At \$60 a pop, this ticket frequently comes with an additional \$150 towing fee and \$20-35 daily storage fee. Regardless of whether snowfall accumulates, these tickets represent parking citations issued during an overnight ban on some 100 miles of Chicago’s streets. We identified 6,045 of these tickets as issued in error. Some were issued outside the December 1 to April 1 or 3-7am times of restriction, while others were written at least one city block removed from a winter ban route.

The 2” snow route violations make up the next most common type of error. Even though these \$60 tickets also come with additional towing and storage fees, citations that fall under this ordinance are different from the overnight winter ban. They apply year-round to more than 500 miles of arterial streets but only on snow days of two or more inches. When we calculated how many of these tickets were written either outside of a recorded snow event (plus a 3-day grace period to account for major blizzards) or beyond a one city block radius of a 2” route, we found 2,345 issued in error.

Among all those ordinances we reviewed, the \$60 citation for no parking in the Loop was among the most infrequent. However, they also had the highest rate of error: more than three out of every four. We found that 69 of the 88 “no Loop parking” tickets issued could be geo-referenced outside the Loop in community areas as far as Auburn Gresham and Edison Park.

ERRONEOUS PARKING TICKETS, AUG 2012 - MAY 2018



THE INESCAPABILITY OF ERRONEOUS PARKING TICKETS

Where are mistaken tickets issued in Chicago? Like grains of sand that cling to your body after a beach day at the Lake, these tickets have found their way into every nook and cranny of the city. No community area escapes them. Even those with the least amount of these tickets, including Burnside ($n = 58$), Fuller Park ($n = 89$), Riverdale ($n = 92$), Hegewisch ($n = 100$), and Pullman ($n = 156$), still average 10 or more per year. Violations for street cleaning or residential parking drive the volume of errors in these community areas.

Those areas swimming in the highest volume of errored tickets cluster around the center of the city, especially near the Central Business District. The community area with the most was the Near North Side ($n = 37,918$), followed by Lakeview ($n = 37,532$), Uptown ($n = 32,727$), the Near West Side ($n = 27,429$), and West Town ($n = 26,199$). Whereas special event violations drive these trends in the Near North Side (49.7% of all errors), in the other community areas parked cars are most likely to be ticketed in error for street cleaning.

Do erroneous tickets follow the city's racial geography?

Unlike many other ticketing practices in Chicago, tickets written in error do not map onto the city's entrenched patterns of segregation in ways one might expect. Locals who pay attention to issues of inequality know this map to which we're referring.¹⁰

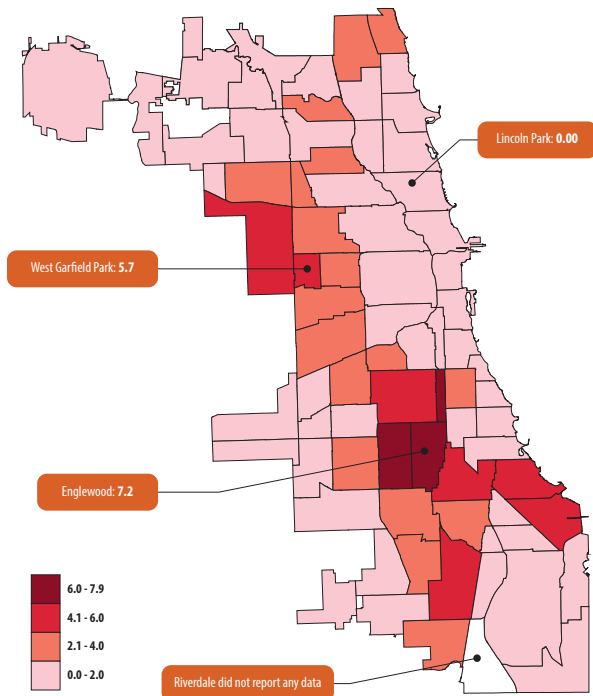
Inequities are concentrated in majority Black spaces on the south and west sides more so than elsewhere in the city. Whether it's a map of child poverty, vacant housing, lead poisoning, or some other indicator, the patterns are more or less the same. Other work by local journalists reveals similar patterns of inequality in parking tickets.

Compared to their white counterparts, those who park or reside in majority Black or Latinx neighborhoods are more likely to:

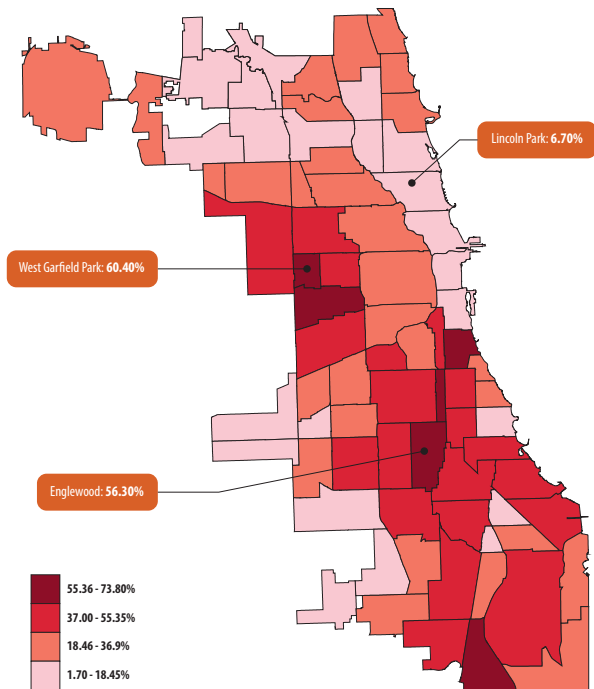
- have speed trap cameras concentrated in their neighborhoods,¹¹
- be stripped of their driver's license for unpaid tickets,¹²

DIFFERENT MEASURES, SIMILAR PATTERNS: MAPPING INEQUITIES IN CHICAGO

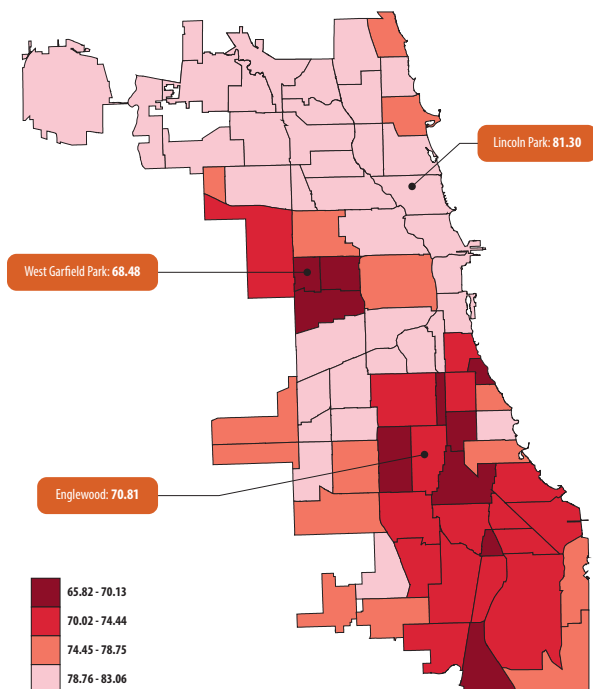
LEAD POISONING RATE PER 100 CHILDREN BY COMMUNITY AREA, 2017



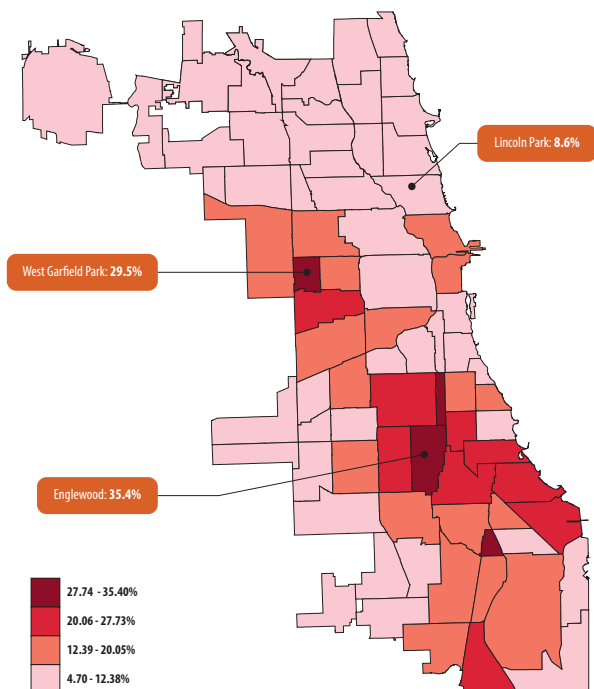
FIVE YEAR ESTIMATES OF CHILD POVERTY BY COMMUNITY AREA, 2012 - 2016



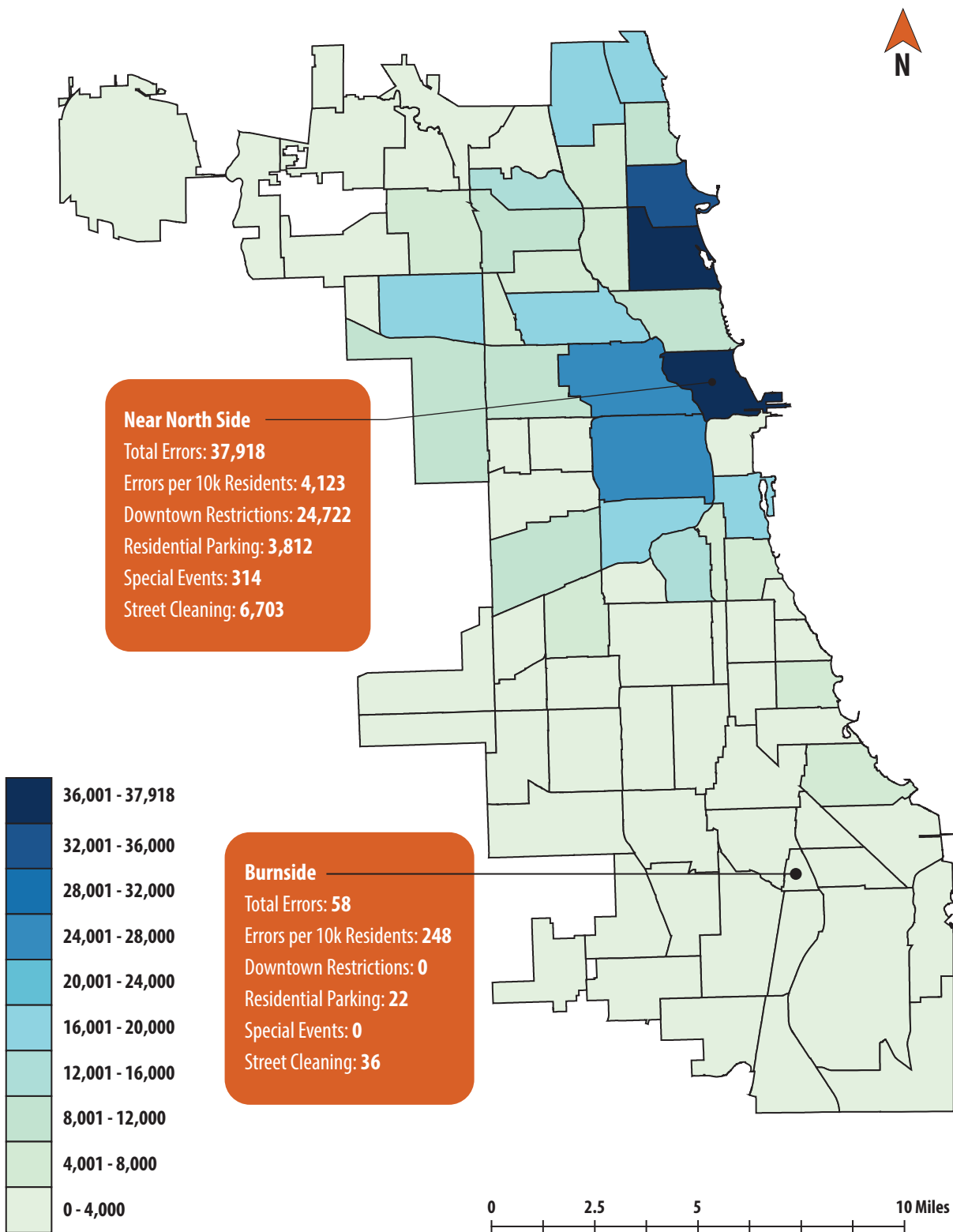
TWO-YEAR AVERAGE LIFE EXPECTANCY BY COMMUNITY AREA, 2016 - 2017



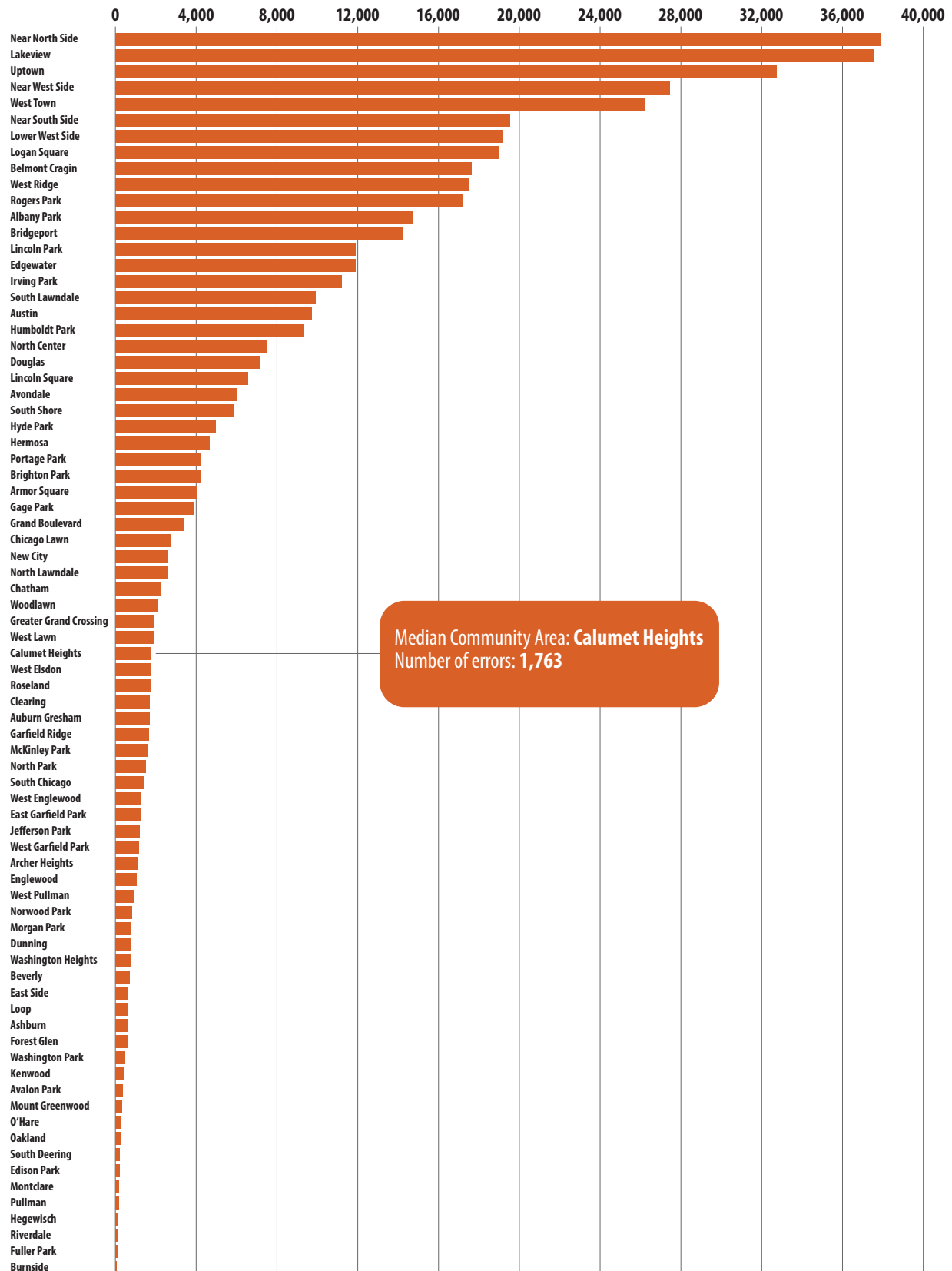
FIVE-YEAR ESTIMATES OF VACANT HOUSING BY COMMUNITY AREA, 2012 - 2016



THE UNEVEN GEOGRAPHY OF ERRONEOUS TICKETS, AUG 2012 - MAY 2018



THE GEOGRAPHY OF ERRONEOUS TICKETS, AUG 2012 - MAY 2018



- have their car seized and sold at scrap value for unpaid tickets,¹³
- and have their state tax refunds garnished for outstanding parking tickets.¹⁴

What we find is that tickets issued in error are an exception to the rule of Chicago's racial geography. Some of the least erroneously ticketed community areas are those where most residents identify as Black. Four of the five community areas with the lowest number of errored tickets were community areas where more than 80% of residents are Black, including Burnside (n = 58), Fuller Park (n = 89), Riverdale (n = 92), and Pullman (n = 156).

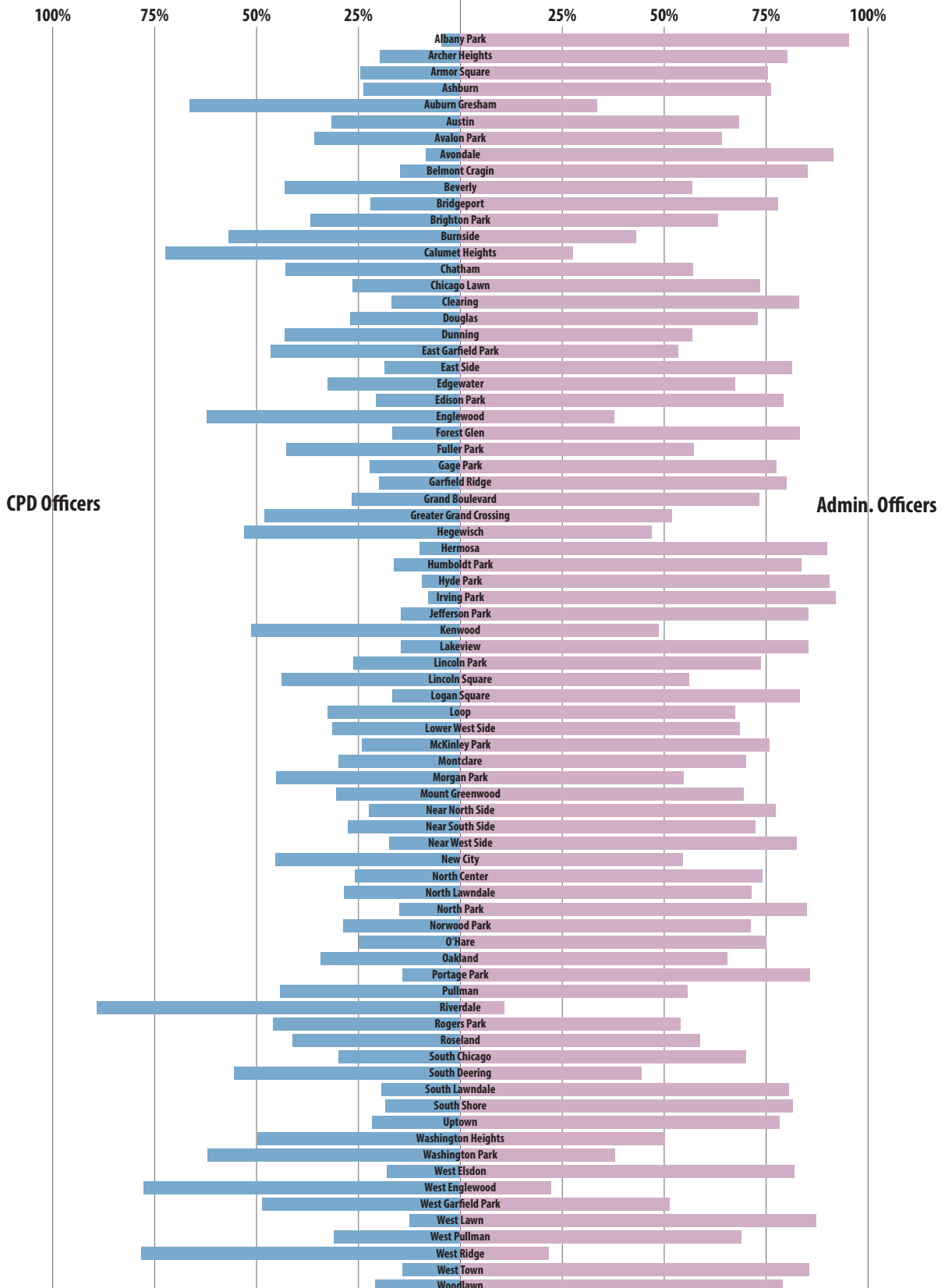
Meanwhile, community areas with the most tickets tend to be those with majority white populations. Four of the five communities with the highest volume of erroneous tickets include community areas where at least 60% of residents identify as white. They include the Near North Side (n = 37,918), Lakeview (n = 37,532), Uptown (n = 32,727), and West Town (n = 26,199).¹⁵

One caveat to keep in mind with neighborhood-based comparisons is that parking patterns differ considerably from one community to the next. Some studies find that whites are more likely than Blacks and Latinxs to have a driver's license, own a car, drive on a more frequent basis, and avoid public transit.¹⁶ Other studies find that Black drivers are less likely than white drivers to break traffic laws.¹⁷ These differences are consequential in a hyper-segregated context, especially, since they expose cars to differential risks of getting ticketed. More research is needed before conclusions can be drawn, but all these factors may help explain why majority white communities are ticketed in error more so than their Black and Latinx counterparts (in the aggregate and proportionally).

Who is responsible for the highest error rate?

Technically speaking, the Municipal Code of Chicago authorizes five different actors to issue parking tickets. These include "any police officer, traffic control aide, other designated member of the police department, parking enforcement aide or other person designated by the Traffic Compliance Administrator" (see §9-64-220(b)). In practice, though, tickets largely originate from two sources. More than 99% of the 3.6 million tickets we reviewed were written either by patrol officers of the Chicago

PERCENT OF ERROR TICKETS ISSUED BY CPD OR ADMIN OFFICERS BY COMMUNITY AREA, AUG 2012 - MAY 2018



Police Department (18.5%)¹⁸ or city workers who report to the Department of Finance or Department of Streets and Sanitation (80.9%).

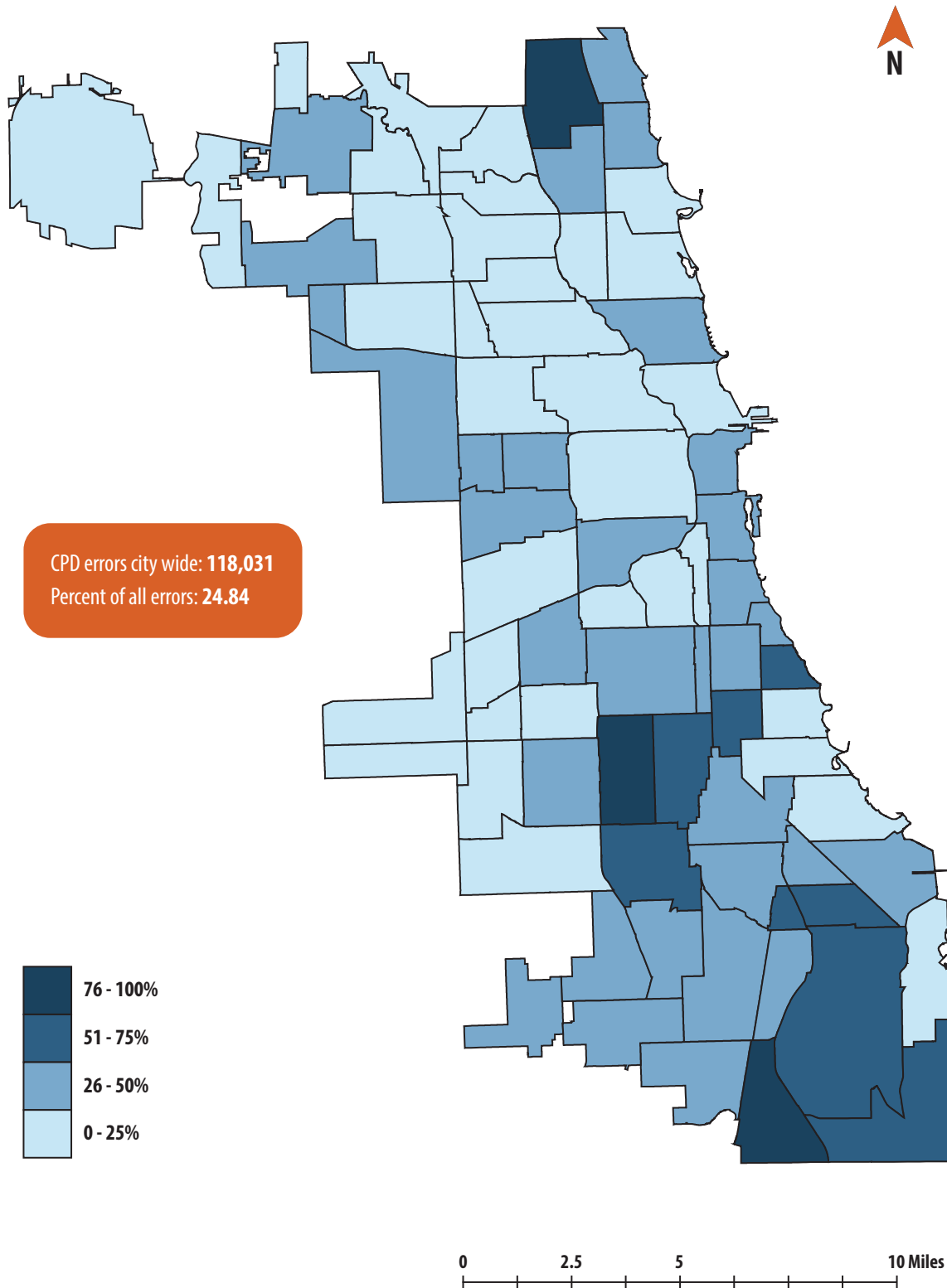
Even though patrol officers of the CPD account for less than one-in-five tickets, their error rate was higher than their city worker peers. They are responsible for a quarter of all errors. Why do patrol officers commit mistakes at such a higher rate? Possibly because ticket duty is generally detested among rank-and-file police. Nearly a half century ago, police scholar Jonathan Rubenstein once described writing tickets as a task reserved for “older men who are no longer interested in doing police work or to rookies that sergeant wants to keep out of the way.”¹⁹

Some of these same sentiments still prevail. Writing tickets can be seen as paperwork of the clerical variety (i.e., “feminized” labor) among many officers,²⁰ far distanced from more spectacular threats that supposedly define their vocation. Police tend to see themselves in protectionist terms, like “guardians” or “warriors,” and parking violations rarely present any clear and pressing danger.²¹ Under these conditions, parking enforcement becomes viewed as menial work. And such little regard for ticket duty can have adverse consequences for how closely patrol officers follow the letter of the law.²²

Patrol officers didn’t just hit any targets of error. Their mistakes were concentrated in majority Black spaces. Of the 11 community areas where patrol officers committed more than half their erroneous tickets, nine of them had majority Black populations. These include Riverdale (95% Black, 89% CPD error), West Englewood (90% Black, 78% CPD error), Calumet Heights (94% Black, 72% CPD error), Auburn Gresham (96% Black, 66% CPD error), Englewood (94% Black, 62% CPD error), Washington Park (92% Black, 62% CPD error), Burnside (97% Black, 57% CPD error), South Deering (64% Black, 56% CPD error), and Kenwood (67% Black, 51% CPD error).

We suspect the link between patrol officers and erroneous tickets in majority Black communities is hardly a surprise among those who call these spaces home.²³ Rather, these statistics are likely confirmation of common experiences they know all too well. Because of uneven geographies of surveillance, police officers are the most familiar face of government for many in majority Black spaces.²⁴ Especially with tickets issued in error, the substance of these relationships does not center on democratic values. They are centered on transactions that “financially frack” communities of their

**PERCENT OF ERRONEOUS TICKETS ISSUED BY CHICAGO POLICE DEPARTMENT
OFFICERS BY COMMUNITY AREA, AUG 2012 - MAY 2018**



resources.²⁵ Even if drivers cannot immediately make good on what they owe, the debtor relation that is embodied within a parking ticket constitutes a claim on future income.

Who is driving errors in their raw numbers?

Although patrol officers are more likely to issue tickets in error, a pattern that holds even after accounting for “bad apples,”²⁶ administrative authorities account for far more ticketing mistakes in terms of sheer numbers. Three out of every four erroneous tickets we identified were written by parking enforcement officers. Whether these occupational differences in ticketing results from some division of labor, variation in beat assignments, or unique workforce training are not questions we can answer with our data.

What we know is that there is a clearer line between ticketing and parking enforcement officers than there is between ticketing and patrol officers. Under a paradigm of broken windows policing, patrol officers simultaneously work as healthcare facilitators, housing managers, park rangers, school disciplinarians, and social workers. By contrast, the whole vocation of parking enforcement is defined by writing tickets – tickets that blur the line between public safety and revenue collection.

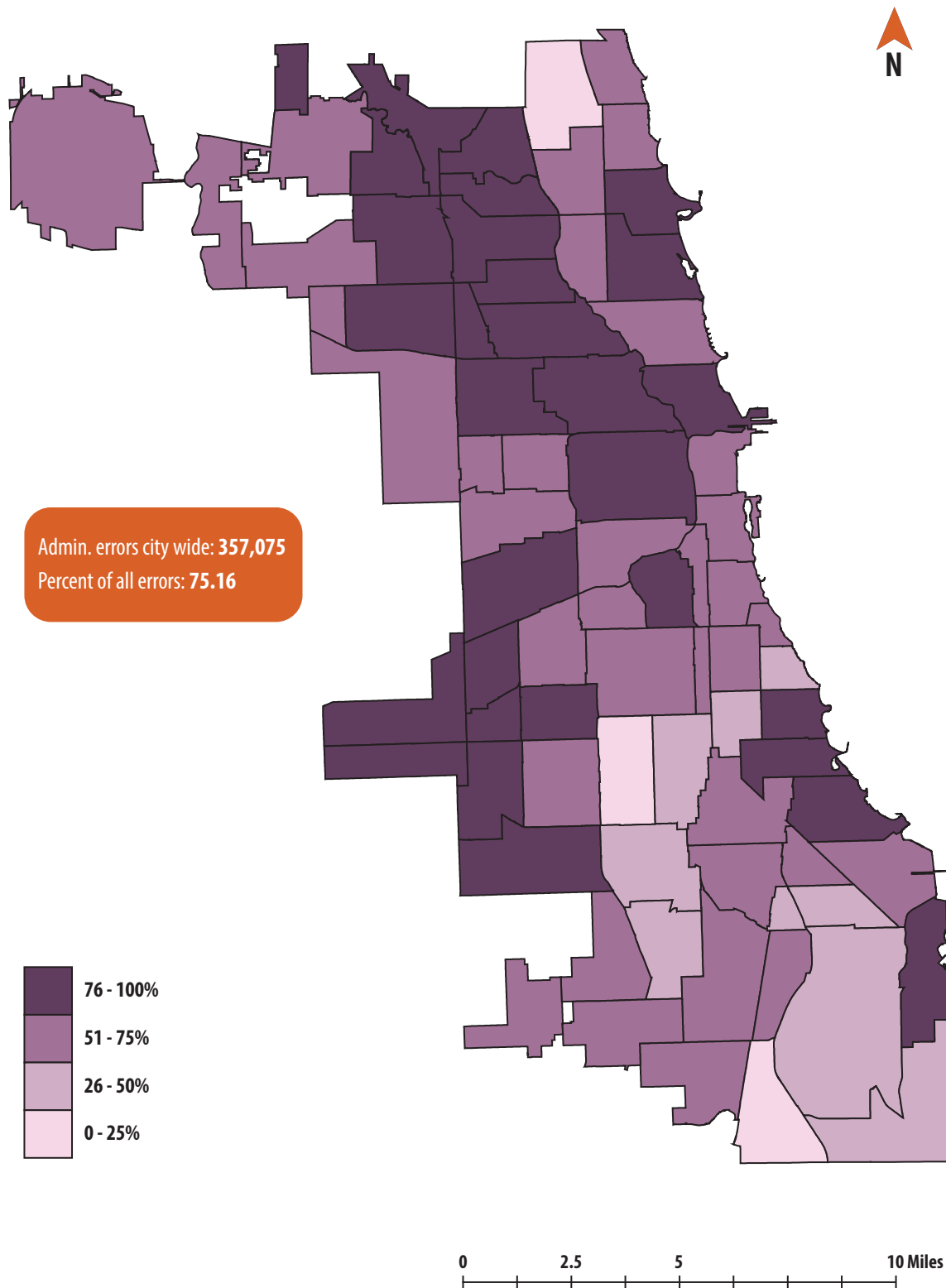
After the Mayor and City Council signed away the City’s parking meters in 2008 to Chicago Parking Meters LLC for 75 years,²⁷ Chief Financial Officer Gene Saffold told one journalist:

“Through the agreement, the city was successful in shifting significant future and operating risk to a private operator.”²⁸

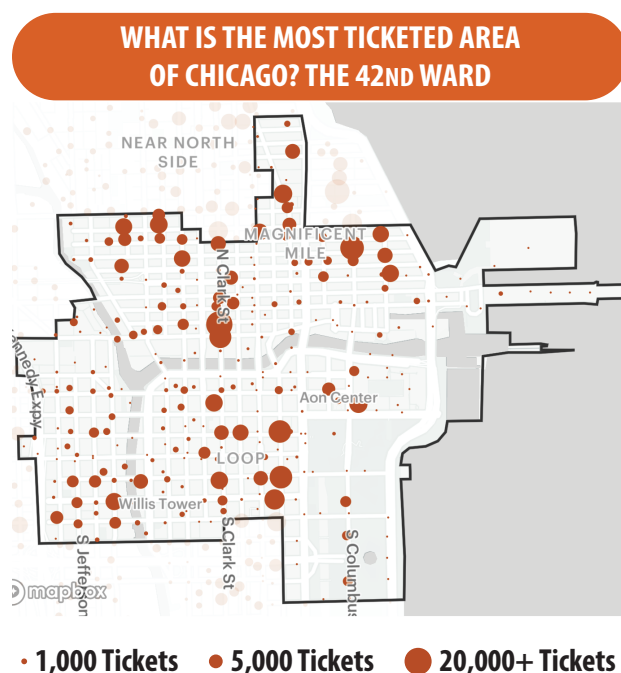
One risk that concerned Saffold and other City Officials included long-term operating costs. They insisted the infrastructure deal would outsource a troubled asset, and all the maintenance required for upkeep, so that local government could turn its attention to more core functions. At least, that’s how the narrative goes.²⁹

Alongside the new private-public partnership, City Council passed an ordinance that dispersed the authority of who could issue tickets.³⁰ It deputized parking enforcement officers who work for LAZ Parking – a subcontractor of Chicago Parking Meters LLC – with the authority to issue tickets, even though these tickets are still handled through Chicago’s Department of Finance.

**PERCENT OF ERRONEOUS TICKETS ISSUED BY ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICERS
BY COMMUNITY AREA, AUG 2012 - MAY 2018**



Of Chicago's 77 community areas, administrative workers committed over half of all errors in 66 of them. Their highest percentage of mistakes came in the community areas mostly on the northwest side, including Albany Park (95%), Irving Park (92%), Avondale (92%), and Hermosa (90%). The southside neighborhood of Hyde Park (91%) is the only other community where more than nine out of 10 errored tickets were written by parking enforcement officers.



Note: This is a screenshot of *The Ticket Trap*, an interactive ProPublica database created by David Eads and Melissa Sanchez (2018). It features tickets issued between Jan 1, 1996 and May 18, 2018 in the 42nd ward, which overlaps with the Near North Side.

Where are most mistakes committed? The Near North Side

Just a half mile north from the Palmer House, where Simone de Beauvoir first met Nelson Algren, you enter the Near North Side. One obvious factor could explain why this community area has the most erroneous tickets in all of Chicago. It's among the most ticketed spaces in general.³¹

The number of cars in the Near North Side far outpaces its parking options, and metered curbside parking comes at a premium. While rates fluctuate according to market demand, meters in this community area frequently charge three times the typical rate found in

other parts of Chicago. That's \$7 per hour compared to \$2.25. Parking is in such high demand in the community area that delivery trucks routinely transform traffic lanes into improvised loading zones. Drivers have few other options.

Not only is the Near North Side proximate to one of the world's largest jobs centers, but it is home to some of the city's major tourist destinations like Navy Pier, the Water Tower, and the Magnificent Mile.³² More than one-in-ten tickets issued here go to motorists with out-of-state tags, a rate that is higher than the city average. And the community area has one of the city's most ticketed cross-streets in Erie and Fairbanks, right outside of Northwestern Memorial Hospital.

MARINA CITY, SEPARATION BY ASCENSION

Fortified outside the City's ticketing grip are gated communities in the sky, where off-street parking facilities are partitioned from the public with private protection.³³ These residential developments on the Near North Side were ushered in under the Chicago 21 Plan that outlined a strategy to revitalize the Loop and surrounding areas with high-rise residential enclaves (e.g., John Hancock Center, Lake Point Tower). The Chicago 21 Plan, itself, can be seen as an extension of planning initiatives of then Mayor Richard J. Daley that prioritized "the needs of the middle-income groups who wish to live in areas close to the heart of the City."³⁴

Like raised drawbridges over a castle moat, the verticality of these mixed-use residential spaces creates an island of isolation for cars parked here. "Above-it-all" skysrise living denies entry to any outsiders, ticket writers included. These spaces are forbidden "cities within a city."³⁵

With a staged opening spanning from 1963 to 1967, Marina City is a "city within a city." It represents architect Bertrand Goldberg's attempt to create a high-rise neighborhood out of residential towers and establish a sense of community. He was among the first architects to apply mixed-use design, where the first 19 floors are dedicated as an upward-spiraling ramp of some 900 parking spaces.

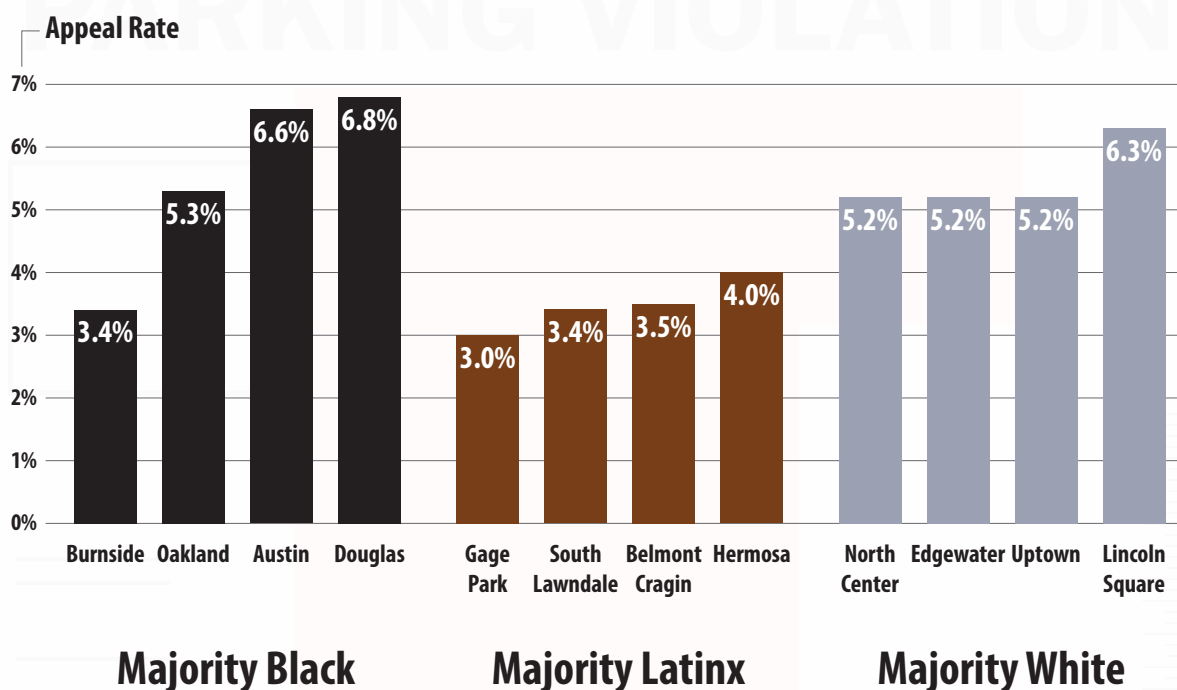


Select Latinx spaces: Exceptions to the racial rule of where erroneous tickets are issued

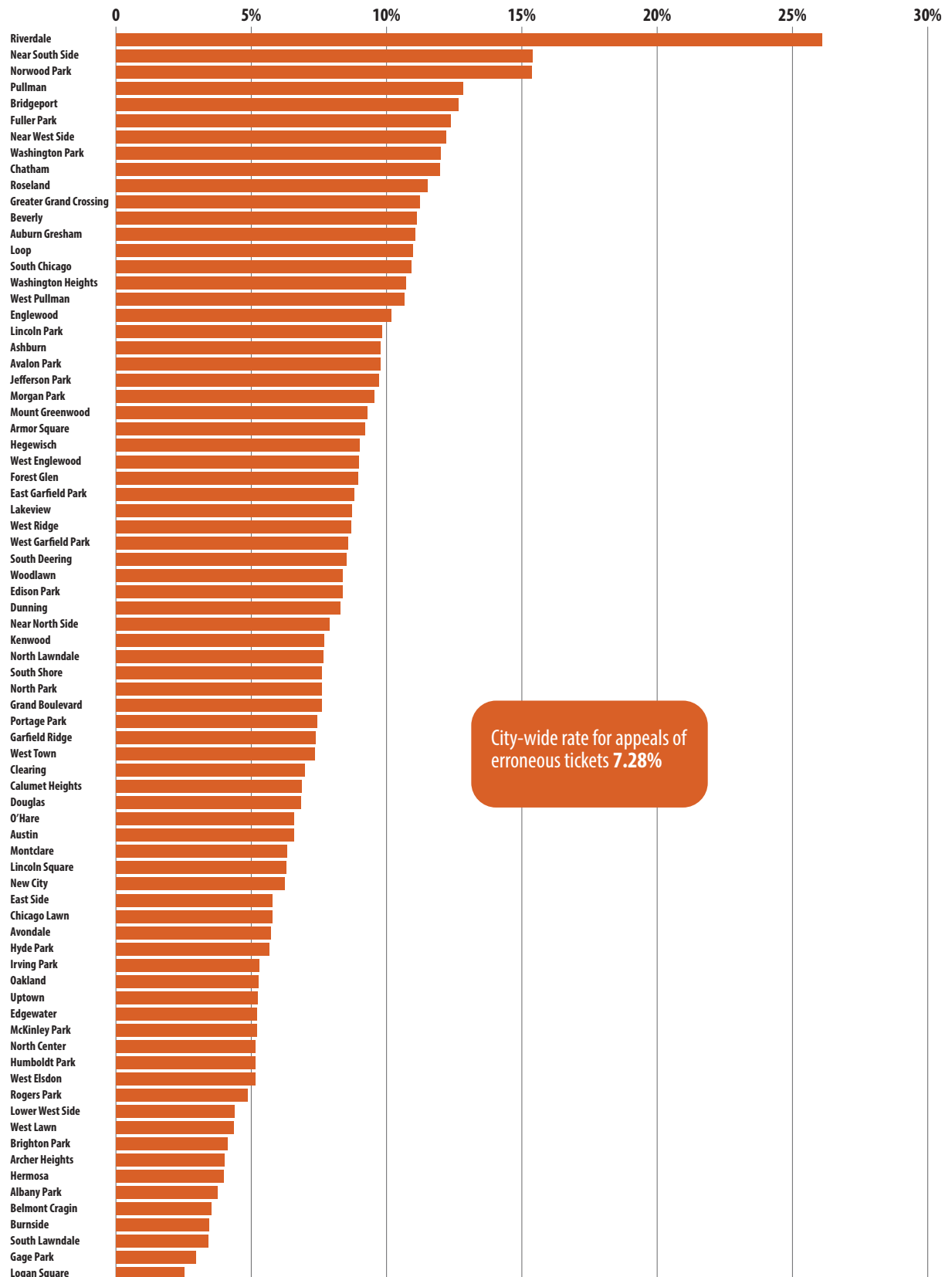
There are exceptions to every rule. While more erroneous tickets are issued in majority white spaces, parts of the northwest and southwest sides, where you hear that summertime jingle of “the paletero man,” are also ticketing hotspots. Most notably, these include the majority Latinx community areas of the Lower West Side (n = 19,167) and Belmont Cragin (n = 17,629). What makes mistaken tickets in these spaces all-the-more pernicious is that drivers in these communities are among the least likely to contest them.

Once a person is ticketed in error, they are within their motorists’ bill of rights to make an appeal. They must first file for an independent review, either by contesting the ticket by mail or asking for an in-person hearing, via Chicago’s Department of Administrative Hearing. Few ever opt for appeal, though. Only 7% of errored tickets were contested city wide. In many Latinx spaces, the appeal rate is about half that number.³⁶

COMMUNITIES WITH THE LOWEST RATES OF APPEAL BY RACE, AUG 2012 - MAY 2018



APPEAL OF ERRONEOUS TICKETS BY COMMUNITY AREA, AUG 2012 - MAY 2018



Nine of the 10 community areas with the lowest appeal rates had proportionally more Latinx residents than their city-wide representation. Seven of these were made up of populations where more than three-quarters of residents identify as Latinx. They include Gage Park (92% Latinx, 3% appealed), South Lawndale (83% Latinx, 3% appealed), Belmont Cragin (82% Latinx, 4% appealed), Hermosa (84% Latinx, 4% appealed), Archer Heights (77% Latinx, 4% appealed), Brighton Park (83% Latinx, 4% appealed), and West Lawn (83% Latinx, 4% appealed).

Many of these Latinx spaces with low appeal rates are home to much of Chicago's "undocumented" population of some 183,000 residents.³⁷ The five communities with the largest undocumented populations are the same communities with some of the lowest rates of appeal.³⁸

Tickets for those without legal status can invite unwanted attention from authorities who are viewed, with good reason,³⁹ as the entry-point to dragnet strategies of immigration enforcement. Even those with established legal residency fear of being targeted by immigration practices that might lead to deportation.⁴⁰ Vulnerable populations may feel they have little recourse against tickets written under false pretenses, making their money ripe for the taking.⁴¹

SAME TICKET, DIFFERENT PENALTY

Parking tickets have a way of intensifying vulnerability among the already vulnerable. The well-off are left unphased.⁴² Classically liberal renditions of law would have people believe no one group or person is above the rules. On paper, rules do not consider where people come from or how much money they have. Nor does it matter what a person's background is. The rules are untampered by subjectivity, untainted by bias. Everyone is treated as contractual equals through an indifferently neutral, value-free stance on self-evident principles of justice. Yet, there's a certain absurdity to "the rule of law" when you consider its equality is unevenly distributed according to social location.

Maybe novelist Anatole France said it best over a century ago with his satire on the relationship between law, wealth, and poverty. He wrote that "the majestic quality of the law [...] prohibits the wealthy as well as the poor from sleeping under the bridges, from begging in the streets, and from stealing bread."⁴³ Among the points he was making is that in a world rife with inequality, some will always be more equal than others under a rule of law that values capital over people.

The impact of law is disparate in its consequences too. Those with income at their disposal can pay their parking tickets just like any other bill. A ticket's effect on the well-to-do is minimal, in that it siphons surplus resources. In this way, parking tickets collide the boundaries between what constitutes a reprimand, on the one hand, and a price or premium, on the other.⁴⁴







The ticketed can buy their way out of courtroom ritual with a check by mail or online payment. So long as tickets get paid (or appealed), parking violations are not an indictable offense. Drivers can repeat these violations indefinitely without further consequence. Mobility goes on uninterrupted upon making good on the debt. Paying a ticket is the cost of no further penalty imposed by the City of Chicago, at least until the next one is written.⁴⁵







Once a car is ticketed in Chicago, the registered owner has 14 days to appeal by mail or 21 days to request an in-person hearing. Drivers are held liable if they don't respond, and the original fine then doubles. Another 22% in collections fees can be stacked atop this debt too. Not everyone can afford or even avoid these debts,

though. Their differential impact is more debilitating than dutiful among the racialized poor since these fines attempt to extract money from people who have little of it.⁴⁶

Tickets are like other regressive revenue streams of government. They disproportionately burden those who have fewer financial degrees of freedom. When applied “equally,” they still have inequitable impact. For example, the typical Black Chicagoan without a bachelor’s degree earns \$18.64 an hour and clears a gross income of \$745.60 for a 40-hour work week. One \$60 ticket saps 8% of their weekly gross income. Should this person be unable to pay the ticket within two weeks or request a hearing in three weeks, that ticket debt spirals to 16% of their income. And if the City decides to add collections fees, that debt balloons to 20% of their earnings. By contrast, the same \$60 ticket costs their white counterpart 6% of their weekly gross, 12% should they incur late penalties, and 15% if collections fees are tacked on.

THE PRICE OF ERRONEOUS TICKETS: DIFFERENTIAL IMPACTS BY RACE, EDUCATION, AND WAGES

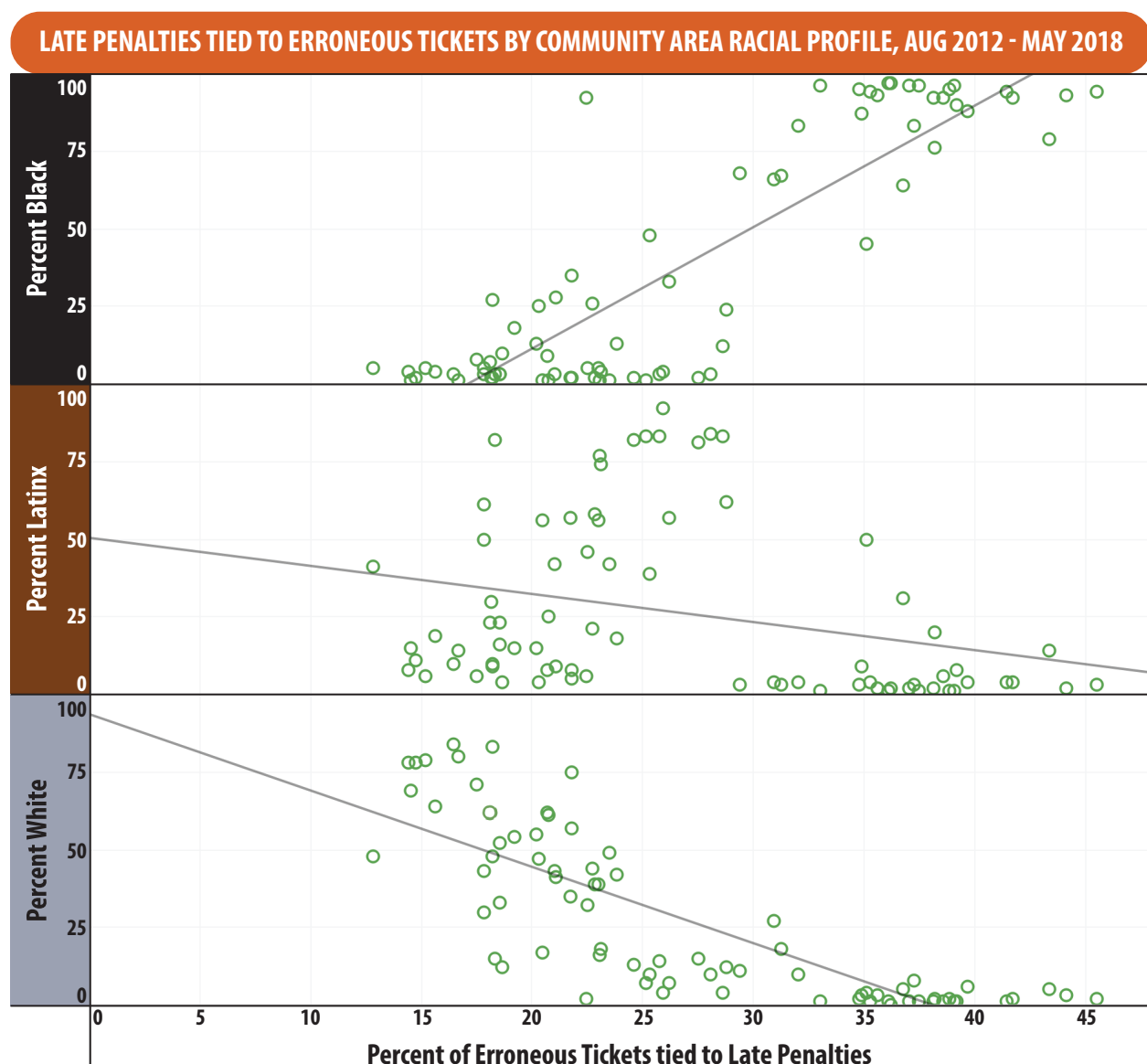
Education & Hourly Pay		Weekly Wages		Ticket Debt as % of Weekly Gross Income		
Less than Bachelor’s, Median Hourly Wage		Gross Income, 40-hr Week		\$60 Ticket	Late Penalty	Collections Fees
Black	 \$18.64	 \$745.60		8%	16%	20%
Latinx	 \$17.91	 \$716.40		8%	17%	20%
White	 \$24.59	 \$983.60		6%	12%	15%

Education & Hourly Pay		Weekly Wages		Ticket Debt as % of Weekly Gross Income		
Bachelor’s or Higher, Median Hourly Wage		Gross Income, 40-hr Week		\$60 Ticket	Late Penalty	Collections Fees
Black	 \$32.14	 \$1,285.60		5%	9%	11%
Latinx	 \$31.74	 \$1,269.60		5%	9%	12%
White	 \$44.02	 \$1,760.80		3%	7%	8%

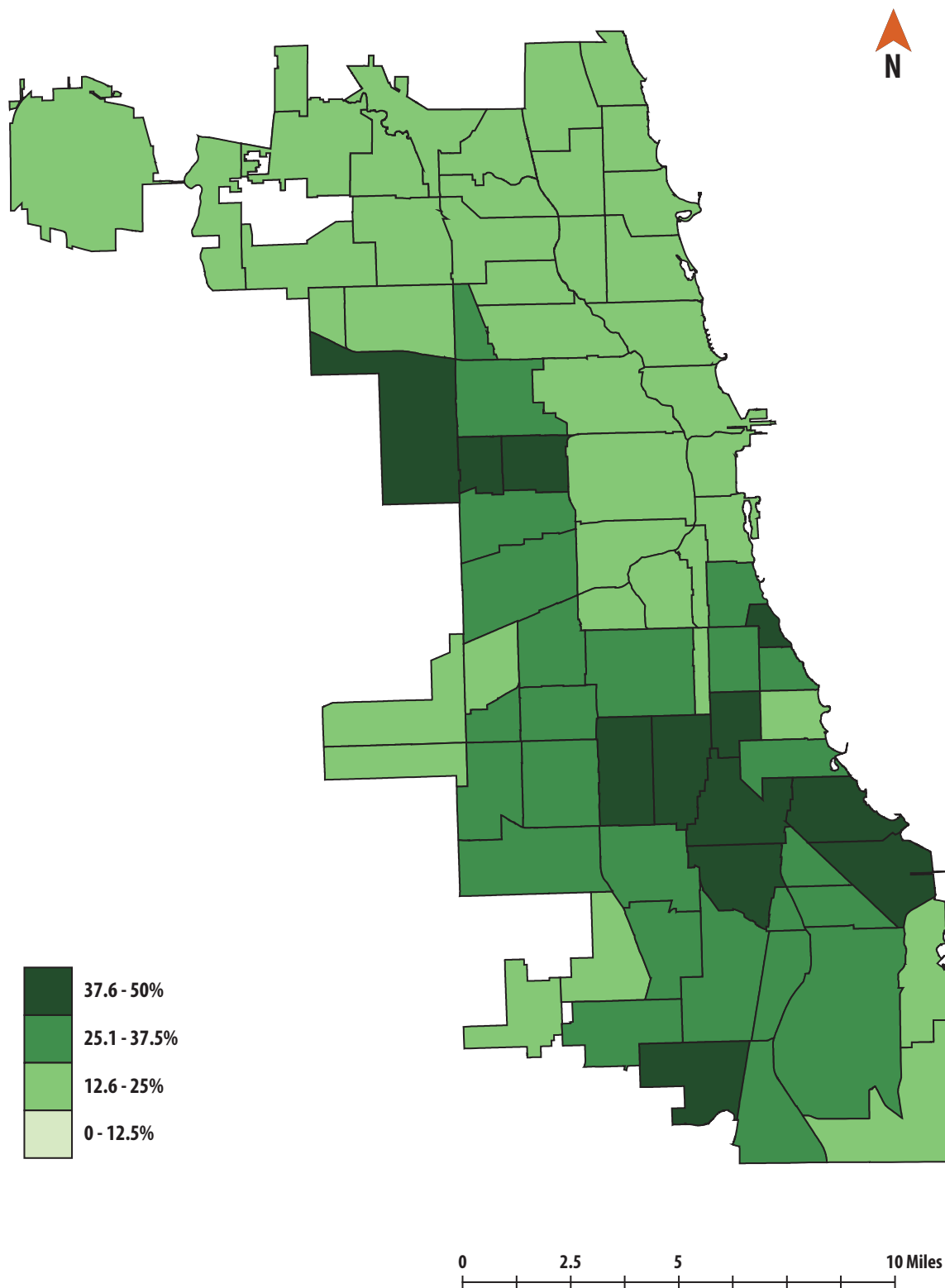
Note: The race, education, and income measures are 5-year estimates (2015 - 2019) from the U.S. Census Bureau’s American Community Survey. This data can be found in IRRPP’s *Deadly Disparities in the Days of COVID-19* report.

Whose errored tickets are subject to late penalties?

Those Chicagoans who blame parking tickets on the ticketed, rather than Chicago's ticketing practices, are not only more likely to attribute the resulting debt to poor individual choices, but they are more inclined to support punitive recourse against those who don't pay what they owe.⁴⁷ What this means is that there's an appetite, if not desire, among some city residents to escalate the terms of punishment upon those who cannot make good on their debt. More than some abstract sentiment among segments of Chicagoans, however, the City of Chicago already puts these principles into practice with late penalties when it doubles the debt on unpaid tickets and adds 22% in collections fees. It doesn't matter if these tickets were issued in error.



PERCENT OF TICKETS WITH LATE PENALTIES BY COMMUNITY AREA, AUG 2012 - MAY 2018



Throughout all of Chicago, more than one-in-five (22%) tickets issued under false pretenses were subject to late penalties. A disproportionate share of these penalties fell on Black communities. Majority Black spaces represent the twenty communities with the highest percentage of late penalties tied to errored tickets. The top three communities - including West Garfield Park (94% Black, 45% of errored tickets incur late penalties), South Shore (93% Black, 44% of errored tickets incur late penalties), Austin (79% Black, 43% of errored tickets incur late penalties) - hover around double the city-wide rate.

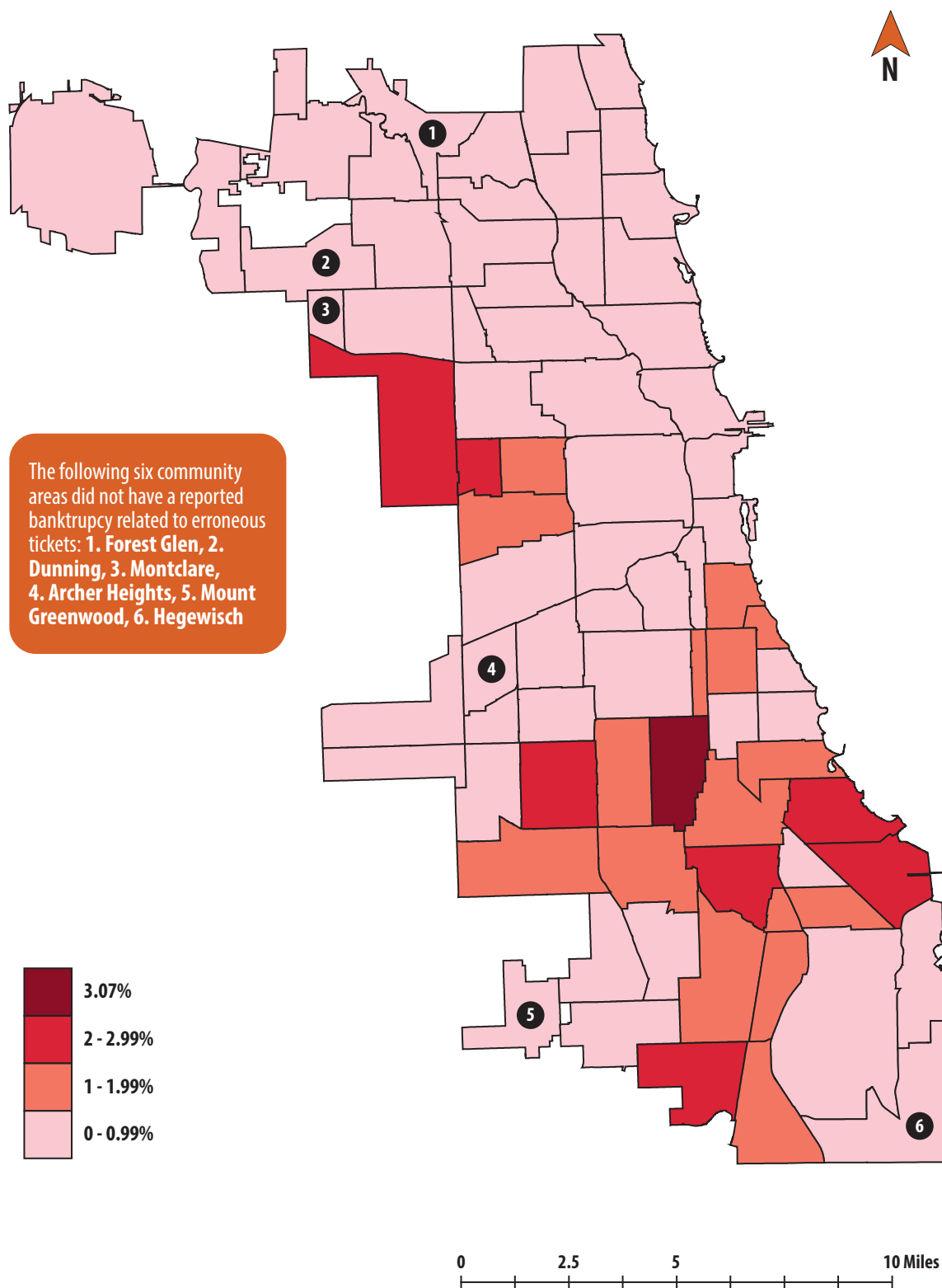
These high rates of late penalties are more than lines in a spreadsheet. They are people's livelihoods for many in Black spaces where poverty is high and even middle-class status is tenuous.⁴⁸ Among Black Chicagoans without a financial safety net, paying a parking ticket might well serve as a tradeoff between some other important expense. What starts off as a seemingly small issue becomes quite consequential in a spiraling cycle of debt.

A \$60 ticket that balloons into \$120 with late penalties could have been a winter coat. The 22% collections fee added onto these debts may have been a nourishing family meal. And for those who cannot satisfy these debts, on the other side awaits the possibility of escalated punishment (e.g., vehicular impoundment), collateral consequences (e.g., barred City employment, state tax return garnishment), other criminal legal involvements (e.g., license suspensions),⁴⁹ and possible bankruptcy.

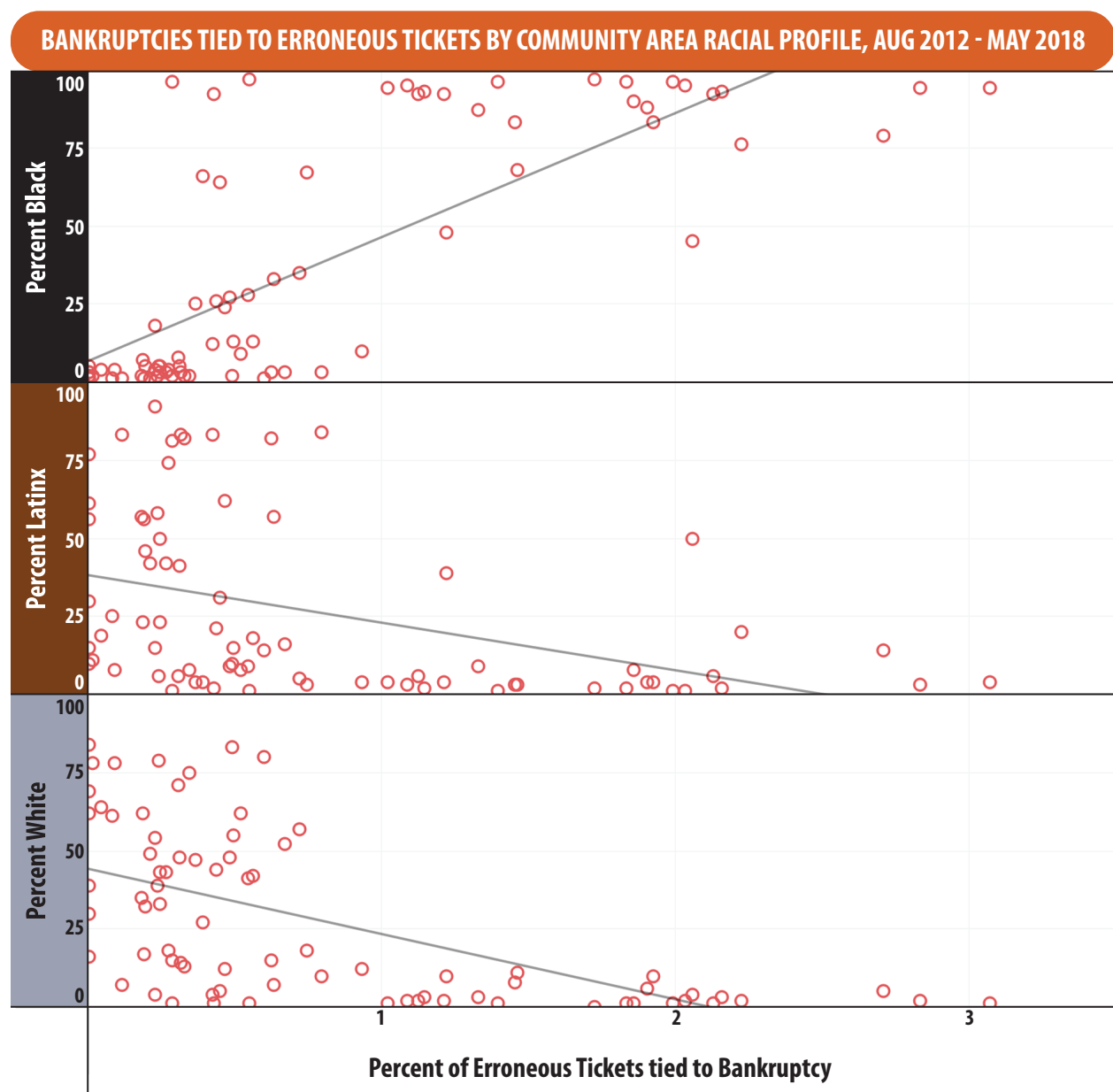
From errored tickets to bankruptcy

Two bankruptcy options are generally available to those swimming in debt: Chapter 7 or Chapter 13. Although Chicagoans who file Chapter 7 tend to, on average, pay less in attorney fees (\$1,000 compared to \$2,600 for Chapter 13 filings), resolve their case in less time (4 months compared to 3-5 years), and are more likely to discharge their debt (a 96% success rate compared to 33% of all bankruptcy cases), Black Chicagoans often pursue Chapter 13 instead.⁵⁰ Half of Black filers in the Northern District of Illinois, which includes Chicago, declare Chapter 13 as compared to less than a quarter for all other groups. More than a simple matter of overrepresentation, however, the Chicagoland region annually processes more bankruptcies than anywhere else in the country. A large factor driving this trend are Chapter 13 filings related to ticket debt.⁵¹

BANKRUPTCIES TIED TO ERRONEOUS TICKETS BY COMMUNITY AREA, AUG 2012 - MAY 2018



The ticketed find Chapter 13 appealing because it's often cheaper than establishing a payment plan with the City. Prior to reforms passed under Mayor Lori Lightfoot, even setting up the City's hardship plan required a down payment of \$1,000 or one-fourth of the total ticket debt, whichever was lower.⁵² Beyond these immediate costs, Chapter 13 is unlike Chapter 7. It allows filers to shelter some existing assets from liquidation, including personal vehicles.⁵³ So long as the bankruptcy case stays active, it lifts license suspensions tied to parking tickets and keeps vehicles off Chicago's "scofflaw list."⁵⁴ Chapter 13 offers instant relief for people who are perhaps even too broke for bankruptcy.⁵⁵





Former site of Peter Francis Geraci Law Offices at 234 S. Ashland Ave. in Chicago. Geraci's firm specializes in bankruptcy law and is the second most-frequent filer of Chapter 13 cases in the Northern District of Illinois, which includes Chicago.

Even though the odds are stacked against Chapter 13 filers, there are structural incentives that could lead bankruptcy attorneys to steer their clients down this road anyways. The payment plans on Chapter 13 filings can be arranged so that they get paid before anyone else, even those debts that actually caused someone to declare bankruptcy in the first place.⁵⁶ Chicago-based law firms like Semrad Law Firm (better known as "DebtStoppers") or

Peter Francis Geraci Law take on these cases for zero-money-down and a flat \$4,000 in fees. These two firms represent more than half of all Chapter 13 bankruptcies in the Northern District of Illinois and about 80% of Chapter 13 filings among Black residents.⁵⁷ What this means is that Chapter 13 filers can pay thousands to firms like DebtStoppers and Geraci without ever lowering the principal balance. Should the case not end successfully, much of the original debt will likely still stand.

Most errored tickets don't end up in bankruptcy, but even one erroneous ticket-turned-bankruptcy is too many. Over the six-year timeline reviewed, we identified as many as 2,313 erroneous tickets that were tied to someone's financial ruin. That figure approximates, on average, slightly more than one erroneous ticket per day ending in bankruptcy. More than four in five (84%) of these can be geo-referenced to cars wrongfully ticketed in majority non-white communities. Three of the five communities with the most erroneous tickets connected to bankruptcy are majority Black. They include Austin (79% Black, 263 erroneous tickets end in bankruptcies), South Shore (93% Black, 126 erroneous tickets end in bankruptcies), and Douglas (68% Black, 105 erroneous tickets end in bankruptcies).

When these bankruptcy numbers are aggregated to a smaller unit of analysis, the census tract, about half of the filings ($n = 1,065$) can be traced to erroneous tickets in community areas where more than half the residents are Black. The rate of erroneous tickets-turned-bankruptcy is 9.11 times higher for cars parked in majority Black community areas compared to tracts with majority white residents.⁵⁸

Because debt among many Black people is like a “negative balance sheet that must be worked through just to get to the starting line,”⁵⁹ the decision to file for bankruptcy likely began prior to the issuance of any erroneous ticket. One study estimates that a third of Black Chicagoans possess either zero or negative net worth, while nearly half lack enough wealth to subsist above poverty for at least three months without income.⁶⁰ For many of these very people, a ticket written under false pretenses is not experienced as just some minor administrative mistake. Erroneous tickets devastate some of Chicago’s most vulnerable because these fines introduce another problem in a much broader crisis of precarity.

HOW MUCH MONEY IS TIED TO MISTAKEN TICKETS?

Erroneous tickets are a multimillion-dollar industry for the City of Chicago. During the six years we reviewed, they generated \$27,543,807 in revenues while another \$8,034,666 remains as unsettled debt. Together, that's \$35,578,473. That's enough money to pay for a third of what Chicago owes IBM each year for processing bogus tickets that its technology was supposed to reduce.

OUTSTANDING DEBT VS. REVENUES COLLECTED FROM ERRONEOUS TICKETS, AUG 2012 - MAY 2018



Debt: \$ 8,034,666
Revenue: \$27,543,807

Although many of the outstanding tickets will likely never be paid,⁶¹ even debt can be an asset to Chicago. Officials can leverage debt as an incoming money stream in budget projections, painting a more flattering image for credit rating agencies like Moody's and companies that might loan the City money.⁶² Meanwhile, ticket debt stays on the books indefinitely in Chicago. There is no statute of limitations for parking violations in the State of Illinois, which places them in the same company as offenses like arson and murder. To offer some comparative perspective, the statute of limitations for parking violations in New York City is eight years, while it is five years in Los Angeles.

Exactly how much is \$35.6 million to the City of Chicago? Aside from a third of the money owed to IBM each year, this figure is \$35.6 more million than what the City collects in a graduated income tax, a corporate head tax, or a "LaSalle St. tax"⁶³ – as Chicago does not currently collect any of these revenues.⁶⁴

The influx of money from erroneous tickets aligns with broader changes that began under Mayor Richard M. Daley. He actively sought out new money to offset traditional

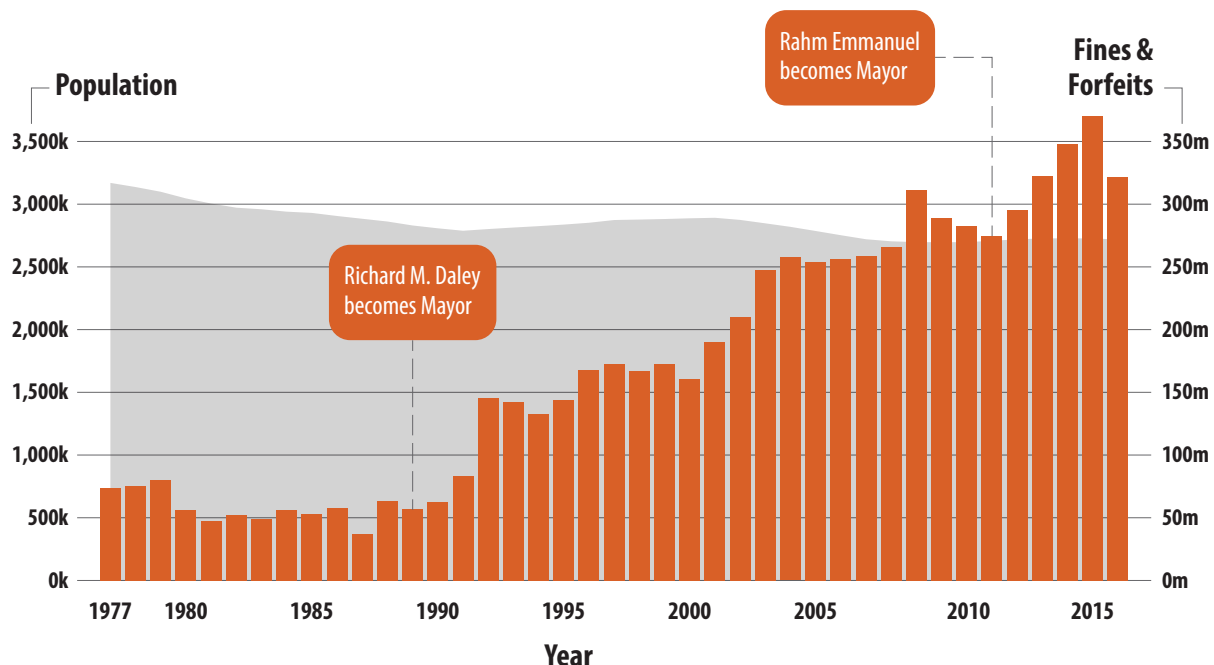
revenue streams like the property tax. In a special meeting at City Council during his first term, for example, Daley made his agenda explicit:

“There’s a limit to what we can ask of local taxpayers. And that’s why we’re putting even more muscle into collection of fines and fees next year.”⁶⁵

What “muscle” was Daley talking about? He was talking about a collaboration with the Illinois Secretary of State to identify Chicago-based drivers who didn’t buy a city sticker. He was talking about more aggressively pursuing those with outstanding ticket debt with a boot and tow. And he was talking about doubling the daily rate of storage fees for impoundment.

Fast forward three decades with regressive reforms added along the way. Census data show that fines and forfeits have grown more than 300% since the days Harold Washington ran the City.⁶⁶ That growth has occurred even though the city’s population has declined by nearly 15% over the same span. These sanctions now generate well

THE GROWTH OF FINES AND FORFEITS BETWEEN 1977 AND 2017



Data source: Lincoln Institute of Land Policy, Fiscally Standardized Cities

Revenues from fines and forfeits only include those receipts that were collected by the City of Chicago. They exclude sanctions collected by Cook County, like those imposed by the Circuit Court of Cook County. According to the Census Bureau, these monies broadly include receipts imposed for violations of law. All currency has been adjusted for inflation and is reported in 2017 dollars.

over \$300 million each year, and they comprised 5.4% of all own source revenue for the City of Chicago in 2017.⁶⁷

Although fines and fees have exploded over the past 30 years, the City of Chicago is not making money hand over fist. Whatever profits Chicago sees are likely funneled right back into the system for its own preservation⁶⁸ or captured by corporate interests through private-public partnerships.

One revealing example of why Chicago is likely losing money on ticketing

Take Chicago's winter parking ban as one revealing example of where the money goes. After you add up the administrative costs of issuing tickets, towing vehicles, operating the auto pounds, and maintaining traffic court, it's difficult to see how the math works out in the City's favor. In 2017 alone, the City generated \$1.9 million from towing and storage fees and another \$245,000 from issued tickets.⁶⁹ Over half this money went to United Road Towing, a private vendor that has monopolized Chicago's towing contract for over three decades.

And United Road Towing's share of the winter ban money continues to grow over time. It raked in 62% of the City's \$105 tow fee in 1997. Ten years later, after the towing fee increased from \$105 to \$150, the share increased to 82%. It was 88% by 2020. When journalists raise questions about these numbers, City Officials insist parking restrictions like the winter ban is about public safety, not money. They also claim outsourcing the work is cheaper than keeping it in-house.⁷⁰

United Road Towing wasn't always known as such. The company changed its name after a 2003 FBI investigation for suspected involvement in an interstate car-theft ring. One year later, reporters at *The Chicago Sun-Times* uncovered other dubious practices.⁷¹ They found the City of Chicago sells nearly 70,000 impounds a year that go unclaimed for various reasons, ranging from outright abandonment to being priced out by spiraling fines and fees. These cars are sold at scrap value (i.e., a couple hundred dollars in most cases) regardless of their market value, and none of the proceeds are subtracted from outstanding ticket debt. The buyer was none other than the same company that towed many of these cars to begin with.

The corporation now known as United Road Towing started out as Environmental Auto Removal. It was a clout-connected firm that formed the same year Richard M. Daley won his first mayoral election in 1989. Tied to a close ally of the mayor, former State Senator Jeremiah Joyce, the company landed an exclusive City contract only nine days after its creation.⁷² The private-public partnership with Chicago propelled United Road Towing to become the largest towing company in the nation, at least until filing for bankruptcy protection in 2015.⁷³ This news came just as the company lost a class action suit of \$5 million, money that would have compensated many whose cars were towed without consent. Instead, United Road Towing was put up for auction.

Who won the auction for United Road Towing? The same company that had already owned a majority of its stake,⁷⁴ Medley Capital Corp. Medley is a New York-based investment firm that entered the top bid of \$39.9 million for a towing company with gross revenues at nearly \$90 million per year prior to filing bankruptcy.⁷⁵ Four years after acquiring United Road Towing, Medley filed for its own bankruptcy. The corporation defaulted on payments to creditors, while accumulating another \$141 million in debt.⁷⁶

Privatization in the “selloff city”

When it comes to infrastructure deals, the relationship between Chicago and United Road Towing is just one example of many. There’s also the parking meter deal that Chicagoans love to hate. After taking over in 2009, Chicago Parking Meters LLC immediately hiked the rates and extended the hours of required payment for parking across the city. The company went on to recoup its initial investment of \$1.16 billion, plus another \$500 million in profit (and counting), during its first 11 years of a 75-year lease.⁷⁷ City leaders stalled hikes to the property tax with this windfall, which eventually happened anyway under Mayors Rahm Emanuel and Lori Lightfoot. Underfunded city pensions got no relief either.

Even during the pandemic’s darkest days, when many Chicagoans reeled in hard financial times, Chicago Parking Meters LLC generated \$91.6 million in revenue.⁷⁸ As much as \$6.8 million of this money consisted of “true-up” payments from the City of Chicago. The contract obligates the City to compensate Chicago Parking Meters LLC for every parking space taken out of service, whatever the reason. These inoperable spaces include those city streets that have been re-purposed for restaurants and storefronts during the ongoing pandemic.⁷⁹

Nearly two decades before the City of Chicago leased the rights to its parking meters, the City's ticket-processing technology was among the first pieces of public infrastructure to privatize. Dallas-based Electronic Data Systems had zero experience with parking management systems, but that didn't stop local leaders from awarding it a 5-year, \$40 million contract in 1990.⁸⁰ The company shared the same public relations firm as Mayor Richard M. Daley in Jasculca-Terman & Associates, which ended up being a subcontractor on the deal. Corporate leaders at Electronics Data Systems also shared networks of legal counsel with direct ties to the Daley family.

City Officials denied the optics. Then Parking Administrator Inge Fryklund was quoted in *The Chicago Sun-Times*, saying the firm had "'one of the best track records in the nation' for doing big data processing jobs [...]. There was no political interference in this decision. We played it straight."⁸¹

Electronic Data Systems managed Chicago's ticket-processing needs until 1998.⁸² In that year, Mayor Richard M. Daley awarded a no-bid, five-year contract worth \$54 million to IBM. A representative from Electronic Data Systems contested the divorce in a letter to City Council, questioning the legality of a bidding process closed off from open competition.⁸³ The call for bids eventually opened, but only one was submitted. IBM replaced Electronic Data Systems, pledging to deliver upon many promises, including a reduction in erroneous tickets.⁸⁴

Multiplying inroads to punitive possibility

When IBM took over the City contract in 1998, at some \$10 million per year until 2012 and more than \$18 million annually thereafter under Mayor Rahm Emanuel, the company introduced its tailor-made technology: CANVAS, the "Chicago Adjudication, Noticing, and Violation Administration System."⁸⁵

IBM established a centralized, real-time record-keeping system. Tickets would no longer be strictly handwritten but issued with hand-held computers. These computers would provide access to a data processing system that could match the make and model of ticketed cars with different license plate numbers. They would also be equipped with cameras to capture photo evidence. IBM promised to build a portal for online ticket payments and continue handling day-to-day collections activities. And lastly, it promised to eliminate bogus tickets.

Upon implementing IBM's new system, then Revenue Director Hugh Murphy praised the technology for bringing Chicago's ticketing program into the 21st century:

"The way it used to work is [ticketers] had a book, single-space. They'd go down the street and open it up. They'd look at the car and look at the list and look at the car and look at the list. It wasn't very efficient [...].

Now we have a better list that's able to connect the same owner with different plates. Our crews use hand-held computers. They plug in the license plate and it pops up and says whether it's boot-eligible or not. If it is, they verify it. They put the boot on and they're gone."⁸⁶

Just two years after taking over the City contract, IBM's system enabled Chicago to boot, on average, 1,000 cars per week compared to 600 under the old system. And the number of tickets issued per year grew to 3.7 million, surpassing \$100 million in annual collections.

Meet Sandra Botello.⁸⁷ She moved to Chicago from Idaho nearly 10 years ago for a better life. In many ways, Chicago delivered on this promise. Ms. Botello got an associate degree. She enrolled for a bachelor's at the University of Illinois at Chicago. And two of her children were awarded scholarships to attend private school.

Ms. Botello's first couple months in Chicago were anything but promising, though. She couldn't land a job. Between moving costs, higher rents, and unexpected expenses, she was almost priced out of the city altogether. Even when good news came, like when one of her sons got a scholarship, it was difficult to celebrate when a \$400 registration fee still loomed. Ms. Botello faced a choice. Either spend her last dollars on her child's education or pay Chicago's city sticker registration. She chose her child, and the debt spiral spun.

After being without a city sticker for one-and-a-half months, Ms. Botello racked up five \$200 city sticker violations. The City Clerk's Office charged an additional \$60 late fee when she was able to purchase a sticker. Ms. Botello's car was booted on March 16, 2015 and towed the next day to an impoundment lot. She was charged a \$150 towing fee, along with storage fees of \$20 per day for the first five days. Thereafter, storage fees jumped to \$35 per day. The car remained impounded for nearly 30 days until it was auctioned off at scrap value for \$139. None of this sale subtracted from Ms. Botello's debt, and Chicago claimed she still owed the City \$2,934.

At \$200 a ticket, the city sticker violation is among the costliest citations in Chicago. It increased from \$120 in 2012 under newly elected Mayor Rahm Emanuel and then City Clerk Susana Mendoza, all with the goal of boosting needed revenue for the City.⁸⁸ An exposé by journalists Melissa Sanchez and Elliott Ramos uncovered that the City of Chicago issued nearly 20,000 duplicates of these tickets between 2007 and 2018, meaning that cars were cited for city sticker violations two, three, or even four times all within the same day.⁸⁹ Majority Black community areas, like West Engelwood, Woodlawn, and North Lawndale, were subject to the highest rates of duplicates. After completing an internal review of these practices in 2018, the City of Chicago would dismiss 23,000 duplicate tickets dating back to 1992.⁹⁰ However, the damage was already done for some. They had already lost their cars or filed for bankruptcy.

IBM's technology aided and abetted the City to make the experience of Sandra Botello possible, not to mention the other tens of thousands of Chicagoans who were ticketed multiple times for the same violation on the same day – sometimes within minutes of one other. That's what CANVAS does. Its ticket-processing system makes indebted drivers legible to the City, so they can be subjected to even more debt. What CANVAS does not do is consider the very circumstantial restrictions of whether a ticket should be issued in the first place.

The system has no built-in mechanism that, for example, prevents snow route tickets from being issued on days of no accumulation. It cannot stop a rush hour ticket that's issued at 2am. It does nothing to prevent no Loop parking tickets from being issued in community areas as far as Chatham or Dunning. IBM arms the City of Chicago with a ticket-processing system that prioritizes the possibilities of punishment over the disruption of sanctions without cause, which says something more fundamental about the values, priorities, and afterthoughts that are baked into the technology.⁹¹

With uncertainty brings possibility

Chicagoans could use a validation workflow that verifies the pretenses of tickets otherwise issued in error.⁹² This missing feature of IBM's technology is all-the-more urgent to develop when you consider how Chicago's Department of Administrative Hearings is lacking in procedural safeguards.⁹³ Its administrative process doesn't scrutinize alleged parking violations with systemic attention. Instead, it defers to the word of ticketing authorities without question and accepts the notice of violation as

a substitute for evidence.⁹⁴ The relaxed evidentiary standard perverts the meaning of compliance since being ticketed doesn't necessarily mean that any parking restrictions were violated.

Unless the ticketed contest their ticket, which can amount to sanctions in its own right,⁹⁵ accusations take priority over factual accuracy. Even those who were mistakenly ticketed can be incentivized to pay tickets outright.⁹⁶ Payment means they don't have to write a concise, cogent statement. It means they don't have to marshal and mobilize evidence to the contrary. It means they don't have to obtain official documents, like police reports, registration records, or pictures of nearby surroundings, that won't be returned by the City. And among those who would appeal in person, payment means they don't have to take off from work and lose a day's wages. Payment means that they'll never experience the vindication of innocence, but many will save money since the cost of appeal can exceed a common \$60 ticket.

The current 10-year contract between Chicago and IBM expires July 31 of 2022, and many Chicagoans ought to have rightful concern about what unfolds thereafter. When the current no-bid contract was signed under Rahm Emanuel, the agreed-upon price of IBM's technology nearly doubled from the previous arrangement. Mayoral spokesman Tom Alexander justified the added expense, saying:

"The scope and nature of the contract has evolved. They're required to do different things."⁹⁷

These "different things" included the expansion of parking meters across the city and the issuance of red-light and speeding violations recorded on camera.

Similar circumstances are before Chicago now. While Mayor Lori Lightfoot campaigned on breaking the City's addiction to fines and fees,⁹⁸ her 2021 "pandemic budget" drove the City in a different direction. Mayor Lightfoot's budget lowered the threshold for automated speed cameras from ten miles per hour to six,⁹⁹ added nearly 750 metered parking spots,¹⁰⁰ and vowed to aggressively pursue "safety-related" parking violations and outstanding debt.¹⁰¹ These are the same kinds of factors cited by Rahm Emanuel a decade ago, all to justify a 10-year partnership that paid IBM to the tune of \$188 million.

As the contract nears expiration, we offer 475,106 reasons why Chicago needs to rethink its ticketing practices.

Private Profits, Public Pain: Privatization and Chicago's Ticketing Machine

There is a long history of the “parking scofflaw” in media and public pronouncements, with chronic violators portrayed alternately as rulebreakers or as folk heroes.¹⁰² One New York Times editorial from 1966 expressed the former sentiment in a typical manner, noting that fewer than half of recently issued parking summonses had been answered, and arguing that “such intolerable disregard for law requires a thorough overhaul of defective enforcement machinery.”¹⁰³ The remedy, according to the Times’ editors, is “certainty of punishment,” which they argued “is a much more effective deterrent than severity of penalty.” Searching newspaper archives from the 1970s through the 1990s, one comes across numerous stories about the “cat-and-mouse game” between witless traffic enforcement agents and chronic parking violators. Taken together, these stories point to the parking scofflaw as the human equivalent of the “broken window”: a leading indicator of the destabilization of the rule of law, and a fundamental challenge to the governability of the modern city.

This report brings the reader to the contemporary moment and behind the rhetoric of the scofflaw. Instead of seeing ticket issuance as linked to the moral fiber of city residents, we encounter a machinery of ticketing that traps residents in a Kafkaesque system. In this commentary, I want to connect some of the empirical insights of the report to two interlinked dimensions of urban governance, arguing that the “accidental” ticket is deeply rooted in the apparatuses of urban austerity. The geographer Jamie Peck describes austerity as a “condition of ‘enforced or extreme economy’” produced by reduced intergovernmental transfers, enforced discipline over public expenditures, or an enhanced political focus on budgetary integrity.¹⁰⁴ While often associated with local government downsizing and rolling privatization, the research presented here also links ticket collection to a larger trend of expanding state apparatuses linked to what the legal scholars Bernadette Atuahene and Timothy Hodge call “stategraft”: “when state agents transfer property and wealth from residents to the state in violation of the state’s own laws.”¹⁰⁵

One immediate relation between erroneous ticketing and austerity is evident in the City of Chicago's contract with the technology firm IBM. Even in the 1960s, the New York Times' editors were bemoaning a lack of administrative coordination in the crackdown on chronic parking violators; by the 1980s, they had turned to celebrating technological fixes, such as hand-held, computerized parking-summons machines as means to better identify errant drivers and maximize parking ticket revenue.¹⁰⁶ With the hollowing out of front-line city agencies over three decades of austerity politics, these fixes are now peddled by firms such as IBM, which step into the space created by budget cutbacks to offer "solutions" that promise market-like efficiencies to problems of service delivery or revenue maximization.¹⁰⁷ Close examination of these "solutions" reveals not so much market efficiencies but glitchy systems, prone to breakdowns and errors and with few mechanisms for accountability.¹⁰⁸ Scholars critical of municipal privatization have highlighted how errors such as these have shaped trends towards re-municipalization or "contracting in" as policymakers and politicians have discovered that the rhetoric of private sector efficiency generally exceeds its reality.¹⁰⁹ However, in the case of erroneous parking tickets there is an alignment of interests: the City of Chicago earns significant revenue from tickets issued in error, and IBM has become a key partner in managing austerity across multiple domains ranging from public schools,¹¹⁰ climate change, and public safety.¹¹¹

This alignment of interests is even more pronounced in the case of a second dimension of austerity urbanism, that being the sale of city infrastructure to private investors. Chicago was an innovator in this practice, employing a quick series of long-term leases between 1998 and 2008 to transfer control over the CTA Green Line rails, the Skyway toll road, downtown underground parking garages, and the city's on-street parking meters to private financial consortia.¹¹² The Daley administration hailed these deals – euphemistically referred to "public-private partnerships" and "asset recycling" – as means to ensure new investment in infrastructural systems and transfer risks to the private sector; more immediately, they generated over \$3.5 billion in direct payments to the city, allowing Chicago to avoid general property tax increases, pay down more than \$925 million in outstanding debt, and (temporarily) upgrade its credit rating.¹¹³ Critics of these deals have pointed to a lack of transparency, lengthy lease terms, and accelerated toll or user fee increases as evidence that the city is giving away the farm and passing the bill to residents. While these criticisms have brought new scrutiny to

the practices of infrastructure privatization, they fall short of identifying the deeper long-term shifts in city services that have accompanied existing deals.¹¹⁴

A case in point is the 2008 agreement to transfer control of the city's on-street parking meters to a consortium led by the investment bank Morgan Stanley. As the research presented here identifies, the concession agreement granted authority to Chicago Parking Meters LLC to aggressively raise parking rates, amounting to a regressive tax increase on the city's low-income drivers. More insidiously, the agreement enrolled city agencies in ensuring a culture of parking compliance, with the contract acknowledging that "the adjudication and punishment of Persons that violate [parking] rules and regulations are material to" the value of Morgan Stanley's investment, and that "failure to [enforce parking rules and regulations] ... may result in losses to the Concessionaire and thereby may constitute" grounds for compensatory damages.¹¹⁵

This reinforces the link between privatization and erroneous tickets in several direct ways. First, it results in a significant uptick in the numbers of tickets issued. As this report notes, the agreement expanded the ticketing machinery citywide by deputizing Morgan Stanley's own private contractors (currently the parking services firm LAZ), authorizing them to issue tickets on metered parking spaces covered by the deal and even giving them access to blank city ticket books. It is not surprising, then, that revenues from parking tickets rose significantly in the immediate aftermath of the deal; leaked emails from the Chicago Department of Revenue in 2010 revealed that aggressive ticketing quotas had become the order of the day.¹¹⁶ While the City is not a financial partner to the deal and sees no payout from higher meter fees, its contractual commitment to maximize ticket-issuance conveniently transforms ticketing into a growing revenue center.

Second, the contract elevates more aggressive collection practices that disproportionately penalize low-income drivers. It specifically commits the City to expanded use of a "vehicle immobilization program" (the expensive "Denver boot") as a "method of deterrence" while requiring that privately-issued tickets be treated as equivalent for determination of when to apply the boot.¹¹⁷ It also requires that instances of nonpayment of a parking fine be referred to a collection agency or law firm within 180 days of final determination, and that City settlements with those in collections be at no less than "ten times the then weighted average hourly Metered Parking Fee" else the City will be liable for further compensatory damages to Morgan Stanley.

Finally, the privatization of parking meters also resulted in the reconfiguring of due process for drivers with tickets. A series of linked measures – again, all mandated within the concession agreement – included the City’s agreement to expedite the prosecution of traffic tickets in court, and to notify the Illinois Secretary of State to pursue license suspensions for drivers with delinquent parking tickets.¹¹⁸ As with other provisions in the Agreement, Morgan Stanley and its financial partners secure the value of their investment by making the city liable for compensatory damages should drivers be given too many opportunities to string out non-payment of fines.¹¹⁹

In this context, we are a long way from the panic over unpaid tickets and the moral fiber of drivers. The city’s erroneous tickets are less accidents than they are features of a system configured to generate revenue – for the City and for its financial partners – over ensuring the rule of law.

METHODOLOGICAL APPENDIX: HOW WE DID THE ANALYSIS

The goal of our project was conceptually simple but data intensive. We wanted to measure how often parking tickets were issued under false pretenses in Chicago. Our project brings together data from multiple sources to answer this question, including 1) ticketing data from ProPublica with 2) parking regulation information from Chicago's Department of Streets and Sanitation (DSS), Department of Transportation (DOT), and Office of the City Clerk (OCC). The ticketing data consists of public records obtained from Chicago's Department of Finance. Because these records only include info on tickets issued and who issues them, they were joined with DSS, DOT, and OCC sources that contain data on parking restrictions. For sociodemographic data on community areas, we turned to 3) five-year estimates spanning 2014 to 2018 from the Census Bureau's American Community Survey.¹²⁰

To confirm if a ticket was written in error, we followed a three-step strategy. First, we checked if tickets were written within their zones of restriction. Second, we checked whether they were cited within the hours of parking restriction. And third, we checked whether they were issued on days of inclement weather when weather-related restrictions were at play. The graphic on the following page outlines the steps we took for each type of violation to determine if a ticket should have been issued or not.

We gave Chicago's ticketing regime the benefit of the doubt with our coding scheme, adding "graces" to account for just how complicated the work can be. We know the rules of the road can be blurry not just for drivers but those charged with parking enforcement. The borders that separate "no parking zones" may not be clearly marked. Gauging if there's enough snow on the ground to apply winter-weather restrictions can be tricky to measure. And some areas are layered with multiple restrictions.

Our strategy recognizes, for example, that Streets and Sanitation crews put in more work during blizzards versus light snowfalls to keep the roadways clear. That's why we include a 3-day grace period for every recorded snowfall of at least 2" to distinguish those snow route violations that were cited in error from those that were not.

For those parking restrictions that are defined by street networks (e.g., special events, the winter ban), as opposed to zones of restriction (e.g., residential parking, street

HOW WE DETERMINED A TICKET WAS ISSUED IN ERROR



cleaning), we added one city block (660 ft.) as a buffer zone to these restrictions. What does this mean? It means that we counted those tickets issued within one city block radius of a parking restriction on a street network as spatially valid.

Altogether, the kinds of concessions to the City of Chicago represent a key limitation within our study's coding procedure. Because our strategy systematically overlooks tickets issued within our coding "graces," we are undercounting just how many tickets are written in error. And still, these errors were many.

The criteria we rely upon for our coding procedure privileges what details are logged in the official record of each ticket. It is possible that some tickets we label as erroneous were rightfully issued under circumstances of noncompliance, but they were nevertheless counted as invalid due to our coding procedure.

One plausible explanation we see for discrepancies like these is that details of the violation were incorrectly recorded (e.g., wrong address, inaccurate date/time). During the data cleaning phase of the project, for instance, we came across numerous tickets that were issued where address locations did not exist. These included easy-to-spot blunders like violations that supposedly occurred east of E. Madison St.'s 100 block, coordinates that located cars in the waters of Lake Michigan. We speculate that the ticketer flipped the street direction in such instances, and the alleged violation took place on blocks west of 100 E. Madison.

Under less obvious circumstances, those tickets we count as wrongful that were written under rightful conditions are difficult to verify. That said, let us note that in instances where incorrect or inconsistent information recorded by the ticketer contradicts support for a specified violation, drivers can appeal the ticket even if it was written under the proper pretext. This challenge is one of the seven acceptable grounds for dismissal (i.e., Defense #5) outlined in fine print on the backside of each citation.

The tickets were georeferenced using Geocodio, a service that translates street addresses into latitude and longitude coordinates. These coordinates allow areal units (e.g., wards, ward-sections, community areas) to be appended for each ticket. Geocodio triangulates multiple data sources (e.g., Census Bureau, OpenAddress, OpenStreetMap, and GeoNames) to pinpoint precise locations, and it recommends using results with accuracy scores of 80% or above in academic research.

Accuracy scores reflect differences between input and output, and scores of at least 80% indicate minor changes were made due to problems like formatting issues. Only those cases that surpass this threshold were retained in our study. Among the ordinances of interest, our final sample retains 98% of the original tickets issued between August 1, 2012 and May 18, 2018.

For those who wish to inspect our work, whether for replication purposes, additional secondary analysis, or to some other ends, we are making the data publicly available at the institutional repository of the University of Tennessee at Knoxville: Tennessee Research and Creative Exchange (TRACE). The dataset contains multilevel data disaggregated to the individual ticket, but no personal identifiers of the ticketed are included. It carries an open access license that allows for unlimited sharing, access, and re-use.¹²¹

ENDNOTES

- 1 Hearing Officers are also referred to as Administrative Law Officers in Chicago's Department of Administrative Hearings.
- 2 See Tucker, Dorothy. 2019. "[CBS 2 gets Results after Woman gets Parking Ticket in School Zone - When There's No School](#)." *CBS-2 Chicago* August 23.
- 3 The promise to reduce bogus tickets predates the current arrangement between IBM and the City of Chicago. It can be traced to when IBM first took over the contract under Mayor Richard M. Daley. In 1998, Fran Spielman reported, "The Inglewood, Calif., system, which would be customized for Chicago by IBM, would cut down on bogus parking tickets." This point has been reiterated across several articles:
 - Spielman, Fran. 2012. "Big-ticket Contract." *The Chicago Sun-Times* July 14:14.
 - Spielman, Fran. 2000. "Chicago Giving More Cars the Boot - Parking Scofflaws Now Easier to Find." *The Chicago Sun-Times* March 16:1.
 - Spielman, Fran. 1998. "Daley Set to Switch Parking-ticket Collection Firms." *The Chicago Sun-Times* April 1:22.
- 4 While our study spotlights how erroneous tickets are issued in systematic fashion, we are not the first to identify this longstanding issue. Many journalists have highlighted the issue over the years, including the following:
 - Brockway, Mike. 2013. "[City Offers to Drop Record \\$105,000 Parking Fine to Just \\$2,500](#)." *DNA Info* April 10.
 - Chapman, Matt. 2019. "[Chicago Parking Ticket Visualization](#)." *Civic Hax* March 27.
 - Konkol, Mark. 2015. "[Are Rogue Meter Maids Sticking It to Parkers One Bogus Ticket at a Time?](#)" *DNA Info* July 21.
 - Ramos, Elliott and Greta Johnsen. 2018. "[When It Snows, Chicago Police Ticket Minority Communities More](#)." *WBEZ* February 12.
 - Sanchez, Melissa and Elliott Ramos. 2018. "[Three City Sticker Tickets on the Same Car in 90 Minutes?](#)" *ProPublica* June 27.
 - Thometz, Kristen. 2020. "[Street Sweeping Tickets Mistakenly Issued During Stay-at-Home Order](#)." *WTTW* May 22.
 - Yates, Jon. 2012. "'Ticketgate' Ends in Settlement: Chicago Pays \$85,000 in Federal Harassment Lawsuit." *The Chicago Tribune* December 20:A1-A2.
- 5 Our selection was restricted to violations that we could corroborate against other administrative data. Attempts were made to expand the analysis to additional types of tickets, like parking in a no standing zone (§09-64-080B) and rush hour

parking (§09-64-080A), but we were unable to obtain the necessary data through our Freedom of Information Act requests. Therefore, we suspect the numbers presented throughout the investigation are conservative estimates for the scope and prevalence of errored tickets.

- 6 We determined which days were considered snow events in Chicago by referring to [DataMade's Clear Streets](#) app, which scraped data released by the Department of Streets and Sanitation's Plow Tracker. It is this information source from the City that shows when (and where) plows were operated.
- 7 The Chicago Data Portal can be accessed at: <https://data.cityofchicago.org/>. A complete list of our data inventory is available in the methods appendix.
- 8 Journalist Matt Chapman found consistent results. During a 13-year period, he uncovered that over 50,000 tickets were issued for an expired meter inside the Central Business District even though these tickets were written outside the CBD. See Chapman, Matt. 2019. "[Chicago Parking Ticket Visualization](#)." *Civic Hax* March 27.
- 9 Ramos, Elliott, Chris Hagan, and Jack Howard. 2016. "[Towing the Line: Chicago's Winter Parking Ban Not Necessary for Snow Removal](#)." *WBEZ* November 30. See also Ramos, Elliott. 2019. "[Chicago Regularly Sells Cars Lost to Winter Parking Ban](#)." *WBEZ* December 1.
- 10 Dukmasova, Maya. 2018. "[Chicago Inside Out](#)." *Places Journal* October.
- 11 Nolan, Lauren. 2018. [The Debt Spiral: How Chicago's Vehicle Ticketing Practices Unfairly Burden Low-income and Minority Communities](#). The Woodstock Institute.
- 12 Sanchez, Melissa. 2018. "[Some States No Longer Suspend Driver's Licenses for Unpaid Fines. Will Illinois Join Them?](#)" *ProPublica Illinois* March 15.
- 13 Ramos, Elliott. 2019. "[Chicago Seized and Sold Nearly 50,000 Cars Over Tickets since 2011, Sticking Owners with Debt](#)." *WBEZ* January 7.
- 14 Davis-Cohen. Simon. 2020. "[Chicago Intercepts Tax Refunds to Collect Unpaid Debt, Hitting Poor Black Areas the Hardest](#)." *The Chicago Reporter* May 11.
- 15 In an interrelated project, Kasey Henricks and Ruben Ortiz (2022) point out how uneven racial geographies of surveillance often result from policies strategies of broken windows that emphasize direct links between small symbols of disorder (graffiti, litter, panhandling, squeegee cleaners, etc.) and more reprehensible offenses like assault or robbery. Because parking violations are more of a regulatory than moral affair, where violations are distanced from often racialized threats to safety, Henricks and Ortiz suggest their attendant policing strategies may democratize the "dispersal of discipline" to implicate a different set of subjects (see also Cohen 1979). That's to say errored tickets have a mesh-widening effect that sanctions those beyond the usual suspects of crime control, majority white communities included. See the following citations:

- Henricks, Kasey and Ruben Ortiz. 2022. "[The Irrelevance of Innocence: Ethnoracial Context, Occupational Differences in Policing, and Tickets Issued in Error.](#)" *Socius*.
 - Cohen, Stanley. 1979. "[The Punitive City: Notes on the Dispersal of Social Control.](#)" *Contemporary Crises* 3:339-363.
- 16 For more commentary on "the benchmark problem" of population-based comparisons in criminological research, see the following works:
- Engel, Robin Shepard and Jennifer M. Calnon. 2004. "[Examining the Influence of Drivers' Characteristics during Traffic Stops with Police: Results from a National Survey.](#)" *Justice Quarterly* 21(1):49-90.
 - Engel, Robin Shepard, Jennifer M. Calnon, and Thomas J. Bernard. 2002. "[Theory and Racial Profiling: Shortcomings and Future Directions in Research.](#)" *Justice Quarterly* 19(2):249-273.
 - Withrow, Brian L. and Howard Williams. 2015. "[Proposing a Benchmark Based on Vehicle Collision Data in Racial Profiling Research.](#)" *Criminal Justice Review* 40(4):449-469.
- 17 Epp, Charles R., Steven Maynard-Moody, and Donald Haider-Markel. 2014. [Pulled Over: How Police Stops Define Race and Citizenship](#). University of Chicago Press.
- 18 We define patrol officers as those who report to one of CPD's 25 local districts, which excludes sworn officers who report to other departments like the Independent Police Review Authority, Office of Legal Affairs, and O'Hare or Midway airport.
- 19 See page 47 of Rubinstein, Jonathan. 1973. [Police Work](#). Farrar, Straus and Giroux.
- 20 Speaking to how femininity and masculinity are projected onto divisions of labor, the following citations offer a gender analysis of police work:
- Herbert, Steve. 2001. "['Hard Charger' or 'Station Queen'? Policing and the Masculinist State.](#)" *Gender, Place and Culture* 8(1):55-71.
 - Hunt, Jennifer C. 1990. "[The Logic of Sexism among Police.](#)" *Women & Criminal Justice* 1(2):3-30.
- 21 Numerous scholars have used the "warriors-guardians" metaphor to depict how police see themselves as defenders of civilization, deputized to neutralize whatever they deem a threat to the social order. Some of these works include:
- Carlson, Jennifer. 2020. "[Police Warriors and Police Guardians: Race, Masculinity, and the Construction of Gun Violence.](#)" *Social Problems* 67(3):399-417.
 - Rahr, Sue and Stephen Rice. 2015. [From Warriors to Guardians: Recommitting American Police Culture to Democratic Ideals](#). National Institute of Justice.
 - Stoughton, Seth. 2015. "[Law Enforcement's 'Warrior' Problem.](#)" *Harvard Law Review Forum* 128(6):225-234.

- 22 Bittner, Egon. 1970. [*The Functions of the Police in Modern Society*](#). National Institute of Mental Health.
- 23 Sociologist Joshua Page and political scientist Joe Soss make a parallel point about Ferguson, Missouri, when a Department of Justice report revealed that its local police department, in collusion with city government and the municipal courts, prioritized revenue from fines and fees over issues of public safety. See Page, Joshua and Joe Soss. 2017. "Criminal Justice Predation and Neoliberal Governance." Pp. 141-161 in [*Rethinking Neoliberalism: Resisting the Disciplinary Regime*](#), edited by Sanford F. Schram and Marianna Pavlovskaya. Routledge.
- 24 Soss, Joe and Vesla Weaver. 2017. "[Police Are Our Government: Politics, Political Science, and the Policing of Race-Class Subjugated Communities](#)." *Annual Review of Political Science* 20:565-591.
- 25 The term "financial fracking" draws from historian Devin Fergus (2014) who uses the phrase to draw attention to new instruments of financialization. He highlights how today's debt often comes with hidden fees and escalating financial penalties should an obligation go unpaid. We contend the concept of financial fracking can be extended to Chicago's ticketing practices. See Fergus, Devin. 2014. "Financial Fracking in the Land of the Fee, 1980-2008." Pp. 67-97 in [*The Assets Perspective: The Rise of Asset Building and its Impact on Social Policy*](#), edited by Reid Cramer and Trina R. Williams Shanks. Palgrave.
- 26 In their multilevel analysis that predicts the determinants of tickets written in error, Henricks and Ortiz (2022) take up the question of whether erroneous tickets may be traceable to a small fraction of rogue agents. They find that occupational differences between patrol officers and their administrative peers remain robust after accounting for high disparity officers. Other factors held constant, patrol officers are 52% more likely than to issue a citation in error (OR = 1.52, $p < .001$). See Henricks, Kasey and Ruben Ortiz. 2022. "[The Irrelevance of Innocence: Ethnoracial Context, Occupational Differences in Policing, and Tickets Issued in Error](#)." *Socius*.
- 27 In 2008, the City of Chicago officially formed a partnership with Chicago Parking Meters LLC. It is a venture led by Morgan Stanley but also includes Allianz Capital Partners and the Abu Dhabi Investment Authority. Altogether, these investors made a one-time payment of \$1.15 billion to the City of Chicago in exchange for all meter revenue and control over meter rates over 75 years. The contract was sealed with a 40-5 vote in City Council under Mayor Richard M. Daley. Those five alders who opposed it include Toni Preckwinkle (4th), Leslie Hairston (5th), Billy Ocasio (26th), Scott Waguespack (32nd) and Rey Colon (35th).
- 28 Quoted on page 6 of Dardick, Hal. 2010. "Boxed in by Contract?: Parking Meter Lease's Dollars and Sense may Give Aldermen Pause as Daley Makes New Push to Privatize City Services." *The Chicago Tribune* September 1:6.
- 29 The partnership between Chicago Parking Meters LLC and the City of Chicago represents one example of a broader developments over at least the past three

decades, where corporate interests are anchored in local politics that remake the landscape of urban governance to fulfill demands for infrastructural provision on one hand and the creation of new markets on the other. See the following works:

- Ashton, Philip, Marc Doussard, and Rachel Weber. 2016. "[Reconstituting the State: City Powers and Exposure in Chicago's Infrastructure Leases.](#)" *Urban Studies* 53(7):1384-1400.
 - Farmer, Stephanie. 2014. "[Cities as Risk Managers: The Impact of Chicago's Parking Meter P3 on Municipal Governance and Transportation Planning.](#)" *Environment and Planning A* 46(9):2160-2174.
 - Weber, Rachel. 2010. "[Selling City Futures: The Financialization of Urban Redevelopment Policy.](#)" *Economic Geography* 86(3):251-274.
- 30 City of Chicago. 2008. [Authorization for Concession of Execution and Lease Agreement and Amendment of Titles 2, 3, 9 and 10 of Municipal Code of Chicago in Connection with Chicago Metered Parking System.](#) City Council of the City of Chicago.
- 31 For those who want to explore Chicago's geography of ticketing patterns, David Eads and Melissa Sanchez created an interactive database that maps where citations dating back to 1996 were issued. The database is detailed down to the street-level. See Eads, David and Melissa Sanchez. 2019. "[The Ticket Trap: Where Chicago Issues Parking Tickets and Who Pays for Them.](#)" *ProPublica* July 31.
- 32 Andrew J. Diamond provides a rich historiography of how an alliance of business interests came together during the latter part of the 20th century to impose their vision for economic "development" in the downtown area that came at the expense of intensified inequality. See Diamond, Andrew J. 2017. [Chicago on the Make: Power and Inequality in the Modern City.](#) University of California Press.
- 33 The language of fortification in the urban landscape draws from the works of Mike Davis and George Lipsitz:
- Davis, Mike. 1990. [City of Quartz: Excavating the Future in Los Angeles.](#) Verso.
 - Lipsitz, George. 2011. [How Racism Takes Place.](#) Temple University Press.
- See also: Embrick, David G., Wendy Leo Moore, and Manuel A. Ramirez. 2022. "[Tearing Down to Take Up Space: Dismantling White Spaces in the United States.](#)" *American Behavioral Scientist*.
- 34 See page 26 for the full quote: City of Chicago, Department of City Planning. 1958. *Development Plan for the Central Area of Chicago: A Definitive Text for Use with Graphic Representation.* City of Chicago, Department of City Planning.
- 35 For more in-depth discussion about how the built environment proscribes what ticketing practices are possible in downtown Chicago, see: Henricks, Kasey. 2020. "[The Verticality of White Space: Depths of Ticketing Exposure and Concealment in the 42nd Ward.](#)" *American Behavioral Scientist* 16(14):1975-1994.

- 36 In their review of 54 million tickets issued in Chicago between 1996 and 2018, valid or invalid, journalists David Eads and Melissa Sanchez found consistent results at the ward level. Majority Latinx wards contest their tickets at the lowest rates in the city. See Eads, David and Melissa Sanchez. 2019. "[The Ticket Trap: Where Chicago Issues Parking Tickets and Who Pays for Them](#)." *ProPublica* July 31.
- 37 For an overview of Chicago's "undocumented" population, as well as the state of Illinois, see Tsao, Fred. 2014. [Illinois' Undocumented Immigrant Population: A Summary of Recent Research by Rob Paral and Associates](#). Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights.
- 38 According to a summary of work completed by demographer Rob Paral and associates (see Tsao 2014), communities with the largest populations of those without legal residency status include South Lawndale (20,000), Belmont Cragin (12,000), Gage Park (11,000), Albany Park (10,000), and Brighton Park (9,000).
- 39 The following academics speak to the myriad ways that practices of immigration and criminal law increasingly blend together through what's commonly referred to as "crimmigration":
 - Armenta, Amada. 2017. [Protect, Serve, and Deport: The Rise of Policing as Immigration Enforcement](#). University of California Press.
 - Coleman, Mathew and Austin Kocher. 2011. "[Detention, Deportation, Devolution and Immigrant Incapacitation in the US, Post 9/11](#)." *The Geographic Journal* 177(3):228-237.
 - Douglas, Karen Manges and Rogelio Sáenz. 2013. "[The Criminalization of Immigrants and the Immigration-Industrial Complex](#)." *Daedalus* 142 (3): 199-227.
 - Macías-Rojas, Patrisia. 2016. [From Deportation to Prison: The Politics of Immigration Enforcement in Post-Civil Rights America](#). New York University Press.
- 40 Asad, Asad L. 2020. "[On the Radar: System Embeddedness and Latin Immigration Immigrants' Perceived Risk of Deportation](#)." *Law & Society Review* 54(1):133-167.
- 41 For deeper theorization on the predatory orientation of fines and fees, see the following:
 - Pacewicz, Josh and John N. Robinson, III. 2021. "[Pocketbook Policing: How Race Shapes Municipal Reliance on Punitive Fines and Fees in the Chicago Suburbs](#)." *Socio-Economic Review* 19(3):975-1003.
 - Page, Joshua and Joe Soss. 2021. "[The Predatory Dimensions of Criminal Justice](#)." *Science* 374(6565):291-294.
 - Sanchez, Amairini, Michele Cadigan, Dayo Abels-Sullivan, and Bryan L. Sykes. 2022. "[Punishing Immigrants: The Consequences of Monetary Sanctions in the Crimmigration System](#)." *RSF: The Russell Sage Foundation Journal of the Social Sciences* 8(2):76-97.

- 42 The same is true of fines and fees more generally beyond parking violations. See Harris, Alexes. 2016. [*A Pound of Flesh: Monetary Sanctions as a Punishment for the Poor*](#). Russell Sage.
- 43 See page 91 of France, Anatole. 1898. *The Red Lily*. The Macaulay Company.
- 44 Legal infractions and money become functional equivalents as far as parking tickets are concerned, where the former becomes quantified in numerical form and the latter is designated as the appropriate medium to express this quantification. Paying a “debt to society” becomes more than metaphor under these circumstances. It becomes literal. Violations of parking restrictions have an exchange value that be redefined in terms of money. For elaboration on the regulatory qualities of fines more generally, see the following:
- Bottoms, Anthony. 1983. “Neglected Features of Contemporary Penal Systems.” Pp. 84-100 in [*The Power to Punish*](#), edited by David Garland and Peter Young. Heinemann.
 - O’Malley, Pat. 2009. [*The Currency of Justice: Fines and Damages in Consumer Societies*](#). Routledge.
- 45 In noting how payment is the price of no further punishment, we borrow a point made by sociologists Mary Pattillo and Gabriela Kirk (2021) about monetary sanctions as they’re imposed more generally in the criminal-legal system. See Pattillo, Mary and Gabriela Kirk. 2021. [“Layaway Freedom: Coercive Financialization in the Criminal Legal System.”](#) *American Journal of Sociology* 126(4):889-930.
- 46 Many have noted the disparate impact of fines on the poor, including:
- Bing, Lindsay, Becky Pettit, Ilya Slavinski. 2022. [“Incomparable Punishments: How Economic Inequality Contributes to the Disparate Impact of Legal Fines and Fees.”](#) *RSF: The Russell Sage Foundation Journal of the Social Sciences* 8(2):118-136.
 - Cadigan, Michele and Gabriela Kirk. 2020. [“On Thin Ice: Bureaucratic Processes of Monetary Sanctions and Job Insecurity.”](#) *RSF: The Russell Sage Foundation Journal of the Social Sciences* 6(1):113-131.
 - Harris, Alexes. 2016. [*A Pound of Flesh: Monetary Sanctions as a Punishment for the Poor*](#). Russell Sage.
 - Katzenstein, Mary Fainsod and Maureen R. Waller. 2015. [“Taxing the Poor: Incarceration, Poverty Governance, and the Seizure of Family Resources.”](#) *Perspectives on Politics* 13(3):638-656.
 - Page, Joshua, Victoria Piehowski, and Joe Soss. 2019. [“A Debt of Care: Commercial Bail and the Gendered Logic of Criminal Justice Predation.”](#) *RSF: The Russell Sage Foundation Journal of the Social Sciences* 5(1):150-172.
 - Rusche, Georg and Otto Kirchheimer. 1939. *Punishment and Social Structure*. Columbia University Press.

- Sutton, Stacey and Nebiyou Tilahun. 2022. *Red-Light and Speed Cameras: Analyzing the Equity and Efficacy of Chicago's Automated Camera Enforcement Program*. University of Illinois at Chicago, College of Urban Planning and Public Affairs.
- 47 A recent study of attitudes among Chicagoans shows that the relationship between viewing fines and fees as a result of poor individual choices and desiring further punishment upon those who cannot pay their debt remains significant even after accounting for confounding factors, like socio-demographics, political values and ideology, and perceptions of crime. The study further finds that sizable segments of Chicagoans support excluding people with legal debt, including parking tickets, from public assistance and forcibly taking their possessions under certain circumstances. See Henricks, Kasey and Ruben Ortiz. 2022. "[Individuals in Default or the System? Race and Ethnicity, Stratification Views on Legal Debt, and Desire for Escalating Punishment.](#)" *Sociology of Race and Ethnicity* 8(1):6-25.
 - 48 As sociologist Mary Pattillo ([1999] 2013) points out in her research, mobility is a double-edged sword among Black Chicagoans. Journalist Natalie Moore (2016) iterates many of these same points. Black members of Chicago's middle class may benefit from higher incomes than the lower-class, and enjoy more stable employment and higher levels of education, but they face myriad obstacles compared to their white middle-class peers. Why? In part, the answer is placed-based. Inequalities in education, employment, income, and wealth are inscribed onto Chicago's segregated geography, and much of Chicago's Black middle class remains anchored, not necessarily by choice, in communities that are cut off from the opportunities and resources historically enjoyed by whites. See the following:
 - Pattillo, Mary. [1999] 2013. [Black Picket Fences: Privilege and Peril among the Black Middle Class](#). University of Chicago Press.
 - Moore, Natalie Y. 2016. [The South Side: A Portrait of Chicago and American Segregation](#). St. Martin's Press.
 - 49 Effective July 2020, the License to Work Act signed by Gov. J.B. Pritzker ended the suspension of licenses over unpaid parking tickets in the State of Illinois. It impacted nearly 55,000 motorists. See Sanchez, Melissa and Elliott Ramos. 2020. "[Tens of Thousands of People Lost Driver's Licenses over Unpaid Parking Tickets. Now, They're Getting Them Back.](#)" *ProPublica* January 17.
 - 50 Morrison, Edward R., Belisa Pang, and Antoine Uettwiller. 2020. "[Race and Bankruptcy: Explaining Racial Disparities in Consumer Bankruptcy.](#)" *The Journal of Law and Economics* 63(2):269-295.
 - 51 Sanchez, Melissa and Sandhya Kambhampati. 2018. "[How Chicago Ticket Debt Sends Black Motorists into Bankruptcy.](#)" *ProPublica* February 27.
 - 52 These reforms included suspending driver's licenses over unpaid tickets, reducing down payments for installment plans, and ending same-day practices of issuing

- multiple tickets, among other changes. See Sanchez, Melissa. 2019. "[Here's What to Expect from Chicago City Council's Ticket Reform](#)." *ProPublica* September 20; Sanchez, Melissa and Elliott Ramos. 2019. "[Chicago City Council Approves Ticket and Debt Collection Reforms to Help Low-Income and Minority Motorists](#)." *ProPublica* September 18.
- 53 Prior to a 2021 ruling on the [City of Chicago v. Robbin L. Fulton, et al. \(No. 19-357\)](#) by the U.S. Supreme Court, there was a possibility that drivers could retrieve their cars from impoundment that results from ticket debt by filing for Chapter 13 bankruptcy (i.e., the "automatic stay" provision outlined in Section 362 of the U.S. Bankruptcy Code). *Chicago v. Fulton* was a consolidation of four similar cases involving Robbin Fulton, Jason Howard, George Peak, and Timothy Shannon. The namesake of the case, Fulton herself, had her car towed on Christmas Eve in 2017, only three weeks after she purchased it, and the City claimed she owed \$11,831.20 in fines, collections costs, and storage fees. In this case, the City refused to return Fulton's car after legally repossessing it prior to her bankruptcy. City Officials claimed they were not obligated to do so based on another provision in the U.S. Bankruptcy Code (i.e., the "turnover" statute of Section 542). Lower courts split on the issue prior to the U.S. Supreme Court decision. Some courts ruled in favor of Chicago's drivers (the Second, Seventh, Eighth, Ninth, and Eleventh Circuits), while others ruled in favor of the City of Chicago (the Third, Tenth, and District of Columbia Circuits). The Supreme Court ultimately sided with the City in an 8-0 vote (newly appointed Justice Amy Coney Barrett did not participate), so now there's no question on whether Chicago must release impounded cars after someone declares bankruptcy. It doesn't.
- 54 Registered vehicle owners are entered into what the City of Chicago calls its "scofflaw list" if one of the two following scenarios are satisfied. Either the registered owner has received three or more "final determinations of liability" for parking violations or two of these final determinations are over a year old. The term "scofflaw," itself, has been reappropriated from the Prohibition era, where it was used to describe the illegal alcohol consumption. By associating criminal activity with unpaid ticket debt, the term effectively links the two in ways that reinforce pejorative stereotypes about the poor and people of color but especially poor people of color. Race, class, and criminality become conflated into one. See Ramos, Elliott. 2019. "[Chicago Seized and Sold Nearly 50,000 Cars Over Tickets since 2011, Sticking Owners with Debt](#)." *WBEZ* January 7.
- 55 Kiel, Paul and Hannah Fresques. 2017. "[How the Bankruptcy System is Failing Black Americans](#)." *ProPublica* September 27.
- 56 Sanchez, Melissa. 2018. "[Chicago begins to Rethink how Bankruptcy Lawyers get Paid](#)." *ProPublica* May 9.
- 57 Morrison, Edward R., Belisa Pang, and Antoine Uettwiller. 2020. "[Race and Bankruptcy: Explaining Racial Disparities in Consumer Bankruptcy](#)." *The Journal of Law and Economics* 63(2):269-295.

- 58 Henricks, Kasey and Ruben Ortiz. 2022. "[The Irrelevance of Innocence: Ethnoracial Context, Occupational Differences in Policing, and Tickets Issued in Error.](#)" *Socius*.
- 59 See page 32 of Seamster, Louise. 2019. "[Black Debt, White Debt.](#)" *Contexts* 18(1):30-35.
- 60 Corporation for Enterprise Development. 2017. [Racial Wealth Divide in Chicago](#). Corporation for Enterprise Development.
- 61 A recent estimate by City Officials ties as much as \$1.8 billion in unpaid parking tickets dating back to the 1990s. See Sanchez, Melissa. 2021. "[Chicago Mayor Lori Lightfoot Proposes Further Traffic Ticket Reforms to Help Low-Income Motorists.](#)" *ProPublica* September 22.
- 62 Farmer, Stephanie. 2014. "[Cities as Risk Managers: The Impact of Chicago's Parking Mater P3 on Municipal Governance and Transportation Planning.](#)" *Environment and Planning A* 46(9):2160-2174.
- 63 The "LaSalle St. tax" is a colloquial way of referring to a financial transactions tax. It effectively works in the same way as a sales tax but only applies to trade on financial assets like stocks and bonds. The namesake of the tax refers to the district where these exchanges take place in Chicago.
- 64 Regressive revenues generated through practices like parking tickets dovetails with Chicago's rich history of punitive experimentation combined with an evasion of progressive tax structures. See Tresser, Tom. 2016. [Chicago Is Not Broke: Funding the City We Deserve](#). Salsedo Press.
- 65 See page 10 of "City Council of the City of Chicago." 1992. *Journal of the Proceedings of the City Council of the City of Chicago, Illinois: Special Meeting - Tuesday, November, 10 1992 at 10.00 A.M.* City of Chicago.
- 66 The U.S. Census Bureau ([1992] 2011) maintains an expansive definition of "fines and forfeits" that homogenizes specific revenue streams into one umbrella category (see Code U30). Included in this summary category are monies not just from parking tickets but general violations of law, civil penalties, court fees, restitution, and forfeiture. What this means is that these data offer a partial picture of growth trends in revenues from alleged parking noncompliance, albeit we think it is an illuminating one.
- 67 By census definition, the category of "own source revenue" excludes government transfers at the federal and state level. It includes money streams only from local sources, like property taxes, city sales taxes, and "sin" taxes.
- 68 Sociologists Alexis Harris, Brittany Friedman, and Mary Pattillo make the same point about fines and fees in the criminal-legal system more generally. We extend their insights to parking tickets. Rather than imply Chicago profits off tickets, we suspect the City actually loses money or breaks even at best. See the following:

- Friedman, Brittany and Mary Pattillo. 2019. "[Statutory Inequality: The Logics of Monetary Sanctions in State Law](#)." *RSF: The Russell Sage Foundation Journal of the Social Sciences* 5(1):174-196.
 - Harris, Alexes. 2016. [A Pound of Flesh: Monetary Sanctions as a Punishment for the Poor](#). Russell Sage.
- 69 These figures draw from the work of journalist Elliott Ramos. See Ramos, Elliott. 2018. "[The Dubious Finances of Chicago's Winter Parking Ban](#)." *WBEZ* April 16.
- 70 Ibid.
- 71 Novak, Tim and Steve Warmbir. 2004. "The City Stole My Car." *The Chicago Sun-Times* November 10: 1.
- 72 See page 132 of Koeneman, Keith. 2013. [First Son: The Biography of Richard M. Daley](#). University of Chicago Press.
- 73 Brickley, Peg. 2017. "[Towing Company United Road Towing Files for Chapter 11 Bankruptcy](#)." *The Wall Street Journal* February 6.
- 74 Randles, Jonathan. 2017. "[United Road Towing Owner Medley Capital Wins](#)." *The Wall Street Journal* April 12.
- 75 Chiappardi, Matt. 2017. "[Towing Co. Files Ch. 11 To Avoid Potential \\$5M Judgment](#)." *Law360* February 6.
- 76 Montgomery, Jeff. 2021. "[Medley LLC Hits Ch. 11 With \\$141M Debt After Losses](#)." *Law360* March 8.
- 77 Spielman, Fran. 2020. "[Parking Meter Deal Chicagoans Love to Hate Gets Worse – Again](#)." *The Chicago Sun-Times* Aug 2.
- 78 Spielman, Fran. 2021. "[Chicago Parking Meter Investors Rake in \\$13M in Profit Despite Pandemic](#)." *The Chicago Sun-Times* June 7.
- 79 Adding complications to any urban planning pursuit, the Chicago of Chicago must pay Chicago Parking Meters LLC for parking spaces taken out of commission due to road maintenance, public-works expansions, and common social events.
- 80 Spielman, Fran and Ray Hanania. 1990. "Clout Firm Wins \$40 Million Pact – City Denies Political Ties Aided Parking Ticket Deal." *The Chicago Sun-Times* May 8:1.
- 81 Ibid.
- 82 After the original 5-year contract where Chicago paid \$8 million in annual fees to Electronic Data Services for its data processing services, the City increased its rate of payment to the company to \$13 million per year. See Spielman, Fran. 1998. "Daley Set to Switch Parking-Ticket Collection Firms." *The Chicago Sun-Times* April 1:22.
- 83 Spielman, Fran. 1998. "City Targets Scofflaws – Unpaid Bills May Go On Credit Record." *The Chicago Sun-Times* April 27:1.
- 84 Spielman, Fran. 1998. "Daley Set to Switch Parking-Ticket Collection Firms." *The Chicago Sun-Times* April 1:22.

- 85 Ibid. See also Spielman, Fran. 2012. "Big-ticket Contract." *The Chicago Sun-Times* July 14:14.
- 86 Spielman, Fran. 2000. "Chicago Giving More Cars the Boot – Parking Scofflaws Now Easier to Find." *The Chicago Sun-Times* March 16:1.
- 87 Sandra Botello is one of many Chicagoans who saw a few outstanding tickets balloon into thousands owed to the City. Her story was prominently featured by journalist Elliott Ramos in his coverage on car seizures. It was also referenced in an amicus brief written by the American Civil Liberties Union, the Cato Institute, Fines and Fees Justice Center, the Institute for Justice, the R Street Institute, and the Rutherford Institute. The brief was submitted to the U.S. Supreme Court in the case of [City of Chicago v. Robbin L. Fulton, et al. \(No. 19-357\)](#). Here, we draw heavily from these two sources:
 - American Civil Liberties Union, the Cato Institute, Fines and Fees Justice Center, the Institute for Justice, the R Street Institute, and the Rutherford Institute. 2019. [Brief amici curiae of American Civil Liberties Union, et al.](#) U.S. Supreme Court of the United States.
 - Ramos, Elliott. 2019. "[Chicago Seized and Sold Nearly 50,000 Cars over Tickets since 2011, Sticking Owners with Debt.](#)" *WBEZ* January 7.
- 88 Sanchez, Melissa and Elliott Ramos. 2018. "[Chicago Hiked the Cost of Vehicle City Sticker Violations to Boost Revenue. But It's Driven More Low-Income, Black Motorists Into Debt.](#)" *ProPublica* July 26.
- 89 Sanchez, Melissa and Elliott Ramos. 2018. "[Three City Sticker Tickets on the Same Car in 90 Minutes?](#)" *ProPublica Illinois* June 27.
- 90 Sanchez, Melissa and Elliott Ramos. 2018. "[Chicago Throws Out 23,000 Duplicate Tickets Issued Since 1992 to Motorists Who Didn't Have Vehicle Stickers.](#)" *ProPublica* November 29.
- 91 While technology is frequently painted as a blank slate that's developed outside of a social context, sociologist Ruha Benjamin (2019) points out how collective norms, ideology, and praxis are constitutive of its design. That tickets issued by mistake remain a low priority speaks to ways that IBM's technology animates a certain degree of apathy (see also Forman 2004). Its creators acknowledge the preponderance of the problem, but they have not encoded any safeguard that might resolve it. See the following:
 - Benjamin, Ruha. 2019. [Race after Technology: Abolitionist Tools for the New Jim Code](#). Polity.
 - Forman, Tyrone A. 2004. "Color-blind Racism and Racial Indifference: The Role of Racial Apathy in Facilitating Enduring Inequalities." Pp. 43–66 in [The Changing Terrain of Race and Ethnicity](#), edited by Maria Krysan and Amanda E. Lewis. Russell Sage.

- 92 While parking tickets are subject to independent review by the Chicago Department of Administrative Hearings, the Hearing Officer assigned this duty does not occupy an adversarial role that might act as a bulwark against erroneous tickets. The Hearing Officer supposedly represents a neutral party in the appeals process, but any separation of power from the City is undermined by the absence of structural incentive to slow down case processing. When reviewing tickets contested by mail, for example, Hearing Officers are expected to spend, on average, between 7-9 minutes on each case (Zeiger 2008). Should productivity slack off, or a Hearing Officer do something objectionable, the Director or Division Chief of the Department of Administrative Hearings can limit the person's hours with little to no recourse. Hearing Officers are political appointees. They are selected by the Director, who in turn is selected by the Mayor. While being a licensed attorney is a prerequisite of the job, Hearing Officers are effectively hourly employees who work as independent contractors with no benefits. Former Hearing Officer of 15 years Sheldon Zeiger (2008) offers these insights in his guide on how to contest a parking ticket. See Zeiger, Sheldon. 2008. *Stick It to Your Ticket: The Unofficial Guide to Beating your Parking Ticket in Chicago*. Sheldon Zeiger Publishing.
- 93 There are many parallels between what procedural safeguards are available to those processed for parking violations through Chicago's Department of Administrative Hearings and the lower echelons of criminal law. Here, we draw from the work of legal scholar Alexandra Natapoff to highlight how subordinate legal spaces often become de facto "courts of convenience" where there's little custom to scrutinize, let alone challenge, alleged violations with systemic attention. See the following:
- Natapoff, Alexandra. 2021. "[Criminal Municipal Courts](#)." *Harvard Law Review* 134:964-1065.
 - Natapoff, Alexandra. 2018. [Punishment without Crime: How Our Massive Misdemeanor System Traps the Innocent and Makes America More Unequal](#). Basic Books.
- 94 In the City of Chicago, seven necessary elements must be established for an alleged violation to constitute a "prima facie" case (see §9-100-030(a)). The parking ticket must include: 1) the vehicle's proper state registration, 2) the vehicle's make, 3) the violated parking ordinance, 4) where the violation occurred, 5) the date of the violation, 6) the time of the violation, and 7) the issuing officer's signature.
- 95 Feeley, Malcolm M. [1979] 1992. [The Process is the Punishment: Handling Cases in a Lower Criminal Court](#). Russell Sage.
- 96 The incentive to pay erroneous tickets outright, as opposed pursuing appeal, is akin to evading what other sociologists have described as an "administrative burden" (Herd and Moynihan 2018) or "procedural hassle" (Kohler-Hausmann 2018). See the following:

- Herd, Pamela and Donald P. Moynihan. 2018. [*Administrative Burden: Policymaking by Other Means*](#). Russell Sage.
 - Kohler-Hausmann, Issa. 2018. [*Misdemeanorland: Criminal Courts and Social Control in an Age of Broken Windows Policing*](#). Princeton University Press.
- 97 Spielman, Fran. 2012. "Big-ticket Contract." *The Chicago Sun-Times* July 14:14.
 - 98 To be fair-handed, Mayor Lori Lightfoot has a mixed record of both progressive and regressive reform on Chicago's ticketing practices. See also Sanchez, Melissa and Elliott Ramos. 2019. "[Chicago Mayor Proposes Reforms that Would Make Life Easier for Thousands of Black and Low-Income Drivers](#)." *ProPublica* July 23.
 - 99 Anyone driving between 6-9 miles per hour above the limit would be issued a warning upon a driver's first alleged violation. A second violation would constitute a \$35 violation. See Hopkins, Emily and Melissa Sanchez. 2022. "[Chicago's 'Race-Neutral' Traffic Cameras Ticket Black and Latino Drivers the Most](#)." *ProPublica* January 11.
 - 100 Pratt, Gregory and John Byrne. 2021. "[Parking Meters Coming to Chicago's Montrose Harbor as Part of Mayor Lori Lightfoot's Budget Plan](#)." *The Chicago Tribune* March 18.
 - 101 Byrne, John and Gregory Pratt. 2020. "[Mayor Lori Lightfoot Wants to Start Issuing Speed Camera Tickets for Cars Going 6 MPH Over the Limit](#)." *The Chicago Tribune* October 23.
 - 102 Anderson, Susan, and David Dunlap. 1985. [Parking ticket champ](#). *The New York Times*, December 26, p.B2.
 - 103 "[The ignored parking ticket](#)." *The New York Times*, June 11, p. A20.
 - 104 Peck, Jamie. 2015. *Austerity Urbanism: The Neoliberal Crisis of American Cities*. New York, NY: Rosa Luxemburg Foundation.
 - 105 Atuahene, Bernadette, and Timothy Hodge. 2018. "Stategraft." *Southern California Law Review* 91 (2): 263.
 - 106 Prial, Frand. 1985. "[Parking tickets by computer](#)." *The New York Times*, December 29, p.A29.
 - 107 For wider arguments regarding IBM and austerity urbanism, see McNeill, Donald. 2015. "Global firms and smart technologies: IBM and the reduction of cities." *Transactions of the institute of British Geographers* 40 (4): 562-574.
 - 108 The geographer Agnieszka Leszczynski has suggested that the "glitch" is a broader feature of "smart city" urbanism involved technology firms. See: Leszczynski, Agnieszka. 2020. "Glitchy vignettes of platform urbanism." *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 38 (2): 189-208.
 - 109 Warner, Mildred, and Austin Aldag. 2021. "Re-municipalization in the US: A pragmatic response to contracting." *Journal of Economic Policy Reform* 24 (3): 319-332.

- 110 ["IBM unveils playbook for U.S. cities to develop grades 9-14 schools that prepare students for technology jobs."](#) PR Newswire, February 28, 2012.
- 111 McMillan, Robert. 2007. ["IBM software aids in vast surveillance of Chicago streets."](#) IDG News Service, September 27.
- 112 Ashton, Philip, Doussard, Marc, and Rachel Weber. 2020. ["Sale of the century: Chicago's infrastructure deals and the privatization state."](#) Metropolitix, November 24.
- 113 Ashton, Philip, Doussard, Marc, and Rachel Weber. "Reconstituting the state: City powers and exposures in Chicago's infrastructure leases." *Urban Studies* 53 (7): 1384-1400.
- 114 See, for instance: Farmer, Stephanie. 2014. "Cities as risk managers: The impact of Chicago's parking meter P3 on municipal governance and transportation planning." *Environment and Planning A: Economy and Space* 46(9): 2160-2174.
- 115 Per Article 7 of the 2008 Concession Agreement: "The City agrees to establish, maintain and undertake procedures for the enforcement of parking rules and regulations that are designed to deter parking violations..." City of Chicago. 2008. Chicago Metered Parking System Concession Agreement. 4 December.
- 116 Main, F., and Spielman, F. 2010. "City to cops: You're not writing enough tickets." *The Chicago Sun-Times*, 17 August.
- 117 City of Chicago. 2008. Chicago Metered Parking System Concession Agreement. 4 December, p.61.
- 118 Ibid., pp. 40, 64.
- 119 For instance, §7.6.(c) on Compensation Events begins: "Each of the following shall constitute a Compensation Event: (i) if the City requires more than three final determinations of parking violation liability for a passenger vehicle to become eligible for immobilization..." City of Chicago. 2008. Chicago Metered Parking System Concession Agreement. 4 December, p.61.
- 120 Data on community areas were obtained from Rob Paral and Associates. They are available at: <https://robparal.com/chicago-data/>.
- 121 The data are available at: <https://doi.org/10.7290/U8BXxo63ai>

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