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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
July 26, 2011

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IGO Recommends SSA Improvements

The City of Chicago Office of Inspector General (IGO) recently conducted a review of the transparency of the City's Special Service Area (SSA) program.

The report, posted online [here](#), contains findings from that review and recommendations for the City and SSA Service Provider Agencies to improve the transparency of the program. The IGO believes that improved transparency, both at the City level and the SSA Service Provider Agency level, will increase the SSA Program's effectiveness by creating greater accountability.

Chicago currently has 42 SSAs with a total budget of \$23 million. They are taxing districts, and each has its own revenue base in the form of incremental property taxes, as well as its own officials in the form of SSA Commissioners, who are appointed by the Mayor and City Council.

To ensure that SSAs are accountable and transparent to taxpayers and their communities, the IGO recommends that the City's Department of Housing and Economic Development (DHED) require Service Provider Agencies to disclose some basic information on each SSA's website. Some examples include:

- Names and contact information of Commission Members and employees
- Timely and accessible posting of SSA meeting schedules, agendas, and minutes
- SSA budgets and audited financial statements
- Vendor lists and bidding opportunities
- SSA goals and measurable efforts to achieve those goals

The IGO also recommends the City provide the SSAs' annual budgets and work plans online to provide program-wide information in a single source, and show that information in a uniform presentation across individual SSAs. Lastly, the IGO recommends that Aldermen link to SSAs in their wards on their official websites to raise the visibility and transparency of SSAs generally.

Additionally, through a [SSA Resource page](#) on its website, the IGO released more detailed information about SSAs including the 2011 Budgets and a map of all the SSAs in the City. This is part of the IGO's ongoing [Open Chicago](#) initiative, which seeks to enhance transparency in City government.

The IGO is charged by ordinance with promoting economy, efficiency, effectiveness and integrity in the operations of the City government. In our continuing effort to be fully responsive to the City's

challenges and supportive of the efforts of the Mayor and City Council in meeting those challenges, the IGO welcomes any suggestions or comments on our reports, or suggestions of City programs to review.

The recommendation can be found [online](#) at the IGO website: www.chicagoinspectorgeneral.org

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