

**Aurora Corridor
Development
Initiative**
Conducted June-July 2010

Vision Driving Development



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Aurora Community Development Initiative

Communities too often are put in the position of reacting to a development proposal, rather than working to attract investment that fits the local vision. The Metropolitan Planning Council (MPC) is reversing this dynamic through the Corridor Development Initiative (CDI), a three-part, participatory planning process that helps local residents understand issues such as density, affordable housing, mixed-use design, and the true cost of development, while establishing priorities to guide future development. The meeting series described in this report is a modification of CDI in the city of Aurora for its Neighborhood Revitalization Strategy Area.

Neighborhood Revitalization Strategy Area

NRSAs are designated by communities, with guidance from the U.S. Dept. of Housing and Urban Development. They bring together community stakeholders such as neighborhood residents, small business owners, and property owners to join forces in a commitment to shape their neighborhoods into attractive places for investment, and encourage an atmosphere where residents are able to address their housing, economic and human service needs. The NRSA process calls for the identification of goals, objectives and action strategies to improve the neighborhood in both the short and long term. Funding to address identified needs comes from Community Development Block Grants, but provides for greater flexibility than traditional CDBG funding. This report captures the outcomes of the Corridor Development Initiative used to fulfill the community engagement component of Aurora's NRSA amendment development.

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From the Mayor

Aurora is one of America's great communities. For more than 150 years, families have taken advantage of the benefits our city offers. Lately, Aurora's appeal has been growing due to our Green initiatives and plans that build from and prioritize the redevelopment of our downtown and near-downtown, as well as reclamation of our riverfront. These activities are already having significant and positive impacts on Aurora's economy, environment and residents.

While considerable publicity has focused on the work to establish Aurora's reputation as a "green" community, we have also been making strides toward becoming a community in which all residents, regardless of their socioeconomic status or ethnicity, are able to thrive. Despite the unemployment and economic displacement caused by the recent recession, we have been able to draw new jobs to Aurora. We are working to spread this prosperity throughout the city, to all of our neighborhoods.

In consultation and collaboration with our residents, we have set the stage with the *Seize the Future Master Plan*, *Aurora Riverfront Vision Plan*, *Riverwalk Master Plan*, *RiverEdge Park Master Plan*, and *Aurora's Sustainability Plan*. Our residents have made commitments to shaping the way their neighborhoods will grow and change with the Aurora Neighborhood Planning Initiative. By developing six comprehensive neighborhood plans, to date comprising approximately 60,000 residents, with strong community input, we are enhancing our community as a city of vibrant neighborhoods.

It is my hope the three Neighborhood Revitalization Strategy Area public meetings held during the summer of 2010 will provide further motivation for residents and businesses on Aurora's Near East Side to build on previous efforts and create better connections (both tangible and economic) to the rest of our city. The NRSA meetings offered us an opportunity to think about ways to best use our existing resources to realize the economic and cultural potential of the Near East side, plan the uses and amenities needed to make each neighborhood thrive, and guarantee that Aurora continues to be recognized as "A City Second to None."

Mayor Tom Weisner
City of Aurora



From the Alderman

The Near East Side is a fascinating area of Aurora. A cultural enclave embracing the city's Hispanic residents and businesses, the neighborhood has civic gems like McCarty Park and Plaza Mexico, and is home to the city's first historic district. The proximity to downtown attractions and the Aurora Metra Station make a walkable district ripe for pedestrian-scale development. All of these assets contribute to the unique identity of a ward I am so pleased to represent.

It is important to reflect on the history of our community and make decisions together about how we would like to see it continue forward. The Aurora NRSA public meetings invited people with an interest in the Near East Side to share their ideas for the future of the neighborhood. The meetings also gave community stakeholders access to development professionals who provided insight into what it will take to make the Near East Side a place that is welcoming to residents and business owners.

I believe this process has energized neighbors to take a more active role in planning for their future. This energy can help to bring quality jobs, desirable retail, and more affordable home options to the Near East Side, making it an even more vibrant place to live.

I would like to extend my thanks to the organizers of these meetings and express the hope that they serve as a launch pad for future community involvement and governmental commitment to this important Aurora neighborhood.

I look forward to the sharing in the work that lies ahead.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Juany Garza". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "J" and "G".

Ald. Juany Garza
City of Aurora, 2nd Ward

From the Steering Committee

The three public meetings held in the summer of 2010 constituted an interactive planning process that brought together Aurora residents, elected and appointed government officials, and business owners. With the support of facilitators, architects and developers, these stakeholders started a conversation about future development, services and amenities in the city's Near East Side neighborhood. Approximately 100 people participated in these meetings – sharing insights, voting in polls, and completing surveys – to voice their thoughts on the community's resources and potential. This report summarizes the suggestions made by the community during these meetings.

The goal of the Aurora meetings was to determine public expectations for future investment in the Neighborhood Revitalization Strategy Area (NRSA). By investigating how those with significant connections to the area would prioritize investment, the City of Aurora hopes to use Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds in a way that makes a positive difference to the Near East Side.

In addition to being a record of public engagement, this report will serve to capture the priorities of Near East Side residents and business owners.

As representatives of the business, educational, service, and public sector, we are all committed to help implement and support redevelopment and look forward to seeing how the continued engagement of stakeholders will shape the future of the Near East Side.



Meeting participants use blocks to model and compare development plans.

About the Aurora Neighborhood Revitalization Strategy Area

The Aurora NRSA was originally approved by the U.S. Dept. of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) in 1999. In an effort to improve the outcomes and effectiveness of its use of federal funds, the city recently submitted a request to amend the NRSA. Community consultation was an important part of drafting the amendment, which was submitted to HUD in January 2011. Aurora asked the Metropolitan Planning Council (MPC) and Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP) for assistance in creating a baseline of existing conditions within the NRSA. This information, in consultation with residents and businesses, could then be used to identify problems and obstacles to development to be addressed with CDBG funding.



Community Development Block Grants

The federal CDBG program provides communities with resources to address a wide range of needs, including affordable housing, services to people in need, and job creation and retention. HUD encourages grant recipients to partner with community groups to identify the best use of funds.

CDBG money can be used for things like homeownership and business assistance, public facilities and public housing improvements, parks and street improvements, community services for youth and disabled people, employment training, and planning and program administration. At least 70 percent of CDBG funds must be used for activities that benefit low and moderate-income persons.

NRSAs as a CDBG tool

NRSA is a provision within CDBG regulations that allows cities and states to develop plans for economic development and housing needs in a particular neighborhood. (Regular CDBG programming rules target aid by income, not location.)

The rules governing the use of grant money are more flexible for NRSAs than for regular CDBG programming, which promotes innovative approaches to economically disadvantaged areas.

CDBG funds designated for NRSAs are more flexible in these ways:

- Under NRSA rules, businesses that receive CDBG funding to retain or create jobs do not have to track the specific income of newly hired employees in order to demonstrate a benefit to the low and moderate-income community, which reduces administrative burden to the businesses.
- NRSA provisions make housing developments more feasible by treating individual housing units as a single structure, which allows grantees to have flexibility in providing housing to residents and reduces recordkeeping requirements.

The NRSA designation also removes some spending caps, allowing grantees to offer a more intensive level of service within the approved community.



Role of Partners

The City of Aurora contracted MPC and CMAP to collect and synthesize data and indicators about the NRSA, and solicit input from residents, business owners, and other stakeholders to inform the NRSA amendment.

Aurora has used this process to:

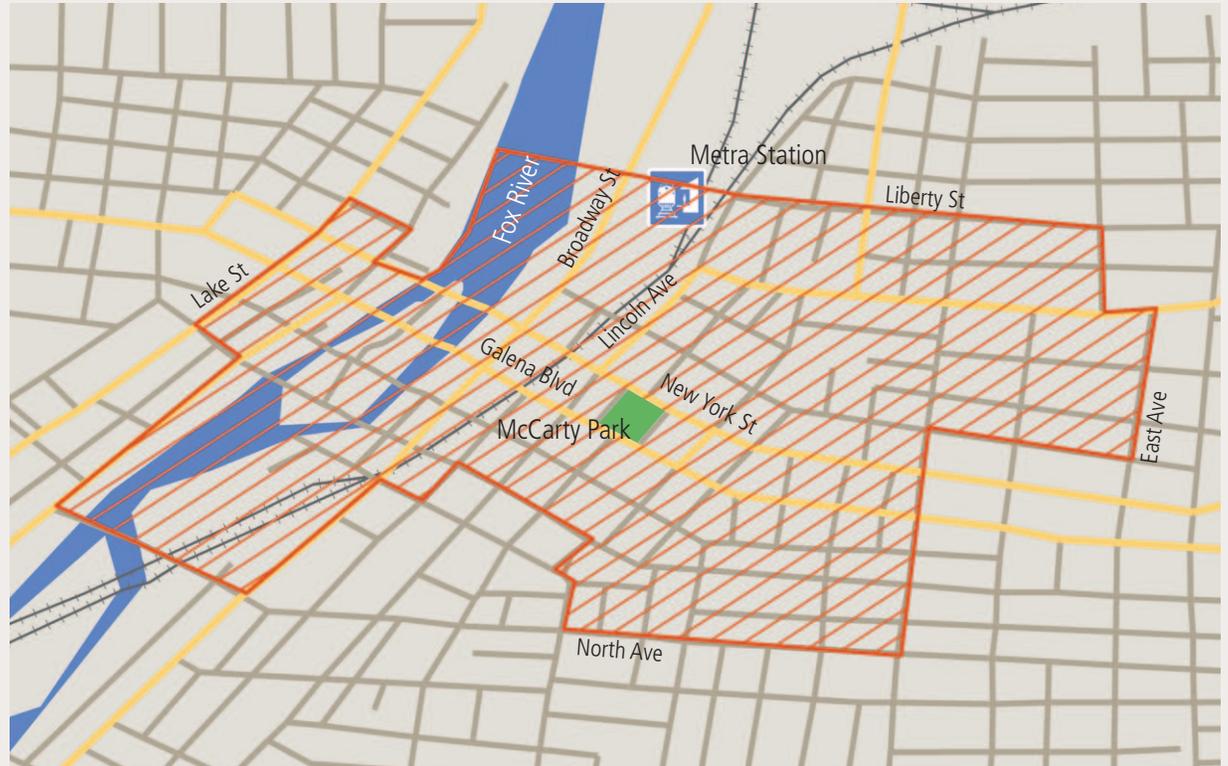
- capture community input for NRSA amendment;
- engage a broad set of community stakeholders, with specific attention to often underrepresented constituencies such as Latino residents and business owners;
- inform future strategy with existing conditions within the business district, housing development issues, and other data and indicators about the NRSA;
- inform stakeholders about and link NRSA efforts to existing resources and broader city initiatives;
- build upon area assets and opportunities;
- cultivate and activate community leadership for implementation; and
- educate stakeholders about the development process.

Focus Area

The area of focus for this report is a section of Aurora designated by HUD as a Neighborhood Revitalization Strategy Area. The census tracts coinciding with the NRSA boundaries were identified as good candidates for the flexible funding rules made available by the designation (see previous page).

The NRSA (highlighted in orange on the map at right) is located in the central part of Aurora, encompassing a small portion of the downtown area and nearly all of the city's Near East Side neighborhood. The area – generally bound by Lake Street, Liberty Street, East Avenue, and North Avenue – is approximately three-quarters of a square mile and borders the Fox River. Residents of the neighborhood enjoy a walkable street layout and close proximity to the Aurora Metra Station and downtown.

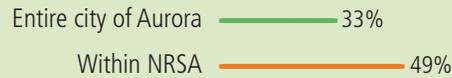
Focus Area



The NRSA is highlighted in orange.

Select Demographics

Latino population



Bachelor's degree attainment



Neighborhood Demographics

To better understand the neighborhood, CMAP compiled and presented data describing demographics, consumer spending, and real estate market conditions. Most of the data illustrated contrasting profiles between the NRSA and city Aurora as a whole.

Using 2000 U.S. Census data, CMAP determined the NRSA has a higher Latino population than Aurora as a whole. Specifically, the Latino population comprises 49 percent of the NRSA, as opposed to 33 percent citywide. The highest concentration of Latino residents live in the eastern portion of the NRSA. Seventy-three percent of the population speaks a language other than English.

There is significant disparity in educational attainment when comparing the NRSA with the entirety of Aurora. For the city, almost 76 percent of residents have obtained a high school diploma, and nearly 54 percent of residents have completed at least some college coursework. However, within the NRSA, 39 percent of residents have less than a ninth grade education, and only 41 percent have a high school diploma.

Consumer Behavior

According to information from Claritas & Costar in 2009, consumer spending in the NRSA topped \$252 million. By 2014, it is expected to grow to \$260.5 million. However, NRSA residents spend about \$9.7 million per year outside of the NRSA for various goods. Within a one-mile radius of the NRSA, this loss balloons to almost \$202 million in retail leakage annually.

A survey of meeting participants collected at the final meeting reflects this behavior. Most residents reported needing to leave the neighborhood to find basic products and services, such as footwear and apparel, auto care, gasoline, furniture, banking and financial services, legal services, child care, movie theaters, and salons/barbers. Residents found groceries and restaurants within the neighborhood about half the time. The services residents were most likely to find in the NRSA were laundry and dry cleaning.



Real Estate

CMAP gathered data about the commercial and residential property in the NRSA. The information comes from a survey of 10,000 listed commercial properties and 19,220 spaces within the NRSA. It currently has more than 476 million sq. ft. of rentable building area; however, the most recent estimation of the growing vacancy rate is 36 percent.

For a neighborhood with such favorable assets in regard to infrastructure, property values are notably depressed, trailing \$50,000 below the Aurora average and continuing to decline. Furthermore, the average home in the NRSA is valued at \$150,000, but the average price for recent sales is significantly lower, at \$59,000. The distressed condition of the local market helps explain this discrepancy: residential properties are experiencing vacancy rates similar to those of commercial properties, and 73 percent of recent sales were on foreclosed homes.

Quality of Life

Numbers do not tell the whole story of life in the NRSA. Much of any area's success depends on how residents, business owners, workers and visitors perceive the neighborhood. Accordingly, participants at the third public meeting completed a quality of life survey. When rating different quality of life measures, participants had varied opinions about what the Near East Side has to offer when it comes to cultural activities, stores, services and safety. Perceptions of the neighborhood in comparison to the rest of the city were discordant as well. For each of the questions asked on the survey, respondents expressed a wide range of satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the neighborhood.

The survey also asked an open-ended question about what actions needed to happen to improve the quality of life in the NRSA. The suggestions mainly focused on living-wage jobs, safe and constructive spaces for children, education, increased neighborhood retail, increasing alternate forms of transportation, improving safety, neighborhood aesthetics, and homeownership.

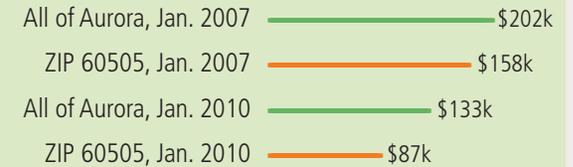
The full results of this survey, including the open-ended question, are presented in the appendix of this report.

Real Estate and Quality of Life

Commercial Vacancy Rate in NRSA



Home Value Index



60505 is the ZIP Code that most closely aligns with the NRSA. Home Value Index is from Zillow.com.

How would you compare the quality of life in Aurora's Near East Side with the rest of Aurora?





Recent Planning Processes

In 2005, the Aurora Economic Development Commission (AEDC) contracted Hitchcock Design Group and Business Districts, Inc., to prepare *Seize the Future: A Master Plan for Downtown Aurora, Illinois*. As part of an ongoing revitalization process, the recommendations in the plan describe a 10-year schedule to accomplish a long-term vision for the 10 neighborhoods that comprise the city's downtown. *Seize the Future* outlines how Aurora will better leverage its downtown's existing assets with emerging development opportunities to create an amenity-rich center. The plan was adopted by the City of Aurora in June 2006. Six of the 10 districts outlined for redevelopment in the master plan fall at least partially within the bounds of the NRSA (Stolp Island, Mercado, South Broadway, Roundhouse, Waubonsee, and Wilder Park).

AEDC's work extends deeper into the Near East Side neighborhood than proposed by *Seize the Future*. The commission has identified priority sites for further development in the neighborhood, including:

- retail developments at the intersections of Union Street with New York Street and Galena Boulevard;
- grocery and restaurant redevelopment at the northwest corner of Claim and Beach streets; and
- redevelopment of an abandoned grocery store site into a specialty supermarket at the northwest corner of Root Street and Galena Boulevard.

Other work focusing on the area is the *McCarty Burlington Neighborhood Action Plan*. It identifies issues the community faces, such as a lack of participation in community activities, unevenly distributed parks and recreational facilities, overcrowding, and low perception of community safety. The plan also formulates action steps to address these issues, and establishes frameworks for leadership and implementation of the remedies. While the leadership team and task forces outlined in the plan are community members, the City of Aurora has committed to providing support to those volunteers with resources and expertise. The Aurora City Council adopted the plan in 2007.

Meeting Series Summary

During each meeting, 35 to 45 local residents, stakeholders and public officials shared their ideas about future development within the NRSA. The first meeting on June 3, 2010, was focused on understanding how stakeholders envisioned the redevelopment of the neighborhood. The June 29 meeting asked participants to come up with a picture of the NRSA's future through a block exercise. The final meeting, on July 22, wrapped up the process with a discussion of neighborhood priorities.

Outreach

To advertise for the meetings, MPC and Aurora used multiple methods of contacting interested stakeholders. Notices of the meeting appeared in the newspapers *Daily Herald* and *Aurora Beacon News*. Steering committee members forwarded meeting information through their e-mail distribution lists. MPC blogged about the meeting on its web site and posted updates about it on Facebook. The most intensive aspect of the outreach centered around the event flyers. Steering committee members, armed with flyers printed in English and Spanish, went on a door-to-door campaign to get the word out about the meetings.

First Meeting

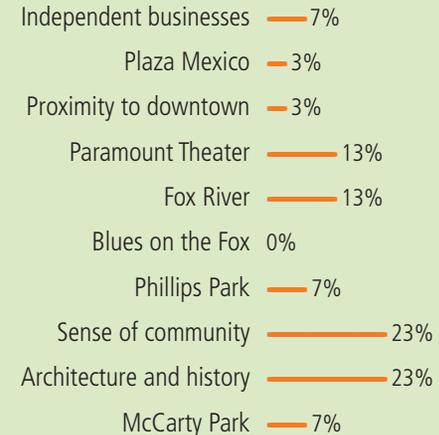
At the first meeting, Aurora officials described previous planning activities in and around the area and CMAP presented data on current demographics and market conditions. MPC led a brief discussion on development issues and how the community members can effect the change they want to see. Throughout the evening, MPC polled the participants to determine their connection to the area and thoughts about the neighborhood.

The first meeting hosted a broad range of ages. Despite the extensive outreach, the ethnicity of participants was not reflective of the NRSA. According to the Census data presented by CMAP, 49 percent of the NRSA's residents are Latino. In contrast, 45 percent of the participants identified as white, 27 percent identified as Latino, and 24 percent identified themselves as African American. As such, additional outreach was conducted for the remaining meetings. The majority of the attendees did not live within the NRSA; however, many expressed a connection to the greater Near East Side, even though they did not live within the specific boundaries.

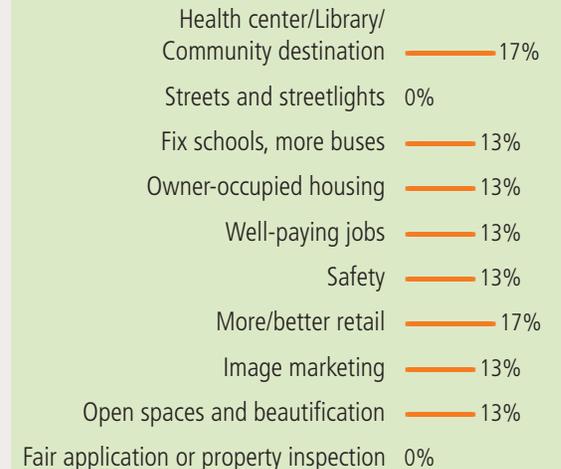
The results of select keypad polling questions asked at the first meeting provide a picture of how participants feel about the neighborhood (see sidebar, right). The most popular aspects of the NRSA were the architecture and history of the neighborhood, its diversity and sense of community, the Paramount Theater, and Fox River. When asked what kind of changes they would like to see in the future, some themes were more retail options and community destinations, such as a health center or a library.

First Meeting Keypad Poll Results

Favorite things about the Near East Side



Focus of future neighborhood efforts





Local grocery store owner Trinidad Cervantes (top), Bola Delano from CMAP (middle), developer James Matanky (bottom), discuss development experiences and possibilities for the Near East Side.

Second Meeting

The second meeting featured a “block exercise,” in which residents used blocks representing standard residential and commercial building sizes to “build” the type of development they would like to see in the community, using three sites in the neighborhood as templates for development. Volunteer architects and developers, recruited by MPC, were present to sketch the buildings and test financial feasibility. In this exercise, members of the community were able to engage in thoughtful discussions about building heights, parking, land uses and affordable housing needs. The end result of this second meeting was a set of development scenarios that reflected residents’ ideas. The images and development figures for these scenarios are the focus of the next section in this report.

Third Meeting

The Built Environment and Human and Resource Development meeting featured two panel discussions about some of the priorities identified during the first two meetings. Experts from the fields of transportation and community planning, real estate development, commercial development, and workforce creation and retention shared their thoughts on the named priorities. They also engaged in a discussion with participants about how the type of changes the residents would like to see could feasibly occur in the Near East Side neighborhood.

The built environment panel reminded the attendees that now is the time to think through how the community wants the city to direct future investment. The panelists offered comments on the neighborhood’s assets, ways the City of Aurora can encourage development, and action items all stakeholders can support to improve the look and feel of the area. The three strongest features upon which the community can build are its walkability, adjacency to downtown Aurora and the Fox River, and sense of community. Those assets, combined with other development incentives and city departments eager to provide support services, provide a good foundation for attracting developers.

Using participants’ stated desire for more parking during the sessions as an example, one of the panelists pressed community members to think critically about their needs and understand key trade-offs, so as not to risk losing an asset (e.g., walkability) to conventional solutions for perceived problems. In regards to spurring development, panelists suggested the city can do more to promote appropriate development through homeownership

counseling programs, thoughtful zoning, investments in infrastructure and land assembly, demand-based development policies, and grant-education programs for local entrepreneurs.

The second panel presented ways to develop human resources and services in the neighborhood, topics of utmost importance to meeting participants. Through the experiences of other suburbs in the Chicago metropolitan region with characteristics similar to the Near East Side, the audience heard about residents rallying to become involved in the redevelopment dialogue. In one community, local congregations organized residents around the revitalization of the area surrounding a proposed Metra station. Another suburb focused on ways to attract higher income earners with a program focused on improving the housing stock. The panel also suggested that stakeholders help connect Near

East Side residents with existing jobs programs.

Both panels' discussions prompted questions from the audience about how the suggestions might best be implemented in Aurora. The responses all had the same theme: it starts with the community. Whether the issue is the propriety of new construction in the context of existing architecture or the need to develop synergy amongst local business owners, the clear and persistent voice of the community should be the driving force behind redevelopment in the NRSA.

Thanks to further outreach efforts, the demographics of the participants of the third meeting more closely matched the demographics of the NRSA. Fifty-four percent of the attendees were Latino, and over half of the participants lived in the Near East Side.



Meeting Demographics

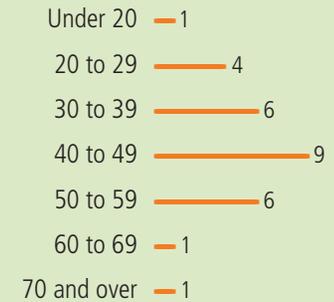
Participants who were Latino



Participants who lived in Near East Side



Third Meeting Attendees by Age



Community-Generated Development Recommendations

The following development plans were created by community stakeholders during the Near East Side NRSA meeting on June 29. Participants developed these concepts based on their ideas for height and layout of residential, commercial, parking, and green space they would like to see in their neighborhood. Volunteer architects created renderings to accompany each recommendation, however, residents did not necessarily express preferences for building styles outside of the general desire that new development should complement the existing character and architecture of the community.

Residents visualized development on three corner lots located at Root and New York Streets; North Avenue and Jackson Street (East); and North Avenue and Jackson Street (West). The steering committee chose these sites as real-world examples to help participants imagine appropriate building scale. However, these sites were merely intended as a guide from which Aurora can take cues for future development in the NRSA.

The volunteer developers used assumptions to help stakeholders determine the feasibility of each site configuration. Although the developers did benefit from using a specialized tool to determine the return on investment for each project, the resulting figures for development feasibility are not necessarily accurate for all market conditions. The political and funding environment in Aurora, as will be the case anywhere, can change—adding or removing barriers to development.

Assumptions

The following assumptions were used to calculate the cost for each development concept.

Basics

| | |
|----------------------------------|------|
| Land Price per square foot (psf) | \$10 |
| Average Occupancy (for all uses) | 95% |
| Cap Rate | 8% |

Rental

| | |
|---|---------|
| Market-Rate Residential (psf) | \$1.15 |
| Affordable Residential (monthly) (60% of area median income, or \$44,940 annually) | \$674 |
| Retail (psf) | \$18.11 |
| Office (psf) | \$21.70 |

Sales

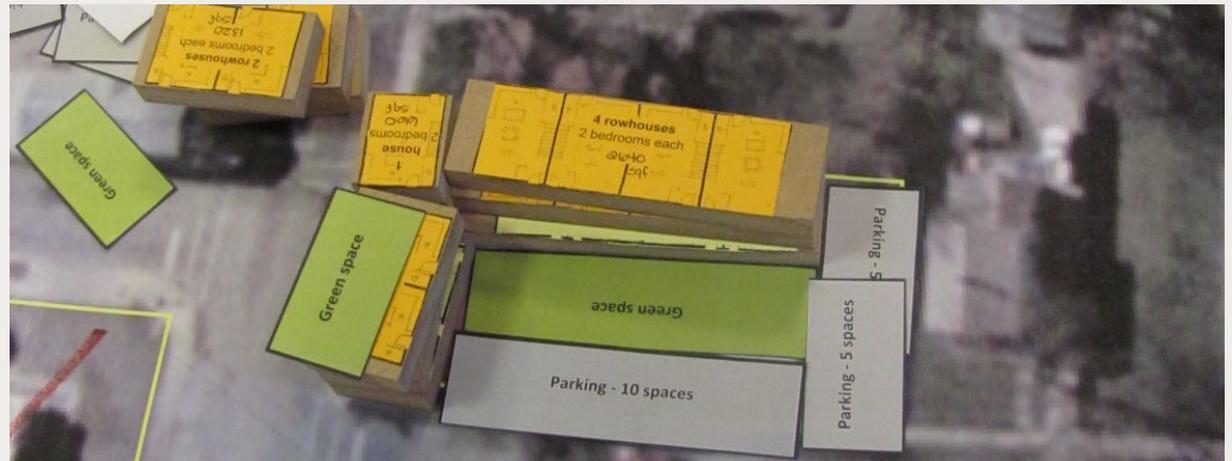
| | |
|-------------------------------|-------|
| Market-Rate Residential (psf) | \$250 |
| Affordable Residential (psf) | \$200 |

Construction Costs

| | |
|-------------------------------|-------|
| Market-Rate Residential (psf) | \$165 |
| Affordable Residential (psf) | \$165 |
| Retail (psf) | \$122 |
| Office (psf) | \$171 |

Parking Costs per space

| | |
|---------------------------------|----------|
| Surface | \$3,000 |
| Structured (above ground) | \$25,000 |
| Underground | \$55,000 |
| Internal (tucked or sandwiched) | \$20,000 |
| Mechanica | \$45,000 |







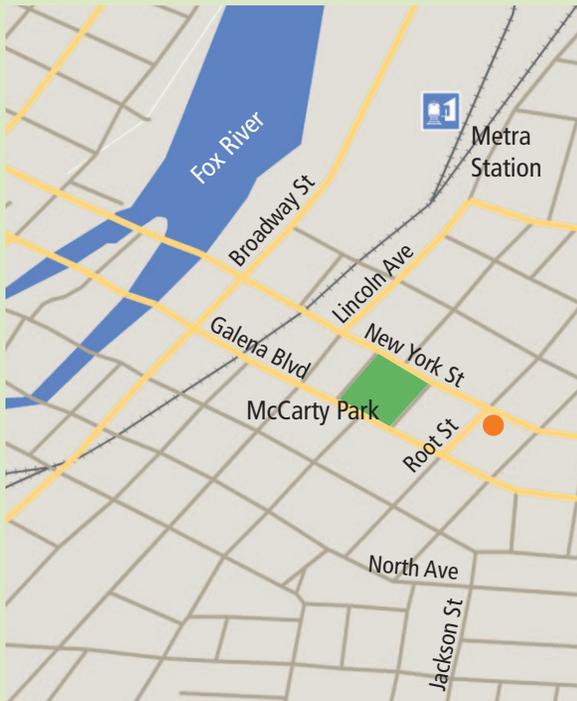
Development Concepts

Of the many proposals developed at the second meeting, seven are included in this report. At the conclusion of the final meeting, participants voted on their three most-preferred scenarios. The scenarios that received the most votes are shown on the following pages. The number of votes each proposal received is noted next to each.

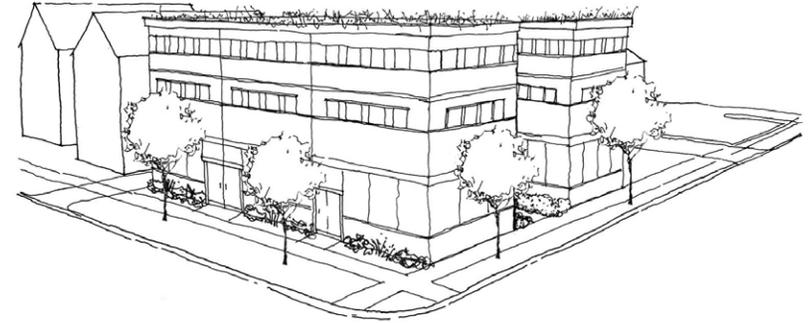
Root and New York

505 E New York Street

This site is located at the southeast corner of the intersection of Root Street and New York Street (orange dot on map below). Three different designs received votes for this site, which is currently occupied by a church structure.



Root and New York (7 Votes)



Development Features

- Office and retail space at ground level
- Residential on upper floors
- Green roofs on buildings and interior courtyard green space

In this scenario, residents looked at three-story mixed-use projects and explored market-rate rental and for-sale housing. They also wanted to maintain the street facades while providing space for green space and parking.

Development Figures

Scenario 1

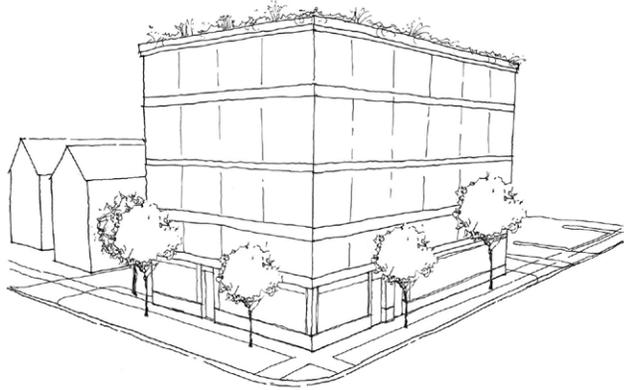
No. Stories: 3
 Total Res. Units: 18 (Rental)
 Affordable Res.: 0
 Commercial Spaces: 9
 Total Parking Spaces: 10
 Total Green Space: 1,980 sq ft.
 Net Operating Income: \$196,386
 Return on Investment: 3.9%

Development Figures

Scenario 2

No. Stories: 3
 Total Res. Units: 18 (For-Sale)
 Affordable Res.: 0
 Commercial Spaces: 9
 Total Parking Spaces: 10
 Total Green Space: 1,980 sq ft.
 Net Operating Income: \$196,993
 Return on Investment: 3.9%

Root and New York (3 Votes)

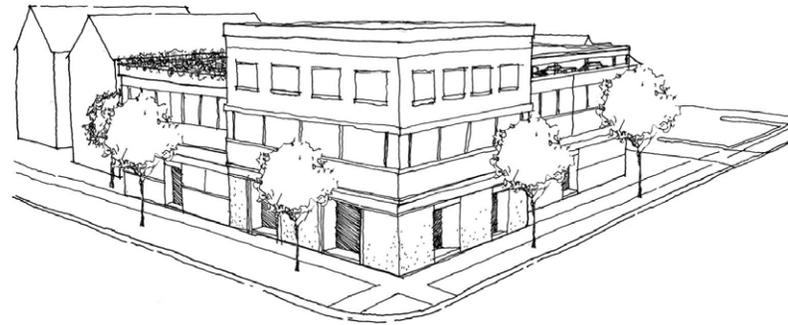


Development Features

- Green roof
- Ground floor retail
- Residential on upper floors

In this scenario, residents proposed a taller, five story mixed-use development. They explored both affordable rental and market-rate for-sale residential scenarios.

Root and New York (2 Votes)



Development Features

- Structured parking
- Green roof
- Mixed-use development

The parking in this scenario, which is tucked away on the back side of the roof, is in response to a long discussion about the need to balance parking with street life.

Development Figures

Scenario 1

No. Stories: 5
 Total Res. Units: 32 (For-Sale)
 Affordable Res.: 0
 Commercial Spaces: 8
 Total Parking Spaces: 12
 Total Green Space: 0
 Net Operating Income: \$292,633
 Return on Investment: 3.7%

Development Figures

Scenario 2

No. Stories: 5
 Total Res. Units: 32 (Rental)
 Affordable Res.: 32
 Commercial Spaces: 8
 Total Parking Spaces: 12
 Total Green Space: 0
 Net Operating Income: \$150,298
 Return on Investment: 9.9%

Development Figures

Scenario 1

No. Stories: 3
 Total Res. Units: 12 (Rental)
 Affordable Res.: 0
 Commercial Spaces: 12
 Total Parking Spaces: 20
 Total Green Space: 1320 sq. ft.
 Net Operating Income: \$134,613
 Return on Investment: 3.9%

Development Figures

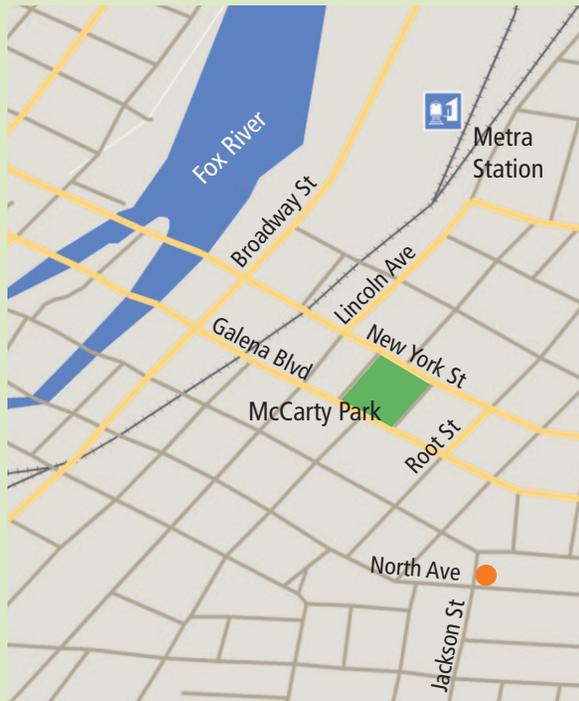
Scenario 2

No. Stories: 3
 Total Res. Units: 12 (Rental)
 Affordable Res.: 0
 Commercial Spaces: 12
 Total Parking Spaces: 20
 Total Green Space: 1320 sq. ft.
 Net Operating Income: \$112,915
 Return on Investment: 6.2%

North and Jackson (East)

220 Jackson Street

Three proposals were voted on for the site at the northeast corner of the intersection of North Avenue and Jackson Street (orange dot on map below), which is currently occupied by a mini-mart. Two proposals are all commercial, while one is all residential and incorporates the existing structure.



North and Jackson (East) (4 Votes)



Development Features

- Green roofs
- All retail
- Green space along the street

In this scenario, residents thought of new uses for the site that entailed a slightly denser retail project and green space.

Development Figures

No. Stories: 2
 Total Res. Units: 0
 Affordable Res.: 0
 Commercial Spaces: 4
 Total Parking Spaces: 10
 Total Green Space: 3,300 sq ft.
 Net Operating Income: \$26,921
 Return on Investment: 4.2%

North and Jackson (East) (3 Votes)



Development Features

- Office and retail spaces
- Green space on two sides of the building
- Parking in the rear

In this scenario, residents converted the existing mini-mart into a two-story, modern development that puts parking in the rear to allow for more green space features.

North and Jackson (East) (2 Votes)



Development Features

- Reuse of current structure
- All residential, all for-sale
- Developer profit is -20.7%

In this scenario, residents converted the existing mini-mart into a residential development.

Development Figures

Scenario 1

No. Stories: 2
 Total Res. Units: 0
 Affordable Res.: 0
 Commercial Spaces: 6 (Retail only)
 Total Parking Spaces: 15
 Total Green Space: 3,300 sq. ft.
 Net Operating Income: \$40,382
 Return on Investment: 4.5%

Development Figures

Scenario 1

No. Stories: 2
 Total Res. Units: 0
 Affordable Res.: 0
 Comm. Spaces: 6 (Retail/Office)
 Total Parking Spaces: 15
 Total Green Space: 3,300 sq. ft.
 Net Operating Income: \$45,718
 Return on Investment: 4.2%

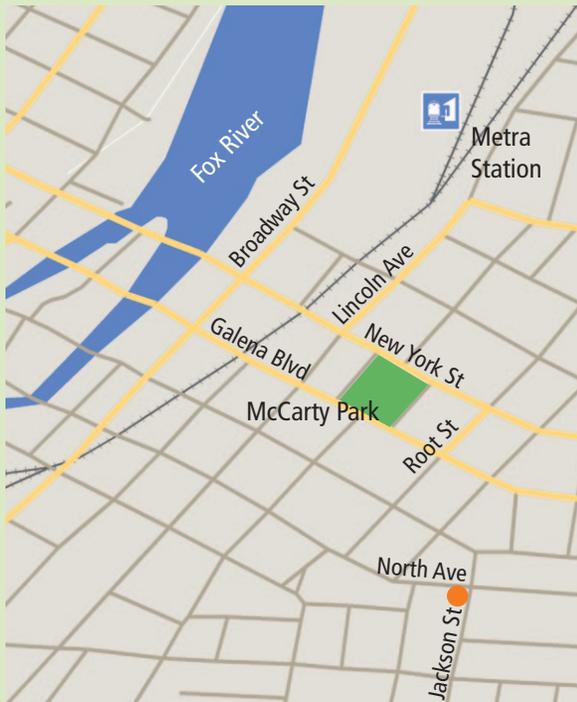
Development Figures

No. Stories: 2
 Total Res. Units: 12 (For-Sale)
 Affordable Res.: 0
 Commercial Spaces: 0
 Total Parking Spaces: 7
 Total Green Space: 1,980 sq. ft.
 Net Operating Income: \$92,902
 Return on Investment: 3.3%

North and Jackson (West)

301 Jackson Street

This site is situated at the southwest corner of the intersection of North Avenue and Jackson Street (orange dot on the map below), across the street from the North and Jackson (East) site. North Avenue jogs here, requiring vehicles and pedestrians to turn to follow it through the intersection, slowing traffic.



North and Jackson (West) (8 Votes)



Development Features

- Realign North Avenue
- Remaining lot is green space

In this scenario, residents discussed the need for adequate transportation access to support the existing commercial development nearby. As this site was not of a sufficient size for development, residents preferred to use it to realign North Avenue and provide open space. This site also inspired residents to discuss the need to create larger sites elsewhere through land acquisition.

Development Figures

No. Stories: 0
 Total Res. Units: 0
 Affordable Res.: 0
 Commercial Spaces: 0
 Total Parking Spaces: 0
 Total Green Space: 7,920 sq ft.
 Net Operating Income: \$0
 Return on Investment: 0%

Next Steps

Using the information gathered as a result of these public meetings, the *City of Aurora, Illinois Neighborhood Revitalization Strategy Amendment* was submitted by the City of Aurora Neighborhood Redevelopment Division to HUD in August 2010. The report summarized the various plans and initiatives meant to encourage positive change in the NRSA since 2000. The essential elements of the amendment are the goals and related activities the city proposes to undertake concerning housing, economic development and neighborhood revitalization. Aurora will track its progress for the programs outlined in the amendment by the numbers of individuals counseled, foreclosures prevented, seminars presented, units rehabbed, home purchases assisted, businesses created, and projects completed for their respective activities.

Performance Measures

Housing

Aurora’s housing goals for the NRSA target the preservation and rehabilitation of existing housing stock, and homeowner assistance programs. The federal funding will go toward partnerships with local businesses and nonprofits to develop homebuyer counseling and foreclosure prevention programs, rehabilitation programs for single-family housing and rental units, and downpayment and closing costs assistance. These performance measures are detailed in Table 1, at right.

| Housing Goals → | Planned Activities → | Measured Outcome |
|--|---|--|
| Prevent mortgage foreclosures within the NRSA | Fund foreclosure prevention programs | 25 homeowners within the NRSA avoid foreclosure |
| Increase use of homebuyer counseling programs by NRSA residents | Fund HUD-certified homebuyer counseling programs | 50 NRSA residents complete homebuyer counseling programs |
| Rehabilitate existing owner-occupied housing units within the NRSA | Fund housing rehab program for single-family owner-occupied units | 50 single-family owner-occupied homes within the NRSA become code compliant and energy efficient |
| Offer incentives for home ownership within the NRSA | Provide down payment and closing costs assistance to qualified homebuyers within the NRSA; encourage use of ASSIST program (private-activity bonds) | 10 homes are purchased in the NRSA with down payment and closing cost assistance |

Table 1. City of Aurora, Illinois Neighborhood Revitalization Strategy Amendment Housing Performance Measures

Economic

Development Goals →

Planned Activities →

Measured Outcome

Connect NRSA residents with employers; improve employability of NRSA residents

In partnership with local non-profits, other governmental agencies, and Waubonsee Community College, host annual Career Job Fairs, held in the NRSA and geared to NRSA residents*

- 5 annual Career Job Fairs
- 25 NRSA residents attend each Career Job Fair
- 5 employers attend each Career Job Fair
- 100 NRSA residents who attend fairs find employment or register for programs or classes to increase their employability

Expand and retain businesses within the NRSA

In partnership with local banks, Aurora Township, 2nd and 3rd Ward aldermen, and Waubonsee Community College’s Small Business Development Center, create NRSA Business Assistance Program to provide loans, gap financing, and technical assistance for targeted businesses located within the NRSA*

10 businesses located within NRSA receive assistance

* Aurora Economic Development Commission takes lead responsibility

Enhance job training opportunities for NRSA residents

Fund job training programs for NRSA residents through area nonprofits

- 100 NRSA residents enroll in job training programs
- 80 NRSA residents complete job training programs
- 50 NRSA residents obtain employment

Economic Development

While the housing goals focus on existing stock and ownership incentives, the economic development goals set the stage for a broader spectrum of activities. The programs address unemployment, job training, retail activity, assistance for existing businesses, and personal finance. All of the goals touch on neighborhood issues addressed by meeting participants, demonstrating that community members have a nuanced view of the challenges facing the Near East Side. These measures are detailed in table 2, at left.

Neighborhood Revitalization

Built environment issues not addressed by the housing goals fall into the neighborhood revitalization category. Elements of urban design and improvements in physical connections between the Near East Side and other parts of the city will be funded activities that are carried out by the existing structure of city government.

The neighborhood revitalization goal is to improve infrastructure within the NRSA, such as streets, lighting and parks. This can be achieved by funding such improvements, and the outcome can be measured by the number of these improvements that are completed.

Table 2. City of Aurora, Illinois Neighborhood Revitalization Strategy Amendment Economic Development Performance Measures

Additional Strategies

In addition to the above proposed activities, the city might consider the following community development strategies in Aurora and the Near East Side:

- **Encourage Employer-Assisted Housing (EAH):** EAH is a model by which employers invest in housing solutions. A common form of this is direct employee assistance to either purchase or rent a home close to work. Through the REACH Illinois coalition, employers and employees are matched with housing counseling agencies to ensure employees are educated about their rights and responsibilities, and are provided access to appropriate financial products. Other models include employer investment in housing development. The State of Illinois provides a tax credit to participating employers and matching funds for assistance to income-qualified employees. More information can be found at www.reachillinois.org.
- **Take a targeted approach:** With limited resources, the city and alderman can work with residents and stakeholders to figure out where to target particular resources within the NRSA. Doing an assessment of property conditions, vacancies, and potential for stabilization and growth will help determine where resources should be targeted. Joliet's Local Homestead Program, which is redeveloping housing one block at a time, is a model of this approach. Other strategies may include identifying priority property types or business that need assistance, such as directing rehabilitation funds toward multifamily housing or economic development funds to promote service businesses missing from the area.
- **Engage the Latino population:** Aurora can encourage the implementation or strengthening of neighborhood organizations to provide opportunities and access for Latino residents and business and property owners to have a stronger voice in the community. The city can start with existing networks and leaders, such as members of the Steering Committee who have relationships with the Latino community. MPC encourages an ongoing conversation that takes the NRSA Amendment recommendations and this report as a framework for future discussions.
- **Participate in the Aurora Area Jobs Council (AAJC):** This coalition of community-based organizations and key stakeholders is working to coordinate job training and economic development efforts. AAJC forms collaborative responses to local job training challenges, and positions the community to take advantage of state programs and funding opportunities by identifying the stakeholders who are best suited to apply. Currently, AAJC is in the process of implementing recommendations from the Greater Aurora/Fox Valley Illinois Works for the Future community meeting report. AAJC members are working to make improvements in the following areas: communication and coordination of services, business climate, transportation, adult career pathways, and career awareness for youth.
- **Endorse and participate in the Illinois Works for the Future campaign:** This state-wide collaboration of more than 120 organiza-



Karen Christensen, manager of Neighborhood Redevelopment Division, City of Aurora (left) and Ald. Juany Garza discuss ideas for new development.



tions is working to make workforce development programs and policies a top priority in the Illinois General Assembly. For information, visit www.ilworks4future.org.

- **Create more ongoing City of Aurora incentives and opportunities for community and faith-based organizations:** Together, these groups could collaborate and develop workforce development services for people who do not qualify for programs at the Illinois WorkNet Center. One example of such an opportunity is the Aurora Homelessness Initiative (AHI), started by Mayor Weisner, which brought together a number of Aurora organizations. Through its employment committee, AHI is in the process of developing and seeking funding for a pilot transitional jobs program for people who are homeless.
- **Advocate for increased investments in proven workforce development strategies:** It is especially important to serve people with barriers to employment, through transitional jobs and bridge programs. The Illinois Dept. of Commerce and Economic Opportunity has a Job Training and Economic Development program (JTED) and the Employment Opportunities Grant Program (EOGP).

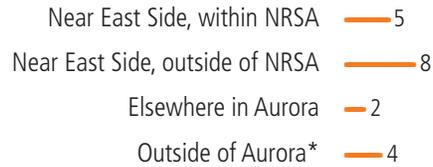
Community-based development organizations (CBDOs) and Community Development Corporations (CDOs) are great resources for targeted neighborhood strategies. Services offered through a CBDO or CDC can range from housing counseling, small business development, and direct real estate development. However, the success and sustainability of a new or expanded organization may be challenging given the current funding climate.

A first step would be to conduct an inventory of current organizations and services, and undergo a goal setting activity to determine what services are needed. If a CBDO still seems to be a viable option, the city should identify what kind of commitment it can make to support and attract resources to the organization. In regards to real estate development activities, the Chicago Community Loan Fund provides a project readiness workshop for organizations interested in pursuing development activities which outlines capacity needs, skills, organizational models, staffing, financial resources, and other key topics to help an organization decide if it can and should pursue development.

The goals and activities proposed by the City of Aurora for the NRSA overlaying the Near East Side neighborhood adhere closely to priorities identified by residents and other stakeholders as critical to redevelopment suitable for the neighborhood. This amendment is an important first step in establishing a commitment to community-inspired development strategy in Aurora. The process also affords an opportunity to practice a habit of reaching out to potential partners in the community and development professionals in the region for guidance at critical decision points. With continued involvement and support from Near East Side residents, this latest round of intervention has a very good chance of making the neighborhood a successful example of applying federal funds to address local issues.

Appendix: Third Meeting Quality of Life Survey Results

1. Where do you reside?



* Oswego, Blackberry Twp., Naperville, Plainfield

2. In general, how would you rate the current quality of the following aspects of life in the part of Aurora where you live?

5: Excellent, 4: Good, 3: Fair, 2: Poor, 1: Not Sure

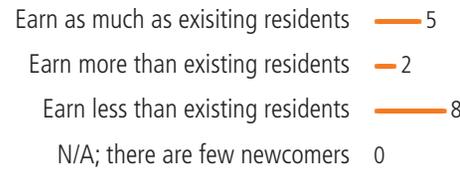
| | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Neighborhood | 2 | 7 | 5 | 1 | |
| Homes | 3 | 6 | 7 | | |
| Safety | 3 | 4 | 5 | 2 | |
| Schools | 2 | 5 | 5 | 2 | 1 |
| Stores, restaurants, and services* | 2 | 6 | 3 | 6 | |
| Traffic flow and parking availability | 1 | 4 | 5 | 3 | |
| Cultural activities, entertainment/rec. | 2 | 4 | 4 | 2 | 1 |

*Comment: "Depends on mobility status"

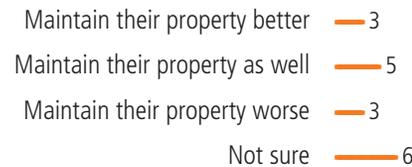
3. How would you compare the quality of life in Aurora's Near East Side to the rest of Aurora?



4. The people moving into the Near East Side seem to...



5. Relative to existing residents, people moving into the Near East Side seem to...



6. Do you own your home or rent?



7. Have you remodeled or improved your home in last two years?

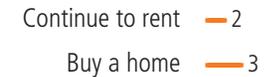


8. Please rate your level of agreement with the following statements.

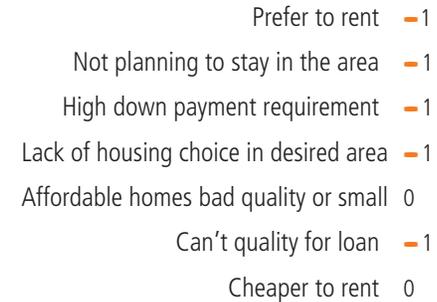
5: Strongly Agree, 4: Agree, 3: Disagree, 4: Strongly Disagree, 1: Not Sure

| | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| I will make substantial investments of over \$5,000 in my home by 2012. | 5 | 5 | | | 3 |
| I cannot make home repairs due to lack of money. | 2 | 3 | 7 | 2 | |
| I would invest more in my home if my neighbors did the same. | 1 | 6 | 3 | | 2 |

9. Within the next three years, do you expect to:



10. What is the main reason you don't own a home?



11. The economy in Aurora is changing...



12. The economy on the Near East Side of Aurora is changing...



13. What are the top five amenities or services you would most like to see more of on the Near East Side?



14. If you live on the Near East Side of Aurora, how far do you normally have to go for the following goods and services?

Groceries

46 percent of respondents are able to fulfill their grocery needs within the Near East Side. These residents identified El Guero and El Paso as grocery stores providing an adequate variety of goods. The remaining respondents reported they were compelled to leave the Near East Side to satisfy their grocery needs. Stores that get this second group's business include Jewel, Dominick's, Wal-Mart, Aldi, Cermak Grocery, Meijer, Eagle, and Woodman's.

Restaurant

Respondents in this category were evenly split. Residents who were satisfied with the restaurant options in the neighborhood go most often to Jalisco Tacos, Pancho's Tacos, and other area taquerias. However, at least one of these respondents would like more variety. Residents who prefer to leave the neighborhood for restaurants go to Orchard Road, Olive Garden (for its vegetarian options), Panera Bread, Portillo's, and Pancho's Restaurant.

Footwear and Apparel

All respondents leave the Near East Side to find shoe and clothing stores. Preferred retailers are at the mall or on Lake Street, such as Farm and Fleet, Payless, DSW, JCPenney, and K-Mart.

Gasoline

Thirty-six percent of respondents find they are able to stay in the neighborhood for a fill-up. Area gas stations they listed were Phillips 66, Citgo (New York), and Mobil (Indian Trail). The rest of the respondents go to the Shell in Montgomery, or to Naperville or Oswego.

Auto Care

Sixty-four percent of respondents leave the Near East Side for their car repair needs. A few of the repair shops they go to are Dave's Auto in Newark, Shipman's in Oswego, and a Ford dealer. Residents who use repair shops in the Near East Side go to Strade's, Orazco's, and Mobil (Indian Trail).

Furniture

All respondents shop outside of the neighborhood to buy furniture. They named a variety of outlets where they look to make furniture purchases including auctions, the Fox Valley Mall, and stores on Route 59.

Banking and Financial Services

Fourty percent of respondents use banking and financial services in the Near East Side, including the Fox Valley Credit Union. Some of the respondents who use banking services outside of the neighborhood are customers of Chase bank and Earthmover Credit Union (outside of the Near East Side).

Legal Services

Seventy-five percent of respondents find legal services outside of the neighborhood; one of these respondents is a client of West Side Attorneys.

Laundry

Seventy percent of respondents are able to do their laundry within the Near East Side, either at home or at a Laundromat on Farnsworth Avenue. One respondent who does laundry outside of the neighborhood goes to a relative's house.

Dry Cleaning

Sixty-three percent of respondents find dry cleaning services within the neighborhood, but did not list specific business names. Respondents who leave the neighborhood for dry cleaning go to Oswego or Montgomery.

Child Care

Sixty-seven percent of respondents are not able to find adequate child care in the Near East Side.

Movie Theaters

All respondents leave the neighborhood to go to movie theaters. Their business goes to Tinseltown (North Aurora), Regal Cantera 30 (Naperville), Kendall 10 (Oswego), Randall 15 IMAX (Batavia), the mall, and Ogden 6 (Naperville).

Salons and Barbers

Seventy percent of respondents do not use salon or barber services within the neighborhood. Some establishments these respondents listed were Great Clips (Oswego), Simply Hair (Naperville), and Folto's (Batavia). Respondents who do use these services in the Near East Side did not list specific business names.

15. If you live on the Near East Side of Aurora, can you satisfy the majority of your shopping needs on the Near East Side?



16. What do you think the most important action steps are for the East Side to improve the quality of life for residents? (For example, bring in a new clothing store, build a new park, help homeowners stay in their homes, help improve property conditions)?

- Restore single-family homes, lower density and bring in stable homeowners
- Promote home improvements and restoration, and improve property conditions
- Improve lighting to promote safety
- Bury the power lines and remove wooden poles to improve aesthetics
- Eliminate one-way streets
- Showcase neighborhood with house walks and architectural tours
- Tear down slum homes and build new ones
- Continual improvement of infrastructure
- Bring in white collar businesses

- Support existing businesses, develop the downtown area, create an inviting, walkable downtown center
- Promote the presence of a large grocery
- Living-wage jobs
- Don't build new when existing (retail) stock sits empty
- Help homeowners stay in their homes
- Fitness center
- Doctors' offices
- Movie theater
- Off-street parking
- Restaurants
- New park, more green space, areas for children to play
- Continue to focus on housing redevelopment
- Continue to work to provide quality education and stress the importance of education
- Keep money in the area

- More after-school programs
- Expand bus service
- Build transit-oriented development near the train station
- Bring in a bookstore to get people coming and staying in downtown Aurora, bring in businesses that encourage patrons to sit and enjoy the neighborhood (as opposed to drive through services)
- Keep the neighborhood local-friendly (no huge big box stores with giant parking lots)
- Add something fun/creative/useful, like an open air trolley that takes people around to local stores
- Make biking easier with more places to lock bikes and safer roadways for cyclists, maybe a bike rental program
- Ensure that handicapped residents can access all services in the area (many bus stops let patrons out on hilly parkways)
- Keep crime down



Contributors

Steering Committee

| | |
|---------------------|--|
| Gonzalo Arroyo | Family Focus |
| Pam Bellm | Aurora Regional Chamber of Commerce |
| Christina Campos | Aurora Township |
| Frank de los Santos | Brady School |
| Nestor Garcia | School District 131 |
| Ald. Juany Garza | 2nd Ward, City of Aurora |
| Joe Grisson III | SAS Outreach |
| Sherman Jenkins | Aurora Economic Development Commission |
| Sylvia Leonberger | Kane County Board |
| Harriet Parker | WCC—Small Business Development Center |
| Bob Reuland | Aurora Downtown |
| Katrina Smith | Quad County Urban League |
| Emily Stern | Rebuilding Together Aurora |
| Norma Vazquez | Aurora Hispanic Chamber of Commerce |

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| Trinidad Cervantes | Supermercado Casa Blanca |
| James Matanky | Matanky Realty Group |
| Steve Simmons | Chicago Jobs Council |
| Stephen Porras | Axia Development |
| Hildy Kingma | City of Park Forest |



The Corridor Development Initiative can work in any community in the Chicago region.

If you would like to host a Corridor Development Initiative in your community or want to learn more about the Aurora CDI, please contact:

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Since 1934, the Metropolitan Planning Council (MPC) has been dedicated to shaping a more sustainable and prosperous greater Chicago region. As an independent, nonprofit, nonpartisan organization, MPC serves communities and residents by developing, promoting and implementing solutions for sound regional growth.



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