

Introduction

This document is intended as an amendment to the City of Aurora's Neighborhood Revitalization Strategy, which was previously submitted to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, pursuant to 24 CFR 91.215 (e)(2). This amendment is submitted in conformance with HUD regulations. The Neighborhood Revitalization Strategy Area (NRSA) was originally created to take advantage of the enhanced flexibility offered in economic development, housing and public service activities using Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funding within the NRSA boundaries.

The reason for submitting an amendment is that the City has determined that the strategy reflected in the original HUD-approved plan was not working as well as expected and therefore desires to change its approach. The timeframe proposed for this amendment to the NRSA is five years, running concurrently with the City's Consolidated Plan (2010-2014).

In this amendment, the City of Aurora has set goals and planned activities based on consultation with members of the community: i.e., residents, owners/operators of businesses, local financial institutions, nonprofit organizations, and community groups.

Since approval of the original Neighborhood Revitalization Strategy by HUD, the City of Aurora has developed various programs to address quality of life issues for those residing within the NRSA, which is located generally on the near east side of Aurora and includes the downtown central business district. The level of economic and social distress remains high within the NRSA. Many household incomes within the NRSA are in the low to moderate range. Unemployment levels are high and education levels are low, compared to the rest of the City of Aurora. Because of the age of existing housing stock, residents are at higher risks for lead-based paint hazards. As part of the City's community consultation process, the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP) collected current neighborhood and demographic data for the NRSA, which is attached as Appendix D.

A number of planning initiatives that affect properties within the NRSA have been undertaken by the City of Aurora since 2000. Residents of the *Bardwell Area Neighborhood* and the *McCarty Park/Burlington Neighborhood* have worked with City staff and consultants to develop *neighborhood plans*, which were ratified by the Aurora City Council. In June 2006, the City Council adopted the *Seize the Future Master Plan* and the *Aurora Riverfront Vision Plan*, both of which were intended to direct continued redevelopment efforts in downtown Aurora. In September 2007, a revised *Riverwalk Master Plan* and the *RiverEdge Park Master Plan* were adopted by the City Council, with the purpose of providing enhanced public access to the Fox River, in concert with adjacent commercial and residential revitalization. In July 2008, a redesigned McCarty Park was unveiled, and in July 2009, the City Council adopted Aurora's first *Bicycle/Pedestrian Plan*. All these projects included significant citizen involvement and public input.

In April 2008, updated Design Guidelines were adopted for the *FoxWalk Overlay District*, which is located within the boundaries of the NRSA. The *Guidelines* now include measures for new construction following sustainability standards set by the U.S. Green Building Council. Examples of new buildings planned under the *Guidelines* include a 132,000 square foot campus

for Waubensee Community College (18 S. River Street), which is slated to open in Fall, 2011, and a 48,000 square foot facility for Wayside Cross Ministries (215 E. New York Street).

Since the designation of the NRSA, assistance has been provided to alleviate economic and social distress within and adjacent to this geographic area:

Economic Development/Job Creation

Section 108 loans to Lennie's New York New York Deli at 37 W. New York Street; Millennium Data Management at 37 S. Stolp; the Moinnudin Medical Center at Lincoln Avenue and New York Street; Pancho's Restaurant at New York and Union Streets; Rachel's Learning Center, 835 W. Illinois Avenue; the Flower Basket, 302 N. Lake Street; Luigi's on the River, 29 W. New York Street; and the Comfort Zone Blues and Jazz Club, 35 W. New York Street

Job Skills Training/Apprenticeship Opportunities

Grants to African-American Men of Unity, Aurora Township, the Quad County Urban League, and the Waubensee Community College/Hesed House Partnership

Homelessness Prevention, Foreclosure Counseling

Grants to Family Counseling Service, Joseph Corporation of Illinois, PADS, SEEDS, Carpenter's Place Aurora, Hesed House, the Quad County Urban League and Hope for Tomorrow

Capacity-Building for Childcare, Healthcare and Transportation

Grants to the Aurora YMCA, the Marie Wilkinson Child Development Center, construction of a new childcare facility to be operated by One Hope United, and funding for roadway/sidewalk improvements in the public right-of-way

Preservation of Existing Housing Stock/Overcrowding Reduction

- Homeowner Maintenance Empowerment Program
- Lead-Based Paint Removal Program
- Aurora Preservation Commission Porch Restoration Program
- Joseph Corporation of Illinois
- Rebuilding Together Aurora
- Reconversion Incentives to return multi-family buildings to single-family homes

Details on these projects are available in the City's Consolidated Annual Performance Evaluation Reports (CAPERs) and the Annual Action Plans (AAPs) submitted previously to HUD.

Additional assistance initiatives in the City are funded through CDBG, the Neighborhood Stabilization Program (NSP 1), and the Homelessness Prevention and Rapid Re-Housing Program (HPRP). Though these programs are not specifically targeted to the NRSA, residents of all neighborhoods, including those located within the NRSA, can avail themselves of services

provided by nonprofits and the City of Aurora. Details are provided in the CAPERs and AAPs submitted to HUD.

Finally, the City of Aurora is a recipient of the Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant awarded by the U.S. Department of Energy under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA). Projects funded through this program are not specifically targeted to the NRSA nor are they income-based; residents of all neighborhoods within the city limits are eligible to apply for various reimbursements and rebates to encourage energy audits, improvements to owner-occupied residences to increase energy efficiency, and enhancements to commercial buildings. The City has also undertaken retrofitting of municipal facilities and several pilot projects using energy generated via wind turbines.

Neighborhood and Demographic Criteria

The boundaries of the Neighborhood Revitalization Strategy Area are Liberty and Spring/Spruce Streets on the north; Beach Street, East Avenue, and Union Street on the east; East Benton and Clark Streets on the south; and Lake Street on the west. A map is attached in Appendix D. All areas within the boundaries are contiguous.

The Neighborhood Revitalization Strategy Area is composed of the census tracts and block groups listed in the table below, and includes the City’s Central Business District (downtown Aurora).

| | | | | | | | | |
|--------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| TRACT | 8533 | 8534 | 8534 | 8536 | 8536 | 8537 | 8537 | 8541 |
| BLOCK | 2 | 3 | 4 | 3 | 4 | 1 | 2 | 2 |

Though the City’s Central Business District (downtown Aurora) was an active commercial area until the early 1950s, it has experienced significant decline and disinvestment since that time, as automobile use replaced public transportation; housing development began to sprawl to the north, south, east, and west; and suburban-type commercial centers proliferated throughout the Fox Valley region. Specific commercial centers that exacerbated the decline of, and continued lack of investment in the central business district include:

- Northgate Mall (1956) at Lake Street on the near west side, anchored by Carson’s
- West Plaza along Galena Boulevard on the far west side, anchored by Jewel (1972) and WalMart (1992)
- Westfield Fox Valley Shopping Center (1975) on the far east side, anchored by J.C. Penney’s, Kohl’s, Macy’s, Carson’s, and Sears
- Chicago Premium Outlet Mall (2004) on the north side at I-88 and Farnsworth
- Butterfield commercial center (2007) at Route 56 and Kirk Road on the north side, anchored by WalMart (2006)

Additionally, commercial corridors have developed along major north/south arterials, specifically Orchard Road, Randall Road, Farnsworth, Eola Road, and Route 59 – all of which extend outward to the neighboring communities of Oswego, Montgomery, North Aurora and Batavia.

The Central Business District is approximately 30 blocks in size and bounded by Lake Street on the west, Lincoln Avenue on the east, Spruce/Spring Streets on the north, and Benton Street on the south. Most downtown businesses are microenterprises, with fewer than five employees. Many are Hispanic-owned and serve customers who are primarily NRSA residents. The City does not maintain data on the numbers or origins of people employed by these businesses.

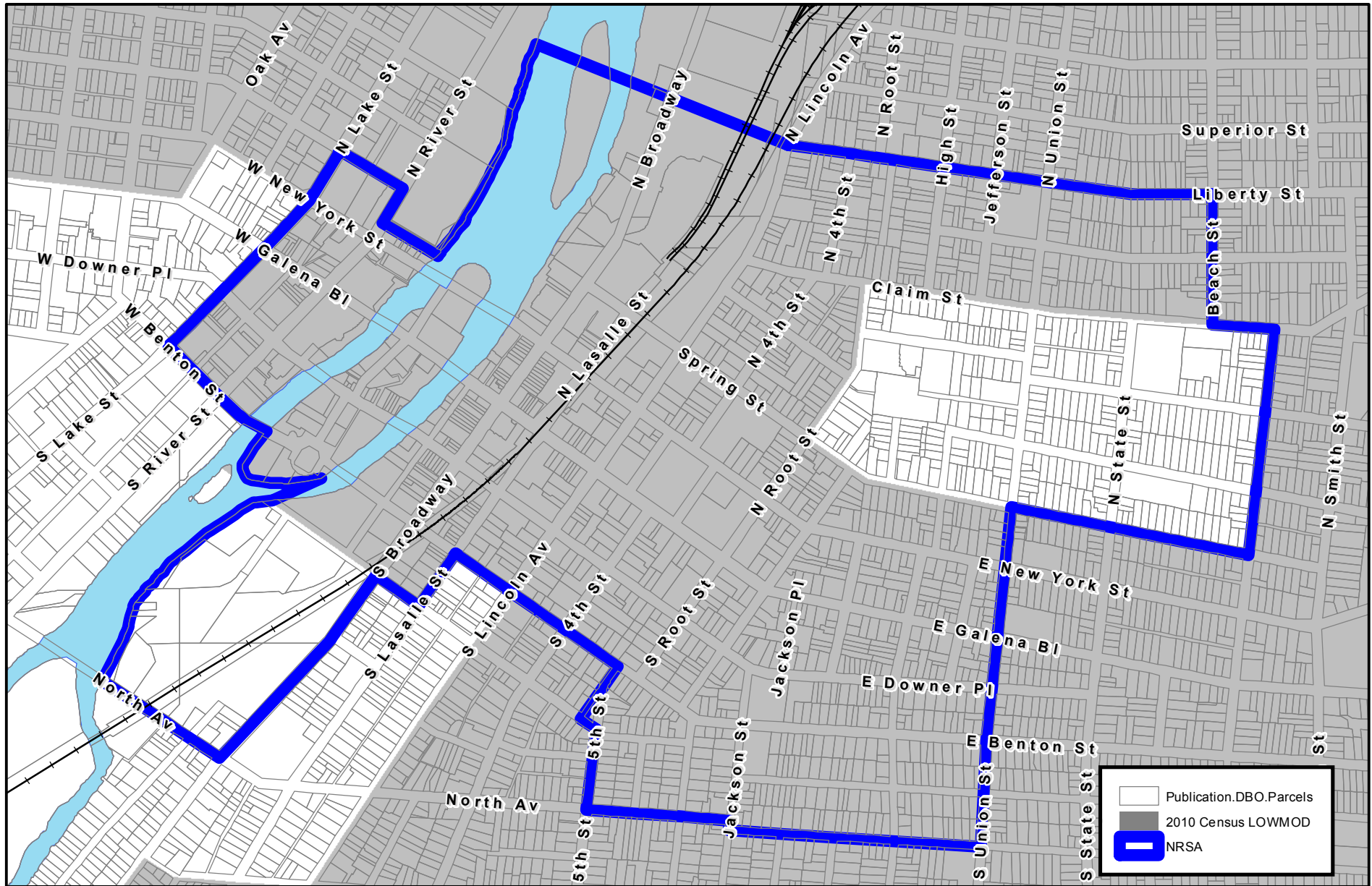
Though efforts have been underway since the 1970s to “reinvent” downtown Aurora, large scale developers are not generally interested in rehabbing pre-World War II buildings and national retail chains do not view NRSA (low-mod income) residents as their targeted customers. Smaller scale investors have taken on rehab projects, but have generally not been able to raise sufficient capital to successfully complete building restorations, even with financial assistance from the City, nor have they been able to attract tenants with the level of sophistication or

expertise needed to sustain them in business over the long term. Local financial institutions have been reluctant to finance commercial rehab loans for downtown buildings or offer lines of credit to “mom and pop” businesses. This lack of access to capital has been dramatically increased in recent months as the overall credit market has constricted and lending to small businesses has decreased.

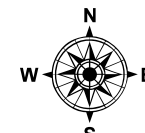
A list of businesses located within the NRSA is attached in Appendix E.

The Neighborhood Revitalization Strategy Area is primarily residential, as described on page 6. As required by 24 CFR 570.208(a)(1)(ii), it contains a percentage of low- and moderate-income residents that is equal to the “upper quartile percentage” or 70%, whichever is less, but not less than 51 percent.

NRSA characteristics described on pages 8-9 were compiled in August, 2010 by the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP), using the 2000 Decennial Census, SF1 and SF3 plus current Dun and Bradstreet reports. Additional neighborhood and demographic data can be found in the section of this document entitled, “Community Consultation” and in Appendix D.



NRSA Boundaries & LOWMOD Area (2010 Census)



Not To Scale



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