

TO: Mayor Richard C. Irvin
FROM: Stephane Phifer, Planning and Zoning Director
DATE: September 21, 2017

SUBJECT:

Ordinance Approving Revisions to Aurora's Comprehensive Plan for Property Located Adjacent to the Fox River from Illinois Avenue on the North and North Avenue on the South and Approving the Updated Downtown Master Plan (Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP) - 15-00569 / AU22/2-14.347-COMP - SP)

PURPOSE:

To update the Future (STF) Master Plan for Downtown in partnership with the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning ("CMAP") as part of their Local Technical Assistance ("LTA") program.

BACKGROUND:

The Seize the Future Master Plan for Downtown Aurora was approved in August of 2006 which provided a 10 year plan and long term vision for downtown (Master Plan: <https://www.aurora-il.org/DocumentCenter/Home/View/2859>). This economic development plan for the area is a valuable tool for conveying to future developers the ultimate vision for the many unique neighborhoods portrayed.

In 2014 Planning and Zoning staff applied to CMAP's Local Technical Assistance program to complement and enhance this Master Plan with a component dedicated to developing arts, culture, and entertainment and to optimizing the transportation opportunities and the walkability of the downtown and was successfully approved for the grant. The "grant" consists of planning staff assistance from CMAP, there are no dollars associated with this award. The partnership with the CMAP brings with it the expertise of the regional planning authority to develop an amendment to the update to the STF Downtown Master Plan to address walkability goals and potential enhancements and to capture and incorporate the growing art and culture movement in the downtown.

In June of 2015 the City entered in to a Memorandum of Understanding ("MOU") with a Scope of Work ("SOW") establishing the terms and parameters by which the two organizations' staff members will partner for this project, including the steps involved and a timeline for completion. The steps include collecting information on existing conditions, developing a draft a plan, and collecting public input for final adoption. The work kicked off in earnest in October of 2015 and CMAP and City staff have spent the last 22 months collecting information, gathering input, and drafting an updated master plan including: setting up a project website which has received over 2,776 visitors; a 20 person panel steering committee which met 5 times; two online surveys with over 1,680 responses; two public open houses with over 300 participants; one-on-one interviews with residents, elected officials, and other stakeholders; two workshops with the illustrator; and numerous staff level meetings and draft plans.

While the current draft of the plan has incorporated many voices and visions, there is still more to be done. The draft plan will now begin the formal approval process through City Council with a public hearing and review and recommendation from the Planning Commission, review and recommendation from the Planning and Development Committee before moving on to public comment and review and action by the City Council. The public is encouraged to continue to comment and provide input on the draft plan throughout this process both at the official meetings and on the CMAP website at: <http://www.cmap.illinois.gov/programs-and-resources/ta/aurora>

DISCUSSION:

The current draft of the Downtown Aurora Master Plan Update includes a modern vision for downtown Aurora which includes an experience to remember; diverse businesses; a place for creatives; a safe and easy to navigate environment; and a vibrant Fox River.

The Plan itself is broken down into six focus areas with key findings and recommendations for each. The focus areas are:

1. The Downtown Experience
2. Revitalizing the Downtown Economy
3. Activating Downtown through Arts & Culture
4. The Heart of Downtown: The Fox River
5. Mobility: Getting to and around Downtown Aurora
6. Building the Downtown Community

The Plan Concludes that the goal of the Downtown Master Plan is to build off previous implementation successes and continue forward within the context of Aurora's historic downtown to create a more livable, walkable, and vibrant core. The Master Plan outlines the community's vision and defines guiding principles to help achieve that vision.

The strategies recommended in this Plan begin with creating a unique, memorable experience to solidify downtown as a desirable destination for people who live here, work here, or just come to visit. Increasing the number of people in the downtown will lead to the development of supportive businesses, entertainment, and retail activity. Arts and culture activity will find direction and increased support at various levels. The Fox River will continue to be the heart of Aurora with attractive new open space, and wetlands to improve water quality and mitigate flooding. Transportation improvements will help to encourage more walking, and reduce frustrations with parking and traffic. Creative and targeted outreach approaches will help to foster a stronger relationship with the municipality and its residents, and cultivate new leaders along the way. The Aurora Community has been, and will continue to work tirelessly toward this bold vision for the future—a future that is, indeed, bright.

But the key is implementing the plan and for this reason the final pages of the plan include a matrix which provide accountability for next steps and the ability to track, measure, and celebrate successes.

IMPACT STATEMENT :

Staff would anticipate that this project will increase the City's overall tax base, by facilitating investment and development, which will offset any incidental Department or staffing impacts..

RECOMMENDATIONS:

The Planning Commission recommended APPROVAL of the Ordinance Approving Revisions to Aurora's Comprehensive Plan for Property Located Adjacent to the Fox River from Illinois Avenue on the North and North Avenue on the South and Approving the Updated Downtown Master Plan.

ATTACHMENTS:

Exhibit A - Downtown Aurora Master Plan Update

Legistar Number: 15-00569

cc: Planning and Development Committee:
Alderman Michael B. Saville, Chairman
Alderman Sherman Jenkins, Member
Alderman Carl Franco, Member
Alderman William "Bill" Donnell, Alternate



CITY OF AURORA, ILLINOIS

ORDINANCE NO. _____
DATE OF PASSAGE _____

An Ordinance Approving Revisions to Aurora's Comprehensive Plan for Property Located Adjacent to the Fox River from Illinois Avenue on the North and North Avenue on the South and Approving the Downtown Master Plan Update

WHEREAS, the City of Aurora has a population of more than 25,000 persons and is, therefore, a home rule unit under subsection (a) of Section 6 of Article VII of the Illinois Constitution of 1970; and

WHEREAS, subject to said Section, a home rule unit may exercise any power and perform any function pertaining to its government and affairs for the protection of the public health, safety, morals, and welfare; and

WHEREAS, on April 3, 1984, the Aurora City Council adopted a Comprehensive Plan which established a general development plan for the City of Aurora and its environs, and is embodied in Ordinance No. O84-5279; and

WHEREAS, an Interim Land Use and Circulation Plan map amending the Comprehensive Plan from time to time was approved by the City Council by Ordinance Number O90-011 on February 6, 1990; and

WHEREAS, said Interim Plan was last changed as per Ordinance Number O2017-026 on June 13, 2017; and

WHEREAS, on September 20, 2017 the Planning Commission recommended approval of the proposed revisions for the property located and that the proposed revisions be reflected on the Aurora's Comprehensive Plan, being the Downtown Master Plan Update, as presented at said meeting; and

WHEREAS, on September 28, 2017 the Planning and Development Committee of the Aurora City Council reviewed said Comprehensive Plan Revision, being the Downtown Master Plan Update, and the before mentioned recommendations and recommended that the proposed revisions be incorporated into the official Comprehensive Plan for the City of Aurora; and

ORDINANCE NO. _____
DATE OF PASSAGE _____

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT ORDAINED by the City Council of the City of Aurora, Illinois, that it does hereby approved the proposed revisions, being the Downtown Master Plan Update, and authorize said revisions to be incorporated into the Aurora's Comprehensive Plan as present in Exhibit "A" the Downtown Master Plan Update attached hereto and incorporated herein.