

Item 2: Qualifying Statement (Section D)

I. Narrative About the Proposal

A. Building History

The Abraham Lincoln School at 641 South Lake Street in Aurora, Kane County, Illinois was constructed in 1891 with additions in 1926 and 1928 by the Aurora West Division Board of Education. Local stonemason and carpenter Clark Brown Colwell designed and built the original block of the school, which was called the South Lake Street School when it opened in 1891. The school was remodeled in the late 1920s, with a gymnasium constructed on the south side of the school in 1926 and an auditorium and classrooms added to the north side in 1928. With this remodel the building was renamed the Abraham Lincoln School. The two-story school building is located west of the Fox River, on the west side of South Lake Street, and is situated on a northeast-southwest oriented bias. The Abraham Lincoln School has a stone foundation, red brick cladding, and a hipped roof with asphalt shingles. It features Prairie style ornamentation such as decorative stone blocks, geometric stone entrance surrounds on the northwest façade, and deep eaves with wood bracketed soffits. The interior of the school retains its historic double-loaded central corridors lined with lockers and classrooms and historic stairwells. Several classrooms retain historic wood entrance doors, historic wood flooring, and historic painted wood window trim. Historic terrazzo edging is extant in the corridors and larger expanses of terrazzo flooring is retained in the historic stairwells, bathrooms, and second-floor classrooms at the top of the stairwells. The 1928 auditorium retains its historic stage and proscenium arch. The school has received replacement windows within the historic openings.

Overall, the Abraham Lincoln School retains good integrity and easily communicates its significance as one of Aurora's oldest school buildings and an example of a Platoon school, reflecting important early-twentieth-century trends in public education. The Abraham Lincoln School sits on a 2.49 acre parcel that contains one building, the school, and one structure, a non-historic playground located to the northwest of the school. The Abraham Lincoln School served the West Aurora School District 129 until its closure in 2009. The building has been vacant since that time.

B. Building Chronology

The school site is composed of one building constructed, added to, and altered twice between 1891 and the school's closure in 2009:

The Abraham Lincoln School is set back from South Lake Street on a parcel that is bordered by residential properties on the plan east and plan west, and by Woodlawn Avenue on the plan north. The footprint of the building is divided into three main sections: the original central two-story and basement, hip-roof structure completed in 1891; a flat-roof plan west addition completed in 1926 featuring a single-story above a basement gymnasium; and a large two-story and basement plan east addition, completed in 1928, with an auditorium, and a continuation of the hip-roof. The Abraham Lincoln School features a rough-face stone foundation and red brick cladding; Prairie style architectural details are evidenced in the deep roof eaves with wood bracketed soffits and decorative limestone blocks in geometric patterns. The school retains original window openings with limestone sills; the 1891 block's windows have brick jack-arch lintels. The historic window sashes have been replaced with aluminum-frame sashes with awning lower panels and fiberglass upper panels.

1891 Original Block

The original 1891 section features symmetrical plan north and plan south elevations with a rusticated Joliet limestone base and water table, upper walls clad in red brick, and a hipped roof with deep eaves and wood bracketed soffits. The plan south elevation is divided into three bays with flanking bays of five single windows around a center bay of two single windows. At the center of this elevation is a limestone plaque which reads: ABRAHAM LINCOLN SCHOOL. A fourth bay is set back at the plan western end of the elevation and features the main entrance, which is topped by a set of three clerestory windows. Originally, windows were four-over-four, double hung, wood sash with fixed upper transoms. The non-historic windows are set within the original openings. The plan north elevation mirrors the three main bays of the plan south and is flanked by a pair of projecting stair and entrance towers, which were added in 1928. Historic photographs show that the 1891 building originally featured a bell tower, hipped roof dormers, and multiple masonry chimneys. These elements were removed when the school was significantly expanded in the late 1920s.

1926 Southwest (plan west) Addition

The 1926 gymnasium addition is joined to the original 1891 block along its plan east side. All elevations are clad in red brick with a limestone water table and decorative trim. The plan north and plan south elevations feature a row of four evenly spaced single windows above the water table, and two sets of four windows on the first floor. The plan west elevation features decorative brick panels framed by brick with flat stone corners, flanking a central bay with a recessed triple window and transom. At the south west corner there is a flight of concrete steps that leads down to a basement-level secondary entrance. At the southwest corner is a single-story brick shed.

1928 Northeast (plan east) Addition

The 1928 addition is joined to the original 1891 block along its plan west side and is similar in design to the original section, except with a square footprint. The building has a rusticated stone base and water table, with red brick cladding on upper floors, limestone details, and a hipped roof with bracketed eaves. The plan south elevation projects plan southwards from the main plan south elevation of the original block and is evenly divided into five bays. The middle three bays have tall windows that span the first and second levels of the interior auditorium space and feature carved limestone spandrels. Original wood, nine-over-nine divided light, double hung, sash windows, with divided light transoms at the second floor have been replaced with glass block within the original openings. The outer flanking bays have shallow projecting brick and stone panels at the ground level, which represent the locations of two former entrance pavilions. The plan north elevation is similar in design to the main elevations of the original section. Fenestration is symmetrically arranged across five bays with four bays of triple windows around a central bay of single windows.

C. Proposed Building Use

The former Abraham Lincoln School will be repurposed to 14 work force housing units with a proposed new building being built to the plan north of the existing building that will consist of an additional 22 work force housing units. Work force housing being defined as housing built to serve families that are sitting in the middle between true affordable housing and luxury housing. Incomes for many of these families are insufficient, and they are currently dropping ever lower in the housing marketplace. They don't make enough to qualify for luxury housing, and they make too much to qualify for true affordable housing, which is another term for government-subsidized affordable housing. This creates a widening gap between those two spaces. This is caused in part by the fact that rents and housing costs are going up for the most part in all major urban metro markets, but wages are stagnant for this group. In essence, these families are stuck in the middle. In the workforce housing space, this project is looking to create a product that serves, as the name suggests, working families. The spaces will also include a community room, library/computer lab and gymnasium.

D. Square Footage Breakdowns of each Building

SITE INFORMATION:

- APPROXIMATE AREA = 2.494 ACRES

ADAPTIVE REUSE (EXISTING BUILDING):

BUILDING STORIES:

BELOW GRADE = 1 FLOOR

ABOVE GRADE = 2 FLOORS

NEW CONSTRUCTION:

BUILDING STORIES:

ABOVE GRADE = 2 FLOORS

BUILDINGS GROSS SQUARE FOOTAGE:

ADAPTIVE REUSE (EXISTING BUILDING) = 42,587 SF

NEW CONSTRUCTION = 27,844 SF

TOTAL UNIT COUNTS:

ADAPTIVE REUSE (EXISTING BUILDING) = 14 UNITS

NEW CONSTRUCTION - 22 UNITS

TOTAL - 36 UNITS

PARKING COUNTS:

STANDARD PARKING PROVIDED – 42 SPACES

HANDICAP PARKING PROVIDED = 12 SPACES

II. This project addresses the following concerns:

a) The public health, safety, morals, comfort, and general welfare:

Lake Street has long been considered a major transportation artery of the west side of Aurora. This subject property operated as a school for over 100 years. Since being vacated there have been a few proposals for the property, but there has been nothing concrete and the building has sat vacant for over ten years. The site sits ready for re-development and the existing building has tremendous historic significance for the community. This coupled with the proposed use of the property ***(Work Force Housing that will include the management team working to provide a full array of services for the residents, including working with local and regional service providers to provide services on-site and access to services. These services may include but are not limited to: a. Develop a comprehensive service plan for the residents to transition from workforce housing to market rate housing; b. Move towards collaborative community relationships internally and externally; c. Help provide access for job training; d. Provide referrals and access for other services such as - case management and health services and e. monthly activities for the residents and children in the development)*** demonstrate that the proposed project will bring much needed services and residences to the

area and significantly enhance the public health, safety, morals, comfort and general welfare of the neighborhood and community.

b) The use and enjoyment of other property already established or permitted in the general area:

With the addition of a park area and the points made in a) above, the use and enjoyment of other property already established in the general area will be impacted in a positive way in that these residences will have green space and services that are greatly lacking in the area

c) Property values within the neighborhood:

It is difficult to accurately predict what will happen to property values with the addition of any one development (several factors come into play for property values – i.e., the local, state and US economy, property tax rates, etc.) it is fair to state that this project should have a positive impact on property values within the neighborhood. It will clean up what was once a vacant building and will bring housing to an area that is in need.

d) The normal and orderly development and improvement of surrounding property for uses established or permitted within their respective existing zoning districts

The proposed uses of this project bring much needed residences to the Neighborhood. As such the proposed project affects the normal and orderly development and improvement of surrounding property for uses established or permitted within their respective existing zoning districts in a positive manner.

e) and f) “Utilities, access roads, and drainage and/or other necessary facilities” and “Ingress and egress as it relates to traffic congestion in the public streets”

Proposed underground utilities include storm sewer, water, gas, electric, and telecommunications. These facilities will be constructed and connected to the public infrastructure present within the City right-of-way. All existing overhead utilities in the City right-of-way are to remain. Drainage requirements will be met per City of Aurora and Kane County ordinances.

Access points to the site are existing along Lake Street and proposed along Woodlawn.

g) and h) “The applicable regulations of the zoning district in which the subject property is proposed to be or is located” and “A bullet point list of any variances, modifications or exceptions that you are seeking from the City’s Codes and Ordinances”

It is proposed that we would rezone the property to R5 with a Special Use Planned Development and a Final Plan for the changes to the site. The National

Park Service identified that this appears to meet the National Register criteria in the Historic Preservation Certification - Part 1 documentation for Tax Credits. The new building would also have to meet the Secretary of Interior Standards.

III. Anticipated Variances:

The following variances are anticipated, however, a need for additional variances may arise due to further coordination with the City of Aurora as the rezoning process continues through the preliminary process to final platting:

Lincoln Adaptive Reuse:

1. Rezone property to R5 with Special Use Planned Development.
The former Abraham Lincoln School will be repurposed to 14 work force housing units; hence the site needs to be rezoned.
2. Allow the parking ratio of 1.5 spaces per unit.
Proposed development is geared towards workforce housing. Families at this income level tend to either not have any vehicle or have only one vehicle per family. Motor Vehicle ownership rates tend to increase with income. Therefore, the state makes it so important that public transportation is convenient to these work force housing developments. We are asking for the variance because this lower ratio will more than cover the needs of the development.
3. Allow provision of common laundry space in lieu of in-unit laundry.
Provision of in-unit laundry adds to the construction cost that indirectly inflates the rent and this being work force housing development it is very important to keep the construction cost low for the same reason listed in item #2 above.
4. Due to adaptive reuse nature of the project allow to deviate from providing balcony/patios to units.
One of the buildings on the site is existing historical building and any alterations will disturb the historical fabric of the building. Such alterations could jeopardize project's eligibility for Historic Tax Credit.
5. Allow reduced landscape to 50% of what is required per Aurora Zoning Ordinance.
Open space available for landscaping is approximately 40% of total site. Providing 100% of landscape as per the zoning ordinance could potentially create the situation where the tree/shrub roots could be interfering with the adjacent tree/shrub root coverage and in turn affect the growth.

6. Allow for single gas meter in lieu of independent meter per dwelling unit.

The only equipment that uses gas in each dwelling unit is the gas fired furnace. The water heater services are paid by the developer. Single water heater located in the mechanical room in each building will serve all the units as well as the common areas. In such circumstances providing an independent meter for each dwelling unit does not prove to be economical and practical approach.

7. Allow for single main domestic water meter in lieu of independently and privately metered service per dwelling unit.

Water services are paid by developer. Single water heater will be centrally located in the mechanical room with the hot water line to each dwelling unit creating a loop. In such scenario, providing an individual water meter for each unit does not necessarily measure the water usage by individual unit but measures the water circulating through the hot water loop. Hence providing an independent metered service to each unit does not prove to serve the purpose.

Lincoln (New Construction):

1. Rezone property to R5 with Special Use Planned Development.
The former Abraham Lincoln School will be repurposed to 14 work force housing units with a proposed new building being built to the plan north of the existing building that will consist of an additional 22 work force housing units.
2. Allow the parking ratio of 1.5 spaces per unit.
Proposed development is geared towards workforce housing. Families at this income level tend to either not have any vehicle or have only one vehicle per family. Motor Vehicle ownership rates tend to increase with income. Therefore, the state makes it so important that public transportation is convenient to these work force housing developments. We are asking for the variance because this lower ratio will more than cover the needs of the development.
3. Allow provision of common laundry space in lieu of in-unit laundry.
Provision of in-unit laundry adds to the construction cost that indirectly inflates the rent and this being work force housing development it is very important to keep the construction cost low for the same reason listed in item #2 above.

4. Due to adaptive reuse nature of the project allow to deviate from providing balcony/patios to units.
One of the buildings on the site is existing historical building and any alterations will disturb the historical fabric of the building. Such alterations could jeopardize project's eligibility for Historic Tax Credit. Since all the residential units on the site for the new and existing buildings are geared towards work force housing, providing the balconies/patios in the new building will create bias towards residents of new building.
5. Allow for 19.6% masonry in lieu of 80% as per Aurora Code of Ordinance.
The design intent of the new building is to not compete with the architecture of existing historic brick building and to maintain its prominence on the site. The use of materials is contextual to the surroundings and a conscious effort to blend the new building with the architecture of the surrounding single family residential houses.
6. New Construction Setback - allow for 27'-0" front setback along Woodlawn Ave in lieu of 30'-0" as per Aurora Zoning Ordinance.
Moving the new building towards the existing building to achieve 30'-0" set back from Woodlawn Ave, will reduce the landscape strip between the building and parking lot on plan south side. New mechanical unit is in this landscape strip and reducing the landscape would impede the provision of landscape screening to the mechanical unit.
7. Parking spaces encroaching the setback (Plan east – along single-family home and the open lot owned by the city).
Few parking spots along the east side of the property overlaps with the required setback line. Most of the overlapping spots are along the open lot owned by the City and very few spots are along the residential lot on north-east. Hence, we believe it is not much of a hindrance to the residential property and it does not compromise the required setback line.
8. Allow reduced landscape to 50% of what is required per Aurora Zoning Ordinance.
Open space available for landscaping is approximately 40% of total site. Providing 100% of landscape as per the zoning ordinance could potentially create the situation where the tree/shrub roots could be interfering with the adjacent tree/shrub root coverage and in turn affect the growth.

9. Allow for single gas meter in lieu of independent meter per dwelling unit.

The only equipment that uses gas in each dwelling unit is the gas fired furnace. The water heater services are paid by the developer. Single water heater located in the mechanical room in each building will serve all the units as well as the common areas. In such circumstances providing an independent meter for each dwelling unit does not prove to be economical and practical approach.

10. Allow for single main domestic water meter in lieu of independently and privately metered service per dwelling unit.

Water services are paid by developer. Single water heater will be centrally located in the mechanical room with the hot water line to each dwelling unit creating a loop. In such scenario, providing an individual water meter for each unit does not necessarily measure the water usage by individual unit but measures the water circulating through the hot water loop. Hence providing an independent metered service to each unit does not prove to serve the purpose.

11. Allow to use partial face brick and fiber cement panels at dumpster enclosure to match with the finishes of new building construction.

This is in line with the building elevation design concept – item #5.