

**Karen Fullett-Christensen**

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**Aurora, Illinois 60506**  
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**Retired; serving as a volunteer for the following nonprofit organizations:**

- Board member, *Fox Valley Music Foundation*
- Board member, *Fox Valley Festival Chorus*
- Board member, *Aurora Downtown*

**In addition:**

- Coordinator, *Books and Bread*, book club
- Co-leader, *A-Town Poetics*, writers group
- Member, *Fox Valley Chapter of Hadassah*
- Member, *Aurora Committee, League of Women Voters*

**EMPLOYMENT HISTORY**

**10/09- 12/12: *City of Aurora, Illinois - Neighborhood Redevelopment Division (transferred as Development Coordinator on October 1, 2009; promoted to Division Manager on January 1, 2010)***

- Responsible for management and oversight of the Neighborhood Redevelopment Division in the City's Community Services Department. In addition to the Division manager, staff included one planner, one development coordinator, one rehabilitation financial specialist, and one office coordinator.

Our division's mission was to support the stabilization and revitalization of Aurora's neighborhoods, in part by administering funds awarded to the City of Aurora by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development and the U.S. Department of Energy under the following programs:

- Community Development Block Grant Program
- HOME Investment Partnerships Program
- Neighborhood Stabilization Program – NSP-1
- CDBG-R (American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009)
- Homelessness Prevention and Rapid Re-housing Program (Housing and Economic Recovery Act of 2008)
- Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant Program (American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009)

**1999-9/09: City of Aurora, Illinois – Downtown Development Director (initially employed as Downtown/Riverwalk Administrator; promoted to Downtown Development Director)**

- Managed TIF-funded building restoration matching grant program budgeted at \$300,000 annually
- Administered zoning ordinance for DC/DF zoning districts
- Administered design review process for FoxWalk Overlay District; re-crafted design guidelines and accompanying zoning ordinance in 2008 to streamline, address new construction, and incorporate sustainability principles
- Oversaw design review process for major development projects including Waubensee Community College campus (130,000 square feet), Ballydoyle Irish Pub (28,000 square feet), Wayside Cross Ministries (40,000 square feet), Elks Club mixed-use (20,000 square feet) and an addition to the Paramount Theatre
- Staff to downtown property owners' organization and its various committees and projects
- Staff to City of Aurora Riverwalk Commission
- Served on planning and steering committees for major neighborhood festivals including *Downtown Alive!* and the Midwest Literary Festival
- Coordinated volunteers for community events
- Led Sustainability Task Force for Aurora's RiverEdge Park; developed River Edge Park Sustainability Handbook
- Led planning effort for Riverwalk Master Plan; managed design and engineering consultant contracts for state and federal permitting
- Assisted in development of Aurora's Countryside Vision Plan, Riverfront Vision Plan, Seize the Future Master Plan, and RiverEdge Park Plan
- Partnered with Aurora Economic Development Commission staff and Seize the Future consultants on redevelopment projects and financial incentive agreements for downtown properties
- Developed wayfinding and destination signage as well as streetscape improvement plan

**Initiated new programs:**

- "Help Plant Aurora's Riverbanks" – raised funds through private, national donors; worked with partner agencies to supervise 80+ volunteers over a six-year project period
- "Keep Looking Up" – architectural retrospective exhibit showcasing building restoration success stories over a ten-year period
- Architectural Trading Cards and collateral poster – educational program targeted to elementary school students
- Downtown Heritage Tour and Cell Phone Walking Tour – managed research and development for both
- "Mayor's Awards for Excellence in Downtown Property Improvements" – program to publicly recognize private investment in Special Service Area

- *Downtown Destinations* marketing cooperative – partnership to encourage cross-promotion and joint marketing for small businesses
- “Aurora ArtWalk” – program to foster a “creative community” in downtown Aurora by enhancing interaction among creative people; build connections; and welcome others who are like-minded; showcase downtown Aurora and historic districts as places where creative people can find places to live and work; and brand downtown Aurora as a lively destination where creativity is celebrated and honored
- Living Downtown Tour” – neighborhood walk showcasing 11 residential projects, from new construction to rehabbed units

**1997-1999: *South Suburban Mayors and Managers Association, East Hazel Crest, Illinois – Program Director*** – Developed and implemented programs for an intergovernmental association of 38 communities with a combined population of 600,000. Staff size: 17. Created and produced brochures, newsletters, press releases, research reports, policy documents, and marketing materials. Negotiated and managed contracts, supervised consultants. Coordinated training program for appointed and elected officials. Staffed municipal bond bank through Bank One Capital Markets. Provided management assistance in finance, economic development, grants, land use planning, resource conservation, cable franchise agreements, legislation, employment law, ordinance development, strategic planning, regionwide community computer network (the LincolnNet), and social services.

**Initiated new programs:**

- Regional watershed planning (\$400,000 appropriation from Illinois General Assembly)
- Industrial Revenue Bond Pool (\$3+million) through Illinois Development Finance Authority
- Regional telecommunications plan
- Regional Y2K planning and preparedness
- Regional surveys on best management practices

**1996-1997: *County of Will, Illinois – Planner III*** - Land use planning, ordinance development, and subdivision review in one of Illinois’s fastest growing counties. *Left to return to SSMMA at a higher salary and level of responsibility.*

**Initiated new programs:**

- Countywide watershed planning (\$40,000 contract with the Northeastern Illinois Planning Commission)
- Wetland restoration/habitat enhancement project (\$10,000 grant from the Eastern Will County Regional Council)

**1993-1996: City of Missoula, Montana – Engineering Division Program Manager –** Long-range planning for non-motorized and mass transit systems under \$10 million federal transportation/air quality grant. Coordinated extensive volunteer network. Worked with local, state, and regional partners on open space programs, transportation projects. Created and produced brochures, newsletters, press releases, research reports, policy documents.

**Initiated new programs:**

- Managed multi-media (radio/television/print) public information campaigns, including extensive public speaking
- Created and managed citywide promotional events
- Developed neighborhood planning curriculum, *Walkable Missoula: Through the Eyes of our Children*
- Founding member of the *Missoula/Ravalli Transportation Management Association*, the first rural transportation management association in the U.S.

**1986-1993: South Suburban Mayors and Managers Association, East Hazel Crest, Illinois – Program Specialist (see above)**

**Initiated new programs:**

- Regional solid waste plan and contract negotiation for waste-to-energy incinerator
- Employee Assistance Program – consortium of 12 member municipalities

**OTHER POSITIONS HELD:**

- Executive assistant to Chief Financial Officer (private industry)
- Executive assistant to Vice President of Acquisitions (private industry)
- Social studies and language arts instructor (elementary and secondary level)
- Partner, *Vito Leonardi Jewelers* (locations at the Hyatt Regency hotel in downtown Chicago and at Evergreen Plaza Shopping Center in Evergreen Park)
- Real Estate agent, Coldwell Banker

**EDUCATIONAL CREDENTIALS and PROFESSIONAL AFFILIATIONS:**

- Bachelor of Arts degree (magna cum laude), Northern Illinois University, 1972
- Graduate, Leadership Missoula, 1996
- Courses in economic development, environmental planning, resource conservation, urban planning and municipal management
- International City/County Management Association
- American Planning Association - Urban Design & Preservation and Economic Development Divisions
- International Downtown Association
- National Trust for Historic Preservation

## **AWARDS AND HONORS**

- Kane County Planner of the Year, 2012
- American Planning Association National Journalism Awards Judge, 2006
- American Planning Association Mentor, 2004
- Lambda Alpha International (honorary land economics professional society), inducted 2001
- Individual Award of Excellence, Will/South Cook Soil & Water Conservation District, 1999
- Earth Champion, *The Missoulian*, 1996