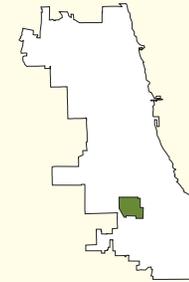


AUBURN GRESHAM: Chicago's Best-Kept Secret



PLANNING TASK FORCE

Auburn Gresham



More than 150 neighborhood residents, business owners, institutional leaders and youth came together over the past year to discuss and contribute to this quality-of-life plan for our community. Greater Auburn-Gresham Development Corporation (GADC) thanks all participants for contributing.

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This list was compiled from sign-in sheets and may not include all participants. Our apologies for any misspellings or omissions.

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A Solid Community Reaches Higher



The neighborhood boasts a selection of housing styles at affordable prices.

Auburn Gresham has stood its ground. No matter what obstacles and setbacks have come our way—from white flight to redlining to gangs and drugs—this community of involved citizens and families remains one of the South Side’s best-kept secrets. There are no vast tracts of demolished housing here, no dismal rows of boarded-up storefronts. To the contrary, most side streets have a full complement of well-maintained bungalows, two-flats and apartment buildings. And we have hidden gems, such as Winneconna Parkway, that would be the envy of any neighborhood.

Still, Auburn Gresham is in need of new blood. We need new investment in our homes and commercial streets, a new generation of young homeowners to carry on the traditions of older, longtime residents, and new forms of assisted living for those same seniors—heroes, really—who held on during the hard times, when many in other neighborhoods did not. We also recognize the need to improve local schools and strengthen the support systems that help residents lead healthy and productive lives.

This quality-of-life plan is an action agenda for revitalizing Auburn Gresham. It is comprehensive, calling for improvement in virtually every aspect of community life—from major new public works, such as a Metra station at 79th Street, to small but crucial changes in established programs, such as fix-up assistance for owners of bungalows and two-flats.

Plan specifics were crafted during 2003-04 by a broad 40-member task force convened and supported by the Greater Auburn-Gresham Development Corporation (GADC). The plan also reflects ideas from hundreds of neighborhood residents and stakeholders, many who contributed their time and thoughts at a larger town-hall session.

Special recognition must go to the principal founders of GADC: Rev. Michael Pflieger of the Faith Community of St. Sabina; former alderman (now CHA executive director) Terry Peterson; and current 17th Ward Alderman Latasha Thomas. It is their vision—that an informed and mobilized neighborhood can take control of its future—that has inspired this plan and will, in time, make its strategies and projects a reality.



Providing a healthy environment for children and families is critical to Auburn Gresham's future.

STRATEGIES AND PROJECTS

STRATEGY 1 Encourage local business ownership and generate jobs for youth and young adults.

- 1.1** Establish a Special Service Area (SSA) on 79th Street to generate revenue for maintenance and projects.
- 1.2** Develop a local chamber of commerce.
- 1.3** Organize businesses and other resources to create jobs for youth and prepare them for careers.
- 1.4** Establish a business assistance center.

STRATEGY 2 Promote Auburn Gresham through a broad-based community-marketing program.

- 2.1** Publicize the quality, affordability and history of the housing stock.
- 2.2** Work with Chicago Public Schools and other organizations to tout the successes of local schools and the educational choices available.
- 2.3** Integrate local business promotion with information about community services and events.

STRATEGY 3 Preserve existing housing and develop new housing to accommodate all levels of income and special needs.

- 3.1** Encourage owners to reinvest in their housing properties.
- 3.2** Develop a Model Blocks target area to increase housing investment and create stronger ties among neighbors.
- 3.3** Rehabilitate vacant buildings to create affordable rental housing or homeownership opportunities.
- 3.4** Recruit developers to build new senior housing that offers supportive services to meet projected needs.
- 3.5** Encourage development of new housing to meet the full range of needs in the community.
- 3.6** Provide intervention services for homeowners facing foreclosure, and provide financing and pre-purchase counseling to reduce foreclosures.
- 3.7** Work with schools, churches, service organizations and other institutions to develop programs that ease the transition of former CHA residents into the neighborhood.

STRATEGY 4 Develop compact business clusters on 79th Street and make them pedestrian- and transit-friendly.

4.1 Prepare a development study for 79th Street that designates cluster locations and establishes standards for commercial development and parking.

4.2 Attract a mix of retail and professional uses to 79th Street.

4.3 Complete façade enhancements for businesses on 79th Street between Racine and Morgan and expand streetscape improvements on 79th Street to blocks east of Halsted.

4.4 Study redevelopment scenarios for underutilized commercial parcels.

STRATEGY 5 Develop a transit village near Winneconna Parkway.

5.1 Construct a town square along 79th Street to provide a gateway to Auburn Park and its lagoons.

5.2 Develop a transit hub that includes a new Metra station and connections to the 79th Street bus.

5.3 Add new housing and green space on vacant land near Auburn Park.

5.4 Create new retail and commercial uses at 79th and Vincennes.

STRATEGY 6 Improve the quality of education for people of all ages and help students and parents maximize the school experience.

6.1 Develop an Options for Knowledge program to improve use of school resources and expand resident involvement in education.

6.2 Support programs of the 17th Ward Education Committee.

6.3 Supplement educational opportunities with projects and programs that meet local needs.

6.4 Promote life-long learning.

STRATEGY 7 Strengthen support systems for health and social services, safety and workforce development.

7.1 Upgrade preventive health care by recruiting health services providers, improving the offerings of health fairs and expanding awareness of nearby health resources.

7.2 Build an Auburn Gresham Wellness Center.

7.3 Expand youth programs to improve community safety and reduce crime.

7.4 Increase participation in crime prevention programs such as community policing and the Explorers program for youth.

7.5 Develop local communications vehicles to connect residents with each other and with providers of services.

7.6 Establish a Center for Working Families to connect residents with job training and placement, financial education and other programs that increase household wealth.

STRATEGY 8 Make enjoyment of the arts, culture and open space part of the Auburn Gresham way of life.

8.1 Develop community uses for the Thurgood Marshall Library to make it a more integral part of the neighborhood.

8.2 Create more arts and cultural programming at the library and other spaces throughout the community.

8.3 Foster community beautification through expansion of block clubs.

8.4 Inventory opportunities to add new parks or greenery.

A Proud History— and Modern Challenges



Auburn Gresham has long been a hidden jewel on Chicago's South Side. Above, the lagoons at Auburn Park.

A hidden jewel on Chicago's South Side, Auburn Gresham has remained strong in the face of adversity. Despite years of disinvestment that threatened to weaken our neighborhood, we are a community determined to grow and remain viable. In recent years our residents and leaders have helped trigger a renewal along 79th Street, the community's main street. With the rebirth of this commercial street and many other new investments dotting the neighborhood, we remain confident that Auburn Gresham has a bright future.

Our neighborhood is at a critical point in its history. Though we are seeing signs of renewal in retail and housing—and have made dramatic progress on reducing serious crimes, such as assault and battery—we also recognize challenges that must be addressed.

Our population is aging—about six of every 10 homeowners are over the age of 55—and that means we must attract a new generation of families. Our schools and youth programs must be improved to serve those families. And we must spread renewal throughout the neighborhood, so that its beautiful homes and quiet streets can serve more generations to come. This quality-of-life plan provides a blueprint for that renewal.

Railroads and farms

The Auburn Gresham community that today spreads out on both sides of 79th Street—with nearly 20,000 housing units filling the side streets, and big industrial parcels on the edges—began 150 years ago on small farms and alongside railroad tracks on Chicago's muddy outskirts.

Nine miles south of the Loop, our neighborhood is an amalgam of three areas that began to attract newcomers in the 1850s. Auburn Park, centered on Wallace and 76th streets, was first settled by German and Dutch truck farmers, and later by Irish railroad workers. Gresham, then called “the Grove,” started to build up after the Civil War, providing housing for employees of nearby railroad and wagon works. Further south, Brainerd grew up around the Rock Island station at 89th Street.

All three were annexed by the city of Chicago before the 1893 Columbian Exposition, and the combined community of Auburn Gresham thrived during the real estate boom triggered by that world's fair. There was another growth spurt during the 1920s—the population tripled to 57,000 as European immigrants moved into older wood houses and new brick bungalows and two-flats. By the end of the Second World War, our neighborhood had matured into a stronghold of the city's Irish and German middle class—a bustling, street-car-riding place where, by 1960, some 59,000 residents patronized a half-dozen commercial strips, the busiest at 79th and Halsted.

Years of decline

Like too many city neighborhoods, Auburn Gresham underwent a dramatic reversal during the 1960s and '70s, as whites moved out and African-Americans moved in. The reasons behind the change are by now familiar: the rush by African-Americans to escape the cramped Black Belt after the Civil Rights movement ended formal segregation; the panicky flight of white families, made easier by new expressways and a suburban building boom; and the fast-buck economics of block-busting and panic-peddling, followed by the slow strangulation of mortgage and insurance redlining. In the 1960s alone, some 40,000 whites moved out, while 47,000 blacks moved in, raising the population to 69,000.

By the 2000 Census, the community's population of 55,928 was 98 percent African-American. We have always had a solid core of home-owning working families and senior citizens, with half of all households earning more than \$35,000 a year. Auburn Gresham has 5,800 households earning \$50,000 a year or more, which exceeds the number in nearby Beverly, a neighborhood that is better known.

This relative prosperity has been both hidden and frustrated by the disappearance of retail stores along the commercial streets. By the mid-1990s, most of the older businesses were gone. The departure of such fast-food

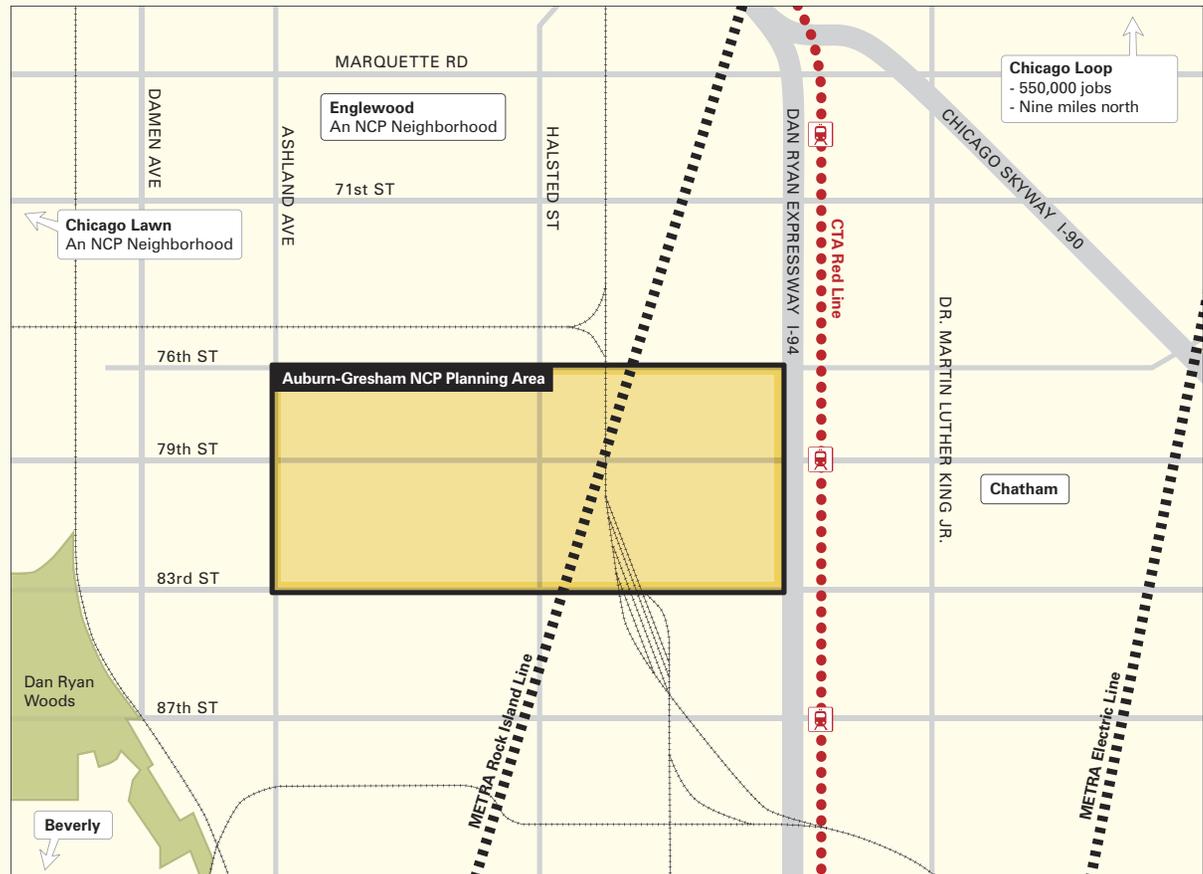


Figure 1 Context

Auburn Gresham is nine miles south of Chicago's Loop, just off the Dan Ryan Expressway. The surrounding area is largely residential with some active industrial uses.



The new SOS Children's Village provides housing for foster families and others on previously vacant land.

outlets as McDonald's, Popeye's and Church's was the final straw. Black-owned businesses were rare, and gang killings and prostitution were on the rise.

This was a low point in the community's history. To be honest, some residents had become apathetic about the community's problems. A few talked about the issues but took no action, while others who were considered middle-class simply moved away. In vacant buildings on the main commercial streets and some side streets, crime, including drug dealing, went unchecked. We lacked recreation for youth, decent senior housing, good schools, banks and other commercial services. In short, Auburn Gresham was not a desirable community for young families—families whose investment was badly needed.

Building a comeback

The revival of Auburn Gresham began with a series of community-wide meetings, several of them hosted by Rev. Michael Pflieger of the Faith Community of St. Sabina, at 1210 W. 78th Place. At his side was then-alderman Terry Peterson of the 17th Ward, who has since become CEO of the Chicago Housing Authority. These two leaders, soon joined by Ald. Latasha Thomas, were instrumental in forming the Greater Auburn-Gresham Development Corporation (GADC), the local lead agency for LISC/Chicago's New Communities Program. The philosophy of Pflieger, Peterson and Thomas, shared by GADC, is simple:

that ordinary citizens can—through faith, vigilance, hard work and coalition-building—oversee the revitalization of their own neighborhood.

Throughout the 1990s, a joint effort of local leaders and city agencies jump-started the community's revival. More than 20 redevelopment projects had been planned and executed by the time GADC was incorporated, in June 2000. Working closely with the city, former alderman Peterson helped marshal \$250 million in public and private investment, including an Osco drugstore, a branch of LaSalle Bank and a new district police station (see **Figure 2**, 1997 map of improvements).

With support from GADC and Ald. Latasha Thomas, the community has more recently landed a Walgreens drugstore and its first sit-down restaurant in recent memory—BJ's Market and Bakery, a purveyor of home-style southern cooking at the corner of 79th and Racine. Additional development has come to the 69th Street area north of Auburn Gresham. New facilities include a Chicago Department of Human Services office at Green Street, and Wheeler House, a senior-citizens' complex developed by New Birth Church of God in Christ at 69th and Laflin. A Salvation Army Red Shield community center is under construction, and a shopping center is planned for the former CTA bus-barn site at 69th and Ashland, to be anchored by a Food 4 Less grocery store. More residential and commercial development is pending.

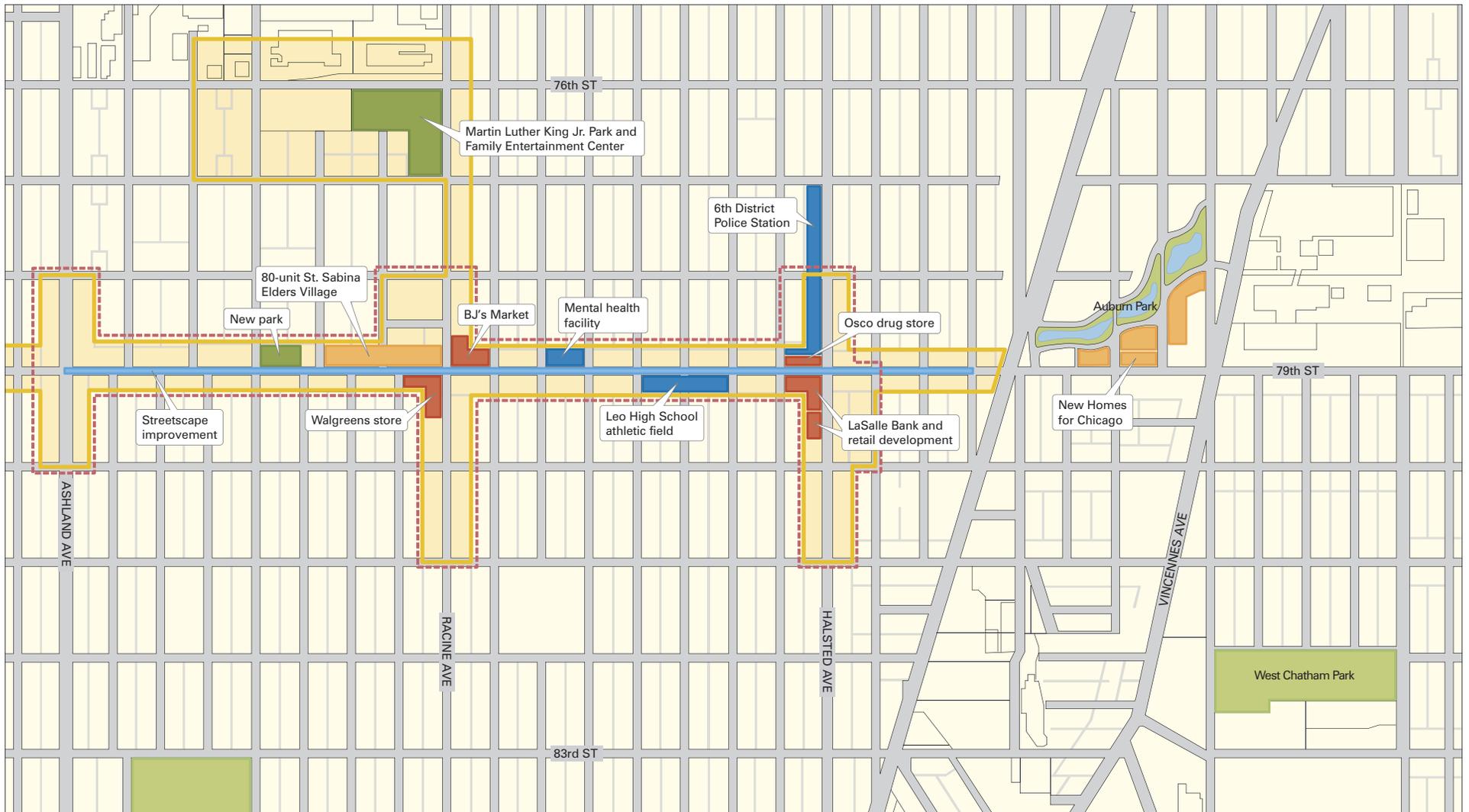


Figure 2 1997 planning initiatives

An ambitious list of redevelopment projects was proposed for the 79th Street area in 1997 by then-Alderman Terry Peterson, with support from the City of Chicago and local leaders. Of about 20 projects targeting the corridor, 12 have been implemented.

- | | |
|---|--|
| Commercial | 79th Street streetscape improvement |
| Residential | 79th Street TIF District |
| Public/institutional | 1997 study area |
| Parks/open space | |

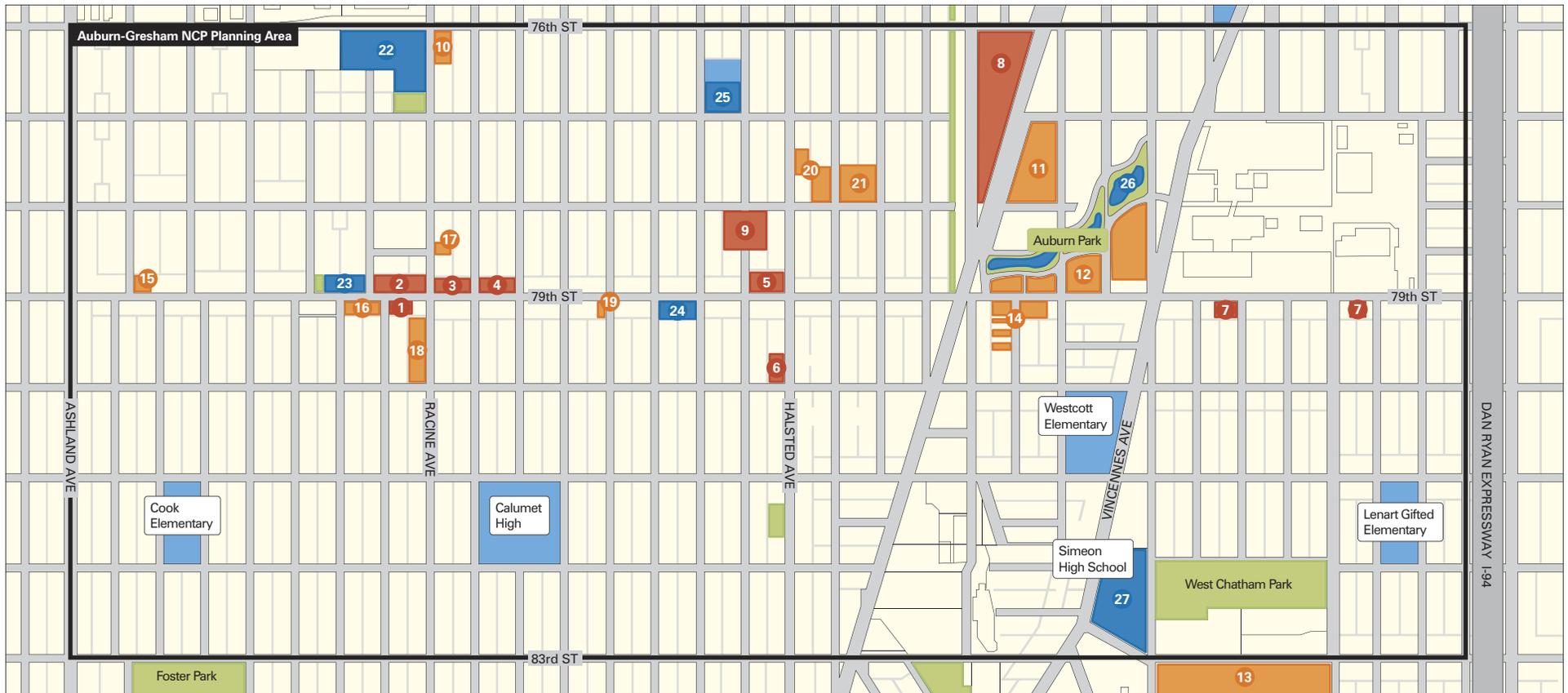


Figure 3 Current and recent activities

Major public and private investments are contributing to revitalization through housing, retail and recreational development.

Recent developments

- 1. Walgreens
- 2. St. Sabina Senior Housing
- 3. Mental Health Center
- 4. WIC Center
- 5. Osco
- 6. Lasalle Bank
- 7. Strip commercial development
- 8. S.O.S. Children’s Village
- 9. Langston Cove Phase I

Proposed projects

- 10. Popeye’s Chicken Training Center
- 11. Auburn Lakes Phase I
- 12. Auburn Lakes Phase II
- 13. Ryerson Steel development
- 14. Langston Cove Phase II
- 15. 79th Street mixed use building
- 16. Proposed medical center
- 17. St. Sabina Safehomes
- 18. Proposed commercial development
- 19. Expand adjacent day care facility
- 20. Veteran’s administrative development project
- 21. 2-flat / 3-flat development project

Community facility upgrades

- 22. Martin Luther King Jr., Entertainment Center
- 23. Renaissance Park
- 24. Leo High School improvements
- 25. Oglesby School improvements
- 26. Auburn Park upgrade
- 27. New Simeon High School

Foundation for growth

Housing has been a stabilizing force in our community, but there is work to be done. As of 2000, there were 19,955 housing units in Auburn Gresham, of which 53 percent were owner-occupied and one-third owned by seniors. We have a strong concentration of historic Chicago-style bungalows, many brick two-flats and a variety of Victorian-era homes, cottages and apartment buildings. Quality housing stock and a high homeownership rate compared to other neighborhoods provide Auburn Gresham with a solid foundation for growth.

Our bungalows were built mostly in the 1920s, as were most of the two-flats that provide important rental income to their owners. Many are in need of tuck-pointing, rewiring and window replacement. Often such repairs are beyond the means of fixed-income seniors, including some who would rather sell to younger families and move to smaller quarters—if they could stay in Auburn Gresham.

New housing is also needed. There is room in the community on scattered vacant lots, on larger plots east of Halsted, and on sites where factories have closed along Vincennes Avenue and 83rd Street. With the help of the city and not-for-profits such as Neighborhood Housing Services and LISC, Auburn Gresham has added several hundred units of new affordable housing in recent years.

The most recent housing development is the first phase of Langston Coves, at 78th and Green, behind the new police station. The second phase of the 48-unit develop-

ment, to be built on vacant land at 79th Street east of the Metra tracks, is already sold out. The development is part of the New Homes for Chicago program; two-flats sell for \$230,000.

Much of the new-housing development has been in the Winneconna Parkway area, a hidden treasure just north of 79th Street and west of Vincennes Avenue, which includes a series of small lakes, bridges and gardens. To build on this asset, our plan calls for new housing and commercial developments, a new Metra commuter rail station and expanded open space in the Winneconna area.

Resources for renewal

Many resources in Auburn Gresham have contributed to the neighborhood's rebound. Three groups that have been instrumental are the St. Sabina Employment Resource Center, Neighborhood Housing Services/Auburn Gresham Englewood (NHS/AGE), and the Faith Community of St. Sabina.

St. Sabina has been a key partner in community improvement for many years. Rev. Michael Pflieger, the pastor since 1981, has been an outspoken leader and community organizer, fighting for reductions in crime and drug activity and improved retail stores. The church has led development of the St. Sabina Social Service Center, the Employment Resource Center, Samaritan House for the Homeless and Elders Village, an 80-unit senior housing facility at 79th and Racine.

From its storefront at 79th and Racine, the Employment Resource Center (ERC) provides services that include employment training, job counseling, job searches, career path development and referrals to employers and social service providers. Staying actively involved in all stages of its clients' growth, the ERC's mission is to ensure that everyone who comes in for help finds not only a job but also sustainable employment.

Neighborhood Housing Services/Auburn Gresham Englewood has a mission to help the greater Auburn Gresham community preserve and maintain its affordable housing and attract new families. Part of a nationwide network, the organization buys homes in the community, rehabs and sells them, ensuring that housing remains affordable. It also offers low-interest loans for home repairs, professional advice on foreclosures, and mortgages.

Two recent developments that have helped anchor revitalization are the Chicago Park District's Martin Luther King, Jr., Park and Recreation Center and the new SOS Children's Village for foster families.

The King recreation center opened in 2003 at the former Hawthorne Park, 1212 W. 77th Street, and features a 12-lane bowling alley, roller rink, arcade, snack bar and a party area for birthdays and special events. SOS Children's Village opened in 2004 on a vacant industrial site at 76th Street and Parnell Avenue. It offers badly needed housing for foster families in 12 single-family homes and four



We must improve our public schools and invest in our children.

duplexes, plus market-rate homes. The Chicago cluster is one of only three facilities operated in the United States by the international organization, which has programs in 132 countries; its mission is to provide permanent homes for abused, abandoned or orphaned children.

Reaching higher

We must build on recent accomplishments to attract new residents who will invest in the community, shop on local streets and raise their families here. But to do so, we must improve educational opportunities for residents of all ages and expand the community's network of resources to help families and businesses build economic assets.

Most of all, we must improve our public schools, where the vast majority of students are from low-income families and where, in most schools, math and reading scores are well below average. At the local high school, Calumet Career Academy, nearly one in five students per day has been absent in recent years, and only 88 of 266 entering students graduated over a five-year period. To combat statistics like these, Calumet, as a part of the

Chicago Public School's 2010 Renaissance Plan, did not accept freshmen in 2004 and will be restructured as several small schools, each with a distinct educational focus, starting in fall 2005.

To create economic opportunity and a culture of learning, education must extend to adults as well as children, through workforce training opportunities, small business development and mentoring of new entrepreneurs. On the housing front, we need to help residents reinvest in their bungalows and two-flats, tapping such programs as the Historic Chicago Bungalow Initiative, which provides subsidies and incentives for renovation, and Housing Repairs for Accessible and Independent Living, which helps seniors stay in their homes.

We want Auburn Gresham to become a community of choice and a destination for people who live in other neighborhoods. This plan provides a framework for reaching that goal.

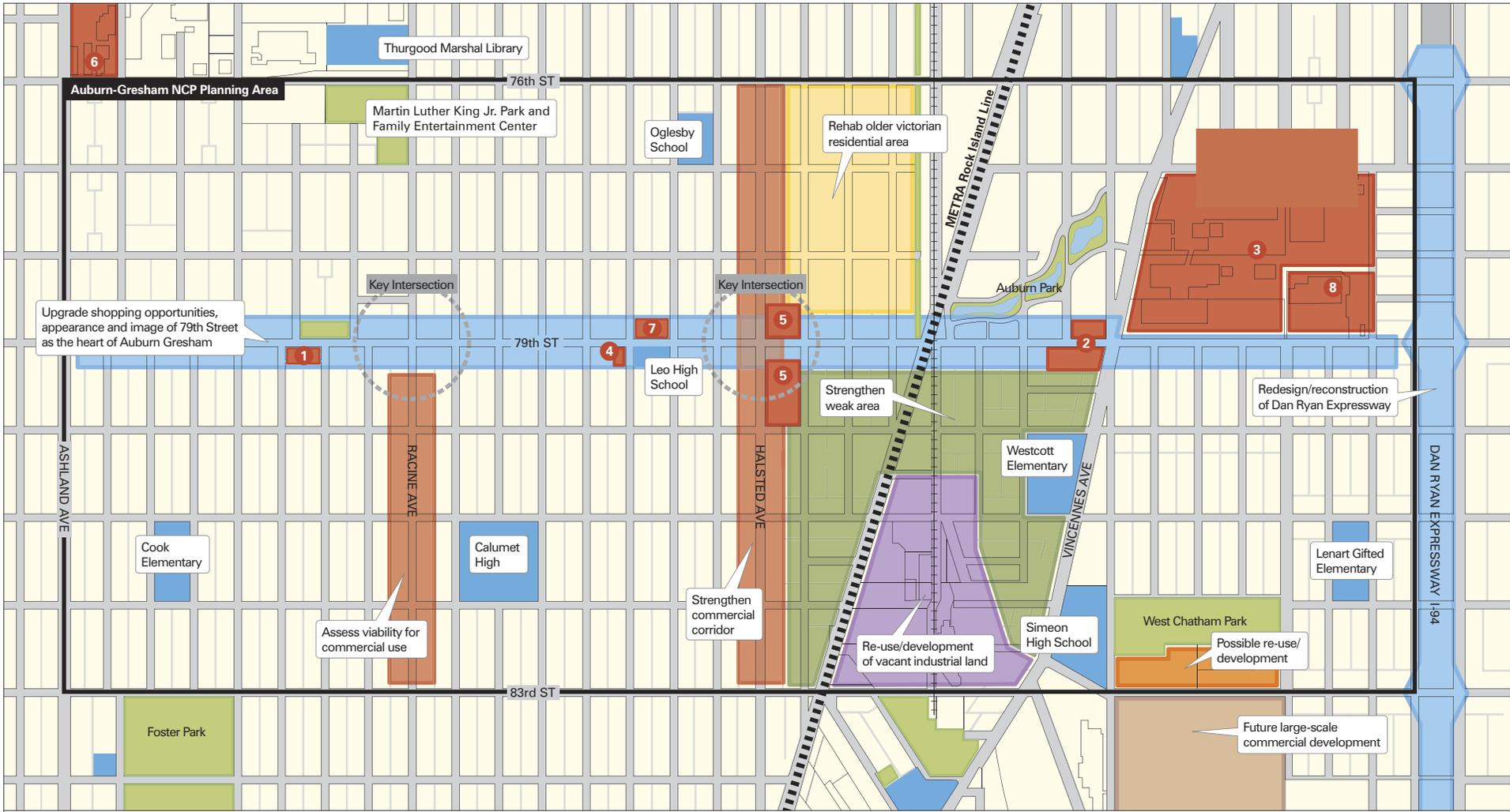


Figure 4 Issues and Opportunities

Some strategies to address community issues have a specific geographic focus while others are area-wide concerns. Sites that offer future development opportunities are also shown.

- School/Public
- Parks

Development opportunities

1. Retail development opportunity
2. City owned land
3. CTA site
4. City owned lot
5. City development RFP's
6. Potential retail development
7. Leo H.S. parking lot redevelopment
8. Obsolete retail

LEAD AGENCY

Greater Auburn-Gresham Development Corporation (GADC)



One of GADC's priorities is to help residents maintain and improve the area's diverse housing stock.

To foster and promote revitalization of the Greater Auburn-Gresham Community, which is comprised of the low- to moderate-income neighborhoods of Auburn Gresham, Englewood and West Chatham.

— GADC mission statement

Greater Auburn-Gresham Development Corporation was founded in 2000 as the result of collaboration among community leaders and the Chicago Association of Neighborhood Development Organizations (CANDO). GADC's service area is bounded by 67th on the north, 83rd on the south, the Dan Ryan Expressway on the east and Damen Avenue on the west.

GADC designs and implements programs that improve the community's economic viability; increase the avail-

ability of quality housing to people of different income levels; maintain and improve existing affordable housing; and enhance the delivery of social services, particularly to senior citizens.

GADC also supports and helps coordinate new development and investment in the neighborhood, working closely with its local partners, the Employment Resource Center, Neighborhood Housing Services/Auburn Gresham Englewood and the 17th Ward Aldermanic office.

PLANNING PROCESS

Visions for the Future, and a Plan to Get There



More than 150 residents participated in a visioning session to build our plan.

The quality-of-life planning process began in October 2003 with a meeting of GADC board members and LISC staff. GADC then began to build its task force from the community, recruiting 40 members through an information campaign of flyers, phone calls and word of mouth. The task force met frequently from December 2003 through June 2004.

The task force was introduced at a community-wide meeting in January 2004. About 150 residents attended this meeting and participated in a visioning session to determine how residents perceived the community and what they hoped it could become in five years.

Participants broke up into smaller groups and developed news headlines describing what Auburn Gresham would be like if all they envisioned were to come true. One suggested that the community could become the “gateway to quality urban living.”

These meetings led the task force to focus on the following quality-of-life issues:

- Commercial and Housing Development
- Education and Employment
- Health Care, Public Safety and Family Support
- Arts, Culture and Open Space
- Economic Opportunity, Small Business and Organizational Development

The task force divided into five subcommittees to research these issues, develop strategies and propose initiatives to carry out the strategies. A planning workshop was held in May 2004 to discuss all of the strategies and initiatives and to determine how they could be achieved.

EARLY ACTION PROJECTS

Five Early Action Projects Get the Ball Rolling



Hundreds of residents received professional assistance with their income tax returns at the St. Sabina Employment Resource Center.

As a New Communities Program lead agency, GADC was charged with creating and developing Early Action Projects that would advance key goals even before the plan was completed. Five efforts were launched to build momentum for larger scale activities to come.

Free tax preparation and education. Working with the St. Sabina Employment Resource Center and the Center for Economic Progress, GADC opened a tax preparation center in January 2004, enabling low-income taxpayers to receive free assistance with tax preparation and filing. The center filed 650 tax returns, generating \$1,053,342 in federal refunds.

Film and arts festival. The inaugural Thurgood Marshall Library African-American Art and Film Festival, conceived to increase library patronage, featured three days of free films, an art exhibit, storytelling, a poetry slam and other events. More than 500 people got involved, and the event produced 45 new library cards and 20 newly registered voters.

Financial empowerment. Working with Fifth Third Bank, Highland Community Bank, LaSalle Bank, Northern Trust, South Side Community Federal Credit Union and Neighborhood Housing Services/Auburn Gresham Englewood, GADC developed a series of financial empowerment workshops, educating residents on wealth building, homeownership and credit issues. The program has since grown to include nine banks as partners. An expanded workshop schedule covers subjects such as investment rehabbing, retirement planning, equity for homeowners and foreclosure prevention. Fifteen participants are expected to graduate from the series in May 2005.

Community appreciation. Partnering with ICE Theaters and the Sixth District police station, GADC sponsored its first Community Day. More than 500 residents participated in a day of health screenings, immunizations, safety seminars and movies.

Building bridges. The closing of public housing units elsewhere in Chicago has brought an influx of new residents to the Auburn Gresham community. To ease the transition, GADC and the housing referral agency CHAC co-sponsored "Bridging the Gap," a seminar that sought to educate both landlords and tenants. More than 80 people participated.

Welcoming and Safe, Growing and Thriving

“One of the most important things to do is identify agencies that are already doing what we need done and then strengthen those agencies and support them so we can leverage resources.”

Carlos Nelson, *Executive Director, Greater Auburn-Gresham Development Corporation*

Auburn Gresham residents care about each other and their community. We support healthy social interaction and foster a network of friendships, extended families and neighborhood organizations that work together. A strong sense of heritage and optimism fuels pride in our community.

We have high-quality housing, attractive business districts and good public and private services throughout the community. Our emphasis on quality does not exclude the less fortunate. Auburn Gresham welcomes and nurtures all members of the community.

We are building an Auburn Gresham that flourishes not simply in physical ways but in the personal and economic development of its residents. Excellent educational opportunities allow all residents to fulfill their potential.

Coordinated efforts among our residents and institutions have reduced crime so that it no longer compromises the neighborhood’s quality of life; when crime does occur, it is addressed competently and humanely.

Social harmony, economic advancement and physical charm combine to make Auburn Gresham a community of choice—where residents form strong attachments to the neighborhood and where non-residents are welcome to join us.



Thurgood Marshall Library

Oglesby School

"Model Block" focused residential rehab area

Small business development
 Technical assistance
 Chamber of Commerce

Focus on 79th Street
 Facade Improvements
 Attract New Business

Cook Elementary

Restructure Calumet High School

New housing
 Langston Cove

Westcott Elementary

Simeon High School

Eight Ways to Improve Our Community

Figure 5 Key Projects of the Plan

This plan addresses community improvement with a range of projects including physical, social and educational approaches.

Our task force developed eight principal strategies for community improvement:

- 1. Encourage** local business ownership and generate jobs for youth and young adults.
- 2. Promote** Auburn Gresham through a broad-based marketing program.
- 3. Preserve** existing housing and develop new housing to accommodate all levels of income and special needs.
- 4. Develop** compact business clusters on 79th Street and make them pedestrian- and transit-friendly.
- 5. Develop** a transit village near Winneconna Parkway.
- 6. Improve** the quality of education for people of all ages and help students and parents maximize the school experience.
- 7. Strengthen** support systems for health and social services, safety and workforce development.
- 8. Make** enjoyment of the arts, culture and open space part of the Auburn Gresham way of life.

To implement these strategies, 35 projects will be pursued over the next five years. These strategies and initiatives are not all that we hope to accomplish. But they represent a beginning that will help us evolve into a fully realized community.

STRATEGY 1

Encourage local business ownership and generate jobs for youth and young adults.

Our neighborhood has benefited in recent years from new businesses along 79th Street and other local arteries. While we welcome the arrival of Osco, Walgreens, LaSalle Bank and others, we also are aware that only a few of our local businesses are owned by residents or African-Americans. We perceive ample opportunity for retail growth near the busy intersections where 79th Street crosses Halsted and Racine.

This strategy seeks to increase the number of businesses owned by local residents by creating a supportive environment for entrepreneurs, start-ups and current small-business owners. A secondary goal is to increase local employment to provide a positive and profitable outlet for youth, as well as local career opportunities for adults.

1.1 Establish a Special Service Area (SSA) on 79th Street to generate revenue for maintenance and projects.

Work with local property owners and businesses to assess the value of creating a Special Service Area, in which a tax would be levied on property owners by the Cook County Assessor's Office. If voters approve the initiative, tax revenues would be used for services that benefit the designated area, such as security, sidewalk cleaning and beautification.

1.2 Develop a local chamber of commerce.

The chamber will serve as a clearinghouse and advocate for local businesses, develop joint marketing and advertising campaigns and coordinate events such as sidewalk sales that bring customers to member businesses.



Small businesses have played an important role in the community since its inception. Above, the busy corner of 79th and Halsted in the early 20th century.

1.3 Organize businesses and other resources to create jobs for youth and prepare them for careers.

- Expand the capacity of the Employment Resource Center in order to add a youth employment program.
- Work with local high schools (Simeon, Calumet and Leo) to create and enhance job-readiness skills and employment training programs.
- Help connect non-college-bound students and high-school dropouts to grant and loan programs to encourage participation in technical training.

1.4 Establish a business assistance center.

Support creation of new locally owned businesses by providing mentoring and one-on-one technical and financial assistance to those wishing to start or expand a business. Offer these services from a high-visibility location that also provides economical office space, shared services and equipment for start-up businesses. The center should sponsor small-business expositions, participate in programs that match national franchises with local entrepreneurs, connect small-business owners to financial and legal advisors and provide opportunities for business owners to share their experiences. Participating companies may also become resources for youth employment as the companies grow into larger businesses.

1.5 Enlarge the 79th Street TIF district and create a TIF/NIP Program to provide funding for residential rehabilitation.

Perform initial studies necessary to enlarge the existing 79th Street Tax Increment Financing district so that it includes the CTA bus barn site east of Vincennes and other vacant or underutilized areas east and west of Vincennes from 76th to 79th streets. The enlarged TIF would create a flow of revenue to support future development opportunities. Also promote creation of a TIF Neighborhood Improvement Fund Program (TIF/NIP) for the area to provide housing rehabilitation grants to homeowners of low and moderate incomes.



There are ample opportunities for retail growth near the intersections where 79th Street intersects Halsted and Racine.

STRATEGY 2

Promote Auburn Gresham through a broad-based marketing program.

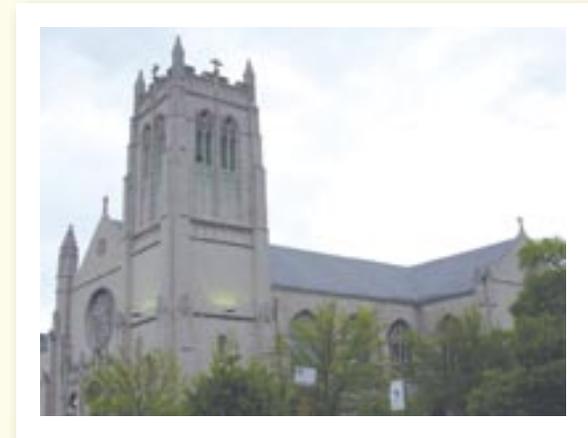
Residents sometimes call Auburn Gresham one of the city's best-kept secrets, because so few people outside the neighborhood are aware of its many assets. Part of Chicago's famous "bungalow belt," the neighborhood boasts well-kept streets lined with affordable, attractive single-family houses, as well as larger frame houses, brick two-flats and apartment buildings.

Auburn Gresham can also offer a high-quality education through its network of public and private schools. In 2003, Chicago Public Schools invested \$40 million in new facilities for Simeon High School at 8235 S. Vincennes, complete with six science labs and eight computer labs. Founded in 1926, the Catholic Leo High School graduates an average of 93 percent of its students, and 90 percent of those graduates go on to four-year colleges. St. Sabina Elementary School is another educational resource, and the nearby Lenart Regional Gifted Center is one of the city's top-ranked elementary schools.

This strategy seeks to highlight the community's current assets and others that become available as this plan is implemented. It will promote the benefits of living in Auburn Gresham to attract newcomers, increase investment in housing and retail stores and strengthen the housing market.

2.1 Publicize the quality, affordability and history of the housing stock.

Develop an information campaign about Auburn Gresham that uses a variety of media to tell the story of the community and its housing stock. Use web sites, press releases, public-service announcements and paid advertisements (such as ads on CTA buses and Red Line trains) to promote local events and assets, with an emphasis on the area's housing stock and long history as a place to raise families. Publicity materials could feature photographs of families and the places they live.



St. Sabina Church has helped anchor neighborhood revitalization.

2.2 Work with Chicago Public Schools, churches and other organizations to tout the successes of local schools and the educational choices available.

The 2005 restructuring of Calumet Career Academy into small schools is an important opportunity to change opinions and raise awareness of local educational opportunities. Using the publicity methods outlined in Project 2.1, spread the word about the Lenart Regional Gifted Center, Leo High School, new facilities at Simeon High School and programs at all local elementary schools.

2.3 Integrate local business promotion with information about community services and events.

Publicity efforts can play a supportive role in implementation of other strategies in this plan, including development of small businesses (Strategy 1) and improvements to health care and safety (Strategy 7). Combining and coordinating the publicity efforts of businesses, social service agencies and local institutions will increase publicity for each participating entity and build broader awareness of resources available in Auburn Gresham.

STRATEGY 3**Preserve existing housing and develop new housing to accommodate all levels of income and special needs.**

Housing is one of our neighborhood's most valuable assets—and one of its greatest challenges.

About three-fourths of Auburn Gresham's 20,000 units of housing are single-family homes or in apartment buildings of four units or fewer, creating a neighborhood of quiet streets and attractive front yards. City data on building permits show steady reinvestment in new and established housing—about \$50 million since 2000. Though housing prices increased about 18 percent between 1998 and 2002, they remain a very good value compared to many Chicago neighborhoods. In 2003 the median value of a single-family home in Auburn Gresham was \$129,000.

This portrait of strength is contradicted by other data, which shows that fully 45 percent of our community's rental households are rent-burdened—that is, they spend more than 30 percent of their income on rent. Many homeowners also are strained financially, with one-third spending above the 30 percent threshold for mortgage payments. Because many owners are older residents on fixed incomes, or victims of predatory lending practices, the foreclosure rate has become a serious problem in recent years. The *Foreclosure Report of Chicago* found that between January and December 2004, an average of 16 foreclosures were initiated each month in the target area served by Neighborhood Housing Services/Auburn Gresham Englewood.

With six out of 10 homeowners aged 55 or older, the community must plan for turnover of its housing stock or provide support to older residents who wish to remain in their homes. The community is likely to need more senior housing similar to the 80-unit Elders Village at 79th and Racine, with its on-site beauty parlor, activity rooms and computer stations. And with 1,685 vacant housing units in 2000, up 25 percent from 10 years earlier, the neighborhood needs an influx of new residents to fill apartments and single-family homes.

This strategy seeks to improve housing affordability for people of modest incomes, while also attracting higher income households and increasing local housing investment.

3.1 Encourage owners to reinvest in their properties.

- Boost the value of bungalows by increasing local participation in the Historic Chicago Bungalow Initiative, which provides remodeling incentives, certification, design guidelines and inexpensive pattern drawings.
- Promote loan and grant programs for low- to moderate-income homeowners and for senior citizens' home-repair needs.
- Create an Auburn Gresham rehab network that provides referrals to local contractors and technical advice on home repair and maintenance. This network can support the goal of Project 1.1, the small-business assistance center, by encouraging the growth of local construction and home-repair companies.

3.2 Develop a Model Blocks target area to increase housing investment and create stronger ties among neighbors.

Covering the area from 76th to 79th streets and Loomis Avenue to Racine, this program will strengthen the housing stock by coordinating participation in public and private renovation and improvement programs. It will also build neighborhood cohesion through organizing, block parties and new programs for youth, seniors and families.

The Model Blocks area contains a diverse mix of housing stock, including 61 brick two-flats, 54 brick bungalows, 16 large apartment buildings and about 40 other homes that range from stucco to frame and cottage construction. The area is also home to the Faith Community of St. Sabina and the Elders Village senior housing development.



The community needs more senior housing similar to Elders Village to allow those who have sustained our neighborhoods to remain.

Components of this comprehensive approach include:

- Building improvements, including façade work, roof repairs, new doors and windows, garage replacement and energy-efficient appliances. Partners include GADC, Neighborhood Housing Services/Auburn Gresham Englewood and the Historic Chicago Bungalow Initiative; they will help residents connect to public programs such as Housing Repairs for Accessibility and Independent Living (HRAIL), bungalow grant programs and the city’s Emergency Home Assistance Program.
- Organizing to create new block clubs, sponsor block parties, develop new programs for senior citizens (such as computer training) and build relationships among neighbors.
- Public investments, such as improved parkways, curbs, lighting, speed bumps, landscaping and new green spaces, coordinated by the 17th Ward Alderman’s Office.

3.3 Rehabilitate vacant buildings to create affordable rental housing or homeownership opportunities.

Develop partnerships with non-profit and for-profit developers to acquire and renovate vacant buildings and improve their value and the value of nearby housing. Target vacant two-flats and Victorian-era wood-frame houses for historically appropriate renovation and subsequent resale at market rates.

3.4 Recruit developers to build new senior housing that offers supportive services to meet projected needs.

Support proposed new developments such as the 85-unit, six-story Senior Suites development at 79th and Carpenter, which will include a Chicago Department of Aging satellite center, and the 130-unit Dr. Oscar David Webster Senior Supportive Living Center at 76th and Yale. A 2005 market study conducted for GADC calculated that more than 13,800 people over the age of 75 live within a five-mile radius of the proposed Webster facility. The study found that demand would be more than sufficient to fill the development with both market-rate and subsidized residents.

3.5 Encourage development of new housing to meet other needs in the community and to utilize vacant land or facilities.

- Develop a database of vacant lots and city-owned parcels and use it to recruit developers. Encourage a mix of price ranges, including homes for middle- and upper-middle-income households. Examples are Langston Cove’s first phase, at 78th and Green, and housing planned for the second phase at 79th and Parnell.

- Provide appropriate support for special housing developments, such as the 181-bedroom St. Leo Residence for Veterans planned by Catholic Charities for the site at 7750 S. Emerald (formerly St. Leo Church). The \$19 million facility will serve homeless veterans with inexpensive studio apartments, an outpatient medical clinic and resource center.

3.6 Provide intervention services for homeowners facing foreclosure, and provide financing and pre-purchase counseling to reduce foreclosures.

To reduce the community’s foreclosure rate, increase outreach and information efforts, such as prevention programs by Neighborhood Housing Services/ Auburn Gresham Englewood. These help owners avoid high interest rates and monthly payments that can lead to foreclosure. Also expand efforts to provide expert advice to help homeowners reduce financial losses after a foreclosure has been initiated.

3.7 Work with schools, churches, service organizations and other institutions to develop programs that ease the transition of former CHA residents into the neighborhood.

Demolition of CHA high-rises in communities to the east has created an influx of new residents into Auburn Gresham’s rental housing. Work with both landlords and tenants to welcome these residents, educate them about their new community, and maintain high-quality rental housing.

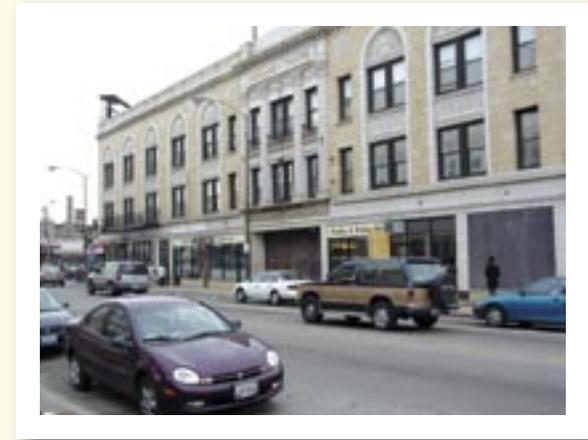
STRATEGY 4**Develop compact business clusters on 79th Street and make them pedestrian- and transit-friendly.**

The main artery running through Auburn Gresham, 79th Street, has always been the neighborhood's principal retail strip and can continue to serve that purpose in the future.

It is heavily traveled by automobiles heading east to the Dan Ryan Expressway or west to the north-south arteries of Ashland and Western. The #79 bus, which serves the Red Line train stop, Chatham and the Ford City Mall, transports 29,500 riders per day—the highest passenger load in the CTA bus system. With busy intersections at the Dan Ryan, Vincennes, Halsted, Racine and Ashland, 79th Street offers the high visibility and traffic volume that modern retailers want.

The street also has potential to support more businesses. The closest major shopping areas are at 87th and the Dan Ryan, at the Ford City shopping center and in the Beverly neighborhood. A 2002 MetroEdge study estimated that community residents make 34 percent of their purchases—worth \$182 million per year—outside the neighborhood, including \$22 million spent at restaurants alone.

Attracting more shoppers, retailers and eating establishments to 79th Street will require that businesses be clustered at major intersections, rather than spread out over the mile-long commercial strip that developed in the days of streetcars. New development should be concentrated near bus stops and convenient parking areas, to allow consumers to visit several establishments easily before continuing on by car or public transportation (see **Figure 6**, 79th Street rendering). Clusters already established along 79th Street—at Halsted and Racine—should be expanded, and new ones developed at appropriate cross streets.



The 79th Street corridor includes attractive historic buildings and space for new development.

4.1 Prepare a development study for 79th Street that designates cluster locations and establishes standards for commercial development and parking.

Working with the Department of Planning and Development, GADC and local businesses, create a detailed plan for long-term redevelopment of 79th Street so that retail clusters are interspersed with housing and other uses. Determine retail potential, parking needs and land availability where 79th intersects Vincennes, Halsted, Racine and Ashland, and identify any other areas that offer retail or commercial potential.

4.2 Attract a mix of retail and professional uses to 79th Street.

Working with city departments, the alderman's office, developers and the local chamber of commerce (Project 1.2), recruit new businesses to 79th Street to meet local needs. Among priorities identified during the planning process were a copy center, which would support this plan's communication and publicity strategies; small service businesses; medical and dental offices; and African-American-oriented stores such as those in the Chatham neighborhood to the east.

Of special interest is the vacant site on the west side of the 7900 block of Racine. GADC is working with a private developer to create a small mall on this site that could include a bank branch, sit-down restaurant and retail stores. The goal is to attract more customers to this already-improved area.

Figure 6 79th Street business cluster

Improvements at retail clusters can create attractive, pedestrian-oriented concentrations of activity at key intersections including 79th and Halsted and 79th and Racine.

4.3 Complete 79th Street façade enhancements between Racine and Morgan and expand streetscape improvements to blocks east of Halsted.

GADC is working with small businesses to use the city's façade-rebate program to beautify their buildings' façades and create a uniform look. Streetscape improvements have already been made on 79th Street from Racine to Halsted and are progressing from Racine to Ashland. Extending the streetscape plan east from Halsted to the Dan Ryan Expressway—and encouraging more businesses to upgrade their façades—will spur business growth along 79th Street. Critical for revitalization of the east end of the street is redevelopment of vacant commercial spaces at 79th and the Dan Ryan.

4.4 Study redevelopment scenarios for underutilized commercial parcels.

A number of parcels along the 79th Street traffic spine could be redeveloped. Underutilized storefronts along the east side of Halsted at 79th are across the street from new retail developments and could strengthen that cluster. East of Vincennes, the CTA bus barn and adjacent sites could provide as many as 45 acres for a large shopping center, if part or all of the property is no longer necessary for CTA operations. Other properties that are distant from major intersections may no longer be viable for retail use. Proposals for new uses should be created for these areas, targeting residential development, institutional uses, senior housing, recreation facilities or green space.



STRATEGY 5

Develop a transit village near Winneconna Parkway.

The Winneconna area at Auburn Park is a unique enclave of houses and apartment buildings that winds along a series of small fishing lagoons. The park and surrounding properties were developed in the late 1800s on land once owned by Chicago's first mayor, William B. Ogden. Located just north of 79th Street, between Vincennes and the Rock Island railroad tracks, the area includes a mix of well-maintained buildings and vacant land. Its white stone bridges were rehabilitated in the late 1990s.

This strategy provides a framework for development of the Winneconna area to include new commercial uses, housing, open space and improved transportation connections. A centerpiece of the plan would be a new Metra commuter-rail station (**Figure 7**) that could provide under-20-minute service to Union Station and outbound travel to the southwest suburbs and Joliet.

An illustrative plan for the transit village is shown in **Figure 8** (Winneconna area redevelopment plan). The plan is based on four components, which can be pursued independently, though coordinated implementation would maximize benefits. Creation of a Tax Increment Financing (TIF) district in the area could provide development incentives and a means of financing.

5.1 Develop a transit hub that includes a new Metra station and connections to the 79th Street bus.

Prepare promotional and discussion materials to present to Metra, city officials and other stakeholders to build support for a new station along the railroad embankment at Fielding Avenue (**Figure 9**). In conjunction with the plaza development (see Project 5.2), add attractive bus stops in both directions on 79th Street, and pedestrian and bicycle paths that serve the station area.

Figure 7 Train station elevation

A new Metra station would stretch along Fielding Avenue, transforming the visual impact of the railroad embankment.

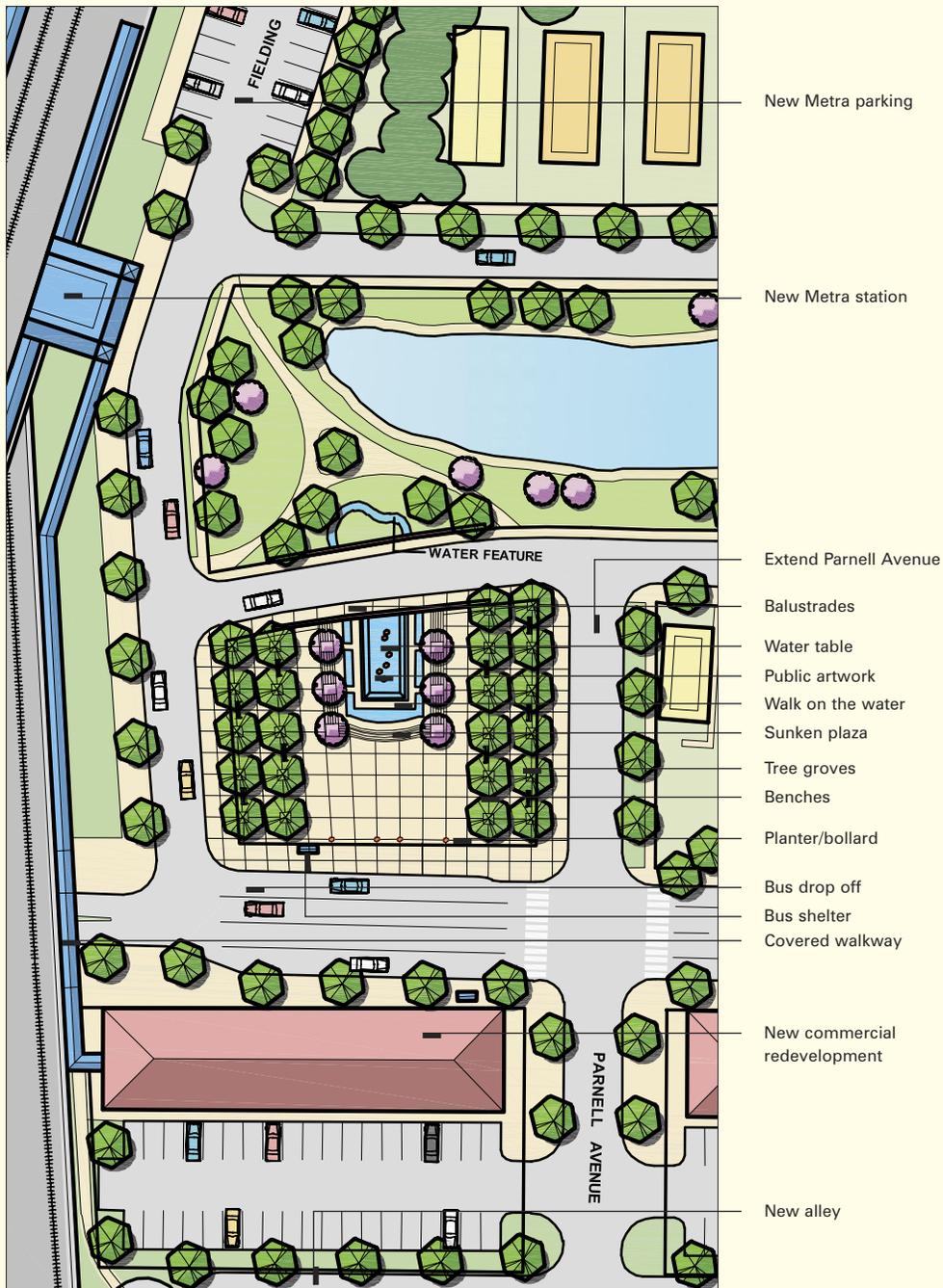




Figure 8 and 9 Winneconna area redevelopment plan

Excellent opportunities for residential and retail development can be found in the Winneconna area. The redevelopment map shows a town square along 79th Street, new housing on vacant land, a new Metra train station and a retail center at Vincennes Avenue.

- Existing residential
- Existing commercial
- Existing public uses
- Single-family in-fill
- New commercial
- New public uses
- Parks
- Ponds
- Plaza/sidewalks
- Woods
- Shade tree
- Ornamental tree



5.2 Construct a town square along 79th Street to provide a gateway to Auburn Park and its lagoons.

A public plaza on currently vacant land just east of the railroad viaduct could include a fountain, public artwork and ornamental trees and provide space for a farmers’ market and other community activities. Extension of Parnell Avenue north to 79th would further improve access to the park.

5.3 Add new housing and green space on vacant land near Auburn Park.

Twenty to 30 new single-family detached houses should be built on empty parcels north of 79th Street. The design of these homes should be compatible with the century-old structures along Normal Avenue and Winneconna Parkway. Additional housing should be located on nearby vacant lots, providing potential riders for the Metra train.

5.4 Create new retail and commercial uses at 79th and Vincennes.

To provide convenient retail shopping for Winneconna residents and transit users, redevelop the commercial areas on 79th at Vincennes. Emphasize pedestrian- and transit-oriented design rather than large parking areas facing the street.

STRATEGY 6

Improve the quality of education for people of all ages and help students and parents maximize the school experience.

Public education was a major concern among residents throughout the quality-of-life planning process. Perceived problems range from disinterested and unqualified teachers to uninvolved parents, unprepared students and overcrowded schools. All of these factors suggest that too many students from Auburn Gresham are ill-equipped to face the world once they leave the public school system.

As in many other Chicago communities, most public schools in Auburn Gresham show weak student achievement. In eight of the 12 elementary schools in the greater Auburn Gresham area, fewer than one-third of students performed at or above grade level in reading in 2003. Math scores were higher, but only three schools—Ryder, Joplin and Lenart (a regional gifted school with selective enrollment)—showed more than half of students performing at or above level in math. One of the neighborhood high schools, Calumet Career Academy, is being formally restructured to reverse high dropout rates, poor test scores and low graduation rates. Another, Simeon, recently moved to a new building. Improved classrooms, science labs and other new facilities offer a fresh start for that school, where student performance has been well below the norm for Chicago public high schools.

Task force members believe that many parents do not know how to become involved at their schools and do not receive guidance on how to navigate their children into better schools or specialized high schools. There are few local support networks for preparing and applying for college or other continuing education.

The neighborhood benefits from two private schools with long traditions of excellence. At 80-year-old Leo High School, about 90 percent of graduates attend college. Special programs and extra-curricular activities attract a student body from beyond Auburn Gresham, including many suburbs.

St. Sabina School serves 600 students from pre-kindergarten through eighth grade. Sixty-five percent of the student body is on the honor roll or Principal's Scholars list. With three computers in each of the 22 classrooms, and a strong reputation, St. Sabina has more than 100 students on a waiting list.

We envision Auburn Gresham as a community where life-long learning is not only encouraged but is seen as an imperative. To that end, the community needs to enroll more young children in pre-school and Head Start programs, help more high-school students move on to college, and inform adults of the many benefits of adult education.

6.1 Develop an Options for Knowledge program to improve use of school resources and expand resident involvement in education.

Using local and citywide agencies as well as the Chicago Public Schools (CPS), this campaign will publicize educational opportunities in the community and elsewhere in the city, and will spread the word through workshops and other methods.

- Provide classes for parents on the importance of participating in their children's education.
- Coordinate college fairs and field trips to colleges and technical schools for high-school students.
- Through orientations and high-school fairs, familiarize 8th-grade students with the high-school experience and introduce them to high-school counselors.

6.2 Support programs of the 17th Ward Education Committee.

This group, convened by Ald. Latasha Thomas, is working with GADC, the 17th Ward Ministerial Alliance and other organizations to create volunteer opportunities in the schools, develop after-school programming, create public-private partnerships and expand parent involvement. It can become a key vehicle for developing and implementing community-wide school-improvement projects.

6.3 Supplement educational opportunities with projects and programs that meet local needs.

Provide prep classes to enhance performance on college-entrance exams; create an after-school tutoring center for elementary students; and seek local partners to establish a charter elementary school in Auburn Gresham.

6.4 Promote life-long learning.

- Expand opportunities for children under five to attend pre-school and Head Start programs.
- Develop an outreach program through churches to promote the benefits of adult education, including career advancement and personal fulfillment.
- Improve access to grants and loans to help adults, including seniors, pursue continuing education or develop new skills, such as use of computers and the internet.



Simeon High School's new facility includes modern science and computer labs.

STRATEGY 7

Strengthen support systems for health and social services, safety and workforce development.

This strategy seeks to build up three critical networks that help make any community stronger. It calls for improved access to mental and physical health services; a stronger, better coordinated program for public safety; and expanded emphasis on helping residents enter the workforce, advance in their careers and increase household wealth.

A 2004 community profile by the Chicago Department of Public Health shows there were 148 deaths from heart disease and 26 from diabetes in 2002, both up from 10 years earlier. Of the 774 births in the community, 116 were low-birth-weight babies, and 16 of the mothers had had no prenatal care. Twenty percent of births were to teen mothers.

One cause of these health problems is that few health resources are located in the neighborhood, forcing residents to travel to other areas for both checkups and emergencies.

Though crime has decreased since the new police station on Halsted opened in 1997, the Auburn Gresham community area in 2003 experienced 16 murders and more than 4,600 index crimes, including thefts, robberies, batteries and sexual assaults. Index crimes fell 11 percent from 1999 to 2003, thanks to aggressive policing and resident involvement in block clubs, churches, community policing and other safety programs. But additional work is needed.

The third component of neighborhood stability—building household wealth—also needs to be strengthened. Family asset-building strategies range from getting and advancing in good jobs to making the most of income. The community has made strides through the Employment Resource Center and other programs, including free tax preparation services that in 2004 returned more than \$1 million in federal refunds to local households. Helping families earn more, save more and build their assets should become a priority for our community.

7.1 Upgrade preventive health care by recruiting health services providers, improving the offerings of health fairs and expanding awareness of nearby health resources.

Expand the impact of local health fairs by including more health screening options, such as HIV testing; promoting exercise and better food choices; and holding such fairs more than once each year. Also use the communications vehicles described in Project 2.3 to promote preventive care and available health services.

7.2 Build an Auburn Gresham Wellness Center.

Develop a full-service health center to promote wellness and provide convenient high-quality medical care. Work with the Chicago Department of Health, hospitals in nearby communities and other health care providers to identify suitable locations and partners.

7.3 Expand youth programs to improve community safety and reduce crime.

Promote resources such as sports leagues and the Martin Luther King, Jr., Recreation Center to involve youth in constructive activities and reduce their engagement with gangs. Also develop new high-quality activities for children, such as after-school programs, Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts and youth clubs.

7.4 Increase participation in crime prevention programs, such as CAPS (Chicago Alternative Policing Strategy) and the police department's Explorers program for youth. Use community newsletters, web sites, block clubs and organizing to promote this involvement.

7.5 Develop local communications vehicles to connect residents with each other and with providers of services.

- Develop a resource guide that lists local health, social and professional services, businesses, recreational offerings and community organizations.
- Create an Auburn Gresham community website and newsletter to disseminate information and promote the community (see Strategy 2).
- Place kiosks throughout the community to provide information on local activities and promote neighborhood cohesion. Working with the chamber of commerce (see Project 1.2), recruit a photocopy store to the community to serve local needs and make it easier to spread information.
- Create a workshop series for service providers to facilitate sharing of information and experiences.

7.6 Establish a Center for Working Families to connect residents with job training and placement, financial education and other programs that increase household wealth.

- Work with LISC/Chicago and the Employment Resource Center to establish a Center for Working Families that will partner with other organizations to provide financial counseling, financial literacy, tax preparation assistance, job training and placement, and access to federal and state economic programs.
- Develop investment clubs for elementary and high-school students to educate youth about financial planning.



The community wants strong support systems for children, from child care to health services.

STRATEGY 8

Make enjoyment of the arts, culture and open space part of the Auburn Gresham way of life.

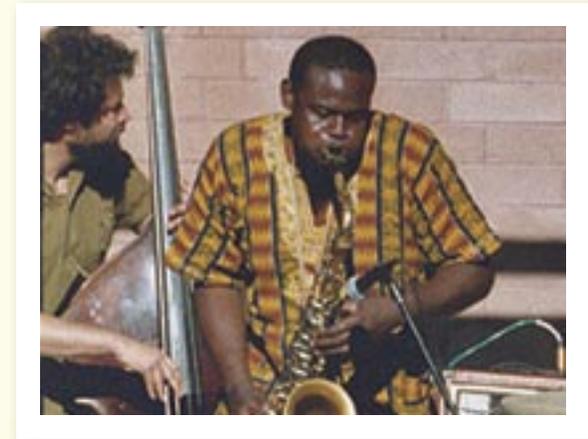
This plan for Auburn Gresham would be incomplete without a strategy to expand the ways we can enjoy our surroundings and each other. By incorporating the arts and culture into many aspects of community life—through the library, public events and arts-oriented business development (such as a store selling African fabrics and sculptures)—we can enrich the daily lives of our residents, from children to senior citizens. Open space is a key element of this strategy, because it provides venues for public art, performances, community gatherings and, of course, healthy recreation.

8.1 Develop community uses for the Thurgood Marshall Library to make it a more integral part of the neighborhood.

Built in 1994, with meeting space for 100 and a special collection on African-American Heritage, the library is an underutilized resource. Work with the library and Friends of the Library to increase community usage through publicity, events and improved connections to nearby schools.

8.2 Create more arts and cultural programming at the library and other spaces throughout the community.

The inaugural African-American Film and Cultural Festival, held at the library in August 2004, attracted more than 500 participants and featured films, live music, a poetry slam and other performances. Institutionalize the library festival as an annual event and organize other public events to showcase artistic talent and provide cultural activities.



The Thurgood Marshall Library hosts the African-American Film and Cultural Festival.

8.3 Foster community beautification through expansion of block clubs.

Use the Morgan Way Homeowners Association Block Club (along Morgan from 67th to 91st Street) as a model. The block club publishes a newsletter, sponsors spring cleanups, has a phone tree and supports local gardeners. Strengthen the Morgan Way group and develop new block clubs on other streets.

8.4 Inventory opportunities to add new parks or greenery.

Build on successes such as the new 1.8-acre green space at SOS Children's Village and the community gardens at 7934 S. Morgan and 7844 S. Morgan, which will be redesigned and improved in 2005. Partner with an experienced open-space organization to inventory open space, assess needs and develop resources for new projects and acquisitions.

Key to Participating Organizations

Organizations that have been approached to implement this plan include:

Catholic Charities

Changing Patterns

Council of Churches

Department of Housing **DOH**

Department of Planning and Development **DPD**

St. Sabina Employment Resource Center **ERC**

Eyas Daycare

Friends of the Library

Greater Auburn-Gresham Development Corp. **GADC**

Historic Chicago Bungalow Association **HCBA**

Jane Adams Hull House

Leo High School

Neighborhood Housing Services/Auburn Gresham Englewood **NHS/AGE**

SOS Children's Village **SOS**

STOP—Strategy To Overcome Poverty **STOP**

St. Sabina Church

17th Ward Alderman's Office

17th Ward Education Committee

Thurgood Marshall Library

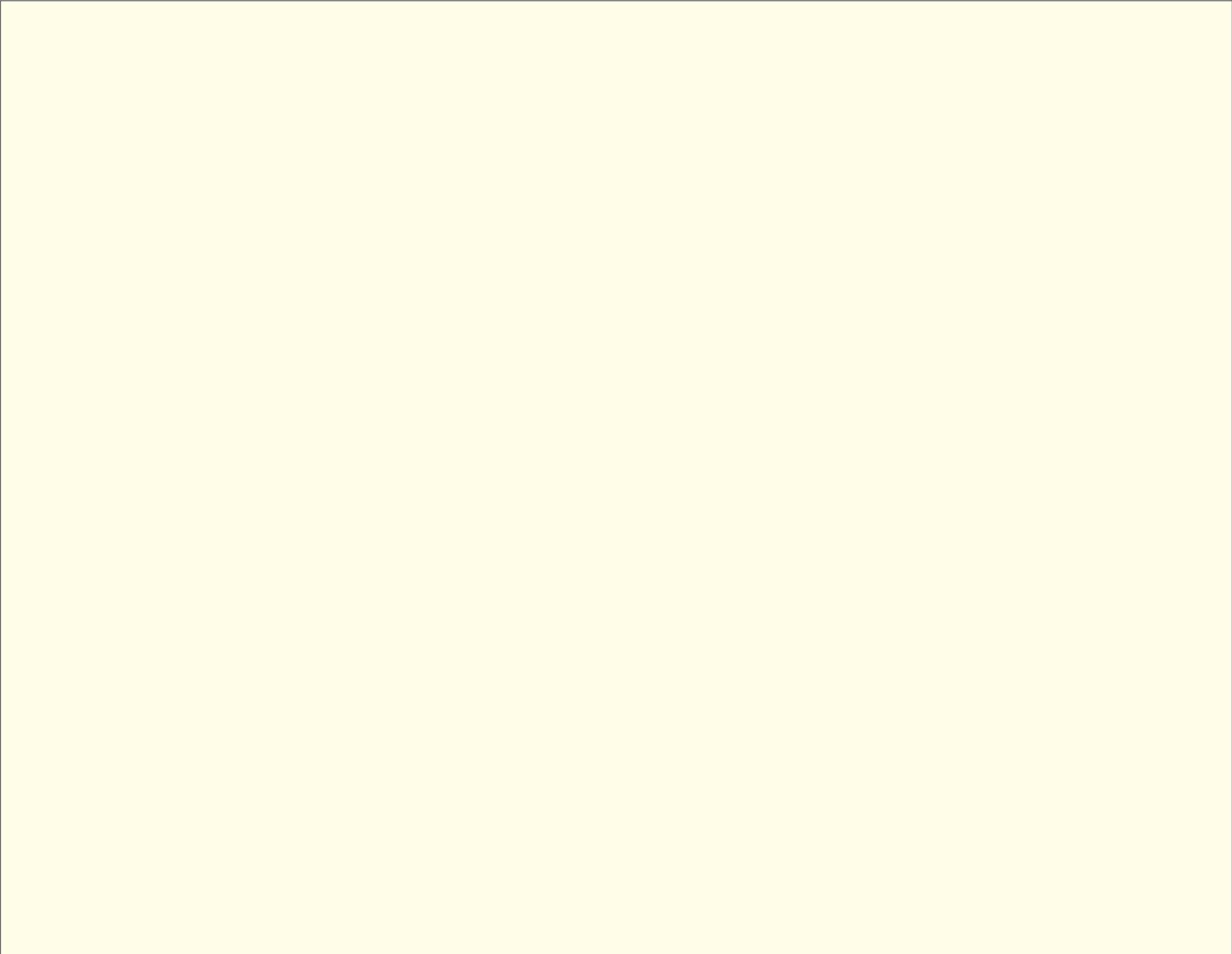
Urban League

Youthnet

Schedule and Priorities

STRATEGY	TIMEFRAME (YEARS)			ORGANIZATIONS
	1	2-3	4-5	LEAD ORGANIZATION
1. ENCOURAGE LOCAL BUSINESS OWNERSHIP AND GENERATE JOBS FOR YOUTH AND YOUNG ADULTS				
1.1 Establish a Special Service Area (SSA) on 79th Street to generate revenue for maintenance and projects.		■		GADC, existing businesses
1.2 Develop a local chamber of commerce.		■		GADC, 17TH Ward Office
1.3 Establish a start-up assistance program for businesses and develop incubator space in the neighborhood.		■		Jane Adams Hull House
1.4 Organize businesses and other resources to create jobs for youth and to prepare them for careers.	■			ERC
1.5 Enlarge the TIF District and create a TIF/NIF Program to provide funding for residential rehabilitation.		■		17th Ward Office, DPD
2. PROMOTE AUBURN GRESHAM THROUGH A BROAD-BASED PUBLICITY PROGRAM				
2.1 Publicize the quality, affordability and history of the housing stock.	■			NHS
2.2 Work with Chicago Public Schools, churches and other organizations to tout the successes of local schools and the educational choices available.			■	CPS, St. Sabina, Leo High School
2.3 Integrate local business promotion with information about community services and events.		■		GADC
3. DEVELOP HOUSING THAT ACCOMMODATES ALL LEVELS OF INCOME AND SPECIAL NEEDS WHILE PRESERVING EXISTING HOUSING				
3.1 Encourage owners to reinvest in their properties.	■	■	■	NHS
3.2 Develop a Model Blocks target area to increase housing investment and create stronger ties among neighbors.	■			NHS/AGE, HCBA, GADC, DOH
3.3 Rehabilitate vacant buildings to create affordable rental housing or homeownership opportunities.		■	■	GADC, private developers
3.4 Recruit developers to build new senior housing.	■	■		GADC, private developers
3.5 Encourage development of new housing to meet the full range of needs in the community.	■			GADC, NHS
3.6 Provide intervention services for homeowners facing foreclosure and provide financing and pre-purchase counseling to reduce foreclosures.	■			NHS
3.7 Work with schools, churches, service organizations and other institutions to develop programs that ease the transition of former CHA residents into the neighborhood.	■			GADC, CPS
4. FOCUS DEVELOPMENT ON 79TH STREET INTO COMPACT BUSINESS CLUSTERS THAT ARE PEDESTRIAN- AND TRANSIT-FRIENDLY				
4.1 Prepare a development study for 79th Street that designates cluster locations and establishes standards for commercial development and parking.	■			GADC, DPD
4.2 Attract a mix of retail and professional uses to 79th Street.	■	■	■	GADC, 17TH Ward Office
4.3 Complete façade enhancements for businesses on 79th Street between Racine and Morgan and expand streetscape improvements on 79th Street to blocks east of Halsted.		■		GADC, local businesses
4.4 Study redevelopment scenarios for underutilized commercial parcels.		■		GADC

STRATEGY	TIMEFRAME (YEARS)			ORGANIZATIONS
	1	2-3	4-5	LEAD ORGANIZATION
5. DEVELOP A “TRANSIT VILLAGE” NEAR WINNECONNA PARKWAY				
5.1 Construct a town square along 79th Street to provide a visual gateway to Auburn Park and its lagoons.		■	■	GADC, DPD, 17th Ward Office
5.2 Develop a transit center that includes a new Metra station and connections to the 79th Street bus.		■	■	GADC, Metra
5.3 Add new housing and green space on vacant land near Auburn Park.	■			Quest Development
5.4 Create new retail and commercial uses at 79th and Vincennes.		■		17th Ward Office, GADC
6. IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION FOR PEOPLE OF ALL AGES AND HELP STUDENTS AND PARENTS MAXIMIZE THE SCHOOL EXPERIENCE				
6.1 Develop an “Options for Knowledge” campaign to encourage lifelong learning.		■	■	CPS, 17th Ward Education Committee, Youthnet
6.2 Supplement existing educational opportunities with projects and programs that meet local educational needs.	■	■	■	STOP, Youthnet
6.3 Promote life-long learning through expanded programming and promotion from pre-school through adult education.	■	■	■	Eyas Daycare, Council of Churches, SOS
7. STRENGTHEN SUPPORT SYSTEMS FOR HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES, SAFETY AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT				
7.1 Upgrade access to preventive health care and education by recruiting health services providers, expanding the offerings of health fairs and increasing awareness of nearby health resources.	■	■	■	GADC, private developers
7.2 Build an Auburn Gresham Wellness Center.		■		GADC
7.3 Expand youth programs to support community safety and crime reduction.	■	■	■	Youthnet, St. Sabina, 6th District Police
7.4 Increase participation in crime prevention programs such as CAPS beat meetings and the police department’s Explorers program for youth.	■	■	■	6th District Police, community residents
7.5 Develop local communications vehicles to connect residents with each other and with providers of services.	■	■	■	GADC
7.6 Establish a “Center for Working Families” that connects residents with job training and placement, financial education and other programs that increase household wealth.	■			ERC
8. MAKE ENJOYMENT OF THE ARTS, CULTURE AND OPEN SPACE PART OF THE AUBURN GRESHAM WAY OF LIFE				
8.1 Develop community uses for the Thurgood Marshall Library to make it a more integral part of the community.	■	■	■	GADC
8.2 Create more arts and cultural programming at the library and other spaces throughout the community.	■	■	■	GADC, Thurgood Marshall Library
8.3 Foster beautification of the community through expansion of block clubs.	■	■	■	GADC
8.4 Assess the community’s open space and beautification needs.	■			GADC, community organizations



New Communities Program

NCP is a long-term initiative of Local Initiatives Support Corporation/Chicago to support comprehensive community development in Chicago neighborhoods. It seeks to rejuvenate challenged communities, bolster those in danger of losing ground and preserve the diversity of areas in the path of gentrification. Each effort is led by a neighborhood-based lead agency that coordinates programs among other local organizations and citywide support groups.

The program gives each of the lead agencies several resources: two full-time staff positions (an NCP director and organizer), technical support for planning and documenting the planning process, a pool of loan and grant funds distributed on a competitive basis for project seed money, and opportunities for learning from both peers and subject-area experts.

All NCP neighborhoods spend their first year undertaking a structured community planning process that leads to the quality-of-life plan, then move on to implementation. They are encouraged to be “doing while planning,” undertaking short-term “Early Action Projects” such as launching a youth program, opening an employment center, creating public art or sponsoring local health fairs.

NCP is designed to strengthen communities from within – through planning, organizing and human development. The comprehensive approach is designed to help broaden opportunities for local residents through better education, broader housing choices, safer streets, stronger personal finances and new economic opportunities. The strengthened community is better equipped to take advantage of larger market forces, attract new investment and enhance the overall quality of life.

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