



Community

# NEWSLETTER

For the 5th Ward

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 **Alderman Carl Franco**

Check out my Facebook page, entitled "Alderman Carl Franco" for a great way to stay informed about news and updates in the 5th Ward.

The Facebook page can be accessed either from my contact information on the city's website or going to Facebook and typing "Alderman Carl Franco" in the search bar.

The West Branch Library is a convenient resource for computer and internet access if you don't have internet access at home.

## Dear 5th Ward Residents,

**2025 has been a transitional year for our city with the start of a new administration.**

As with any change in leadership, there have been some growing pains as the team works through the complexities of running a large municipality. With that said, we are hopeful that 2026 will bring fewer bumps and an even stronger sense of momentum.

In the last newsletter, I mentioned several residential projects that had recently broken ground. Prairie Meadows on Prairie Street (74 ranch homes targeted to seniors), Heyday/Mews of Orchard Lake on Independence (108 rental townhomes), and Springs of Aurora on Orchard (310 rental townhomes) are all progressing well and are expected to be ready for occupancy by the end of the year. These market-rate developments will have a positive impact not only through increased property tax revenue, but also by bringing new residents and consumers—something that is attractive to both new and existing businesses.

More recently, the City Council approved a zoning change for the 22-acre parcel on the east side of Orchard Road owned by Toyota. Previously zoned

Industrial—which would have allowed uses such as warehousing, data centers, or manufacturing—the prior administration and I believed the property would be better suited for commercial development. Over the past three years, we worked with Toyota and IDOT to secure critical infrastructure improvements, including a right-in/right-out access drive and a left-turn lane from the north. These improvements significantly increase accessibility and consumer appeal.

GTZ Properties is the developer for the site and has secured **QuickTrip** as the initial tenant. QuickTrip has committed to funding the IDOT-approved infrastructure improvements as well as the interior roadways for the development. This approach makes the site even more attractive to future tenants, as they will only need to fund their individual lots.

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## Upcoming Meetings

(Jan April July Oct)

### West Aurora Concerned Citizens

**WHEN:**

Quarterly on the 3rd  
Wednesday at 6:30 pm

**LOCATION:**

1981 W Galena Boulevard

### Washington Neighbors

**WHEN:**

Quarterly on the 3rd  
Tuesday at 7:00 pm

**LOCATION:**

1981 W Galena Boulevard

*Please check the Facebook page "Alderman Carl Franco" for changes or updates.*

## Garbage Pick-up Day and Shred Event

We will once again hold our annual "Clean-up Day and Shred Event". This year the Clean-up Day will be for those in the 5th Ward residing north of Galena. We are working with Groot for a date in late April. We will mail postcards with the details to those residents affected as we near the date.

The annual Ward 5 and 6 Shred Event will also be held this summer. Again, we will mail postcards with the details as we get closer to a date.

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## Letter to Residents

The preliminary plan includes approximately ten acres of residential townhomes on the north end, two acres for detention ponds, and ten acres dedicated to commercial use. Potential commercial tenants discussed include **Panda Express, Buona Beef**, a full-service restaurant, and a **Kiddie Academy**. There are five commercial pads planned, not including the gas station.

Once completed, this development is expected to be a significant revenue generator for the city, with estimated annual revenues of approximately \$3.5 million. The gas station alone is projected to generate \$750,000 annually, not including an additional \$2-3 million in permitting fees.

While there was some pushback from the current administration, citing concerns that gas stations may become obsolete, a majority of the City Council felt strongly that this development was in the city's best interest and voted to move it forward. Thank



*Heyday/Mews of Orchard lake*

you to the many community members who voiced their support for this important economic development.

Finally, Bravo Furniture opened mid-year in the former Walmart location. They offer a wide variety of furniture at competitive price points and carry many well-known name brands. We encourage residents to support this new local business.

As always, thank you for staying engaged and informed about the growth and future of our city.

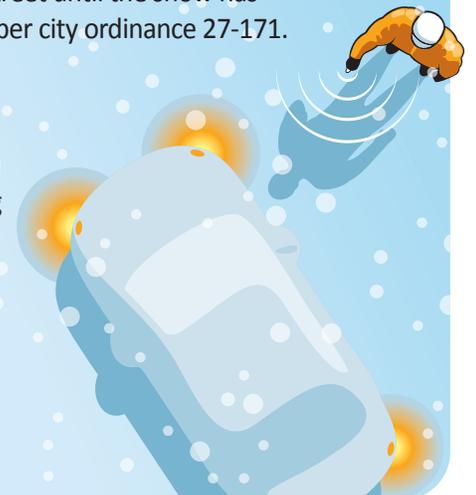
**Alderman Carl Franco**  
5th Ward Alderman

## Parking Restrictions During Snow Events

Motorists are encouraged to move their vehicles off-street to facilitate plowing efforts during a snow event. Snow events with accumulation of 2 or more inches, residents are prohibited from parking on any city street until the snow has been cleared. Violators will be ticketed and towed per city ordinance 27-171.

Because off street parking may be difficult to find, vehicles may park on front lawns of a residential property during or within twenty-four hours after a snowfall. Cars may also park over a sidewalk during or within twenty-four hours after a snow fall. Cars may not park on the parkway.

It is also a violation to shovel into the street as it causes dangerously slippery conditions for motorists and pedestrians.



## Hollywood Casino Update

The new casino located on Farnsworth west of the outlet mall is scheduled to open this summer. Here are some of the amenities for the new location: Hollywood Casino Aurora is pleased to announce a partnership with McClain Camarota Hospitality (“MCH”) to bring prominent Chicago chefs and restaurants to the all-new land-based sites in Aurora and Joliet. The new Chicagoland locations will feature the Boulevard Food & Drink Hall (“Boulevard”), a dynamic dining experience highlighted by local favorites, including an all-new burger concept from celebrity chef Stephanie IZARD alongside Antique Taco and Pretty Cool Ice Cream. The Boulevard locations are designed and operated by MCH. Boulevard will be accessible to all ages at the completely reimagined casino and entertainment destinations and will feature:

- **Lucky Goat**—an all-new Stephanie IZARD burger restaurant that will

feature specialty burgers, fries, milkshakes and more.

- **Antique Taco**—the first suburban locations for the popular gourmet taco restaurant that will feature its signature handmade tacos, the customer-favorite Antique Taco Salad, chips and guacamole and salsa, and specialty drinks.
- **Pretty Cool Ice Cream**—the fourth and fifth locations for the contemporary ice cream shop, which also has storefronts in Logan Square and Lincoln Park along with a walk-up window opening in Lincoln Square this Memorial Day weekend that will feature its unique flavors of ice cream bars, popsicles and cookie sandwiches.
- **Five50 Pizza**—a New York City-style meets Neapolitan pizza concept offering a fun, casual experience from the fine-dining chefs at MCH.

## City Manager Ballot Initiative for Aurora

A group of local residents have recently formed a committee to explore a potential change to how the City of Aurora is governed. Currently, Aurora operates under a “Strong Mayor” form of government, in which the mayor is responsible for overseeing the city’s day-to-day operations.

Many residents have expressed concern that managing an organization with more than 1,000 employees and an annual budget of approximately \$600 million should be handled by a professionally trained administrator—someone with formal education, certifications, and experience in municipal management. Another concern raised is that the strong mayor system can introduce political ideologies into city operations, even though Aurora is intended to function as a nonpartisan government.

Most municipalities across the country operate under a City Manager form of government and have done so successfully. Under this model, the city council and mayor continue to play a vital role by

setting the vision, priorities, and policies for the community. The mayor would also serve as the city’s representative. A professionally hired city manager would then be responsible for implementing those policies and managing the city’s daily operations in an efficient, transparent, and accountable manner.

To make this change, a ballot initiative would be required so residents can vote on whether to adopt a City Manager form of government. The committee is currently in the early stages of researching how this transition could work and developing educational materials to inform residents about the potential benefits of this model.

Some long-time residents have asked why this issue was not addressed years ago. As the city continues to grow and become more complex, many believe the time is right to have this important conversation. It makes sense—and its time has come. For additional information please visit [icma.org](http://icma.org).

## City of Aurora Customer Service Call Center

A great way to get information and make service requests is through the City of Aurora’s Customer Service Call Center.

Below are examples of the information and services provided:

- Zoning violations
- Abandoned vehicles
- Overgrown grass/weeds
- Garbage, trash, or debris
- Unsafe structures
- Street maintenance and repairs, such as streetlight outages, and damaged street signs.
- Notary
- City of Aurora, county, state, and federal services
- Ideas for improving your neighborhood
- Crime prevention
- Planning and conducting neighborhood improvement projects
- Support and assistance to neighborhood and business associations
- Water bill payments

*Customer Service can be reached by calling*

**(630) 256-INFO (4636).**

*For police emergencies call 911, for non-emergencies call (630) 256-5000.*

## Alderman Mission Statement

*To serve the residents and businesses of the City of Aurora in a responsive and effective manner through leadership and legislative action for the present and future well-being of the community.*

## Orchard Road Sound Barrier Update

I would like to report that the Sound Barrier project for Orchard Road is underway, but unfortunately that would not be accurate. Last spring, we were on the cusp of finalizing both financing and engineering, with hopes of beginning construction last fall. However, following the election last April, momentum stalled as the new administration sought to revise certain aspects of the project. Quite frankly, I am uncertain where things currently stand.

The previous administration and I successfully raised approximately \$4 million of the \$4.1 million required at that time to fund the project. As it stands, there is a substantial amount of money already raised and waiting for construction to begin. Despite campaigning on completing this project, the new administration did not include it among their priorities during the 2026 budget meetings. That reality is understandably frustrating given the eight years of effort invested in bringing this project to fruition.

This was never going to be an easy undertaking, particularly because there was no historical blueprint for a project of this nature. Securing funding from state legislators, Kane County, the City of Aurora, and ward funds was a complex and time-consuming process in itself. Moving forward, my hope is that the administration recognizes the strong desire within our community to see this issue addressed and takes action to move the project ahead as expeditiously as possible.

## 5th Ward Grant Program AURORA WARD 5 RESIDENTIAL AND NONPROFIT GRANT PROGRAM GUIDELINES

The 5th Ward Alderman shall receive and approve requests for grants for community enhancements and/or improvements in the 5th Ward. The program, without limitations, will be geared around the following:

- Enhancements and/or improvements, such as, landscaping or infrastructure projects for public use.
- Demonstrate a benefit for the immediate area.
- Promote the character and integrity of the neighborhood and community.

The Ward Committee may also consider other information when approving or denying grant requests such as previous approvals, past history, and future development plans.

**THANK YOU!**



**I would like to thank the many residents who voiced their support this past year for the Aurora Civic Center Authority (ACCA).** ACCA is the organization that operates the Paramount Theatre, Stolp Island Theatre, Copley Theatre, RiverEdge Park, and the Paramount School of the Arts.

Since COVID-19, theaters across the country have faced significant challenges in rebuilding their subscriber bases and restoring attendance to pre-pandemic levels. With the support of the City, ACCA weathered this crisis better than many comparable organizations. This strong partnership allowed most productions to continue until this past summer, when budgetary constraints required the cancellation of the remainder of the Bold Series at the Copley Theatre.

We truly appreciate the many residents who took the time to let the City Council and administration know how important the arts are to them and to our community. It was especially encouraging to hear that so many understand the positive financial impact our theaters have on downtown businesses and restaurants.

In 2024 alone, more than 630,000 patrons attended performances across our venues. Over the past five years, these performances have generated approximately \$171 million for our local economy.

We are proud of our vibrant theater and arts community, which is widely recognized throughout the Chicagoland area for its quality and excellence.

Please continue to show your support. Our elected officials rely on your voices and advocacy to ensure that one of Aurora's most recognized and valued assets continues to shine.

**Carl Franco**  
5th Ward Alderman

