

PUBLIC NOTICE

**Amendment to Neighborhood
Revitalization Strategy Area Plan**

As an entitlement community, the City of Aurora, Illinois receives funding from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) through the Community Development Block Grant Program (CDBG) and HOME Investment Partnerships Program (HOME). The HUD funding must be allocated according to the City's five-year Consolidated Plan. The Consolidated Plan provides an analysis of data and market conditions as well as an overview of existing policies and funding delivery to assist the City in identifying its greatest housing and community development needs. The process involves thorough data analysis followed by citizen and stakeholder participation to provide input, to review, and comments on the findings and proposed uses of federal funding. Additionally, the analysis includes a review of the City's Neighborhood Revitalization Strategy Area Plan.

In accordance with the City of Aurora's Citizen Participation Plan and HUD's public participation requirements, a public hearing will be held at 1:00 p.m. on January 24, 2025 at City Hall, 44 E. Downer Place, 5th Floor, Conference Room 5B to provide the public an opportunity to comment on the community development and housing priorities, goals, objectives, and/or funding estimates identified in the following draft strategic planning documents:

1. 2025-2029 Consolidated Plan, which includes the City's 2025 City of Aurora Annual Action Plan. Under the City's 2025 Annual Action Plan, the City anticipates receipt of approximately \$1.2 million in CDBG funds and \$550,000 in HOME Program funds.
2. Amendment to Neighborhood Revitalization Strategy Area Plan.
3. Substantial Amendment (#2025-1) to the City's 2020, 2021, 2022, 2023, and 2024 Annual Action Plans. This proposed Amendment's intent is to reallocate CDBG (approximately \$250,000) and HOME-ARP funds (approximately \$150,000), including adjustments to the HOME-ARP Allocation Plan. These changes are necessary to maintain the integrity of the City's spending obligations and ensure compliance with HUD's regulatory requirements for administering the CDBG and HOME-ARP Programs.

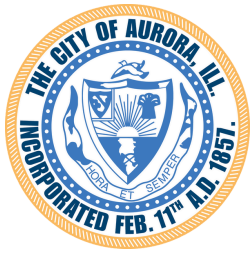
As per 24 CFR 570.200(h), 24 CFR Part 92.212, and 2 CFR 200.458, the public is hereby notified that under certain conditions, the City and/or its subrecipients may incur costs associated with the CDBG and HOME activities identified in the City's 2025 Annual Action Plan prior to the effective date of its grant agreement with HUD. The total amount of any pre-award costs incurred will not exceed \$300,000 or 25% of the amount of the City's anticipated 2025 CDBG allocation. Costs related to the HOME program may not exceed 25% of the City's current program amount. Citizens are advised that such pre-award costs will have no effect on future grants and will be in compliance with the regulations that govern the CDBG and HOME Programs as stated at 24 CFR Part 570, 24 CFR 92, and 24 CFR Part 576, respectively, as well as the Environmental Review Procedures stated in 24 CFR Part 58. To provide the required public disclosure of the City's intent to use unobligated carry-forward funds as necessary for such 2025 pre-award costs, the regulatory provisions for incurring pre-award costs will be discussed at the public hearing. This may include using unobligated front funding for CDBG public service, program administration, community amenities/neighborhood revitalization/infrastructure, and housing activity costs as well as HOME administration and project costs.

Please be advised that effective January 13, 2025, the above referenced documents will be available for review and public comment at the following locations: City of Aurora-Community Development Division, 44 E. Downer Place, , Aurora, IL; Library-Main, 101 S. River St., Aurora, IL; Library-Eola, 555 S. Eola Rd., Aurora, IL; Library-West, 233 S. Constitution Dr., Aurora, IL; and on the City of Aurora website: www.aurora-il.org/1175/Neighborhood-Redevelopment .

Upon advance request, the City will provide for interpretation or translation services to meet the needs of non-English speaking residents. The City will also take whatever actions are appropriate to serve the needs of persons with disabilities. For more information, to make special arrangements, or to provide comments, contact the Community Development Division, 44 E. Downer Place, 4th Floor, Aurora, IL 60507, (630) 256-3320 or COACDD@aurora.il.us.

Comments will be accepted no later than 4:00 p.m., February 11, 2025. The above-referenced documents are scheduled for review and adoption at the City Council's February 11, 2025 meeting at 6:00 p.m., Council Chambers, 2nd Floor, City Hall, 44 E. Downer Place, Aurora, IL 60507.

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MAYOR
RICHARD C. IRVIN

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HOUSING & COMMUNITY
DEVELOPMENT BLOCK GRANT

CONSOLIDATED PLAN

2025 - 2029

NEIGHBORHOOD REVITALIZATION STRATEGY AREA PLAN RENEWAL

PREPARED BY:

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DIVISION
COMMUNITY SERVICES DEPARTMENT

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PLAN CONSULTANT | TDA CONSULTING

JANUARY 2025



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A submission to the United States Department of
Housing and Urban Development by:

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Community Development Division
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1 INTRODUCTION + BACKGROUND

The City of Aurora (“City”) requests to renew a previous Neighborhood Revitalization Strategy Area (NRSA) designation, as defined by the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), pursuant to 24 CFR 91.215 (e)(2). This request for renewal is submitted as part of the City’s 2025 – 2029 Consolidated Plan and is in conformance with HUD regulations.

What is an NRSA?

The NRSA is a special provision under the Community Development Block Grant Program to reinvigorate distressed community areas. Selection of an NRSA must be based on an assessment of economic conditions, opportunities for economic development and anticipated barriers and challenges. An NRSA plan should promote economic progress with a focus on activities that would create economic opportunities for low- and moderate-income residents of the NRSA. The City has developed actionable benchmarks over the course of the next five years, and will monitor progress made every year with annual reports to HUD.

Benefits of the Designation

The rules governing the use of grant money are more flexible for NRSAs than for regular CDBG programming, which promotes innovative approaches to economically disadvantaged areas developed under particular neighborhood needs, rather than strictly on income. CDBG funds designated for NRSAs are more flexible in these ways:

1. *Job Creation/Retention as Low/Moderate Income Area Benefit:* Job creation / retention activities pursuant to the strategy may be qualified as meeting area benefit requirements, thus eliminating the need for a business to track the incomes of persons that are considered or hired for such jobs (24 CFR 570.208(a)(1)(vii) and (d)(5)(i));
2. *Aggregation of Housing Units:* Housing units assisted as part of the strategy may be considered part of a single structure for purposes of applying the low/moderate-income national objective criteria, thus providing greater flexibility to carry out housing programs that revitalize a neighborhood (24 CFR 570.208(a)(3) and (d)(5)(ii));
3. *Aggregate Public Benefit Standard Exemption:* Economic Development activities carried out under the strategy may, at the grantee’s option, be exempt from the aggregate public benefit standards, thus increasing a grantee’s flexibility for program design as well as reducing its record-keeping requirements (24 CFR 570.209(b)(2)(v)(L) and (M)); and
4. *Public Service Cap Exemption:* Public Services carried out pursuant to the strategy by a Community Based Development Organization will be exempt from the public service cap (24 CFR 570.204(b)(2)(ii)).

History of Aurora’s NRSA

The City’s NRSA plan was originally created in 1999 and subsequently amended in 2011, 2020, and 2022.

Since the 2011 NRSA amendment, the City released a 2017 Downtown Aurora Master Plan, which guides investment for downtown Aurora on the West and East sides of the Fox River. In 2020, the City

requested an expansion to the NRSA boundary to complement broader investment going into Downtown Aurora by incentivizing economic development activity that encompasses key gateways identified in the Master Plan and offer affordable housing incentives to a greater number of households surrounding the Downtown, which would counterbalance any negative impacts from increased investment (i.e., displacement). Since the housing stock and population of the proposed amended NRSA boundary shared similar socio- demographic and neighborhood characteristics as the previous NRSA, the expansion would help promote social and neighborhood cohesion among communities along the Fox River.

Through this designation, Aurora aimed to improve outcomes and effectiveness of its CDBG funding from HUD. Since the designation, the City has assisted several economic development projects, and numerous households and organizations which has helped to alleviate economic and social distress within and adjacent to Downtown Aurora. These activities include:

- Preserving the existing housing stock through single-family housing rehabilitation programs.
- Down payment assistance incentives for income-qualified, first-time homebuyers seeking homes located within the NRSA.
- An increase in affordable housing through the adaptive re-use of another large, historic building when the long-time vacant, former St. Charles Hospital building (on the National Historic Register) was converted to affordable senior housing through a nearly \$25 million renovation. This project created 56 rental units and four market-rate rental units. Financed in part through Low Income Housing Tax Credits (9%), this project was able to score competitively under the Tax Credit Program's Community Revitalization Plan criterion due to its location within the NRSA.
- Located within the City's downtown, the City's most recent NRSA multi-use redevelopment (residential and commercial) project of three large, historic buildings within the NRSA resulted in the preservation (38 units) and creation (38 units) of seventy-six affordable rental housing units. This project's commercial development of a restaurant and performing arts school will create 75-100 new permanent jobs and attract 150,000 to 200,000 annual visitors to the area that will further stimulate the local economy. This project had several funding sources including LIHTC and HUD funds. For both programs, the NRSA location benefited the project's funding opportunities in anticipation of the economic and housing development opportunities.

This renewed NRSA proposal aims to build on past accomplishments while using the benefits of the NRSA to further the recommendations of the 2025 ONE City Affordable Housing Strategy recommendations. The Strategy includes nine recommendations to remove barriers to affordable housing, all of which directly or indirectly link back to the City's affordable housing preservation and expansion strategy. They are identified in order of priority under each category:

Optimize

Recommendation #1 - Support the Development of Mixed-Income Units to Expand Affordable Housing Opportunities to Increase Long Term Sustainability.

Recommendation #2 - Utilize Public Land and Under-Utilized Property to Expand Affordable Housing Opportunities by Creating a Landbank.

Recommendation #3 - Enhance the City's Current Single Family Rehabilitation Programs to Preserve Housing and to Promote Aging in Place.

Navigate

Recommendation #1 - Educate and Inform Stakeholders About Local Programs, Services, Data Trends, and the Importance of Affordable Housing in Aurora.

Recommendation #2 - Leverage Multiple Funding Sources, Partners, and Solutions for Affordable Housing Activities.

Recommendation #3 - Create a Community Resource Coordinator Position at the City to Assist Residents in Need.

Empower

Recommendation #1 - Establish an Aurora Affordable Housing Fund to Preserve and Expand Affordable Housing Opportunities.

Recommendation #2 - Provide Landlords with Training Opportunities and Incentive Programs to Enhance Housing Stock and Assist Current and Future Tenants.

Recommendation #3 - Enhance Down Payment Assistance Program to Increase Homeownership

A renewal of the NRSA designation will allow the City to work more effectively to address the opportunities and challenges presented in housing and community development in Aurora and align its use of HUD funding with broader efforts across the City.

2 PLANNING AREA

Boundary

The City is proposing one, contiguous Neighborhood Revitalization Strategy Area focused on the Fox River, Downtown Aurora and adjacent neighborhoods. Selection of the boundary was determined by an analysis of HUD income data, consultations with community stakeholders, and building off of previous planning work from the 2017 Downtown Master Plan and the more recent affordable housing strategies. Note that while these boundaries largely track the boundaries of the previously approved NRSA, due to changes in the outline of census block groups as well as shifts in the low to moderate income populations, the exact shape of the areas presented in this proposal are slightly modified from previous plans. The areas, however, still concentrates on the Fox River, Downtown Aurora, and adjacent neighborhoods.

Figure 1. NRSA Boundary Map, City of Aurora

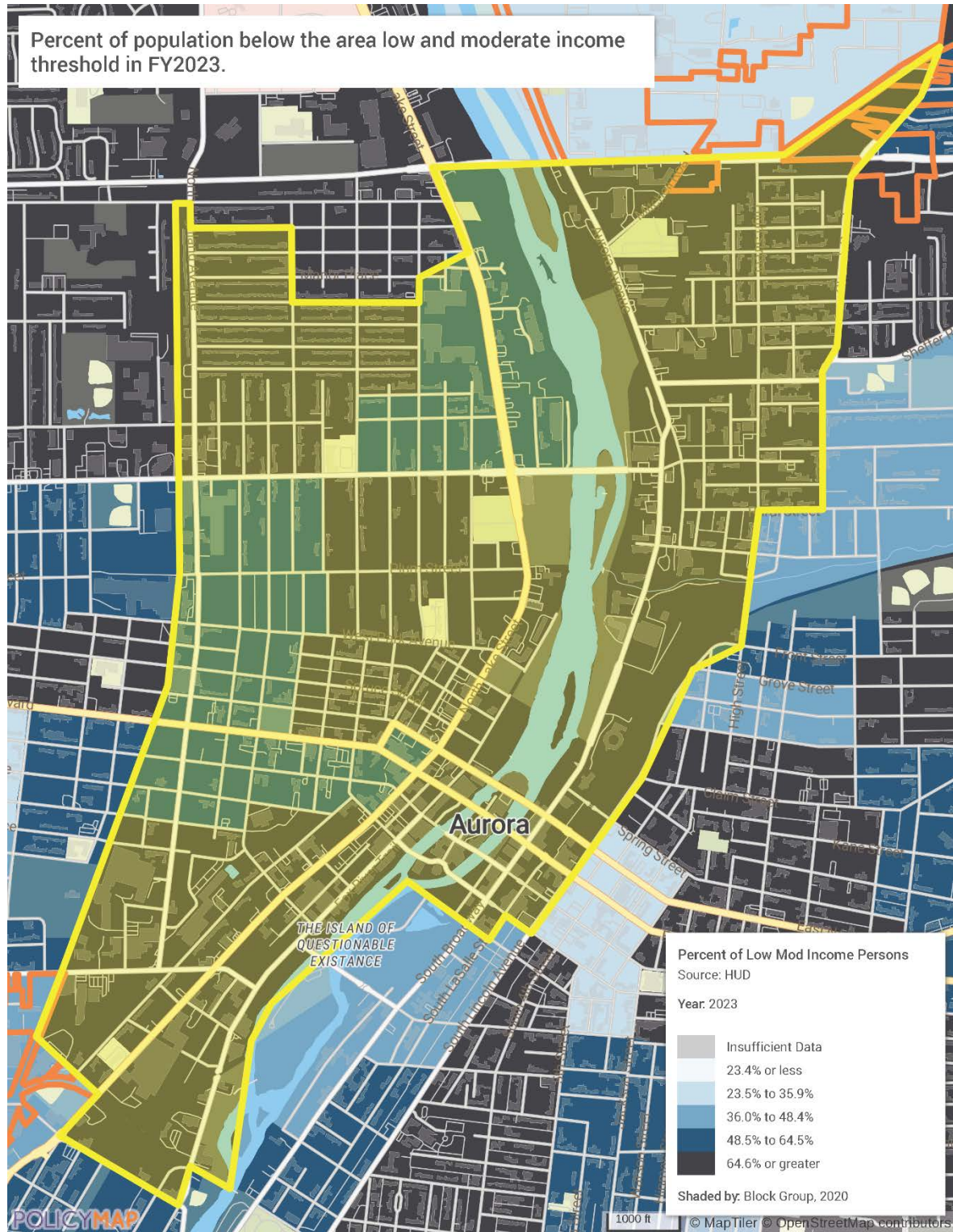
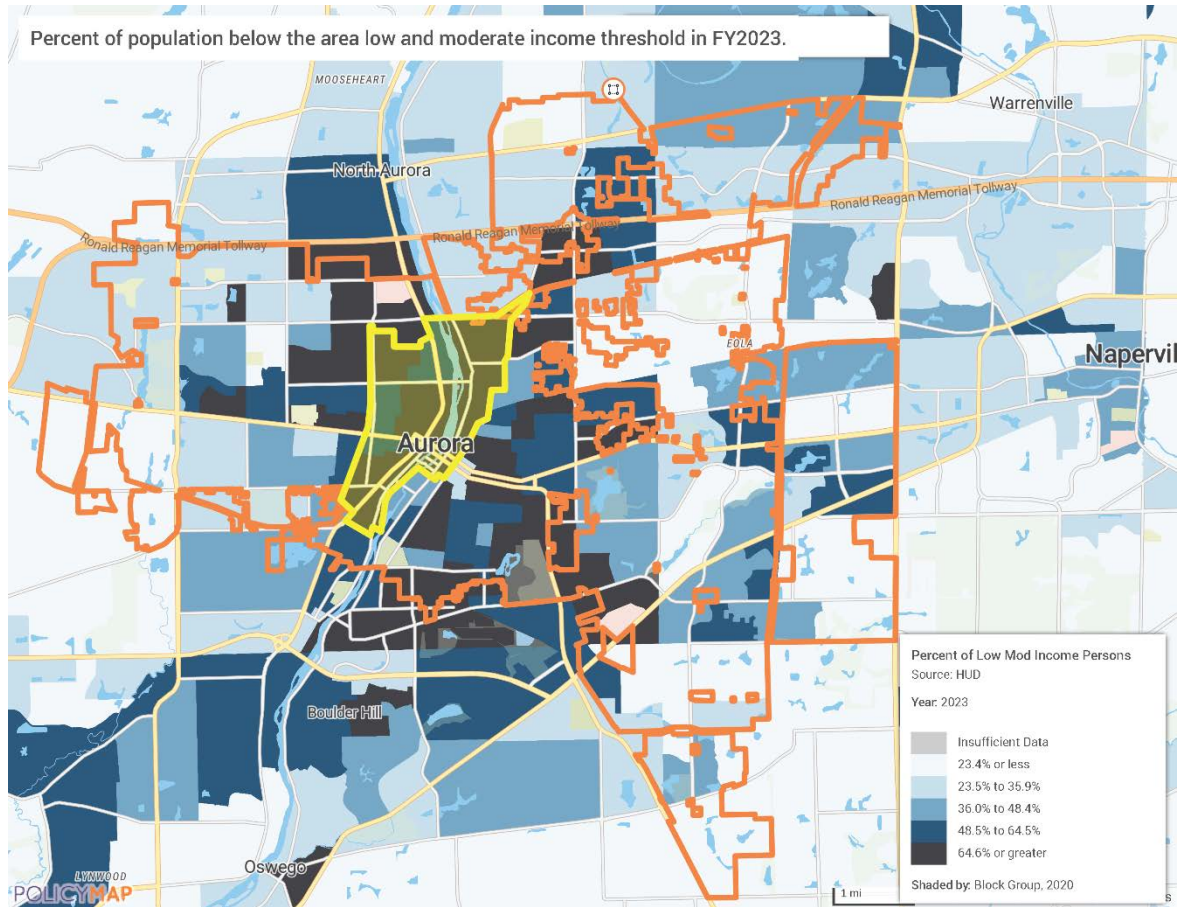


Figure 2. NRSA Boundary Map, City View



Methodology

The City used the following regulations from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development to develop the proposed NRSA boundary amendment:

- 1) An area may not encompass the entire jurisdiction;
- 2) The areas covered under the NRSA must be contiguous to each other; there cannot be checkered board areas across the community;
- 3) The selected area must be primarily residential; and
- 4) The designated area must contain a percentage of LMI residents that is equal to Aurora's "highest quartile percentage" (as computed by HUD) or 70 percent, whichever is less.

Low- and Moderate-Income Analysis

Approximately 74.2% of the population in the NRSA earn less than 80% of the area median income, defined by HUD as LMI (low- and moderate-income). This percentage is higher than both Aurora's upper quartile percentage (73.8%) as well as HUD's baseline of 70%. This percentage exceeds HUD's requirement for percentage of low- and moderate-income households in a revitalization area.

Figure 3. LMI Population by Block Group and Total Area, City of Aurora NRSA

Block Group	Total Population	Number of people low/mod	% low/mod income			
170898529051	964	602	62.4%			
170898529052	2,113	1693	80.1%			
170898529072	889	693	77.9%			
170898532001	1,614	1356	84.0%			
170898532002	2,688	2188	81.4%			
170898532003	1,559	900	57.7%			
170898533002	588	450	76.5%			
170898533003	1,667	1352	81.1%			
170898539001	592	291	49.1%			
170898547001	694	494	71.2%		Population Low/Mod	10,922
170898547002	1,349	905	67.1%		Total Population of NRSA Area:	14,717
TOTAL	14717	10922			TOTAL	74.21%

Source: ACS 5-Year 2019-2023 Low- and Moderate-Income Summary Data, Hud Exchange

3 COMMUNITY CONSULTATIONS

As part of the development of the NRSA Plan, the Community Development Division (CDD) conducted a thorough, multi-layered consultation process with City staff, key stakeholders, and the general public in both formal and informal settings. Consultation was developed from previous planning work, including the multi-year 2017 Downtown Master Plan that generated input from hundreds of residents. In addition, outreach for the NRSA was part of a larger community consultation strategy for the FY2025 – FY2029 Consolidated Plan update, which guides the use of all federal housing and community development funds. The series of events were mostly held in August 2024, which helped the CDD set priorities and performance goals leading up to the creation of the Plan.



Outreach Methodology

Public events were advertised using the following strategies throughout December 2024:

- Created a project website with information about the Consolidated Planning process and NRSA update, and ways in which the public could provide input. All public notices and information were posted to this website.²
- Made a presentation about the Consolidated Plan and NRSA update to the Block Grant Working Committee on 1/22/2025 and the Public Health Safety, and Transportation Committee Meeting on 1/28/2025
- Issued public notices to the Aurora *Beacon News* as well as *Reflejos*, a regional bilingual Latino publication.
- E-mailed engagement materials to more than 400 key stakeholders.

Stakeholder Engagement

The City maintains a list of more than 400 community stakeholders. These stakeholders were contacted for participation in interviews and community meetings. Through these efforts the City engaged 65 individual organizations in the development of the Consolidated Plan and renewed NRSA proposal. Stakeholder perspectives helped to identify specific needs of the community, in particular the downtown area included in the planned NRSA area.

Focus Groups

Community-based organizations, interested residents, and advocates were invited to participate in a series of 6 focus groups on key topical areas: housing affordability and homelessness, disabilities and seniors, youth and education, community improvements/infrastructure, economic development, and general community needs. A total of 65 different representatives participated in one or more of these focus groups. Conversations were robust and centered around how the City can build off of and expand existing programs and develop opportunities to better meet affordable housing and community development needs and goals. In each focus group, Downtown Aurora and its surrounding neighborhoods, including the existing NRSA, were consistently mentioned as areas with a concentration of poverty, a higher prevalence of housing problems for both renters and homeowners that is exacerbated by the area's older housing stock, and a lack of neighborhood amenities. The most prevalent concern brought up across all meetings was the lack of affordable housing and that the current affordable housing options are still out of the price range of many who qualify. Security deposits, language barriers, navigating processes, waitlists, credit and background checks, and accessibility challenges were all noted as barriers to finding and securing affordable housing. The need for transportation also emerged as a theme throughout these discussions, noting the need for expanded hours, additional bus routes, and increased proximity of transit routes. The need for more widespread affordable childcare options is an increasing concern, especially for families who work non-traditional hours or on weekends. Other needs noted from the meetings included the need for road and sidewalk repair, digital literacy and professional development opportunities, the need for more shelters and transitional housing, and the need for expanded language services to assist LEP residents with navigation and connecting to resources.

Community Open House Forums

The City hosted three (3) Open House meetings to collect thoughts, experiences, and perspectives on community needs. Two (2) of the meetings were hosted in-person and one (1) was offered virtually. During these meetings, participants engaged in a priority ranking activity on a range of topics. Homelessness prevention and services for individuals with mental disabilities were the top voted public service needs. Community centers was voted as the top community facility and infrastructure need. Parks, warming centers, and City lighting were all noted as infrastructure needs. Economic development opportunities for downtown and job training opportunities were voted as the top economic development needs. Housing for older adults (ages 55+), housing and services for low-income families, and supporting first-time homebuyers and providing homeownership opportunities were all noted as top housing needs.

Formal Public Comments

Residents and stakeholders were invited to provide written comments to the CDD Division during formal 30-day public comment period beginning January 13, 2025. Comments will be added upon completion of public comment period.

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4 DEMOGRAPHIC DATA AND ASSESSMENT

The age distribution in the NRSA closely mirrors that of the City, with some notable differences. The NRSA has a slightly higher proportion of young children, youth under 18, and seniors aged 65 and older compared to the City as a whole. Specifically, 8.4% of the NRSA's population is under 5 years old, compared to 6.4% in the City. Similarly, 12% of the NRSA's population is aged 65 and older, compared to 10.5% in the City.

Population Statistics, NRSA compared to the City of Aurora				
	NRSA		City of Aurora	
	Number	%	Number	%
Total Population	14,717	100%	181,405	100%
Under 5	1,233	8.4%	11,559	6.4%
Under 18	4,035	27.4%	48,473	26.7%
Ages 18-64	8,911	60.6%	113,879	62.8%
Ages 65 or older	1,771	12.0%	19,053	10.5%

Source: 2018-2022 ACS

Just over half (53.3%) of the NRSA's population identifies as Hispanic, a figure notably higher than the City's rate of 42.3%. Approximately 10.2% of the City's total Hispanic population resides in the NRSA, even though only 8.1% of the City's total population lives there. The NRSA has a significantly smaller proportion of White residents, with only 29% identifying as White, compared to 63.8% in the City overall. Additionally, the percentage of people identifying as two or more races is higher in the NRSA (23.4%) than in the City as a whole (16.6%).

Race and Ethnicity in the NRSA and City of Aurora				
	NRSA		City of Aurora	
	Number	%	Number	%
Total Population	14,717	100%	181,405	100%
White	4,270	29.0%	115,708	63.8%
Black	1,288	8.8%	23,708	12.7%
American Indian or Alaska Native	423	2.9%	3,921	2.2%
Asian	218	1.5%	21,831	12%
Hawaiian and Pacific Islander	0	0%	406	0.2%
Other	2,035	13.8%	47,251	26%
Two or More Races	3,445	23.4%	30,037	16.6%
Hispanic	7,840	53.3%	76,816	42.3%

Source: 2018-2022 ACS

The NRSA has a significantly higher proportion of renter-occupied housing units compared to the City. Approximately half of all housing units in the NRSA are renter-occupied, compared to about 32% in the City. Additionally, the NRSA experiences higher rates of cost burden and severe cost burden among both homeowner and renter households. Around 55% of renter households in the NRSA are cost burdened, with 27% facing severe cost burdens. In contrast, 44% of renter households in the City are cost burdened, and 21% are severely cost burdened.

Cost Burden in the NRSA and City of Aurora				
	NRSA		City of Aurora	
	Number	%	Number	%
Total Housing Units	5,438	100%	63,468	100%
Homeowners	2,423	44.6%	40,402	63.7%
Cost Burdened	568	23.4%	8,707	21.6%
Severely Cost Burdened	231	9.5%	3,488	8.6%
Renters	2,739	50.4%	20,090	31.7%
Cost Burdened	1,516	55.4%	8,848	44%
Severely Cost Burdened	740	27%	4,260	21.2%

Source: 2018-2022 ACS

In the NRSA, 16.5% of residents report having some high school education or less, compared to just 12% in the City. However, the NRSA has a higher percentage of residents with a high school diploma, some college education, or an Associate's degree than the City average. Conversely, the percentage of residents in the NRSA who have attained at least a Bachelor's degree is nearly 50% lower than that of the City.

Educational Attainment in the NRSA and the City of Aurora				
	NRSA		City of Aurora	
	Number	%	Number	%
Total Population	14,717	100%	181,405	100%
Some high school or less	2,424	16.5%	21,856	12.1%
High School diploma	2,658	18.1%	24,514	13.50%
Some college or Associate's degree	2,667	18.1%	27,944	15.40%
At least a Bachelor's degree	1,009	6.9%	24,491	13.50%

Source: 2018-2022 ACS

Approximately 43.5% of housing units in the City were built before 1980. In the NRSA, however, nearly 90% of housing units date back to before 1980, despite the area containing only 8.6% of the City's total housing stock. The median gross rent in the NRSA is about \$200 lower than the City's overall median, and the median home value in the NRSA is significantly lower than the City-wide median home value.

Housing Data in the NRSA and City of Aurora				
	NRSA		City of Aurora	
	Number	%	Number	%
Total Housing Units	5,438	100%	63,468	100%
Housing Units Build Pre-1980	4,805	88.4%	27,631	43.5%
Median Gross Rent	\$1,265		\$1,462	
Median Home Value	\$188,956		\$241,600	

Approximately 19% of residents in the NRSA have median incomes below \$25,000, which is 8% higher than the rate for the City overall. The NRSA also has higher proportions of residents with median incomes between \$0 and \$74,999 compared to the City. However, as income levels rise, the City surpasses the NRSA in median income distribution. Notably, the proportion of residents with median incomes of \$150,000 or more is about three times higher in the City than in the NRSA.

Household Income in the NRSA and the City of Aurora				
	NRSA		City of Aurora	
	Number	%	Number	%
Median Income	\$56,949,00		85,943	
Less than \$25,000	982	19.0%	6,691	11.1%
\$25,000 - \$34,999	355	6.9%	2,960	4.9%
\$35,000 - \$49,999	1,015	19.6%	6,166	10.2%
\$50,000 - \$74,999	1,057	20.4%	10,088	16.7%
\$75,000 - \$99,999	721	13.9%	8,495	14.0%
\$100,000 - \$124,999	440	8.5%	6,283	10.4%
\$125,000 - \$149,999	223	4.3%	5,539	9.2%
\$150,000 or more	379	7.3%	14,270	23.6%
Source: 2018-2022 ACS				

The NRSA has a lower proportion of family households compared to the City as a whole. While nearly three-quarters of the City's households are family households, only about 66% of households in the NRSA fall into this category. Among family households, the NRSA has a smaller percentage of married families with children compared to the City. However, the NRSA has higher proportions of single-parent families, particularly those headed by single females with children, than the City average.

Household Type in the NRSA and the City of Aurora				
	NRSA		City of Aurora	
	Number	%	Number	%
Total Households	5,172		60,492	
Family Households	3,401	65.8%	44,723	73.9%
Married with Children	1,044	30.7%	16,668	37.3%
Single with Children	713	21.0%	7,148	16.0%
Single Female with Children	489	14.4%	4,914	11.0%
Other Families	1,644	48.3%	20,907	46.8%
Source: 2018-2022 ACS				

Single-family detached homes are the most prevalent housing type in both the NRSA and the City, comprising over half of all housing units in each area. However, the City has approximately four times as many single-family attached homes as the NRSA. In contrast, the NRSA has higher percentages of 2-unit homes, duplexes, units in small apartment buildings, and units in large apartment buildings compared to the City.

Housing Type in the NRSA and the City of Aurora				
	NRSA		City of Aurora	
	Number	%	Number	%
Single Family detached homes	30,056	56.2%	37,236	58.7%
Single family attached homes	240	4.4%	10,379	16.4%
2-unit homes and duplexes	639	11.8%	3,058	4.8%
Units in small apartment buildings	1,034	19.0%	10,390	16.4%
Units in large apartment buildings	461	8.5%	2,275	3.6%
Mobile homes or manufactured housing	8	0.2%	110	0.2%
Other types	0	0	20	0.0%
Source: 2018-2022 ACS				

5 STRATEGIC PLAN

The *NRSA Plan* includes a set of eight housing, economic development, and neighborhood revitalization goals developed from a Needs Assessment and Market Analysis, stakeholder consultations, and public input. These goals mirror the strategic plan in the FY2025 – FY2029 Consolidated Plan. Some goals apply more broadly to low- and moderate-income households across the City; however, given the prevalence of housing issues within the NRSA, the City of Aurora anticipates using the NRSA designation as a tool to guide additional investment into Downtown Aurora and its surrounding neighborhoods along the Fox River through increased investment opportunities (i.e. additional grant or loan resources by being located in the NRSA).

Potential Challenges

Limited English Proficiency

Community outreach and education about available resources for housing and services is a challenge across the City. However, community awareness about programs and resources is particularly lacking for about one out of every five individuals in Aurora over 5-years-old who have difficulty speaking English.¹¹ Given the NRSA's concentration of Hispanic households in the City, improving language access and community outreach will be a critical component to the implementation of this Plan. This was a concern raised throughout consultation as well.

High Percentage of Population without a High School Degree

Income disparity in the City is correlated to the lack of educational attainment as median earnings rise with advanced education.

Diploma/equivalency has not been sufficient to secure middle-income jobs for years, and individuals without technical training or substantial work history can have a difficult time securing employment altogether. Often, these workers are paid low wages, receive limited or nonexistent benefits, work erratic part-time schedules, and suffer higher unemployment rates than residents with higher educational attainment. These households would benefit from subsidized housing and other public services to make living in Aurora affordable. Revitalization goals will need to include workforce development training that promotes educational attainment and skill building tools.

¹¹ 2013-2017 American Community Survey, Population over 5 years old who speak English less than "very well."

Higher Renovation Costs Associated with Older Infrastructure and Building Stock

Neighborhoods thrive when buildings are intact and in use. Historic properties and other vacant and underutilized buildings are in need of significant investment for environmental remediation, upgrades to meet building code, and structural repair. The cost to renovate old buildings is often not financially viable for investors and developers, and puts homeownership out of reach for many households.

Older housing stock makes accommodating modern environmental and housing code standards challenging. With steep stairs and narrow hallways, for example, it is often difficult for those with limited mobility to remain in their homes. Neglected environmental hazards from dated ventilation methods, old water systems, and the use of lead-based materials trigger a range of health issues that may displace residents who are unable to remediate these issues.

Abandoned Properties

The number of vacant residential properties has increased in the last several years, causing a number of issues including threats to safety and depressed real estate values.

Opportunities

Financial Empowerment Center (FEC) Replication Initiative

The Cities for Financial Empowerment (CFE) Fund provides funding and focused technical assistance to mayors and their teams to promote systemic financial empowerment programs and policies into city services that improve individual and financial stability. The CFE Fund began working with the City in 2018, and in Summer 2019 the City released an RFP to hire a community-based organization to partner with the City to develop and manage the FEC as well as coordinate and build partnerships among other organizations. Services at the FEC include financial counseling assistance – reducing debt, establishing and improving credit, connecting to safe and affordable banking services, building savings, and budgeting, among other activities. These activities will help expand housing opportunities for low- and moderate-income households and directly support this plan's goals (outlined below).

The Neighborhood Group Support Initiative

The Initiative helps residents organize in their neighborhoods, giving residents the opportunity to get more information and resources to neighborhoods, voice concerns, and build relationships with the Aurora Police Department. The Initiative began in 2015 at the direction of the Mayor and City Council to strengthen relationships among neighbors, City officials, and police. The CDD can use this initiative to raise awareness about programs, gather additional needs throughout this planning period, and be a liaison with the community. The following neighborhood groups are located within the NRSA boundaries:¹²

- Southwest Neighbors
- The Tomcat 4th Ward Community Group
- Restore the Neighborhood Community Group
- West Park Neighbors
- Lights of the Sacred Heart Community Group
- Boulevard District Neighbors
- United Neighbors
- We are United
- Downtown Aurora Neighbors Association
- Community Connection

Strong Community Partner Network

The City has a strong network of community-based organizations, of which, many have offices within the NRSA boundaries. The following organizations will help disseminate information about programs and services, partner on various projects of the plan, or may help administer programs on behalf of the City:

- Hesed House
- Mutual Ground
- Rebuilding Together Aurora
- The Neighbor Project
- World Relief Aurora
- Fox Valley United Way
- Family Focus Aurora
- Breaking Free, Inc.
- Aurora Downtown
- Hope For Tomorrow, Inc.
- Community Foundation of the Fox River Valley
- Aurora Quad County Urban League
- Aurora Regional Chamber of Commerce
- Quad County African American Chamber of Commerce
- The Women's Business Development Center - Aurora
- Aurora Hispanic Chamber of Commerce
- Waubensee Community College
- East Aurora School District 131
- Invest Aurora

¹² A Comprehensive Map of Registered Neighborhood Maps can be accessed at <https://www.aurora-il.org/DocumentCenter/View/2811/Neighborhood-Comprehensive-Group-Map-24-by-36-PDF>

Goals and Performance Outcomes

Through a review of housing and economic data, planning studies, and consultation with stakeholders and interested residents, CDD has identified five priority needs for the NRSA: 1) Affordable Housing; 2) Homeless Prevention; 3) Neighborhood Revitalization; 4) Capacity Building, and 5) Sustainability. The City will continue to address these needs as part of a renewed NRSA proposal.

The CDD will implement specific strategies within the NRSA and across the City across four goals. These goals include: 1) Expand the Affordable Housing Stock; 2) Ensure the Housing Stock is Safe, Healthy, and Accessible for All Residents; 3) Public Service Assistance; and 4) Enhance and Improve Access to the Number of Community Amenities in Low- and Moderate-Income Areas.

In the NRSA, CDD is interested in assisting non-housing investments that increase the desirability of the area through increased community amenities, public investments, and economic opportunities. CDD is also committed to preserving and expanding affordable housing opportunities in the City to help combat displacement from rising property values rise as a result of investment.

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Goal	Description	Performance Outcomes
Expand the Affordable Housing Stock	Expanding the existing affordable housing stock with newly produced units will assist in meeting the intensifying need for affordable housing in Aurora. Throughout this Consolidated Planning period, housing restricted to households below 80% AMI will be considered; however, RFPs will prioritize projects that increase the stock of permanent supportive housing, family-sized units, housing restricted to households who earn less than 50% of the area median income, and special needs groups, including housing for older adults, physically and developmentally disabled, persons who are mentally ill, persons with substance use disorders, victims of domestic violence, and persons with HIV/AIDS who often live on fixed incomes.	Support the development of 15 units of new affordable housing units in the NRSA.
Ensure the Housing Stock is Safe, Healthy, and Accessible for all residents	Housing rehab activities will promote long-term, community-based housing options for older adults and persons with physical and developmental disabilities to age in place; promote actions that decrease environmental hazards, such as lead-based paint or lead poisoned drinking water, and other hazards as part of the Healthy Homes Rating System. Funds may also be used to support policies and programs that increase a community's ability to respond to natural disasters and other impacts of climate change, particularly for vulnerable populations.	Provide rehabilitation assistance to 210 households in the NRSA.
Public Service Assistance	Activities that promote this goal include tenant-based rental/mortgage assistance for the prevention of homelessness, rapid-rehousing, the development of new permanent supportive housing units, community-based shelter facilities, and needed public services that increase economic opportunities, reduce poverty, or support special needs populations.	Public service activities other than Low/Moderate Income Housing Benefit: 29,951 Persons Assisted

Enhance and Improve Access to Community Amenities in Low and Moderate Income Communities	Targeted neighborhood investments that provide safe and accessible pedestrian modes of transportation from affordable housing communities to neighborhood amenities and public transit, promote crime prevention through environmental design standards, and adds neighborhood amenities (i.e. public art, community gardens, playgrounds, and parks) that enhance the quality of life.	Public Facility or Infrastructure Activities other than Low/Moderate Income Housing Benefit: 7,375 Persons Assisted
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Leverage Potential

With limited federal resources and a significant amount of needs, the City of Aurora will need to leverage other public and private resources to stretch CDBG funding to better promote the goals outlined in this plan. Some of these resources may be:

Federally Designated Opportunity Zones

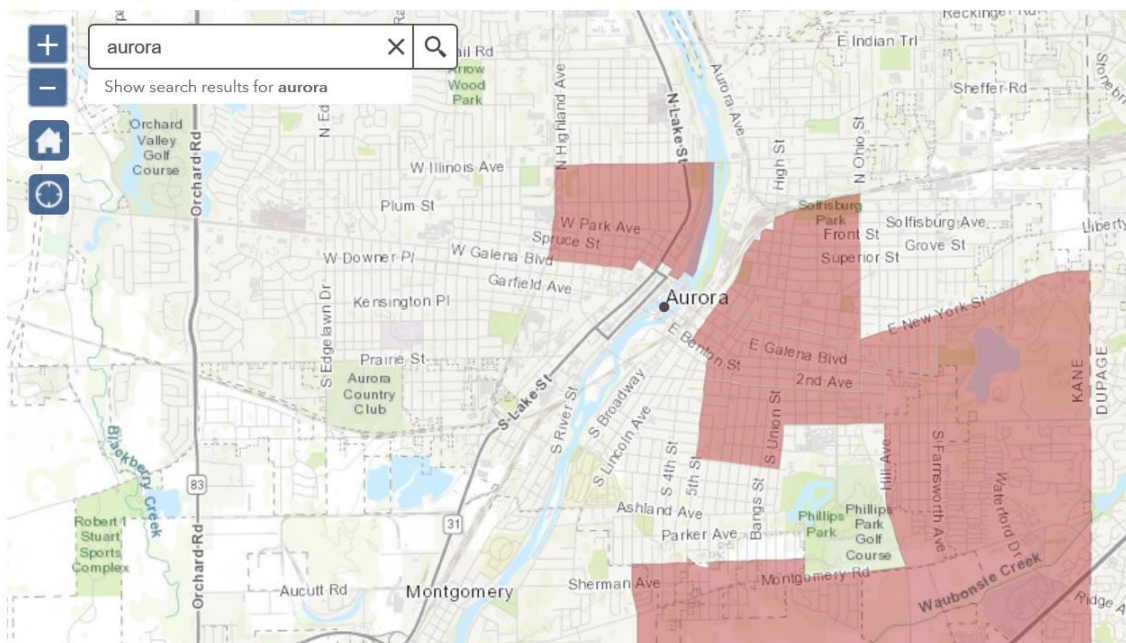
Qualified Opportunity Zones were created by the 2017 Tax Cuts and Jobs Act to encourage long-term investment and job creation in low-income areas throughout the Country. Investors with projects located in designated census tracts are provided tax benefits, which can be deferred on eligible capital gains. Each State designated its own census tracts as Opportunity Zones. Outside of Chicago, the State of Illinois limited each jurisdiction to five designated census tracts to equitably distribute areas of opportunity throughout the state. Four out of the City of Aurora's five designated Opportunity Zones are located within the NRSA, which presents an opportunity for the City target leverage its CDBG resources to promote affordable housing and community economic development goals alongside economic development activity.

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Figure 16. Federally Designated Opportunity Zones within the City of Aurora

DCEO

Illinois Opportunity Zones



Source: Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity, Illinois Opportunity Zones, <https://www2.illinois.gov/dceo/Pages/OppZn.aspx>

Federal and State Tax Credits

- **Low Income Housing Tax Credit:** The federal Low Income Housing Tax Credit (4% and 9% Programs) gives investors a dollar-for-dollar reduction in their federal tax liability in exchange for providing financing to develop affordable rental housing. Investors' equity contribution subsidizes low-income housing development, thus allowing some units to rent at below-market rents. In return, investors receive tax credits paid in annual allotments, generally over 10 years.
- **New Markets Tax Credit:** The New Markets Tax Credit program is designed to attract investment for economic development projects in low income areas. Investors contribute to a community development entity which then makes an investment in a qualified active low income community business. The investor receives a 5% tax credit in each of first three years and a 6% credit in each of the remaining four years for a total of a 39% tax credit over seven years.
- **Rivers Edge Tax Credit:** State of Illinois program that provides a state income-tax credit up to 25% of a project's qualified rehabilitation expenses to owners of certified historic structures located within River Edge Redevelopment Zones (Aurora, East St. Louis, Elgin, Peoria, and Rockford).
- **Federal Historic Preservation Tax Credit:** The Federal Historic Preservation Tax Credit program provides a 20% tax credit for the substantial rehabilitation of an income producing property that is certified as historic. Rehab projects must meet specific standards for rehabilitation to qualify.