



SCOPE OF WORK

Urban Land Institute Chicago/Metropolitan Planning Council City of Aurora/Aurora Housing Authority (AHA) Technical Assistance Panel

Background

Jericho Circle is a 13-acre site owned by the Aurora Housing Authority (AHA) that previously contained 28 residential buildings with 145 dwelling units. In September 2010, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) approved demolition of the buildings at Jericho Circle. AHA commissioned a thorough structural review of the buildings finding that the buildings were well beyond repair and would need to be torn down.

The previous administration at the AHA had been working on an effort to replace the lost units of affordable housing at the Jericho site. Initially, the AHA represented that the rebuilding of public housing on-site would be a condition of the demolition, and thus the City included the AHA's plans to rebuild a "mixed-income" development at the Jericho Circle site in its 2010-2014 Consolidated Plan. However, when HUD clarified that rebuilding affordable housing at the Jericho site was not a condition of demolition, the City took the position that the AHA's plans to move forward to rebuild were not consistent with the City's 2010-2014 Consolidated Plan. Furthermore, the AHA plans would not have created a truly "mixed-income" development at the site (given the details of two subsequent IHDA LIHTC applications submitted for the site in 2011 and 2012).

Aurora Mayor Thomas Weisner appointed an Affordable Housing Task Force in the fall of 2011. While the scope of the Task Force was city-wide, the Task Force was also designed to facilitate community dialogue on several specific issues, including the growing inventory of foreclosed homes and the need to address the loss of 145 public housing units being demolished at Jericho Circle. In addition, the City hired consultants to undertake a comprehensive affordable housing study with recommended action steps. The study recommended that the City adopt the Housing Endorsement Principles and Criteria from the Metropolitan Mayors Caucus and review and amend (if necessary) their 2010-2014 Consolidated Plan to ensure consistency with this newly adopted criteria. Upon conclusion of this effort, the City eliminated the inclusion of AHA's plan for Jericho Circle to be rebuilt as a mixed income development from the City's Consolidated Plan. Shortly after this time, the AHA filed a discrimination complaint with the HUD Fair Housing Office in Chicago and moved to block the City from appointing new board members to the AHA. The City ultimately prevailed in the lawsuit and HUD subsequently treated the complaint as having been withdrawn.

Since that time, a new Executive Director – Keith Gregory – has been hired at the AHA and the relationship between the AHA and City has improved. Mr. Gregory and a new majority on the AHA Board have agreed to pursue a scattered site tax credit application with Brinshore Development, similar to a plan that had received broad-based support as part of the Affordable Housing Task Force and in three public forums. However, there has yet to be a full exploration of the various options for redevelopment of the Jericho Circle site – or of other ways to cooperatively fund and/or further affordable housing development in the City as a whole. The role of the Technical Assistance Panel (TAP) is to determine the most appropriate use for the Jericho site, as well as recommend other strategies for the City and AHA to pursue to create additional affordable housing opportunities throughout Aurora. The TAP panel will explore and incorporate the impact of the foreclosure crisis on neighborhood stabilization, shifts in Aurora’s demographic composition over the past decade, transportation access and the availability of land near Metra and high frequency bus routes.

Scope of Work

Questions for the Panel

1. What is the most appropriate use of the Jericho Circle 13-acre site? Could a mixed-use redevelopment plan address the previous challenges? If not, what is the appropriate use of the site in light of the location, surrounding land uses, and potential for redevelopment?
 - a. What role, if any, should the City play in the redevelopment effort of the Jericho Circle site with the AHA?
2. What other opportunities and strategies are there for stabilizing neighborhoods and providing affordable housing in Aurora?
 - a. Are there ways the City and AHA can partner on any of these opportunities and strategies?
 - b. How can the City and AHA partner to acquire and rehab foreclosed single-family homes to provide quality rental housing to a range of incomes?
3. Where and what are the greatest opportunities for helping low-income families move to mixed-income neighborhoods with access to transportation and amenities and how can the City and AHA support this effort?