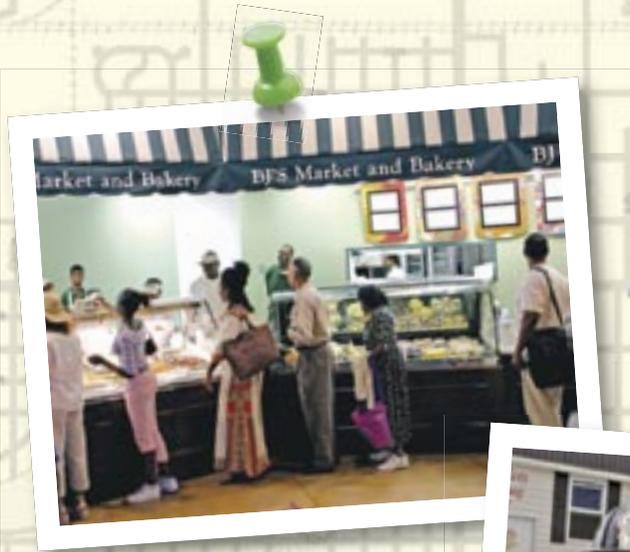


# AUBURN GRESHAM: Chicago's Best-Kept Secret

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



**Auburn Gresham**



# Greater Auburn-Gresham Development Corporation (GADC)

**Planning Task Force**

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.

**Byam Alexander**

**Angela Ball**

**Kham Beard**

**Alberta Brooks**

**Donnie Brown**

**Steve Casey**

**Jackie Collins**

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**Rev. Dennis Dobson**

**John M. Doty**

**James Drake**

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**John Everett**

**Stephanie Gordon-Jones**

**Pat Hanes**

**Delores Johnson**

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**Cynthia Levy**

**Phillip Marley**

**Jasmine McCalpin**

**Mildred McClendon**

**Pat Meyers**

**James Miller**

**Clarice E. Mills**

**Willie Mitchell**

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**Amanda Norman**

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*(32nd) State of Illinois*

**Terry Peterson**

**Rev. Michael Pflieger**

*Faith Community of*

*St. Sabina*

**Lisa Ramsey**

**Al Simms**

**Betty Swanson**

**Ald. Latasha Thomas**

*(17th) City of Chicago*

**Barbara Washington**

**Julie Welborn**

**Sally Wells**

*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.

## Welcoming and Safe, Growing and Thriving



Arts and culture should become part of the Auburn Gresham way of life.

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.

# KEY PROJECTS

Thurgood Marshall Library

Oglesby School

"Model Block" focused residential rehab area

Small business development  
Technical assistance  
Chamber of Commerce

Cook Elementary

Restructure Calumet High School

Focus on 79th Street  
Facade Improvements  
Attract New Business

New housing  
Langston Cove

Westcott Elementary

Simeon High School



# 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.

## **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 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.

## **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.

## **For more information**

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To download full plans, go online to:

**[www.newcommunities.org](http://www.newcommunities.org)**

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