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MAYORS AND CIVIC LEADERS WORK TOGETHER ON HOUSING FOR THE FUTURE

AURORA, LIBERTYVILLE AND OAK FOREST ARE FIRST TO BENEFIT FROM DEMONSTRATION PROJECT

CHICAGO -- Suburban leaders in the Chicago region have examined housing trends in their communities and are making plans today to help fulfill the housing needs of residents in 2030.

Aurora, Libertyville and Oak Forest are the first of nine suburbs to participate in a demonstration project offered by the Metropolitan Mayors Caucus and Chicago Metropolis 2020.

With the voluntary and active participation of leaders of those three cities, the project has developed a housing policy plan for each of those cities. The housing policy plans analyze existing housing stock and needed housing; project future housing needs; and suggest strategies to meet those future needs.

Unlike many housing policy plans that focus only on low-income or subsidized housing, this pilot takes the unique approach of creating a balanced housing mix across the entire income spectrum.

"Because each city has different challenges and different needs, a successful housing plan cannot be one-size-fits-all," said Zenovia G. Evans, Mayor of the Village of Riverdale and co-chair of the Metropolitan Mayors Caucus' Housing Committee. "We've looked at the distinct characteristics of each community and proposed some strategies that can make the communities even better places to live in the future."

The new publication, "Homes for a Changing Region, Phase Two," is an easy-to-read resource that uses the latest Census data, expert projections, zoning maps and photo-simulations. It is a guide to assist those three demonstration communities, and it demonstrates best practices in housing planning to municipalities across the region.

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“When a community examines its housing needs, it is important to look at available housing that residents can afford and not just what is provided by the market,” said King Harris, a Senior Executive at Chicago Metropolis 2020. “Because these communities have a mix of income levels and can anticipate demographic changes through the next decade, they will need a range of housing affordable to a variety of income levels.

“The recent increase in mortgage foreclosures in our region and elsewhere cannot be blamed solely on adjustable rate mortgages and predatory lenders,” Harris said. “Many families simply could not find homes they could afford close to their jobs. In the future, we want them to be able to find more options throughout our region.”

The ultimate goal for these housing policy plans is to serve as the first step in creating a balanced stock of affordable housing for each community in the region.

Because the housing challenges are a regional issue, the policy plans examine sub-regional data as well as the housing needs of the municipality. A plan will be developed for one municipality in each of the Chicago region’s nine councils of governments. In addition to the City of Chicago, the Metropolitan Mayors Caucus consists of 272 suburban municipalities in nine sub-regional councils of governments.

The leaders of three additional suburbs – Gurnee, Montgomery and Northlake – have begun working with the Metropolitan Mayors Caucus and Chicago Metropolis 2020 on the next round of housing policy plans. The third and final round of three cities will be selected at a later date.

The 2005 report “Homes for a Changing Region” forecast a serious mismatch between the type of housing being planned in the Chicago region and the housing likely to be needed by the growing population. The report warned that too many large-lot, expensive single family homes and too few small-lot single family homes, town houses and condominiums were being planned.

In this second phase of the “Homes for a Changing Region” project, the Metropolitan Mayors Caucus and Chicago Metropolis 2020 encouraged communities to take action to eliminate the mismatch, and the second phase of the project is bringing in experts to work directly with community leaders on the formulation of multi-year housing plans.

Copies of the 2005 report and the new 2007 report featuring Aurora, Libertyville and Oak Forest are available at www.mayorscaucus.org and www.chicagometropolis2020.org.

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ADDITIONAL QUOTATIONS AND CONTACT INFORMATION

Aurora Mayor Tom Weisner: “The recent growth of Aurora has been strong, making us the second largest city in Illinois, and we’re forecasted to continue that growth trend, as much as a 12 percent increase by 2030. By working with neighboring communities and monitoring our housing supply, we can meet the challenge of that growth and housing needs for all.”

Contact Mayor Weisner at 630-844-3612

Libertyville Mayor Jeffrey A. Harger: “Housing prices have climbed so sharply that many long time Libertyville residents are finding it difficult to remain in their houses and apartments. We’ll use this research and recommendations to help us find ways to encourage new housing that is affordable to a wide range of incomes.”

Contact Mayor Harger at 847-362-2430

Oak Forest Mayor JoAnn Kelly: “As with many other suburbs, the City of Oak Forest is changing and likely will look much different 25 years from now. This housing policy plan explains the benefits of planning for a variety of housing types and has helped us envision ways to make Oak Forest even more attractive for families who want an easy commute to their jobs in the Loop and for new businesses.”

Contact Mayor Kelly at 708-687-4050

About the Metropolitan Mayors Caucus

The Metropolitan Mayors Caucus is a voluntary collaboration of the Mayor of the City of Chicago and the Mayors and Presidents of the suburban municipalities in the region acting through their councils of governments. The Mayors Caucus provides a forum through which the chief elected officials of the region cooperatively develop consensus on common public policy issues and multi-jurisdictional challenges.

Contact David E. Bennett, Executive Director at 312-201-4505

About Chicago Metropolis 2020

Chicago Metropolis 2020 is a nonprofit civic organization created in 1999 by The Commercial Club of Chicago to promote long-term planning, better regional cooperation, and smart investment in the Chicago region and its people.

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