

POAH Awarded \$750,000 to Advance 'Renew Woodlawn' Plan Efforts

To help re-energize the Woodlawn neighborhood, the State of Illinois has awarded POAH \$750,000 to purchase, rehabilitate and re-sell vacant and abandoned small buildings in the community for homeownership.



The funding, provided by a national foreclosure settlement with attorneys general across the country, will be paired with \$1.5 million in Choice Neighborhood funds for acquisition and resale of 75 homes in Woodlawn on blocks affected by the foreclosure crisis.

POAH continues to seek additional funds for the undertaking titled 'Renew Woodlawn.'

"Choice Neighborhood funds have supported a robust rental housing market; however in order to support the broader mixed-use strategy for the Woodlawn community, we have to expand housing options, including homeownership. This award will create a homeownership fund to support the acquisition and resale of homes in blocks hardest hit by foreclosure," said Bill Eager, Vice President, POAH Chicago.

Activities of the fund will range from acquiring and securing abandoned properties to ultimately rehabbing and re-selling the properties to responsible homeowners.

"By rebuilding and rehabilitating vacant and abandoned properties to turn around blighted portions of the Woodlawn neighborhood, POAH looks to provide a critical option to homeowners and renters to build and re-energize the community," said Eager.

Community Garden



6100 S. St. Lawrence Block Club Community Garden Project has built an urban garden to teach sustainable urban agriculture and job skills, establish food gardens and provide for residents. Bill Morrisett serves as the master gardener and has given strategic direction on the garden's design.

"FROM THE CHICAGO OFFICE" continued from front

Our commercial development work is focused on three areas: the northwest corner of 61st and Cottage, where we are considering a hotel or other large development; the northeast corner of 63rd and Cottage, and a broader area around that intersection. We are working with the city and other stakeholders to develop a new vision of what is possible at that intersection, and along the 63rd Street corridor.

We will keep you posted on our progress through this publication and during our various community engagement activities.

SUMMER 2013

FROM THE GROVE

A Preservation of Affordable Housing NEWSLETTER

From the Chicago Office

The Cottage Grove corridor continues to be a bustling place, with another phase of development nearly complete and two more buildings getting underway in the coming months.

By year's end, all of the original Grove Parc Plaza apartments south of 61st Street will have been demolished, replaced with attractive new construction in their place continuing the transformation of this neighborhood.



In the broader neighborhood, rehabilitation of the soon-to-be renamed Westwood Apartments is finally complete, with all 51 market-rate apartments (of 102 total units) leased and occupied. Thanks to the efforts of our neighbors and our property management staff, Preservation Housing Management (PHM), the Westwood buildings continue to operate smoothly and enhance 62nd Street in West Woodlawn.

Meanwhile, construction of Woodlawn Center North (also to be renamed), a 33-unit mixed income building on the east side of Cottage, is scheduled for completion in September and slated for full occupancy by year's end. We start construction on the 65-unit senior building on the west side of Cottage Grove in late 2013, and are negotiating the transfer of land at 61st and Cottage to Metrosquash, which is nearing its fundraising goal of \$6.5 million to begin construction of a facility that will serve 250 children a mix of athletics (squash), tutoring and mentoring by March 1.

We also continue to plan for the development of more market-rate housing and commercial development in pursuit of our broader redevelopment plans. We are designing a 24-unit mixed-use market-rate property for the southeast corner of 61st and Cottage for which we hope to break ground in 2014.

See "FROM THE CHICAGO OFFICE" back cover >>>

Woodlawn Center South Wins Award



POAH's Woodlawn Center South development has been selected as the 'Multi-Family' category winner for the 2013 Residential Energy Efficiency Award by the State and Local Energy Report, a quarterly magazine that focuses on energy-related issues. The project was lauded as an excellent example of what organizations can achieve with creative thinking, new technologies and dedication.

The 67 apartments at Woodlawn Center South, the first building of the multi-phase redevelopment of the former Grove Parc Apartments, was constructed to be both attractive and sustainable. The buildings were designed to be energy efficient and environmentally responsible, including super insulated slab walls and roofs, low -U-value (low energy loss) windows, and an air-tight building envelope. Outside, 100% of all storm water is retained on site for irrigation of planting beds and shrubs, and does not enter the city's sewer system.

"We're delighted with the award," says Bill Eager, Vice President, POAH Chicago. "We build for the benefit of our future tenants; it's a great pleasure when sensible work is honored for its community benefit as well."

It Takes a Village to Stop a Killing

Neighborhood safety remains Woodlawn residents' primary concern. Fortunately for the community, 2013 is proving to be much calmer than 2012, with crime down in all three major categories tracked by the Chicago Police Department – violent crime, property crime and quality of life crimes. Most notably, there have been a total of two homicides in Woodlawn, in January and in July. There were 12 by this date in 2012.

The loss of life under violent circumstances is tragic and our sympathy is extended to the families of the victims, but we are grateful for this reduction in fatal violence.

It is difficult to name one or two contributing factors, but the Chicago police have ramped up anti-gang efforts and increased overtime to provide greater coverage through foot patrols and special operations. In addition, Woodlawn is among the communities Ceasefire is working in under a contract with the City.



Pictured at the 3rd District Convening Beat Meeting are youth who participated in the Chicago Youth Leadership Academy, an innovative program for male teenagers, between 13 – 17, where they have an opportunity to experience college life while being mentored by Chicago Police officers who focus on providing a structured and disciplined life-skills curriculum.

Woodlawn Public Safety Alliance (WPSA) has made great strides in community organizing, including partnering with POAH and PlayStreets on an initiative to encourage young residents to engage and become physically active in the community.

Recognizing its progress in a June 24th letter to its board of trustees, the Woodlawn Public Safety Alliance wrote: "We are grateful to report that Woodlawn has only experienced one homicide this year [the second occurred over the July 4 weekend]. We are grateful to God for this lull in fatal violence. We also acknowledge that continued vigilance in prayer and community support are required to sustain this peace for which we are all grateful."

In addition, POAH has continued to work closely with neighborhood groups and recently submitted a grant proposal for a Public Safety Enhancement grant to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and Department of Justice to support efforts to address youth violence in the Woodlawn neighborhood.

The program is a school-based counseling, mentoring, violence prevention and educational enrichment system that promotes social-emotional and behavioral competencies in at-risk youth. The proposal supports the Woodlawn community's existing public safety plan that mobilizes residents, forges strong relationships with local police and uses technology with the objective to reduce crime. The program will specifically target youth ages 11-19 living in the neighborhood's highest crime areas.

"By aligning existing City of Chicago resources, community organizing and evidence-based violence prevention programming as a mechanism to reduce crime in the Woodlawn community, we look to deliver an innovative approach to reduce violent crime, gang activity and illegal drug activity in Woodlawn," said Bill Eager, Vice President, POAH Chicago.

In addition, POAH will continue its efforts to work closely with neighborhood groups, the City of Chicago, the University of Chicago and all respective policing organizations in an effort to stabilize the neighborhood and reduce crime.

Planning for School Change in Woodlawn

The Woodlawn community lost two elementary schools, John Fiske Elementary and Dumas Technology Academy, in the recent Chicago Public Schools closing of 54 schools citywide. However, the Woodlawn neighborhood is gaining an International Baccalaureate (IB) program at the Sexton Elementary School which will offer a middle school IB program for sixth through eighth graders.

As a result of the CPS decision, Fiske and Dumas Elementary Schools will be closed, and students from Fiske will merge into Sexton Elementary. The hope is that the Sexton IB program will help prepare students for Woodlawn's Hyde Park Academy's recently established high school IB program, which has a rigorous academic curriculum that includes 100 community service hours.

POAH expects that more than 125 students living in either Grove Parc or other nearby housing will be affected by the school closings and is working with the Woodlawn Children's Promise Community (WCPC) to ensure a smooth transition. With safety a significant concern, POAH staff is engaged locally in the development of a "safe passage" plan to ensure that children can get to and from their new school safely as they cross large streets and travel unfamiliar blocks to reach new schools.

WCPC and Metropolitan Family Services have been working with POAH and others to provide information to families and all community residents to better prepare for the upcoming school year. If you have questions about school assignments or resources contact tchillis@woodlawnpromise.org.

Two New Developments for Cottage Grove Move Closer to Reality

New facilities for both ends of the age spectrum – youth and senior citizens – are up next as part of the redevelopment of Cottage Grove.

The Woodlawn Senior Design Committee has been active in the planning of the senior building to be built on the west side of Cottage Grove just north of 62nd Street. The building will be a five-story complex with a community resource center on the ground floor and 65 well-appointed one and two-bedroom apartments above. Construction is scheduled to begin in late 2013.

The committee recently toured other senior buildings in Chicago to help incorporate the best ideas from similar housing into the new building, and participated in focus groups and planning discussions.

"The tour showed me all the possibilities of what the seniors can have in their building," said Teresa Walton, president of the Grove Parc Tenants Association and member of the design committee. "It was also useful to learn about the building rules and regulations, and what makes their communities work."



In addition to the new senior facility, Metrosquash, the renowned organization that combines sports with academic instruction to enhance educational opportunities for children from 5th through 12th grades, is also making great progress on its development of a recreational facility.

The soon-to-be constructed building on the west side of 61st and Cottage will combine squash courts with classrooms and other amenities for student tutoring and mentoring.

"The game instills good sportsmanship, and is a low-cost, year-round activity with no age, size or physical strength barriers," said Bill Eager, Vice President, POAH Chicago. "We welcome them as an amenity for the whole community."

Metrosquash leadership reports that the organization has raised almost all of the \$6.5 million needed for construction and plans to break ground for the facility in March 2014.

Felicia Dawson, Director, Community Engagement, POAH Chicago, emphasizes the importance of the facility for the community.

"The unique combination of squash and academic instruction along with mentoring, cultural enrichment and community service help students with their self-confidence, independence and academic training in preparation to enter high school and eventually college," says Dawson.



Clockwise starting at the top – Rendering of Metrosquash facility scheduled to be constructed at 61st and Cottage; Rendering of senior building to be built on the west side of 62nd and Cottage Grove; Woodlawn Senior Design Committee touring senior buildings in Chicago and discussing best practices.