

# Building on Legacy:

## Greater Homan Square Strategic Development Plan



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## Executive Summary

With long standing roots in Chicago's North Lawndale community, the Foundation for Homan Square (FHS) has a demonstrated track record in the production and long-term stewardship of quality affordable housing and community facilities. Homan Square Campus is a campus community in comprised of DRW College Prep, Nichols Tower commercial facility, a community center and residential housing units developed, owned and managed by the Foundation for Homan Square.

The success of Homan Square lies in its ability to concentrate local organizations and businesses addressing community needs within the same Campus as the families that utilize their services, creating a sense of place. Organizations range from health care and recreation, to family support services and education, to arts programming and workforce development. Yet, despite the success of the Campus, continued investment is needed to support new development and investment in the broader North Lawndale and East Garfield Park community.

The Greater Homan Square Strategic Development Plan focuses on a shared vision for real estate development contributing to an income-inclusive, healthy community. This Plan aims to build upon the success of the Homan Square Campus by broadening focus to include an additional two to three blocks surrounding the Campus.

Strategic goals outlined in this document are intended as a blueprint to:

- Explore opportunities for development within an expanded Homan Square footprint,
- Develop quality housing across the spectrum of affordability,
- Develop mixed-use and commercial projects that provide space for community programming and local businesses, and

- Inspire potential investment in specific projects within the larger Plan.

Potential redevelopment opportunities surround the Campus footprint. The area, once populated with greater commercial and residential density, now struggles with the challenges presented by vacant lots, abandoned buildings and underutilized sites that negatively impact otherwise strong city blocks. These sites now present infill or redevelopment opportunities that can leverage existing community assets on and around the Homan Square Campus.

As FHS sets sights on this new community-building effort, focus areas prioritizing development opportunities around the Campus footprint are identified in the Plan to guide the work. Dependent upon the specific opportunity, preliminary projects may require the involvement of multiple private and/or nonprofit entities, developers, service providers, and other partnerships. The first of these projects is targeted to break ground within the first year of the Plan and will be developed by FHS. The project will redevelop existing housing units and add new affordable housing units that straddle the existing Homan Square footprint and an adjacent community block.

## Ahead of its Time

The original Sears, Roebuck and Co. property was built in 1905 and included multiple buildings listed on the National Register of Historic Places. In 1989, developer Charlie Shaw, then Sears chairman Ed Brennan and retired Sears vice president Charley Moran, developed a concept plan designed to reinvigorate the community and revitalize the neighborhood of North Lawndale.

Shaw met with Chicago Mayor Richard J. Daley, elected officials, and community and business leaders. These meetings revealed not only deep concern over the future of the community, but clear ideas for what was needed. Community leaders expressed support for a three-pronged development strategy to include new housing, economic development and community services, including recreational and health care facilities.

Shaw knew that such a project would require a massive and long-term partnership of the public, private and community sectors. With pledges of private investment, city commitment, and community support in hand, that original vision for Homan Square transformed into reality.

After 27 years of dedicated service to the Homan Square community, Kristin Dean is stepping down as President of the Foundation for Homan Square. And the Shaw Company, which has provided real estate development and back office support to the FHS, is also winding down.

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## Continuity and Change

IFF is a nonprofit community development financial institution (CDFI) and developer founded in Chicago in 1988 to invest in and financially strengthen nonprofits and the communities they serve. IFF has deep experience in community planning, lending, real estate development and property management in low-income communities.

It has a long history of supporting nonprofits on the West Side, has worked with the FHS for many years<sup>1</sup>, and understands and shares the Foundation for Homan Square's mission.

The Foundation for Homan Square's leadership has asked IFF to formally become the Asset Manager and long-term development partner with the FHS by December 31, 2017. This means FHS and IFF will:

- Become the Asset Manager for the Homan Square Campus properties,
- Work with Homan Square Campus leaders to support program collaboration,
- Work with the community to advance a shared real estate vision to expand redevelopment beyond the Homan Square Campus, and

The Foundation for Homan Square will continue its role as a community-based institution, leading on the program collaboration, and creating a shared vision for continued community development to complement Homan Square.

### Guiding Principles

IFF will take on this role as a steward of the FHS work under the following set of guiding principles developed by FHS leadership.

- The Foundation for Homan Square will **strive towards excellence in all aspects of its daily activities**—property management,

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<sup>1</sup> In the past 10 years alone, IFF has made \$25 million in loans and New Market Tax Credit investments and provided real estate services to dozens of nonprofits in North Lawndale including Lawndale Christian Legal Center, Power

tenant relations and support, customer services and employee morale.

- **FHS commercial buildings will be occupied by organizations that support the long term health and viability of North Lawndale and other West Side neighborhoods.** To date we have focused on: health care; recreation; family support services; education; arts programming and digital media education; workforce development; literacy; housing services; business retention; and economic development. The array of programming may change as the needs of the community change.
- We will **strive to keep our rental rates as low as possible**, with the goal being covering our costs while still making our spaces as affordable as possible for our tenants.
  - We will **strive to hire locally whenever possible**. We will work to train our employees with the goal that they will be prepared to find higher wage jobs elsewhere.

### Community Engagement

IFF will work in partnership with FHS staff to develop and implement a community engagement strategy. FHS/IFF strives to actively involve community members to ensure local stakeholder aspirations are part of all planning and decision-making tied to community development plans and projects. FHS/IFF will work through the Community Advisory Council and the Homan Square Leadership Council as its primary mechanisms to engage local stakeholders as well as to ensure FHS leadership is engaged and collaborative with other community development plans and efforts.

House High School, Lawndale Christian Health Center, Carole Robertson Center for Learning, and Family Focus.



### **A Stronger Foundation**

A lot has changed since the FHS began in 1988. Where vacant properties once stood, there are now hundreds of new homes and apartments, new community facilities and strong community service providers. But some challenges remain. With a stronger set of community partners and community assets, FHS/IFF will continue that original vision of housing, economic development and community services to meet the changing needs of the North Lawndale and East Garfield Park communities.



## **2. HOMAN SQUARE TODAY**

### **A Neighborhood within a Community**

Homan Square is a distinct campus within the larger North Lawndale/ East Garfield Park communities on Chicago's West Side. North Lawndale has seen its population decline and transform. In the early 1900s, North Lawndale rapidly became the third largest Jewish community in the world by the 1930s and over 90% of the population was white at its most populated.

Following World War II, the neighborhood transitioned to become the first community for African-Americans moving to Chicago from the South, and had at its height in 1960 nearly 130,000 residents. Today the population of about 30,000 is 91% black with a median income of about \$24,000. North Lawndale is also challenged by high rates of unemployment and violent crime. The community has many assets including Douglass Park, robust community-based institutions, as well as easy access to train and bus transportation, proximity to the Illinois Medical District and downtown.

### **Current Community Trends**

To understand trends and opportunities pertaining to housing and community development planning, various demographic characteristics were evaluated for a 1-mile radius of the Homan Square Campus. Data were accessed using Cook County's "Connect to Cook" web-based tool, driven by ESRI Business Analyst.

Within this geographic area, but excluding the Homan Square Campus, the majority of housing units were constructed prior to 1939. The majority of units are renter occupied, and the number of vacant units has increased since 2000.

On the campus, the housing is much newer, having started construction in 1993. Additionally, at the present time, there is a waitlist for existing housing options.

As previously mentioned, the Homan Square Campus is advantageously located near numerous community assets including its location in close proximity to rapid transit and regional highway access, employment centers, and community-based / community-focused organizations such as the YMCA, Lawndale Christian Health Center, the School of the Art Institute's satellite campus, and the UCAN campus to name just a few. This proximity yields multiple opportunities for future strategies.

### **Current Campus Assets**

The Foundation for Homan Square fulfilled much of its original vision by redeveloping and repurposing the land and facilities of the original Sears campus (Map 1). Among its accomplishments:

Developing new housing for low and moderate income families.

- 141 units of newly constructed single-family homes & townhouses for sale in Phases I, II, & III
- 242 units of new rental housing in Phases I, IV, V & VI
- Phase I and II subsidized by City of Chicago "New Homes for Chicago" program

Generating economic development and attracting community service providers through the creation of new facilities.

- 70,000 square-foot facility on 9 acres
  - 14,300 square-foot health clinic operated by Lawndale Christian Health Center and serving 20,000 patients annually
  - 8,400 square-foot Family Center operated by Family Focus

- 40,000 square-foot Chicago Park District recreation/fitness center featuring an indoor pool, gym, and activity rooms
- 25,000 square-foot YMCA Child & Family Center owned by the YMCA of Metropolitan Chicago serving infants, toddlers, and pre-school-aged children
- 89,000 square-foot charter high school operated by Nobel Network serving 500 youth
- 45,000 square-foot new Holy Family Lutheran School for K – 8
- 35,000 square-foot Nichols Tower into a nonprofit incubator and shared office space serving 14 agencies including the School of the Art Institute of Chicago



### **3. MOVING FORWARD**

#### **A Comprehensive Development**

From its beginning as the site for the headquarters of Sears, Roebuck and Co., the Homan Square Campus has been developed with a comprehensive approach. Its strategic location in close proximity to the Loop and transportation options benefitted its original development as a major mercantile center, and its comprehensive redevelopment as Homan Square into a vibrant neighborhood reflecting residential, educational, recreational and health uses. The Campus is just 20 minutes from downtown Chicago, and 10 minutes from the Illinois Medical District. Its proximity to multiple job centers is reflected on Map 2.

#### **Community Voice**

As the leaders of the Foundation for Homan Square did some 30 years ago, IFF and current FHS leadership will continue to do today. That is, listen to community residents and stakeholders to guide the future development.

To that end FHS/IFF have set up a Community Advisory Committee comprised of North Lawndale residents, business owners, and representatives from local aldermanic offices and nonprofits. This Committee provides ideas and reviews projects that FHS/IFF will pursue or partner on in the community.

IFF and the FHS also convene a Homan Square Leadership Council (HSLC) comprised of senior leadership of 16 nonprofits located on the Homan Square campus to drive collaboration and deliver comprehensive community supports and services by working as a collective, while delivering on individual missions, goals and outcomes.

North Lawndale also has existing community plans and new ones in formation including the new quality of life plan supported by CMAP and LISC Chicago and the NLCCC, which FHS/IFF will support.

#### **Program Collaboration and Innovation**

The FHS and HSLC will continue to work together to engage community partners, assess current needs and alignment with current program offerings, and increase coordination of the comprehensive array of social services and programming offered on the Homan Square campus.

IFF will support these effort and new ideas for future program collaboration and innovation through: the creation of a Homan Square Innovation Fund that will raise private funds from individual and institutional donors to the FHS; and the supportive coordination by the FHS with campus partners.



**Map 2 - Chicago Metro Job Centers**

This map illustrates the distribution of job centers in the Chicago metropolitan area. Concentric circles are drawn around the Loop, indicating distances of 1, 5, 10, and 15 miles. Major highways (I-55, I-54, I-90, I-94) and the Chicago River are shown. Key locations include O'Hare International Airport, Midway International Airport, and the Illinois Medical District. The map highlights job centers with colored dots and lines, showing a high density of jobs in the Loop and surrounding areas.

**Strengthening the Homan Square Campus**

IFF will work closely with FHS staff and tenants to address needs among all of the assets throughout the campus and to maintain and improve facilities. Nichols Tower is undergoing final tuck pointing and HVAC upgrades; Homan Square Community Center will soon have updated and improved signage, updated HVAC, and a new dental clinic; and DRW Charter School is operating efficiently. FHS/IFF is developing a capital improvement plan for the campus that will provide guidance to maintain and undertake continuous improvements.

#### **4. EXPANDING THE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT VISION**

FHS/IFF will continue to work with partners to extend the vision of housing, economic development and comprehensive services beyond the Campus' current foot print. While IFF will steward the existing housing and facility assets on the Homan Square Campus, IFF will also work with FHS to support Campus partners to collaborate in their program engagement.

This community revitalization initiative will focus on a geography immediately surrounding the existing Homan Square footprint; the greater Homan Square area which is bounded by Kedzie Avenue to the east and Independence Boulevard to the west, Harrison Street to the north, and Roosevelt Road to the south (Map 3).

##### **Development Planning and Phasing**

There are multiple redevelopment opportunities within the greater Homan Square area in the form of vacant land and structures as well as underutilized sites. To help guide development planning, focus areas are identified as either Phase I, Phase II, or future phases (Map 3). The actual implementation of development activities may be undertaken directly by FHS/IFF or FHS/IFF in partnership with others. Additionally, properties may be developed independently by other private or nonprofit entities.

Development opportunities undertaken by FHS/IFF in the greater Homan Square area will be advanced in phases, with increasing affordable housing development a key part of the first phase.

In addition to a focus on the housing stock, there are also opportunities for mixed-use, commercial, and other forms of site development along the Kedzie, Roosevelt, Harrison, and Homan corridors.



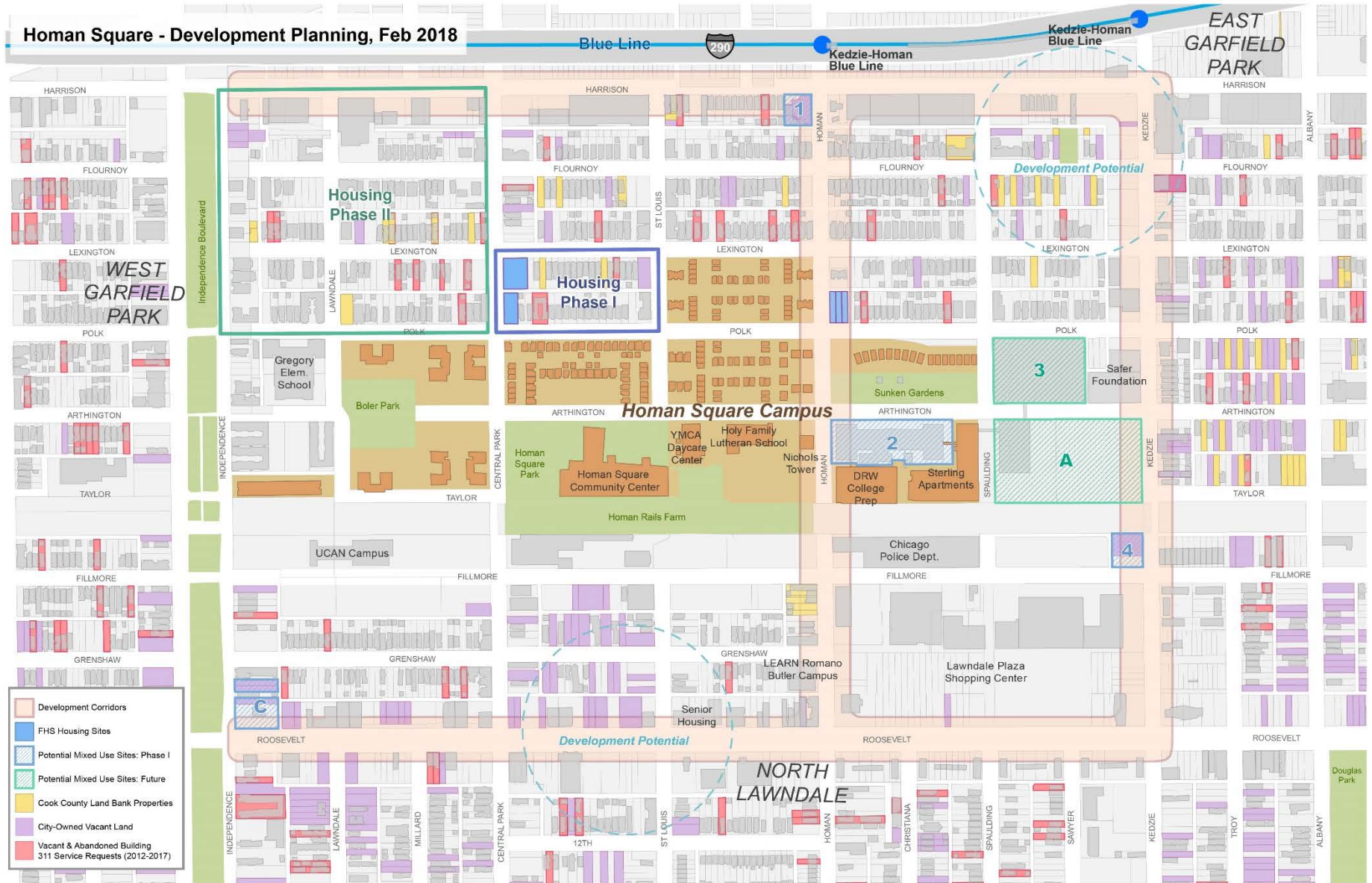
Existing residential block

##### **Housing Development**

The first scattered phase of the housing development initiative will concentrate efforts on a one to two block area closest in proximity to the Homan Square Campus. The possibility of additional phases of affordable housing may follow in the larger community around the Campus once the first phase has commenced.

Community engagement activities undertaken as part of the CMAP/North Lawndale Neighborhood Planning process, as reflected in the Existing Conditions Report (ECR), indicated that a high priority focus should be on rehabilitating vacant buildings/properties for quality housing. As depicted in the ECR, between Central Park and Kedzie Avenues north of the Homan Square Campus, vacant housing units as a percentage of the applicable Census Block Group range between 16- 30%. Also reflected in the ECR, the most recent residential development within the greater Homan Square area includes the 181-unit Lofts on Arthington affordable housing project developed by Mercy Housing.





### Homan Square Scattered Sites Phase I

As reflected in Map 3, FHS/IFF has identified vacant and buildable parcels intended for acquisition as part of a first phase of the scattered site redevelopment project totaling approximately 190 units of affordable housing. Two existing phases – 158 units – of rental housing owned by FHS that were built over 20 years ago require moderate rehab and the infusion of fresh capital in order to perform the repairs.

Approximately 18-24 units of new construction are planned for six vacant, contiguous lots in 6- to 12- unit buildings. This affordable housing project is anticipated to break ground in 2019. Rents for the proposed project will be affordable to families earning up to 60% of the area median income with the target market drawn from the same pool of families currently on the waiting list for existing Homan Square units.

### Homan Square Scattered Sites Phase II

The existing rental and for sale housing owned by the FHS represents stable, quality housing on seven city blocks in North Lawndale. The FHS strategy for future development envisions broadening the footprint of housing stability into the surrounding residential community where there are larger plots of vacant and abandoned parcels of land and abandoned properties (Map 3). Subsequent phases may include rental, for sale, or lease-to-purchase residential options with anticipated construction targeted in 2020.



Example housing design images.

The creation of additional affordable units will be driven by a two-pronged approach:

1. Identification of vacant lots owned by the City, Cook County Land Bank or private owners for new construction of affordable units. Larger plots of land suitable for multi-family units would be targeted by FHS/IFF for development with smaller footprint lots identified for construction by local developers.
2. Identification of vacant and/or foreclosed buildings owned by Community Investment Corporation, bank-owned REO properties or private owners for rehab of affordable units. Acquisition of larger multi-family buildings would be targeted by FHS with smaller buildings under 4-units referred to the local developer pool.

While FHS/IFF would not develop vacant lots and existing properties sized more appropriately for smaller scale units, we would cultivate relationships with local investors, developers and nonprofits having an interest in constructing single-family and/or 2-4 unit properties. IFF could also provide valuable property research for this potential developer pool



regarding current ownership, zoning and title defects (building code violations, outstanding taxes, other liens) available via public record. The goal of this strategy is the establishment of a collaborative effort that addresses the abundance of smaller vacant lots and properties in the greater community.

### **Mixed-Use and Non-Residential Development**

As reflected on Map 3, there are multiple vacant and underutilized properties situated along the key corridors (Harrison, Homan, Kedzie, and Roosevelt) that may be suitable for redevelopment of mixed-use, commercial or other types of site improvements. To determine viable opportunities within the greater Homan Square area as depicted on the map, FHS/IFF will analyze existing conditions, gather market data, and identify unmet community development needs.

#### Current Conditions

Over 500,000 square feet of vacant, non-residential building space exists within the greater Homan Square area based on Co-Star data as of May 2017. The most significant vacancies are reflected in the office sector (99.4%) which is mainly attributed to the continued vacancy of some of the former Sears properties. In addition to vacant buildings, there are multiple parcels of vacant land conducive for mixed-use or commercial development.

Based on ESRI data collected as of May 2017, residents living within a 1-mile radius of the center of the Homan Square campus must leave the area to purchase most retail goods. These data indicate that demand exceeds the existing supply, and reflects an estimated retail gap of \$138M. Research undertaken as part of the CMAP/North Lawndale Neighborhood Planning process, as reflected in the Existing Conditions

Report (ECR), confirms the scarcity of retail in the community. Additionally, the area is designated as medically underserved indicating a shortage of primary care health services for residents.

Other conditions informing development efforts include the area's higher unemployment rates, and higher poverty levels, indicating that job creation opportunities and other community development initiatives are of critical importance.



Example commercial/mixed-use design images.

#### Phase I

Uses that will be evaluated and pursued for Phase 1 focus are based on various data sources including demographics, expressed needs of

community stakeholders and anchors, current planning processes and community feedback, the ability to leverage partnership opportunities, and financial feasibility. The goal is to launch an implementation plan within the next three years.

As reflected in Map 4, both the Homan and Kedzie corridors are pedestrian pathways leading to and from the Blue Line Kedzie/Homan transit station. As such, redevelopment of key vacant sites fronting onto these corridors are designated as a high priority. In addition, available opportunities within the boundaries of the Homan Square campus are prioritized.

**Site 1:** This vacant property is comprised of a number of contiguous vacant lots that are primarily publicly-owned. The property is located at the southwest corner of Harrison and Homan is strategically situated within the area. Given its proximity to the Blue Line Kedzie/Homan transit station, this highly visible site is suitable for repositioning in the interim as a landscaped entry point into the surrounding neighborhood, possibly as part of the School of the Art Institute of Chicago's Oaks of North Lawndale. The project involves the planting of 7,000 oak trees in and around North Lawndale contributing to a more peaceful, tree-lined community. Other complementary interim strategies may include the use of the site for a local farmer's market and/or the expansion of the existing seasonal flower containers. Depending upon site and financial feasibility as well as other factors, longer-term opportunities may include re-use for a healthcare facility, or another nonprofit use, possibly including a small coffee shop component. This site would likely be the first target for redevelopment in Phase I.

**Sites 2 & 3:** Located on the Homan Square campus, Royal Imperial Group owns, and is currently marketing these properties for sale and



redevelopment. The properties include a 280,558 square foot building, the former Sears Administration site, and a 338,332 square foot reinforced concrete parking structure in a dilapidated state. Potential re-uses for evaluation may include: artist live/work and makerspace, and/or other forms of new residential uses, and ancillary parking. Given current marketing efforts, and a new adjacent development project that opened recently, focus on facilitation of redevelopment opportunities is included in the first phase of activities.



3333 W Arthington vacant site.

Site 4: Similar to Site 1, interim uses for this smaller, predominantly publicly-owned vacant property along the Kedzie corridor may include its repositioning as a landscaped space and/or pop-up retail given its unique layout, its adjacency to Douglas Park Plaza and its proximity to residential properties.

#### Future Phases

Given the number and complexity of possible redevelopment opportunities based on existing vacant properties, the mix of current ownership between public and private, and anticipated development trends, future phases of mixed-use and nonresidential development will

be dependent on a myriad of factors. Focused attention on properties with higher visibility along the key corridors and reflecting broader footprints is an appropriate facilitation strategy. The timeframe for future phases is anticipated to occur in 2020 or beyond.

As depicted on Map 4, future redevelopment opportunities include vacant land and buildings along the Harrison, Kedzie, and Roosevelt corridors. Potential opportunities may include pursuit of development directly by property owners, or the facilitation and execution of new development partnerships that could be comprised of a variety of parties (e.g., community developers, community-based organizations, community anchor institutions, or others).

As in Phase I, uses that will be evaluated and possibly pursued for future phases will be based on existing and/or proposed development plans, demographic analysis, expressed needs of community stakeholders and anchors, community feedback, the ability to leverage partnership opportunities, and financial feasibility.

In particular, the following mix of uses will be explored during subsequent phases: 1) housing for families in transitional living situations; 2) housing for area high-school students in transitional living situations; and 3) commercial development (e.g., nonprofit, small businesses, retail, and other).

While there are many combination of sites that could result in future development, a few options are reflected on Map 4, and described below.

Site A: Located on the Homan Square campus, Royal Imperial Group owns, and is currently marketing this property for sale and redevelopment. It includes the former headquarters of Allstate

Insurance, comprising 324,147 square feet, and 3.42-acre development site that is currently a paved parking lot. Potential redevelopment may be suitable for residential and/or mixed-uses.

Site B: This site is occupied by a vacant industrial building and ancillary parking lot, and incorporates vacant land. Some of the parcels are controlled by the Cook County Land Bank. Its current zoning and location along Harrison Road, fronting the heavily travelled 290 expressway, may lend itself to re-use as makers space/light industrial space. Other possibilities, depending upon detailed due diligence, may include nonprofit or institutional development.

Site C: Given Its corner location along Independence Boulevard and Roosevelt Road, this grouping of vacant properties may be suitable for retail and/or fast casual restaurant uses, subject to market demand.

Harrison/Kedzie Corridor: Interim use opportunities for vacant corner sites along the Harrison corridor may include repositioning properties for landscaped open space. This site may also be suitable as a location for the Oaks of North Lawndale project spearheaded by SAIC. Other uses that may be explored include additional residential housing based on the immediately adjacent land uses.

Vacant property along the Kedzie corridor presents an opportunity for mixed-use development with commercial or retail uses on the ground floor and residential units above. The site is currently included within an existing residential planned development.

Roosevelt Corridor: Assembly of vacant parcels along opposite corners of Roosevelt and St. Louis could yield two sizeable mixed-use development opportunities. Re-use potential could include ground floor commercial (retail uses, nonprofit uses), and upper story residential; or a



Example mixed use design images.

mix of nonresidential uses (nonprofit, institutional, other). Zoning for properties at the northwest corner of St. Louis and Roosevelt reflect a residential/business planned development. The properties at the southwest corner of St. Louis and Roosevelt currently reflect a combination of manufacturing and business district zoning.

### **Partnerships**

IFF, in partnership with FHS, will explore opportunities presented in this strategic plan. In some cases, development options may include FHS/IFF acting as sole developer, co-developer, or developer facilitator. In other cases, development may be initiated and pursued by existing property owners or other vested parties.

The strong nonprofit base in North Lawndale presents opportunities for collaboration and partnership in creating a shared real estate vision. The creation of the Community Advisory Committee (CAC) aims to solicit input and feedback around any potential development during the early conceptual stage of the project. Through regular communication FHS intends to build trust and cultivate strong relationships with all community partners that are dedicated to the continued development of North Lawndale.

## **5. OPPORTUNITIES TO SUPPORT**

### **Building on a Solid Foundation**

Partnerships between FHS and organizations like IFF, its Campus associates, and place-based initiatives such as L-Evated Chicago will help to extend the original vision of Homan Square to meet new challenges and opportunities within the surrounding community.

L-Evated Chicago is part of the Strong, Prosperous and Resilient Communities Challenge (SPARCC), a national initiative comprised of six cities focused on finding creative solutions in the built environment that produce positive outcomes for racial equity, human health and climate resilience. SPARCC is a partnership between Enterprise Community Partners, Federal Reserve Bank of San Francisco, Low Income Investment Fund, and the Natural Resources Defense Council. Funding for SPARCC is provided by the Ford Foundation, Kresge Foundation, and Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.

FHS participates in L-Evated Chicago's collaborative effort focused on innovative development within the ½-mile radius around several transit stations, connecting people and creating equitable centers for climate resilience, health and culture. The Blue Line Kedzie/Homan transit stop is one of the areas of focus. Through this initiative, limited funding may be available to support programs and capital projects within the designated transit areas. FHS will work with L-Evated Chicago to help identify and advance such programs and/or projects.

Hundreds of individual donors, philanthropic foundations and government agencies have supported the FHS's past efforts, and we invite you to join us.

To learn more about real estate development activities identified in this plan, please contact Kevin Sutton, Executive Director of the Foundation for Homan Square.



## **6. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

### **Foundation for Homan Square**

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Christyn Henson – Greater Westside Community Development

Bernard Jennings – Lawndale Business Renaissance Association

Kylia Kummer – Turning the Page

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Mike Madden – Noble Charter Schools

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