

Exhibit A - Executive Summary
City of Evanston

Background

With a population of 78,000, the City of Evanston stretches four miles along Lake Michigan's western shoreline just north of Chicago. Evanston is a highly-dense, nearly built-out community, with few vacant parcels and no opportunity for large-scale annexation or land acquisition. Its 7.8 square miles include vibrant residential neighborhoods, thriving business districts, and varied recreational facilities and offerings. Interspersed throughout the community are over 290 acres of parks, including five public swimming beaches, athletic fields, and bicycling and jogging trails. Evanston is located 12 miles from downtown Chicago and provides access to a variety of jobs, excellent public transportation via Metra UP-North and the CTA Purple Line, and is highly walkable and bikeable. Evanston is home to Northwestern University, NorthShore University HealthSystem Evanston Hospital, Ascension Saint Francis Hospital, Rotary International headquarters, and two highly regarded school districts.

Despite Evanston's significant location and amenities, housing production has been limited in part by the adoption of early land use controls and the first zoning code in Illinois in the 1920s – an effort to maintain Evanston's verdant suburban character. Evanston's historic development patterns predate exclusionary zoning practices and these neighborhoods are inexorably linked with the City's identity. They represent vibrant human-centered environments and a rich juxtaposition and diversity in residential densities, socio-economic strata, and housing choice that remain desirable but are not replicable under current land use controls. More restrictive zoning, including single units on large lots has resulted in housing demand that far outweighs the supply – creating significant affordability and displacement pressures and eroding the existing attainable housing stock and starter homes.

Generational Opportunity

Between 2023 and 2025 the City is undertaking a generational opportunity to develop a new Comprehensive Plan and Zoning Code and update its Inclusionary Housing Ordinance – all critical initiatives that will position Evanston to grow, be more inclusive, more affordable, more resilient, and less economically and racially segregated. These efforts will advance the City's goals and objectives around the creation of sustainable, vibrant, and human-centered places – places that prioritize people, walkability, and alternative and mass transportation over cars – vibrant human experiences and attainable housing over parking – authentic, compatible, and varied architecture over commodified and isolating development patterns – and sustainable use of city-owned assets that provide publicly controlled, significant opportunity sites to develop lasting and meaningful primarily affordable housing.

Through implementation of the new Comprehensive Plan and Zoning Code, the City of Evanston expects to streamline entitlement and permitting processes, encourage production of additional and diverse market-driven attainable housing, add much-needed density to support our business districts, City services, public transit, and schools, and capitalize on newly-created market rate

development to contribute more affordable units through our Inclusionary Housing Ordinance. To amplify these opportunities and expedite meaningful progress toward our affordable housing goals, the City has identified key barriers that must be addressed and the associated strategies and activities that will provide transformative outcomes to strengthen Evanston and build a more vibrant and resilient community – but lacks the capacity to implement them on its own.

Strategy

The City of Evanston has identified three significant barriers to affordable housing production and preservation, and has proposed associated strategies to mitigate or remove them through this grant. First, limited funding limits the success of housing preservation policies and the implementation of strategic anti-displacement programs. We propose expanding financial and staff capacity for existing programs that have demonstrated success to meet our residents' needs. Second, the City has complex entitlement and permitting processes that stifle development, and lacks housing data that would enable the strategic use of limited resources where they will have the most impact. We propose streamlining affordable housing entitlement and permitting processes, collecting and analyzing comprehensive housing data and the development potential of opportunity sites to drive decision making and agile implementation of housing production strategies. Finally, the City of Evanston is reactive to changes in local understandings of affordable housing, land disposition, development proposals, and market conditions. We propose proactive and strategic dialogue and ongoing partnerships with community-based organizations, affordable housing developers, and landowners to not only preserve and produce affordable housing, but to leverage impactful and strategic investment of City resources.

Summary

Addressing these barriers through our proposed activities will provide opportunities for low- and moderate-income households to enjoy the same privileges, freedoms, and health enjoyed by higher-income households that come with access to decent, suitable, and affordable housing. The activities directly fund the production of new, primarily affordable housing units, streamline and incentivize housing production, implement an equitable public participation process, and develop data-driven decision making tools for long-term planning and investment. The City of Evanston has a local and regional obligation to address these barriers and our shared housing crisis. The City's location near jobs and public transit, history of progressive housing policies, and shared and determined vision for the future, combined with Evanston's community capital and political will, positions the City to leverage housing production and housing preservation strategies to have the most impact and to provide a significant and immediate return on this investment.