



**Joliet Correctional Center Redevelopment:
Technical Assistance Panel Report
Implementation Status Update
July 16, 2014**

The Joliet Correctional Center Redevelopment report was completed in April 2012 through a partnership between the City of Joliet, the Urban Land Institute (ULI) Chicago, and CMAP. As part of this report, CMAP committed to remain involved for a period of two years to assist with the implementation of its recommendations. Over the last two years, CMAP has held quarterly meetings with the City of Joliet to discuss implementation activities and has also assisted with continued involvement of the community, primarily through the Collins Street Task Force.

Collins Street Task Force

The Task Force has become one of the leading groups through which the City and others are working toward implementing the report's recommendations. The Task Force is led by Illinois State Senator Pat McGuire and Representative Lawrence M. Walsh, Jr. Other members include local residents and representatives from the City of Joliet, ULI Chicago, Will County Center for Economic Development, Will County Forest Preserve District, Openlands, Lockport Township, Joliet Park District, Joliet Area Historical Museum, Will County Land Use Department, CMAP, and members of the Will County Board. All signs indicate that the Task Force will continue to meet into the foreseeable future and the City should continue to participate in and support their efforts whenever feasible.

Implementation Status

The Joliet Correctional Center Redevelopment report identified a number of key activities that were expected to occur within the first two years of adoption. The following summarizes each key recommendation, discusses the activities that were completed or are underway, and identifies actions that should continue to be worked on.

Prison West Recommendations

- 1. The City of Joliet should take a leadership role in working with the state to stabilize the Prison West complex as quickly as possible and halt the deterioration of select prison buildings.**

The prison buildings have quickly deteriorated since the facility was closed. A combination of poor maintenance, vandalism, theft, and fire has left the buildings in very critical conditions.

Steps Completed

The City of Joliet and the Collins Street Task Force have been working on various strategies to meet this recommendation. In general, the group has been working toward acquiring the prison property (both east and west sides) from the State of Illinois. Upon acquisition, the City of Joliet and the Will County Forest Preserve District would become the potential owners of the property. Once acquired, a number of strategies will continue to be discussed regarding ways to raise/obtain funds to make improvements to the structures and overall properties. A primary goal is to obtain the funds necessary to stabilize the Prison West complex due to its extremely poor building conditions.

Recently, legislation was introduced for a prison deal that was sponsored by State Representative Larry Walsh Jr. The legislation was designed so that the prison property (both east and west sides) could be sold to the City of Joliet for \$10. The legislation stalled in a House subcommittee on June 3, 2014. The legislation required the City of Joliet to be responsible for maintenance issues, such as grass mowing, while the State would be liable for any remediation issues. A second bill that would offer private investors tax credits to develop state-owned properties, such as the prison, also remains stalled.

A tour of the prison complex was held in January 2014 with Task Force members. During the tour, a preliminary visual inspection was completed by City staff that identified the most pressing building upgrades. Those key improvements and potential costs were identified by the City. One of the key recommendations was to construct a new roof over the large cellblock building. Unfortunately, the roof recently collapsed, breaking through to the basement below.

The Joliet Area Historical Museum has researched former prisons from around the country to see how they were converted for tourism. The museum has also partnered with the City of Joliet to create a preliminary tour route – all outdoors – that would help bring tourists to the Prison West complex. In order to offer such a tour, both the City and the museum will need to address ownership and liability concerns. Both groups believe that the revenues a tour would raise could then in turn be used for making building improvements.

Moving Forward

Due to the fact that the State of Illinois owns the property and the high costs associated with building rehabilitation and possible remediation, the City and the Task Force should continue to look for innovative ways to acquire and preserve important historical buildings. Although the proposed legislation has been stalled, the City should continue to monitor its progress. At this time, it is not clear what the next steps for pursuing the legislation will be. However, through the Task Force, the City should remain engaged in the process and provide assistance and support whenever feasible.

- 2. Secure key structures that have architectural and/or historic value, repair their roofs, clean the interiors, and address safety concerns.**

As noted previously, the City and the Task Force continue to work toward finding creative solutions to acquire the property and preserve key structures. Unfortunately, without ownership and funds, this continues to be a struggle.

Steps Completed

The City of Joliet and the Joliet Area Historical Museum have identified important structures worth saving and preliminary cost estimates for the most pressing repairs.

Moving Forward

The City should continue to work toward securing key structures and making important building repairs after ownership and liability issues can be addressed and funding identified.

- 3. Partner with Openlands to discuss greening and integrating the site into the Heritage Park Plan and explore connections to canal trail.**

Steps Completed

Because of ownership and liability issues no steps have been completed.

Moving Forward

The City should partner with Openlands to determine how best the property can be integrated into adjacent open space and how new connections can be made with the I&M Canal Trail. This will likely not occur until after the property is eventually acquired from the State.

Prison East Recommendations

- 4. Retain this site primarily as open space for recreation. Donate portions of land to partners like the Will County Forest Preserve District, Joliet Park District, and nonprofits.**

The City of Joliet and the Collins Street Task Force, led by the Will County Forest Preserve District, have made much progress toward retaining the Prison East parcel.

Steps Completed

The Forest Preserve has begun to investigate the existing conditions of the Prison East parcel to determine what – if any – environmental issues exist. As part of their efforts, a private engineering firm (Carlson Environmental) volunteered their services to complete a Phase One Environmental Report. In January and April 2014, the results of that report were presented to the Collins Street Task Force. Currently, the Forest Preserve is working to create a scope of work for a Phase Two Environmental Report. That work is expected to be completed later this year.

In fall 2013, the newly realigned Woodruff Road opened. The City of Joliet worked with the Canadian National Railway and the State Department of

Corrections to construct the new road. The new road runs parallel along the rail line and crosses the rail line near the northern portion of the property. The realignment removes the previous street-level railroad crossing on the southeastern edge of the site. As part of the realignment, a nearby State of Illinois shooting range was relocated to the grounds of Statesville Prison.

In May 2014 CMAP assisted Will County's Land Use Department in creating a *Brownfield Prioritization for Solar Energy Development Report*. That report identified both the eastern and western sites as potential locations for developing solar energy production. The report acknowledges that a solar energy project should be for a portion of the property and should complement the proposed recreational uses.

Moving Forward

The City should continue to support the Will County Forest Preserve's efforts in working to acquire the property and open the site for public open space. If the property is acquired, the City, along with the Forest Preserve District and the Joliet Park District, should work with the Collins Street Task Force and nearby residents to create a master plan for the property. Based upon that plan, funding should then be secured and/or grants pursued.

- 5. Use the wooded bluff north of the rail line for trails and links to existing parks and forest preserves; in the long term the site could gradually be developed with mixed income housing.**

Steps Completed

At this time no steps have been completed.

Moving Forward

This area north of the rail line should be included in a future detailed master plan for the entire parcel.

- 6. Use the area south of the rail line for a mix of recreational purposes: trails, fishing, organized sports. Consider other community initiatives such as urban agriculture.**

Steps Completed

Since the adoption of the report, representatives of the Collins Street Task Force have toured the property and visually inspected the tipple building and the two quarries. The area, including the water within the quarries, will be inspected as part of the Phase Two Environmental Study.

Moving Forward

Similar to Recommendation #5, this area south of the rail line should be included in a future detailed master plan for the entire parcel.

7. Explore using portions of the Prison East site to accommodate additional parking requirements for the Prison West site.

Steps Completed

Because neither the east nor west properties have been acquired, no steps have been completed.

Moving Forward

This should be considered when creating the more detailed master plan for the property. It will likely depend also upon the eventual reuse of the Prison West site.

U.S. Steel Site Recommendations

As noted in the report, U.S. Steel has taken steps to determine the environmental status of their property and has explored reuse. The company has conducted a Phase Two environmental investigation and enrolled in the Voluntary Cleanup Program with the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency. U.S. Steel is also analyzing various redevelopment options for the site and has been in communication with the City regarding redevelopment options.

At this time, because U.S. Steel is still working towards resolving environmental issues, no progress has been made toward fulfilling these four recommendations.

- 8. Develop grocery-anchored retail along Collins Street in a development that could accommodate 75,000 - 100,000 square feet of retail space.**
- 9. Create an internal boulevard from Bruce Street on the north to Ohio Street on the south and expand Ward Avenue back to the westernmost portion of the site with Collins Street.**
- 10. Reserve the rear portion of the site for light industrial or office use.**
- 11. Secure and preserve the T-shaped "blue building" by removing its east/west portion. The remaining 71,000 square feet would be ideal for crane user tenants if light industrial use is pursued.**

Moving Forward

The City should continue to work with U.S. Steel to see the property redeveloped.

Conclusion

As CMAP's two-year commitment comes to a close, we want to encourage the City of Joliet and the community to continue to work toward implementing the plan. The City of Joliet and the Collins Street Task Force should be commended for their efforts. CMAP and ULI Chicago will continue to attend Task Force meetings and touch base with the City on an annual basis concerning project implementation and would appreciate updates on significant activities and progress.

On behalf of ULI Chicago and CMAP, thank you for your participation in the Local Technical Assistance program, and we look forward to working with you as partners in the future.