



For Immediate Release

**Secretary Castro and Mayor Emanuel Break Ground for Senior Housing
Development and MetroSquash Academic & Squash Center**

Two new developments for South Cottage Grove Move Closer to Reality

Chicago – Only four years ago, the aging 500 plus-unit Grove Parc Plaza Apartments stood as an eyesore on Chicago’s Cottage Grove Avenue and served as a problem for development and growth. . Today, all the buildings are down, the former residents relocated and a new mixed income neighborhood – Woodlawn Park – is rising on the site where the blighted buildings once stood.

Underscoring how far Cottage Grove and Woodlawn have come, Julian Castro, the newly appointed Secretary of HUD, and Mayor Rahm Emanuel joined Alderman Willie B. Cochran to break ground for a senior building and youth sports/education center – both signs of the renaissance of Woodlawn being made possible through a partnership between the Federal Government, the City of Chicago and Preservation of Affordable Housing (POAH), which is redeveloping the property. POAH, along with the City, are the co-recipients of \$31 million Choice Neighborhoods Initiatives grant, awarded in 2011.

The Burnham at Woodlawn Park, the first seniors-only building to be constructed as part of Woodlawn Park, will offer 65 apartments, and is the latest housing development for POAH. All told, since 2011 POAH has built or rehabbed more than 350 mixed income units to replace those at Grove Parc, building both new apartments in a variety of complexes on Cottage Grove and by purchasing and renovating 18 buildings in the surrounding neighborhood. The 250 apartments restored on those blocks have been important in reclaiming troubled buildings and stabilizing the neighborhood.

The MetroSquash Center, being built on a parcel of land owned by POAH at 61st and Cottage, will house eight squash courts, four classrooms and community space for 300-plus youth in 5th grade through college. The program uses the game of squash to engage students and their families academically, mentally and physically and to empower Chicago Public Schools students to reach their full potential.

Secretary Castro praised the mix of incomes and property uses emerging on Cottage Grove, “Woodlawn Park is exactly the kind of development HUD had in mind when the Choice Neighborhood Program was created”, said Castro. “A mix of incomes, a mix of land uses – that anchor schools, new businesses and the safe environment that are the hallmarks of a sustainable community.”

“Woodlawn is a great example of what can be done when federal, city and private resources are put in the service of a community with a strong vision and leadership,” said Mayor Emanuel. “In only three years with the help of POAH, Alderman Cochran, HUD, I have witnessed an incredible comeback. Two new schools are now located in this community, new businesses are opening, abandoned buildings have been reclaimed. Crime is down and hope is up.”

“I want to praise not only Alderman Cochran and POAH but all the neighbors, block clubs and churches who together are invested in and supporting this process of change and growth.”

POAH, one of the nation’s preeminent developers known for its preservation of affordable housing across the country, was, in partnership with the City of Chicago, one of the nation’s first recipients of a \$30.5 million HUD Choice Neighborhoods Initiative grant in 2011.

POAH’s president, Amy Anthony, explained the Choice Neighborhoods grant has expanded the organization’s development capacity. “The strategy that has guided POAH’s work since our founding has been a marriage of common sense and complexity - build new mixed income housing to replace outmoded, all low-income housing; use resources to acquire and transform vacant or distressed buildings into well-managed, well-appointed mixed income properties throughout the community,” says Anthony. “With the help of the Choice Neighborhoods Initiative we’ve also had the resources to involve community leaders such as MetroSquash and private sector leaders - such as financier JP Morgan Chase Bank - as well as many others to ensure that Woodlawn also can develop the educational, recreational, retail, transportation and other fundamental resources a healthy community needs to thrive. There’s clearly more to do but together we’ve built a strong foundation for the future.”

Introduced by the Obama Administration in 2010, The Choice Neighborhoods Initiative is a strategic approach intended to help transform high-poverty, distressed neighborhoods into communities with healthy, affordable housing, safe streets and access to quality educational opportunities. Along with Boston, New Orleans, San Francisco and Seattle, Chicago was one of only five cities out of more than 80 first-round applicants to receive a Choice Neighborhood grant.

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