



DEVELOPER DISCUSSION PANEL

Summary Report: January 2015



Regional
Transportation
Authority



Urban Land
Institute

Introduction

The Regional Transportation Authority (RTA) has invested over \$4 million of its own funds and leveraged over \$6 million of local and Federal funds during the past 15 years to complete approximately 90 transit-oriented development (TOD) planning studies through the RTA's [Community Planning](#) program. This program funds TOD planning studies and implementation assistance that promote walkable, mixed-income, mixed-use development co-located and/or well-connected to retail and business uses in transit station areas while also increasing overall access to transit. From the RTA's perspective, pursuing and achieving implementation of these plans can result in more efficient transit operations, improved access to transit services and a potential for increased ridership for all three of our Service Boards (Metra, Pace and CTA). Implementation efforts can also increase private investment in TOD areas while promoting the principles of sustainability and livability.

As part of these increased efforts, the RTA is working with the Urban Land Institute (ULI) in Chicago to facilitate discussions between individual communities and development experts to shed light on the future of TODs and how this relates to the changing market and economy.

A Developer Discussion Panel was held in Bellwood on **November 17, 2014** and this report summarizes the discussion and the panel's recommendations and suggested strategies.



Bellwood Metra Station. Photo Credit: Village of Bellwood

Discussion Participants

Urban Land Institute & Regional Transportation Authority

Anastacia Fratto- Land Acquisition Manager, Crown Community Development

John Gerut- Director of Housing, IFF

Tony Manno- Project Manager, Local Planning & Programs, RTA

Brian White- Executive Director, Cook County Land Bank Authority

Art Zwemke- Manager, Robert Arthur Land Company

Village of Bellwood

Frank A. Pasquale- Mayor

Peter Tsiolis- Chief of Staff

Tonita S. LeShore- Director of Human Resources/Community Relations

Michael Ciavattone- Trustee

Annie Delgado- Trustee

John Galvan- Zoning Administrator

Gloria Holman- Trustee

Ronald Nightengale- Trustee

MC Robinson- Trustee



Background

The [Bellwood Transit-Oriented Development Plan](#) (*St. Charles Road Redevelopment Plan*) outlines a plan for the improvement, development and growth of the St. Charles Road corridor. The Plan includes community goals, objectives, and policies for the future of the corridor, including long-range recommendations for land-use, transportation, and community facilities. In addition, the Plan includes an Implementation Plan that assigns priorities and outlines actions to be taken to complete the Plan's recommendations.

Since the completion of the Plan, the Village has been able to attract various commercial uses near the St. Charles Road corridor including Checkers and Tops & Bottoms as well as create a pocket park throughout the study area.

The goal of the ULI panel was to gain feedback on the challenges being faced for development in the area, the highest and best uses of key available sites that can support transit service, and how the Village may best encourage development.

Study Area



Key Recommendations

Short-Term Recommendations

- Identify an area for a public gathering space along the St. Charles corridor. Creating a public gathering space for farmers markets, public events, etc. can generate activity and increase pedestrian traffic in the area
- Explore/Pursue funding for a Retail Market Absorption Study to identify the types of retail/commercial uses appropriate (and needed) along the St. Charles corridor. This study can also identify traffic impacts of increased activity along the corridor.
- Incentivize existing Village retail to expand or relocate to the St. Charles corridor by offering façade improvements, tax and rent abatement and other property improvement programs
- Create a gateway feature for the St. Charles Road corridor (similar to the River Street gateway arch in Batavia, IL)

Long-Term Recommendations

- Improve streetscape along St. Charles once the 25th Avenue Bridge project is completed and truck traffic returns to 25th Avenue.
 - Streetscape improvements can include wider sidewalks, decorative lighting, crosswalks, wayfinding signage, street furniture, bike parking, etc.
 - Explore diagonal parking along St. Charles to create more parking spaces and slow traffic down.

- Continue to create pocket parks throughout the downtown area, focusing on kid-friendly parks and respite areas that can generate activity

- Establish relationships with local businesses and leaders that may be interested in donating funds to create local art programs (bridges, murals, etc.)

- Continue to work with the Illinois Facilities Fund (“IFF”) and Cook County Land Bank Authority to create more housing opportunities throughout the Village

- Improve Village branding efforts to market and advertise the excellent highway access, existing retail, Metra access, affordability and strong existing housing stock