

Downtown Transit-Oriented Development Study *Plan Brochure*

Chicago Heights, Illinois
Adopted November 2, 2009

The City of Chicago Heights is pleased to present this *Downtown Transit-Oriented Development Study* for the area bounded by Lincoln Highway on the north; 23rd Street on the south; Lowe Avenue / Union Avenue on the east; and Chicago Road on the west. The Study Area encompasses what was historically the "downtown" area of Chicago Heights; this Plan defines a bold vision for redevelopment of this area of Chicago Heights to serve as the central place within the community.

This planning project has been undertaken by the City and the Regional Transportation Authority in advance of Metra's proposed SouthEast Service Line, which would serve the south side of Chicago and the suburban communities of southern Cook County and Will County, with a station proposed in downtown Chicago Heights.

This brochure is a synopsis of the final report for the project, approved by the Plan Commission Zoning Board of Appeals and City Council in 2009. The full report is available online and at City Hall.



SouthEast Service Line Station Plan

The **SouthEast Service Line Station Plan** details the infrastructure elements envisioned to support the proposed transit facilities, and is the organizing focus of the planning for the greater Study Area.

The Metra station is proposed to be located just south of 17th Street, adjacent to the Cook County Housing Authority buildings. 17th Street is proposed to be closed to vehicular traffic, but will remain open to pedestrians. This location is close to the historic “heart” of downtown and the Chicago Heights Police Station. A civic plaza to the west of the station is envisioned as a downtown “celebratory space”, with ornamental gardens, specialty paving, memorial bricks, a tinted concrete “compass rose”, and a clock tower. The Pace Transfer Facility will be relocated across from the Station. Commuter parking and kiss-and-ride facilities will be provided on both east and west sides of the railroad tracks. An improved network of sidewalk and bicycle facilities will enhance non-vehicular safety and circulation.

Color Rendering of Proposed Station Area: View from southwest



Development Plan

The **Development Plan** translates an assessment of market conditions into a potential development program of uses in the Study Area, catalyzed by the SES Line and building on existing community assets and anchors. The detailed market analysis report is included in **Appendix 4**.

Residential: Residential development will be driven by expected long-term population growth in the City and across the South Suburbs, and enabled through a policy decision by the City to direct a portion of new residential development to the Study Area. If the City channels $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{3}$ of new housing units demanded by household growth in the City through 2030 (as estimated by the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning), build-out of the Study Area could include approximately 275 to 375 new housing units. The Study Area should include a variety of product formats and neighborhood densities, including for-sale and for-rent units in single-family attached and detached formats and multi-family structures.

Commercial: Commercial uses form a vibrant component of transit-oriented development plans. Specific uses include a mix of retail goods and consumer services (retail financial services, tax preparation, etc.) targeted to area residents and visitors, as well as employees of other local businesses. Over the long-term development of the Study Area, potential development could range from 30,000 to 50,000 square feet.

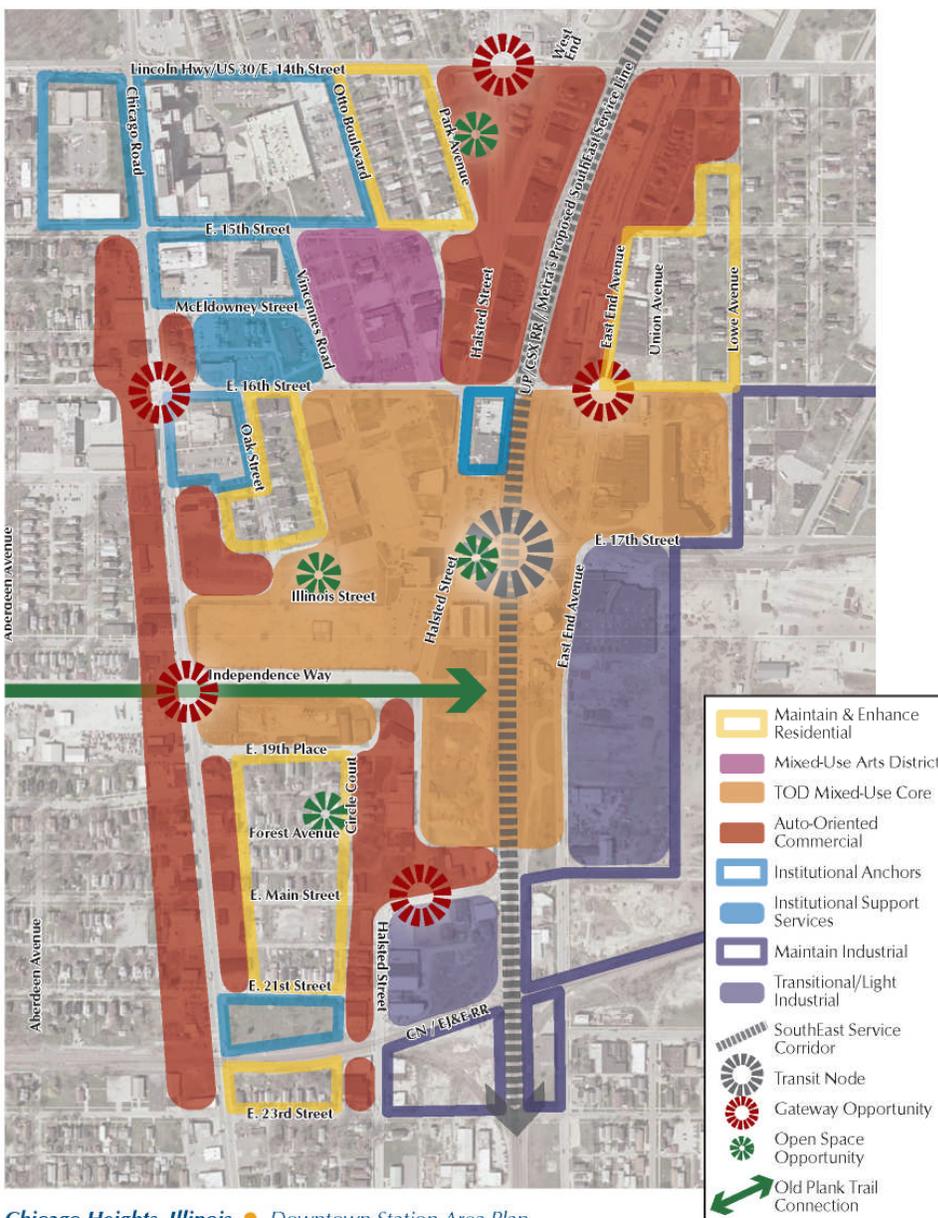
- Office development in the Study Area will be driven primarily by the growth of small businesses that need additional space or who wish to relocate out of existing obsolete office facilities elsewhere in the City or surrounding communities.
- Retail development in the Study Area is expected to include both auto-oriented facilities along the major arterials (Chicago Road and Lincoln Highway/Route 30) as well as transit- and pedestrian-oriented uses in the TOD Mixed-Use Core. The table in **Appendix 1** provides general guidelines for the trade areas and site location preferences for different types of stores.

Industrial: While not a typical use for TOD, light industrial development could be a compatible use for the peripheral buffer areas on the east and south sides of the Study Area, if developed in careful manner according to the **Design Guidelines** for the Study Area.



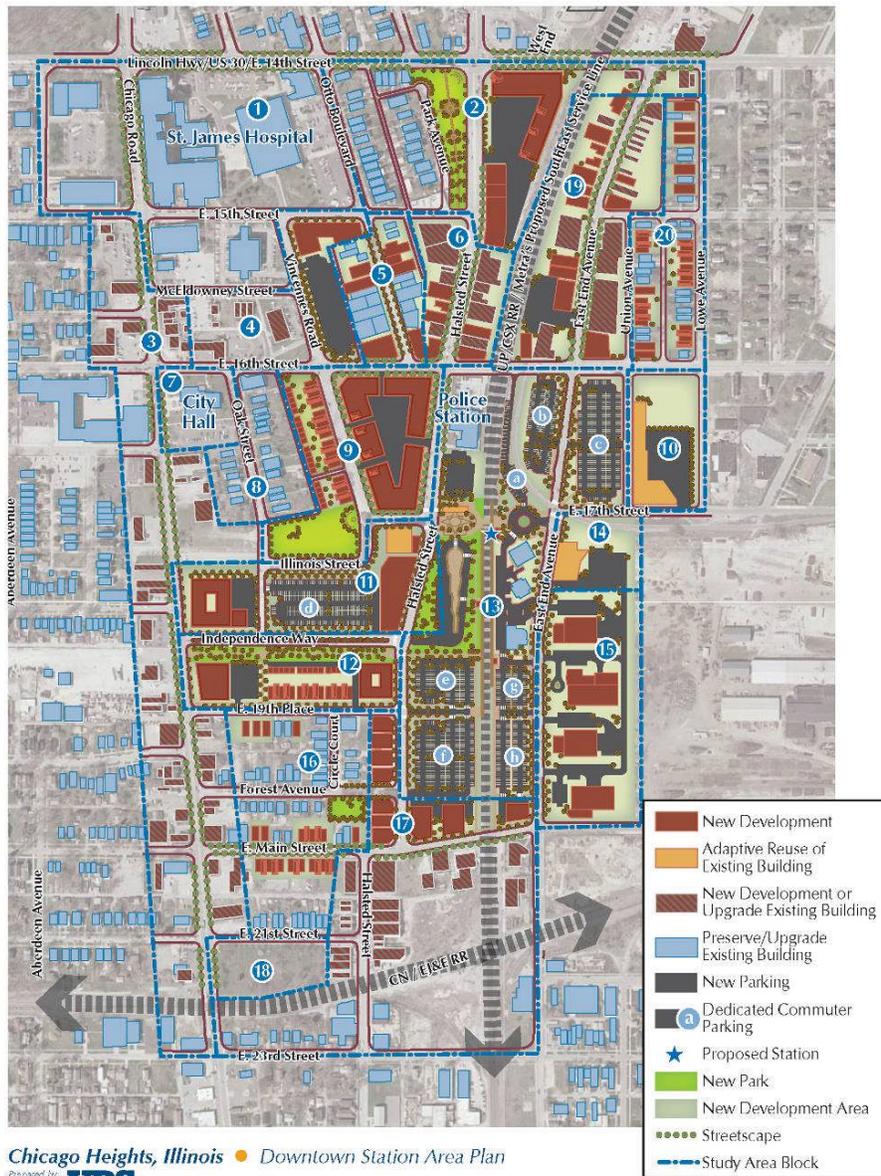
Land Use Framework Plan

The **Land Use Framework Plan** lays the foundation for the Concept Plan and presents the high-level plan for land uses in the Study Area. The future land use pattern recommends a redeveloped “Downtown Mixed-Use Core” anchored by the proposed train station, new green spaces, and higher density housing and mixed-use developments featuring a dynamic mix of retail and commercial tenants, ringed by lower density existing anchor uses – including institutions, residential neighborhoods, commercial corridors, and industrial businesses around the periphery of the Study Area.



Concept Plan

The **Concept Plan** illustrates how the Study Area could develop over the long term, siting the possibilities described in the **Development Plan** in specific areas of the Study Area according to the guiding principles outlined in the **Land Use Framework Plan**.



The **Concept Plan** shows a high level of private, mixed-use, commercial and residential development, and illustrates a variety of uses within a small area, consistent with TOD principles. As shown on the Framework Plan, the Concept Plan improves the downtown area land uses by recommending a civic core anchored by the proposed train station, several new green spaces, and mixed-use and higher density housing. The Concept Plan protects existing single-family residential areas, incorporates preservation of buildings with historic character, and promotes the existing industrial uses and businesses that provide employment and contribute to the tax base.

This concept provides green “spines” along Independence Way and Halsted Street, with a park on Illinois Street and a small tot lot at the south end of the Study Area along Halsted Street. The Plan assumes that City Hall would remain in its current location. It also assumes that private development would occur on the current “Expo” lot, potentially evolving into a mixed-use parking deck with dedicated commuter parking, eventually replacing a surface commuter parking lot. The east side of East End Avenue, along the western portion of the Chicago Heights Steel campus, is assumed to redevelop in the long-term into supporting light industrial uses.

The Study Area is expected to evolve through a combination of public and private improvements at strategic points throughout the Study Area, as completely new development, preservation of existing uses, or as adaptive reuse of existing structures for new uses. Detailed suggestions on a block-by-block basis are presented in Chapter 9 in the full report.

Area 1: Key institutions along with parking or supportive uses remain in the northwest corner of the Study Area.

Area 2: Halsted Street entryway to the Study Area, featuring new commercial development and strengthened existing residential neighborhoods, enhanced with new green space and gateway features.

Area 3: Chicago Road auto-oriented commercial corridor offering retail goods and services.

Area 4: New development, potentially institutional support businesses.

Area 5: Otto Boulevard Arts District Area, a lively destination area for residents and visitors. Mixed-use developments in this area could include retail shops and residential flats above.

Area 6: Halsted Street commercial corridor with small retail and service businesses.

Area 7: City Hall remains in its current location as a key institutional anchor.

Area 8: Existing residential neighborhood that should be strengthened through renovation, maintenance, and infill development.



Area 9: Residential hub of the TOD Mixed-Use Core area, enhanced with mixed-use structures, circulation improvements, and new green space.

Area 10: Adaptive reuse of a former industrial facility to live/work lofts.

Area 11: Mixed-use, pedestrian friendly corridor with commercial and residential new developments and amenities for transit users, including commuter parking.

Area 12: New residential neighborhood with green space, high quality streetscaping and recreational amenities.

Area 13: Transit hub of the Study Area, detailed in the *SouthEast Service Line Station Plan*.

Area 14: Modernizing adaptive reuse of building with interesting historic façade.

Area 15: Light industrial or office/warehouse transitional land zone between the Study Area and existing heavy industrial uses further east.

Area 16 Existing residential neighborhood that should be strengthened through renovation, maintenance, infill construction, and development of a neighborhood park.

Area 17: Commercial and light industrial zone, potentially for small businesses that support the adjacent industrial uses, such as business, professional or technical services.

Area 18: Existing cemetery to remain undisturbed.

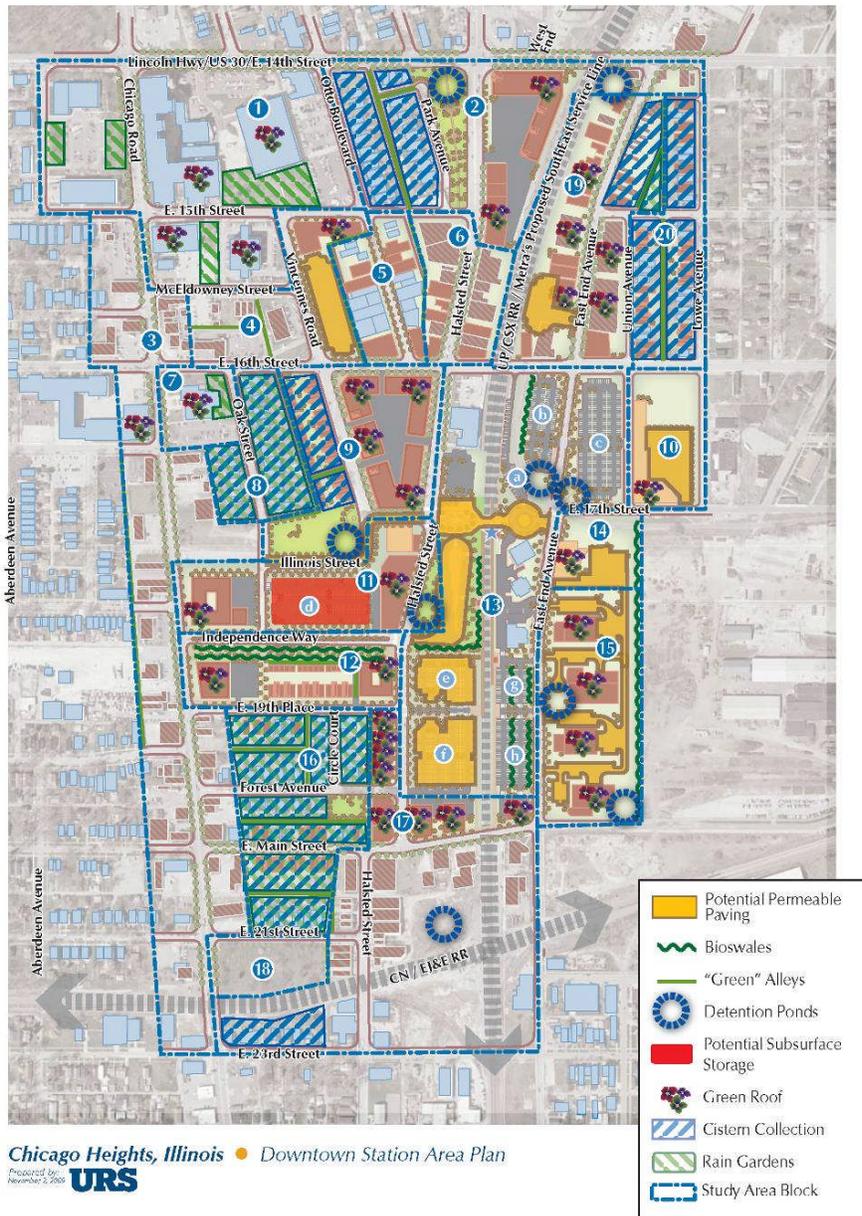
Area 19: Maintain currently viable businesses, with redevelopment in long term as auto-oriented commercial.

Area 20: Existing residential neighborhood that should be strengthened through renovation, maintenance, and infill development.



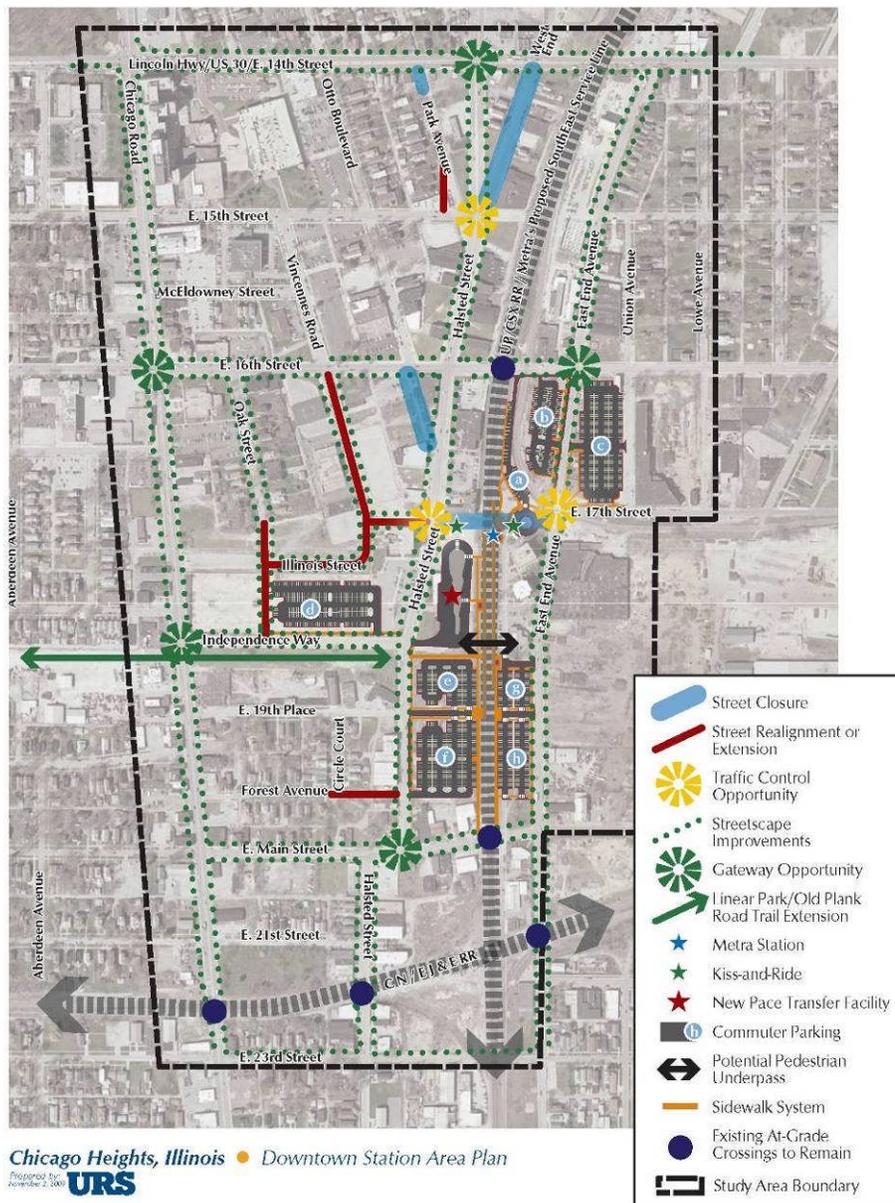
Stormwater Management Plan

The redevelopment of the Study Area as shown in the **Concept Plan** necessitates consideration of stormwater management, particularly with the provision of significant surface parking for transit users. The **Stormwater Management Plan** describes various techniques for handling stormwater in the Study Area and recommends particular solutions in the context of the uses proposed in the **Concept Plan**



Transportation and Circulation Plan

The **Transportation and Circulation Plan** defines the infrastructure investments recommended to support the **SouthEast Service Line Station Plan** and the **Concept Plan**, considering all modes of transportation: pedestrian, bicycles, vehicles and public transportation. These projects would improve access to transit, increase internal circulation in the district, and support the viability of current and proposed uses.



Roadway improvement projects include road closures, roadway realignment or extension, and resurfacing. Four road closures are proposed to improve traffic flow and create more attractive sites for development: West End Avenue between Lincoln Highway and Halsted; a partial closure to limit access to Park Avenue between Lincoln Highway and 15th Street/Halsted Street; 17th Street between Halsted and East End Avenue to site the proposed Metra Station; and Otto Boulevard between 16th Street and Halsted Street. Extensions or segment realignments are proposed in four locations: extending Oak Street south to Independence Way; reestablishing Illinois Street between Oak and Vincennes Road on existing right-of-way; extending Forest Avenue to join to Halsted Street; and improving the intersection of 17th Street and Halsted by realigning Vincennes Road between 16th Street and Illinois Street and extending 17th Street from Vincennes Road to Halsted Street.

One of the major aspects of the proposed Concept Plan is to create a pedestrian friendly atmosphere and an improved image for the Study Area. Roadway and streetscape improvements will have the following elements, which are illustrated in the **Design Guidelines** in Chapter 12 of the full report: new landscaping, sidewalks and lighting; improved signage and wayfinding; gateway design elements, and roadway and pavement improvements. Specific pedestrian improvements include a sidewalk system linking surface parking lots with the at-grade crossing at Main Street; crosswalk and bump-out enhancements; and a future potential pedestrian underpass at or near Independence Way.

Dedicated parking for transit riders is designated on both the east and west sides of the UP/CSX Railroad in several lots; 1,286 spaces are proposed, pending final ridership estimates from Metra. On-street parking for Study Area visitors, residents and employees is proposed in scattered locations throughout the Study Area; diagonal on-street parking is suggested along Halsted Street, near the Police Station between 16th and 17th Streets. New development projects include private off-street parking in surface lots or structures. Shared parking resources among multiple uses (rather than dedicated lots or structures for each use or building) may provide financial and environmental benefits to the City and property owners.



Design Guidelines

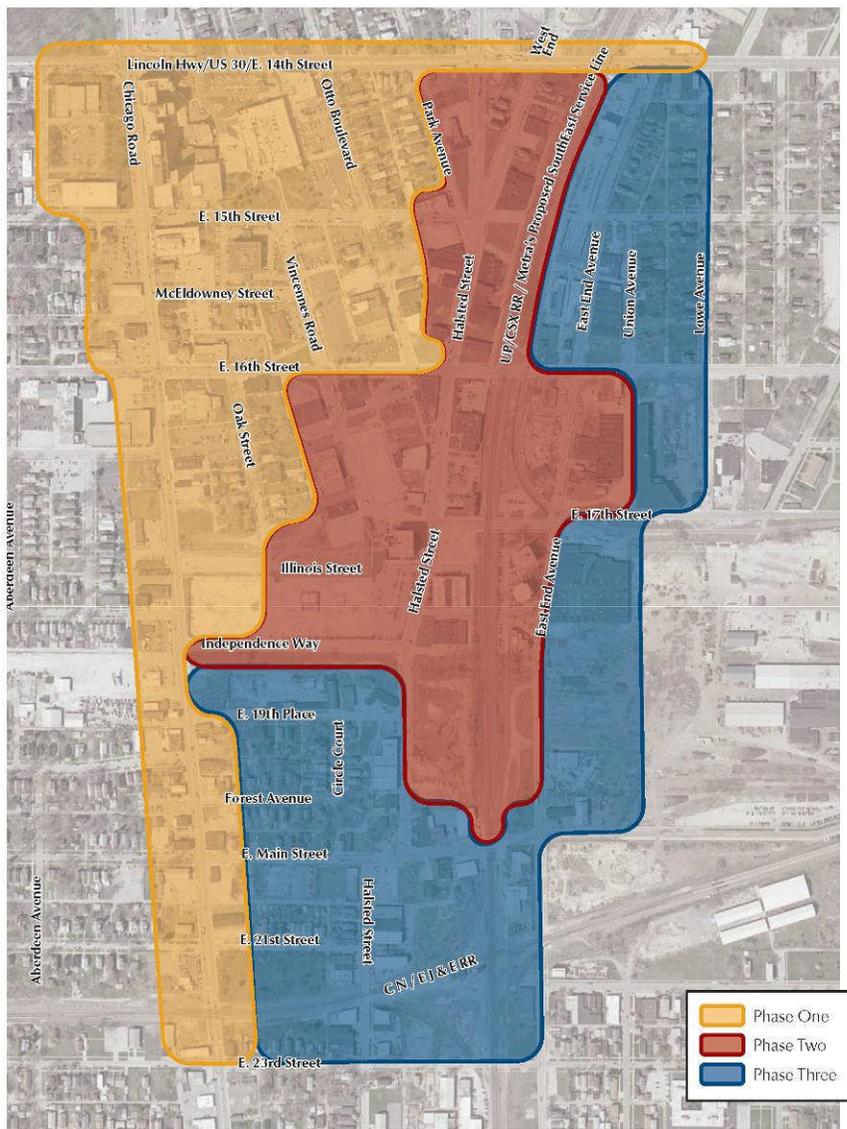
The **Design Guidelines** present the preferred urban design and architectural character of the Study Area, with specific parameters that should be considered or permitted in development and infrastructure activities. These **Design Guidelines** reflect principles and best practices for transit-oriented development, shaped by community input regarding design and aesthetic preferences.

<p>Urban Design</p>	<p>Pedestrian-friendly amenities. Features such as street furniture, high-quality pavement treatments, and pedestrian-scaled lighting add comfort and promote walking.</p> <p>Landscaping. In addition to reducing heat gain, trees and other plant material can enhance the environment, encouraging individuals to walk to and from stations.</p> <p>Public building frontage. Elements such as canopies overhanging sidewalks, extensive window frontage, architectural details that offer visual interest and 2 to 5- story structures built on the sidewalk edge enhance the pedestrian experience.</p> <p>Lighting. The Study Area must be perceived as safe and secure for all users. Sight lines within station facilities must allow for quick comprehension when entering and exiting.</p> <p>Station access. Urban design favors access to the station to the following modes in order of priority: pedestrians, bus riders, bicyclists, and vehicles. On a broader scale, access to the proposed SES station must be convenient for pedestrians within a 5- to 10-minute walk, and bus, bicycles, and vehicles dropping off riders.</p>
<p>Development Density</p>	<p>Minimum and Maximum Residential Densities. TOD works best as an energizing force for development, and supports ridership to the greatest extent, with high concentrations of residential, employment and entertainment and retail opportunities.</p> <p>Minimum and Maximum Floor-to-Area Ratios. Minimum FAR standards maximize public investment in public infrastructure and help create a sense of enclosure - the “public room”- that stimulates activity in the public realm. Maximum FAR standards ensure that employment land uses do not overwhelm the residential land uses.</p>
<p>Parking</p>	<p>Minimum and maximum off-street parking standards. Since residents of TOD are likely to own fewer cars, there is less need to devote valuable development space to parking. To the extent possible, the cost of parking and principal land uses should be unbundled so that private market decisions determine parking supply.</p>
<p>Parks & Open Space</p>	<p>Design of recreation space. An important element in place-making is ensuring that there are opportunities for residents, workers, and visitors to gather, relax, and recreate.</p>



Phasing Plan

The **Phasing Plan** proposes an order of events in the build-out of the Study Area according to the **Concept Plan** that considers the timing of the proposed SouthEast Service Line, but supports the redevelopment of downtown Chicago Heights independent of that transportation project.



Chicago Heights, Illinois • Downtown Station Area Plan
Prepared by:
November 2, 2009
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Phase One starts with adoption of this Study and continues until approximately two years before the opening of the proposed SES Line. The first phase lays the groundwork for future development in the Study Area.

Phase Two begins approximately two years before the opening of the proposed SES Line and continues for five to ten years. Phase Two focuses on the core of the Study Area and the station itself. The goal of this Phase is to provide a solid core around which subsequent development will occur and thrive. During this phase, the City will work with the South Suburban Mayors and Managers Association (SSMMA) and communities in the Southeast Commuter Rail Board (SCRB) to fund construction of the stations, parking and station amenities at the anticipated stations along the proposed SouthEast Service Line.

Phase Three begins approximately five to ten years after the start of the proposed SES Line and continues for approximately ten to fifteen years. This phase completes the transition of the Study Area to a fully functional TOD, and includes new private residential and commercial, industrial, and mixed-use development in Downtown Chicago Heights.



For More Information

This report is a synopsis of the comprehensive final report for the Study, meant to provide key information related to the Study recommendations in a short format. The full report is organized into three sections, reflecting the overall planning process.

Section 1: Introduction and Background provides information on the project approach, as well as a summary of the foundation information that feeds into the development of neighborhood plans. The detailed background research behind this section is found in **Appendix 3: Existing Conditions Report** and **Appendix 4: Market Analysis Report**, two interim work products prepared during the project.

Section 2: Downtown Transit-Oriented Development Plans contains the visionary results of the various dimensions of the planning process. Eight plan elements are included, and should be taken together to present a complete view of the redeveloped downtown. These elements are summarized for convenience in this brochure.

Appendix 1: Retailer Requirements illustrates site location and facility requirements for a representative sample of regional and national retailers for businesses that may be compatible in the redeveloped Study Area.

Section 3: Implementation Strategies is the action-plan or to-do list targeted to City staff to move the Downtown Transit-Oriented Development Plans from concept to reality. **Appendix 2: Funding Toolkit** provides an inventory of potential funding sources to assist in redevelopment of the Study Area, including grant, loan, policy and technical assistance resources. **Appendix 5: Downtown TIF Map** contains a map illustrating the boundaries of the TIF District adopted by the City in February 2009, which should encourage economic redevelopment of the Study Area.

