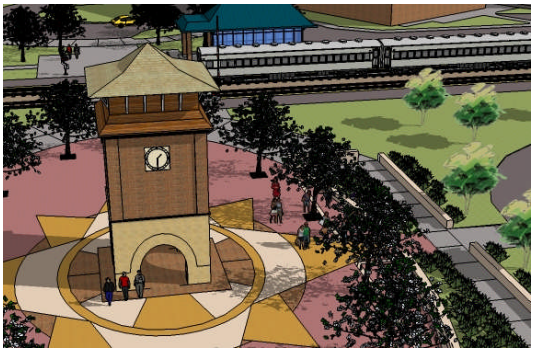
# Downtown Transit-Oriented Development Study

## Chicago Heights, Illinois
## Adopted November 2, 2009

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This document summarizes the work conducted for the Downtown Chicago Heights Transit-Oriented Development Plan. The document was prepared under contract with the Regional Transportation Authority. Preparation of the document was financed in part through a grant from the U.S. Department of Transportation, Federal Transit Administration, and the Regional Transportation Authority. The contents of the document do not necessarily reflect the official views of the U.S. Department of Transportation, Federal Transit Administration, or the Illinois Department of Transportation.

# Section 1

## Introduction and Background

## Introduction

The City of Chicago Heights (City) is pleased to present this *Downtown Transit-Oriented Development Plan* (Plan) for the area bounded mainly by Lincoln Highway on the north; 23rd Street on the south; Lowe Avenue on the east; and Chicago Road to the west. This Plan defines a bold vision for redevelopment of this area of Chicago Heights to serve as the central place within the community. The Plan recommends mixed-use development, higher density residential and recreational uses within a pedestrian-oriented environment by leveraging the proposed SouthEast Service (SES) Line commuter rail to support new investment in the community.

Planning for the Study Area provided the opportunity for the City to comprehensively address issues related to market conditions, land use, transportation networks, environmental constraints, development character and implementation strategies. This Plan identifies key public sector initiatives that will improve the function and appearance of the Study Area and support private sector reinvestment.

This planning project has been undertaken by the City and the Regional Transportation Authority (RTA) in advance of Metra's proposed SouthEast Service commuter rail line. The proposed introduction of this public transportation connection to Chicago is seen as having a potentially dramatic effect on land use and redevelopment prospects for downtown Chicago Heights. A transit-oriented development (TOD) study brings together many different issues to analyze and discuss redevelopment opportunities. Unlocking the potential for positive land use and community impacts requires paying detailed attention to factors such as the site of the proposed station and its accessory uses; the use and design of adjacent new development; the optimal strategies for pedestrian and traffic circulation; and leveraging existing community, institutional, and employment assets strategically. Due to the magnitude of the Plan, a 20-year timeframe is envisioned for this Plan.

The planning project included eight work tasks between November 2008 and September 2009.

- Task 1: Community Input
- Task 2: Data Collection and Assessment of Existing Conditions
- Task 3: Market Assessment
- Task 4: Concept Planning
- Task 5: Circulation & Access Planning
- Task 6: Design Guidelines
- Task 7: Implementation Strategies
- Task 8: Report Production

## The Downtown TOD Study Area

The City of Chicago Heights, Illinois, is a well-established community in the south suburbs of Chicago. It is bordered by Glenwood, Homewood, and Flossmoor on the north, Olympia Fields and Park Forest on the west, South Chicago Heights, Steger, and Sauk Village on the south, and Ford Heights on the east. Chicago Heights is located approximately 30 miles from the Chicago Loop. Two major highways, Illinois Route 1 and U.S. Route 30, connect the City to other parts of the region.

The project Study Area (the "Study Area") has been defined as the district bordered by 14th Street/Lincoln Highway/Route 30 to the north, 23rd Street on the south, Lowe Avenue to the east and Chicago Road/Illinois Route 1 to the west. The area is intersected by two sets of freight railroad tracks: an east-west right-of-way that is part of the Canadian National/Elgin, Joliet & Eastern (CN/EJ&E) Railway and a north-south right-of-way, currently used by the Union Pacific (UP) and CSX Railroads. The UP/CSX Railroad is the designated corridor of the proposed SES Line through the Study Area. There have also been long-range proposals to use the CN/EJ&E Railway right-of-way for commuter rail service, the potential Metra STAR Line Service.

The Study Area encompasses what was historically the "downtown" area of Chicago Heights and portions of an industrial area on the eastern side of the railroad tracks. This area was at one time a vibrant shopping area, but has fallen victim to the rise of shopping malls and major commercial centers that have been built in nearby communities. However, several large public and institutional users remain in the Study Area and serve as anchors to potential redevelopment.

## The Downtown TOD Study Project

The Downtown TOD Study project spanned 10 months from November 2008 to September 2009, and included eight work tasks.

Task 1: Community Input

Task 2: Data Collection and Assessment of Existing Conditions

Task 3: Market Assessment

Task 4: Concept Planning

Task 5: Circulation & Access Planning

Task 6: Design Guidelines

Task 7: Implementation Strategies

Task 8: Report Production

**Task 1: Community Input**

Community stakeholders participated in the development of this Plan. Information was provided to the general public via local newspapers and the City website regarding meeting dates. Public meetings were held throughout the process to discuss issues, opportunities and development alternatives for the Study Area.

**Task 2: Data Collection and Assessment of Existing Conditions**

To establish a solid understanding of Study Area conditions and context of the City as a whole and neighboring communities, planners gathered, analyzed and mapped information about existing development, land use, zoning, traffic and transit data, demographics, environmental conditions, and open spaces. This information formed the basis for subsequent planning activities.

**Task 3: Market Assessment**

As an input to concept planning activities, planners researched current levels of market-driven real estate activity in the residential, retail, and office sectors. Based on demographic and economic trends in the Study Area, City, and surrounding communities, planners identified a program of redevelopment potentials and suggested opportunity sites in the Study Area that would maximize proximity to the proposed SES Line station and existing development or community anchors.

**Task 4: Concept Planning**

The first planning activity in this project was the selection of a site for the proposed SES Line station. Planners analyzed technical and site requirements from Metra and the UP/CSX Railroad, and proposed several options, which each included site for a station, pedestrian, vehicular and transit connections, and commuter parking. A preferred site was selected after discussion with City officials and elimination of several options due to fatal design flaws.

Concept planning for the larger study area also followed an iterative process. Concurrent with *Task 5: Circulation and Access Planning*, planners identified development / redevelopment prospects for the Study Area. Two draft concepts, with differing levels of market-driven development, civic investment, and location of open space, were proposed. After obtaining community and City input, a preferred concept was selected.

**Task 5: Circulation & Access Planning**

Concurrent with *Task 4: Concept Planning*, planners identified infrastructure improvements to enhance development prospects and facilitate access to the proposed station. Once the preferred Concept Plan was selected, more specific improvements to infrastructure, streetscaping, and parking were proposed.

**Task 6: Design Guidelines**

To ensure that development and redevelopment of the Study Area proceeds in a cohesive and high-quality manner, design guidelines were developed to articulate minimum expectations of architects and developers working in the Area. Guidelines are applicable to both public and private investments.

**Task 7: Implementation Strategies**

To assist the City move forward in its vision for the Study Area, a comprehensive action plan was designed, including an analysis of supportive zoning updates, suggested key action steps, and identification of potential local and external funding sources.

**Task 8: Report Production**

The project culminated in a synthesis of all interim working deliverables into a cohesive and usable final report.

## How to Use This Document

This final 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 research summarized in this section is found in *Appendix 3: Existing Conditions Report* and *Appendix 4: Market Analysis Report*, two interim work products prepared during this 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:

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

- The *Land Use Framework Plan* provides a high-level plan for land uses in the Study Area; the illustrative plan graphic should be used in conjunction with the associated detailed text explanations of land use categories

- The *Development Plan* translates an assessment of market conditions into a potential development program of uses in the Study Area, with illustrative structure types and associated or targeted users

- 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 illustrative plan graphic should be used in conjunction with the associated detailed text explanations of development styles and potential users

- The *Stormwater Management Plan* describes various techniques for handling storm water in the Study Area and recommends particular solutions in the context of the uses proposed in the *Concept 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

- 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

- 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 SouthEast Service

Line, but supports the redevelopment of downtown Chicago Heights independent of that transportation project

*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.

## The SouthEast Service Line

A major public transportation improvement in the regional long-range transportation plan for the Chicago metropolitan area is the development of commuter service along the Metra SouthEast Service Line (SES) corridor, with a station in Chicago Heights connecting into downtown Chicago.

### Service Plans

The proposed SES Line would serve the south side of Chicago and the suburban communities of southern Cook County and Will County. The proposed 33-mile rail line would operate along a series of four existing railroad rights-of-way. It would operate on the UP/CSX Railroad right-of-way from near Balmoral Park Race Track in Crete to Dolton Junction, on Union Pacific right-of-way from Dolton Junction to Oakdale Junction, on the Chicago Rail Link from Oakdale Junction to Gresham Junction and Metra's Rock Island District right-of-way from Gresham Junction to LaSalle Street Station in Downtown Chicago. The proposed SES Line would serve two existing Rock Island District stations (the LaSalle Street and Gresham stations), a planned 35th Street Station on the Rock Island District, and ten new stations. The City of Chicago Heights has been identified as a potential station location, along with the neighboring communities of South Chicago Heights, Steger and Crete.


### The Federal Transit Administration's Development Process

Before a transportation agency or service provider can implement any new service or expand existing service, projects must undergo several feasibility and environmental studies to ensure all federal and state guidelines are met. Agencies seeking federal funding for projects must comply with the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) New Starts process, which requires documentation and rigorous studies to justify that the

commuter rail alternative best addresses the transportation needs and issues within the corridors. Stages in the project development process include:

- Alternatives Analysis (AA)
    - If found to be feasible, the Locally Preferred Alternative (LPA) in the AA will be determined for the SES corridor. Metra expects to submit the LPA to the FTA in Fall 2009.
- Environmental Assessment/Preliminary Engineering
- Final Engineering and Design/Land Acquisition
- Full Funding Grant Agreement
- Begin Construction
- Begin New Service

Metra, the Chicago region's commuter rail service provider, is in the process of completing an AA for the proposed SES Line. During this stage, local, regional and federal governments work together to identify the transportation issues within a corridor, define the purpose and need for the transportation problems, and develop and evaluate potential transportation alternatives to meet those needs. Numerous transportation alternatives are being evaluated, including different alignments and modal technologies (e.g., bus, commuter rail, light rail). Ridership projections are currently underway.

Although several of the communities along the proposed SES Line are undertaking, or have already completed, some studies of their own, Metra is mandated by law to take the proposed projects through an entire roster of studies. Public involvement and any information previously generated by the communities is an important part of the overall analysis, and Metra plans to build upon the data generated from these studies. This TOD Plan is one such study that Metra will use as it progresses through the New Starts process.

Pending the completion of the AA process and the FTA's approval to proceed into Preliminary Engineering, service on the SES Line would not begin for approximately

eight to ten years from the present time (2009) to complete. Metra plans to complete the AA in Fall 2009.

## Funding

### Federal Funding

A significant share of the funding to implement and launch the SES Line is anticipated to come through the successor to the current federal transportation funding program: Safe, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU), which funds the New Starts program for large-scale transit projects. The next federal multi-year transportation authorization is anticipated to begin in late 2009 or after. As with historical New Starts projects, state and local matching funds will be a necessary component of the overall funding package. All of the communities that plan to host stations will also need to secure funding for land acquisition and construction of station and parking facilities.

### Regional Funding Collaboration

According to the *South Suburban Commuter Rail Corridor: Land Use and Local Financing Study, Phase 2* (December 2007), eight suburban communities (Crete, Steger, South Chicago Heights, Chicago Heights, Glenwood, Thornton, South Holland, and Dolton) have begun to explore efforts to develop a cooperative, joint approach to funding the stations, parking areas, and other local aspects of the SES Line project.

The idea of a "corridor funding pool" was endorsed in this study. It examined preferred funding sources in more detail. It also presented information on how the communities can begin to initiate formal intergovernmental agreements to govern creation, management and oversight of a joint funding pool to help pay for the land acquisition and construction of stations and parking facilities along Metra's proposed SES Line. Each community that plans to host a SES Line station would need to fund the acquisition of the land and construction for the station and parking, as well as ramps, sidewalks, pedestrian and vehicular grade separations, and other infrastructure associated with the station. Metra's contribution to the cost of the station infrastructure includes the construction of platforms along the railroad right-of-way, as well as potential necessary track and crossing improvements to operate commuter rail safely and effectively.

Another recommendation in the study was the formation of a board called the Southeast Corridor Rail Development Board (SCRDB) to help advance the efforts of the individual

municipalities to create a station and parking facilities along the proposed SES Line. A list of funding options and a sample intergovernmental agreement were included in the study. The City should continue to participate on the SCRDB and seek out intergovernmental funding options as the New Starts process progresses.

## Transit-Oriented Development Methods and Principles

TOD is characterized by mixed-use, vibrant, higher density areas that enable people to live near transit, such as the proposed SES Line and existing Pace bus routes, thereby reducing dependence on automobiles. Typically, TOD includes development within a ¼ to ½ mile radius (roughly a five- to fifteen minute walk) of a major transit hub. TOD has many benefits, including increased pedestrian traffic and greater street liveliness. Safety is improved, as is community cohesion, by increasing density and uses. Pedestrians who walk past restaurants and retail shops support local businesses and contribute to the number of "eyes on the street". Transit systems also benefit from the ridership provided by residents, commuters, workers, shoppers, and visitors. Most importantly, local residents benefit through easy access to jobs, retail, schools, and other services. Benefits accrue to the broader City, too. Land that might be vacant can be used for higher density tax-generating development. With less driving, there is less congestion, air pollution and climate impact, allowing Chicago Heights to become a "greener" community.

### TOD Design Principles

Successful TOD requires that many complex and subtle urban design principles be coordinated in place-making, integrating transit infrastructure with surrounding development and creating a cohesive experience for all users, visitors, and residents of the Study Area. Communities that are implementing TOD principles strive to improve the pedestrian environment and remove existing barriers to access as part of building a transit-oriented district. This emphasis on a safe, walkable district prepares the area for further development and redevelopment. The table on the following page summarizes TOD design principles.

**TOD Design Principles**

| | |
|---|---|
| Development Density | **Minimum and Maximum Residential Densities**. TOD works best as an energizing force for development, and supports ridership to the greatest extent, when people are living within a quarter-mile radius proximity of transit stations.<br>**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. |
| Urban Design | **Pedestrian-friendly amenities.** Features such as street furniture, high-quality pavement treatments, and pedestrian-scaled lighting add comfort and promote walking.<br>**Landscaping.** In addition to reducing heat gain, trees and other plant material can enhance the environment, encouraging individuals to walk to and from stations.<br>**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.<br>**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.<br>**Station access.** Urban design favors access to the station to the following modes in order of priority: pedestrians, bus riders, bicyclists, vehicles (short-term parking), and vehicles (long-term parking). 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. Street and sidewalk connectivity is key in this regard.<br>**Active uses at ground-level.** Commercial buildings, institutions, or other activity centers should be the preferred outward "face" of development in the district, as opposed to surface parking or uninviting parking structures. |
| Parking | **Minimum and maximum off-street parking standards**. Since residents of TOD are likely to own fewer cars, less valuable development space needs be devoted to parking when there is a lower need. To the extent possible, the cost of parking and principal land uses should be unbundled so that private market decisions determine parking supply.<br>**Consider surface parking as a means of land-banking.** Having control of a significant amount of property adjoining the proposed SES station, the City is in the fortunate position of not being beholden to immediate private property concerns of maximizing short-term profit gain over long-term TOD viability. This enables the City to wait for optimal development conditions and gain the highest quality development possible while providing surface parking on interior streets. |
| Parks & Open Space | **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. |

## Economic Impacts of Development near Transit

Numerous studies, drawing from local and national examples, have documented that development of a transit system has the opportunity of creating positive economic impacts in the areas immediately surrounding the transit line and stations.

In addition to the transportation-related benefits that will result from a new transit system, a community can realize direct and spin-off economic benefits. Transit can be viewed as a community or infrastructure improvement that adds value to land and makes it more attractive for development:

- Value for commercial and institutional development: provides improved access for employees and customers to visit commercial establishments (i.e., offices, retail stores, service providers, schools, hospitals, etc.);

- Value for entertainment and tourism development: provides improved access for employees and visitors to entertainment and tourist destinations, and reduces automobile-generated congestion for high-attendance events (e.g., sporting venues, arts establishments, casinos, bar / restaurant districts, etc.);

- Value for residential development: provides a transportation alternative to local residents.

As new developments begin to occur in a transit service area, a new community develops. The presence of a mix of uses has a synergistic and multiplicative benefit: as residential units or office buildings develop, retail becomes more viable and these uses begin to appear. As more retail and services appear, the area becomes more attractive to prospective residents or office facilities, and more housing units and office space are developed, and so on.

The increased value to land in a transit service area may be realized as early as the point in time when a transit project is announced, in anticipation of its general construction, and may continue well after transit operations begin.

Impacts vary from place to place in degree and timeframe realized, and it is generally agreed that the following factors influence the extent of benefits received include:

- Stage of transit project (proposed, funded, in progress, completed)

- Transit type (i.e., technology implemented: traditional busses, bus rapid transit, light rail, streetcars / trolleys, commuter rail, etc.)
- Transit connectivity, such as access to desirable routes and destinations
- Frequency of service
- Local real estate market conditions
- Land uses in the station area
- Local land use policy (i.e., zoning, neighborhood plans, comprehensive plans, etc.)
- Accessibility of station to pedestrians, park-and-ride users, and connecting transit users
- Disincentives to driving, such as roadway congestion, rising fuel costs and taxes, and high parking costs and inconvenience

Value may accrue to a variety of parties as a result of increased land value and subsequent development:

- Property owners: net gains on investment from increased property values
- Developers and landlords: reduced development costs resulting from lower parking requirements and increased density, and ability to charge rental premiums on land or space rental
- Retail and service business owners: increased sales resulting from increased traffic and visibility
- Taxing bodies: incremental tax revenues as a result of increased property value

# Community Input

The successful completion of a planning process depends on the engaged involvement of those agencies and individuals who will be tasked with implementation.

## The Project Team

A core team of technical experts guided the project from beginning to end. Planners from URS Corporation led the project and facilitated design of the TOD Plan, contributing expertise in urban planning, transit-oriented development, transportation and circulation planning, and implementation strategies. The City's Economic Development Department served as the client lead for the project, together with the Planning Department of the RTA.

## Steering Committee

The Project Team formed a Steering Committee at the beginning of the project, to serve as a guiding force for the project and to provide focused input and feedback to interim work products. Steering Committee members included the City's Chief of Staff, City Attorney, and consulting planners. Staff from Pace and Metra also served on the Steering Committee.

In addition to setting project direction and reviewing deliverables, members of the Steering Committee participated in a half-day bus tour of Chicago suburbs with successful TOD districts around their Metra commuter rail stations. The tour visited LaGrange and Lemont, whose TOD neighborhoods had transformed into vibrant mixed-use districts from areas that were either blighted or simply underutilized. Municipal staff from the host cities provided a history of the redevelopment and shared lessons-learned and implementation techniques for consideration in this project.

## Key Person Interviews

The Project Team conducted one-on-one interviews with various community stakeholders, including members of the Chicago Heights Business Council, to obtain detailed information about issues and opportunities in the Study Area.

## Public Participation

Community stakeholders participated in the development of this Plan. Information was provided to the general public via local newspapers and the City website regarding

meeting dates. Public meetings were held throughout the process to discuss issues, opportunities and development alternatives for the Study Area.

**Input to the Plan**

The first public workshop for the project was held on Wednesday, March 25, 2009, in City Council Chambers. The Project Team began the meeting with an explanation of the project schedule and scope. The first interactive activity was a Visual Preference Survey (VPS). VPS is a planning tool that allows the public to rate visual concepts of various types of building designs, landscape characteristics, community fabric, architectural styles, signs, etc. The VPS also provides a way for the public to communicate likes or dislikes about the current aesthetic fabric, and what they would like to see changed. A total of 56 images were shown to illustrate different design elements. Elements included building types, building heights, design of sidewalks, streets, building facades, landscaping, signage, and other character features. Every participant was given a ballot and upon review of the image, assigned the image a variable positive/negative ranking. The Project Team used the results of the VPS to shape the draft concept plans and develop community-relevant Design Guidelines, which are included in Chapter 12.

The second interactive activity during this workshop was small group discussion of the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) of the Study Area. This feedback is presented in Chapter 5.

**Review and Comment on Draft Concept Plans**

The second public workshop for the project was held on Wednesday, May 27, 2009, in City Council Chambers. The Project Team began the meeting with a summary of the project schedule and scope, and a recap of findings from the first public workshop. The Project Team then presented draft versions of the Land Use Framework Plan and the two Draft Concept Plans for comment. Participants in the meeting, who included residents, business owners, journalists, and City staff, recorded comments on a ballot for incorporation into the Concept Plan. This presentation was reprised the following week at the June 2, 2009 meeting of the Chicago Heights Business Council, who also provided comments.

**Final Plan Presentation**

The final draft version of the Plan was presented to the City at joint meetings of the Plan Commission and Zoning Board of Appeals on August 26, 2009 and October 7, 2009 and at a meeting of the City Council on November 2, 2009. The purpose of these meetings

was to share project findings and present recommendations for final comment. The final version of the Plans and this report reflect public comments from these presentations. The City Council voted to adopt the Plan as an amendment to the City's Comprehensive Plan on November 2, 2009.

# Study Area Existing Conditions

The first work task in the project was an assessment of existing conditions in the Study Area. In addition to generating a baseline of information, this information will inform the concept planning and implementation strategies deliverables by demonstrating how far, and in what ways, the Study Area will transform from the current state to the end vision identified in the Concept Plan.

## Property Ownership

A large amount of the land in the Study Area is publicly-owned. In addition to properties that are actively used for municipal/public purposes, the City owns vacant and underutilized land. Significant City-owned properties include:

- Chicago Heights City Hall on Chicago Road
- Chicago Heights Public Library on Chicago Road
- The Police Station on Halsted and 16th Street
- The "Expo Site"/parking lot, located north of E. Hickory Street/Independence Way
- Most of the block that is bounded by 17th Street on the south, 16th street on the north, Union Avenue on the east, and East End on the west
- Property along Halsted which is used for public works purposes

The City also owns other parcels scattered throughout the Study Area. A significant opportunity for the City in relationship to the proposed train station is the "Expo Site" which is envisioned to be used for commuter parking.

The City has been proactive in its approach to blight removal and redevelopment and has purchased or has control over several parcels of land in the Study Area. This will allow the City to control the land uses and types of development on these parcels, which will "set the stage" for redevelopment of the entire Study Area. For example, the City may wish to issue Requests for Qualifications (RFQ) or Request for Proposals (RFP) for properties that are targeted for redevelopment (as described in Chapter 9) that would state the City's development objectives and vision, and seek a development partner.

## Environmental Concerns

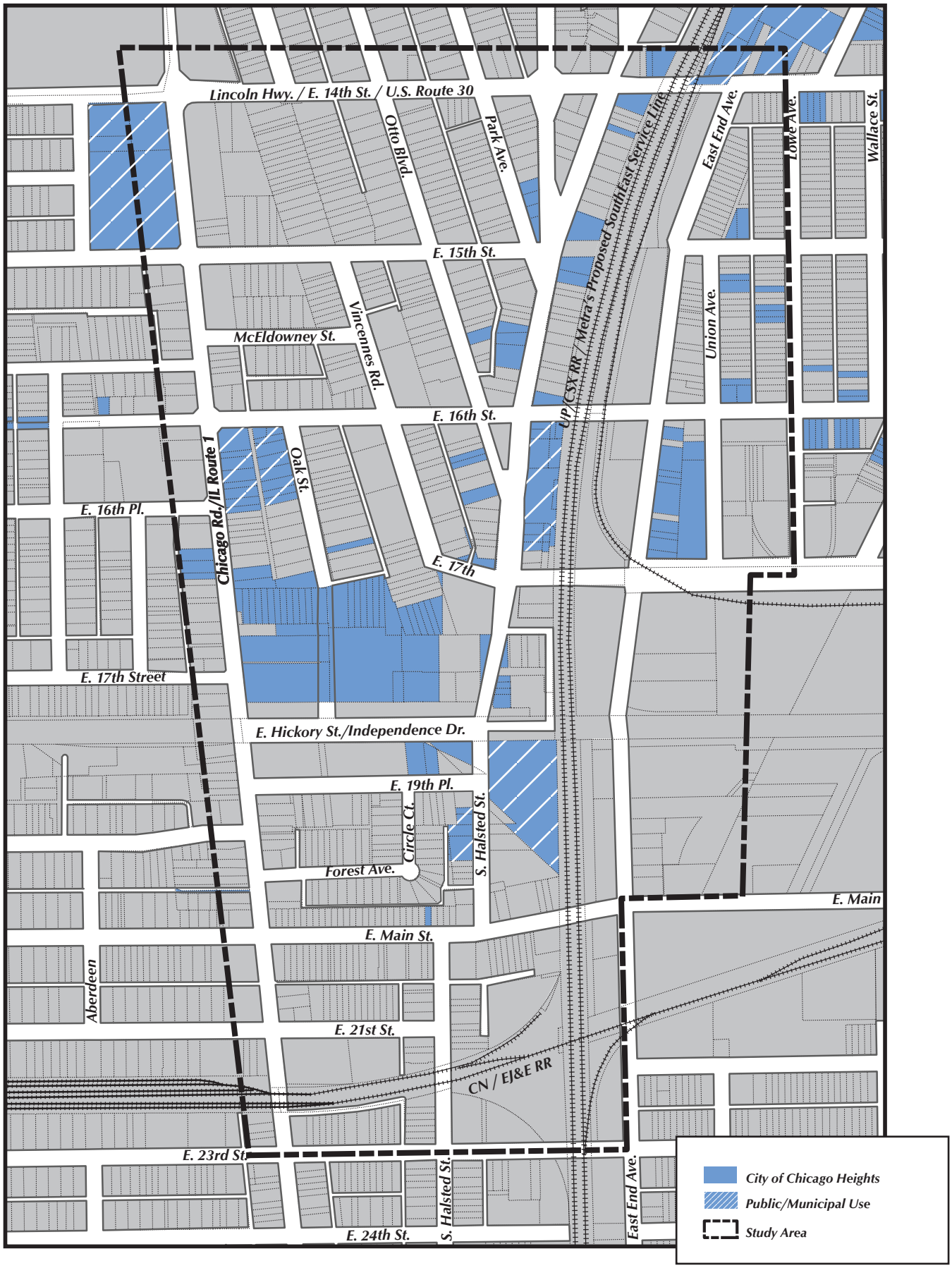
Well-established, built-out communities with current or past industrial uses often contain environmentally-contaminated properties known as brownfields. Brownfields are defined as abandoned or underutilized commercial and industrial properties where real estate is hindered by real or perceived contamination. Examples of brownfields are former gas stations, dry cleaners, or manufacturing plants.

The suspicion of contamination is often enough to deter potential developers. Identifying properties that are real or perceived brownfields and removing obstacles to development should be a priority for Chicago Heights. Brownfield redevelopment can have many positive effects on a community, including: increasing economic opportunities by returning land to productive use, increasing the number of jobs in the community, providing recreational areas, and diversifying the economic base.

As part of a previous assignment, URS conducted an Environmental Site Assessment (ESA) for a parcel of land located northwest of the intersection of 17th Street and Union Avenue, within the Study Area. As part of the ESA, a regulatory records review was performed to assess the potential for the presence of hazardous substance contamination as a result of activities conducted on properties within the Study Area. Several properties in the Study Area were identified as being listed on one or more of the state or federal environmental inventory databases.

These sites have the potential to be contaminated based on their historical use. Further investigation would be warranted if any of the sites are redeveloped, including sampling of soil and groundwater. If the sampling shows that the sites are in fact contaminated, they could be remediated. The Illinois EPA's Site Remediation Program (SRP) verifies completion of site remediation by issuing No Further Remediation (NFR) letters for the remediated sites. These sites may not require active remediation. An NFR letter provides comfort to the prospective developer that the environmental risks have been evaluated and sufficiently mitigated. A common remediation technique is an engineered barrier, which could include a building foundation or parking lot; landscaping can also be considered an engineered barrier in certain cases.

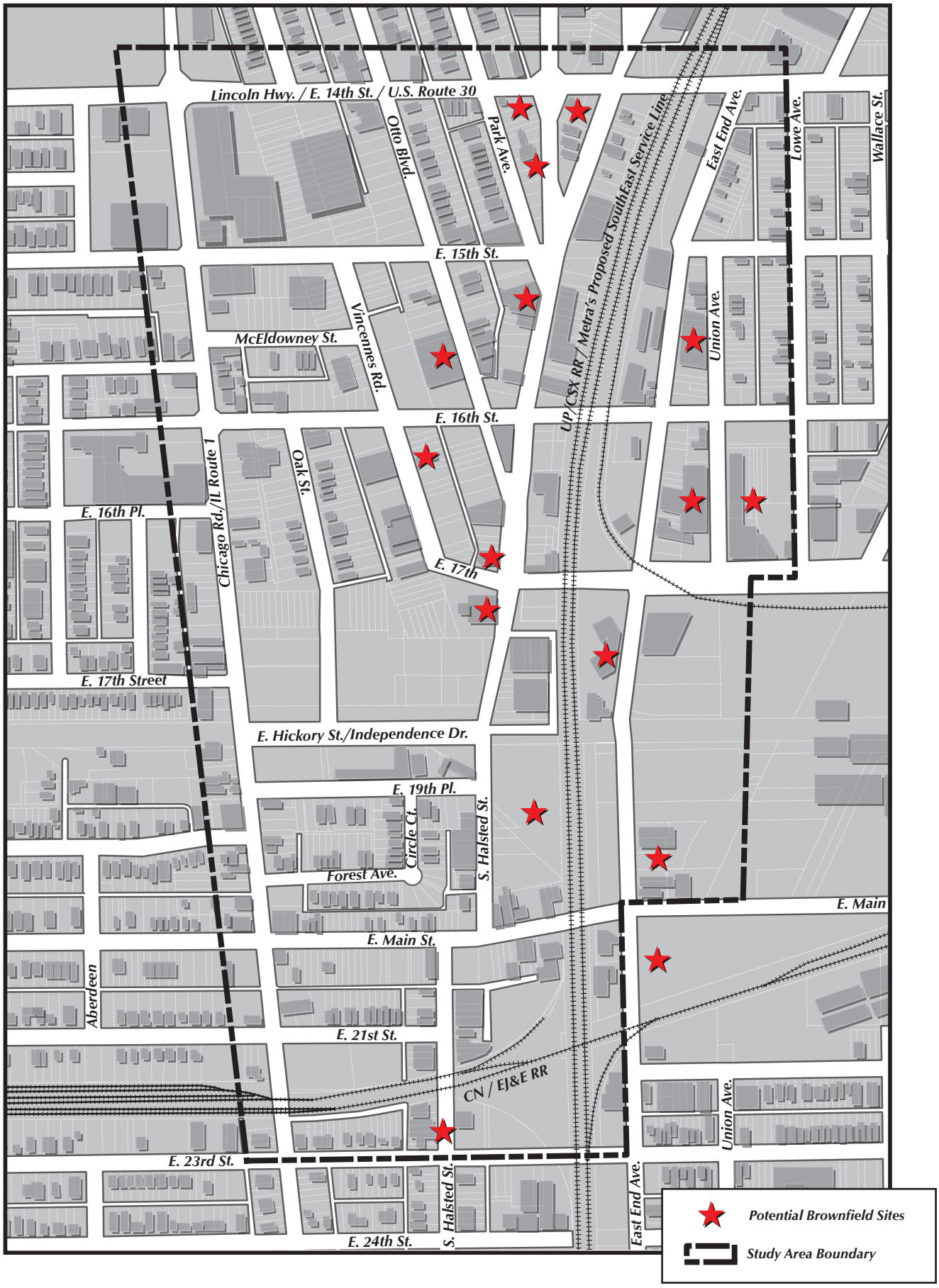
# Map 1: Publicly-Owned Land






*Prepared by:*
*November 2, 2009*
URS

## Map 2: Known Environmental Concern Areas



## Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats Analysis

Although the start of proposed SES Line lies years in the future, considering the physical relationships between the downtown area and the proposed commuter station may offer opportunities for new residential, commercial, mixed-use, and recreational development. The large size of many of these parcels and the number of vacant sites require a phased strategy for redevelopment which identifies short- and longer-term opportunities. While redevelopment will likely take place over a period of years, it should not occur as a series of isolated and unrelated projects.

The following summarizes the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) to redevelopment in the Study Area. Strengths and weaknesses are internal and controllable characteristics; opportunities and threats are external and out of the City's influence. This analysis is undertaken from the perspective of potentially attracting new developments, which may transform the vacant or underutilized development parcels into components of a vibrant transit-oriented district.

**Key Strengths**

| | |
|---|---|
| **City control of key parcels** | Ability to provide incentives for the right projects is strengthened |
| **TIF available** | Adoption of TIF district permits City to offer financial incentives, acquire land, upgrade infrastructure |
| **Large employment base** | St. James Hospital, Chicago Heights municipal functions, industrial businesses provide employment anchors |
| **Lincoln Highway access & visibility** | High-traffic artery attractive for retailers, service providers |
| **Community history** | The City's rich cultural history can enhance marketing and branding campaigns that underlay redevelopment efforts |
| **Historic building stock** | Can leverage existing buildings for unique developments |
| **Government/institutional presence** | May provide chances to partner on expansion initiatives |

**Key Weaknesses**

| | |
|---|---|
| **Perception of crime and safety in Study Area** | Study Area and station facilities will need to be well-lit, clean, and well-maintained |
| **Perception of adjacent neighborhoods** | East Side and Hill neighborhoods seen as in decline |
| **Heavy rail & auto traffic** | Residential potential at certain sites impacted by adjacency to railway, heavy truck traffic; the volumes of which may be expected to increase |
| **Potential environmental issues** | Contamination issues may be present at former industrial sites |
| **Existing industrial uses** | Existing uses may limit demand for incompatible uses, such as high-value residential, passive and/or active recreation as well as vibrant commercial/entertainment district development |
| **Physical aspects affecting perception of community** | Existing vacant parcels, lack of retail, meager pedestrian and vehicular traffic impact the image of the downtown area |

**Key Opportunities**

| | |
|---|---|
| **Rail service & access** | Metra's proposed SES Line would bring in commuters from the City & surrounding communities |
| **Regional funding programs** | South Suburban Mayors and Managers Association (SSMMA) and Southeast Corridor Rail Development Board (SCRDB) working with communities along SES line to develop financing mechanisms |
| **Unique site along SES Line corridor** | Other station sites do not offer as many shovel-ready TOD opportunities |
| **Growing regional population** | City can capture short & long term growth by planning for an attractive downtown |
| **Enhanced employment base** | Chicago Southland Economic Development Corporation, among others, is actively recruiting new business development for communities in the region and can assist or provide the model for City's development of employment opportunities |

**Key Threats**

| | |
|---|---|
| **Thriving retail corridors in other south suburbs** | Homewood, Park Forest, Matteson, and other nearby communities contain recognized retail competing concentrations |
| **TOD competition with adjacent communities** | Glenwood & S. Chicago Heights have similar profiles and will also target TOD strategies |
| **TOD is unfamiliar** | New development model in the south suburbs requires a skilled development team |
| **Weak real estate market** | Economic conditions may delay development |

# Section 2

## Downtown Transit-Oriented Development Plans


# SouthEast Service Line Station Plan

The SouthEast Service (SES) Line station in Chicago Heights is viewed as a potential catalyst for redevelopment, and a station in the downtown area offers the City the greatest potential for generating economic development benefits. Downtown Chicago Heights used to be a more vibrant area, but as large retailers relocated out of the Study Area, vacant land and buildings came to characterize much of the area. The City recognizes that the downtown is no longer the retail focus of the City, but sees the needs of the community to upgrade the area with a focus on institutional, civic, and mixed uses. A train station in the downtown would improve the prospects of attracting retail, residential development, and mixed-use developments typically associated with transit-oriented development (TOD). The station could also serve the municipal and institutional uses that are located nearby.

## Station Considerations

One of the initial steps in Chicago Heights' TOD planning process was to identify a station location for the proposed SES Line. The proposed Metra SES Line utilizes existing rail lines to provide commuter rail service from Crete to the Chicago LaSalle Street station with a proposed transit station in Chicago Heights. Previous planning efforts (including the *South Suburban Commuter Rail Corridor Local Land Use and Local Financing Study* (2005) and *South Suburban Commuter Rail Feasibility Study* (April 1999) identified the station as being located in the downtown area, on the east side of Halsted Street between 17th and Illinois Avenue. According to that Study, the City expressed a preference for creating a combined Pace transfer center and SES Line station in the central business district. During this project, the City confirmed these preferences. This concept would require only a minor diversion of existing Pace bus routes that serve the area.

### Station Location Considerations

Because the majority of morning peak hour riders are expected to be travelling north into Chicago, the proposed primary waiting facilities are located on the east side of the UP/CSX Railroad, which is the proposed inbound side. Passengers waiting for inbound morning trains (which constitute the bulk of Metra ridership) board on this side of the tracks, and thus should have waiting and shelter areas available on this side. There should also be a smaller-sized waiting shelter on the outbound (west) side platform.

Commuter parking is provided on both the east and west sides of the tracks. Because existing active land uses--mainly industrial--are present on the east/inbound side of the

tracks, it is advantageous to site parking and developments on the west/outbound side of the tracks. The presence of vacant land and city-controlled parcels, as well as more compatible uses on the west side of the tracks, are also advantageous for development of parking. However, the majority of riders will likely be boarding the train on the inbound (northbound or east) side platform, so parking is provided on the east side of the UP/CSX Railroad tracks for the convenience of these commuters.

An investigation of the east side of the rail right-of-way in downtown Chicago Heights indicates two limiting factors for the positioning of a rail station related to passenger safety: a significant curve in the right-of-way north of 16th Street (which reduces operational safety and efficiency), and the presence of an active rail spur that branches off and travels east along 17th Street (a condition that limits access by customers, Pace and first responders).

**Station Features**

The station location has been chosen based on community input, and feedback from Metra, Pace, and City officials. The Station Plan proposes that 17th Street will be closed to vehicular traffic, but will remain open to pedestrians. The station location is proposed just south of 17th Street, adjacent to the Cook County Housing Authority (CCHA) buildings. One warming shelter is proposed for each side of the tracks. Two 14' wide platforms, including 2' tactile warning strips, at 805' length each, would be constructed with the station. (The exact number of shelters and platform lengths will be confirmed once ridership projections have been completed as part of the AA in Fall 2009.) The Station Plan also provides effective vehicular access for first responders and a turn-around area with drop-off zones, for traffic circulation.

This location is close to the historic "heart" of downtown and the Chicago Heights Police Station. The proposed station should serve as a view terminus from both the east and west sides of the Study Area. This location allows the station to merge into a larger civic complex that would anchor this area and to use an existing at-grade crossing at 17th Street. Closing an at-grade railroad crossing to vehicular traffic will need to be approved by the Illinois Commerce Commission and the UP/CSX Railroad, who has jurisdiction over safety requirements for track, facilities and equipment belonging to rail carriers within the state. In general, removals of at-grade railroad crossings are encouraged where possible.

Vacating 17th Street would allow for a civic plaza on the west side of the UP/CSX Railroad/Proposed SES Line. The civic plaza is envisioned as a downtown "celebratory

space", with ornamental gardens, specialty paving, memorial bricks, a tinted concrete "compass rose", and a clock tower. The civic plaza should function as a multi-use space for activities, including farmers markets, performances and other recreational activities. The civic plaza also provides an attractive setting for the historic Chicago Heights National Bank Building. Illustrated color renderings of the station area are included at the end of this chapter.

**Station Parking Requirements**

According to Metra, until projected ridership numbers are determined, all communities that plan to host a SES Line station will need to provide approximately 1,250 parking spaces at full build-out (approximately 13 acres). The minimum number of parking spaces needed at the beginning of SES Line will be determined once ridership projections have been completed. Metra plans to complete the AA in Fall 2009; ridership estimates should be provided at that time. Specific commuter parking details include:

- 1,250 spaces within Metra's prescribed radius of 1,300 feet from the station
- 14 kiss-and-ride spaces on the inbound/east side
- 22 ADA-compliant spaces.

The City should consider using stormwater best management practices to address stormwater runoff resulting from surface parking lots. Various techniques are presented in Chapter 10: Stormwater Management Plan.

**Pace Transfer Facility**

Pace has stressed its desire to connect with Metra at points along the SES corridor and provide strong east/west transportation connections. Pace currently owns a bus transfer facility at 16th Street and Vincennes Avenue in Chicago Heights. However, in order to support Pace's desire to connect with the SES, and better facilitate a multi-modal transit node, a new location for the facility is proposed in the Plan on the west side of the tracks, immediately south of the proposed civic plaza. The new Pace transfer facility will include, at a minimum, existing and planned passenger and operational features of the facility at 16th Street and Vincennes Avenue. The new west side facility will include, at a minimum, a covered canopy, passenger waiting shelters, bus operators restroom facility, bus layover area, passenger information displays and real-time bus arrival displays and

security enhancements. The design of the facility would be a six-bay, sawtooth alignment.

A supporting facility on the east side of the tracks would include two bus bays on East End Avenue north of the vacated 17th Street and existing rail spur. This facility would include, at a minimum, passenger waiting shelters, passenger information displays, real time bus arrival displays and security enhancements.

Designs for both areas also include improved streetscaping to make the Pace facilities more accessible to bicyclists and pedestrians.

The current Pace transfer facility at 16th Street and Vincennes Avenue has a remaining useful life until 2016. Abandonment of this location prior to this date will result in repayment of remaining useful life to its Federal, IDOT, and RTA funding agencies. Depending on the outcome of any new location for a Pace transfer facility; this would have to be addressed by the participants of this study as a financial obligation of the project.

**Pedestrian and Bicyclist Considerations**

A sidewalk system is proposed adjacent to the UP/CSX Railroad right-of-way, linking surface lots with an existing at-grade crossing at Main Street for improved pedestrian circulation and safety. Bump-outs should be constructed at roadway intersections to enhance pedestrian safety and calm local traffic. A potential pedestrian underpass may be constructed at/near Independence Way pending availability of additional funding, concurrence of freight train ownership, and the ability to avoid impacts to freight rail operations.

A former railroad corridor, the Old Plank Road Trail runs from Joliet to Sauk Village and is already developed—or is being developed—as an active-use regional trail in communities to the west. The Trail is illustrated with a proposed eastern terminus adjacent to the outbound track and a trailhead entry plaza on Halsted Street across from the outbound commuter station platform and Pace transfer facility. The Trail would provide a point of entry to the Station Area for cyclists coming from west of Chicago Road.

## Station Design

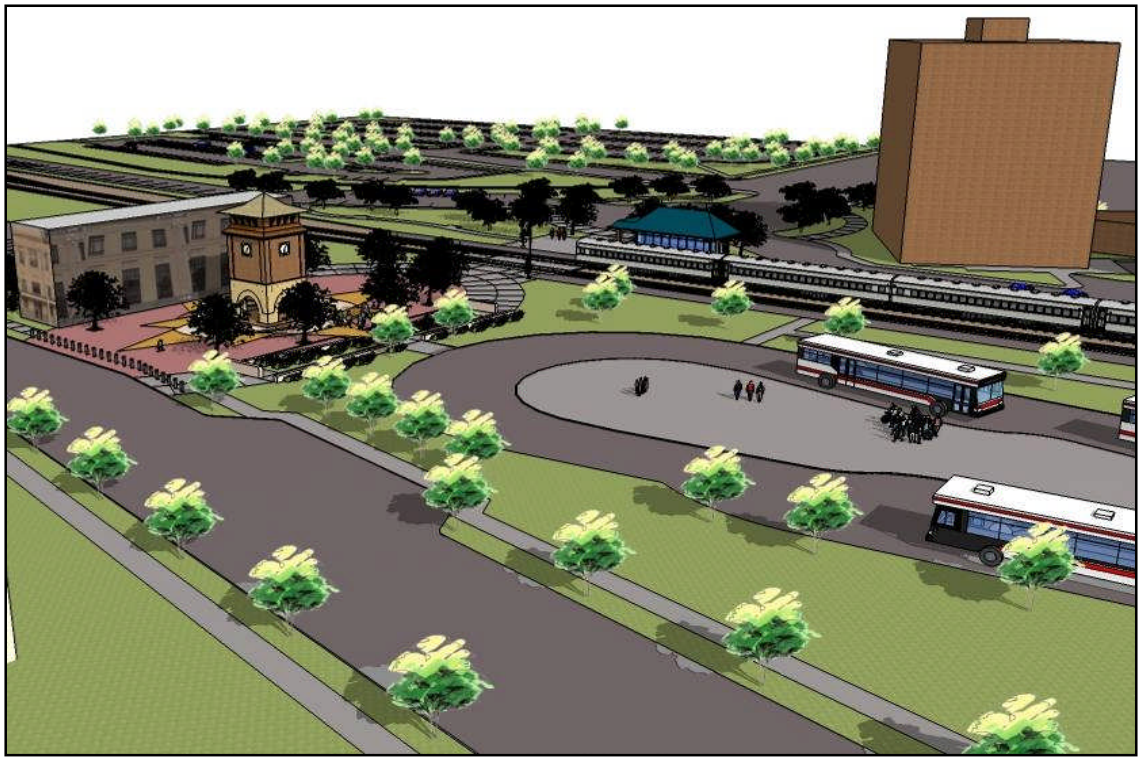
Metra has developed design guidelines that must be included in a basic station; there are currently three sizes for basic stations, based on projected levels of ridership. Examples of each station type are provided below. The classification of each proposed station will determine the minimum design guidelines to be followed. Metra's basic station and parking design guidelines are documented in Metra's *Station Manual* and *Parking Manual*, and are discussed in greater detail in Chapter 15: Action List. These documents contain the minimum guidelines that each municipality should follow regarding station and parking design.

**Example Station Type: Small, Medium and Large Warming Shelters**

In March 2009, residents participated in a visual preference survey (VPS) to identify the visual character most suitable for the proposed train station, mixed-use, residential, park and open space, streetscape, and other developments in Chicago Heights. The VPS formed the basis of the Design Guidelines, included in Chapter 12. The highest-ranked station examples are shown below.

**Community-Preferred Station Styles**

**Color Rendering of Proposed Station Area: View from southwest**



**Color Rendering of Proposed Station Area: View from west**

PLOTTED: August 19, 2009 BY: McMahan, Jeff CTB USED: URS-STANDARD.ctb PAPER SPACE TAB: Plan (11x17)
DWG PATH: P:\Projects - Public\Chicago Heights TOD\6000 Reports\6300 Draft And Final Reports\6310 Draft\Graphics\Station Area Concepts\Graphics\4-City-Preferred_Concept1.dwg

EAST 16TH PL.
VINCENNES RD.
POLICE STATION
POLICE STATION PARKING LOT
5 Commuter Spaces & 22 ADA Spaces
Commuter 116 Spaces
EAST END AVE.
7 PACE 8
Commuter 253 Spaces
LOWE AVE.
Historic Chicago Heights National Bank Building to remain
EAST 17TH ST.
Civic Plaza w. Clocktower @ vacated 17th Street
Expo Lot
PACE TRANSFER FACILITY
PLATFORM
CCHA PARKING LOT
CCHA
CCHA
Historic Furniture Building to remain
Cook County Housing Authority Residential Facility to remain
Commuter 358 Spaces
EAST HICKORY ST./ INDEPENDENCE DR.
Old Plank Trail Extension to Station Complex
Trail
Plaza
Potential Pedestrian Underpass
EAST 19TH PL.
Commuter 326 Spaces
Commuter 192 Spaces
SOUTH HALSTED ST.
UP/CSX and Metra's Proposed SouthEast Service
Sidewalk
Sidewalk
FOREST AVE.
Sidewalk Connection
EAST MAIN STREET

NORTH
0 75 150 300
SCALE IN FEET

CHICAGO HEIGHTS DOWNTOWN TOD STUDY

STATION AREA PLAN

DATE: Aug 19, 2009
JOB NO.: 25367121
DRAWN BY: JMM
CHK'D BY: JLMD
SCALE: AS SHOWN

URS
100 S. WACKER DRIVE, SUITE 500
CHICAGO, ILLINOIS 60606
PHONE: (312) 939-1000
FAX: (312) 939-4198

## Land Use Framework Plan

The Land Use Framework Plan lays the foundation for the Concept Plan and presents the land use recommendations for the long-term redevelopment of the Study Area. During the next 10 to 20 years, the Study Area should be improved and revitalized as a transit hub, should function as an employment and business area, a retail and commercial service district, and include a range of housing options.

### Existing Land Use

Chicago Heights has a broad mix of land uses, including residential, commercial, open space/recreational, retail, industrial/manufacturing, vacant land, and public/institutional. Much of the land in the Study Area is currently vacant or underutilized, presenting tremendous opportunity for redevelopment. The Study Area is an older section of the City, and historically had passenger rail service. The Study Area contains some buildings of historical and architectural interest, including the building known as the "Chicago Heights National Bank" on the northeast corner of 17th and Halsted Streets and the former Star newspaper building on Otto Street. Consideration should be given to maintaining and enhancing these structures when possible.

The Existing Land Use figure illustrates the generalized existing land use in the Study Area, based on field surveys undertaken in January 2009. Documenting the existing land use pattern is an important element in determining improvement and development potentials within the Study Area.

**Industrial**

Industrial/manufacturing uses are concentrated along East End Avenue and the eastern side of the UP/CSX Railroad tracks and south of Main Street. There are a number of industrial/manufacturing businesses in the Study Area, including Chicago Heights Steel on the east side of East End Avenue and DiCicco Concrete, located south of Lincoln Highway between the railroad tracks and East End Avenue.

**Residential**

Residential uses are found throughout the Study Area, mainly in a few concentrations: just south of Lincoln Highway, between Park Avenue and Otto Boulevard.; along Oak Street, south of 16th Street; along Forest Avenue; and in the northeastern corner of the Study Area just south of Lincoln Highway between Union Avenue and Lowe Avenue.

The residential areas show some signs of deterioration and neglect. The City has included some of the residential areas within the downtown TIF district.

While most of the residential uses are single-family, there are a few multi-family buildings scattered throughout the Study Area. The Cook County Housing Authority (CCHA) maintains a high rise building for senior citizens, located along East End Avenue just south of 17th Street.

**Commercial**

Some commercial businesses are located within the Study Area. Commercial uses include retail shops, pharmacies, food stores, eateries, a new grocery store that is under construction, laundromats, and others. Commercial Service uses include banks, business and personal services, auto repair shops, and others. Uses are mainly concentrated along Chicago Road and north of 16th Street.

Lincoln Highway/U.S. Route 30/14th Street is a major commercial corridor and many of the City's retail and commercial establishments are located along this street in other parts of the community.

**Mixed-Use**

Mixed-Use reflects a combination of single land uses (most often Commercial, Institutional, and Residential) in one land area or development. The individual use types must be compatible in terms of occupancy, intensity and patterns of activity, and design. The only existing mixed-use is the plaza on 16th Street between Otto Boulevard and Halsted Street.

**Parks/Open Space**

There are no parks or recreational open spaces within the Study Area, The Joe Orr Woods unit of the Cook County Forest Preserve is located to the just outside of the Study Area to the northwest.

**Public/Institutional**

The Study Area is fortunate to contain a number of public and institutional facilities, which can anchor redevelopment efforts and add character to the Study Area. Public and institutional uses primarily occur in the northwest portion of the Study Area. Many of the public/institutional establishments are major employers. St. James Hospital, located

on the northwest side of the Study Area along Lincoln Highway, is a major employer in the City of Chicago Heights. The Chicago Heights City Hall is located on Chicago Road, across from Washington Junior High School. The Chicago Heights Library and Park District are also found in the northwest area corner of the Study Area. The Chicago Heights Police Department and Public Works facilities are located along Halsted Street.

In addition to the public establishments, there are several churches in the Study Area. Examples include St. Agnes Parish and School, and St. James CME Church.

**Railroad**

Two major rail lines cut through the area. The north/south rail corridor is owned and operated by UP/CSX Railroad. The east/west rail corridor was owned by the EJ&E but has recently been purchased by CN; as a result of that acquisition, freight traffic volumes are expected to increase dramatically in the Study Area. An active rail spur, which serves the Ford Stamping Plant (east of the Study Area) and Chicago Heights Steel, runs parallel to 17th Street.

**Vacant Land and Buildings**

The Study Area also contains significant amounts of vacant land and buildings. Much of the vacant land was historically occupied by light industrial or manufacturing uses. The largest vacant properties include the "Expo" site, which is a large, mostly unused surface parking lot located north of E. Hickory Street/Independence Drive; the proposed train station site (s); and properties along Halsted Street, south of Lincoln Highway and north of Main Street. The former First National Bank building on S. Halsted between E. Hickory Street/Independence Drive and 17th Street is a large vacant office building. Other smaller vacant buildings and parcels are scattered throughout the Study Area.

## Future Land Use Designations

Land-use recommendations are presented as usage categories and are as illustrated on the Land Use Framework Plan. Definitions are presented below.

**Residential District**

Existing residential neighborhoods provide a lower density housing option near the proposed SES Line station and in the Study Area. These areas are characterized by one- or two-family units with a mix of wood frame and brick construction. Their traditional

historic character is compatible with TOD principles. In these areas, the City should maintain and repair streets; sidewalks and other public rights-of-way; and enforce property maintenance standards; support property rehabilitation and infill of vacant lots with one-to-three family residential buildings.

**Mixed-Use Arts District**

In this area, the goal is to build on the existing arts organizations–such as Union Street Gallery–and buildings with historic character to create a consolidated district. This district could define the character for the Study Area and act as a development anchor in the north-central portion of the Study Area.

**TOD Mixed-Use Core**

The area within easy walking distance from the proposed train station is the TOD Mixed-Use Core. This area includes the Station Area and identifies the land that should be reserved for future commuter parking, the proposed SES Line station, kiss-and-ride drop-off area, and Pace Transfer Facility. This area should function as a town center with places for people for live, work, shop, dine and be entertained. To support a vibrant pedestrian-oriented atmosphere, neighborhood buildings should be built close to the sidewalk to create a continuous street wall, and provide safe and convenient circulation among the various points of interest or development nodes. Buildings should contain a vertical mix of uses with retail or office commercial businesses on the ground floor, and residential above. The area is characterized by higher density residential uses than surrounding neighborhoods.

**Auto-Oriented Commercial**

Commercial environments that support the shopping needs of the Study Area as well as surrounding areas through automobile trips are compatible in certain sections of the Study Area. Development in these areas will be of a lower density than TOD Core and should be primarily commercial.

Commercial, office, commercial service, and retail uses are appropriate for Halsted Street. Stabilization of the Halsted commercial corridor is a key to improving the entire Study Area. Recommended actions include upgrading the streetscape and promoting commercial uses on vacant lots with commercial buildings that directly line up at the sidewalk along Halsted Street, with parking behind or to the side.

Chicago Road is a commercial corridor that should be maintained and enhanced. Auto-oriented uses should be encouraged along Chicago Road. Recommended actions for the City include attracting businesses, enforcing property maintenance standards, implementing a façade rebate program, encouraging development of vacant lots, and consolidating curb-cuts to improve traffic flow.

**Institutional Anchors**

These important organizations, including St. James Hospital, City Hall, Police Station, the Chicago Heights Public Library, the Chicago Heights Park District's Recreation Center, churches, public and private schools and the Forest Preserve, both serve the Study Area and attract people to the area. The City should make a special effort to retain and support these institutions, as well as encourage development of shops, restaurants, and other service businesses that staff and visitors may require.

**Institutional Support Services**

These locations should be used for the development of hospital, public, and semi-public auxiliary uses, should the need arise for expansion for existing facilities or infill with new institutional uses. These uses will benefit from close proximity to the nearby institutions and to each other.

**Industrial Districts**

Industrial uses are a vital part of Chicago Heights' economy. These areas should continue to support existing industrial uses and allow for appropriate industrial infill development to continue in a manner that is compatible with the less intensive uses to the west.

**Transitional/Light Industrial**

Light industrial office/warehouse facilities provide a transition between the Study Area and heavier industrial uses to the east. The Study Area has excellent access to State Route 1/Halsted Street, US Route 30/Lincoln Highway and Interstates 94 & 57 as well as UP/CSX Railroad and CN/EJ&E Railway freight rail service, a key consideration when attracting new industrial users.

**Transit Node**

The transit infrastructure proposed for the Study Area includes a new Metra station for SES Line and a relocated Pace Transfer Facility. These two elements are surrounded by

supporting infrastructure, such as commuter parking and improved access for all modes of transportation (pedestrian, bicycle, vehicles, and public transportation.)

**Gateway Opportunities**

The City should develop a design scheme for the primary entrances to the Study Area that provide an attractive initial impression and cohesive identity for the Area. Gateway features are proposed at five key intersections, including: 16th Street and Chicago Road, Independence Way and Chicago Road; Halsted Street and Lincoln Highway; Halsted Street and Main Street; and 16th Street and East End Avenue. Community-preferred images are presented in Chapter 12 .

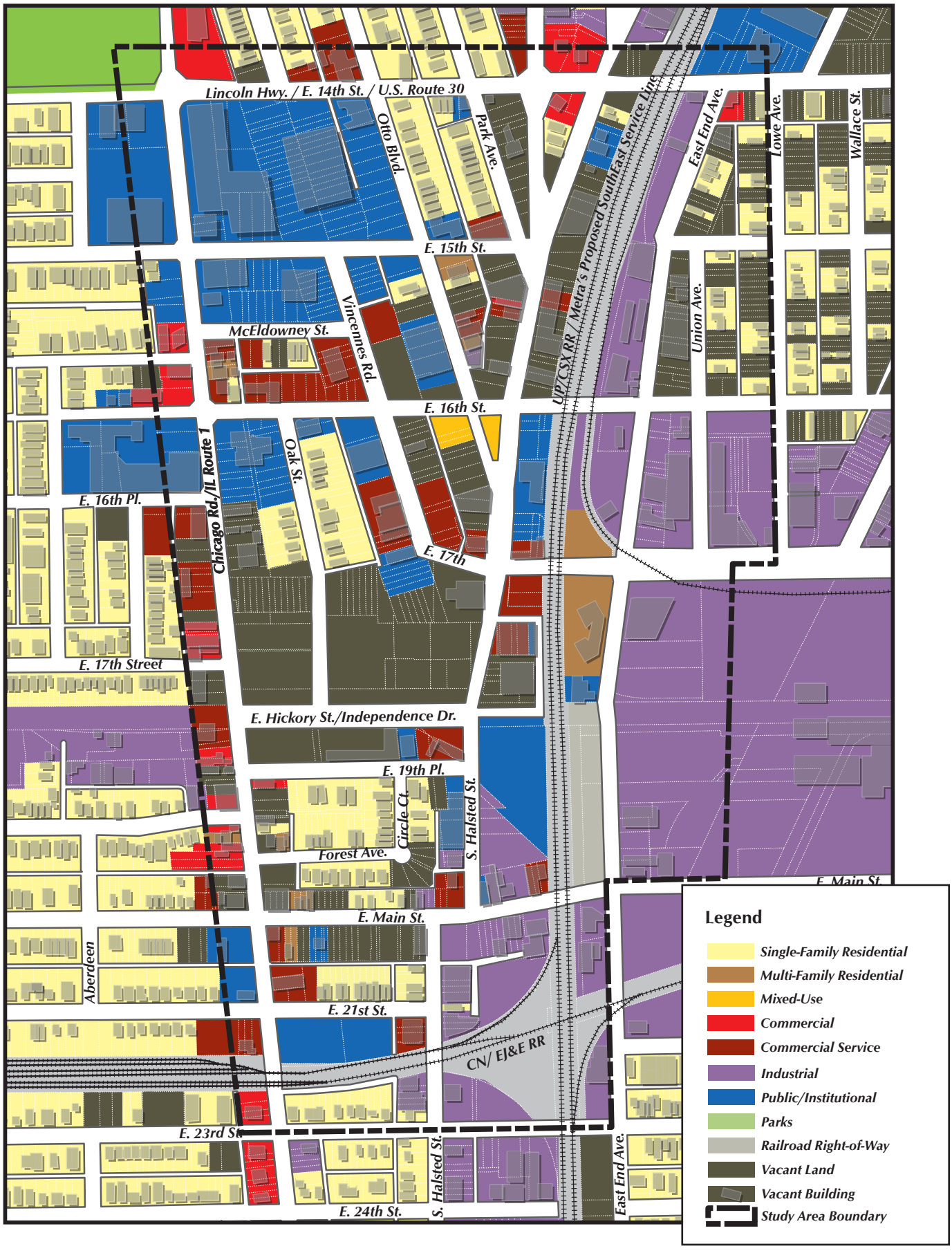
**Open Space Opportunity Areas**

Potential locations are designated for small parks or plazas that provide open space to support higher density residential, celebratory spaces for the broader community, and act as a transition between uses to support the development of an identity for the Study Area.

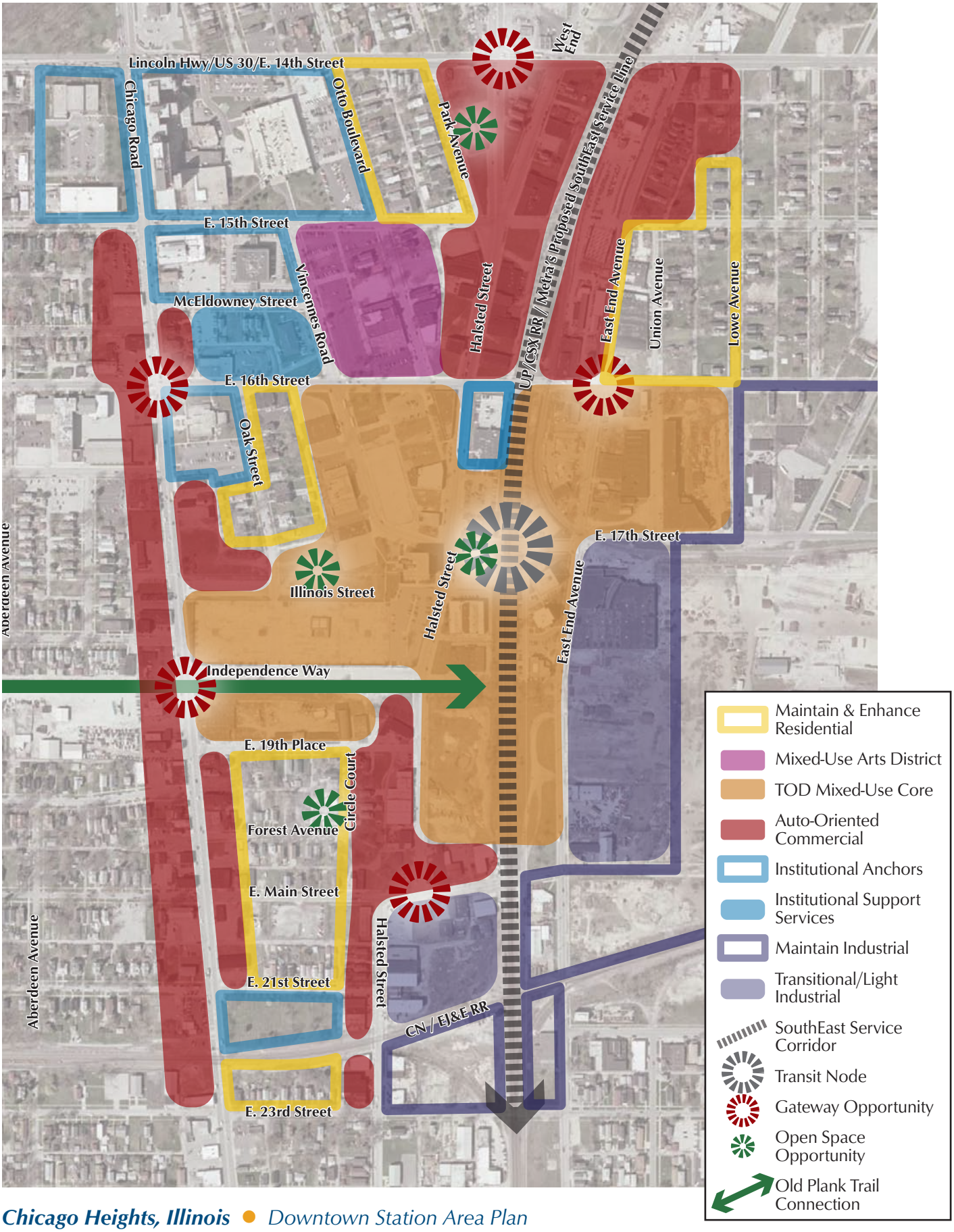
**Old Plank Road Trail Connection**

The right-of-way of a former railroad corridor runs from Joliet to Sauk Village and has been redeveloped as the Old Plank Road Trail in communities to the west. The City should improve the existing right-of-way within city limits to provide another mode of access connecting the Study Area to the rest of the City and to the region.

## Map 4: Existing Land Use



# Map 5: Land Use Framework Plan



## Development Plan

The Downtown TOD Plans outline a potential build-out of the Study Area, catalyzed by the SES Line and building on existing community assets and anchors. The proposed scenario of uses presented below is based on a synthesis of TOD principles and a current understanding of socio-economic and local market conditions. This mix should be considered flexible; as market conditions evolve, the private sector may present unique and innovative development proposals to the City that conform to the spirit of the Plans while requiring some minor adaptation of the details that are presented here for illustrative purposes. Due to current challenging economic and finance conditions, the long history of minimal new investment and gradual disinvestment in the Study Area, uncertainty around the start date of the potential SES, and the novelty of TOD as a development style in and around Chicago Heights, redevelopment of the Study Area may take as long as twenty years into the future.

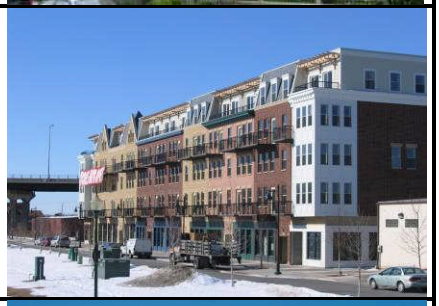
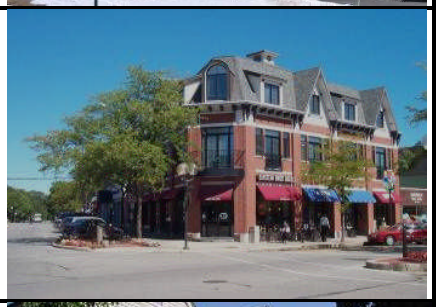
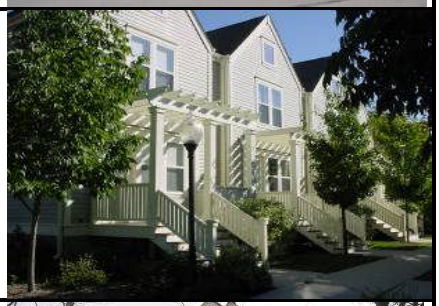
### Residential

Higher density housing (as compared to single family detached homes on ¼+ acre lots) is encouraged in transit-oriented development planning to establish the local residential community that will become active transit users, a customer base for local businesses and a talent base for local employers.

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 ¼ to $^1/_3$ 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 housing stock should be accommodated in several product formats, reflecting higher density and more compact development styles, and appropriate to the City's moderate-to-middle income status.

**Potential Residential Development Program**

| Product Description | Proposed Mix | Example Development |
|---|---|---|
| For-rent apartments in mid-rise mixed-use buildings (20 to 50 dwelling units per acre) | 30% of total units, or 83 to 113 units |  |
| For-sale condominium units in mid-rise mixed-use buildings (20 to 50 dwelling units per acre) | 30% of total units, or 83 to 113 units |  |
| Upper-floor flats (for-sale or rental) in 2 to 3 story mixed-use infill buildings (15 to 32 dwelling units per acre) | 10% of total units, or 27 to 37 units |  |
| Row-house or town-houses (8 to 30 dwelling units per acre) | 15% of total units, 41 to 56 units |  |
| Compact single-family homes on infill lots (6 to 8 dwelling units per acre) | 15% of total units, 41 to 56 units |  |

| Product Description | Proposed Mix | Example Development |
|---|---|---|
| Age-restricted independent living or assisted living facilities | One complex; unit number dependent on market demands |  |
| Total | 275 to 375 new housing units (excluding age-restricted) | |

## 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. Small businesses in office-using industries (such as consulting, architecture and engineering, legal professions, etc.) are also viable users of commercial space in TOD neighborhoods. 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 in the financial and professional & business services sectors who need additional space or who wish to relocate out of existing obsolete office facilities elsewhere in the City or surrounding communities. Proximity to anchor institutions in the Study Area such as municipal services and St. James Hospital, as well as new transportation opportunities, could provide a competitive advantage over potential alternative office sites. Facilities should offer infrastructure to accommodate current and future communications and information technology systems, but a moderate palette of amenities and finishes to keep rental price points competitive with existing moderately-priced or upscale office space in the area. Target businesses could include:

- Medical offices (patient care)
- Medical offices (back-office support services)
- Law offices
- Accounting
- Architecture, engineering, and construction management

- Staffing and human resources
- Outsourced municipal functions

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 auto-oriented commercial is likely to develop first, since these commercial corridors are well established and have consistent vehicular traffic volumes. These uses are likely to be a mix of locally-owned retail businesses as well as potential representation from regional or national chains. As the interior of the Study Area redevelops, and new residential and employment uses arrive, more traditional TOD will follow (e.g., stores in mixed-use structures). Tenants of the infill mixed-use buildings are more likely to be smaller, locally owned specialty businesses. Developers of mid-rise mixed-use buildings are more likely to seek chain or established businesses as tenants because they offer greater potential stability, but should also offer opportunities for established local businesses. Customers for retail businesses in the TOD Mixed-Use Core area would include new area residents, employees, and transit riders, but will predominantly be visitors to Study Area institutions and businesses, and shoppers who view the TOD as a purposeful destination.

An analysis of existing retail coverage and residential spending patterns indicated that there may be opportunities in several retail categories that are currently underrepresented within one mile of the Study Area and can be developed in formats consistent with the configuration of the Concept Plan: Electronics, Clothing and Accessories, Health Care and Personal Goods (i.e., drugstores), Hobbies and Books, and Dining (Fast Food, Fast Casual, and Bars). Target businesses[1] could include:

- Retail Goods
    - Electronics
        - Personal electronics (e.g., Gamestop, Radio Shack, telecommunications)
    - Clothing and Accessories
        - Men's clothing (e.g, Express, Old Navy)

[1] Examples are representative of potential categories; potential tenant location in the Study Area is subject to companies' strategic operating/expansion plans and specific development layouts at future time of business development efforts.

        - Women's clothing (e.g., Deb, Lane Bryant, Motherhood Maternity)
        - Children's clothing (e.g., Rainbow Kids,)
        - Shoes (e.g., Aldo, Famous Footwear, Foot Locker)
    - Health Care and Personal Goods
        - Beauty supplies (e.g., Bath & Body Works, Sally Beauty, Ulta)
        - Drugstores (e.g., Walgreen's)
        - Medical supplies
    - Hobbies and Books
        - Specialty books
    - Dining
        - Fast food (locally owned franchises and unique independents)
        - Fast casual (e.g., Go Roma, Panera Bread, Starbucks)
        - Bars and entertainment venues
- Retail Services
    - Financial services (insurance, investments and financial planning)
    - Professional services (tax preparation, legal services, private employment agencies)
    - Social services (job training and placement, social assistance, child and eldercare)
- Arts-Related
    - Art supplies
    - Galleries
    - Café restaurants
    - Specialty foods and wines

**Potential Commercial Development Program**

| Product Description | Proposed Mix | Example Development |
|---|---|---|
| Ground floor commercial in mid-rise mixed-use buildings (retail goods and service offices) | 20% of total space, or 6,000 to 10,000 square feet |  |
| Ground floor commercial in 2-3 story mixed-use infill buildings (retail goods and service offices) | 20% of total space, or 6,000 to 10,000 square feet |  |
| 2-3 story commercial infill buildings (retail goods and services; professional healthcare, and social service offices) | 30% of total space, or 9,000 to 15,000 square feet |  |
| Auto-oriented commercial (retail goods) | 30% of total space, or 9,000 to 15,000 square feet |  |
| Mid-rise office building (professional services, healthcare and social services) | TBD – Subject to long-term market demand |  |
| Total | 30,000 to 50,000 square feet | |

**Retail Requirements**

Retailers evaluate certain key indicators when looking to develop new store locations, including:

- Population and household density within a certain trade area ("rooftops")
- Household income category
- Vehicle traffic
- Presence of other stores or business
- Population characteristics

These indicators vary among store types, depending upon the type of good or service provided. The table in Appendix 1 provides general guidelines for the trade areas and site location preferences for different types of stores, including the typical store size (gross leasable area (GLA) in square feet), lot size and street position, and shopping center format.

## 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 presented in Chapter 12. The manufacturing, distribution and transportation industry sectors remain relatively strong in Chicago Heights, and have served as a significant component of the City's economic base. Allowing new, clean and attractive developments that do not negatively impact the quality of the TOD could provide a more attractive use to vacant or underutilized industrial property that currently contributes an appearance of blight and neglect to the neighborhood. In addition, the new commuter rail station is unlikely to drive growth in the industrial and light industrial sector.

## Concept Plan

The Concept Plan is the graphic representation of the community's vision and goals for the Study Area. The illustrative Concept Plan for Chicago Heights demonstrates the development potential of the Study Area. The Concept Plan illustrates the site of the proposed SES Line transit station, relocation of the Pace Transfer Facility, recommended land uses, development opportunity sites, potential building footprints, parking configurations, and open space features. It should be emphasized that the inclusion of sites in this section does not imply that redevelopment will occur by any forceful action of the City, or that any particular home or business within these sites is considered less valuable than others. Rather, it suggests that these parcels present opportunities for private sector business ventures and public-private partnerships, as the development market dictates.

The Concept Plan is intended to show how increased growth and density in the Study Area could develop. As previously described, much of the land around the Study Area is currently vacant or underutilized and contains several sites that represent development opportunities. There are several key institutions that draw people into the northwestern section of the Study Area, but currently have very little to draw residents and visitors into the core of the Study Area. The proposed SES transit station will serve as an anchor for the Study Area and the central TOD Mixed-Use Core, in particular.

Based upon analysis of physical conditions, market conditions, and input from residents, business and property owners, and other community stakeholders, two draft Concept Plans were developed that included opportunities for private sector redevelopment and public improvement needs. These draft Concept Plans were presented for Steering Committee review and comment; after receiving input from the public, a preferred Concept Plan was selected.

### Concept Plan Description

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. The category definitions presented below explain the nature of redevelopment envisioned in the Study Area and as shown on the Concept Plan at the end of this chapter. Specific usage suggestions on a block-by-block basis are presented in the Concept Plan Recommendations section of this chapter.

**New Development**

This designation refers to sites that may be redeveloped as the Study Area grows into a mixed-use, vibrant area. It should be noted that these are not site plans, but are intended to show how development could occur in the Study Area. Detailed site plans will need to be presented by prospective developers, and should include provision of parking, loading, internal access, drainage, landscaping, and other site improvements, in addition to the architectural or facility plans.

**Adaptive Reuse of Existing Buildings**

This designation refers to existing buildings that are visually interesting and contribute positively to the historic character of the Study Area, but are currently underutilized or vacant. In some cases, the buildings are in good condition and the business signage and decorative features are well maintained. Wherever possible, redevelopment activities should promote rehabilitation and reuse, potentially for viable but different uses than originally designed. For example, a former light industrial facility may be converted into trendy loft-style apartments or live-work space for artists. The financial costs of rehabbing old buildings versus the benefits derived from proposed new uses will influence the feasibility of adaptive reuse.

**Preserve/Upgrade Existing Building**

This designation includes buildings and structures with features and conditions that give the appearance of decline and neglect. If not addressed, these conditions could harm the success of existing businesses, as well as opportunities for new investment in the Study Area. These limited improvements include façade and signage upgrades or repairs, as well as potentially more intense structural repairs required to maintain the viability of the buildings and support. These buildings should be maintained to support current uses, and reused as tenants or ownership changes.

**New Development or Upgrade Existing Building**

This designation refers to sites that contain structures that are suitable for repairs or that may be completely redeveloped. This flexible designation indicates that either scenario is acceptable within the context of the vision for the overall the Study Area, and dependent upon particular proposals from current or prospective property owners and developers.

**New Parks**

High quality, publicly-accessible parks and open spaces contribute to healthy neighborhoods and balanced urban spaces. Dense development and high quality open space go hand-in-hand. Potential locations for several new green spaces are illustrated on the Concept Plan to help make the Study Area more attractive for current residents and for future residential development.

**Streetscaping**

Improvements to the public way are recommended along the major commercial corridors, along Halsted Street, around the Study Area, and along East End Avenue. The inclusion of landscaping and shade trees can help make the area more pedestrian friendly and function as a stormwater management technique.

## Concept Plan Recommendations

Detailed recommendations for specific blocks in the Study Area are shown below, and correspond to the numbering scheme on the Concept Plan illustration.

In Area 1, key institutions, such as the Chicago Heights Public Library, the Chicago Heights Park District, St. James Hospital, St. Agnes Church & School should be encouraged to remain at their current locations. These and other local institutions,

along with parking or supportive uses, should be encouraged to remain in the northwest corner of the Study Area.

In Area 2, a gateway at Halsted Street is envisioned, such as an open space feature on the west side of the street. The entry block on the east side of Halsted features commercial development and a new building constructed to the sidewalk with distinctive architectural features. Potential tenants could be offices of small businesses and retail services, as well as shops selling retail goods. The outlet of Park Avenue onto Lincoln Highway should be closed to strengthen the Halsted gateway and improve traffic flow on Lincoln Highway. This also becomes a traffic calming element for the adjacent residential area west of Park Avenue, which should be strengthened and preserved. West End Avenue should be closed to create a developable parcel between Halsted and the tracks, strengthen the Halsted Street gateway, and improve traffic flow on Lincoln Highway. The signature open space along Halsted would serve as a buffer between commercial and residential uses and establish the identity for the neighborhood. Strip shopping center development may be located in this area to follow the existing pattern of auto-oriented commercial development on Lincoln Highway.

In Area 3, Chicago Road should remain in its current use as auto-oriented commercial corridor offering retail goods and services. The City should seek to improve the corridor by attracting businesses, enforcing property maintenance standards, implementing a façade rebate program, upgrading the streetscape, encouraging development of vacant lots, and consolidating curb-cuts.

In Area 4, as the private market demand dictates, existing buildings may be preserved, upgraded, or enhanced, or could serve as sites for new development. These locations should be used for the development of hospital, public, and semi-public auxiliary uses to benefit from close proximity to the nearby institutions and to each other.

Area 5 includes a burgeoning arts neighborhood along Otto Boulevard. The City should adopt and promote the "Otto Boulevard Arts District Area" as a lively destination area for residents and visitors. Developments in this area could include retail shops and mixed-use buildings with ground-floor commercial and residential flats above (rental or owner-occupied). Outdoor cafes, sidewalk merchandising, and other commercial uses of the sidewalk enliven the public way and should be encouraged. In this area, the City should encourage preservation or upgrade of existing buildings that are suitable for maintenance, and new development on infill sites. Surface parking for this development area is shown along Vincennes Road. Possible automobile access could be provided via a rear alley.

In Area 6, Halsted Street should redevelop into a functional commercial corridor with small retail and service businesses. Infill opportunities for new mixed-use buildings are shown in red with site access provided by rear alley. Along Halsted Street, existing buildings could be improved or replaced, depending on the demands of the private market. Parking to serve the potential new uses should be provided via on-street parallel parking along Halsted Street.

In Area 7, City Hall should remain in its current location as a key institutional anchor. The site and building should be maintained and upgraded over time.

Area 8 is an existing residential neighborhood, anchored by the Chicago Miracle Temple Church at the southeast corner of 16th Street and Oak Street. The notable architecture of this church building should be preserved and rehabilitated, as funds become available. The existing homes along Oak Street should be maintained and renovated. This district can be strengthened by the construction of new single-family homes on available infill lots.

Area 9 is envisioned as the residential hub of the TOD Mixed-Use Core area. This centrally-located area is conducive to mid-and-higher density residential development, such as townhomes and row houses, as well as residences and facilities for senior citizens. This area is within easy walking distance to the proposed station site. This area includes townhomes (lower density) on the west side of Vincennes Road and mid-rise apartments or condominium units (medium-density) on the east with private parking on-site and internal private circulation. Construction of ground floor space for retail goods and services businesses would be appropriate, especially in the higher-density buildings on the block between Vincennes Road and Halsted Street A new park would serve this new, more dense residential development and contributes to an "open space spine" through the Study Area.

Area 10 contains a warehouse building east of Union Avenue between 16th Street and 17th Street. This building is targeted as an adaptive reuse of a former industrial facility to live/work lofts (such as for artists, in support of the Otto Boulevard Arts District) with private on-site parking.

Area 11 is envisioned as part of a mixed-use, pedestrian friendly commercial corridor with a two-to-five story mixed-use building that establishes a cohesive streetwall along Halsted Street. The vacant First National Bank building, an architectural icon of downtown Chicago Heights, is proposed to be renovated and adaptively reused for commercial or residential uses; alternatively, in the absence of market appetite for a

rehabilitation, the building could be demolished and replaced with another mixed-use structure in keeping with the character of adjacent new developments.

Along Chicago Road, auto-oriented commercial development, such as the newly-constructed grocery store, should be encouraged. Oak Street, which currently does not connect with Independence Way, should be extended. This area is suitable for residential uses to the west of Oak Street, potentially as a location for senior housing. Initially, the "Expo Lot" should be used for a surface commuter parking lot (shown as parking lot D). Over the long term, this portion of Area 11 could redevelop as a multi-story mixed-use development with a parking deck serving building residents or customers, and providing equivalent replacement spaces for commuters; this redevelopment would be driven by market conditions and supportive ridership numbers.

In Area 12, Independence Way should become a boulevard with medians, planters and streetscaping. The planned Old Plank Road Trail should become a multi-modal, linear park, with a trail head design feature at Halsted Street. This area is suitable for residential uses, such as townhomes fronting 19th Place and flat-style residences (low-to-medium density rental apartments or condominiums) fronting 19th or Halsted. To make the area more attractive for residential development, a plaza and walkways providing pedestrian linkage from 19th Place to the "Expo" parking lot and northward should be developed.

Area 13 is envisioned as the transit hub of the Study Area. It includes the location of proposed SES Line station, the new Pace Transfer Facility, transit user amenities, and a new civic plaza. The station area is presented in greater detail in Chapter 6. The Chicago Heights Police Station and its associated parking, and the Cook County Housing Authority (CCHA) residential buildings ("Golden Towers") should remain. The historic Chicago Heights National Bank building should be maintained, but adapted for active use as a commercial, government, or retail use.

The existing building in Area 14 at the southeast corner of 17th Street and East End Avenue has an interesting historic façade that should be preserved as part of a modernizing adaptive reuse of the structure for new commercial purposes, such as offices or light industrial.

In Area 15, light industrial or office/warehouse development along East End Avenue, south of 17th Street, on Chicago Heights Steel's western property, should be encouraged as a transitional land use between the Study Area and existing heavy industrial uses

further east. Landscaping should be installed along East End Avenue and Main Street as a buffer to adjacent new development.

Area 16 illustrates the residential district between 19th Place and 21st Street. The existing homes in the district should be maintained and, as needed, renovated. This district can be strengthened by the construction of new single-family homes or townhomes on available infill lots. A neighborhood park, such as a tot lot, is shown along Forest Avenue.

Area 17 should be developed as commercial opportunities along Halsted Street and the north side of Main Street, potentially for small businesses that support the adjacent industrial uses, such as business, professional or technical services. The block east of Halsted Street between Main Street and the CN/EJ&E Railway tracks is appropriate for industrial development due to the concentration of like uses to the south and east. Existing buildings in the blocks south of Main Street down to 23rd Street should preserved, maintained, and enhanced with the potential for new development on infill lots, with a focus on light industrial uses or commercial businesses that support surrounding industry.

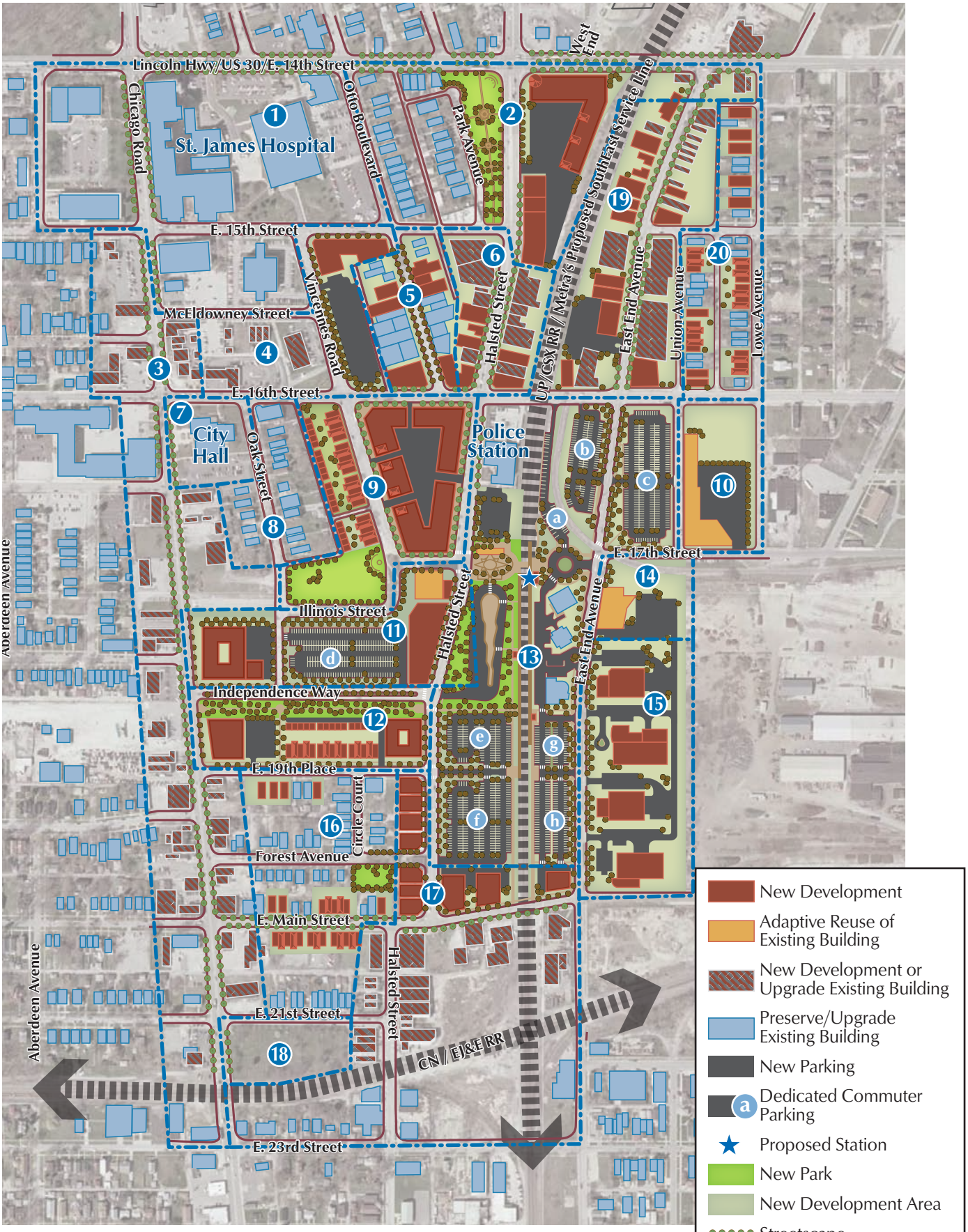
In Area 18, the existing cemetery should remain undisturbed.

Area 19 currently contains a profitable business that has recently reinvested in its facilities. It is tidy and self-contained, and can continue in that location indefinitely. Over the long term, these properties should be viewed as redevelopment sites for commercial, including office uses related to the health care sector or auto-oriented retail profiting from Lincoln Highway vehicular traffic.

Area 20 is a residential district featuring numerous opportunities for enhancement of existing homes and infill development of new single-family homes in the character of the overall neighborhood.

The project boundaries for the Downtown Transit-Oriented Development Study and for the Eastside Neighborhood Plan overlap in Areas 19 and 20. Recommendations for these two planning sub-areas are consistent between the two planning studies.

## *Map 6: Concept Plan*



# Stormwater Management Plan

The redevelopment of the Study Area as shown in the Concept Plan in Chapter 9 necessitates consideration of stormwater management, particularly with the provision of significant surface parking for transit users. A discussion of guiding principles is presented below, along with recommendations.

## Cook County Watershed Management Ordinance

The Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago (MWRD) has begun the process of developing a countywide stormwater management regulatory ordinance to be known as the Cook County Watershed Management Ordinance (WMO). The WMO will establish uniform, minimum, countywide stormwater management regulations for Cook County. Components which may be regulated under the WMO include drainage and detention, floodplain management, wetland protection, stream habitat and riparian environment protection, soil erosion and sediment control, and water quality. Further information regarding the WMO can be found in Chapter 7 of the *Cook County Stormwater Management Plan*.

Chicago Heights is part of the Little Calumet River Watershed Planning Council. Planning councils represent communities located within major watersheds in Cook County, and communicate the needs and interests of the members of the public and local governments to the MWRD. A Technical Guidance Manual (TGM) will also be developed and serve as a companion document to the WMO, by providing detailed information, methodologies and examples to explain how compliance with the rules and regulations set forth in the WMO can be achieved.

The current method for designing detention is the "Modified Rational Method", which is being replaced with a hydrograph method. According to the draft ordinance, the WMO applies to the following developments:

- Single-family (5,000 sq. ft.-5 acre parcel detention threshold)
- Non-Residential and Multi-Family (5,000 sq. ft.-1 acre detention threshold)
- Roadway (5,000 sq. ft.-1 acre new impervious area detention threshold)
- Open Space (5,000 sq. ft.)

Permit requirements are triggered by earth work affecting stormwater runoff; maintenance is exempt from WMO. The WMO differs from the existing MWRD requirements by lowering the threshold for requiring detention from 10 acre residential / 5 acre non-residential to 5 acre residential/1 acre non-residential. Detention will be required in all areas of Cook County for those applicable developments.

## Stormwater Management Recommendations

Stormwater management can be accomplished through a variety of techniques that are appropriate in certain locations in the Study Area. Location references are illustrated on the Stormwater Management Plan at the end of this chapter.

### Bioswales

Bioswales are landscape elements designed to manage surface runoff water and to remove silt and other pollutants. They consist of a drainage course with gently sloped sides filled with native vegetation, compost and/or riprap. Appropriate placements in the Study Area are:

- Surrounding the commuter parking lots B, G and H
- Surrounding the new Pace Transfer Facility
- Along the planned Old Plank Road Trail south of Independence Way
- East side of Area 14 and the industrial campus in Area 15

Metra's *Parking Manual* does not currently contain any standards that address bioswales. The design and use of bioswales in commuter parking lots would need to be approved by Metra.

### Detention Ponds

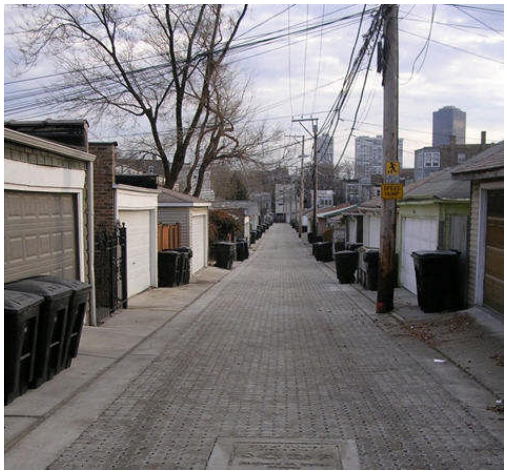
Detention ponds are permanent or semi-permanent aquatic systems that dry out only under drought conditions. They act as traps where pollutants picked up by surges of

storm water settle out before leaving the detention pond via percolation, evapotranspiration, and/or controlled release. Appropriate placements in the Study Area are:

- Adjacent to or within the footprints of commuter parking lots B and C and the new Pace Transfer Facility
- In the green spaces in Areas 2, 9, and 13, and at East End Avenue entrance to the Study Area in Area 19, potentially accented with landscape design, fountains, or other art features
- In the light industrial areas in Areas 15 and 17

**Permeable Paving**

Surface parking lots should use permeable paving materials to disperse surface runoff. Plan zones with significant hard surface areas where permeable paving might be used include:



- Commuter parking lots E and F
- The new Pace Transfer Facility
- Parking aisles on dedicated streets
- Green alleys serving residential developments or neighborhoods in Areas 1, 2, 4, 5, 8, 9, 12, 16, 19 and 20
- The Civic Plaza in Area 13
- Private off-street surface parking associated with the adaptive reuse of buildings in Areas 10 and 14, the industrial campus in Area 15, and the shared-use surface lot in Areas 5 and 19

Metra's *Parking Manual* does not currently contain any standards that address permeable paving options. The design and use of permeable paving in commuter parking lots would need to be approved by Metra. Permeable paving is not permitted in railroad rights-of-way.

**Subsurface Storage**

Subsurface storage of stormwater is accomplished by the construction of large scale holding tanks or pipes below-grade for the purpose of temporarily holding large volumes of storm water. These systems, due to significant cost and effort, are appropriate for installation only in conjunction with site redevelopment. In the Study Area, subsurface storage could potentially be provided underneath surface parking on the current Expo parking lot in Area 11, lot D, when that site is redeveloped as mixed-use including commuter parking.

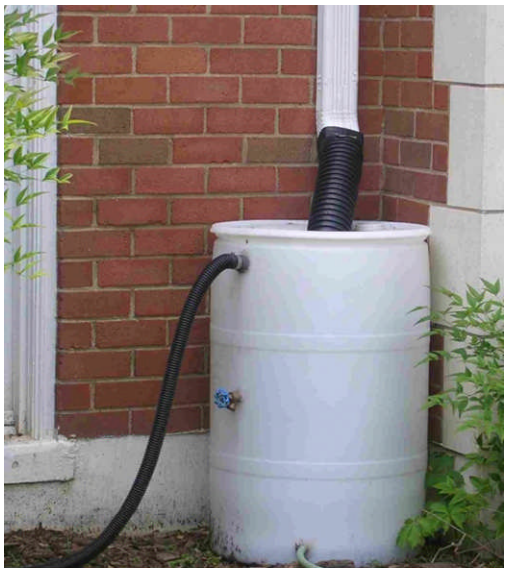
**Stormwater Best Management Practices (BMPs)**

Other techniques recognized as Best Management Practices (BMPs) include:

- Developing rain gardens in residential and institutional areas (such as Areas 1, 4, 8, and 16). A rain garden is a planted depression that allows rainwater runoff from impervious surfaces to be absorbed, instead of flooding storm drains or eroding other surfaces. The vegetation in rain gardens also serves a remediation function, removing pollution before the runoff absorbs into the groundwater system. Native plants are considered more viable than decorative plantings.

- Installing green roofs on new developments or with the replacement of roofing systems on existing buildings, particularly structures with large footprints. Opportunities exist in nearly every area in the Concept Plan.

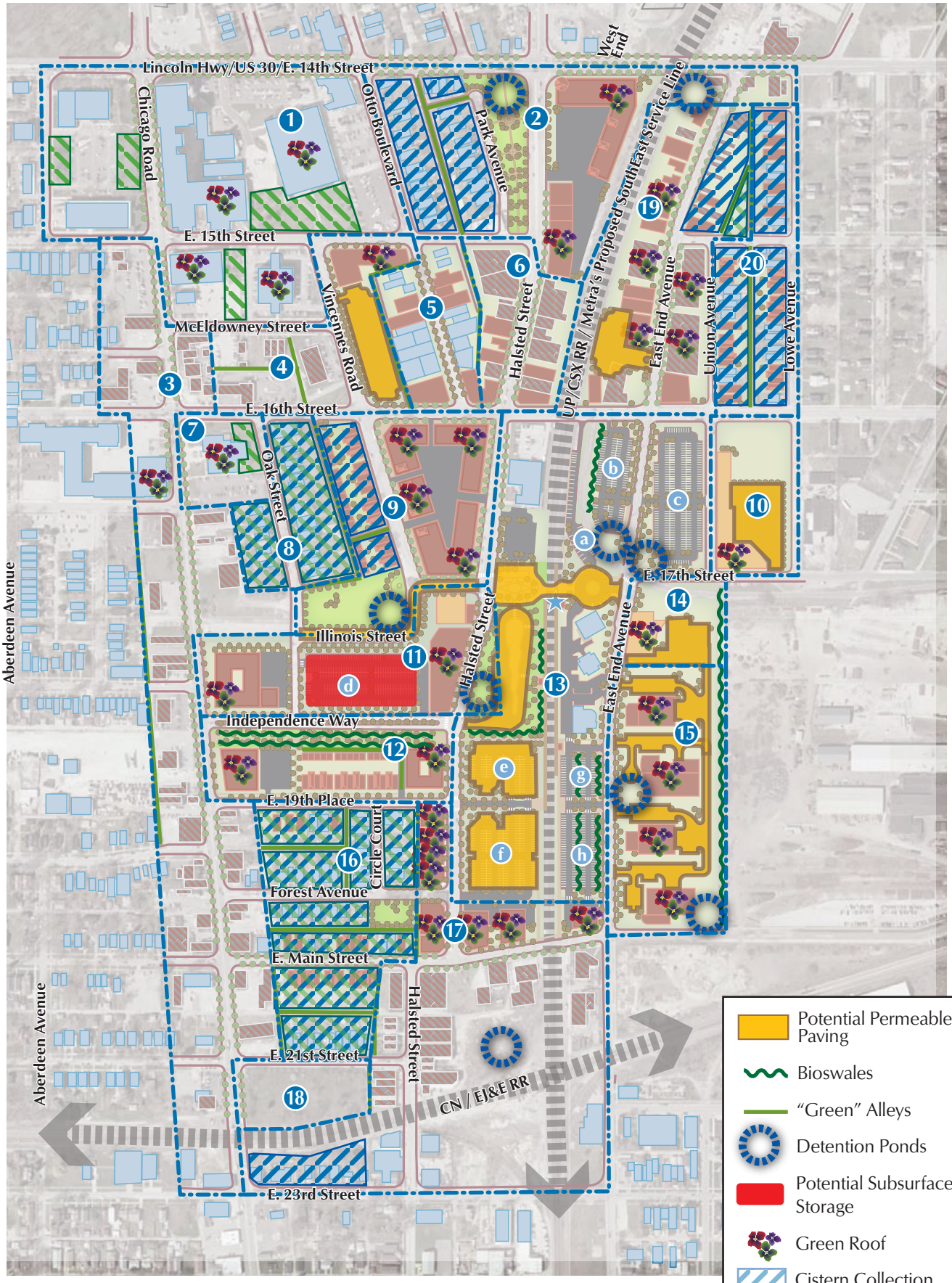
- Storing roof runoff in rain barrels or cisterns for reuse. Traditionally, roof runoff has been routed via downspouts directly into the sewer system. The City should encourage the disconnection of downspouts so that roof runoff can flow directly into vegetated areas. In the event that natural or native vegetated areas are not adequate, runoff from small to moderate storms can be temporarily stored in rain barrels or cisterns. The stored water then can be used to irrigate lawns and landscaped areas in between storm events. More sophisticated systems have been configured to provide "grey" water for toilet flushing and boiler heating systems. The effectiveness of rain barrels (or cisterns) is a function of their storage volume in comparison to the size of the roof. The actual effectiveness of this approach will depend on the regular draining of rain barrels (such as for irrigation) between storm events. The diversion and/or storage of roof runoff with rain barrels or cisterns is applicable to most residential, commercial and institutional properties in the City, such as in Areas 2, 8, 9, 16, 17, and 20.



**Separate Municipal Storm Sewer System**

The Storm Sewer System includes a City or sewer district's network of roads with drainage systems, municipal streets, catch basins, curbs, gutters, ditches, man-made channels, or storm drains. As developments are presented in the Study Area, the City should ensure that, together with the sustainable techniques described above, the traditional system elements in the Study Area continue to offer sufficient capacity.

# Map 7: Stormwater Management Plan




**Chicago Heights, Illinois** • *Downtown Station Area Plan*

*Prepared by:*
*November 2, 2009*
URS

# Transportation and Circulation Plan

## Existing Conditions

### Roadways

The Study Area is bounded by two major highway arterials through the south suburbs: Lincoln Highway (also referred to as 14th Street or U.S. Route 30) and Chicago Road (also referred to as Illinois Route 1 as it runs through the Study Area). These two roadways are each designated as Strategic Regional Arterials (SRA) by the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT).

**Traffic Counts on Study Area Roadways**

| Road | Portion | ADT | Classification (CMAP) |
|---|---|---|---|
| Lincoln Highway | West of Chicago Road | 24,900 | Strategic Regional Arterial |
| Lincoln Highway | East of Chicago Road | 17,400 | Strategic Regional Arterial |
| Chicago Road | South of Parkside Street | 21,600 | Strategic Regional Arterial |
| East End Avenue | South of 14th Street | 4,650 | Arterial |
| Halsted Street | North of 14th Street | 10,100 | Arterial |
| Halsted Street | South of 14th Street | Unavai. | Collector |

*ADT = Average Daily Traffic count*
*Source: Illinois Department of Transportation, 2006-2007*

Even with the potential for new public transportation service in downtown Chicago Heights, these major roadways will continue to play a prominent role in the community's development prospects going forward. In particular, Lincoln Highway and Chicago Road are two high-volume roadways that are primary locations for retail and commercial development in the City of Chicago Heights. Revitalization of the Study Area as a commercial, residential and cultural center for the South Suburbs will involve attracting drivers from these high-traffic roadways into the downtown. A description of each of the major roadways accessing the Study Area follows:

The Chicago Road corridor extends along the west edge of the Study Area in a north-south orientation. Chicago Road is an arterial and features two lanes in each direction with a two-way left-turn lane in the center with a speed limit of 30 miles per hour (20 mph when school children are present). Chicago Road has dedicated left turn lanes at the signalized intersections at Lincoln Highway, 15th Street, and 16th Street. The remaining cross streets that intersect Chicago Road are controlled by stop signs.

The Lincoln Highway corridor extends along the north edge of the Study Area in an east-west orientation. Lincoln Highway is an arterial and features two lanes in each direction with a planted median in the center and a speed limit of 35 miles per hour. The

median includes opening at certain intersections thus providing access to St. James Hospital, downtown, and the residential areas. Lincoln Highway has dedicated left turn lanes at the signalized intersections with Chicago Road, with Halsted Street, and with East End Avenue.

Halsted Street is a north-south collector road that bisects the Study Area. Halsted Street serves as a major gateway to downtown Chicago Heights from Lincoln Highway on the north end of the Study Area. The corridor generally features one lane in each direction with room for parallel parking on each side of the street. The intersections with Lincoln Highway and 16th Street are signalized and the intersections with 17th Street, Main Street, and 23rd Street feature all-way stops.

East End Avenue is another north-south collector road that runs along the east edge of the Study Area. East End Avenue is not as heavily used by the residential and business traffic in downtown but more so by the industrial traffic located east of the Union Pacific/CSX railroad tracks. The corridor generally features one lane in each direction, and some sections have enough room to allow parallel parking on one or both sides of the street. The intersection with Lincoln Highway is signalized, and the intersections with 16th Street, 17th Street, and Main Street feature all-way stops. The intersection at 17th Street also features the at-grade railroad crossing with the railroad spur that serves the industrial area east of East End Avenue along 17th Street.

16th Street is an east-west collector that bisects the north half of the Study Area. 16th Street generally features one lane in each direction with ample space for parallel parking on both sides of the street. The intersections with Chicago Road and with Halsted Street are signalized, and the intersections with Vincennes Road and with East End Avenue are all-way stop controlled.

Main Street is an east-west local road along the south end of the Study Area; Main Street is residential west of the railroad tracks and industrial in use east of the tracks. Main Street features one lane in each direction with room for parallel parking on each side of the street. Main Street is all-way stop controlled at the offset intersection with Halsted Street and the intersection with East End Avenue.

There are eight at-grade railroad crossings in the Study Area:

- Three at-grade railroad crossings with the CN/EJ&E Railway along the south end of the Study Area at Chicago Road, Halsted Street, and East End Avenue;

- Four at-grade railroad crossings with the UP/CSX Railroad on the east side of the Study Area at 16th Street, 17th Street, Main Street, and 23rd Street;

- One at-grade railroad crossing at East End Avenue at the spur, which runs east/west along 17th Street until it runs north/south beginning at East End.

**Public Transportation**

Existing public transportation in the Study Area is limited to bus routes operated by Pace, the suburban bus agency. Pace's Chicago Heights Transfer Center is located at the southwest corner of 16th Street and Vincennes Avenue, with six Pace routes currently meeting at this location to exchange passengers. These routes connect passengers to surrounding areas in each direction, and include:

Pace Suburban Bus

*Route 352 - Halsted*

Route 352 is a major north-south trunk line connects the CTA Rapid Transit Red Line at 95th Street, the center of Pace South service in Harvey and the Chicago Heights Terminal via Halsted Street. Route 352 connects with the Metra system at the stations at the Pullman/111th Street and Harvey Metra Electric Stations. This route serves Illinois Dept. of Human Services, Prairie State College, and St. James Hospital. Route serves Posted Stops Only along the entire route. This route replaces Route 370.

*Route 357 - Lincoln Highway*

Route 357 is the southernmost of Pace's east-west cross-town routes. It connects areas of Ford Heights and Chicago Heights with the 211th Street Metra Electric Station and Lincoln Mall in Matteson. It also serves the Chicago Heights Terminal at 16th and Vincennes, and a major commercial strip along Lincoln Highway. Services to Lawrence Manor, Southwick Drive Complex, St. James Hospital, Sam's Club and Lincoln Mall are included.

*Route 358 - Torrence*

Route 358 is a north-south route which operates from the Chicago Heights Terminal to the South Shore Railroad in Hegewisch on weekdays. Saturday service operates between Chicago Heights and River Oaks Shopping Center only. It also serves commercial and residential areas from Steger to Hegewisch including River Oaks Shopping Center and the Landings Shopping Center.

*Route 366 Park Forest – Chicago Heights*

Route 366 connects Park Forest with the Chicago Heights Terminal. It serves medium to high density housing areas, St. James Hospital and downtown Park Forest.

*Route 372 – Dixie Highway*

Route 372 provides hourly service between the Chicago Heights Pace Terminal and the Homewood Metra Station. Alternating trips operate via 10th Street and Ashland Ave or Joe Orr Road and Riegel Road/Chicago Road. This route replaces portions of Route 352 between the Homewood Metra Station and the Chicago Heights Pace Terminal.

*Route 890 South Suburbs – UPS Hodgkins*

Route 890 provides express service from the Chicago Heights Terminal, Homewood Park-n-Ride, Harvey Transportation Center, and Harvey Metra Station to the United Parcel Service facility in Hodgkins. Trip times are coordinated with shift times at this major employer.

**Pace Ridership at Chicago Heights Terminal**

| Pace Route | Boardings | Alightings |
|---|---|---|
| Route 352 Halsted * | 330 | 264 |
| Route 357 Lincoln Highway | 328 | 300 |
| Route 358 Torrence | 156 | 157 |
| Route 366 Park Forest – Chicago Heights | 174 | 161 |
| Route 370 Harvey – Chicago * | 159 | 116 |
| Route 890 South Suburbs – UPS Hodgkins | 27 | 26 |
| Total | 1,174 | 1,024 |

*Note: Table shows average weekday ridership activity at the Chicago Heights Pace Terminal*
** Routing and service changes were implemented in June 2009 as part of Pace's South Cook County / Will County Restructuring Initiative. As part of the restructuring, Route 370 was eliminated and combined into Route 352. A portion of Route 352 is now served by the newly created Route 372. Ridership data on newly restructured routing segments is not available at this time.*
*Source: Pace, 2006 4Q*

Metra Commuter Rail

Metra's Fall 2006 Origin-Destination Survey data provides information on current use by Chicago Heights residents of the Metra Electric District (MED) Line service, by boarding station. According to the survey data, 40% of the Chicago Heights residents use the 211th Street MED Station, 15% use the Flossmoor Station, 10% each use the Calumet and Homewood Stations, 7% each use the Olympia Fields and Matteson Stations, and 2% use the Richton Park Station.

**Boarding Stations for Chicago Heights Residents: 2006**

| MED Station | Drive Alone | Dropped Off | Carpool | Bus | Walk/ Other | Total | % |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 211th Street | 114 | 25 | 2 | 12 | 0 | 153 | 40% |
| Flossmoor | 30 | 25 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 58 | 15% |
| Calumet | 40 | 0 | 3 | 2 | 0 | 45 | 12% |
| Homewood | 17 | 8 | 2 | 8 | 2 | 37 | 10% |
| Matteson | 21 | 3 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 26 | 7% |
| Olympia Fields | 23 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 25 | 7% |
| Richton Park | 7 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 8 | 2% |
| Other | 8 | 2 | 8 | 2 | 8 | 27 | 7% |
| Total | 258 | 67 | 20 | 25 | 10 | 379 | 100% |

*Weighted responses from Metra's 2006 Origin-Destination Survey*
*Source: Metra*

## Bicycle & Pedestrian

Each transit trip begins and ends with a pedestrian trip, as the transit user needs to walk to the train, and again to a final destination. Thus, pedestrian and other non-motorized modes of transportation are an important consideration within a transit-oriented district.

For transit-oriented development to be successful, urban design must foster a safe, hospitable pedestrian environment. This involves a number of factors, including safety and security; improvements to the public rights-of-way (sidewalks, crosswalks, street plantings, furniture, etc.); and appropriate lighting and building design. This also requires a proper balance of auto and pedestrian planning. In a vibrant station area, the priority given to these two modes of transportation should be at least equivalent, and drivers should be given visual signals that pedestrians are present.

The Study Area is a developed urban district that contains sidewalks, crosswalks, and other pedestrian amenities. Many of these facilities are, however, in disrepair due to the general state of disinvestment and abandonment in the district. An industrial area is located along the east side of the rail tracks, and this area has less continuous pedestrian infrastructure.

There is currently very little bicycle infrastructure in the Study Area.

## Freight Rail

The Study Area contains two freight rail rights-of-way: the UP/CSX Railroad and the CN/EJ&E Railway. These two railways intersect near the southern edge of the Study

Area, and currently serve freight trains including local traffic to Chicago Heights' industrial sites as well as through traffic.

The UP/CSX Railroad runs generally north-south, connecting into the City of Chicago to the north. This right-of-way would potentially be used for the proposed SES Line as far south as Crete. Current freight traffic along this line is approximately 60 trains per day. A spur from this line travels east along 17th Street serving numerous manufacturers, such as the Ford Stamping Plant to the east, and other industrial users in the City of Chicago Heights (this spur is reported to have daily traffic of approximately five to ten trains per day).

The CN/EJ&E Railway generally travels east-west through the south suburbs, and is part of a broader circumferential line that the freight railways can use to bypass the City of Chicago. The recent acquisition of this line by the CN indicates that this is likely to be a more heavily utilized freight corridor in the future. There have been proposals to use this right-of-way for passenger rail service (Metra STAR Line) at Main Street to serve the proposed SES Line and the potential future phase of the STAR Line, but this is a very long-range proposal.

The proposed SES Line station location is at 17th Street, the site of a current at-grade crossing. The Plan proposes to close that at-grade crossing for vehicles. It is unlikely that additional at-grade crossings will be created in the Study Area. Due to safety concerns, most freight railroads are interested in reducing, rather than introducing, potential conflicts with autos or pedestrians. Railroads typically do not allow additional at-grade crossings without the closure of one or more at-grade crossings.

In order to facilitate the implementation of this Plan, several transportation and circulation related improvements will need to be implemented. These improvements range from realigned and removed streets, new streetscape for existing arterials, new gateways for the TOD area, and traffic-related improvements to reduce the number of offset or less optimal intersections in the Study Area. Each of these projects would require the procurement of design services and would need to obtain relevant permits from with the agencies with jurisdiction.

## Programmed Improvements

**Roadways**

The major roadways at the north and western edges of the Study Area are owned and maintained by IDOT. According to the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) for

the Chicago region, prepared by the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP), there are not any major reconfigurations of these roadways planned for the near term. The TIP does show the following improvements, however:

- Resurfacing Halsted Street from Illinois 1 to 15th Street (no cost estimate available)
- Signal improvements at Lincoln Highway and Chicago Road ($2.52M)
- Resurfacing East End Avenue from Lincoln Highway/US 30 to 26th Street ($1.23M).

**Public Transportation**

The proposed SES Line station will be a valuable asset to the City of Chicago Heights. This TOD Plan is focused on maximizing the station's potential to spur development. Creating strong connectivity between the Pace Transfer Facility and the new SES station is critical to a strong multi-modal development. This Plan does not suggest any changes to Pace service, except minor diversions of existing bus routes to connect to a new Pace Transfer Facility location. A center turning lane on Lincoln Highway should be considered to ease bus movements south onto East End Avenue. The two Pace bus stops on East End Avenue should remain north of the railroad spur, to provide egress to the east out of the Study Area.

**Bicycle & Pedestrian**

Both the *Northeastern Illinois Regional Trail and Greenways Plan* (prepared by the Northeastern Illinois Planning Commission, 1997) and the *South Suburban Bicycle Plan* (prepared by South Suburban Mayors and Managers Association, 2008) show Chicago Heights as connected into the regional trail network in the future via improvements along Thorn Creek and the vacant rail right-of-way which is being used as the Old Plank Road Trail. Each of these existing trails currently terminates outside of Chicago Heights.

Trails traveling along Thorn Creek connect many of the County Forest Preserve areas that lie along this waterway. Additional improvements to this trail network could connect Chicago Heights to areas north and south, including a direct trail connection to Chicago and the Lakefront.

Programmed near-term improvements to the Old Plank Road and Thorn Creek trail systems would bring access to these trails in to or close to the Study Area. Improvements to each trail are included in CMAP's Regional TIP (2007 to 2012):

- $5.4 million for the extension of the Thorn Creek Bicycle Trail from 183rd/Cottage Grove (Glenwood) to 26th/Euclid (Chicago Heights).

- $1.1 million for the extension of the Old Plank Road Trail Extension from Western Avenue to Euclid Avenue.

In addition, the *South Suburban Bicycle Plan* suggests the addition of a bicycle lane along Chicago Road through the Study Area.

## Traffic and Circulation Plan

In support of the Concept Plan, four road closures are proposed to improve traffic flow and create more attractive sites for development. As part of the closure process, a public hearing may be required.

The first proposed closure is West End Avenue between Lincoln Highway and Halsted. Removing this street fragment will create a larger, more desirable development site; focus access to the TOD through the Halsted gateway; and improve safety at this multi-legged intersection of 15th Street and Halsted. To begin the process of creating a single large development site, the City can work with property owners and developers to consolidate the property on both sides of the closure.

The second proposed closure is a partial closure to limit access to Park Avenue between Lincoln Highway and 15th Street/Halsted Street. This will create a quieter and more desirable residential street; focus access to the TOD through the Halsted gateway; and reduce the potential for congestion at the intersection of 15th Street and Halsted Street. Park Avenue will be dead-ended just south of Lincoln Highway and realigned to meet 15th Street at a ninety degree angle. With this option, 15th Street becomes a "t-intersection" with Halsted Street. (An alternative option is to close access to Halsted Street from 15th Street by using a curbed barrier; there would no longer be an intersection at this location. This alternative would reduce the congestion at 15th Street and Halsted Street but may increase traffic on Park Avenue, which would be open to Lincoln Highway in this scenario.)

The third proposed closure is 17th Street between Halsted and East End Avenue to site the proposed Metra Station. This location is desirable to the City, because the proposed station and platforms will be near the Police Station facility, and south of the curve in the railroad track and the active rail spur. Closing this street to vehicular traffic will improve safety for the proposed train station, reduce traffic backups caused by trains stopping at the station, and allow space for a Kiss and Ride and a celebratory space. Removing this street will close the existing at-grade crossing to vehicles; therefore, Illinois Commerce Commission approval is required. The approval process should be straightforward, as removal of the crossing will benefit the freight railroads, the proposed SES, and the City. This crossing will remain open to pedestrians.

The fourth closure is Otto Boulevard between 16th Street and Halsted Street. This small portion of Otto Boulevard will be removed to create a new larger development site.

The Concept Plan recommends realignment or extension of four streets. The following changes to the street grid between City Hall and the new train station are intended to improve circulation and better divide the area into developable sites:

- Oak Street should be extended south to Independence Way.
- Illinois Street between Oak and Vincennes Road should be re-established on existing right-of-way to improve traffic circulation within the TOD area.
- Vincennes Road should be realigned between 16th Street and Illinois Street. The intersection may be improved by extending Vincennes Road south to join with Illinois Street and extending 17th Street between Halsted Street and Vincennes Road.
- Forest Avenue should be extended to join to Halsted Street to provide access to commuter parking.

As redevelopment occurs and traffic in the Study Area increases, additional traffic control measures, such as stop signs or traffic signals, may need to be taken. "Year of construction traffic counts" will need to be undertaken. Depending on the revised/projected traffic counts, the appropriate traffic control measure should be installed. If an additional traffic control measure is deemed warranted on an SRA such as Chicago Road or Lincoln Highway, IDOT may participate in funding the improvement. Traffic control measures include additional signage, traffic signals, or stop signs.

With increased traffic the current intersection of Park Avenue, 15th Street, Halsted Street and West End Avenue may become congested. Closing West End Avenue and limiting access to Park Avenue as discussed above should improve the intersection, but a traffic signal may be required if traffic counts demand.

Vincennes Road currently veers east and merges with Halsted Street. The intersection may be improved by extending Vincennes Road south to join with Illinois Street and extending 17th Street between Halsted Street and Vincennes Road. 17th Street should intersect the Halsted Street and Vincennes Road at as close to a 90 degree angle as possible. The intersection of 17th Street and Halsted is the main pedestrian crossing between the residential portion of the TOD and the commuter station and should be improved with pedestrian safety in mind.

Given the relatively low observed traffic volumes on the collector and local streets in the Study Area, excessive traffic queues would not be expected during train crossing events. There is also a grade-separated crossing of the UP/CSX Railroad tracks at Lincoln Highway that provides motorists with a route around train crossing events that interrupt east-west traffic flow across the tracks at the at-grade crossings.

**Bicycle & Pedestrian**

Pedestrian and other non-motorized modes of transportation are always an important consideration within a transit-oriented district. For transit-oriented development to be successful, fostering of a safe, hospitable environment for these transportation modes is fundamental to redevelopment.

A sidewalk system is proposed adjacent to but outside of the UP/CSX Railroad right-of-way linking surface lots with the existing at-grade crossing at Main Street for improved pedestrian circulation and safety. Bump-outs should be constructed at roadway intersections to enhance pedestrian safety and calm local traffic. Bump-outs are most likely warranted in the TOD Mixed-Use Core area where there may be contention between heavy vehicular traffic and pedestrian activity, such as intersections of neighborhood or collector streets with Halsted Street, East End Avenue, 16th Street, Independence Way, and Main Street. Finally, a pedestrian underpass may be constructed at or near Independence Drive, pending availability of additional funding, concurrence of the railroad owners (UP and CSX Railroads), and the ability to avoid impacts to freight rail operations.

The Old Plank Road Trail, a paved trail that follows the abandoned Michigan Central rail corridor, currently ends at the western border of the City. A completion of the trail along the railroad right-of-way into Chicago Heights would allow a direct connection all the way to Joliet and beyond. Expansion of the Old Plank Road Trail is recommended, recognizing that the trail could become an important organizing element in the physical redevelopment of the downtown area. It could provide more recreation opportunities within the district, function as a gateway for the district, become an energizing element for character of a redeveloped transit-oriented community, and provide additional identity and a branding component. Expansion of the trail also allows the Study Area to fully capitalize on multi-modal opportunities. The catalytic effect of regional trails is becoming well documented within the many suburbs in the region, including the Southland. The planned contribution of the Old Plank Road Trail should be fully communicated and embraced.

**Streetscape Program & Gateway Opportunities**

One of the major aspects of the proposed Concept Plan is to create a pedestrian friendly atmosphere and an improved image for the development area. The roadway and streetscape improvements will have the following elements, which are illustrated in the Design Guidelines in Chapter 12:

- New landscaping
- New sidewalks
- New lighting
- Improved signage
- Roadway improvements: milling and resurfacing of existing roadway
- Bump-outs and clearly identified cross walks

These improvements are recommended for:

- Lincoln Highway/US 30/E. 14th Street between Chicago Road and East End Avenue, through these intersections
- 16th Street between Chicago Road and East End Avenue

- Illinois Street between Oak Street and Vincennes Road
- Independence Way between Chicago Road and Halsted Street
- E. Main Street between Chicago Road and the East End Avenue
- Chicago Road between Lincoln Highway/US 30/E. 14th Street and 23rd Street
- Halsted Street between Lincoln Highway/US 30/E. 14th Street and 23rd Street
- East End Avenue between Lincoln Highway/US 30/E. 14th Street and 23rd Street
- Vincennes Road between E.16th Street and Illinois Street
- Oak Street between E.16th Street and Independence Way

Gateway design elements are located at primary entrance to the TOD area. They should convey a sense of arrival and provide initial and lasting impressions. Refer to the Design Guidelines for detailed improvements included as part of a gateway. Recommended gateway points are:

- Halsted Street and Lincoln Highway/US 30/E. 14th Street
- Halsted Street and Main Street
- Chicago Road and E. 16th Street
- Chicago Road and Independence Way
- East End Avenue and E. 16th Street

**Signage & Wayfinding**

With an increase in proposed commuter parking and the possibility of shared-use parking for other uses, a comprehensive and easily understood wayfinding system should be implemented. Directional signs should be installed at key entry points to Study Area, as well as within the Study Area, guiding motorists to Study Area destinations and to the various parking options. Information kiosks describing the Study Area services and retail establishments and showing parking locations should be placed at various points

within the Study Area as an added benefit to those visiting the area. Upcoming events within the Study Area and the City could be posted to provide additional visibility.

## Parking Recommendations

Parking is a key provision in a TOD plan that can influence transit use and greatly affect the redevelopment of a downtown area.

### Commuter Parking

All communities that plan to host a SES Line Metra station need to provide approximately 1,250 parking spaces at full build-out (approximately 13 acres). The minimum number of parking spaces needed at the beginning of SES Line revenue service will be determined once ridership projections have been completed. Metra plans to complete the AA and ridership projections in Fall 2009.

It should be understood that these parking fields represent a first phase in the redevelopment of the district. Large surface lots are not consistent with the more compact, multiple and shared usage development patterns characteristic of transit-oriented development. Over the long-term, as development opportunities present, surface parking could be moved into structures that could allow for shared use parking between commuters and other users during off-peak hours. These structures could also serve as mixed-use buildings having retail on the ground floor that responds to the needs of commuters as well as other users within the Study Area.

The City's provision of commuter parking could be phased over time to correspond with expected ridership demand. Phasing recommendations have not been developed at this time. Development of commuter parking lots should be based on ridership needs, proximity to the proposed station, vacancy status, current land use, and current public (City) ownership. Several of the proposed commuter parking lots will require the City to acquire property. These acquisitions could also be timed to move existing uses into proposed new developments. There may be a time lag between property acquisition and the beginning of commuter service. The City may wish to permit interim uses in existing structures; otherwise, the City's priority should be to keep target sites safe and free from blight, which may involve demolition of existing structures and sodding, budget permitting. The City will need to balance these factors to develop the commuter parking lots in a cost-effective and logical manner.

The design of commuter parking lots includes landscaping, pedestrian amenities, and universal accessibility. Estimated costs per parking space were calculated based on unit

cost experience with other commuter parking lot developments, supplemented with guidance from Metra based on recent construction of other suburban commuter parking facilities. All cost estimates provided are in 2009 dollars, and are based on typical unit costs for surface parking construction with standard materials. These costs do not account for land acquisition. The financial obligations for any commuter parking lots proposed for redevelopment on land purchased with State and Federal funds will need to be discussed with IDOT. Most grant dollars, including Metra's, are not available for financing the replacement of commuter parking spaces that are displaced from designated and/or historical spaces. At the future point when organizing funding for construction of surface parking, if the City decides to pursue use of permeable paving materials, it will need to investigate whether Federal or State funds can be used for that purpose.

**Estimated Parking Costs**

| Surface Parking Lots | Number of Parking Spaces | Cost Per Parking Space * | Total Cost |
|---|---|---|---|
| Lot A | | | |
| *Kiss & Ride* | 14 | $10,000 | $140,000 |
| *ADA* | 22 | $10,000 | $220,000 |
| *Other* | 5 | $10,000 | $50,000 |
| Lot B | 116 | $10,000 | $1,160,000 |
| Lot C | 253 | $10,000 | $2,530,000 |
| Lot D/ "Expo Lot" ** | 358 | $1,000 | $358,000 |
| Lots E & F | 326 | $10,000 | $3,260,000 |
| Lots G & H | 192 | $10,000 | $1,920,000 |
| Total | 1286 | | $ 9,638,000 |

*Note: Actual number of parking spaces will depend on actual allowable impervious lot coverage and are subject to design and engineering revisions.*
** Cost estimates do not include land acquisition.*
*** Cost estimates are for repairs & repainting existing parking lot.*

## Long-Term Commuter Parking

The final phase of the commuter parking strategy may include the construction of a shared parking garage in the "Expo Lot" in conjunction with private development (shown as Lot D and further discussed in Chapter 9: Concept Plan, Area 11 section). The costs associated with structured parking are significantly higher than surface lots. This parking garage may have several floors and could be split between commuter spaces and public spaces devoted to users of the private development. Spaces allocated to commuters in this new parking deck will need to be planned to meet future transit

demand needs. Land that might be used for parking, at a low tax rate, can be used for multi-story tax-generating development. With less driving, there is less congestion, air pollution and climate impact, resulting in a "greener" community.

**On-Street Parking**

Scattered locations throughout the Study Area, including the northern sections of Halsted Street, Otto Boulevard, and several of the residential streets allow for on-street parallel parking. Diagonal parking is found along Halsted Street, near the Police Station between 16th and 17th Streets. Given the relatively low traffic volumes on these streets, on-street parking would not interrupt traffic flow to any major degree. This Plan does not recommend removal of on-street parking. On-street parking provides a buffer between pedestrians and moving vehicles and enhances the perception of safety and security for pedestrians within commercial districts.

On-street parking provides convenient access to commercial and mixed-use business. The opening of commuter rail service introduces potential on-street parking contention between customers of local businesses and commuters; that is, commuters may monopolize free and easy street parking for the duration of the work day and "crowd out" customers of local businesses who may need convenient parking for short periods throughout the day. The streets in the Study Area with the greatest potential for conflict in the Study Area include Halsted Street, Independence Way, and East End Avenue. The City should adopt time limits on parking (i.e., a two-hour maximum) for street parking to discourage commuters from monopolizing on-street parking and encourage them to use dedicated commuter lots. If this approach proves to be ineffective, another option is installation of meters for on-street parking. Modern technology meters accept multiple forms of payment from the customer, and can facilitate enforcement by requiring placement of time-stamped receipts on vehicle windshields.

To avoid parking conflicts in the residential neighborhoods in the Study Area, the City may wish to reserve on-street parking on specific blocks for residents and their guests by implementing parking zones, potentially during workday hours, but possibly at all times if other Study Area commercial users overflow into the residential neighborhoods. Commuters from outside the residential neighborhood would not be permitted to park on residential streets as an alternative to pay commuter lots.

**Shared Parking**

Shared parking is defined as "the used of a parking space to serve two or more individual land uses without conflict or encroachment." A fundamental principle in TOD planning

is to recommend shared parking resources rather than dedicated lots or structures for each use or building. The compact, walkable nature of TOD neighborhoods is conducive to the use of shared parking. Two conditions influence the ability to share parking spaces:

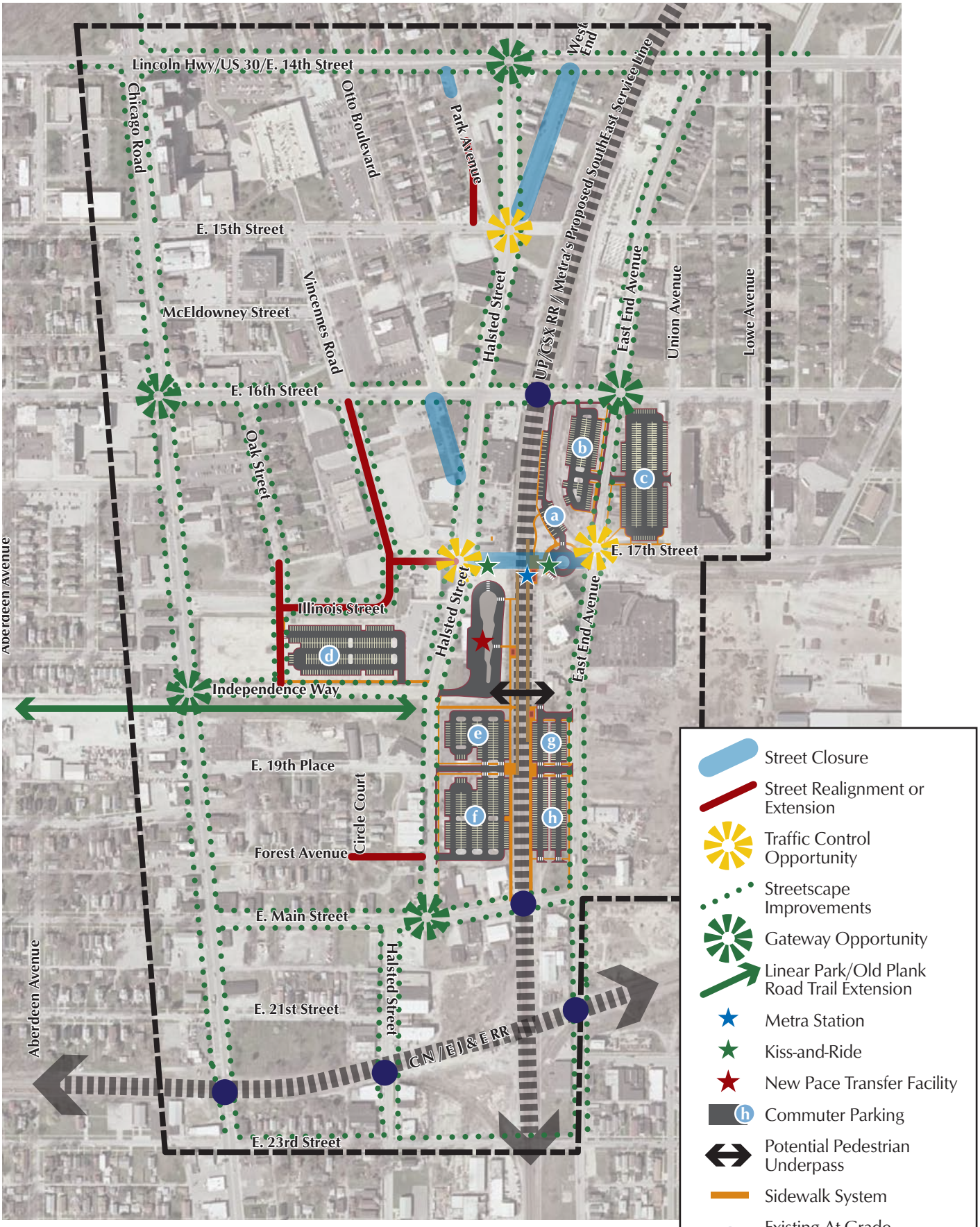
- Variations parking patterns by hour, by day, or by season among individual land uses, and

- Relationships among the land uses that result in visiting multiple land uses on the same auto trip.

Many suburban downtowns have successfully adopted shared parking and have experienced economic and environmental benefits. Parking can consume a large amount of surface area and contribute significantly to the development cost of a project. The goal of shared parking is to strike a balance between providing adequate parking to support development while minimizing the negative aspects of excessive land consumption or resources devoted to parking.

The City's current zoning allows for joint use of parking facilities, provided the total number of spaces located together total the requirements for each use. The City should explore revising this requirement in the TOD area to allow for a reduction in the number of required parking spaces for mixed-use developments. The City should consider eliminating parking minimums and let the private market calculate and verify the number of parking spaces needed. Another option is to set parking maximums in the TOD core as a means of promoting use of transit.

## *Map 8: Transportation and Circulation*






Prepared by: URS
November 2, 2009

## Design Guidelines

Design Guidelines are planning tools that enable municipalities or other statutory authorities to promote a level of design and architectural quality, compatibility and consistency among built elements that will help the Study Area to achieve and maintain a unique and distinctive character. The focus is on developing a cohesive image, not to dictate architectural styles or "make all buildings look the same."

**Goals for the Downtown TOD Design Guidelines:**

- Promote private improvements and developments that will help create an engaging mixed-use environment.
- Foster new development that complements the potential SES Line train station, new Pace Transfer Center, open space development, existing adjacent commercial and residential areas, and establishes distinctive new focal points and activity areas.
- Establish a development pattern that encourages more significant and safer pedestrian activity, while still accommodating enhanced public transit, automobile traffic, and parking.
- Promote a level of quality, compatibility, and consistency that will reinforce the mix of uses and enhance positive perceptions for those who live, work and play within the Study Area.
- Encourage public improvement projects that address the character of the public way, and the pedestrian experience.

### Purpose of Design Guidelines

The Design Guidelines provided in this Plan should be used to promote high-quality, compatible improvements for both new development and redevelopment within the Study Area. The guidelines address both the public and the private realms of the Study Area.

Architects and developers should use the Guidelines as a reference as they prepare plans for new commercial, mixed-use, industrial, and residential developments. Conformance to the Design Guidelines can reduce the design review time of development proposals and accelerate construction schedules, which is a financial benefit to property owners and investors.

### Preparation of these Design Guidelines

Community input and feedback formed the basis for development of these Guidelines. At the initial public meeting, a visual preference survey (VPS) was conducted. VPS is a planning tool that allows the public to rate visual concepts of various types of building designs, landscape characteristics, community fabric, architectural styles, signs, etc. This tool is frequently used in developing design guidelines as a channel for community

members to communicate likes or dislikes about the current aesthetic fabric, and what they would like to see changed.

Questions of design character have been of particular interest in this planning process. A total of 56 images were chosen to illustrate different design elements. Elements included building types, building heights, design of sidewalks, streets, building facades, landscaping, signage, and other character features. Every participant was given a ballot and upon review of the image, assigned the image a variable positive/negative ranking. The subsequent assessment of the rankings yielded preferences related to building type, size and character, which informed the objectives cited in the guidelines.

## Implementation of the Design Guidelines

Previous sections of the Plan presented recommendations for sites that could accommodate new open space, commercial, mixed-use, and residential development. The Design Guidelines presented in this section address new buildings, site development, and public improvements within the Study Area.

The Design Guidelines should be used by the City of Chicago Heights, the Planning Commission and Zoning Board, and other Boards and Agencies in reviewing plans and proposals for new projects and improvements within the Study Area. The City's Zoning Code governs the use of land in the City and includes fundamentals of site development, such as minimum lot size, floor area ratio, setbacks, and noise and performance standards. The Design Guidelines are "supplements" to the City's Zoning Code and other applicable codes and ordinances.

## Guidelines for Commercial, Office and Mixed-Use Development

Commercial development within the Study Area should be designed to capture the markets created by nearby residential areas, commuters, employees, passing motorists, and visitors. Proximity of stores and businesses to adjacent neighborhoods can also create convenient shopping opportunities that benefit both customers and merchants. To be successful, commercial development within the Study Area must include a healthy and diverse mix of stores and businesses, accessible and visible to both pedestrians and vehicular users.

**Building Scale and Proportion**

Multiple storefronts in the same building

Distinguishing design features

Facades divided into "bays"

New retail / mixed-use buildings should be one to five stories in height. However, office and mixed-use developments may be greater in height, provided they are in character with the surrounding area and comply with exist Study Area zoning requirements.

All buildings within the same block should have a strong spatial and functional relationship to each other. Building design should express a single strong architectural theme within each individual development area.

The first floor of all new buildings should have a strong pedestrian orientation, with windows, attractive detailing, and convenient and "hospitable" entrances. Retail development should include display windows.

Multiple storefronts in the same building should be visually compatible in terms of scale, alignment and storefront design. However, variations in signage, awnings, and storefront color may be allowed.

The façades of large new buildings with multiple tenants should be visually divided into 20 to 30 foot "bays" to reflect a traditional commercial development pattern.

Design features, such as façade elements, trims, and accents, that distinguish the Study Area from other

development areas should be encouraged and should respect the historic character of Chicago Heights.

Strip centers within the Study Area should face the street and incorporate screened parking to the side or rear. The parking should be screened with a landscape buffer along the sidewalk.

**Building Placement and Orientation**

Building with a strong physical relationship to the street


Edge defining wall maintains street frontage

Buildings should have a strong visual and physical relationship to the street. Buildings should be attractive from both pedestrian and vehicular perspectives.

In most blocks within the Study Area, new commercial and mixed-use buildings should be positioned at the front property line. In these locations, the streetwall should form a continuous line of buildings.

New commercial buildings within the Study Area should face the street; placement of buildings at irregular angles to the street should be avoided. However, corner buildings might take advantage of their prominent locations with angled or recessed corner entrances or other small setbacks.

In locations where buildings have greater setbacks, side yards and surface parking lots, the street frontage should be maintained through the use of edge defining landscaping and decorative fencing.

**Rooflines**

Contemporary roofline

Blocks should be developed with common cornice lines that give a distinctive scale and massing to the development.

For commercial buildings with flat roofs, roof parapets should be used to create an interesting building profile and to screen rooftop equipment.

Vertical architectural elements, such as clock towers or spires, should be considered as design highlights and used judiciously, occurring at appropriate locations.

**Building Materials**

Masonry construction with architectural accents

Building materials used should have a minimum life cycle of 50 years. The use of faux materials or finishes is strongly discouraged. Facade designs should avoid gimmickry or trendy styling. The use of reflective and heavily tinted glass is not recommended.

Recommended accent materials for commercial buildings should include stone, simulated stone, terra cotta, and wood and metal trim.

While "exterior insulation finish systems" (EIFS) might be used in limited quantities as an accent material or on upper floors, they should not be employed as a primary building material or be used on the street level of a building.

Rough-sawn wood, aluminum and vinyl siding, rustic shingles and shakes, and plastic or metal panels should not be permitted on commercial, office or mixed-use facades.

**Colors**

Light colored sandstone façade highlights architectural features building

Color should be used to unite the elements of a façade and to highlight architectural features. The colors on individual buildings should complement and be compatible with the colors of other buildings within the same block.

While the predominant colors for new buildings should be relatively muted and subtle, contrasting and complementary colors might be used to accent building components, highlight architectural elements, and add richness and variety to the commercial areas.

Windows, doors and cornice trim should be highlighted with a complementary color.

Ceramic tile, terra-cotta, brick, stone, and glass surfaces should not be painted.

**Doors**

Use of awnings to identify entrance

Doors on all buildings should be attractive and inviting to pedestrians. Recessed entrances and the use of awnings should be encouraged to define entryways and protect users from weather elements.

Special attention should be given to the ornamentation around doors and windows.

Multiple entrances encourage pedestrian activity along block

Entrance doors should have large areas of glass to promote visibility, rather than solid or windowless doors. Entry doors may have accentuating colors that are complementary with the color scheme of the building.

Multiple entrances should be encouraged along a block front with multiple tenants to enhance pedestrian activity and add visual interest to the street.

Main entrances should be at the front of the building and should face the sidewalk. Corner buildings can take advantage of their prominent locations with angled corner entrances. Secondary entrances should be encouraged from public parking areas located at the rear of buildings.

**Ground-Floor Windows**

Ground-floor windows

Ground-floor windows should be employed in new construction. These windows add interest to the street and increase the feeling of safety.

Display windows should include kick-plates below (glazing should not extend to the ground), with clerestory windows above. Display windows should account for

approximately 60 to 70 percent of the ground floor façade of retail buildings.

Window glazing should be clear or lightly tinted; dark, or reflective glass is discouraged on commercial, office or mixed-use storefronts.

**Upper-Floor Windows**

Upper-floor windows and patios

Windows on the upper floors of new buildings should appear to be discrete openings within a solid wall, rather than continuous rows of windows separated only by their frames, unless specifically in keeping with the architectural statement. Upper floor windows should be recessed, not flush with the surface of the building, in order to enliven the shadow patterns on the façade.

Upper floor windows should be spaced evenly and symmetrically along the façade. Windows should be vertically proportioned and smaller than the windows on the ground floor.

Curtain-wall window treatments might be employed in newer buildings along the corridor where appropriate.

**Awnings & Canopies**

Awnings and canopies color complements facade

Awnings and canopies should be encouraged to provide weather protection and to add visual interest.

Awnings and canopies should be integrated into the design of the building façade and should be in character with the architectural style of the building.

Simple pitched awning profiles, either fixed or retractable, are preferred. Awnings should be made of a canvas or durable fabric material that can be easily cleaned.

The color of awnings and canopies should complement and enhance the overall color scheme of the building façade.

Awnings should project no more than 6 feet from the building. An 8-foot clearance from the sidewalk to the underside of the awning is recommended.

**Property Rear and Sides**

Dumpster screening

The rear and side portions of all properties should be clean, attractive, and well maintained, particularly where these areas are visible to the public and are adjacent to residential areas.

New buildings should have attractive rear and side façades that are comparable to front façades.

All service entrances, dumpsters, and loading facilities should be located at the rear of buildings. They should be screened from view along sidewalks and roadways through the use of masonry walls and/or evergreen plantings.

A 7-foot wide landscape strip, plus decorative fencing, is recommended to be used when a service yard or loading area is adjacent to residential uses or the public way.

**Building Signage**


Monument sign landscaping

Exterior building signs should be limited to business identification and description. Exterior advertising signs should not be permitted. The size, material, color, and shape of building signs should complement the architectural style and scale of the building.

Free-standing signage should not be permitted within the commercial areas, except for shared, low-profile monument signs for multi-tenant properties. If

appropriate, no more than one monument sign per development area should be permitted.

Monument signs should be constructed of material similar to the primary building on the site. The size, material, color, and shape of monument signs should complement the architectural style and scale of nearby buildings.

The letters of an internally illuminated monument sign should be illuminated with a light source of appropriate color. The light source for externally illuminated signs should be focused and of limited intensity so as not to distract from the overall character of the Study Area.

Pole signs, pylon signs, and billboards for individual businesses should not be permitted within the Study Area.

Signs should be designed and placed to avoid conflicts with private and public landscape treatments in order to maximize visibility.

**Tenant Signs**

Wall-mounted sign

A signage band should be incorporated into the design of the front façade, situated above the storefront and below the upper floor windows. Lettering should be compatible with the design of the buildings.

When a building contains multiple ground-floor tenants, signage for all businesses should be compatible in design, color and placement.

Projecting placard signs may extend out from the front face of the building. Placard signs can be round, square or vertical, mounted from the face of the building at the second floor level. These signs should be mounted on

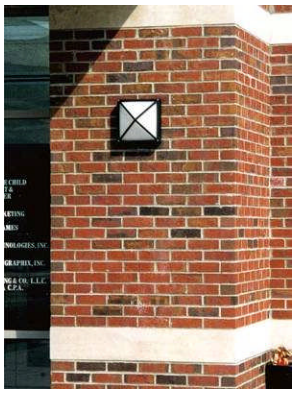
fixed hardware, swinging or chain mounted signs should not be permitted.

Street numbers should be prominently displayed at the main entrance of every business and be clearly visible from the street, sidewalks, and adjacent parking lots.

Wall-mounted signage should not project above the cornice line or be mounted on the roof of a building.

Signage with reverse channel or halo lighting is permitted. Light sources must be fully concealed within the letters, and rear face of the letters may be no greater than 1" from the background material.

**Building Lighting**



Wall-mounted lighting

Wall-mounted dark sky light

Use of best management practices prepared by the U.S. Green Building Council (USGBC) related to building lighting is strongly encouraged.

Exterior building lighting should be carefully designed. Incandescent and low voltage lighting may be allowed. Fixtures should be in keeping with the style of the building façade.

Building lighting should focus on accenting building signs, promoting a sense of safety and security for pedestrians, and enhancing architectural details.

Lighting in service areas should be designed to avoid spillover into adjacent residential areas and should incorporate full–shield cutoffs to contain light within the service areas.

Metal halide lighting creates a natural light, and should be encouraged.

LED lighting may incur lower energy costs than other technologies, and may be a preferred choice as technology improves. If neon or LED lighting is used, colors should be compatible with and complement the façade of the building.

**Private Landscaping and Site Improvements**

Plaza feature

Landscape improvements should serve to enhance the appearance of the site, especially as viewed from an adjacent public right of way. Effective year round screening shall be provided to lessen the visual prominence of: parking lots, service yards, loading docks, public utility structures, and unsightly appurtenances.


Decorative plantings

Plant material should be selected for its form, texture, color and the relationship of these characteristics with the subject building(s) as well as concern for its size at maturity.

Outdoor seating areas, such as those provided by restaurants, should be well landscaped and incorporated into the overall site design. Outdoor seating areas should be set back and screened from parking areas and access drives. Outdoor seating areas should not hinder pedestrian circulation and must comply with any and all municipal standards.

Maintenance programs should be established to ensure that private landscaping is adequately cared for and that its value is retained over time. Regular maintenance should include watering, turf mowing, periodic fertilization, pruning, weeding, and regular clean-up of litter and debris.

## Guidelines for Parking

While adequate parking is essential, the Study Area should be improved and redeveloped in a manner that encourages safe and convenient pedestrian access and circulation in order to reduce the reliance on automobile travel and reduce the need for more and more parking.

**Surface Parking Lots**

Parking lots within commercial areas should be located within a convenient walking distance of all commercial establishments.

Landscaped islands with planters and street furniture

Parking lots should be shared between multiple stores and businesses to allow for a more efficient lot layout and to minimize access drives. Cross access between adjacent parking lots should be encouraged, especially in consideration of the needs of first responders.

Parking lots should be located behind buildings or at mid block where possible. However, parking for strip centers and larger shopping areas along Chicago Road may be permissible in the front of buildings.

Curb cuts and access drives should be minimized, particularly along pedestrian shopping streets; they should not be located near intersections or primary building entrances. They should be planned with knowledge of traffic flow on the access streets.

Ornamental brick wall screening parking

Parking lots should be screened from view along sidewalks, roadways, and adjacent uses through the use of landscaping and decorative fencing.

All parking lots should be paved, well marked, and designed for proper drainage.

Parking lots used at night should be adequately illuminated. A high degree of illumination should be provided for safety purposes.

Trees in parking lots should be large canopy trees, and should be sited to enhance shading.

Parking lot lighting should be in scale with nearby buildings, and should not be more than 12 to 16 feet high. Parking lot light fixtures should be decorative and painted either black or dark green.

Parking lot lighting should be screened from view along sidewalks, roadways and open spaces through the use of landscaping and decorative fencing.

Ornamental fence

A landscaped buffer of no less than seven feet in width should be provided around the perimeter of all surface parking lots. Perimeter landscaping along adjacent rights of way should include a continuous hedge of shrubs, shade trees at 40 foot spacing, maximum, and groundcover.

In conjunction with landscaping, open-style decorative fencing is encouraged to delineate and screen parking and service facilities.

Where possible, sustainable/LEED recommended materials and stormwater management techniques should be used. These include bioswales, permeable and light colored pavement, high efficiency lights and priority parking for high efficiency vehicles.

Chain link fencing and concrete block walls are not appropriate within the Study Area (although masonry piers are encouraged).

Commuter parking should be convenient to, and in clear site of, the proposed Metra station and boarding platforms. All commuter parking facilities should ideally be located within 1,300' or ¼ mile of the Metra station. Design of commuter parking facilities should comply

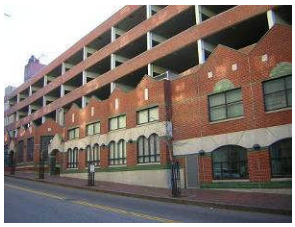
with established guidelines published in Metra's *Parking Manual.*

**Parking Structures**


Mixed-use parking structure

Parking structures should be encouraged in selected locations to lessen the reliance on surface parking and to provide more land area for buildings and open spaces.

Parking structure development should allow for the ground along primary shopping streets to be used for stores, restaurants, or service establishments.



Parking structures with architectural style

Parking structures should have an architectural style and design character that is similar to other buildings within the Study Area. In general, the design treatment of parking structures, particularly the ground floors and front façades, should conform to the design guidelines presented above.

Parking garage roof-lines and floor level articulations that are visible from the street should be parallel to the street; ramping and inclines should occur within the structure or on the interior of the block.

The appearance of parking structures might also be "softened" through the use of planter boxes and foundation plantings. Uncovered parking on the top level of a structure might also entail roof-top planters around the full perimeter of the building.

Openings in the parking structure's walls should incorporate grillage, or architectural screening, to minimize the glare from interior lighting systems.

## Guidelines for Residential Development

The Study Area is bordered on the west and north by historic, attractive and well-maintained residential neighborhoods that add significantly to the overall character of the Study Area and also provide a base of support for commercial uses and businesses within the area. Single-family homes, two-family dwellings, and multi-family developments comprise these neighborhoods. The style and character of the buildings in these neighborhoods should inform the design of new housing product, when being developed.

Over time, new multi-family residential development within the Study Area would serve to expand the customer base for retail and service businesses within the area, respond to a potential evolving need, and would enhance the vitality, image and perception of the Study Area.

Several guidelines specifically related to new residential development are presented below.

Detached single-family residential

New housing construction should reflect the scale and character of the established residential neighborhoods, particularly to the west of Chicago Road, in terms of masonry or wood frame building materials, colors, massing and proportion.

Building materials should be high-quality, durable, attractive and have low maintenance requirements.

Attached single-family residential

New residential buildings should be set back from the sidewalk, in a manner consistent with historical precedents. These setbacks should be consistent along a block front. Unless a courtyard-style multifamily building is envisioned, residential buildings should be aligned with and face the street.

Residential sites should be attractively landscaped, including building foundation plantings and along perimeters of parking and service areas.

Residential portions of the Study Area should reinforce a streetscape that is residential in character by the use of sidewalks, smaller-scale street lights, street trees at 30 to 40 foot spacing, and turfed parkways.

Where possible, parking to serve multi-family uses should be located inside the primary buildings; if garages or surface lots are provided, they should be located behind residential buildings. Curb cuts should be limited and vehicular access is encouraged through alleyways.


Multi-family residential

Apartment units, either rental or fee-simple condominium, should also be promoted on the upper floors of commercial buildings to create a mixed-use urban residential component very different from other residential areas within the Study Area. This use is not currently in large supply and can serve empty-nesters as well as younger residents.

## Guidelines for Industrial Development

There are several larger industrial uses located in the eastern portion of the Study Area. Older industrial factory and warehouse buildings, several of which are vacant or lightly used, and the site of Chicago Heights Steel (the only specialty market mill in the nation that rolls billet and rail steel) occupy much of the southeastern quadrant of the Study Area. Manufacturing is a historical source of employment and long-standing element of the tradition of Chicago Heights.

Opportunities for light industrial and office warehouse developments may exist along the east side of the southern portion of East End Avenue. Development of this type can act as a transition between existing and proposed residential, commercial and mixed use and the heavy industrial uses further to the east.

Landscaped buffer between industrial and residential properties

Light-industrial developments

The impacts of industrial uses on nearby commercial, residential and mixed-use needs to be minimized. Landscape treatments can help buffer adjoining residential areas.

Industrial traffic should not be routed on residential streets.

Industrial uses should not allow loud noises, noxious vapors or uncontrolled glare from site lighting to emanate from the industrial use, particularly when adjacent to a residential area.

While most industrial uses currently use chain link or steel plate for perimeter fencing, industrial uses should be buffered and screened around the perimeter of the site with decorative fencing and enhanced landscape treatments, particularly near public sidewalks and roadways.

Industrial uses can also create environmental concerns. The City of Chicago Heights should monitor environmental conditions on industrial uses in this area.

## Guidelines for Public Rights-of-Way

In addition to site and building development, a range of projects should be considered by the City of Chicago Heights within the public rights-of-way to enhance the image and appearance of the Study Area and create a safe, attractive, and hospitable shopping, living, and leisure-time environment. Public sector improvements can help promote new private investment and development, and attract additional visitors and business patrons to the area.

In general, it is recommended that the City establish a comprehensive, area-wide design for public improvements to various portions of the Study Area. The design should work to establish a unique new identity for the Study Area.

Because of the diverse mix of residential and commercial uses and the presence of existing public transit (Pace bus routes) and potential for commuter rail service, the Study Area should be improved so that pedestrians and vehicles can move safely and efficiently between various destinations and attractions. The Study Area should become a more safe, attractive, and convenient environment for both pedestrians and vehicular users.

The guidelines presented below provide a preliminary framework for the design treatment of streets, sidewalks, crosswalks, streetscape facilities, lighting, public signage, and other defining amenities.

**Streets**

Unobstructed view of traffic signals

Streets should be designed to support vehicles, public transit, and pedestrians on a relatively equal basis. While accommodating vehicular traffic, streets should also promote walking, and the use of public transit.

On-street parking, both parallel and diagonal, is convenient for short-term business patrons and provides protection for pedestrians. It should be provided wherever possible.

Streets should be designed to control the speed of traffic within the Study Area in order to protect pedestrians and enhance commercial activity. Contrasting paving materials, landscaping, on-street parking, intersection

bump-outs, as well as landscaped parkways and medians can all be employed to calm traffic.

**Sidewalks**

Limited streetscape

Sidewalks should be provided on all streets within the Study Area. Sidewalks along or within major shopping areas should be concrete and at least six feet wide. Specialty paving, or enhanced scoring patterns, can be incorporated at important locations. Private development improvements within the public way must comply with City standards and will require approval.

Within the Study Area, all public sidewalks should be a minimum of six feet in width. In locations with trees in grates or planters, and in areas of heavy pedestrian use, sidewalks should be a minimum of eight feet in width.

Intensive streetscape

An area-wide system of secondary walkways should be also developed to provide linkages between public sidewalks, shopping areas, storefronts, parking areas, and adjacent residential areas.

All public sidewalks should be accessible to the handicapped and should comply with appropriate ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) standards.

Buildings fronting a street should have walkways that connect with the public sidewalk, providing pedestrian entry into commercial establishments. Access should be ADA compliant.

**Crosswalks**

Paving identifies crosswalk

Crosswalks should be provided at key locations to encourage pedestrian use of the Study Area.

To improve visibility and safety, crosswalks should be made prominent and noticeable by employing a change in paving materials, texture, and color as well as change in elevation.

Small pylons and special lighting fixtures might also be used to highlight crosswalks.

Pedestrian-compatible traffic signals, regulatory signage and other measures might also be considered.

**Public Landscaping**

Boulevard street cross-section

A program of street tree planting should be pursued by the City of Chicago Heights within the Study Area; historically the area was heavily treed. Street trees should be protected from motorized and pedestrian traffic by curbed planters or tree grates.

Plantings in raised beds or containers should be considered along the curb line in selected locations, to highlight building entries and special activity areas, but not so as to compromise sight lines.

**Corridor Lighting**

Installation of traditional-styled light fixtures that complement the historic flavor of the Study Area should be installed as part of ongoing capital improvements projects.

Lighting along public streets within the Study Area should consist of both roadway lighting and pedestrian lighting.

Combination vehicular / pedestrian lighting

Roadway lighting should be consistent with IDOT and the City of Chicago Heights codes and standards. Where possible, light poles in new commercial areas should generally be no more than 20 to 25 feet in height in order to be in scale with new buildings.

Banners attached to street lights should be considered to commemorate special events and reinforce marketing and branding goals within the Study Area. Banners should be changed periodically throughout the year.

Pedestrian light fixtures should be of a style appropriate for the Study Area and are most effective when mounted on poles separate from roadway lighting as they help differentiate pedestrians from the vehicular traffic, enhancing the perception of safety for pedestrians. Light poles should be between 12 to 15 feet in height.

Pylons and bollard lighting should be considered as accents and for ornamental purposes. These fixtures could be used to highlight crosswalks, open spaces, seating areas, key intersections or locations and major pedestrian ways.

**Gateway and Wayfinding Signage**

Overstreet gateway feature

Gateway signs would identify the primary entries into the Study Area and should be positioned at or near the intersections of Lincoln Highway and Halsted Street, Chicago Road and 16th Street, Chicago Road and Independence Drive, East End Avenue and 16th Street, and Halsted Street and Main Street. In addition to signage, gateway designs would incorporate the City's branding package and also should include landscaping and lighting features.

Wayfinding signage

Wayfinding signs should be placed at strategic locations to direct vehicular users to multi-modal transit facilities, commercial developments, parking areas, and other activity areas within the Study Area. Wayfinding signage should incorporate branding elements, including logo, color, font, etc.

Pedestrian-scaled informational signs should be provided at key locations to direct pedestrians to stores and businesses and to announce activities and community events within the Study Area.

**Other Pedestrian-Scale Improvements**


Sidewalk cafe

Smaller-scale open spaces and courtyards should be considered as a necessary component of private development projects within the Study Area. Courtyards might be integrated with adjoining restaurants to provide outdoor seating areas.


Public art

Improvements and developments within the Study Area should include a unified system of "street furnishings," such as seating, trash receptacles, drinking fountains, bike racks, decorative fountains, and other amenities, as promoted by the City of Chicago Heights.

Public art installations, both permanent and temporary, are encouraged at key locations along the public rights-of-way, with municipal oversight and approval, and on private properties. Businesses or institutions within the Study Area could be recruited to sponsor public art.


Tower focal point


Plaza / celebratory space

## Phasing Plan

Development of the Chicago Heights TOD as depicted in the Concept Plan will occur incrementally over time as property owners identify opportunities to maximize the value of their investments, environmental issues are addressed, market forces evolve, and participation in the FTA New Starts program moves forward.

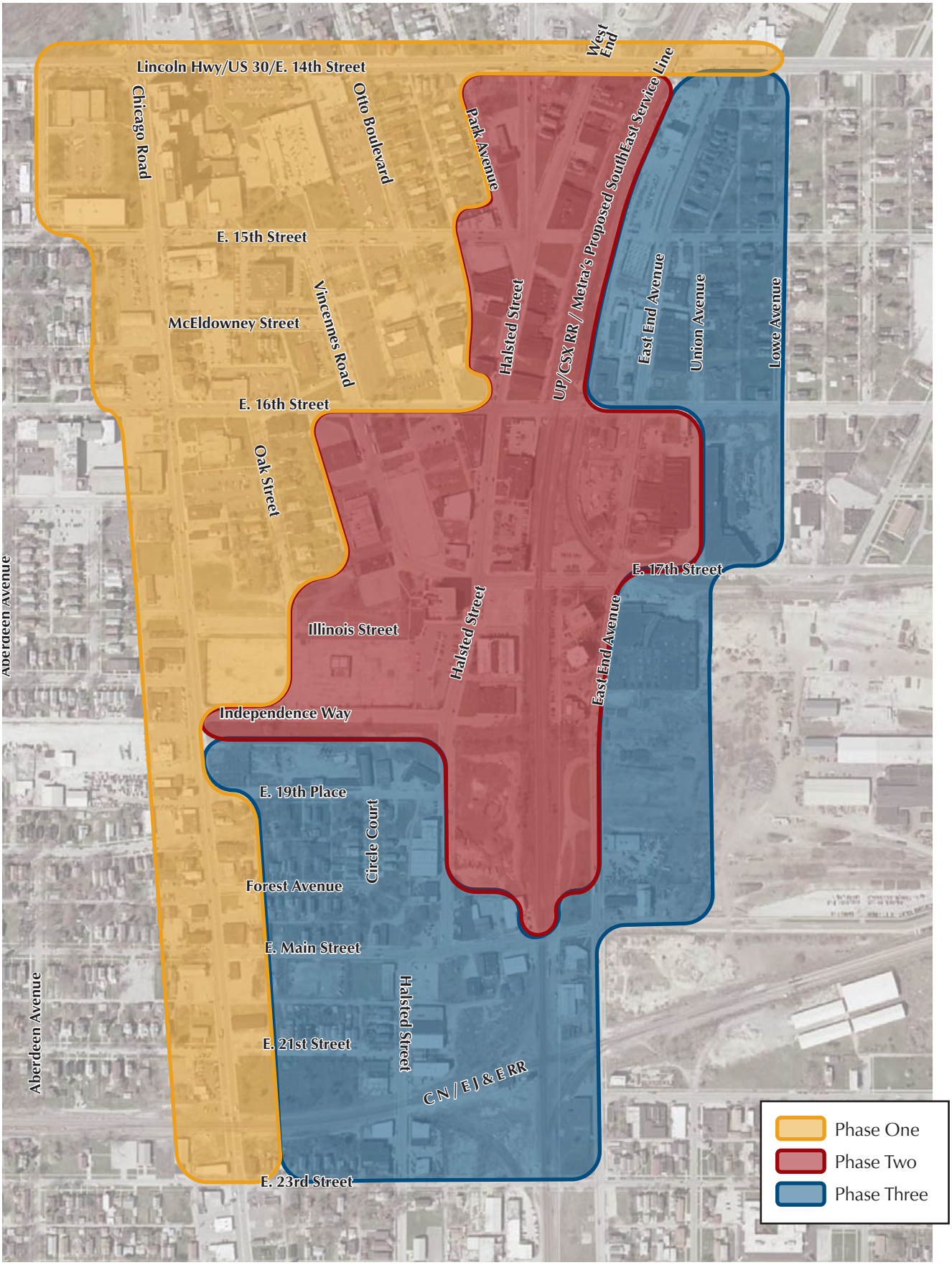
The Concept Plan exhibit in Chapter 9 provides a graphical representation of the Study Area's end state. Plans of the size and complexity of Chicago Heights' TOD Plan are handled most successfully by organizing activities into phases according to community priorities, market support and private interest, and dependencies on external events. The strategy for accomplishing this TOD project includes development in three phases organized around the timing of the proposed SES Line.

### Phase One

Phase One starts with adoption of this Plan and continues until approximately two years before the opening of the proposed SES Line. The opening of the proposed SES Line is not expected for 8 to 10 years (2017 to 2019), but the City should start preparing the Study Area for TOD development. The objective of the first phase is to lay the groundwork for future development in the Study Area. Phase One steps include:

- Administer City plans and policies: adopt this Plan and apply updated zoning districts
- Engage an Advisory Committee
- Coordinate with communities along the proposed SES Line and support the New Starts process
- Improve the streetscape (including planted medians) along Chicago Road and Lincoln Highway in coordination with planned roadway improvements and infrastructure upgrades
- Support major institutional uses: work with St. James Hospital and other institutional uses to identify their expansion and support service needs
- Target infill sites along Chicago Road for auto-oriented commercial development

## *Map 9: Implementation and Phasing Plan*



- Strengthen the "Arts District:" work with Union Street Gallery and property owners along Otto Boulevard between 15th and 16th Streets; invest in signage and streetscaping; and preserve existing buildings and infill where necessary

- Reinforce existing residential neighborhoods

- Continue property acquisition: acquire land needed for the proposed station, commuter parking, open space, and the new Pace transfer facility

- Finalize plans for commuter parking when Metra completes ridership projections; the potential full build-out is estimated at this time to be 1,250 commuter parking spaces

- Identify local funding sources for constructing the Metra station, commuter parking, and the Pace Transfer Facility, including working with the South Suburban Mayors and Managers Association (SSMMA) and the Southeast Corridor Rail Development Board (SCRDB) to create a joint funding pool

- Work with property owners to consolidate property for new development

- Construct gateways at Lincoln Highway/Halsted Street, 16th Street/Chicago Road, and Chicago Road/Independence Way

- Support a significant State capital plan to provide the necessary local match for the proposed SES Line

- Preserve land for the Metra station, commuter parking, and the Pace Transfer Facility

- Discuss the proposed SES Line station location with the Cook County Housing Development Authority, given their ownership interests in the adjacent residential towers

- Work with Pace to create a detailed implementation plan for relocation of the current transfer facility at 16th Street and Vincennes Avenue to the proposed location near the proposed SES station

## Phase Two

Phase Two begins approximately two years before the opening of the Proposed SES Line and continues for five to ten years after the SES. 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. Phase Two steps include:

- Create gateways at 16th Street/East End Avenue
- Extend Illinois Street and Oak Street
- Improve the streetscape along Halsted Street, Independence Way, 17th Street, the Illinois Street extension, the Oak Street extension, 16th Street, and Vincennes Road
- Address the Halsted Street and 15th Street intersection
- Close West End Avenue
- Limit access to Park Avenue
- Install boulevard medians along Independence Way
- Construct the Old Plank Road Trail and/or a linear park
- Make necessary circulation, kiss-and-ride, and 17th Street grade crossing improvements
- Pending the construction of the SES Line, sign a *Commuter Facility Development Agreement* with Metra to formally establish the City's adherence to Metra's station and parking design; construction standards; parking fee standards; maintenance of the station, parking and access; funding of routine maintenance and landscaping; and utility fees
- Obtain all necessary funding to purchase land for the Metra station, commuter parking facilities, and new Pace Transfer Facility

- Begin negotiations with the Cook County Housing Development Authority to obtain necessary access to a portion of their parking lot for commuter station access and circulation

- Build the SES Line station and the required initial number of commuter parking spaces

- Support the construction of Pace's new Transfer Facility on the west side of the train station and additional bus bays on East End Avenue

- Work with the private market to redevelop sites along Halsted Street and Vincennes Road

- Design and build the new civic plaza and park space along Halsted Street near the Pace Transfer Facility

## Phase Three

Phase Three begins approximately five to ten years after the start of the proposed SES Line service and continues for approximately ten to fifteen years. This phase focuses on the areas south and east of the core and completes the transition of the Study Area to a fully functional TOD. This phase includes new private residential and commercial, industrial, and mixed-use development in Downtown Chicago Heights, providing an anchor of new residents and shoppers who value the convenience and liveliness of a mixed-use suburban environment. Establishing greater population density in the Study Area will be critical to launching a more active and energized area. Private development potentials are contingent upon the successful implementation of the infrastructure enhancements described in Phases One and Two.

Phase Three steps include:

- Strengthen residential neighborhoods and encourage infill development

- Adapt existing historic industrial structures for reuse

- Develop a transitional industrial/warehouse campus on the east side of East End Avenue between 17th Street and Main Street

- Improve or update commercial and industrial buildings along Halsted and Main Streets
- Install gateway feature at Main Street/Halsted Street
- Improve the streetscape along Main Street
- Extend Forest Avenue
- Develop open or green space at Forest Avenue/Halsted Street
- Build additional commuter parking as needed to support growth of transit ridership

## Cost Estimates

For the purposes of understanding the order of magnitude of the public infrastructure costs associated with the Concept Plan, high-level infrastructure costs estimates have been developed. These figures have not factored in financing tools such as grants, or cost-sharing approaches such as public-private partnerships. All figures are provided in 2009 dollars and exclude land acquisition and site cleanup, remediation, and/or preparation. (Costs do not include costs for the proposed train station).

This analysis is not intended to substitute for preparation of detailed engineering and design cost estimates; subsequent additional analysis will be required as actual projects are proposed and designed. The estimates presented here were formulated based on prior experience with similar projects and industry standard per-unit cost factors. Cost variances or changes in strategy may occur based on changes in driving factors, delays in the timing of phases or changes in larger economic conditions outside of the City's control. Tables of summary and detailed estimated infrastructure costs are presented below and on the following page:

**Estimated Infrastructure Costs – Summary by Phase**

| Phase | Cost | Distribution |
|---|---|---|
| Phase 1 | $7,427,750 | 25.7% |
| Phase 2 | $19,557,550 | 67.7% |
| Phase 3 | $1,917,500 | 6.6% |
| **Total** | **$28,902,800** | |

## Estimated Infrastructure Costs – Summary by Element

| Infrastructure Element | Cost | Distribution |
|---|---|---|
| Roadway Improvements | $8,476,000 | 29.3% |
| Streetscaping | $7,560,000 | 26.2% |
| Green Space | $952,800 | 3.3% |
| Civic Space | $1,971,000 | 6.8% |
| Gateways | $305,000 | 1.1% |
| Commuter Parking | $9,638,000 | 33.3% |
| **Total** | **$28,902,800** | |

## Estimated Infrastructure Costs - Detailed

| Investment Description | Size Units (Gross New #) | | Per Unit Multiplier | Estimated Infrastructure Costs Total | Phase 1 Infrastructure Costs | Ph 1 % of Total | Phase 2 Infrastructure Costs | Ph 2 % of Total | Phase 3 Infrastructure Costs | Phase 3 % of Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **ROADWAY IMPROVEMENTS** | 13,375 | | | $8,476,000 | $4,484,000 | 53% | $3,842,000 | 45% | $150,000 | 2% |
| Lincoln Highway | 2,300 | L FT | $700 | $1,610,000 | $1,610,000 | | $0 | | $0 | |
| Halsted Street | 3,500 | L FT | $700 | $2,450,000 | $0 | | $2,450,000 | | $0 | |
| Chicago Road | 4,050 | L FT | $700 | $2,835,000 | $2,835,000 | | $0 | | $0 | |
| Independence Way | 1,000 | L FT | $700 | $700,000 | $0 | | $700,000 | | $0 | |
| 17th Street | 250 | L FT | $500 | $125,000 | $0 | | $125,000 | | $0 | |
| Illinois Street Extension | 425 | L FT | $500 | $212,500 | $0 | | $212,500 | | $0 | |
| Oak Street Extension | 500 | L FT | $500 | $250,000 | $0 | | $250,000 | | $0 | |
| West End | 650 | L FT | $130 | $84,500 | $0 | | $84,500 | | $0 | |
| Park Avenue | 100 | L FT | $200 | $20,000 | $0 | | $20,000 | | $0 | |
| Forest Avenue Extension | 300 | L FT | $500 | $150,000 | $0 | | $0 | | $150,000 | |
| Otto Boulevard | 300 | L FT | $130 | $39,000 | $39,000 | | $0 | | $0 | |
| **STREETSCAPING** | 19,275 | | | $7,560,000 | $2,943,750 | 39% | $2,971,250 | 39% | $1,645,000 | 22% |
| Lincoln Highway | 2,300 | L FT | $425 | $977,500 | $977,500 | | $0 | | $0 | |
| Halsted Street | 3,500 | L FT | $425 | $1,487,500 | $0 | | $1,487,500 | | $0 | |
| Chicago Road | 4,050 | L FT | $425 | $1,721,250 | $1,721,250 | | $0 | | $0 | |
| Independence Way | 1,000 | L FT | $425 | $425,000 | $0 | | $425,000 | | $0 | |
| 17th Street | 250 | L FT | $350 | $87,500 | $0 | | $87,500 | | $0 | |
| Illinois Street Extension | 425 | L FT | $350 | $148,750 | $0 | | $148,750 | | $0 | |
| Oak Street Extension | 500 | L FT | $350 | $175,000 | $0 | | $175,000 | | $0 | |
| East End | 3,400 | L FT | $350 | $1,190,000 | $0 | | $0 | | $1,190,000 | |
| 16th Street | 1,250 | L FT | $350 | $437,500 | $0 | | $437,500 | | $0 | |
| Main Street | 1,300 | L FT | $350 | $455,000 | $0 | | $0 | | $455,000 | |
| Otto Boulevard | 700 | L FT | $350 | $245,000 | $245,000 | | $0 | | $0 | |
| Vincennes Road | 600 | L FT | $350 | $210,000 | $0 | | $210,000 | | $0 | |
| **GREEN SPACE** | 6 | | | $952,800 | $0 | 0% | $865,300 | 91% | $87,500 | 9% |
| Halsted Park | 1.4 | ACRE | $175,000 | $245,000 | $0 | | $245,000 | | $0 | |
| Illinois Street | 3.4 | ACRE | $125,000 | $425,000 | $0 | | $425,000 | | $0 | |
| Forest Avenue | 0.7 | ACRE | $125,000 | $87,500 | $0 | | $0 | | $87,500 | |
| Linear Parkland (Independence Way) | 1.86 | ACRE | $105,000 | $195,300 | $0 | | $195,300 | 0% | $0 | |
| **CIVIC SPACE** | 3,650 | | | $1,971,000 | $0 | 0% | $1,971,000 | 100% | $0 | 0% |
| Civic Plaza - formerly 17th Street Crossing | 3,650 | SQ YD | $540.00 | $1,971,000 | $0 | 0% | $1,971,000 | | $0 | |
| **GATEWAYS** | 5 | | | $305,000 | $0 | 0% | $270,000 | 89% | $35,000 | 11% |
| Lincoln/Halsted | 1 | Each | $125,000 | $125,000 | $0 | | $125,000 | | $0 | |
| 16th/Chicago | 1 | Each | $35,000 | $35,000 | $0 | | $35,000 | | $0 | |
| 16th/East End | 1 | Each | $35,000 | $35,000 | $0 | | $35,000 | | $0 | |
| Main/Halsted | 1 | Each | $35,000 | $35,000 | $0 | | $0 | | $35,000 | |
| Chicago/Independence | 1 | Each | $75,000 | $75,000 | $0 | | $75,000 | | $0 | |
| **COMMUTER PARKING** | 1,286 | | | $9,638,000 | $0 | 0% | $9,638,000 | 100% | $0 | 0% |
| Lot A | | | | | | | | | | |
| Kiss & Ride | 14 | Each | $10,000 | $140,000 | $0 | | $140,000 | | $0 | |
| ADA | 22 | Each | $10,000 | $220,000 | $0 | | $220,000 | | $0 | |
| Other | 5 | Each | $10,000 | $50,000 | $0 | | $50,000 | | $0 | |
| Lot B | 116 | Each | $10,000 | $1,160,000 | $0 | | $1,160,000 | | $0 | |
| Lot C | 253 | Each | $10,000 | $2,530,000 | $0 | | $2,530,000 | | $0 | |
| *Lot D/ "Expo Lot" | 358 | Each | $1,000 | $358,000 | $0 | | $358,000 | | $0 | |
| Lots E & F | 326 | Each | $10,000 | $3,260,000 | $0 | | $3,260,000 | | $0 | |
| Lots G & H | 192 | Each | $10,000 | $1,920,000 | $0 | | $1,920,000 | | $0 | |
| | | | | ***$28,902,800*** | ***$7,427,750*** | 25.7% | ***$19,557,550*** | 67.7% | ***$1,917,500*** | 6.6% |

*Estimates are in year 2009 dollars. Costs exclude land acquisition/parcel assemblage, environmental remediation, and major utility upgrades. Station construction costs are not included.*
*Source: URS Corporation, RS Means*

# Section 3

## Implementation Strategies


# Zoning Analysis

Zoning districts outline the permitted uses within a given area and influence the type of development that can occur within the Study Area. The City's zoning code contains provisions on the purposes of each district, permitted uses, accessory uses and structures, general standards, lot area requirements, maximum building heights, and other applicable regulations. If the present zoned use is not the desired use for future development, revisions to zoning in the Study Area may be necessary to encourage those desired uses.

## Current Zoning Classifications

Zoning districts that occur within the Study Area are briefly described below.

**R2-One Family Residential**

This district provides areas of higher density than R-1 single-family, but of a similar low density residential character. Minimum lot sizes for single-family residential are 6,000 square feet in the R1 district; 15,000 square feet for non-residential uses and special uses. R2 zoning allows for two-family or row homes to be built on a 6,000 square foot lot. They are intended to be a transitional area between medium density and low-density residential areas. In addition to single-family uses, two-family, duplexes, and row homes are allowed.

**R4-General Residential**

This district was established as a multiple family residential district to encourage new development, and to allow the redevelopment of predominantly older sections of the city while preserving residential character. This district allows the same development as other residential districts, but also allows for conversion of single-family homes into up to four-family dwelling units.

**B2-Limited Service Business**

The purpose of this district is to allow for additional business and commercial uses that are not permitted in the B1 district, including such uses as wholesale and distribution stores, automobile dealerships, plumbing showrooms, and others. Many types of business and commercial uses are permitted. "Drive-in" establishments, such as fast-food restaurants, are not allowed.

**B3-General Service and Wholesale Business**

This district was established to accommodate higher density commercial uses and includes a variety of retail, service, office, governmental, and/or complimentary uses. Many of the same types of businesses and commercial uses as B2 are permitted, with the addition of processing/light assembly and other large scale, more intensive uses.

**B5-Central Business**

This district designates the primary shopping area of the city with a wide variety of retail and service uses, including restaurants, cafes, art galleries, bakeries, professional offices, apparel shops, and the like. There are many special uses included in this district, including planned unit developments, churches/rectories/parish houses, day care centers, public works uses, financial institutions with drive-thrus, and more.

**M1-Limited Manufacturing**

This district contains a number of permitted uses and special uses. Residential uses are only allowed in special cases. All business, production, servicing, and processing should take place in enclosed buildings and walls/fences are required if the facility is within 150 feet of a residential use.

**M3-Heavy Industrial**

This district allows many types of industrial and manufacturing uses, and is the most permissive of all the industrial districts. It also allows railroad freight operations, freight terminals, switching yards, and other heavy motor uses. Performance standards related to noise, vibration, toxic matter, smoke, fire and explosives, and glare apply to the manufacturing districts.

**Heritage Preservation Overlay**

The purpose of this district is to identify, preserve, and maintain structures, sites, and neighborhoods that have historic, architectural, and aesthetic significance and to encourage renovation, rehabilitation, and repair that is consistent with their character. This district encompasses the area bounded by 14th Street on the north, Chicago Road on the east; CN/EJ&E Railway tracks on the south; and Thorn Creek on the west. Permitted uses are the same as in the R-1 Single Family district.

**Planned Unit Developments (PUD)**

The zoning code has provisions for residential, business, mixed-use, and manufacturing/office park PUDs. A minimum of 5 acres is necessary to apply for a PUD. PUDs are generally intended to provide for various types and combinations of land uses and encourage creative design and sensitivity to the natural environment. The zoning code includes detail on minimum requirements for each type of PUD. PUDs are granted as a special use to the zoning district in which it may be located.

**Other Classifications**

The following zoning districts are identified on the official City zoning map, but not in the zoning code:

- ROS-Recreation and Open Space
- IN-Institutional

## Zoning Classification Recommendations

A key element in the success of Downtown Chicago Heights will be the look and feel of the neighborhood. Zoning districts outline the permitted uses within a given area and influence the type of development that will occur in the Study Area. The City revised Chapter 4, Section 1 of the Zoning Code in 2009 to add several mixed-use districts.

The City was wise to update the Zoning Code to include mixed-use provisions, which should reinforce TOD principles. Some of the present land uses are not the desired end-state, so revisions to zoning in the Study Area are necessary to encourage those desired uses. With the adoption of these new zoning districts, Chicago Heights' current zoning takes a positive step towards encouraging the type of new development proposed in the Concept Plan: a downtown area with a greater diversity and mix of land uses built at higher density than in other areas of the City.

Recommendations for application of these new classifications to the Study Area are included.

**MX-T-Transit-Oriented Mixed Use District**

The highest density district of the four mixed-use districts; intended to support a mix of residential and retail uses, whether within the same building or in close proximity to each

other. This zoning district would be most appropriate for the immediate station area; the Otto Street Mixed-Use Arts District; and the "TOD Mixed-Use Core" as shown on the Framework Plan.

**MX-C-Commercial-Residential Mixed Use District**

This zone is intended to be less dense than the MX-T district, while still allowing for a mix of residential and retail uses. This district would be most appropriate for the area along Halsted Street as shown on the Framework Plan.

**MX-I-Industrial Mixed Use District**

This zone intended to be similar to the other mixed-use districts, with the exception of allowing light industrial uses. This district would be most appropriate for the areas that are currently industrial and are shown as "Transitional/Light Industrial" on the Framework Plan.

## Parking Requirements and the Zoning Code

The revised districts refer to the existing parking standards in the City's current Zoning Code. Chapter 10 of the Zoning Code does not allow for reduced parking standards. A recommendation for the TOD Mixed-Use Core is to eliminate minimum parking requirements or consider reducing the number of required off-street parking spaces. Provisions for bicycle and off-street parking are provided for in the City's Zoning Code, and the City should encourage development of bicycle and off-street parking wherever possible to make the Study Area more pedestrian-friendly.

## Encourage Planned Unit Developments

The City should encourage use of the Planned Unit Development (PUD) classification as new development interest arises. Defining a PUD will be viewed as the most favorable option by the development community, as it provides the greatest degree of flexibility (within the parameters of the TOD Plan) while reducing the risk that certain proposals would be unexpectedly viewed as undesirable uses by the community or by changes in political administration. The current Zoning Code contains provisions on PUD approvals. Developments that have a gross site area of five or more acres need to obtain City Council approval as a PUD. Developments with less than five gross acres use the B-3 and R-4 regulations as a basis, while meeting the intent of the mixed-use district in which it is located.

## Adopt "Green" Code Standards

The City's Zoning Code does not currently contain provisions for green buildings, Leadership in Environmental Energy & Design (LEED) standards, conservation design, or other types of environmentally sustainable language. In order to reflect modern building and zoning codes, the City should consider updating the Zoning Code to include environmentally sustainable provisions.

## Consider Use of Density Bonuses

Many communities that are focusing on redevelopment of their downtowns and TOD areas utilize a density bonus program. Density bonus provisions allow the City to provide economic incentives for developers in return for provision of affordable housing and public amenities that improve the quality of life for residents, employees, and visitors and are of benefit to the public. For example, a density bonus for residential projects in the Study Area might allow for a 20% increase above base limits in the zoning code. A density bonus program is not part of the current Zoning Code but is recommended to be included.

## Enforcing the Design Guidelines

As redevelopment begins to occur, to encourage economic vitality and a pedestrian-friendly station area, the City should require conformance with the Design Guidelines created for this Station Area in Chapter 12.

The City may consider creation of a Transit District Overlay zone, which would reference the Design Guidelines for the Study Area. New development within the Transit District Overlay would be required to follow the Design Guidelines.

The Guidelines could be administered as part of the development review process for new construction. As the City works to implement the "vision", the built environment will change for the better over time if the City consistently enforces the basic principles contained in the Design Guidelines. The City should provide the Design Guidelines to architects and developers proposing development within the station area, and amend the development review process to require a preliminary sketch plan submission and design review meeting. This review process will enable the City to review a developer's application and convey the basic principles of the Design Guidelines. This could be administered by the Plan Commission, City Council, or an Advisory Council.

## Action List

These implementation action items are based around the long-term redevelopment opportunities that may occur within Downtown Chicago Heights. This implementation strategy is the "call to action" that supports the physical redevelopment of the Study Area. It includes organizational and economic development actions which are integral to success.

Recognizing that it is impractical at this point in time to formalize a precise timeline and sequence for development, the following implementation strategy should serve more as a reference tool for the City to guide development planning. These implementation recommendations are based around the long-term redevelopment opportunities proposed for the Study Area. As development proceeds in the Study Area and new development proposals are presented to the City, the focus should be to capitalize on the key market attractors present in the Study Area and ensure that development activity on one site does not impede the broader redevelopment efforts, rather than rejecting proposals that do not exactly match concepts articulated in the Plan.

### Preparatory Actions

To initiate implementation of this TOD Plan, the City should undertake a number of preparatory activities. These steps are general in nature, and will not benefit any one desired use over another. They are however, a critical foundation for subsequent development. The steps involved should be undertaken by the City and City representatives upon adoption of the TOD Plan. Many of these are high-priority, early action projects that largely represent public policy or administrative decisions. They do not require a significant new allocation of funds and they should be undertaken within a relatively short time frame. These actions relate to revising and updating local codes and ordinances, follow-up studies and administrative actions.

**Adopt the TOD Plan and Update as Needed**

In order for the TOD Plan to be meaningful and truly serve as a guide for future development, the Plan presented here should be adopted by the City Council and incorporated into the City's Comprehensive Plan as a sub-area plan. This action establishes a common understanding of the vision for the area and an administrative foundation for development decisions with authority.

In order for this Plan to be maintained and updated in a timely manner, the designation of an agency responsible for coordinating planning activities, receiving community input

and comments, and providing and disseminating information regarding this Plan is required. While the City's Plan Commission and elected officials are ultimately responsible for implementing this Plan, City staff is most appropriate to carry out the daily activities of administration.

**Continue to Expedite Approvals**

Chicago Heights has made a commitment to development of the Study Area by conducting this and other planning studies, and is very supportive of improvement in the Study Area. In addition to recently adopting a Downtown Tax Increment Financing (TIF) District, the City uses other means to encourage development. Chicago Heights has a short turnaround time for approvals, which lowers pre-development and land carrying costs. The City is very accommodating to potential developers and is willing to expedite engineering and building permit reviews.

**Focus on City Services**

One of the most important ways that the City can show the community that they are committed to revitalization of the Study Area is by focusing on increased provision of basic public services. Fundamental actions are to ensure that the Study Area is clean, well-lit, has a strong police presence, and graffiti is removed promptly. The City should closely monitor building conditions and strictly enforce all zoning, building, fire safety, and occupancy codes as they apply to all structures.

**Expand City Skills and Capacity**

The City should focus on improving internal organizational capacity to undertake and direct economic and community development at the municipal level. City funds could be used to fund additional staff positions to help facilitate redevelopment in the Study Area. If the City's current staffing levels were increased, staff could be more aggressive about attracting retail and commercial tenants.

**Increase Marketing and Promotions**

The City is known to be "pro-development" and should continue to highly prioritize working with the business community, businesses and property owners to realize economic change and physical improvement. The City should use this Plan as the basis for a strong marketing effort that highlights the unique advantages and growth opportunities for retailers investing in the City then share this with real estate brokers and groups (such as the International Council of Shopping Centers).

The City should seek additional funds for networking and membership in professional organizations and conference attendance to raise awareness in the development community. As funds become available, the City should consider development of a web-based inventory of available commercial space.

**Develop Advisory Committee**

There are internal, organizational actions which the City can use as an approach to redevelopment of the Study Area. The City should establish an official Advisory Committee to oversee the activities necessary to move this project forward. Optimally, this committee will be in place over the long term to assure continuity and consistent adaptation of the Plan for the area as it develops over time. The advisory committee should focus on areas such as housing, transportation, economic development, and parks and civic space development. Membership on the committee should also comprise area residents, banks and financial institutions, local real estate professionals, the Chicago Heights Business Council, and others with the common interest of developing the Study Area. It is also critical to include representatives from public entities such as the South Suburban Mayors and Managers Association (SSMMA); Cook County; private business and property owners; and key institutions, such as St. James Hospital and local churches.

Advisory committee participation insures that all activities undertaken by the redevelopment agency include the participation of a broad constituency. Such broad participation is essential for large, long-term plans such as this. It ensures ongoing interest and support for the project, and keeps the plans moving forward. The committee can also help determine the level of City action that is required or appropriate for key individual sites, as described in the table on the following page.

**Potential Levels of City Participation in Redevelopment Activities**

| | |
|---|---|
| High Participation | Under the most proactive approach, the City, either on its own or through a development agency, would acquire the development sites, through negotiated purchases, condemnation or a combination of methods. The City would issue a Request for Qualifications/Proposals that would state the City's development objectives and vision and seek a development partner.<br>Under a Request for Qualifications, the City would not ask for a specific development plan or financial pro forma, but would rather select the developer based on past experience and qualifications. Under a Request for Proposal, the City would seek a development proposal that lays out proposed uses and financial details. Once a developer is selected, the next step is to negotiate a development agreement and begin to determine the appropriate incentives package based on the City's objectives and the economics of the development program.<br>A high level of City involvement gives the City the greatest control over the outcome of the development, but also costs the most in terms of local funds, City staff time and risk on the part of the City. |
| Medium Participation | Under the medium scenario, the City assists a developer/land-owner to undertake a project. Under this scenario the City does not take title to the land and thus has less control to select the developer. A developer or landowner may decide to pursue a project and the City can offer to work with the developer to achieve the City's development objectives.<br>The City can offer TIF or other incentives to gain leverage to convince the developer to build parking or other improvements that meet larger objectives of the City's Plan.<br>Under the medium scenario, the City has some control to shape the development program, but not as much control as under an RFP/RFQ process. |
| Low Participation | The City can take a reactive position and use its regulatory and zoning authority to attempt to guide development. The City can adopt and approve a Plan, then use it to approve or reject development proposals that the private market brings forth.<br>The City still has some control, or veto power, over what development occurs, but the City has very limited ability to have positive influence over the process.<br>Under this scenario, the City essentially waits until private developers propose development. The benefit of this scenario is that it is market-driven and low cost and low risk for the City. |

## Fund a Downtown Development Organization

Many communities use Special Service Areas (SSA) or TIF Districts to fund the start up and/or operation of a non-profit organization that can oversee a range of redevelopment activities for a specific geographic area, particularly commercial or business districts. These types of organizations are often funded through public-private partnerships with financial commitments from local financial institutions or businesses and a public funding source (TIF, SSA, etc.) to provide for both operating expenses and programs, as

appropriate. The City recently adopted a TIF District that includes portions of the Study Area. A map of the TIF District is included in Appendix 5.

A downtown development organization is typically an independently chartered organization with not-for-profit status that is governed by a board of directors. The directors typically bring expertise in real estate or business development along with a demonstrated commitment to the community. These groups may undertake traditional chamber of commerce-like activities such as marketing, promotion, workforce development, information management, and technical assistance to small businesses, but may also administer loan programs or acquire and redevelop property in the community.

Many communities create these organizations under the umbrella structure of an established chamber of commerce in the community so that missions are complementary and do not overlap. The Chicago Heights Business Council currently undertakes some of these activities, including holding monthly meetings at member businesses with City representatives; a website presence with the opportunity to link to businesses; new business breakfast and networking after hours; and quarterly workshops on economic development-related topics (e.g. Enterprise Zone, Small Business Loans, Transportation, and Marketing).

**Acquire and Prepare Sites**

The City recently adopted a TIF covering much of the Study Area. As discussed later in this chapter, TIF funds could be a key strategic funding tool for the City that will help enable it to help prepare properties in the Study Area for the potential train station, commuter parking, and private development. Preparatory activities eligible for TIF funding include environmental investigation and remediation; parcel assembly; property demolition; site assembly and clean-up, and public infrastructure upgrades and investments. TIF can be used for a variety of site preparation costs that help "fill the gap" between the existing characteristics or configuration of a site and its potential value as a development parcel. By working with the private development community to determine the existing needs of each site, the City can make a determination on how to best lay additional groundwork for development.

Acquisition of key parcels of land results in unified ownership that permits development under a unified master plan. Such a process could also be effective in terms of in-fill development within Chicago Heights's downtown. Land write-downs are another way in which the City can provide gap financing to help attract private investment into the downtown. The City should be proactive and begin to acquire buildings targeted for

redevelopment. By having ownership of buildings, the City is in a better position to direct the type of development it envisions for the area, as well as having the ability to provide building write-downs to potential businesses looking to expand or locate to Downtown Chicago Heights as gap financing to help attract private investment into the downtown.

**Façade Rebate Program**

Many communities have implemented a façade rebate program in their downtown or TOD area. Façade rebate programs are an excellent tool to improve the aesthetics of buildings. In a typical façade rebate program, commercial buildings are eligible for a rebate of approved costs up to a set amount per application or low/zero interest loans. They are often funded through a TIF. Typical types of eligible activities include: facade renovation, exterior lighting, signs, graphics, windows, doors, window displays and awnings, passive security and energy conservation systems, truck docks.

## Implement the Watershed Management Ordinance (WMO)

The Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago (MWRD) has begun the process of developing a countywide stormwater management regulatory ordinance to be known as the Cook County Watershed Management Ordinance (WMO). The WMO will establish uniform, minimum, countywide stormwater management regulations for Cook County, as detailed previously in Chapter 10. Stormwater detention will be required in all areas of Cook County for those applicable developments. The City should work closely with their engineers to interpret and apply these regulations as applicable, as development plans evolve.

## Commence Quiet Zone Analysis

Because of the expected increased amount of freight and commuter train traffic through Chicago Heights, there may be a noise impact on the community due to horn noise. Trains are required by law to sound their horns at all public at-grade road crossings.

There are several at-grade crossings in or near the Study Area:

1. 16th Street & UP/CSX Railroad

2. 17th Street (at-grade crossing to be removed; pedestrian access only) & UP/CSX Railroad/Proposed SES Line

3. UP/CSX Railroad spur track over East End Avenue & 17th Street intersection

4. E. Main Street & UP/CSX Railroad

5. E. 23rd Street & UP/CSX Railroad

6. East End Avenue & CN/EJ&E Railway

7. Chicago Road & CN/EJ&E Railway

8. S. Halsted Street & CN/EJ&E Railway

Establishing a "Quiet Zone" (QZ) in the Study Area would make the area more attractive to new residential development as well as improve the quality of life for existing residents. A QZ is a zone along the tracks where the train operator is allowed to not sound the horn at public at-grade crossings. The operator is always permitted to sound the horn if he/she sees a dangerous situation or workers are present along the tracks. Municipalities must initiate the QZ process, which is as follows:

1. Initiate a study and review existing conditions at all at-grade crossings under consideration for a QZ. Catalog all existing safety features like gates, bells, and lights at all crossings. Include traffic data, accident history, speeds, and other relevant information.

2. Using a formula and a procedure established by the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA), enter the data and see what safety features must be upgraded to qualify for a QZ.

3. Complete the needed upgrades.

4. Request a QZ.

If not already in place, municipalities are responsible for funding gates, bells, and lights at all public road crossings. A barrier median, gates that block the entire roadway (known as "quad gates") or curbing may possibly be needed to prevent vehicles from going around the gates. The City would be required to undertake separate QZ requests for the UP/CSX Railroad and for the CN/EJ&E Railway.

## Build the SES Line Station, Pace Transfer Facility and Commuter Parking Lots

As the SES Line project moves toward reality, the City will need to initiate the infrastructure projects required to provide all the amenities for the proposed transit facilities. Key activities will include development of a funding package, solicitation of engineering and design services, and construction. The City should continue to work with the SSMMA and SCRDB to create a joint funding pool to support creation of the proposed station, bus transfer facility and parking facilities.

**Commuter Facility Development Agreement**

Prior to the initiation of rail service, and in conjunction with the efforts of the SCRDB, each community with a station will enter into a *Commuter Facility Development Agreement* with Metra. This agreement formally establishes the community's adherence to Metra's station and parking design and construction standards and sets standards for the following station and parking issues:

- Parking fees;
- Station, parking, and access maintenance;
- Funding of routine maintenance;
- Landscaping upkeep; and
- Utility fees and provisions.

In accordance with the *Commuter Facility Development Agreement*, a commuter parking capital investment fund will also be established. The revenue generated from the commuter parking fees will be deposited into this fund to be used for maintenance.

**Employ Station Facility Design Guidelines**

The communities that plan to host a station(s) will need to fund the proposed station(s) and parking areas. It is important to note that the communities would need to fund any additional design enhancements not required by Metra. Metra will provide each community that proposes to host a station along the SouthEast Service corridor with the design guidelines that must be included in a "basic" station. Metra currently has three sizes for basic stations, based on projected levels of ridership that are not yet completed.

Metra's basic station and parking design guidelines are documented in Metra's *Station Manual and Metra's Parking Manual.* These documents contain the minimum guidelines that each municipality will need to follow regarding station and parking design elements including:

- Vehicular access to the station;
- The distance between parking areas and the station;
- Pedestrians and bicycle access to station;
- Bus access to the station;
- Landscaping;
- External lighting; and
- Basic station amenities (seating, restrooms, ticket agent office, etc.).

Since each municipality may have ideas of what should be included in a station above and beyond Metra's requirements for a basic station as well as how it wants to approach the development of its station, the SCRDB, using the Metra Commuter Facility Development Agreement as the starting point, should develop a written and/or graphic description of what the proposed stations should include. This discussion should occur after Metra has determined the required size of each of the proposed stations. Some design elements that are considered above and beyond a "basic station" include:

- Higher-quality building materials;
- Brick pavers;
- Retail space inside a station;
- Additional or higher-quality indoor and outdoor amenities;
- Open space at and within one-quarter mile of the station;
- Additional landscaping;

- Security; and
- Access to retail space.

## Support the FTA Project Development Process

Before Metra can implement any new service or expand existing service, projects must undergo several feasibility and environmental studies to ensure all federal and state guidelines are met. Metra must comply with the FTA New Starts process, which requires documentation and rigorous studies to justify that the commuter rail alternative best addresses the transportation needs and issues within the corridor, as discussed in Chapter 2, The Federal Transit Administration's Development Process section. The City can support Metra's development of the SES Line project by providing information needed for the New Starts process and letters of support for the project. The City can also support the State's preparation of a capital bill, which would be a vital source of local match funds.

## Funding Opportunities

Large-scale redevelopment areas, such as the Study Area, require a combination of funding tools from various levels of government. Due to the complexity and diversity of issues typically involved in redevelopment projects, such as environmental, transportation, infrastructure, land acquisition/assembly, building demolition/ rehabilitation, and business recruitment issues, a municipality needs a number of resources to tap to help address the varying aspects of the redevelopment project. However, locally controlled economic development tools cannot be stressed enough. Based on national experience, local funding tools are critical in the redevelopment process because local funding tools empower municipalities to guide redevelopment and provide timely assistance, which is critical to today's development projects.

Recognizing that many of the infrastructure, parking, and transit improvements will not be realized without the support of Chicago Heights residents and local business community, it will be extremely important for the City to continue the public outreach and education programs established during this project. These programs will continue to communicate how the proposed improvements will enhance the identity and vitality of Chicago Heights. Public outreach is critical for gaining the support of residents and businesses to facilitate the public/private partnerships necessary for the multi-phased development approach proposed for the Study Area.

The most relevant funding tools that the City should consider to provide incentives are summarized below.

### Capital Improvement Plan

The City's Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) and income from land sales can be used to help fund improvements in the Study Area. The CIP typically schedules the implementation of a range of projects related to development, such as the restoration and upgrading of existing utilities and infrastructure facilities, including the water system, sanitary sewers, storm water facilities, and the street system. The public infrastructure projects outlined in this Plan are ambitious yet achievable. They will be implemented in multiple phases as part of the City's capital improvement process.

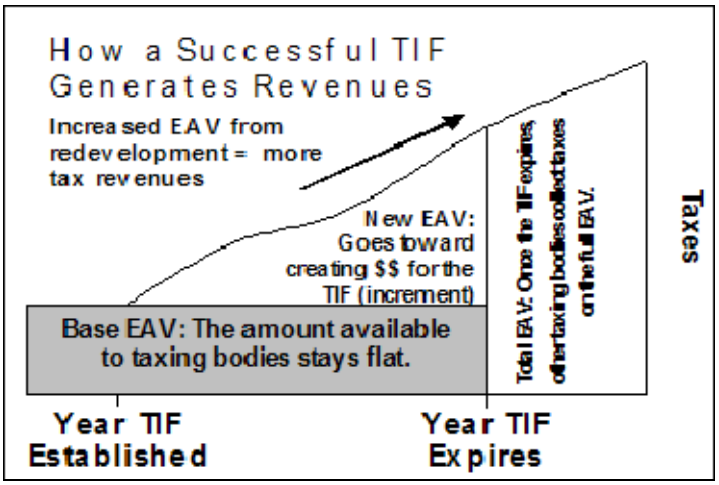
### Tax Increment Financing (TIF)

Public incentives, such as TIF, can be used to guide the types of development that might occur in an area by encouraging developers to construct buildings or other private

improvements and/or by paying for public improvements, such as streets, sidewalks, sewer and water, and similar improvements. Optimally, TIF funds should be used strategically to help provide long-term benefits to both the immediate area and the entire City, creating an improved tax-base for when the term of the funding program expires.

The City adopted a TIF for the Downtown Area on February 3, 2009. The boundaries are not coterminous with the Study Area, but do overlap significantly. A map of the TIF District is included in Appendix 5. Adopting the TIF District is a key action to implement the recommendations in this Plan, because it:

- Signals to the development community that the City of Chicago Heights is dedicated to redeveloping the Station Area.
- Provides a source of money to conduct basic preparation activities, such as writing and adopting zoning ordinances, and marketing of redevelopment sites.
- Provides a source of money for general public infrastructure activities, such as the construction of parking spaces, streetscape improvements, and a stormwater management system, and improving the street grid system.
- Provides a source of money for project-specific development activities, such as property assembly and site preparation.




TIFs work by capturing all new property tax revenues within a specific area and reinvesting them in that area for a period of 23 years. When a TIF is established, the value of all the property in the TIF is examined to determine the Base Equalized Assessed Value, or Base EAV. The property taxes generated annually by the frozen Base EAV are distributed to all taxing districts on a prorated basis. The property taxes generated by growth in EAV above the Base EAV are distributed to the municipality's TIF fund. The growth in EAV occurs as a result of private investment in

new development, rehabilitation of existing development, as well as growth in property values through reassessment.

**Analysis of Downtown TIF**

As presented in Exhibit G of the *Downtown Redevelopment Project Area* budget, the majority of the budget (34%) is designated for public works or improvements, which include streets, curb and gutters, utilities, and other infrastructure improvements. Property assembly, which includes acquisition of land and other property, building demolition and site preparation; and building rehabilitation, are the next largest budget items (22%). This is consistent with the recommendations put forth in this Plan, which recommends major streetscaping projects, façade improvements, site assembly and clean-up, infill development, and preservation and renovation of existing buildings. The City will need to acquire sites for commuter parking when the station is initially opened and as ridership levels demand construction of surface lots.

**Downtown TIF Budget**

| Estimated Redevelopment Project Costs | Estimated Cost | % of Budget |
|---|---|---|
| Public Works/Improvements | $ 13,500,000 | 34% |
| Property Assembly | $ 9,000,000 | 22% |
| Building Rehabilitation | $ 9,000,000 | 22% |
| Relocation | $ 3,400,000 | 8% |
| Taxing District Capital Costs | $ 200,000 | 0% |
| Job Training | $ 200,000 | 0% |
| School District Increased Cost | $ 200,000 | 0% |
| Interest Costs Incurred by Developers | $ 2,500,000 | 6% |
| Planning, Legal & Professional Service | $ 600,000 | 1% |
| General Administration | $ 250,000 | 1% |
| Financing Costs | $ - | 0% |
| Contingency | $ 1,250,000 | 3% |
| | | |
| **Total Estimated Costs** | **$ 40,100,000** | |

*Source: PGAV Urban Consulting, February 3, 2009*

## Special Service Areas (SSA)

In addition to TIF and allocations in the CIP or General Fund, a SSA is a funding tool available for financing public-facing projects whose benefits can be appreciated by the Corridor as a whole. SSAs, also known as Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) and Special Improvement Districts (SIDs), are a useful tool for improving, managing, and maintaining a defined district.

SSAs are used in downtowns, business districts, neighborhoods, parks, and industrial areas to provide funding for infrastructure, maintenance, programs, and other business-related activities. An SSA can be used in conjunction with a TIF, but involves fewer setup and maintenance processes than a TIF. It is an extra property tax on a defined set of properties (called the "service area") that reinvests 100% of that tax revenue back into the service area. The SSA budget is typically administered by a local organization such as a Chamber of Commerce or business association (e.g., Chicago Heights Business Council). The SSA program is typically established and managed by the local property and business owners or the municipality.

SSAs are authorized through State law (Illinois Compiled Statutes, Revenue, Property Tax Code 35 ILCS 200). To create an SSA, first the boundaries and service area are established. The budget for the service area is created by multiplying the total of equalized assessed property values (EAV) for the properties in the service area by a selected SSA tax rate, usually less than, or near, 1% of the EAV. A public hearing on the proposed SSA is conducted in accordance with State statutes. If a majority of the property owners of record in the service area agree with the SSA, an ordinance is established defining the duration of the SSA.

SSA funds may be used within the service area boundaries for a variety of activities. These include:

- Maintenance and beautification;
- Security services, including, but not limited to, the development of safety programs;
- Recruitment and promotion of new businesses and retention and promotion of existing businesses within the service area;
- Coordinated marketing and promotional activities;
- Strategic Planning for the general development of the service area;
- Financing of storefront façade improvements;
- Other technical assistance activities to promote commercial and economic development including, but not limited to, streetscape improvements, strategic

transit/parking improvements including parking management studies, and enhanced land use oversight and control initiatives.

## Enterprise Zone Program

Chicago Heights participates in the Illinois Enterprise Zone (EZ) Program through the Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO). The EZ Program is designed to stimulate economic growth and neighborhood revitalization in economically depressed areas. Businesses that locate in a designated EZ can become eligible to obtain special state and local tax incentives, regulatory relief, and improved government services, thus providing an economic stimulus to an area. Businesses that locate or expand in an EZ may be eligible for several incentives from the State of Illinois:

- An exemption on the retailer's occupation tax paid on building materials
- Investment tax credit of .5% of qualified property
- Tax credit for jobs created for which a certified dislocated worker or economically disadvantaged worker is hired.
- Other special exemptions that require a business to be certified by the DCEO

In addition to the State incentives, zones offer local incentives to enhance business development projects. In Chicago Heights, the primary used of the EZ designation is sales tax sharing arrangements.

## Motor Fuel Tax Revenues

The City's allocation of Motor Fuel Tax (MFT) revenues can be used for infrastructure expenses in coordination with the Illinois Department of Transportation. Typical projects include: engineering services; roadway reconstruction; sewer improvements; bicycle paths, lanes, signs, and parking facilities; pedestrian subway or overhead crossings; sidewalks; off-street parking facilities; and street lighting systems.

## Municipal Bonds

Municipal bonds may also be considered for special projects during various phases of the implementation of the TOD Plan that may require more long-term financing.

General obligation bonds (GOB) are supported by the full faith and credit of the municipality and typically offer the benefit of low interest rates. (Actual rates vary based upon each municipality's bond rating). Although GOBs may be fully paid off with dedicated revenues generated from a TIF district, SSA, MFT, and hotel taxes, etc., any

shortcomings in such dedicated revenue would necessarily come from the municipality's General Revenue Fund.

Revenue bonds are supported only by specifically dedicated revenues from one or more identified sources, such as TIF district incremental revenues, SSA revenues, any of the taxes described earlier in the report, or even by a special assessment (a voter-approved tax increase dedicated for financing a specific project). Each of these revenue sources is subject to varying limitations in terms of amounts and intended uses. In the case of revenue bonds, if the dedicated revenues are insufficient to meet the debt service requirements, the municipality has no obligation to make up the difference. Due to their increased risk premium, the interest rates on revenue bonds are higher (sometimes considerably) than GOBs.

## Foundations and Private Grants

The successful implementation of this Plan requires realization of projects that range in scale and scope. Foundation grants are funding sources that becomes increasingly significant when issue-specific projects or programs (tourism, performing arts, historic preservation, small business assistance, etc.) are considered.

The City should dedicate resources to monitoring and exploring foundation grants as funding tools. An example of a service successfully used by many cities and counties is the eCivis Grants Locator (http://www.eCivis.com), which is a service provider that matches local government needs with grant types.

## Revolving Loan/Downtown Loan Fund

A revolving/downtown loan program is another funding option that would further the regeneration the Study Area. Other communities have used downtown loan programs to reduce investment risk in downtown and increase building values. Such a program might be used for buying commercial property which creates or retains jobs. It might also be used for purchasing, constructing, and rehabilitating a commercial building for business use. Funds typically target both new and expanding businesses for such redevelopment activities as interior improvements, façade and exterior improvements, building additions, site improvements, etc. Some state and federal small business assistance programs are structured to work in combination these types of loan programs.

Typically, the City or a local non-profit organization facilitates a revolving loan fund or a community lending pool capitalized by commitments from local financial institutions to

provide low-interest/low-cost loans. For example, the City could fund 40% out of loan pool at a low interest rate. A consortium of private local banks could contribute to the loan fund at prime +1%.

Often, to qualify for a loan, jobs must be created or retained and made available to a low/moderate income person. Many of the residents in Chicago Heights and are considered low / moderate income and could be potential employees at local businesses.

## External Funding Tool Kit

Economic development incentives will play a critical role in helping the City of Chicago Heights create a healthy and vibrant downtown. Financing tools are necessary to encourage private investment within the downtown and to make the TOD concepts set forth in this Plan a reality.

The tables in Appendix 2 identify local, state and federal tools and incentives that can assist the City of Chicago Heights in implementing the Plan over the multiple phases of development. The City should plan application for these funding sources upon adoption of the TOD Plan.