

The overall implementation process for the Preferred Plan will require political and elected official support in addition to staff and financial commitments from the Village of Elmwood Park. The Village will need to address the following implementation strategies: amend development regulations; enforce design guidelines; determine financing opportunities; implement major capital improvements; focus on key redevelopment priority areas; and, schedule phases for redevelopment. Since the Village's administrative capacity is currently focused on day-to-day governance, the Village may want to hire a new full-time staff member as the director of economic development to focus solely on the redevelopment process. Given the long-term nature and complexity of the redevelopment process, a director of economic development could initiate and oversee the near- and long-term projects proposed under the Plan. Besides designating a key leader for Plan implementation, the Village administration can act in a variety of roles to move Plan recommendations forward. The Village's varying levels of involvement are briefly described in the subsequent implementation strategies.

Strategy 1: Amend Development Regulations

The Village should amend the zoning code and map to align them with the intent of the Plan. The Land Use Framework provides clear guidance on the specific zoning recommendations. Most importantly, regulations for Grand Avenue should allow multi-family residential uses by right and provide more residential development opportunities west of the railroad.

Strategy 2: Enforce Design Guidelines

The Village should amend its development ordinances to require the use of the Design Guidelines as part of its site development plan review, and require their use for the facade improvement program. Due to the inconsistent building styles, materials, massing, setbacks, and colors along Grand Avenue, the Village should promote a higher quality and more consistent development pattern for downtown Elmwood Park through the Design Guidelines.

Strategy 3: Determine Financing Opportunities

The Village should investigate funding opportunities to address the costs of major capital improvements, as well as the gap financing needed to make private redevelopment feasible. There are numerous federal, state, and local funding sources that could provide the needed funds for public infrastructure and for private development assistance.



Strategy 4: Implement Major Capital Improvements

The Village should implement key public improvement projects in the near-term for Grand Avenue between Harlem and 76th Avenues, as well as for Conti Parkway. In particular, the streetscape improvement recommendations for banners, gateways, and public open spaces would provide a positive indication of change in the business district. More specific recommendations may be found later in this Chapter.

Strategy 5: Focus on Key Redevelopment Project Priorities

The Village should act as a development partner and take a more direct role in key redevelopment project priorities to overcome development finance hurdles. The most important areas for redevelopment include the land adjacent to the Elmwood Park Station on Grand Avenue and the remaining TIF properties on Grand Avenue between Harlem and 73rd Avenues.

Strategy 6: Schedule Phases for Redevelopment

The Village should prioritize the recommended phases for the Plan by scheduling appropriate actions into its administrative agenda and allocating funds through its capital improvement budget process. A general phasing plan is included at the end of this chapter to summarize the key public and private sector actions to realize successful redevelopment projects.



Strategy 1: Amend Development Regulations

The current zoning regulations for downtown Elmwood Park are not fully conducive to creating a pedestrian-friendly, mixed-use “Main Street” environment. The Village should amend portions of its current zoning regulations in order to promote its vision and begin the improvement program. Consistent with the Land Use Framework Plan, the subsequent zoning amendments should be made within a year of the final adoption of the Elmwood Park Station Area Plan.

Grand Avenue, Harlem Avenue to 76th Avenues

The current B-2 General Commercial zoning classification does not allow mixed-use development “as-of-right.” The recommendation is that this classification be amended to permit dwelling units above commercial on the ground floor as a permitted use, rather than as a special use. If market demand justifies land assembly of adjoining residential lots to the north to create more feasible development sites, the Village may consider re-zoning on a case-by-case basis. Any re-zoning petition would be reviewed to ensure that proposed development minimizes encroachment into adjoining residential areas.

Grand Avenue, 76th Avenue to the Municipal Boundary

In an effort to concentrate commercial uses on Grand Avenue between Harlem and 76th Avenues, the Plan encourages multi-family residential uses west of 76th Avenue. The current zoning classification in this area is C-1/R-4. The residential density that is appropriate for this area is that permitted in the R-4 General Residence zoning category. If the area were rezoned to R-4 General Residence, the legally existing commercial uses within this area would be rendered nonconforming (i.e. “grandfathered”), and could continue to exist.

Diversey Avenue, Harlem to 76th Avenues

Due to limited demand for commercial uses in this area, the Village should consider re-zoning Diversey Avenue to the R-2 Two/Three Family Residence classification, consistent with zoning on adjacent parcels. Since some properties have already redeveloped as mixed-use with ground-floor retail, Diversey Avenue between 76th Avenue and 74th Court could be re-classified as B-1 Neighborhood Business which allows mixed use development.



Off-Street Parking

The Village should consider a detailed parking study within the business district. There may be the potential to reduce or eliminate individual on-site parking requirements for business uses within 500 to 1000 feet of the Elmwood Park Station, provided that on-street parking is permitted on both sides of Grand Avenue near the Elmwood Park Station. Elimination of the on-site parking requirements for individual businesses recognizes the pedestrian orientation of the Elmwood Park Station area and the need to address parking on an “area-wide” basis.



Strategy 2: Enforce Design Guidelines

To create a vibrant pedestrian-friendly business district, the Village should require the use of the Design Guidelines by ordinance, and use the guidelines as part of the development review process for new construction and as part of the facade improvement program. The current built environment along Grand Avenue consists primarily of single-story buildings and auto-oriented sites, such as drive-thru banks and single-use parking lots. As the Village works to implement the vision of the Plan, the built environment will improve over time if and only if the Village enforces the basic principles contained in the Design Guidelines (see appendix).

The Village should provide the Design Guidelines to all intended designers and developers, and amend the development review process to require a preliminary sketch plan submission and design review meeting. This review process will enable the Village to review a developer's application and convey the basic principles of the Design Guidelines. In amending its regulations, the Village should provide flexibility in the Design Guidelines application to allow creative development solutions to challenging site conditions typical along Grand Avenue.

The Village should provide the Design Guidelines to all applicants for its facade improvement program in the Grand Avenue corridor. Since the Village is providing public funds for the facade improvement program, the Village could further help the business district by ensuring that all businesses are adhering to the same basic principles.



Strategy 3: Determine Funding Opportunities

The Village should determine potential funding opportunities and create financial incentives to spur the implementation of the Plan. Potential funding sources can be categorized as local, state, federal, and private resources. While the funding sources at the state and federal level will change over time, the sources most appropriate for the Village's implementation process are summarized below to provide a basis for initiating projects in the short- and near-term phases.

Village Resources, Tools, and Incentives

Tax Increment Financing

The Village currently has in place along the corridor a Tax Increment Finance (TIF) district. The Village's TIF district encompasses Grand Avenue from Harlem to 73rd Avenues, and Harlem Avenue from Grand Avenue to Altgeld Street. When the TIF district was first adopted in 1983, the Village assembled parcels to attract Circuit City. However, the Village has yet to fully utilize the redevelopment opportunities on the south side of Grand Avenue. Since the private market sector has not re-developed this stretch of Grand Avenue, the Village should assemble the parcels necessary for a redevelopment project prior to the expiration of the existing TIF in 2011.

Another option the Village should consider is studying the establishment of a second TIF district for the remainder of Grand Avenue. A new and expanded TIF district would allow the Village to implement some of the major capital improvement projects recommended in the Plan, such as parcel assembly for key redevelopment sites, streetscape improvements, and structured parking.

Capital Projects Budget Fund

The Village has the option of utilizing its annual capital projects budget fund to leverage new development and infrastructure projects. For instance, the key redevelopment project on the north side of the Elmwood Park Station will require a public/private partnership between multiple parties—such as the Village, IDOT, Pace, Metra, and potential developers—due to the structured parking component for various uses (including future commuter parking needs), the proposed kiss-and-ride, and proposed bus pull-out. The Village could participate in this



partnership by allocating funds for public open spaces or by subsidizing a portion of the structured parking.

Federal and State Resources

Grants and loans may be secured through various federal and state programs to both aid in public infrastructure projects and reduce certain private sector development costs. Some programs will allow public agencies, such as IDOT, Metra, or Pace, to secure and administer resources on the Village's behalf for use on public infrastructure, commuter parking, and other transit-related improvement projects. In other cases, the Village may need to secure and administer funds independently.

Annual funding cycles are typically used to allocate federal funds to state and regional agencies, who then review applications for funding from local municipalities. However, some funding may only be available by direct application to federal, state, and regional agencies. Although not an exhaustive inventory of potential funding, the following government funding resources should be explored to aid in Plan implementation.

Transportation and Infrastructure Resources

The Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU) is the federal act authorizing surface transportation programs for highways, highway safety and transit for the 5-year period 2005-2009. SAFETEA-LU includes numerous programs that can support state transportation projects and local transit projects. The federal funds for SAFETEA-LU are allocated to IDOT, which uses certain funds for transportation projects and allocates other funds to regional public agencies. The following program resources may be available to assist the Village in implementing key aspects of the Preferred Concept Plan.

- **Transportation Enhancement Program (ITEP)**
This program is administered by IDOT and used for projects such as train station improvements, streetscape improvements, and pedestrian and bicycle enhancements. Funding reimbursement is available for up to 50% of the cost of right-of-way and easement acquisition, and 80% of the cost for preliminary and final engineering, utility relocations, and construction costs.



- **Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement Program (CMAQ)**
This program is administered by the Chicago Area Transportation Study (CATS) and used for projects that can benefit regional air quality and reduce auto emissions. Eligible projects include transit improvements, commuter parking, traffic flow improvements, and bicycle/pedestrian projects. These projects are also federally funded at 80 percent of project costs.
- **Surface Transportation Program (STP)**
This program is administered by the Chicago Area Transportation Study (CATS) to improve the regional transportation network. Projects in this funding category must have a local sponsor and are selected based on a ranking scale that takes into account the regional benefits provided.

Funding for Commuter Parking and Transit Facilities

If the Village pursues the parking structure or surface lot for various uses (including future commuter parking needs), the proposed kiss-and-ride, or the proposed bus pull-out, a public/private partnership could be formed between multiple parties, including the Village, IDOT, Metra, Pace, etc. Metra may have access to additional funding sources for use on commuter station improvement projects, such as commuter parking and the proposed kiss-and-ride. However, these proposed projects are currently not in the Metra’s capital program.

Metra only participates in building new parking spaces where demand warrants and funding is available. Metra does not have funds to build structures for commuter parking. While Metra has participated in funding new commuter parking spaces within structures, the level of participation has generally equated to the cost of building an equivalent number of surface spaces. This is due to the fact that parking structures are extremely costly to build, operate, and maintain. Also, grant dollars for the construction of structured parking has been limited to date and securing these funds is a highly competitive process. Any proposed new surface or structured commuter parking would need to be discussed with Metra’s Executive Director. It is important to also note that commuter parking fees within the proposed parking structure should remain comparable and competitive with commuter parking fees within the Metra system.



Real Estate and Economic Development Resources

The Illinois Development Finance Authority and the Illinois Housing Development Authority administer a variety of funding programs for real estate development projects, such as grants, loans, bonds, and tax credits. These funding programs can be used to lower development costs for a municipality directly involved in a project, or for a developer who can demonstrate community support for a project.

Additionally, the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO) administers programs to help new businesses through low-interest financing and technical training assistance. This type of funding may also be available through the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA).

For real estate projects with specific environmental benefits, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) administers programs to alleviate costs for environmental remediation and increased energy efficiency.

Private Resources

Private sources of funding can often be secured for specific community improvement projects. These resources could include grants or loans from philanthropic organizations, the local Chamber of Commerce, or local banks. Some projects that may meet the standards for these funding sources include the gateway park at Grand and 76th Avenues, streetscape enhancements along Grand Avenue, or urban design elements within the train station plaza.

Since banks have to meet federal requirements for local community reinvestment, the Village should discuss its goals with the banks on Grand Avenue to determine if certain projects could receive grant funding. In addition, the Village may be able to establish a low-interest loan program through a local bank for the purposes of spurring new commercial development or assisting businesses with facade improvement projects.



Strategy 4: Implement Major Capital Improvements

The Village should implement key public improvement projects in the near-term to help brand “Downtown Elmwood Park” and create a more positive aesthetic environment. Just like homeowners improve their home’s facade and front lawn to improve its “curb appeal” among potential buyers, the Village should also work to improve the curb appeal of its business district to increase investment, attract customers, and improve the overall tax base. Specifically, the re-design of Grand Avenue, a streetscape improvement program, and new open spaces will signal to private investors that the Village is committed to the success of investing in its business district.

Grand Avenue Re-Alignment

As recommended in the Circulation and Access Plan, the Village should determine the feasibility of re-designing the travel lanes and parking alignment for Grand Avenue. In particular, the 56-foot street right-of-way could potentially accommodate four 11-foot travel lanes and two 7-foot parking lanes. Since Grand Avenue’s right-of-way is within IDOT’s jurisdiction, the Village should discuss the potential re-design with IDOT, which may provide funding options for a preliminary engineering study. Lastly, due to the current study of the potential railroad grade separation on Grand Avenue, the Village should wait until the study’s conclusion before proceeding with its vision for Grand Avenue’s re-alignment.

Streetscape Improvement Program

As recommended in the Circulation and Access Plan, the Village should create a streetscape improvement program that includes new streetlights, banners, sidewalks, crosswalks, street trees, street furniture, and wayfinding signage. The general locations for these elements are highlighted in the Preferred Concept Plan, with more detailed recommendations described within the Circulation and Access Plan. However, a detailed design study and preliminary engineering will be required to provide specific locations and costs. Since Grand Avenue’s right-of-way is within IDOT’s jurisdiction, the Village should discuss its streetscape improvement goals with IDOT. Funding options may be available for a joint study of the Grand Avenue re-alignment and streetscape improvements. Due to major capital costs for streetscape improvements, the Village should also consider the potential for a pilot program within the TIF district since TIF funds could be used for design and construction costs.



New Open Spaces

The Plan highlights two new open spaces adjacent to the Elmwood Park Station - the gateway park at Grand and 76th Avenues and the transit plaza at Grand and 75th Court. Both of these projects would affect existing property owners and businesses. However, given the positive results of the Grand Avenue Business Survey, the Village should discuss its vision with existing property owners who may be willing partners in the redevelopment process. Due to these interrelationships, the Village should consider a joint public/private partnership for this key redevelopment area. This partnership could amass the necessary funds for public open spaces, pedestrian and transit improvements, and gap financing for new development.



Strategy 5: Focus on Key Redevelopment Project Priorities

The Village should take a direct role in key redevelopment project priorities – the land directly adjacent to the Elmwood Park Station and the Grand and Harlem TIF District area. With limited market demand over the next 10 years, these two areas have been chosen as a focus of the Village’s initial redevelopment efforts. New gateway developments in these locations could act as “bookends” to the business district and create additional private market interest in the remaining properties along Grand Avenue. The future “build-out” vision for these business district gateways are illustrated in Figures 10 and 11.

Elmwood Park Station Side Development

A high-priority redevelopment area is north of and adjacent to the Elmwood Park Station along Grand Avenue, between 75th Avenue and 76th Avenue. This station side development area is a gateway to Grand Avenue from the west and for arriving train commuters. In addition, 75th Avenue is the only direct north-south connection across Grand Avenue within the Village boundaries. This high profile site should take advantage of commuter traffic, community cross-traffic, and general traffic along Grand Avenue.

Due to the importance of this area, the Village should act as a development partner and negotiate with potential partners to realize the overall vision. This area contains only two property owners - the owner of the coffee shop and the owner of the Car Wash, who also recently purchased the Brown’s Chicken property. Given the adjacent train station and the proposed kiss-n-ride and Pace bus pull-out, the Village should also negotiate with IDOT, Metra, and Pace for potential funding.

Grand and Harlem TIF District Development

The other high-priority redevelopment area is the remaining TIF district area on Grand Avenue, between Harlem and 73rd Avenues. Following establishment of the TIF district, the Village assembled land on the north side of Grand Avenue to attract Circuit City. However, the south side of Grand Avenue has seen little redevelopment. The Village should consider assembling necessary parcels and preparing properly sized sites for redevelopment.

In order to retain existing anchor stores within the business district, the Village should discuss the potential to re-locate Super Low Foods or True Value Hardware to this redevelopment area.



Another option is to conduct a Request for Proposals (RFP) process to determine private developer interest.

Once potential commercial interest has been determined, the Village could break up the entire block into development phases. The proposed corner site at 73rd Avenue contains two surface parking lots and one building, so the potential impact on existing businesses would be minimal. The newly-completed retail space could then be used to re-locate any existing businesses remaining within this TIF district area.

In order to create new surface parking for the proposed mixed-use building, the Village should negotiate with Circuit City to acquire its western parking lot at 73rd Court and create a shared-use municipal parking lot. This surface lot is currently underutilized by Circuit City, and could be used to solve the perceived parking shortage until structured parking is built.

The Village should confirm developer interest in the remaining portion of the TIF site. Once development partners have been enlisted, the Village could then begin assembling the parcels for a mid-block parking garage with ground-level retail. Once the structure is built, the newly-completed retail space could be used to relocate additional existing businesses. The final phase of development would be the mixed-use retail and residential building on the corner of Grand and Harlem.





FIGURE 10

Preferred Concept
Plan Perspective,
Sunset Drive and
Grand Avenue

July 2006





FIGURE 11

Preferred Concept
Plan Perspective,
Grand Avenue and
73rd Avenue

July 2006



Strategy 6: Redevelopment Phasing Plan

Given the overall level of reinvestment contemplated in the Plan, the Village should begin the redevelopment process where it is needed most, at the key business district gateways. The following redevelopment phasing plan summarizes key public and private sector actions to realize successful projects, and assumes that the previously highlighted administrative actions will be taken to prepare the business district for change.

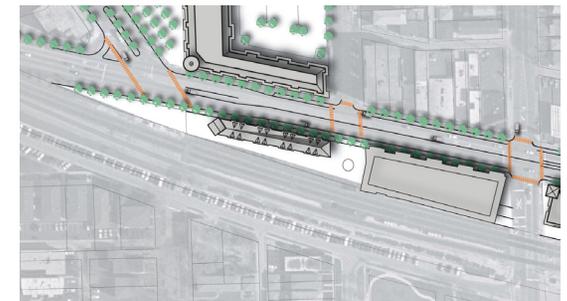
Phase 1: Short-Term Development (1-5 years)

The short-term development phase focuses the Village’s efforts at the high-priority redevelopment sites near the Elmwood Park Station and the Grand and Harlem Avenues intersection. Due to the current market demand and TIF district expiration in 2011, the Village should work to redevelop both sites concurrently.

Site 1: South side of Grand Avenue, between 75th and 76th Avenues

A high-priority redevelopment site includes the parcels immediately north of the Elmwood Park Station along Grand Avenue from 75th Avenue to 76th Court. The Village should work on the following redevelopment actions:

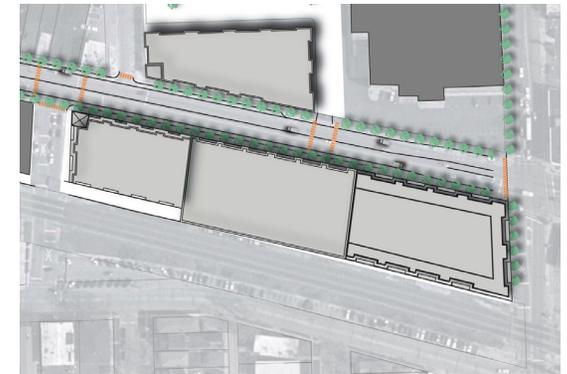
1. Discuss vision with existing property owners and enlist them in an RFP process to attract potential private developers
2. Discuss vision for the proposed kiss-n-ride and bus pull-out with public agencies—such as IDOT, Metra, and Pace—and determine potential funding opportunities
3. Determine whether to capitalize on current market demand and funding opportunities, or create a new TIF district designation for Grand Avenue
4. Review and negotiate with potential private developers based on their intent to fulfill the redevelopment vision
5. Determine off-street and on-street parking solutions to fully maximize the site’s development potential, including shared use parking policies along Marwood Avenue
6. Streamline the development review and permitting process for an accepted development proposal



Site 2: South side of Grand Avenue, from Harlem to 73rd Avenues

The other high-priority redevelopment site includes all the parcels on the south side of Grand Avenue from Harlem to 73rd Avenues. This area is part of the Grand and Harlem Avenues TIF District. The Village should work on the following redevelopment actions:

1. Actively promote the site's redevelopment given its prime location at Grand and Harlem Avenues
2. Discuss potential to relocate existing anchors on Grand Avenue to future mixed-use buildings at this site
3. Create an RFP process to determine interested private developers for a joint public/private partnership, which would be needed for the project's structured parking component
4. Assemble necessary redevelopment parcels in phases to minimize impacts to existing businesses and offer potential for relocation
5. Assemble parcels at Grand and 73rd Avenues first due to the existing surface lots and one business (discuss relocation options)
6. Discuss potential to purchase Circuit City's western surface lot to create a shared-used municipal parking lot
7. Assemble mid-block parcels to construct a parking structure with ground-level retail (provides additional relocation options)



- 8. Assemble remaining parcels to construct a mixed-use building at Grand and Harlem Avenues

Phase 2: Near-Term Development (5-10 years)

The near-term development phase is meant to build upon the previous redevelopment efforts of the Village, and strengthen the gateway locations of the business district – the Elmwood Park Station and the Grand and Harlem intersection. The Village may choose to move forward on these sites within a shorter timeframe, depending on the interest of existing property owners and private developers. In particular, the Village may wish to move forward on TIF district redevelopment at Grand and Harlem Avenues prior to the TIF’s expiration.

Site 3: Northwest side of Grand and Harlem Avenues

With the recent purchase of the Catherina Mall and proposal for a mixed-use retail/condominium building, the remaining TIF parcels on Harlem could likely be redeveloped without Village assistance. However, the conceptual site plan recommends a new large-format commercial building that fronts Grand Avenue at 73rd Court, with rear- and side-yard parking. The Village should work on the following redevelopment actions:

1. Discuss vision with Circuit City and enlist them in an RFP process to attract potential private developers
2. Create an RFP process to determine interested private developers
3. Interested developer will need to purchase several residential properties to create a larger commercial site

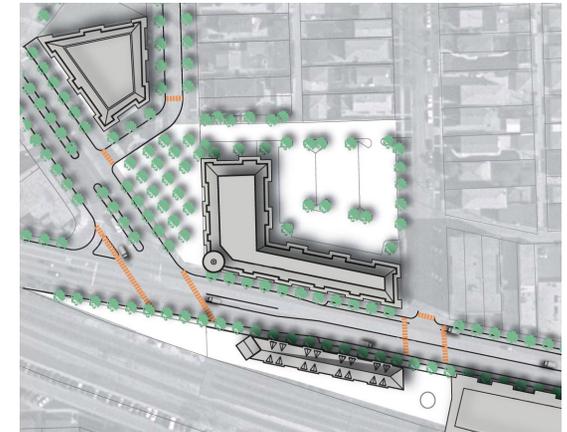


- 4. Approve new commercial development construction and shared-use parking lots
- 5. Ensure adequate buffering at adjacent residential uses

Site 4: North side of Grand Avenue, between 75th Court and 76th Avenue

The properties closest to the Elmwood Park Station have the greatest market potential for transit-oriented retail and services. Due to building and site obsolescence and its prominent corner location, the properties containing the True Value Hardware, print shop, auto repair shop, and hot dog stand are recommended for near-term redevelopment. The Village should work on the following redevelopment actions:

- 1. Discuss vision with current property owners, determine their willingness to relocate
- 2. Discuss vision with Metra and determine their interest in a public/private partnership to accommodate future surface commuter parking (90 spaces)
- 3. Discuss vision with Pace to determine feasibility of a relocated bus lay-over zone, which is currently along the Avenue of Flags
- 4. Enlist current property owners in an RFP process to attract potential private developers
- 5. Interested developer will need to purchase several residential properties to create a larger development site
- 6. Streamline the development review and permitting process for an approved developer

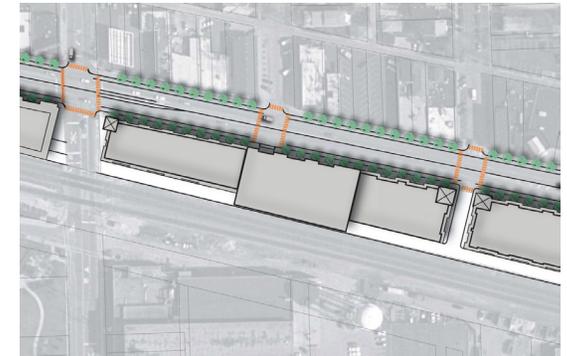


7. Ensure adequate buffering at adjacent residential uses

Site 5: South side of Grand Avenue, between 73rd and 75th Avenues

The current Super Low Foods building is too small and the site is too constrained for future expansion needs. Since the current owners have indicated a willingness to relocate, the Village should discuss relocation options with them in the earlier redevelopment phases. The Preferred Concept Plan contains two large-format commercial sites within the Grand and Harlem TIF district. The Village should work on the following redevelopment actions:

1. Discuss vision with current property owners and enlist them in an RFP process to attract potential private developers
2. Create an RFP process to determine interested private developers for a joint public/private partnership, which would be needed for the project’s structured parking component
3. Create development phases to minimize impacts to existing surface parking needs
4. Work to develop the corner site at 75th Avenue with a mixed-use building and the mid-



block shared-use parking garage, in order to fulfill future parking demand

5. Work to develop other parcels after the parking garage comes on-line

Phase 3: Long-Term Development (10+ years)

The long-term development phase builds on the previous phases of development. Due to changing variables over the long-term, such as administrative priorities, market demand, and financing opportunities, specific implementation steps are not enumerated for these remaining sites. The Village should expect the basic process highlighted in the previous implementation phases to be repeated for these projects.

Site 6: Northwest Corner of Sunset Drive and 76th Avenue

This site has a prominent corner location, and potential to attract pedestrian traffic from Grand Avenue into Conti Parkway, the funeral home is recommended for mixed-use redevelopment in the long-term. Based on the conceptual site plan for the Grand Avenue and 76th Court redevelopment, this site offers the potential to create a more exciting “outdoor room” at the western gateway into the community.

Site 7: Northwest Corner of Sunset Drive and Conti Parkway

With a setting in the historic mixed-use commercial development of the Westwood subdivision, as well as strong market demand, the corner property at Sunset Drive and Conti Parkway is recommended for mixed-use redevelopment. Due to the wide sidewalks along Conti Parkway, this particular site offers the potential for additional restaurants, cafes, and outdoor seating areas.

Site 8: North side of Grand Avenue, between 77th Court and 78th Court

The properties on the north side of Grand Avenue, between 77th and 78th Courts, contain a few small auto-oriented uses and do not represent the “highest and best land use” in proximity to the train station. The recommended land use in the long-term is multi-family residential, which will provide support for the Elmwood Park Station and the business district.



Site 9: South side of Grand Avenue, between 78th Avenue and 78th Court

The properties on the south side of Grand Avenue between 78th Avenue and 78th Court contain mixed commercial uses in buildings that are obsolete for modern retailing, and do not represent the “highest and best land use” due to the Village’s desire to attract more intensive residential development within walking distance of the station.

