

May 6, 2013

Developer Panel Summary Report

Manhattan, IL

Prepared by:



Introduction

The Regional Transportation Authority (RTA) has invested over \$3 million of its own funds during the past 13 years to complete approximately 75 transit-oriented development (TOD) planning studies through the RTA's Community Planning funding program. This program funds TOD planning studies that promote walkable, mixed-income, mixed-use development co-located and/or well-connected to retail and business uses in transit station areas while also increasing overall access to transit.

While there are many success stories from communities that have implemented their plans, several communities have encountered obstacles and barriers to implementing recommendations found in their completed TOD planning studies. The RTA is continuing to invest in the communities we have worked with previously by offering an opportunity to receive additional technical assistance and support towards implementing their plans. In 2011, the RTA launched a new program, entitled *Setting Ideas in Motion: TOD Implementation Technical Assistance Program* targeted to those that have completed a TOD planning study through the RTA Community Planning Program and have illustrated a need for technical assistance and support with implementation. From the RTA's perspective, pursuing and achieving implementation of these plans can result in more efficient transit operations, improved access to transit services and a potential for increased ridership for all three of our Service Boards (Metra, Pace and CTA). Implementation efforts can also increase private investment in TOD areas while promoting the principles of sustainability and livability.

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

Developer Panel Participants

- Anastacia Fratto, Crown Community Development
- Tony Manno, RTA
- Cindy McSherry, ULI Chicago
- Shawn Temple, Weston Solutions
- Greg Terwilliger, McShane Construction Company
- Art Zwemke, Robert Arthur Land Company

Village of Manhattan Participants

- Marc Nelson, Development Manager
- Marian Gibson, Village Administrator
- Howard Butters, Superintendent, Manhattan School District
- Dan Forsythe, Fire Chief, Manhattan Fire District
- Ashley Hopper, Library Board Member, Manhattan-Elwood Public Library District
- Vince Aversano, President, Chamber of Commerce
- Dale Meyer, Property Owner
- Andy Doyle, Chairman, Planning & Zoning Commission

Background

The Village of Manhattan completed their Village Center Master Plan, funded by the RTA, in September 2010. The plan provides guidance for the location of civic, residential, office, commercial, and recreational spaces near the Metra Station. Particular attention is paid to enhancing the core downtown while developing a 100-acre parcel adjacent to the station, with recommendations for the surrounding land uses, transportation improvements, and proposed crossings. Additionally, an implementation plan and design guidelines are included to be used by the Village and potential developers. This plan was awarded an IL-APA Award in 2011, and represents the Village's objective to maintain the viability of the downtown area while creating opportunity on the greenfield site near the Metra station.



The RTA provided the Village with continued support through the RTA TOD Implementation Technical Assistance Program by providing funding and a consultant to update the Village's TOD zoning regulations. This effort created a new downtown zoning district based on general recommendations from the Village Center Master Plan. The new zoning district was approved on June 19, 2012.

Summary of Key Recommendations from Discussion

Short-Term (0-3 Years)

- Extend Front Street to the Metra station to create a connection from downtown;
- Partner with local businesses to market events/activities in the downtown area and utilize village-owned land along the Metra tracks (in the downtown area) for community gathering activities such as:
 - Community Gardens
 - Farmers Markets
 - Antique Fairs, etc.
- Complete the land swap with BP that allows for a larger buffer between the tanks and the study area. As a part of this swap, propose that BP create a buffer using trees, a berm, etc., to visually and physically separate the tank farm area from future development near the Metra Station;
- To attract commercial development and the build-out of 1,500+/- vacant single-family parcels, please consider lessening the brick requirements in the building codes;
- Consider a commercial/retail gap analysis (market study or survey) to identify opportunities in the downtown area;
- Create a façade improvement program for the downtown area
- Work with the Midewin Tallgrass Prairie to open up access to the area near the Metra station;

Mid-Term (3-5 years)

- Consider working with IDOT and Will County to re-route Route 52 truck traffic along Gougar Road to bypass the downtown area, creating a safer pedestrian and auto experience as the Village of Plainfield has;
- Revisit the Village Center Plan's recommendations and consider the following:
 - Locating the civic uses (Village Hall, Library, etc.) immediately adjacent to the Metra station instead of further west as the plan recommends;
 - A Continuing Care community for active adults, independent seniors, assisted living and skilled nursing
- Focus marketing efforts to attract senior housing and residential care uses;

Long-Term (5-10+ Years)

- Development of the 100-acre parcel as a destination attraction that would draw visitors to the Village Center.