

December 10, 2013

Developer Panel Summary Report

Oak Forest, IL

Prepared by:



Introduction

The Regional Transportation Authority (RTA) has invested over \$4 million of its own funds and leveraged over \$5 million of local and Federal funds during the past 15 years to complete approximately 90 transit-oriented development (TOD) planning studies through the RTA's Community Planning 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. Additionally, since 2011, the RTA has offered communities an opportunity to receive plan implementation technical assistance through the Community Planning program. 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

Tony Manno, RTA
Cindy McSherry, ULI Chicago
Greg Terwilliger, Ledcor Group
Sarah Wick, Related Midwest

City of Oak Forest Participants

Adam Dotson, Community Development Director
Hank Kuspa, Mayor
Jake Melrose, AICP, Community Development Planner
Dave Newquist, Assistant Community Development Director
Gene Steinmarch

Background Information

The Gateway Development in Oak Forest is a 4.9-acre project located at the northwest corner of 159th Street and Cicero Avenue and abuts the Oak Forest Metra station on the northwest. Prior to the 2008 approval for the mixed-use transit-oriented development, the property served the community as the Metra commuter parking lot. In early 2007, RSC & Associates began discussions with the City of Oak Forest to undertake the Gateway Development. An early step in reconfiguring the property involved relocation of the existing commuter parking lot to the south side of 159th Street onto the former site of Arbor Park Middle School.

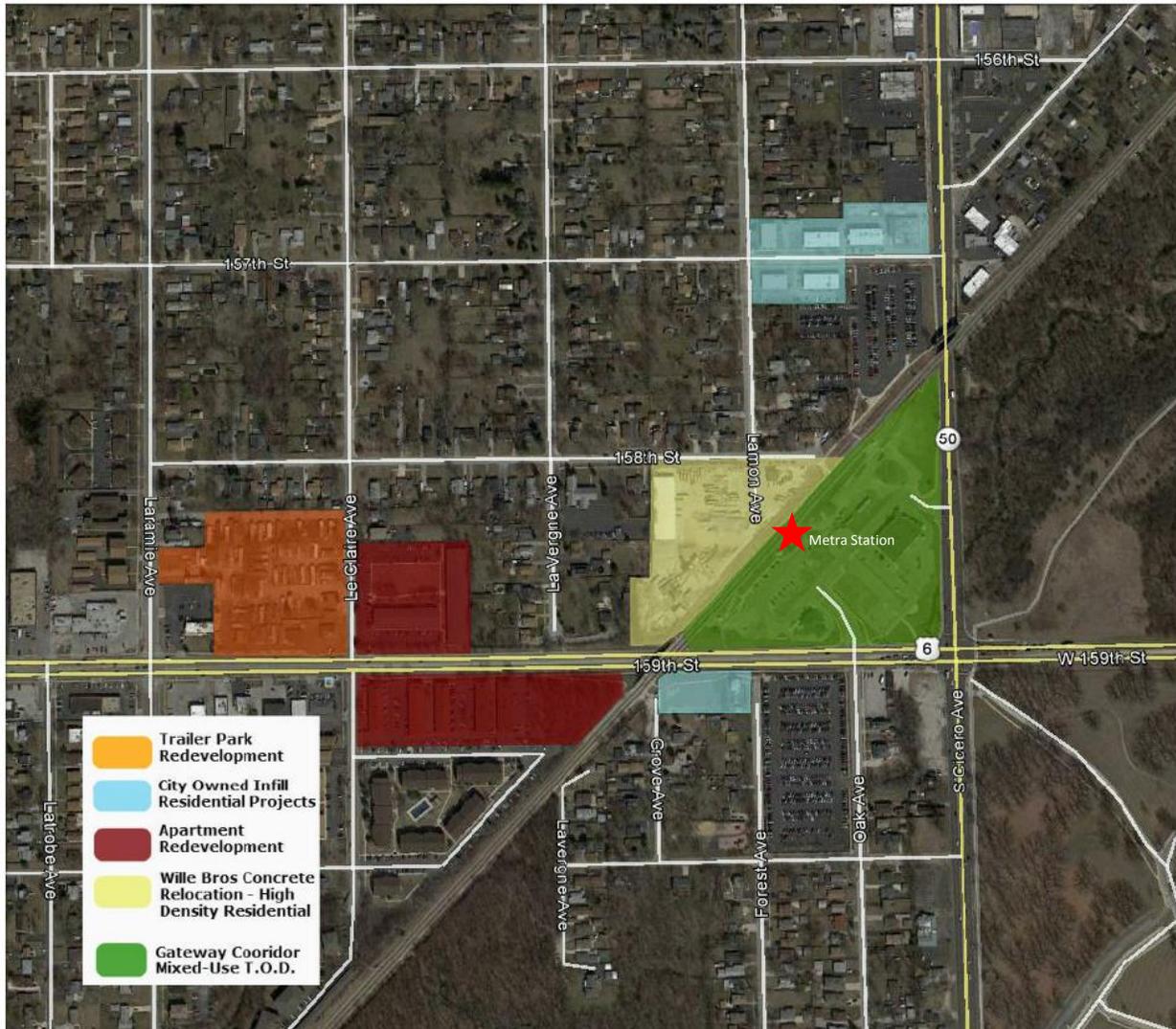
In 2009 the South Suburban Mayors and Managers Association commissioned Land Vision, Inc. and its consultant team to prepare a transit study involving 36 existing and 9 proposed station areas within its jurisdictional service area. The study's aim is to promote economic development in the south suburbs by capitalizing on the region's commuter rail network and to highlight the health-related environmental and social benefits of transit. The Initiative, as it relates to the Oak Forest Station area, identified existing conditions and community desires, resulting in the assignment of one of four station area typologies to describe the character, scale, intensity, and type of development envisioned for the area. The Initiative characterized the Oak Forest station area as a Multi-Use Transit Center which is envisioned as a place that has the potential to or currently serves as the economic and cultural center of the community.

With the vision of the 2008 City Comprehensive Plan and the analysis provided by Land Vision, Inc., the City began implementing plans to invigorate the Gateway Corridor development. Currently, the city has completed and initiated many of the Corridor development objectives that include the relocation process of the adjacent Wille Bros. Concrete Plant, the initiation of redeveloping blighted apartment complexes within the Corridor, and the purchasing of properties by the City within the Corridor in order to control development rights.

In 2011 the U.S. Department of Transportation awarded the City of Oak Forest \$1.3 million to assist in the construction of a new Metra station. This new station was completed in December 2013 and has been the second busiest stop along the Rock Island District Line with a daily ridership of approximately 1,500 commuters using the station every day. 23 weekday commuter trains pass through Oak Forest on the way to Chicago and City hopes the new train station will help to attract development/redevelopment in the immediate station area.

The Gateway Development at the northwest corner of 159th Street and Cicero Avenue is a catalyst project helping to stimulate the larger redevelopment goals of the adjacent area and provide the city with a new demographic that will utilize the 1 gigabit broadband access at the Gateway and the 20+ miles of looped forest preserve trails that engulf the city. This new demographic and stimulant of development/redevelopment will hopefully provide Cicero Avenue with a needed revitalization and set up the corridor as a destination area for entertainment and retail.

Study Area



Summary of Key Recommendations from Discussion

Phase I

- Consider performing a market study on the area to identify which commercial or residential uses are economically feasible;
- Explore commercial/office/retail uses in the TOD area that would complement and support each other and create daytime activity;
- Relocate the Wille Brothers operation to the industrial area near I-57 and pursue residential uses on this site for future redevelopment;
- Consider relocating City Hall and/or other community services, including a satellite campus for South Suburban College, to the TOD Gateway area vacant sites;
- Continue to work with Brinshore Development to work out a feasible agreement for the proposed IHDA project;
- Heavily market the incoming broadband upgrades that will make the area attractive for companies interested in advanced technology access;
- Review existing zoning code to allow for reduced front yard setbacks to create a more pedestrian-friendly environment along 159th and Cicero Avenues;

Phase II

- Consider purchasing the two building pads between the CVS and recently-closed bank. This will give the City control of the majority of the Gateway area;
- Consider purchasing the vacant bank building to use as City Hall or other community services. This is also a potential site for a day care or professional services use;
- Explore funding for a pedestrian overpass in anticipation of future closings of the mid-block track crossings.