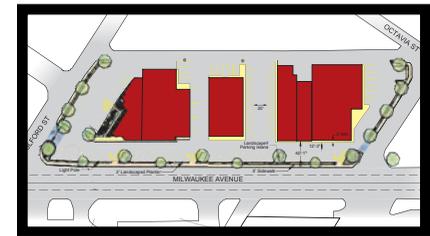
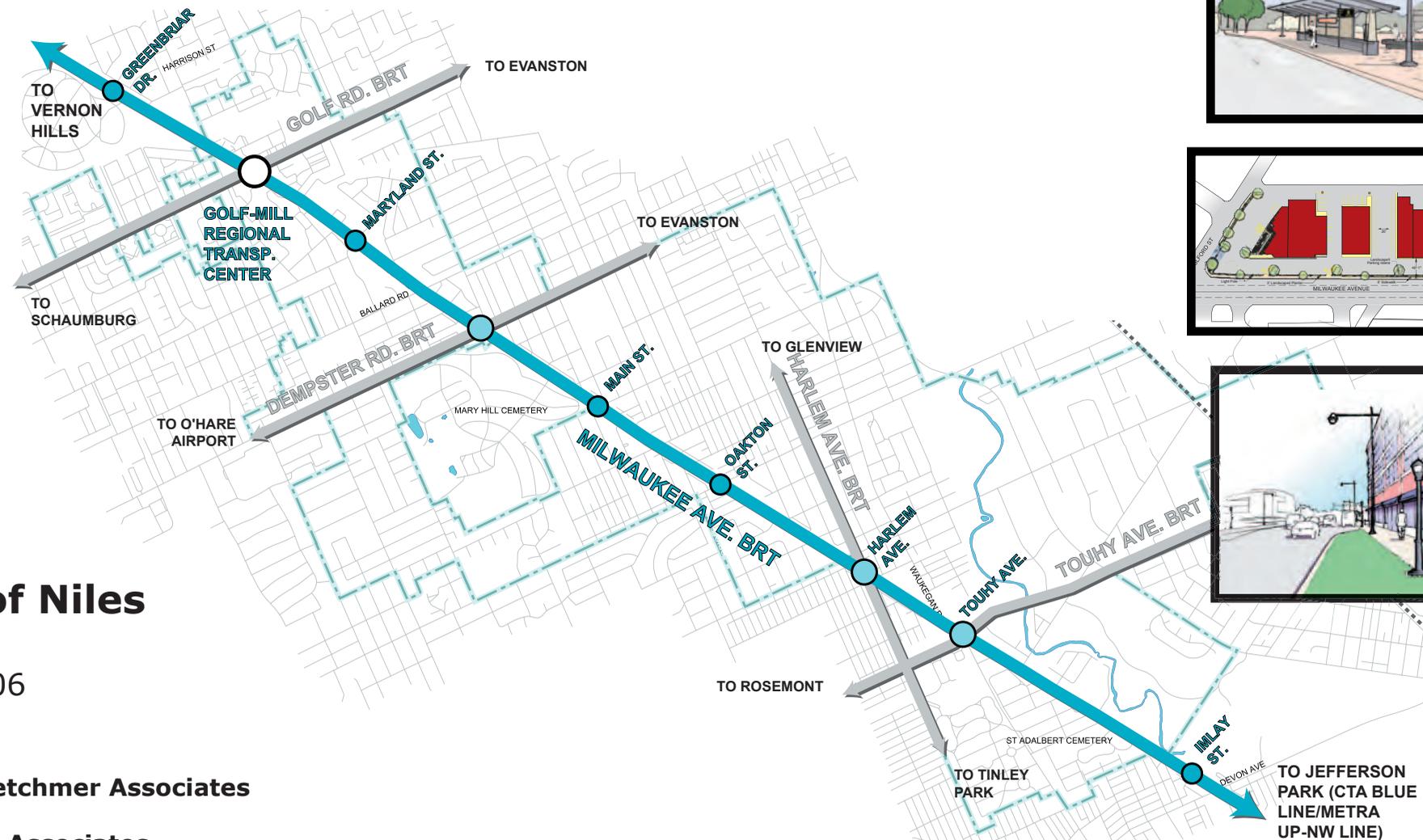


Milwaukee Avenue Plan



Village of Niles

January 2006

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This document summarizes work conducted for the Niles Bus Oriented Development Plan for Milwaukee Avenue. This document was prepared by Camiros Ltd, under contract to the Village of Niles. Preparation of this document was financed in part through a grant from the Regional Transportation Authority, and the U.S. Department of Transportation, Federal Transit Administration, under the Federal Transit Act, and/or the Illinois Department of Transportation. The contents do not necessarily reflect the official views of the Regional Transportation Authority, U. S. Department of Transportation, Federal Transit Administration, or the Illinois Department of Transportation.

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Milwaukee Avenue Plan Summary

The Milwaukee Avenue Plan proposes strategies to improve transit facilities and service along Milwaukee Avenue, within the context of an overall effort to improve the function and aesthetics of the Village of Niles' main commercial corridor. The Plan addresses improvements to traffic circulation and access to businesses, new facilities for pedestrians and approaches to streetscaping, and potential redevelopment areas and projects.

The goal of the Milwaukee Avenue Plan is to make improvements to Niles' most important street in three general areas:

- Transit
- Traffic
- and Redevelopment

Implementation of Plan recommendations will be achieved through an integrated approach that seeks to provide new transit and roadway facilities at strategic locations, especially as part of redevelopment projects at major intersections.

Bus Rapid Transit Concept

The Village of Niles values bus transit, funding the Niles Free Bus for residents, and received a grant from the Regional Transportation Authority to explore concepts for improving service along Milwaukee Avenue. The RTA's suburban bus operator Pace has identified Milwaukee Avenue as a priority route for improved bus service and facilities under the bus rapid transit concept, or BRT. The regional location of Milwaukee Avenue between two commuter rail

corridors and existing transfer opportunities, including to the Niles Free Bus, make the corridor a good candidate for BRT.

Key aspects of a Milwaukee Avenue BRT include:

1. Limited stops every half-mile at major intersections and bus transfer points.
2. Dedicated queue jump by-pass lanes at BRT stops.
3. Priority signal technologies.
4. BRT station amenities including real-time information on bus arrival and station ticketing.

Traffic improvements

Perhaps of greatest concern to Niles residents and business owners is the need to improve traffic flow and access to businesses, especially south of Monroe Street. The potential to add turn lanes to the roadway is constrained by existing development, but the Plan identifies strategies for improving flow and circulation.

Recommendations for traffic improvements include:

1. Add left turn lanes where possible, especially for northbound traffic north of Oakton Street.
2. Create bus turn-out lanes at major intersections, thereby allowing traffic to flow past stopped buses.
3. Seek additional space for new lanes as part of major redevelopment projects.
4. Improve site planning and control access to off-street parking areas.

Urban Character Districts

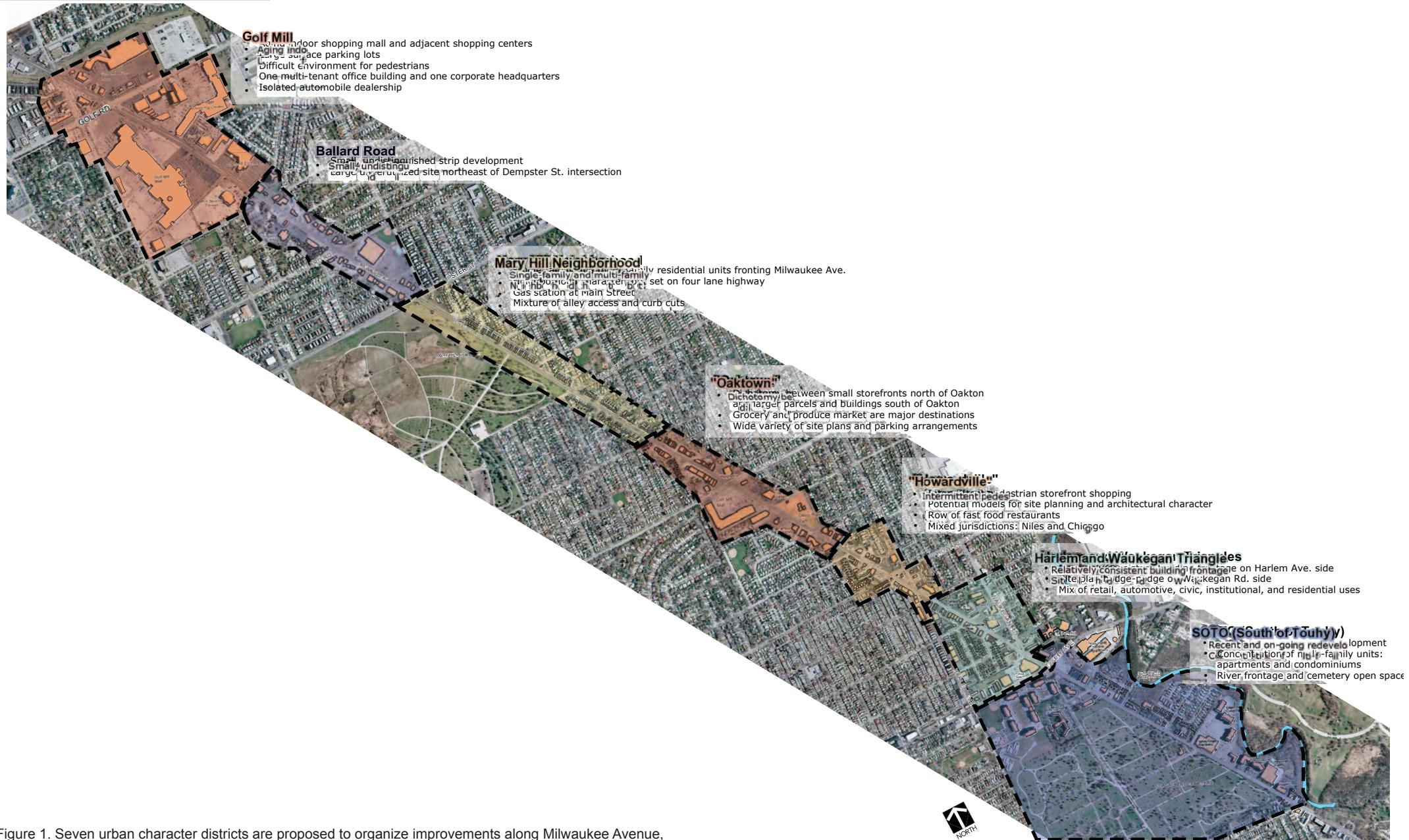


Figure 1. Seven urban character districts are proposed to organize improvements along Milwaukee Avenue, based on existing land use and development types.

Redevelopment opportunities

Under this general category, the Plan addresses opportunities to redevelop vacant or underutilized sites along the avenue, as well as improvements to the public realm focusing on facilities for pedestrians. Recommendations reflect the constraints of the present built environment tempered by an evaluation of local market conditions. Key findings of the market analysis include:

1. Retail opportunities exist in the apparel, home furnishings, bedding and home goods categories.
2. Demand could be strong for medium priced, casual sitdown restaurants.
3. Most of the major retailers targeting the middle income market are already present in the corridor.
4. Older strip centers are having difficulty attracting new stores.
5. Neighboring communities are developing new retail destinations that may compete with Milwaukee Avenue.
6. Niles has very little Class A office space and could find a market for a limited amount of new office space.
7. Residential condominium sales are strong in the southern part of the corridor.

The Plan promotes integration of transit and traffic improvements into redevelopment projects, and recommends standards for new development. The Plan makes recommendations for public realm projects, and explores the potential of priority redevelopment sites within the context of character districts.

Summary of Plan Recommendations by District

The Plan identifies seven urban character districts along Milwaukee Avenue, as distinguished by the existing land uses, predominate development types, and roadway configuration. The Plan promotes steps to reinforce existing character in each district as well as make improvements to transit facilities, traffic circulation, pedestrian environment, and foster redevelopment.

Major recommendations of the Plan for each district are provided below.

SoTo, or south of Touhy

The trend in SoTo is toward development of condominium units. Plan recommendations include:

- Promote a mixed-use redevelopment project from Touhy to Harts Road.
- Improve crosswalks and pedestrian safety at the Touhy intersection.
- Secure a bus queue jump by-pass lane as part of the redevelopment project on the southeast corner of the Touhy intersection.
- Seek to maintain a more urban character through careful site planning.

Harlem and Waukegan

The section of Milwaukee Avenue between Harlem Avenue and Waukegan Road has potential as a pedestrian shopping area. The Plan focuses on improving the pedestrian realm through the following steps:

- Construct a consistent sidewalk on the west side of Milwaukee Avenue, and include a new lane for parallel parking along the new curb.

- Install new streetscape elements, specifically decorative pedestrian-level street lamps, new highway lights, and a railing system to enclose parking lots.

“Howardville”

The Plan promotes the Howard Street area as a restaurant, specialty food, and boutique shopping destination. Key recommendations include:

- Improve site development by eliminating long curb cuts, controlling access, and providing new off-street diagonal parking configurations.
- Create a transit plaza on the triangular site bounded by Milwaukee, Howard, and Harlem.
- Encourage redevelopment of aging strip malls and underutilized sites, and relocate heavy commercial uses.



Figure 2. Sketch shows a consistent sidewalk, with new streetscape elements, and a new lane for parallel parking in the Harlem and Waukegan district.

“Oaktown”

Combined with the Harlem and Waukegan district and Howardville, the Oaktown district completes the potential pedestrian shopping area along Milwaukee Avenue. The Plan recommends:

- Marking a new left turn lane north of Oakton Street.
- Improvements to Oak Mill Mall, including construction of a small bank building at the corner.

Mary Hill

The residential segment of the corridor from Monroe Street to Dempster Street is stable and few changes are foreseen. However, improvements are recommended in regard to closing local street access and relocating a bus stop, specifically:

- Consider closing local street access to Milwaukee Avenue at Madison Street, Kedzie Street, and Grennan Place.
- Relocate the southbound bus stop from Crain Street to a new location south of Dempster Street.

Ballard Road

North of Dempster Street, the roadway facility is wider and strip malls are the dominant development type. A large redevelopment opportunity site is located between Ballard and Dempster on the east side of Milwaukee Avenue. The Plan recommends:

- Foster redevelopment of the former Sports Authority site as a mixed-use development that retains the same amount of retail space and adds residential units and professional office space.
- Include dedicated bus lane and BRT stations along the frontage of the redevelopment site.

Golf Mill

Golf Road and Milwaukee Avenue will remain a regional shopping destination anchored by Golf Mill mall. The Plan focuses on relocation of a major transit transfer facility.

- Facilitate faster transfers between the funded Golf Road BRT and the proposed Milwaukee Avenue BRT by relocating the transit transfer facility from south of the Golf Mill mall to a new location along Golf Road.

Implementation Strategies

Milwaukee Avenue is a state highway under the jurisdiction of IDOT. Partnerships between the Village, IDOT, and Pace should be developed to implement the projects in the Plan. Improvements to Milwaukee Avenue are in keeping with the goals of a number of different programs from which funding should be sought, including:

- CMAQ
- SAFETEA
- ITEP
- STP

The Village should also consider organizational steps including creation of an ad hoc committee to

promote improvements to Milwaukee Avenue, a formal site plan review process, and addition of site development standards to the zoning ordinance.



Figure 3. An illustrative plan for improving sites configured with a single bay of parking. Access is controlled and a consistent sidewalk provided.

Project

Goals

The Village of Niles initiated planning for the Milwaukee Avenue corridor in the spring of 2005. The goal of the Milwaukee Avenue Plan is to recommend strategies to improve transit facilities and service along Milwaukee Avenue, within the context of an overall effort to improve the function and aesthetics of the corridor. The Plan addresses improvements to traffic circulation and access to businesses, new facilities for pedestrians and approaches to streetscaping, and potential redevelopment areas and projects.

In essence, the goal of the Milwaukee Avenue Plan is to make improvements to Niles' most important street in three general areas:

- Transit
- Traffic
- and Redevelopment

Beginning with an analysis of existing conditions and then presenting concepts to address key issues, the Plan promotes the concept of working toward solutions as part of an integrated effort wherein improvements to one of the three areas support or make possible improvements in the other two. This is especially important in regard to securing right of way along the state highway in order to improve traffic flow and transit efficiency. Redevelopment projects at main intersections offer an opportunity to gain space for new turn lanes, as well as provide new pedestrian amenities.

Transit planning goals

A grant from the Regional Transportation Authority

was made to the Village of Niles to fund the creation of the Milwaukee Avenue Plan, and specifically consider improvements to transit service and facilities. The RTA's suburban bus operator Pace participated in the plan process. In its Vision 2020 Plan approved in 2001, Pace identified Milwaukee Avenue as a Line Haul Arterial Route, making it a priority corridor for bus service and efficiency improvements, commonly conceived under the term "bus rapid transit." Pace sees Milwaukee Avenue as ideal for bus rapid transit, or BRT, and one of the primary goals of the project is to identify where improvements can be made to the functional efficiency of bus movements along Milwaukee Avenue. In the simplest terms, improvements are based on giving priority to buses by means of special traffic signal technologies and pairing these bus signals with "queue jump" by-pass lanes and dedicated lanes for buses to turn-out of traffic when stopping to let off or take on riders. Providing improved rider amenities is also a goal, as are improvements to the pedestrian environment to ensure safe access to transit.

Traffic improvement goals

Traffic improvement goals for the Plan are closely correlated with the transit planning goals. Creating bus lay-by or turn-out lanes is a primary goal of the Plan in regard to traffic improvements, because buses that have room to pull over and stop allow other vehicular traffic to pass, thereby improving the overall flow. Most of the corridor currently has two lanes in each direction, and when a bus stops to take on riders traffic behind the bus must also stop, or change to the center lane.

The other two main impediments to flow include

left turn movements and traffic slowing or stopping for vehicles turning at cross streets and curb cuts. Achieving improvements in regard to cross streets and curb cuts is also a planning goal. In addition to traffic flow, and improving the safety of the corridor for drivers, making Milwaukee Avenue a safer place for pedestrians is a very important goal. Provision of a consistent sidewalk is a basic goal of the Plan, and achievement of these goals overlap with and are dependent on improvements to private property and careful coordination of public realm improvements that make the corridor a safer and more attractive place.

Redevelopment goals

As buildings age and businesses look for competitive advantages, the value of a particular building or location can change, leading to a decision to renovate, relocate, or redevelop property. In the southern part of the Milwaukee Avenue corridor, a market for new residential units in a condominium style has led to redevelopment of a number of sites. In the central section of the corridor, aging malls struggle to lease retail space. And at the north end of Milwaukee Avenue, a number of large retail buildings are vacant or under-leased.

Given that much of the corridor was developed forty or even fifty years ago, at the advent of the post-war automobile suburb, many of the commercial structures and their attendant facilities, such as parking lots and means of access, are in need of new investment to remain competitive with newer shopping centers. In some cases, building facades can be upgraded and parking lots resurfaced, but in other cases vacancies grow and the value of a property drops

to the point that starting again is the most logical action. Redevelopment is a necessary response to changing markets, especially for commercial property, where retailers are always looking for locations and buildings that are competitive and up to date with the latest trends. In many ways, the development along Milwaukee Avenue is a testament to progressive changes in retailing, from small mom and pop storefronts to the huge Golf Mill mall and its national chain stores.

The dominant trend in retailing is to the big box store, and some sites at the north end of Milwaukee Avenue are big enough to allow that type of development. Yet a second, newer trend is to pay attention to the whole environment, especially in regard to pedestrians and the quality of the shopping experience. Newer shopping centers are working to bring the best parts of the old Main Street environment into their planning and architecture, while older downtowns constantly struggle to address access, parking, and aesthetic issues.

The Village of Niles does not have an older Main Street dating from the days before the private automobile. Neither does Niles have a train station to act as its downtown destination. The Village is in fact built around and along Milwaukee Avenue. The corridor itself is the Village's Main Street and its downtown. It can't be turned into something other than what it already is: a high-volume regional thoroughfare with many different types of commercial uses along its frontage. But Milwaukee Avenue can be improved, and its muscular position as a retail marketplace fortified for years into the future. Improvements to pedestrian facilities, as well as bus transit

facilities, and traffic flow and access to retail property, can be made—not all at once along the whole length of corridor, but through focused renovation and redevelopment efforts that include a basic set of civic infrastructure elements and follow basic site planning principles.

The Plan recommends strategies to guide reinvestment in a manner that addresses the three main areas of transit, traffic, and redevelopment. In most locations, it is through coordination of improvements to the public realm in concert with new private development that the goals of the Plan are most achievable.

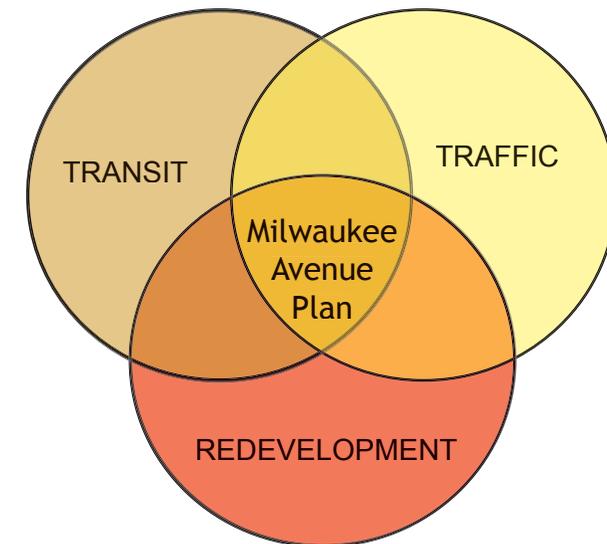


Figure 4. Goals for the Plan overlap in the three areas of transit, traffic, and redevelopment.

Milwaukee Avenue Today Existing Conditions Analysis

The Existing Conditions section provides an analysis of conditions along Milwaukee Avenue in regard to:

- Land-use pattern
- Urban form
- Site planning
- Pedestrian environment
- Traffic and circulation.

The real estate market and transit operations are discussed in separate chapters following this one, providing a summary of existing conditions as well as discussion of future opportunities for these topic areas.

The discussion of existing conditions is addressed first through an overview of the whole corridor, followed by a geographic division of the corridor into south-eastern, central, and northwestern sections. This organization makes it possible to evaluate the physical environment of the corridor first at the scale of the whole corridor—revealing its pattern of development through successive eras, then at the scale of landscape features such as major cross streets and more detailed pattern of land use, and finally at the scale of the street environment and individual sites.

The existing conditions analysis was informed by a detailed survey of land uses and building types, documented and evaluated through site visits that included photography of individual sites and street scenes, and the use of aerial photographs. The Village of Niles provided the consultant team with an aerial photograph of the whole corridor taken from a flight in 2003. The aerial photograph provides a high-

resolution base for mapping land uses and evaluating individual sites, and is used throughout the plan.

In addition to the analysis of physical conditions conducted by the consultant team, information on existing conditions was garnered from interviews with residents, business owners, property owners, and Village staff. These interviews provided invaluable information on the role of the Milwaukee Avenue corridor in the daily life of Niles citizens, and their perceptions of what the key issues are and where the corridor needs improvement. In some cases, anecdotal evidence of an issue can be more telling than statistical data on topics, such as traffic or real estate markets.

For instance, a number of people said that difficult traffic movements and congestion at Oakton Street are the biggest problem in the corridor, even though actual traffic counts and evaluation of intersections for this report showed that delays at Howard Avenue and Harlem Avenue were sometimes longer. Perceptions of how the corridor is functioning are important, in this case Oakton is a more important commercial destination for residents than elsewhere in the corridor, and the area has significant access challenges. Likewise, the market data for eating and drinking establishments in Niles was strong (perhaps based on the number of banquet halls), but many people said that Milwaukee Avenue does not provide enough variety of dining experiences, and that they are more likely to visit neighboring communities for a night out. The evaluation of the corridor shows how Milwaukee Avenue changes over its length and continues to evolve over time.

Land Use, Overall Corridor



Figure 5. Overall pattern of land use along Milwaukee Avenue in Niles.

Overall Land Use and Urban Form

A drive up Milwaukee Avenue in the Village of Niles reveals a progression of urban development in a first-ring American suburb. Along the five-mile extent of Milwaukee Avenue, and moving from the southeast to northwest, successive eras of building can be examined in terms of land use and urban form:

- At the southern end of the corridor early development is evident on smaller parcels, including heavy commercial uses and older structures;
- In the central section, bigger and deeper parcels are found around Oak Mill Mall at Oakton Street, and more land is devoted to parking;
- At the north end of the corridor, strip malls are numerous, and very large parcels were created for development of Golf Mill mall and other shopping centers, all surrounded by parking lots.

At the scale of the whole corridor, it is evident that land use along Milwaukee Avenue is predominately retail commercial, with an interspersing of heavy commercial, such as gas stations, muffler shops, printers, and a car dealership. The type and size of commercial uses takes a wide variety of forms, as is discussed in more detail in the urban form analysis below. Nearly all of the commercial in the corridor is in single-story buildings, although there are a few older structures with second floor space. Only a short stretch of the corridor has any mixed-use commercial and residential buildings with apartments over storefronts, these located on the west side of the avenue north of Oakton Street.

However, there are significant breaks in the commercial strip where two large cemeteries occupy long frontages on the west side of the street. Cemeteries are a type of landscaped open space, and the east side of the avenue opposite the cemeteries is developed with multi-family residential uses that take some advantage from views into the open space and provide relief from the commercial strip. Retail uses work best where fronting both sides of a street. Residential uses are found in the area south of Touhy Avenue across from St. Adalbert Cemetery and along the river corridor, and opposite Mary Hill Cemetery. A short section of the avenue, roughly two blocks long, has single-family residential dwellings fronting both sides of the avenue between Main Street and Monroe Street. Large areas with residential uses, primarily small-lot, single-family development, lie behind Milwaukee Avenue to the east and west.

There is only one multi-story, multi-tenant office building in the corridor and one large headquarters building both in the vicinity of Golf Mill mall. Other office space is located in the corridor in storefronts and strip malls, as described in more detail in the market analysis section of this report. As a land use, office uses are nearly invisible along Milwaukee Avenue in Niles.

Institutional uses, such as churches and medical facilities, are sparse in the middle and north part of the corridor, but more numerous to the south. In the Touhy Avenue area there is a cluster of institutional and public uses, the most prominent being the new Niles Police Headquarters building. The Oasis Water Park owned and operated by the Niles Park District is the largest public use along Milwaukee Avenue,

both in terms of the amount of land and the number of visitors. Another public park, called Washington Terrace Park, is located off Milwaukee north of Dempster Street. As noted, two cemeteries constitute the largest open space feature along Milwaukee Avenue. These cemeteries have related commercial uses in the corridor in monument sales shops and a funeral home, and funeral processions are an important part of the daily function of the corridor.



Heavy commercial land use and motel located in the southeast section of the corridor. Building is set up on the sidewalk with parking to the side.



Niles Shopping Center in the central part of the corridor, is one of the oldest strip malls in the corridor. The relationship between the sidewalk and storefronts is broken by intervening parking.



A large fitness center located in the northwest part of the corridor. The scale of the building and large parking lot is an example of urban forms developed for access via automobile.

**Minimal Setback with
Parking to Side and Rear**



**Single-Bay Parking
in Front of Building**



**Double-Bay Parking
in Front of Building**



Figure 5. A wide variety of building setback and parking arrangements exist along Milwaukee Avenue. Three basic layouts are used on lots with shallow depths, as portrayed in these photographs. Different layouts are frequently found adjacent to each other, creating a confusing urban form, difficult access, and unreliable pedestrian facilities.

Site planning and development in the corridor

Within the general pattern of commercial land use along Milwaukee Avenue is a dizzying hodge-podge of site plans. Site planning is the arrangement of buildings, parking lots, access points, and landscaping on a lot. In general, moving from the southeast to northwest, site plans along Milwaukee Avenue provide an increasing amount of space to parking for automobiles and less contact between the public sidewalk and storefronts. The corridor is a virtual case study in how site plans developed in response to greater demands for access via automobile.

The progression of development in the corridor shows how the old urban form of street, sidewalk, and building gave way to accommodations for automobile access and storage. Like along so many state highways the expansion of the roadway and traffic led to the removal of parallel parking spaces along the sidewalk and curb. Although on at least one block north of Oakton Street parallel parking spaces were retained and function relatively well. Removing cars from curbside parking and requiring off-street spaces was the essential change from old urban forms.

At first the response to off-street parking on shallow lots was to insert a single-bay of parking between the sidewalk and the building facade. The spaces may be arranged with diagonal parking or perpendicular to the building. On some blocks the parking is pointed to the curb, while on the next block it may be perpendicular to the building. In a similar fashion, some blocks retain a public sidewalk and curb, but others dispense with the sidewalk altogether and allow cars to drive right up to the building on sites with uncontrolled access. This produces a situation where

visitors to businesses must try to figure out on a block by block basis how to access the site and which way to park. On a few sites the parking layout remains undetermined and cars park in a variety of angles.

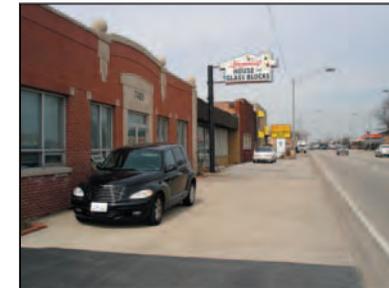
The next idea, found on many small sites in the corridor, with the exception of the stretch south of Touhy Avenue, was to put two rows or bays of parking spaces between the sidewalk and the building facade. This configuration proved popular and spawned a ubiquitous and familiar urban form—the strip mall. Some of the more successful strip mall sites along Milwaukee Avenue were developed with a wide landscaped parkway between the curb and sidewalk. This landscaping helps to frame and buffer the parking area and protect pedestrians on the sidewalk. However, as an urban form the strip mall is disparaged for bringing a placeless quality to corridors like Milwaukee Avenue in Niles. The deeper setback of the double-bay layout reduces the visibility of storefronts, and architectural details are eliminated. Pedestrians find themselves between the street and parking lots, and at a distance from shop entrances.

Finally, the relationship between retail buildings and the street was broken altogether with the creation of the indoor shopping mall surrounded by large parking lots. Golf Mill mall is an early example of this type of site development, which induced new types of retailing including single-story department stores as anchors and franchise boutique shops lining an interior pedestrian mall. Easy access on wide roadways and plentiful free parking were the key planning innovations.

As for the post-war suburban shopping corridor,

Milwaukee Avenue has it all. However, many of the strip malls and shopping centers are starting to show their age and are challenged by new urban forms in the every evolving, highly competitive retail marketplace.

Of particular interest for the Milwaukee Avenue Plan is how redevelopment in recent years is creating another layer of new land uses and urban forms on top of older parts of the corridor. Yet this trend toward redevelopment challenges the Village of Niles to define its preferred development type for the variety of contexts already found in the corridor.



Vehicles parked on the sidewalk on the west side of Milwaukee Ave. south of Harlem Ave. Note that space exists for a parallel parking lane and sidewalk, and that the sidewalk disappears and is blocked further in the distance.



A narrow sidewalk creates a path between a drive lane to the left and parking to the right. This configuration is preferable to not having a sidewalk and access is controlled to the parking area.

Land Use, Southeast Section

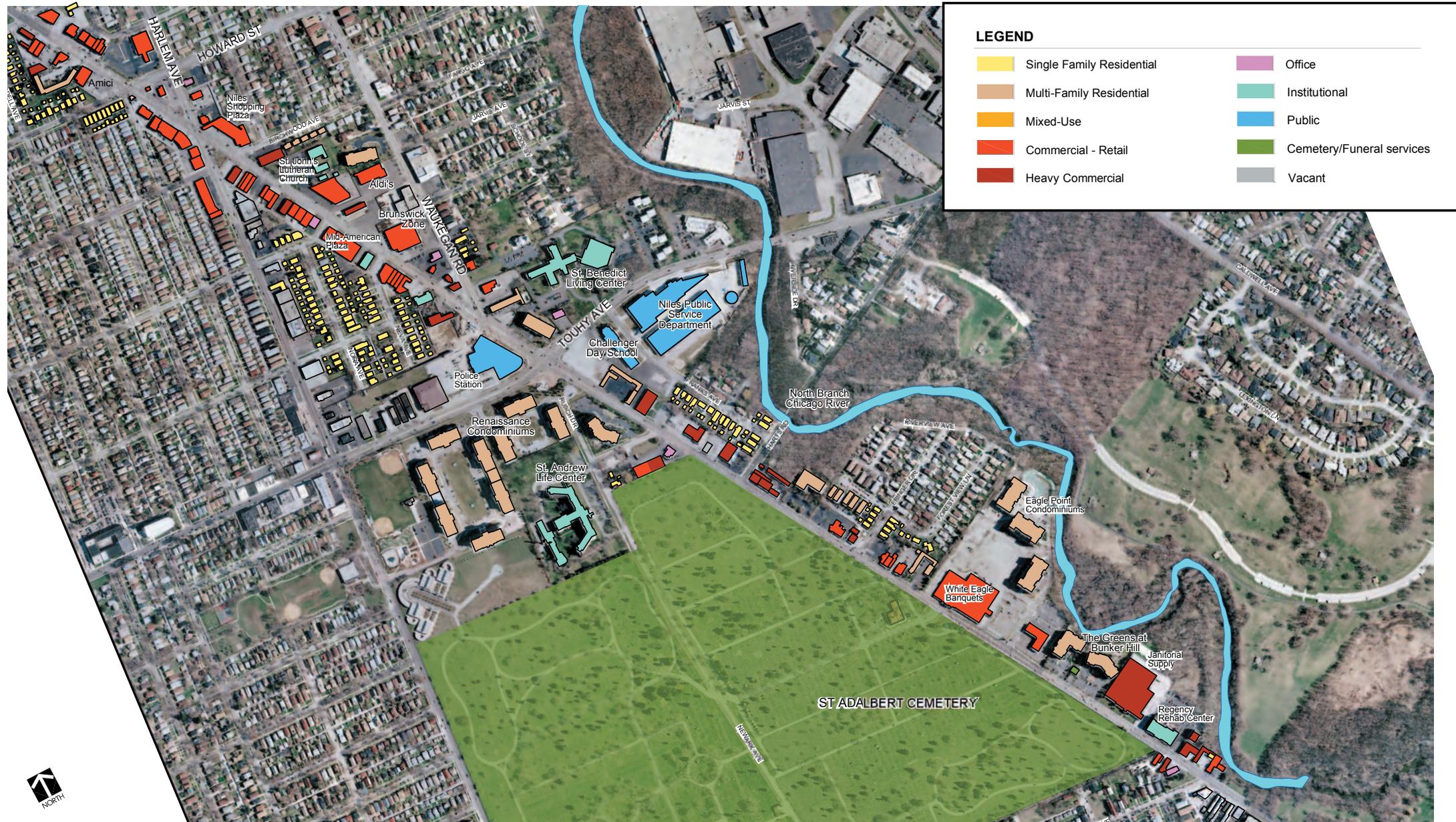


Figure 6. Pattern of land use in the southeast section of the corridor, from Howard Street to the southern village limit.

Land Use and Major Features

Southeast Section

The pattern of land use in the southern part of the Milwaukee Avenue corridor is shaped by natural and man-made topographic features and by successive eras of development, leading to this current period of transition. Major features that shape the overall layout of the streets and lots in the area include:

- Chicago River North Branch and Forest Preserve,
- St. Adalbert Cemetery,
- Touhy Avenue,
- Waukegan Road,
- Harlem Avenue
- and the City of Chicago.

Unlike the rest of the corridor to the north, where Milwaukee Avenue cuts across a regular grid of streets aligned to the cardinal directions, the features present in the southern section create unusual development sites and complex intersections.

Because of the presence of St. Adalbert Cemetery and close proximity of the Chicago River, the pattern of land use south of Touhy Avenue has a different configuration than the area to the north of Touhy; which in turn is influenced by the alignment and terminus of Waukegan Road and by Harlem Avenue, the west side of which is in the City of Chicago. The cemetery creates an essentially one-sided corridor along its third of a mile stretch. No side streets meet Milwaukee from the west in this area, while on the east side the river also interrupts the grid and creates parcels of varying depths in relation to its meander.

In terms of the smaller scale patterns, the influence of different periods of development is most telling. Starting at the southern end of the corridor, at the Niles village limit at Albion Avenue, heavy commercial land uses, such as janitorial supply businesses, date from the post World War II period. Likewise, two small motor lodges are remnants from the period of urban expansion, prior to construction of the interstate, when Milwaukee Avenue was an important route to the outskirts of the Chicago region.

However, more recent development shows a dramatic shift in land use south of Touhy. The increasing age and obsolescence of some uses and structures, in addition to open space amenities provided by cemetery and forest preserve, have encouraged the development of new residential projects, including the Eagle Pointe, Renaissance, Fountain View, and Bunker Hill condominiums. Market demand for this style of dwelling and the many services available to senior citizens in the Village of Niles have also fueled this transformation away from highway commercial types of land uses to a high-density residential use. Indeed, most of these new condominium units cater to seniors, and three other centers in this part of the corridor (St. Benedict, St. Andrew, and Regency) provide additional services. The remaining mix of uses south of Touhy includes a large banquet hall and relatively new office and retail building at Eagle Point, two restaurants, a pub, automobile repair, gas station, contractors, and clusters of small retail and service businesses.

North of Touhy the corridor is shaped like two opposing triangles sharing Milwaukee Avenue as their hypotenuse. Harlem and Waukegan avenues are the



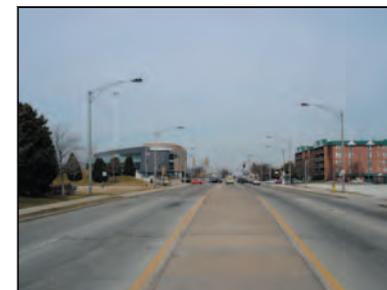
Buildings set close to the sidewalk and with similar set backs near the southern village limit.



Recent high-density residential development with deep set back and parking in front at the Greens at Bunker Hill Condominiums.



An attractive example of older style urban site planning with building fronting on the sidewalk.



The approach to the Touhy and Milwaukee intersection.

Site Plan and Pedestrian Environment Analysis: Southeast Section



Figure 7. Analysis of existing site plans and the pedestrian environment in the segment between Harlem Ave. and Waukegan Road focuses on the availability of a sidewalk, number of curb cuts, and position of building frontage or setback.

Sidewalk
 Internal Sidewalk
 Curb Cut

sides of these triangles meeting Touhy and Howard at right angles. The convergence of Waukegan with Milwaukee creates an especially narrow strip of land and sharply pointed and angled parcel at their intersection. This is the narrowest of the handful of triangles formed by the diagonal Milwaukee Avenue, and has commercial uses extending between the two major streets.

In regard to land use, the area north of Touhy shows some variation within the dominant heavy and retail commercial pattern, with a church, animal hospital, medical clinic, and police headquarters located between Touhy and Birchwood. A large bowling alley occupies an important location near the point of the Waukegan triangle, offering one of the few entertainment venues along Milwaukee. At the opposite end of the Waukegan triangle, fast food restaurants and retail shops are grouped at the intersection with Howard Street.

Urban Form, Site Development, and Pedestrian Environment

Southeast Section

The urban form of the section between Albion and Touhy avenues begins to show contrasts and tension between older styles of urbanization and the influence of the automobile. Many of the older structures are set up on the sidewalk, or have only a minimal setback from the lot line and street. Even as the street was widened and traffic and demand for parking grew, structures still reached out to the street with front or side walls along the sidewalk and parking to the side or rear of the lot.

This section of the corridor contains structures from the early period of urbanization as well as the most recent redevelopment. The newer form of urbanization shows a change in the relationship between the buildings, sidewalk, and street, in a manner that elevates the value placed on circulation and parking of automobiles, while devaluing the pedestrian experience. Examples of contrasting styles of site development are the Regency Rehabilitation Center, which has only a minimal setback and places all of its parking and circulation to the rear of the lot, and the Greens at Bunker Hill, which favors proximity to the forest preserve and locates its parking in a lot fronting the street. Likewise, the mixed retail and office building at Eagle Point is set back from the sidewalk with intervening parking. Without buildings fronting on the sidewalk, pedestrians are in an environment that has automobiles to both sides, as well as cutting across the sidewalk at frequent curb cuts.

The lack of buildings or side streets along the cemetery presents a difficult environment for pedestrians, especially given the lack of signalized crossings. This lack of crossings reduces the efficiency of transit service to the area, for instance for residents of Eagle Point, who need to walk up to Touhy Avenue to safely access a southbound bus. However, the intersection with Touhy Avenue is itself an impediment to pedestrians given its four through lanes in each direction and numerous turning lanes. From a land use and urban design point of view this intersection presents great opportunities as well as challenges. The wide extent of the roadways make corner lots highly visible and therefore desirable for retailing, yet three of the four corners are occupied by non-commercial uses. Currently vacant land at the southeast corner of

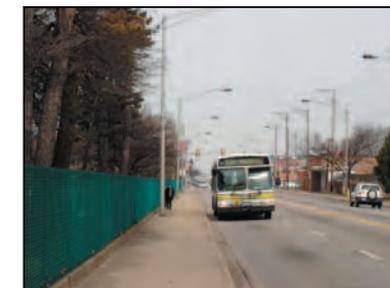
Touhy and Milwaukee is a prime redevelopment site.

The triangular parcels created by intersecting streets are one of the interesting features of the corridor. The angles at Touhy have been straightened somewhat, yet the northwest corner remains sharper than 90 degrees. The Niles Police headquarters was recently constructed on this corner so that its facade follows the curve, in the most successful design solution for the many flat-iron sites along Milwaukee.

Continuing north, the segment of Milwaukee between Waukegan and Harlem (or Birchwood) seems to display the two opposing concepts of site planning:

- on the west side nearly all of the buildings have a similar set back creating a consistent street frontage
- on the east side sites have a wide variety of building setbacks and orientations and parking arrangements.

While this description captures the general layout, the situation on the ground is actually more chaotic; even on the narrow strip between the curb and buildings on the west side, cars are parked in a variety of ways: parallel to the street, diagonal to the building, to the side and rear of structures, or on the sidewalk itself. The presence or absence of the sidewalk varies from property to property.



A pedestrian walking as far as possible from the drive lanes, on the constrained sidewalk along St. Adalbert Cemetery.

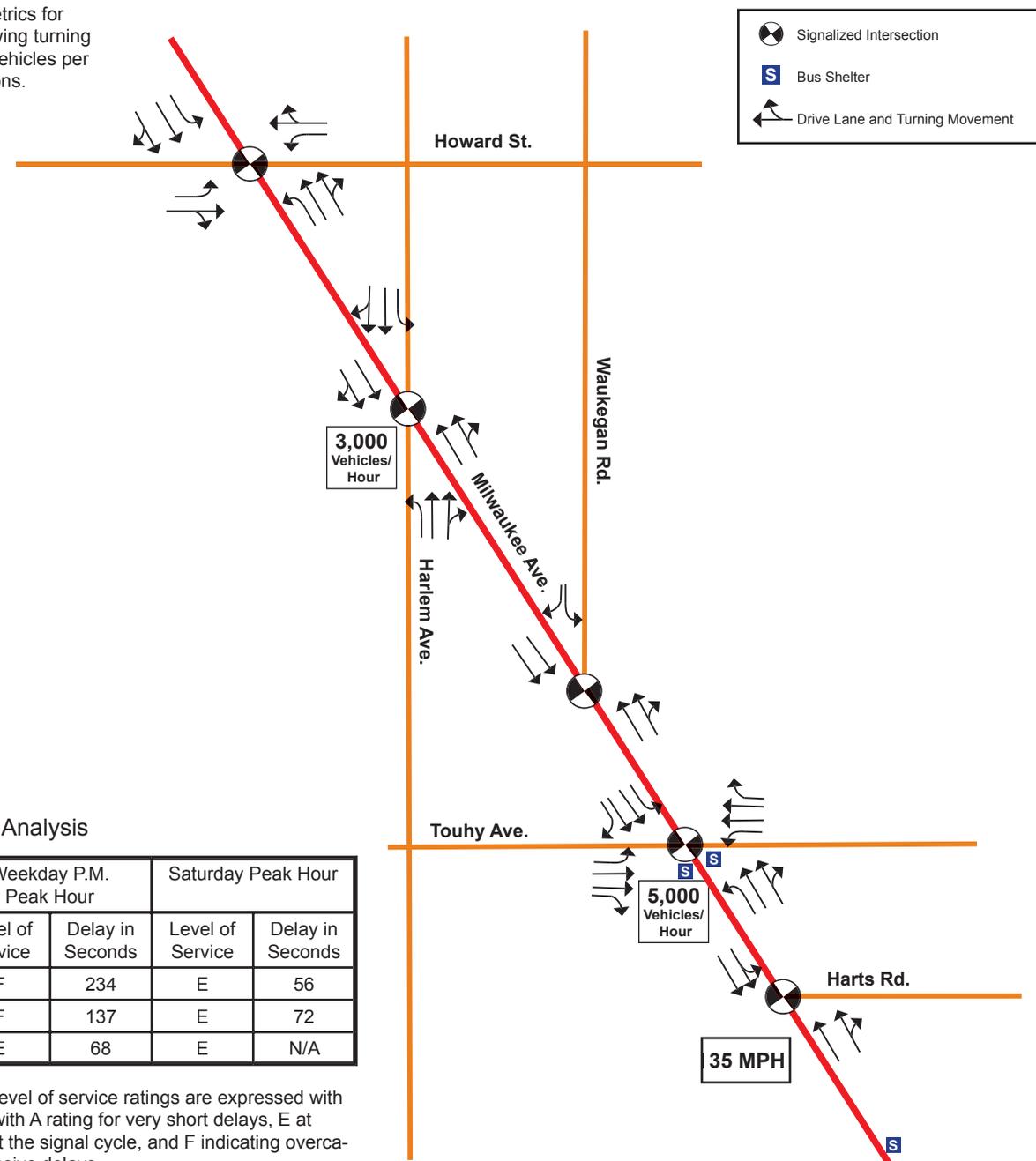
Traffic and Circulation

Overview and Southeast Section

The Village of Niles is built around Milwaukee Avenue, and the roadway serves as the primary arterial in the village. While it is a local road for residents, Milwaukee Avenue is also a state highway (designated by IDOT as Illinois Route 21 north of Harlem Avenue), and a regional arterial. The diagonal alignment of Milwaukee Avenue increases its importance as a regional route because it cuts across the grid in a northwest to southeast direction, connecting communities in the northwest suburbs. The road carries over 36,000 vehicles per day in some segments of the village. It is intersected by many other busy arterials in Niles, including Touhy Avenue, Harlem Avenue, Oakton Street, Dempster Street, and Golf Road (Illinois Route 58). These intersections present daily challenges to motorists, transit operators, and pedestrians. Congestion and access to businesses are issues for residents, those traveling to Niles for shopping and business, and those passing through to other destinations.

The roadway is generally built with a four lane undivided cross section, widening at intersections. Although there are no plans to expand the road beyond four lanes, in terms of planning for improvements to Milwaukee Avenue, providing new turn lanes is the foremost issue. Turning vehicles stop or slow following traffic, whether turning left at an intersection or slowing to enter a private lot. In addition, buses halt traffic when stopping to pick up riders. Therefore, finding ways to expand the roadway at strategic locations is a great challenge for the planning process.

Figure 8. Roadway geometrics for the southeast section showing turning lanes, traffic signals, and vehicles per hour at selected intersections.



Intersection Capacity Analysis

Intersection with Milwaukee Ave.	Weekday P.M. Peak Hour		Saturday Peak Hour	
	Level of Service	Delay in Seconds	Level of Service	Delay in Seconds
Howard St.	F	234	E	56
Harlem Ave.	F	137	E	72
Touhy Ave.	E	68	E	N/A

Standardized intersection level of service ratings are expressed with a letter grade from A to F, with A rating for very short delays, E at capacity and high delays at the signal cycle, and F indicating overcapacity conditions and extensive delays.

Traffic volumes and flow, lane configurations and turning movements, and intersection operations and level of service constitute the main components of roadway infrastructure and function in the Milwaukee Avenue corridor. An analysis of the existing conditions in Niles was performed for this study, including a field survey of roadway geometrics and traffic counts at key intersections. As with the general pattern of land use, the roadway configuration is more accommodating to automobile traffic in the northwest section than in the central or southeast sections. This is a direct result of the period of development for each part of the corridor.

Bus operations in the corridor

In terms of bus operations, Pace operators stop the bus and load or unload passengers at all intersections, and at other locations along Milwaukee Avenue on a “flag down” basis, meaning the bus will stop to pick up riders wherever the driver sees a signal to stop. In addition to regular stops at intersections, there are a handful of bus stops with shelters along Milwaukee Avenue in Niles, as indicated on Figures 8, 12, and 14. These shelters are maintained by an advertising company through a concession contract with the Village of Niles.

In addition to Pace buses operating on Milwaukee Avenue, consideration needs to be given to facilitating transfers to regular Pace routes operating on intersecting arterials, and to the Niles Free Bus. A discussion of bus routes is provided in a separate chapter, beginning on page 35. It is important to note that the Village of Niles seeks improvements to the bus service, and that such improvements can also be of benefit to overall traffic flow. Opportuni-

ties exist along the corridor to coordinate construction of new transit facilities in concert with other redevelopment projects.

Southeast Section

In the southeast section, from Howard Street to the village limit, older development fronting the street limits the provision of turn lanes, and smaller parcels with numerous businesses create a multiplicity of curb cuts along Milwaukee Avenue. Auxiliary turn lanes exist at the major signalized intersections but are not available along the road for local streets and driveways. Any vehicle turning into a business can slow or stop following traffic.

The most congested area in the corridor appears to be immediately south of Howard Street and south of Harlem (see Intersection Capacity Analysis table on page 16), in the area where the two roads cross Milwaukee Avenue and create a difficult and confusing double intersection. In addition, uncontrolled access to private lots, which includes parking of vehicles on the public right of way creates a disorganized and possibly hazardous situation.

Future redevelopment projects offer an opportunity to create new turn lanes through land dedication as a part of site planning. Driveway and curb cut consolidation is also critical to improving flow. Opportunities exist in the southeast section for a clearer definition of parking areas and reorganization of sites to provide a curb line, consistent parking layouts—especially for land in the public right of way and on the west side of Milwaukee between Harlem and Waukegan—and controlled access to private property.

South of Touhy, the planned redevelopment of the site on the southeast corner offers an opportunity to add new space to the roadway to provide a dedicated bus queue jump by-pass lane before the intersection. Space for a bus stop on the far side of the intersection is constrained by existing development, and new transit and pedestrian facilities can be constructed as part of the redevelopment project.

In order to allow easy access to the new retail and residential uses being considered for this site, a continuous southbound left turn lane from Touhy Avenue south to Harts Road is also desirable. However, in order to provide these new lanes, public right of way now used for the sidewalk may need to be added to the roadway, therefore requiring additional space from the private property to move the sidewalk to the east, with the dedication of a minimum of 12 feet. This example shows how improvements to traffic flow, transit efficiency, and redevelopment can work together along Milwaukee Avenue.

Land Use, Central Section

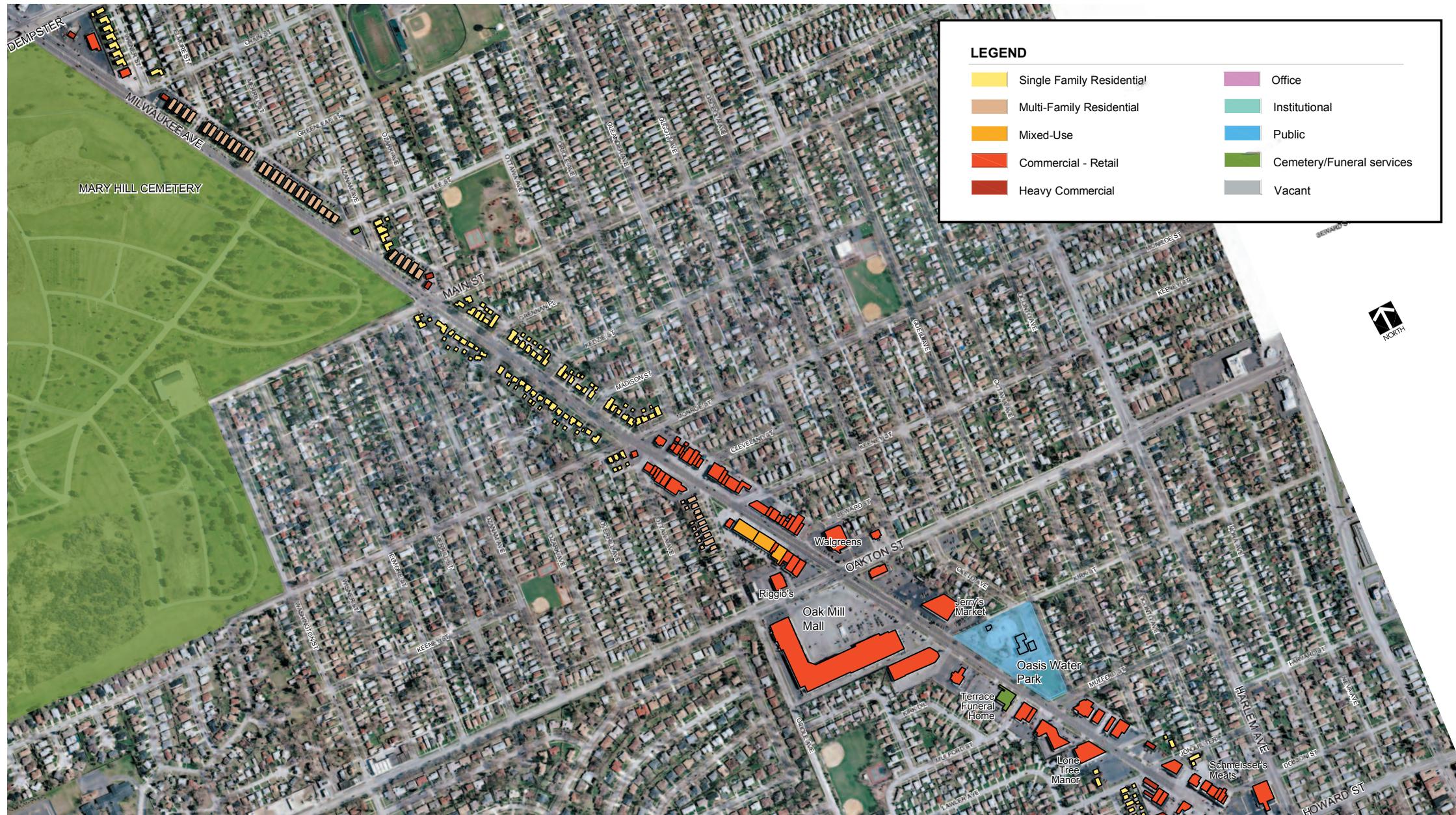


Figure 9. Pattern of land use in the central section of the corridor, from Dempster St. to Howard St.

Land Use and Major Features

Central Section

In contrast to the area south of Howard, the pattern of land use in the central section of the Milwaukee Avenue corridor in Niles is quite uniform. Commercial uses are located on a thin strip fronting Milwaukee surrounded by large residential neighborhoods. In fact, the commercial uses stop at Monroe Street, where residential uses front Milwaukee north to Dempster Street. Major features then are fewer than to the south:

- Howard Street
- Oakton Street
- Oak Mill Mall
- Oasis Water Park
- Mary Hill Cemetery
- Residential uses fronting on Milwaukee.

Notably lacking in this area is a direct north-south thoroughfare crossing Milwaukee. Oriole Avenue crosses Oakton Street and meets Milwaukee from the south, creating a triangle between the three streets, but it does not continue directly north and is exclusively residential.

There are fewer heavy commercial uses in this section than to the south, and those that are here are related to automobile service, including a small cluster of businesses at Jonquil Terrace (a gas station, car repair, and truck rental), a gas station at Main Street, and oil change and repair shop at Crain and then Dempster.

The commercial land uses in the area are related to daily market activities and personal or business services. The area around Oakton Street is a community shopping destination for residents of Niles. The two main attractions are Oak Mill Mall and its full service grocery store, and a fresh produce market. While Oak Mill Mall was designed as a retail mall, a growing demand for medical offices is filling space in the building.

In addition to the two large grocers, specialty deli and meat shops are located in the area. The second of three banquet halls in the corridor indicates a niche market, and a funeral home is located between the two cemeteries. On the west side of Milwaukee north of Oakton, a row of two-story buildings constitute the only significant mixed-use development in the corridor, with these buildings providing retail space on their ground floor and apartment units above.

Fast food and sit-down restaurants are dispersed throughout this segment of the corridor, as are banks, and professional offices. Office space is located in older storefronts, or on some second floors, but there are not any stand-alone office buildings.

A sharp break in the commercial strip occurs roughly two blocks north of Oakton Street at Monroe Street, where a two-block stretch of single-family houses occupies both sides of Milwaukee Avenue. Continuing north, six-flat apartment buildings, all from the same period of construction, line the street opposite Mary Hill Cemetery.



Block of storefronts just north of Howard St. shows some local character.



Oak Mill Mall at Oakton Ave includes a full-service grocery store.



Mixed retail and residential buildings located north of Oakton Ave..



Six-flat apartment buildings with parking lane and alley access located across from St. Mary Cemetery.

Site Plan and Pedestrian Environment Analysis: Central Section



Figure 10. Analysis of existing site plans and the pedestrian environment in the segment between Mulford and Howard St. focuses on the availability of a sidewalk, number of curb cuts, and position of building frontage or setbacks.

Sidewalk
 Internal Sidewalk
 Curb Cut

Urban Form, Site Development, and Pedestrian Environment

Central Section

At Birchwood Avenue, the Niles Shopping Plaza is one of the earliest examples of the small strip mall type of development prevalent in the corridor. What defines it as a strip mall is a layout that puts one or two rows of parking in front of a strip of shops located in a single-story building with an undifferentiated facade. Chicago city limits extend across Milwaukee Avenue east to Harlem Avenue at Howard Street. This complicated intersection is further challenged by this shared jurisdiction. While buildings in the Chicago part of the intersection exhibit a relatively consistent frontage along Milwaukee Avenue, the basic plan is that of a strip mall with most of the parking out in front on narrow single-bay lots. The appearance of the area is drab. A fast food hamburger restaurant sits uneasily on a small triangular island of land formed by the three intersecting streets. Trash container sheds and cell towers front on Milwaukee and Howard. Across Harlem just north of the Niles Shopping Center are two fast food restaurants.

Dynamic changes in urban form occur in the central section. Starting at the southern end at Howard, the street is lined with a block of small shops, one designed with hints of northern European roots in its gabled-front roof and white cross emblem reflecting its sale of Old World, craftsman quality sausages and meats. Across the street, an Italian restaurant displays Mediterranean styling including red clay tile roof, washed out stucco in warm yellow, and a portico with Doric columns. This attention to architectural detail in a business-appropriate theme manages to

avoid camp or kitsch, making this area near Howard one of the most inviting along the whole street. The spell is quickly broken though on blocks immediately north. On the east side of Milwaukee an automobile repair shop occupies a very short block and the sidewalk is difficult to discern from the curb cuts, followed by a block where there is no sidewalk, but instead a 285-foot-long curb cut leading directly to a single bay of parking in front of four small buildings. This creates an unappealing strip of asphalt spilling from the road into the lot, and potentially dangerous movement of automobiles in and out of the site. This type of condition occurs far too often in the corridor, but better site plans can be found that are models for improvement.

In fact, the block with Schmeiser's Meats north of Howard Street offers a model for better site development in this type of single-bay parking configuration, including:

- controlled access at one point and egress at one point,
- diagonal parking at the curb that is shared by the businesses,
- a one-way drive lane between the parking and storefront,
- a consistent public sidewalk,
- and an internal sidewalk along the storefronts.

Wide variations in site and roadway standards are evident in this short section of the avenue. Starting at Jonquil Street and going north to Oakton, the west side of Milwaukee Avenue has a very wide parkway, landscaped with grass and street trees. The environ-

ment for pedestrians is relatively pleasant with the parkway acting as a buffer between the sidewalk and street. Parcels deepen, leading up to the Oak Mill Mall and Jerry's Market area at Oakton. The mall is an "L" shaped building at the back of its site with a large surface parking area lining Milwaukee Avenue and Oakton. This configuration shows its parking up front, but does not define or enclose the corner, in the southernmost example of a "big box" site plan on Milwaukee Avenue. The produce market on the east side of the street offers a bit more building frontage along the street and shares a curb cut with a fast food restaurant on the corner. These site plans operate at the automobile scale, but at a cost to the pedestrian environment.

Just north of the Oakton intersection a new drug store shows attention to landscaping and has marked crosswalks for pedestrians, but again the parking is out front and building in back. In perhaps the most curious twist along the corridor, a block of on-street parallel parking is located just north of the drug store. This is practically the only place in the corridor that parallel parking is found in front of commercial uses. The buildings front directly on the sidewalk in a traditional urban plan. Yet, across the street, the condition is again that of a single-bay parking arrangement, with a 600-foot-long curb cut and no sidewalk. The parking is head-in, pulling straight up to the building facades. Access to the corner bakery is severely constrained, leading to a recent decision to relocate. At the north end of this triangular block, a small landscaped park takes the point. More site plans with single-bay parking in front are found on the blocks leading north to the residential area.

Site Plan and Pedestrian Environment Analysis: Central Section

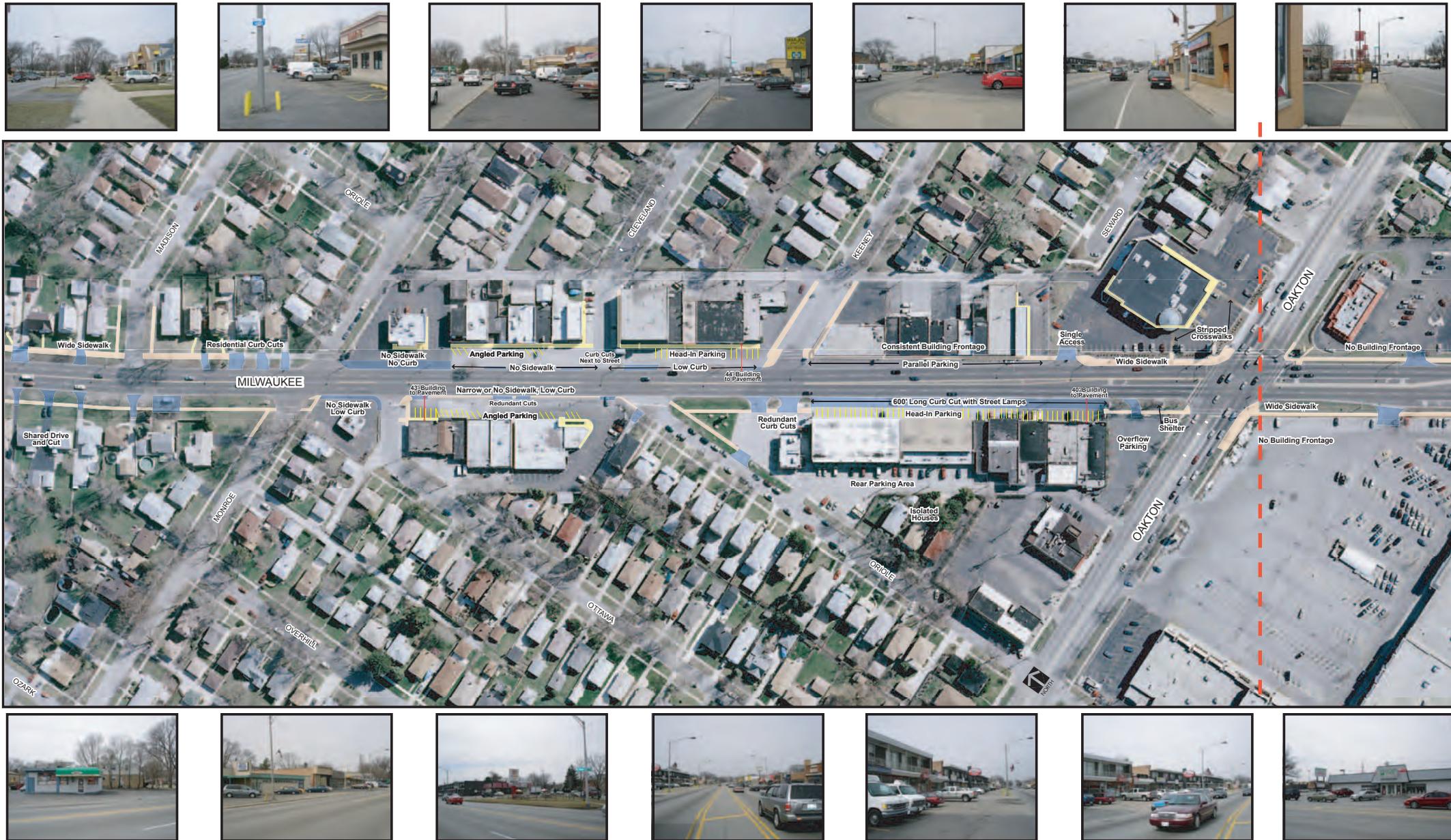
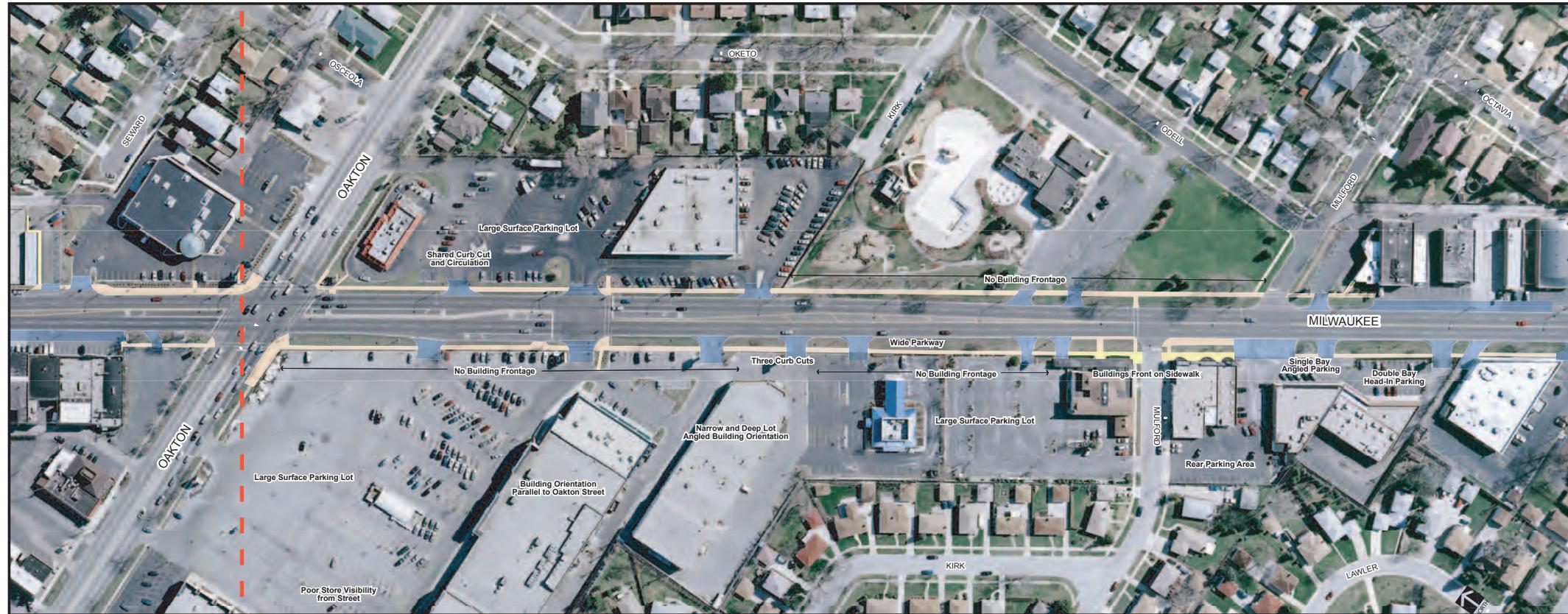


Figure 11. Analysis of existing site plans and the pedestrian environment in the segment between the residential area north of Monroe St. and continuing on the facing page past Oakton St. south to Mulford Ave. and Howard St.

Sidewalk
 Internal Sidewalk
 Curb Cut

Site Plan and Pedestrian Environment Analysis: Central Section



Sidewalk

Internal Sidewalk

Curb Cut

The residential stretch of Milwaukee Avenue is a relatively orderly arrangement; however, the area of single-family houses has a large number of curb cuts due to a lack of alley access for most of the parcels. In contrast, the stretch of apartment buildings fronting the street is served by alleys. At the intersection with Main Street a gas station occupies a corner, breaking the residential frontage. Likewise, commercial uses are located at the north end of the residential area at Dempster Street.

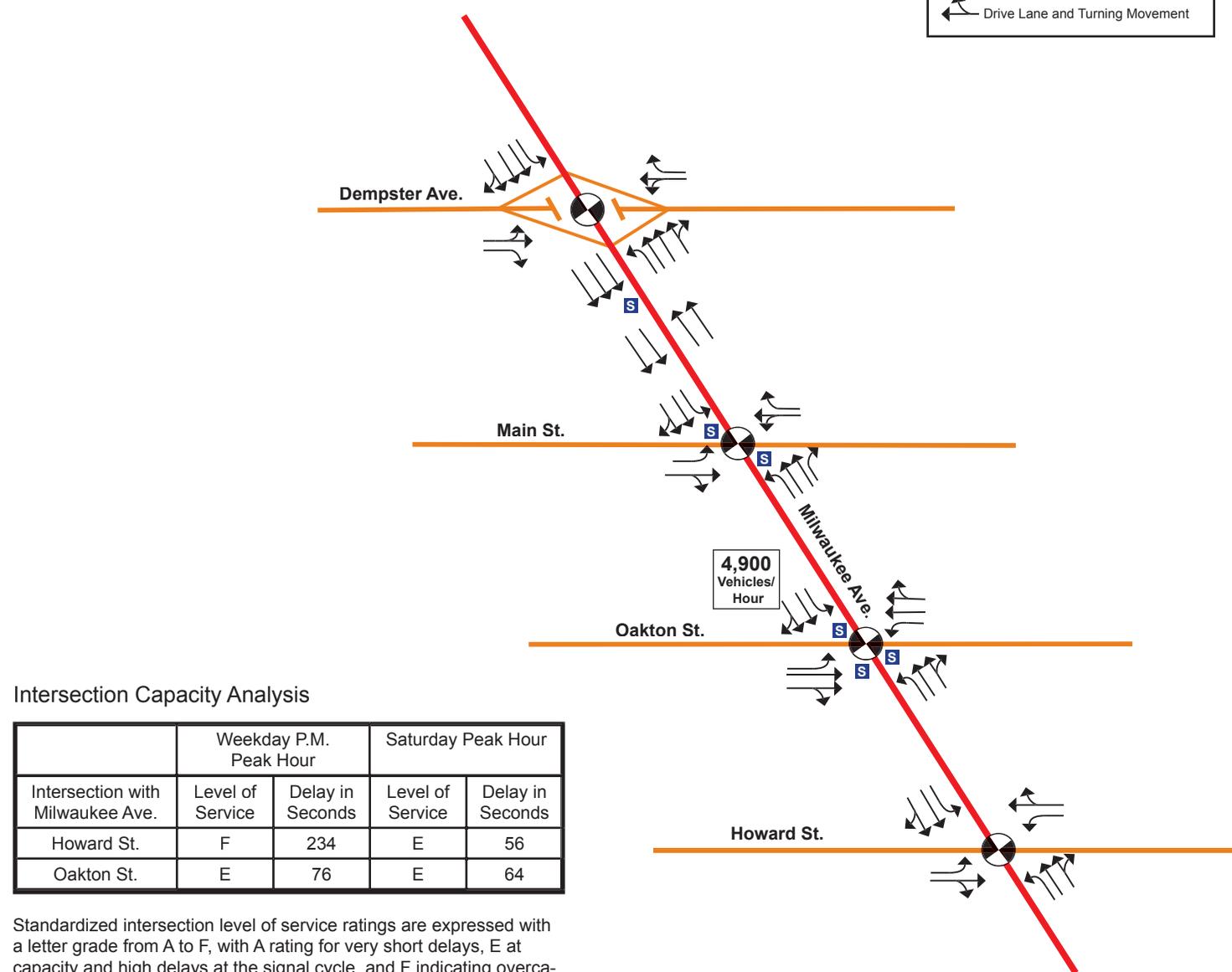
Traffic and Circulation

Central Section

Traffic flow in the central section of the corridor is somewhat improved from the southeast section, due both to the pattern of land use and less complicated intersections. Yet certain parts of this section also have serious congestion, turning movement, and access problems.

Starting south of Dempster Street to Main Street, the cemetery creates a long stretch with only a single driveway on the west side of Milwaukee, and apartment buildings on the east side are served by an alley. This configuration results in efficient traffic flow. Parallel parking is allowed in front of the apartment buildings. While traffic flow is good, this causes countervailing issues regarding pedestrians crossings at Crain Street and Main Street. Students attending Notre Dame High School, at Crain and Ozark Avenue, cross Milwaukee at the unsignalized intersection with Crain Street to access the southbound bus. Currently the bus stop and shelter is located at Crain Street. The safety of pedestrian crossings at Main Street was also raised as a concern by residents.

Figure 12. Roadway geometrics for the central section showing turning lanes, traffic signals, and vehicles per hour at selected intersections.



Intersection Capacity Analysis

Intersection with Milwaukee Ave.	Weekday P.M. Peak Hour		Saturday Peak Hour	
	Level of Service	Delay in Seconds	Level of Service	Delay in Seconds
Howard St.	F	234	E	56
Oakton St.	E	76	E	64

Standardized intersection level of service ratings are expressed with a letter grade from A to F, with A rating for very short delays, E at capacity and high delays at the signal cycle, and F indicating overcapacity conditions and extensive delays.

Single-family houses line Milwaukee from Main Street to Monroe Street. While this land use does not generate as much traffic as commercial property, there is a large number of individual curb cuts. In addition, three local roads connect to the east side of Milwaukee on very short block faces and cars turning to local streets and private driveways slow traffic.

Traffic movement in the commercial stretch between Monroe Street and Oakton Street was identified by the field survey and by residents and business owners as an area of specific concern. No turn lanes are provided for businesses between Monroe and Oakton, and on the majority of these blocks cars are allowed uncontrolled access to parking areas in front of commercial buildings. Very long curb cuts interrupt the sidewalk and circulation and parking is chaotic and potentially hazardous.

Cleveland and Keeney streets connect to the east side of Milwaukee allowing additional turning movements. Access to Seward Street was closed at the time the relatively new drugstore was developed on the corner with Oakton Street, however, the fact that southbound left turns are still allowed to this site is problematic. Closing Cleveland and Keeney streets could be considered. Surprisingly, the lone stretch of parallel parking on the east side of Milwaukee just north of the drugstore functions relatively well, given that the parking lane is wide and it is easy to understand the parking arrangement.

Oakton Street was identified by many citizens as particularly difficult to negotiate during times of peak congestion. The lack of a left turn lane for northbound traffic north of Oakton causes traffic to back

up, as motorists try to access businesses on the west side of the road. Access to parking areas on the west side is not controlled. However, the field survey and map analysis indicates that room may be available in the right of way to add a left turn lane north of Oakton.

South of Oakton Street to Howard Street traffic flow is relatively good. The west side of Milwaukee Avenue has a wide parkway with landscaping, and four sites are configured with building frontage along the sidewalk and parking to the side of the building—these businesses being Amici Restaurant, Lone Tree Manor, Callero and Callero, and Terrace Funeral Home. This site configuration is a model for the corridor because it provides a relatively efficient and safe circulation pattern, while also creating some building frontage along the sidewalk for pedestrians.

The east side of Milwaukee between Mulford Street and Jonquil Terrace exhibits a block-long curb cut, an unnecessary connection to Octavia Street, and redundant curb cuts. Yet south of Jonquil Terrace to Howard Street is a model site plan, where access is limited to a single point and diagonal parking and a side lot is shared by all the businesses on the block.



The site plan for Amici Restaurant places the restaurant up next to the sidewalk and parking to the side.



Buildings front on Milwaukee Avenue with parking to the side and rear.



Wide landscaped parkway between the sidewalk and curb, and building frontage along the sidewalk provide a buffer and enclosure for pedestrians.



A long, open curb cut without a sidewalk leaves pedestrians without a clear and safe path.

Land Use, Northwest Section



Figure 13. Pattern of land use in the northwest section of the corridor, from Golf Rd. to Dempster St.

Land Use and Major Features

Northwest Section

Land use in the corridor north of Dempster Street remains predominately retail commercial, however, the scale of the parcels, buildings, and parking lots grows substantially larger than along the rest of the corridor. In fact, Milwaukee Avenue itself is wider in this northwest section serving stand-alone strip malls from Dempster to Maryland Street, and leading to a regional shopping center at Golf Mill Shopping Center. Major features include:

- Mary Hill Cemetery
- Dempster Street, and its grade separated intersection
- Golf Road
- Former Sports Authority site
- Golf Mill Shopping Center
- Four Flaggs Shopping Center
- Golf Milwaukee Plaza
- Bradford Exchange
- Surface parking lots.

Indeed the amount of land devoted to parking automobiles is so great that it becomes a major land use and feature in itself. Currently, with more than 5 parking spaces per 1000 square feet of commercial space, the parking lots around Golf Mill mall consume more land than the mall itself. This parking also serves the circular office building incorporated into the south end of the mall building, which is the only multiple-story, multiple-tenant office building in the corridor. Across Milwaukee is the corporate headquarters for Bradford Exchange, which constitutes the other office use in the section. Also across

from the mall is a car dealership, which is the largest heavy commercial use, but other car repair uses are present, specifically along Golf Road between Milwaukee and Greenwood Avenue, and on a number of sites between Maryland and Dempster.

A few institutional and public uses are located in the section, including the Niles Historical Society and Washington Terrace Park both south of Ballard Road. St. Mathew's Church is located near the intersection with Maryland, and the Glenbridge nursing home center is on Golf Road.

Urban Form, Site Development, and Pedestrian Environment Northwest Section

North of Dempster the urban form is that of small disjointed strip malls, which are difficult to distinguish from each other. The one large site in the section from Dempster to Maryland, is the former Sports Authority site. It is identified in this manner because most of the big box structure is vacant, although partially occupied by a liquor store. A large banquet hall is located between Ballard Road and Maryland Street. This is the northern most of three banquet halls along Milwaukee Avenue in Niles. A pool supply business and fence sales operation are located across from each other in this section, along with other eclectic buildings and uses such as the Niles Historic Society and an old single-family house.

The series of strip malls, with single-story structures set back from the wide street, leaves the area between Dempster and Maryland Street with a weak



Former Sports Authority site with vacant building and large parking lot.



Strip mall development north of Dempster St.



Golf Mill mall and office tower with its large parking lot.



Only a portion of Four Flaggs Shopping Center is visible from Milwaukee Ave.

architectural presence, compensated by aggressive signage attempting to grab the eye of passing motorists.

The Golf Mill mall area begins north of Maryland Street and continues north to Golf Road. The mall, built in 1960, occupies the western side of Milwaukee from Maryland or Church Street to Golf Road. The façade of the mall is radically different than other buildings in the corridor, having only a minimal orientation to Milwaukee Avenue, with no storefronts or features. It was designed as an object, set in a vast expanse of parking, that gives few clues as to its contents. This type of mall is designed for access via automobile, but paradoxically, its real attraction is that it creates an internal pedestrian environment free of traffic, as well as the vagaries of weather. Currently, only three “out buildings” are located on the site, one being a vacant, former electronics store.

The evolution of commercial retailing in the last twenty years has left the internal mall behind, first favoring continuous strip centers where patrons park as close as possible to their main shopping destination—an example being the Four Flaggs Shopping Center across the avenue from the mall. Four Flaggs epitomizes this design, strung out like a snake extending from Milwaukee back to Golf with façades that advertise each store. The second big step away from the internal mall was to the superstore that simply internalizes all potential shopping needs into one business and one box. Golf Milwaukee Plaza on the northeast corner of the intersection shows this type of configuration, built around a Kmart store, which is scheduled to be torn down and replaced with a Wal-Mart store. This “plaza” is also typical, with eight separate out buildings scattered along the

periphery of the site. The latest evolution in retailing is the “life-style center” which seeks to create an environment that hints at the urban street through attention to pedestrian amenities, but is geared to a high-end retailing. Milwaukee Avenue does not have an example of this type of center.

The environment for pedestrians in the northwest section is hostile, both in terms of the scale of development, the large parking lots, and the speed of traffic. Walking between different shopping malls, from Golf Mill mall to Four Flaggs is problematic, given the need to cross the large parking lots and Milwaukee Avenue. Even going from one store to another within sites can be difficult without an automobile.

Traffic and Circulation

Northwest Section

Beginning at Dempster Street, the northwest section of Milwaukee Avenue is quite different than the other two sections, where the roadway struggles to function with constraints existing prior to growth in traffic. The area north of Dempster was designed for ease of access via automobile. The scale of development is at the scale of travel by automobile, faster speeds leading to buildings spaced further apart along the roadway—very different from storefronts built at the scale and walking speed of pedestrians. Indeed the strip malls and the regional mall found in this section of the avenue are styles of retailing designed to appeal to and cater to motorists, many coming to Milwaukee Avenue from a market area enlarged by the possibility of quick shopping trips on large arterial roadways, including Golf Road and Dempster Street. Parking is guaranteed by devoting large por-

tions of sites to asphalt.

The first indication of provision for greater traffic levels and speeds is the grade separated intersection at Dempster, where traffic crossing Milwaukee passes underneath the avenue. Continuing north of Dempster, Milwaukee Avenue is configured with full turn lanes in the center of the roadway to access local streets and the malls and shopping centers. A full set of dedicated left and right turn lanes is provided, along with the standard two drive lanes in each direction.

Comments received from residents and employees in the area indicate that left turns onto Milwaukee can be difficult, particularly going north from Oak Street. The turn lane for Elizabeth Street is very close to the intersection with Dempster and could be considered for closure. Ballard Road is misaligned east of Milwaukee, which could be addressed if the large site south of Ballard is redeveloped. The many curb cuts in the stretch from Dempster to Ballard can impede traffic.

The southbound bus stop at Dempster Street is on the near side of the intersection, which is not ideal for transit efficiency, because without signal prioritization the bus must load passengers and then wait for the green signal. A far-side stop would allow a bus to cross the intersection then load and proceed, yet, without a bus turn-out lane, traffic would be stopped behind the bus in the intersection, which is unacceptable at this location. The lack of a bus turn-out lane on the far side of Dempster, next to the cemetery, precludes a bus stop south of the intersection and creates the problem of having the bus stop located

at Crain Street, as discussed in the central section analysis.

Transit efficiency is promoted by having a major transit transfer center on the south end of the Golf Mill mall site. A number of Pace bus routes converge on this transfer facility, however, the location on the south side of the mall forces buses operating on Golf Road to go nearly a half-mile off of Golf Road and back again. Buses turning west onto Golf Road at Greenwood Avenue must get in the queue behind other traffic at this busy intersection, causing further delays.

Intersection Capacity Analysis

Intersection with Milwaukee Ave.	Weekday P.M. Peak Hour		Saturday Peak Hour	
	Level of Service	Delay in Seconds	Level of Service	Delay in Seconds
Ballard Rd.	D	47	C	30

Standardized intersection level of service ratings are expressed with a letter grade from A to F, with A rating for very short delays and F indicating overcapacity conditions and extensive delays. Light congestion gets a rating of C and a rating of D indicates noticeable congestion and more vehicles stopped at the intersection.

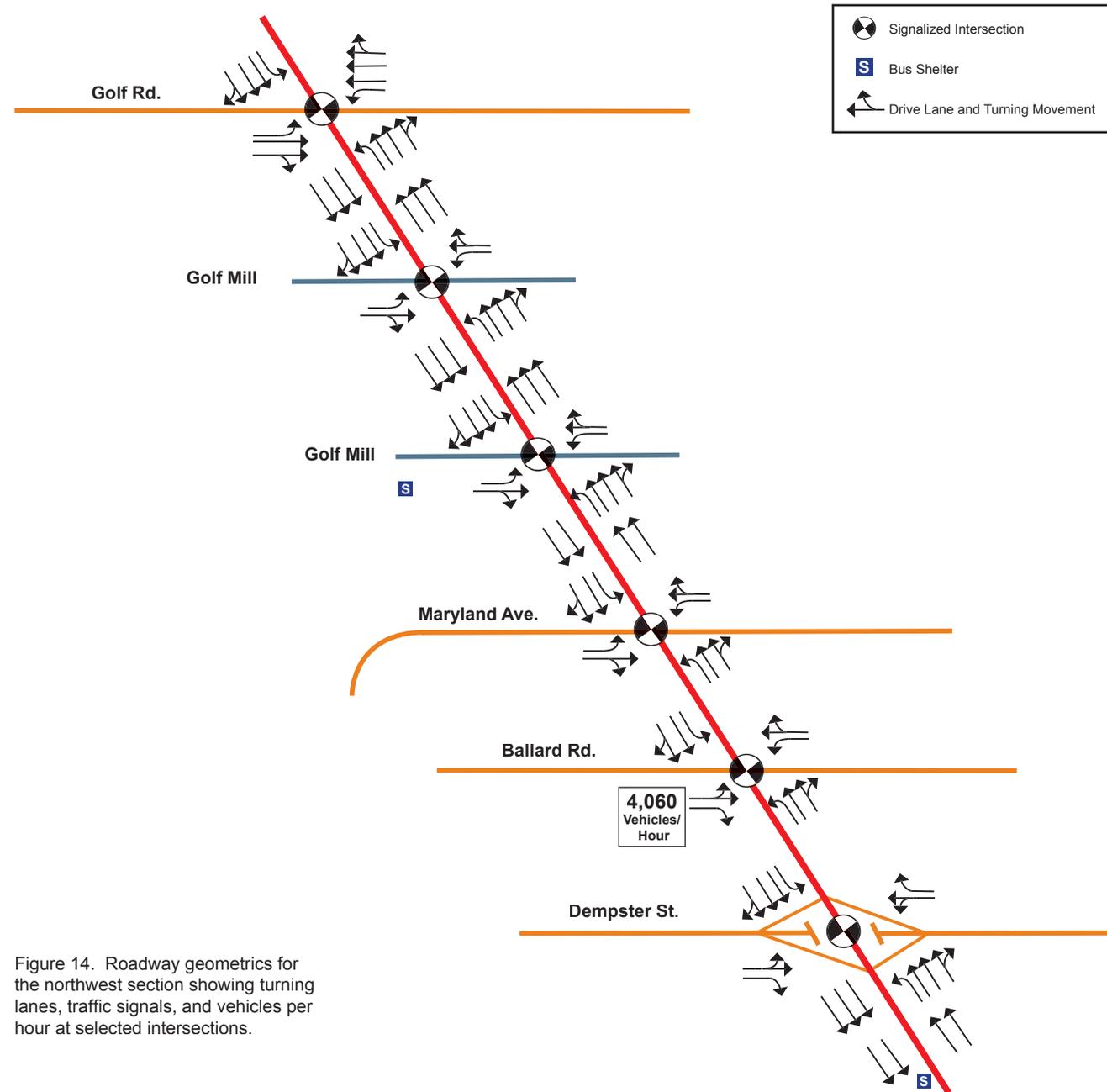


Figure 14. Roadway geometrics for the northwest section showing turning lanes, traffic signals, and vehicles per hour at selected intersections.

Retail Market Areas for Niles Shopping Destinations

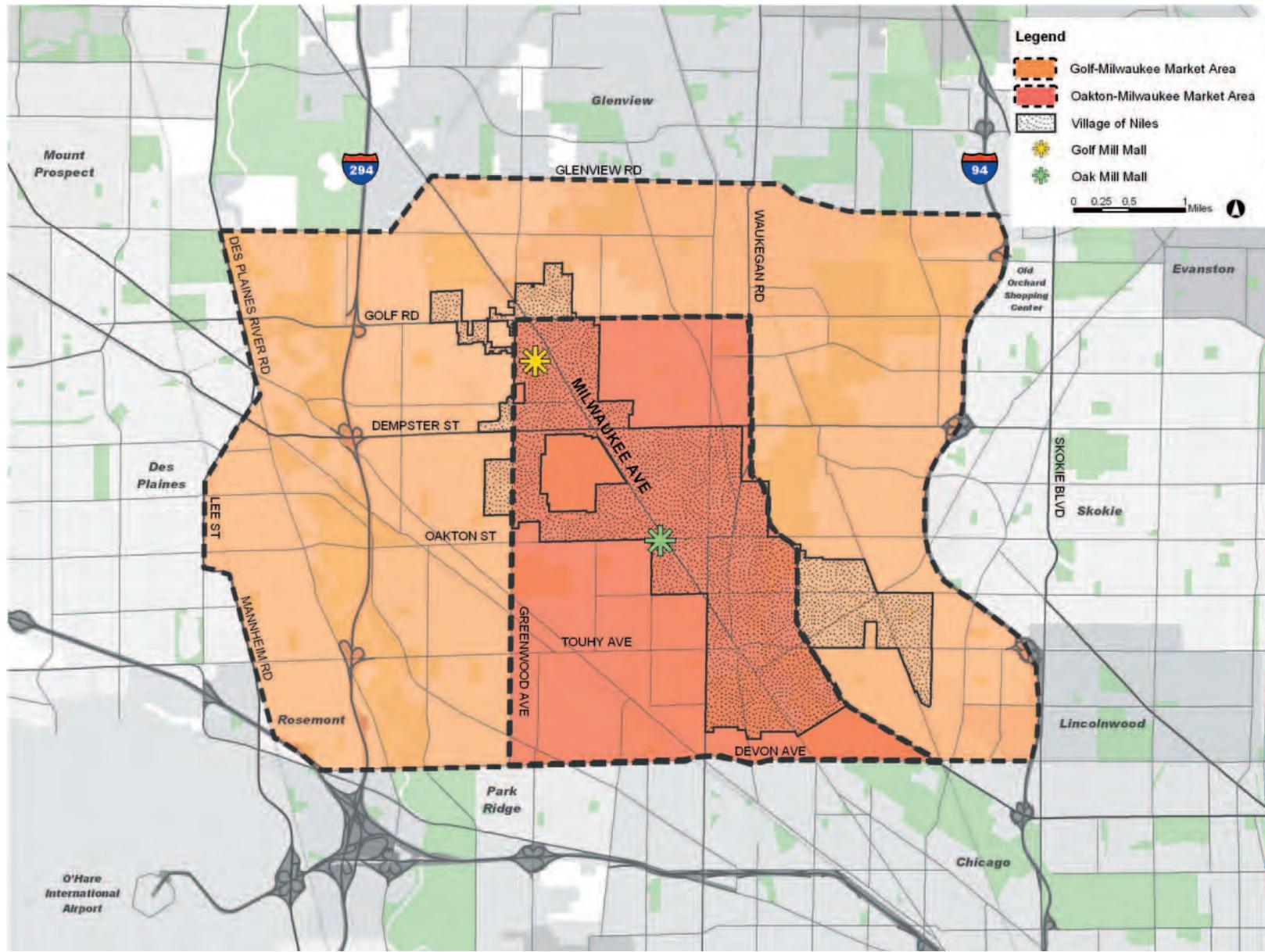


Figure 15. Retail market areas are shown for shopping destinations at Golf Rd. and Milwaukee and Oakton St. and Milwaukee. The area for Golf Mill mall is much larger, and extends well beyond the Village of Niles.

Real Estate Market Analysis

Focus on retailing

A real estate market analysis was performed for Milwaukee Avenue in 2005 by Valerie S. Kretchmer Associates to determine the competitive position of the corridor relative to surrounding communities, with a focus on the market for retail space. This analysis looked at the major retail nodes in the corridor and identified geographic trade areas as well as the types of goods and services that the corridor offers. Retail rents were inventoried, and gaps or opportunities in the retail market were identified. The analysis also investigated the types and availability of office space and the trend for new residential development.

The accompanying demographic analysis and comparison to other northwest suburbs shows the success of long-standing Village policy to foster retail development along Milwaukee Avenue as a main source of revenue generated through sales tax. The policy has allowed Niles to capture a leading amount of per capita sales revenue and thereby fund many Village services. The singular focus on retail however, challenges Milwaukee Avenue in its role as the village's functional main street, which would benefit from a more varied mix of land uses, particularly in the provision of office space for professional services and a more vibrant mix of entertainment, hospitality, and civic uses.

Regional position and retail concentrations

Much of the strength of Milwaukee Avenue as a commercial corridor comes from the diagonal alignment of the roadway and the facility of the roadway itself. Milwaukee Avenue is a major thoroughfare, linking neighborhoods on the northwest side of the City of Chicago with many Cook County suburbs and beyond. The five-mile length of the road in Niles includes many major intersecting roads, including Touhy Avenue and Dempster Street which motorists use to reach the Tri-

State Tollway (I-294) and the Edens Expressway (I-94). The resulting traffic brings over 36,000 vehicles a day past the many different types of businesses found on the avenue.

Milwaukee Avenue has two key commercial nodes, or retail destinations, at Golf Road and Oakton Street. Each of these retail concentrations has a mall as an anchor, although they differ greatly in size and layout. The Golf Mill Shopping Center and nearby smaller centers form a key shopping concentration which draws shoppers from well beyond the Village of Niles (see Fig. 15). The small Oak Mill Mall at Oakton is less successful as a retail center, and has a much smaller market area, but is still an important destination for grocery shoppers.

Niles has other retail concentrations beyond the Milwaukee Avenue corridor, located primarily along Dempster Street and Touhy Avenue. Some of the competitive shopping centers on these streets are just beyond the Niles municipal boundaries, either in Morton Grove or Skokie.

Demographics for Niles market

Niles has a stable population (just under 30,000) and household base with a high degree of homeownership. Its population density is attractive to retailers.

The proportion of the population ages 65 and older (27%) is higher in Niles than in neighboring communities, as is its median age of 47 years. Because many senior citizens are living on limited or fixed incomes, median household income in Niles (estimated at \$52,368 in 2004) is lower than that of its neighbors. As a result, Niles' stores tend to cater to moderate- to middle- income shoppers, while stores in Skokie, Glenview, and Park Ridge serve younger and more affluent shoppers.

Niles has fewer residents with college educations and more households without access to an automobile. In part, the latter finding reflects the village's older population, many of whom no longer drive. The village has an excellent system of bus transportation that serves this population.

Competitive market for retail

Shopping areas along Milwaukee Avenue compete with retail concentrations in Skokie, especially businesses in and around Old Orchard mall, strip centers in Morton Grove and Park Ridge, and, to a lesser extent, recently developed stores at The Glen in Glenview. Despite the extensive retail competition outside of its borders, Niles is a retail sales magnet. On a per capita basis, Niles' retail sales are very strong. In 2004, the Village registered \$35,176 in non-automotive retail sales for every resident—far more than the Cook County average (\$8,323) and outpacing all of its neighbors, (see charts at right).

In 2004, the Village generated over \$1.2 billion in retail sales; \$1.04 billion if automotive sales are excluded. The prior peak year for retail sales in Niles was 2001. Although sales declined in 2002 due to the lingering effects of the national recession, they have since rebounded. However, the rate of sales growth since 2000 has lagged behind that of Skokie, Des Plaines, and Glenview, while outpacing Morton Grove and Park Ridge. Glenview in particular has been very aggressive in adding new retail sales generators.

Niles' retail sales growth has been especially strong in three categories (eating and drinking places, lumber and hardware, and automotive) but quite weak in three other categories (food, apparel, and furniture and home furnishings). Niles residents have potential spending power of \$280 million, but the retail sales potential for

the Oakton-Milwaukee market area is \$650 million and for the much larger Golf Mill market area is \$1.9 billion. These figures show the extent to which Niles is attracting shoppers from outside its borders and must continue to do so if it is to maintain or increase its retail base.

From this analysis the following conclusions are drawn regarding the competitive position for retail space in Niles and along Milwaukee Avenue:

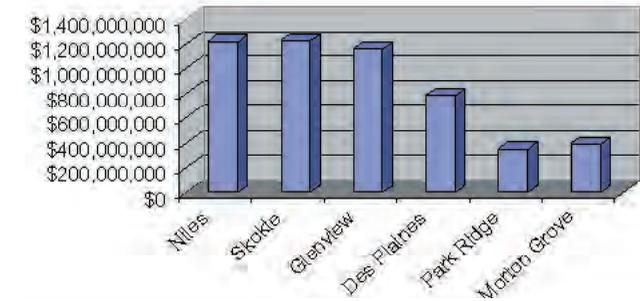
- Niles has more retail space and per capita retail sales than its neighboring communities.
- Milwaukee Avenue shops serve a market that is focused on middle income shoppers.
- Sales growth in Niles is slower than in its neighbors with larger populations.
- Niles is dependent on shoppers from outside the village as a major source of revenue.

Retail property along Milwaukee Avenue

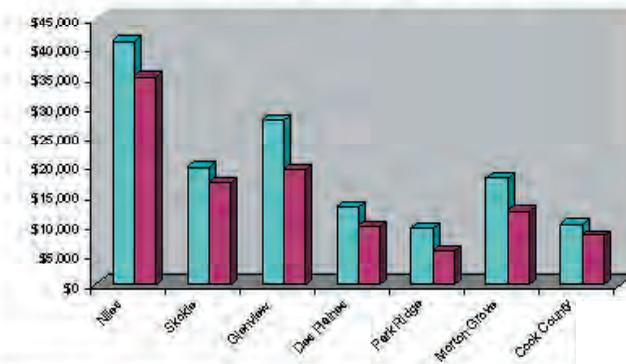
Milwaukee Avenue has a wide variety of retail spaces available for lease, from space within Golf Mill mall to small strip center storefronts. Taken as a whole, the market for retail space along the corridor remains strong, yet certain indicators point to weaknesses that the planning effort should address. Starting with the biggest asset, a summary of conditions at Golf Mill Mall includes:

- Originally built in 1960 as an open-air regional mall.
- Renovation enclosed the mall and subsequent investments have been made to reposition the mall.
- Mall has 1.1 million square feet of space.
- Current tenants include J. C. Penney, Sears, Kohls, Target, a grocery, and recently added furniture store.
- Non-anchor space is currently 20% vacant.
- Plans to add a 12-14 screen cinema are proceeding.

Total Sales for Niles and Surrounding Municipalities Year 2004



2004 Per Capita Total Sales and Non-Automotive Sales in Niles and Nearby Communities



The importance of Golf Mill Mall as a destination along Milwaukee Avenue can not be overemphasized. In addition to its own space, the mall is the anchor for adjacent centers, including Four Flaggs Shopping Center, which has a Jewel-Osco grocery store and a number of large chain stores, and Golf-Milwaukee Center, which has a vacant Kmart store currently earmarked to be converted to a Wal-Mart as part of a redevelopment effort. This retail node is challenged by aging structures, difficult circulation patterns between shopping centers, and lack of attention to overall aesthetics in regard to signage, overhead lines, and the streetscape. Despite this, the Golf Mil area remains competitive and investments are planned, showing that major retailers remain committed to the area.

The shopping area at the intersection of Oakton Street and Milwaukee is the second major retail node in the corridor. The market area for this commercial center is much smaller than for Golf Road, and its stores are focused on perishable goods and daily and weekly shopping needs. The largest shopping center is the Oak Mill Mall, with 160,000 square feet of space. The anchor tenant is a Jewel supermarket, which occupies 50,000 square feet and has a long-term lease. The western part of the shopping center is a small enclosed mall. Enclosed centers of this size are not very attractive to today's store chains or individual entrepreneurs because they lack visibility and exposure to the street. Rents for retail space are low, and the value of the land at this highly visible intersection is said to exceed the value of the building. Yet the mall owner has found a market for medical offices, which now occupy a good portion of the space.

Besides the major shopping centers, retail space is dispersed along Milwaukee Avenue in a large number of strip malls, stand-alone buildings, and older store-

fronts. Overall vacancy rates in Niles retail centers are very low and along Milwaukee Avenue most retail strips have no more than one or two small vacancies. The corridor has few parcels of vacant land, but there are a number of large retail spaces that are vacant and other shopping areas that appear to be dated or underutilized. The former Sports Authority building south of Ballard Road is a case in point, where more than half of the 100,000 square foot big box structure is vacant. A general conclusion is that owners of retail space along Milwaukee Avenue have been able to keep most of the available space leased, but at rather low rates, and that some of the older shopping centers struggle to remain competitive.

Retail market opportunities

The analysis of the retail market in Niles and along Milwaukee Avenue leads to the following conclusions about potential retail opportunities and niches and overall competitive position:

1. Niles should look to enhance its retail offerings in the apparel, eating and drinking, home furnishings, and miscellaneous retail categories.
2. A wide range of apparel targeting children, teens and 20 to 40 year olds could enhance the current retail mix.
3. A store such as Bed Bath and Beyond or Linens N Things could do well here.
4. A variety of medium priced, casual sit-down or quick casual restaurants would be a big draw, especially given the large number of employees during the day.
5. The potential for a multi-screen theater at Golf Mill could enhance the opportunities for more restaurants.
6. The market for expanding retail space along Milwaukee Avenue is weak, and most of the major retailers interested in the market are already present in the

corridor, within Niles on Touhy Avenue, or in nearby communities.

7. Development of new retail space will further depress leasing rates in older, non-competitive shopping centers.
8. Many of the small, older strip centers are located on parcels with very shallow depths, making them difficult to redevelop for larger retailers.
9. Neighboring communities are developing new retail space that will compete with Milwaukee Avenue.

In order for the Village of Niles to stay competitive with adjacent communities that are working to entice shoppers with the latest in goods and shopping environments, redevelopment projects should aim to improve the architectural and site planning aspects of development along Milwaukee Avenue, in concert with efforts to upgrade the public realm along the corridor.

Office market

Niles has very little Class A office space. The only Class A multi-tenant building identified in the survey is a 20,000 square foot building on Oakton Street, where a community bank is the anchor tenant. This building is 16.5% vacant. The inventory of Class B and C space is much larger – nearly 220,000 square feet, with very little vacancy.

Because of its distance from both the Tri-State Tollway and the Edens Expressway, the Milwaukee Avenue corridor is not a location of choice for large-scale Class A office development. However, the corridor is home to numerous small businesses and professional service providers who may want better quality space than is currently available in the largely Class C Niles buildings.

Such tenants can include, but would not be limited to:

- medical and dental practices that benefit from proximity to Lutheran General Hospital,
- medical support services such as physical therapists, laboratories, and medical equipment rental,
- and accountants, financial advisors and investment firms, attorneys, and contractors.

A new Class B building with 20,000 to 30,000 square feet should be marketable along the corridor in either a free-standing building or as part of a mixed-use project.

Residential market potential

Niles was developed in the post-war era with single-family houses and a small number of apartment buildings. The houses were modest in size by today's standards, and some tear-down activity has occurred in recent years, removing single-story bungalows and ranch style dwellings and replacing them with larger two-story houses. In 2004, single-family homes prices in Niles ranged from \$218,000 to \$762,000, with a median price of \$340,000.

Given the relative uniformity of available dwelling types, and the aging population of Niles and surrounding communities, a market toward condominium units has developed in the southern part of the Milwaukee Avenue corridor. Condominiums offer amenities and services not available in a separate house, not the least of which is yard maintenance. The majority of mid-rise condominium buyers in Niles and adjacent suburbs are singles and empty nesters. Many formerly resided in the City of Chicago and moved to the northwest suburbs to be closer to their adult children or because of the suburbs' quality of life. There is some evidence of a growing number of families with children purchasing condominiums because the cost of single-family homes

is rising rapidly.

Niles condominium resale prices in 2004 ranged from \$124,000 to \$225,000 for a one bedroom unit, with a median of \$148,000. In the newest buildings, the price range is \$185,000 to \$225,000 for one bedroom. For a two bedroom condominium, 2004 resale prices started at \$162,000, with the newest units starting at \$210,000 and going as high as \$355,500. The median price for a two bedroom unit in Niles is \$220,000. Although recent trends seemed to indicate the presence of a market for new units, no new condominium projects are currently under construction in Niles, and none have been approved.

Five projects totaling 470 units are being marketed in Des Plaines. Units range in size from 1,048 to 1,938 square feet, and are priced from \$191,900 to \$366,000. Most of the units are priced between \$175 and \$190 per square foot. Prices for the one project underway in Morton Grove are similar to those offered in Des Plaines. Six projects are being sold in Skokie, all at higher prices. One bedroom/one bath units start at \$220,900, and the most expensive units are well over a half million dollars. At two small properties being developed in Glenview, prices start at \$555,000 for a three bedroom unit with 1,530 square feet. Should new condominiums be built in Niles, achievable prices would be closer to those being attained in Des Plaines and Morton Grove than the higher prices asked in Skokie or Glenview.

Niles residents have voiced concern about the traffic impacts of any future condominium construction, especially at the south end of the Milwaukee Avenue. However, general traffic analysis provided during this planning process indicates that a new condominium project at the south end of Milwaukee Avenue would

generate less traffic than a retail center.

There is a market for townhouses in the village. Townhouses would be appropriate for some sites along Milwaukee Avenue in the south of Touhy area, if set back from the roadway and developed with site amenities.

Potential redevelopment sites

At this time, the following locations are or could be available for redevelopment:

- The former Sports Authority building on the north side of Dempster Street and the east side of Milwaukee Avenue. This 71,000 square foot big box store has been vacant for a long time.
- The former Circuit City free-standing store at Golf Mill mall. This site is on the west side of Milwaukee Avenue at the south end of the mall. It lacks visibility from either Milwaukee Avenue or Golf Road, but is visible from Greenwood. The building is 32,279 square feet.
- The area south of Touhy Avenue on the east side of Milwaukee Avenue. Several parcels are being acquired for a retail or mixed-use development.
- Older, small strip centers on both sides of Milwaukee Avenue north and south of Oakton Street.

Transit Service and BRT Concept

Pace and the Niles Free Bus

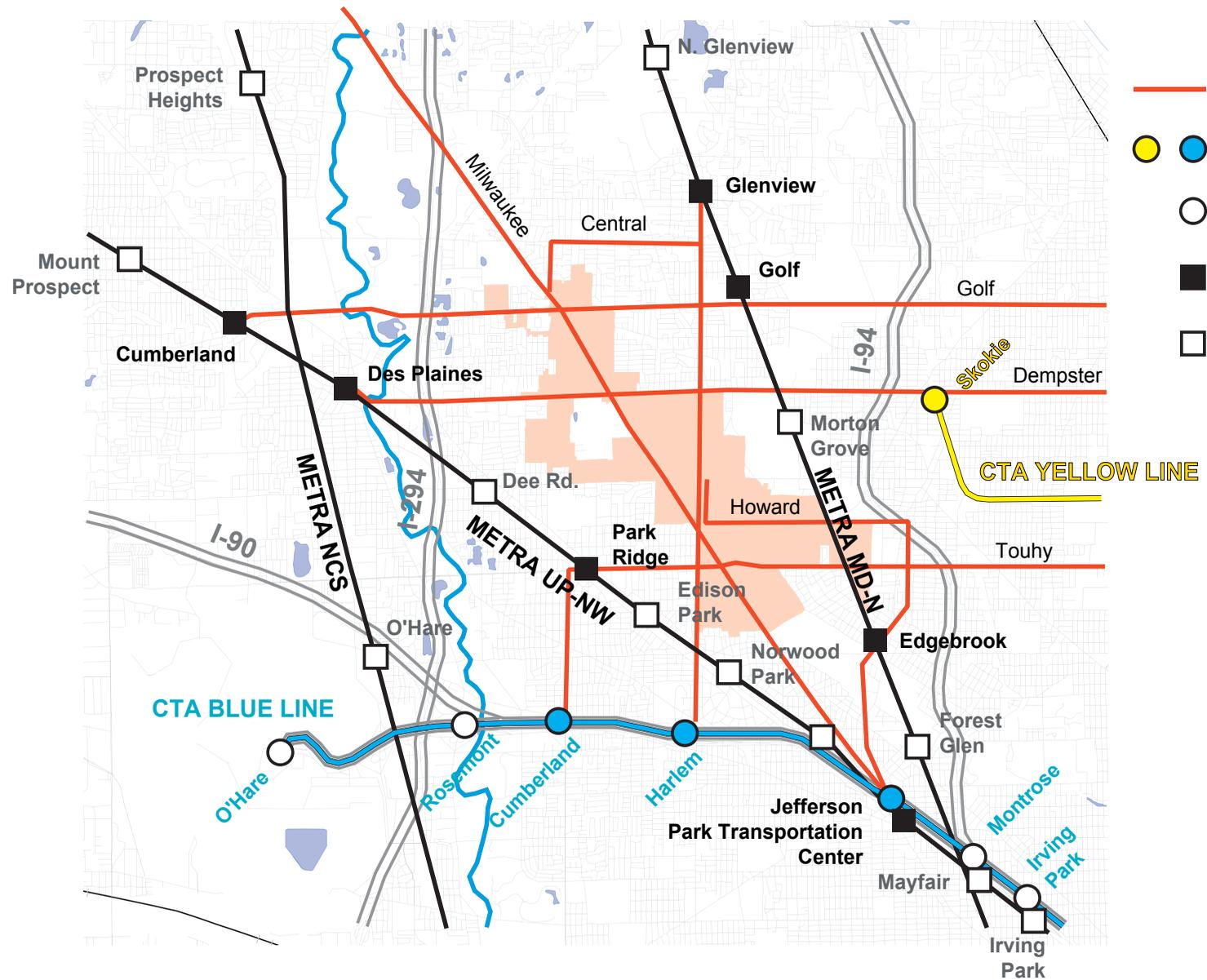
Residents of the Village of Niles are served by the Pace suburban bus system. In addition to a large number of regional bus routes that operate in the village, residents are served by the Niles Free Bus. As the name suggests, this transit service is available to residents without a cashbox fare charge. The Village of Niles subsidizes this bus service, operated by Pace, through its annual budget—a unique transit benefit that is especially useful to the large number of senior citizens living in the community. The Niles Free Bus acts as a circulator to major destinations and to line-haul Pace bus routes, creating a high level of service coverage.

Pace operates nine routes in Niles with the key route being the #270 Milwaukee Avenue. The #270 route is eighteen miles long and operates from well northwest of Niles, through the village, then on to the CTA Blue Line station at Jefferson Park in Chicago. Although Niles is not served by Metra commuter rail, or a CTA rail line, travelers may use one or more of the Pace bus routes in the Village to access rail and bus transfer centers and ultimately regional destinations.

Because of the value that the Village places on bus transit, and the regional importance of Milwaukee Avenue as a connecting route and transfer point, planners for the Pace system identified Milwaukee Avenue in Niles for significant transit upgrades. The creation of the Milwaukee Avenue Plan is an outcome of this working relationship between the Village and Pace, and improving transit efficiencies and amenities is a key goal of the Plan.



Major Transit Facilities in Niles Region



- Milwaukee Ave Corridor Bus Routes with Access to Regional Services
- CTA Train Stations Accessible by Milwaukee Ave Bus Routes
- CTA Train Stations Not Accessible by Milwaukee Ave Bus Routes
- Metra Train Stations Accessible by Milwaukee Ave Bus Routes
- Metra Train Stations Not Accessible by Milwaukee Ave Bus Routes

Metra and CTA Rail Service and bus links in the Niles region

Station	Weekday Boardings	Bus Routes at the Station for Access & Transfer
Metra MD-N		
<i>Average Weekday Line Boardings 21,640</i>		
Glenview	1,390	Pace: 210 Lincoln, 421 Wilmette, 422 Linden CTA Northbrook, 423 Linden Harlem, 648 Glenview Metra AON
Golf	264	Pace: 208 Golf, 210 Lincoln
Edgebrook	624	Pace: 225 Central-Howard, 226 Oakton; CTA 84 Peterson, 85A North Central
Metra UP-NW		
<i>Average Weekday Line Boardings 33,272</i>		
Jefferson Park	749	Pace: 225 Central-Howard, 226 Oakton, 270 Milwaukee, 394 UPS Addison; CTA: 56 Milwaukee, 56A N Milwaukee, 68 NW Highway, 81 Lawrence, 81W W Lawrence, 85 Central, 85A N Central, 88 Higgins, 91 Austin, 92 Foster
Park Ridge	932	Pace: 209 Busse Highway, 241 Greenwood Talcott, 290 Touhy; CTA: 68 NW Highway;
Dee Road	388	Pace: 209 Busse Highway, 240 Dee Road
Des Plaines	991	Pace: 208 Golf Rd, 209 Busse Highway, 230 S Des Plaines, 234 Wheeling, 250 Dempster, 649, Des Plaines Metra - AON
Cumberland	393	Pace: 208 Golf Rd, 221 Wolf Rd, 234 Wheeling
CTA Blue Line		
<i>Average Weekday Line Boardings 129,000 - O'Hare Branch alone 63,000</i>		
Jefferson Park	5,934	Same as Jefferson Park Above

Figure 16. Milwaukee Avenue is located between two commuter rail lines, but is not served by rail transit. Still, the powerful diagonal reach of the Pace #270 connects with two major transportation centers along its route: Golf Mill and Jefferson Park.

Regional transit facilities and connections

Figure 16 shows the main transit service lines and facilities in the Niles region. Milwaukee Avenue in Niles cuts through its region in a corridor that is equidistant from two radial Metra commuter lines, and I-294 and I-94. Because Milwaukee Avenue lies on a diagonal relative to the predominate street grid, the road allows for efficient movement across the northwest suburbs. This alignment makes Milwaukee Avenue a high volume bus route that intersects with bus routes operating on east-west arterials set one mile part—at Golf, Dempster, Oakton, and Touhy—connecting Niles with adjacent towns, particularly those to the east such as Lincolnwood, Skokie, Morton Grove, and Evanston.

Although Niles does not have any rail transit, Pace bus routes provide access to regional rail transit via connections to Metra and CTA facilities in adjacent communities. Metra’s Milwaukee District-North line is accessible by bus from Niles at the Glenview, Golf Road, and Edgebrook stations. The Union Pacific-Northwest line stations accessible by bus from Niles are Jefferson Park, Park Ridge, Dee Road, Des Plaines, and Cumberland.

Niles has direct access to the CTA Blue Line (O’Hare Branch) by means of the Pace #270 service terminating at the Jefferson Park Transportation Center (Lawrence and Milwaukee) in Chicago where transfers can be made to Metra rail, to CTA rail, and to four Pace and ten CTA buses as listed in the table on page 36. The CTA Yellow Line (Skokie Swift) is also accessible by Pace service from Niles. Bus access to these rail stations tie Milwaukee Avenue into the CTA rail and bus systems, allowing access to downtown Chicago, O’Hare International Airport, and many other destinations.

The main regional transit facility within the Village of Niles is located at Golf Mill mall where transfers can be made to and from five Pace regular service buses: #270 Milwaukee Avenue, #208 Golf Road, #240 Dee Road, #241 Greenwood-Talcott, #272 Golf Mill-Westfield and two Niles Free Buses #411 (Local) and #412 (Shopper).

Route #270 and transfers points on Milwaukee Ave
Milwaukee Avenue in Niles currently has nine Pace line-haul routes operating a portion of their route on Milwaukee or crossing Milwaukee, as summarized in the table to the right. The #270 is the most important route in regard to Milwaukee Avenue since it operates on the avenue for its full length through Niles. The route is very easy for riders to understand as it runs in a straight line, from Golf Mill mall south to Jefferson Park.

The #270 had average weekday boardings of 3,110 riders in May of 2005, second highest of all the bus routes operating in the subregion. Only the #290 running on Touhy and intersecting with Milwaukee, had higher boardings, at 3,948 riders (see table and chart at right). As might be expected, the next two most popular routes operate on Dempster and Golf Road, which are large arterial roadways with a number of major destinations and multi-modal connections. Clearly, facilitating transfers between the #270 and the #208 on Golf Road, #250 on Dempster Street, and #290 on Touhy Avenue is an important goal.

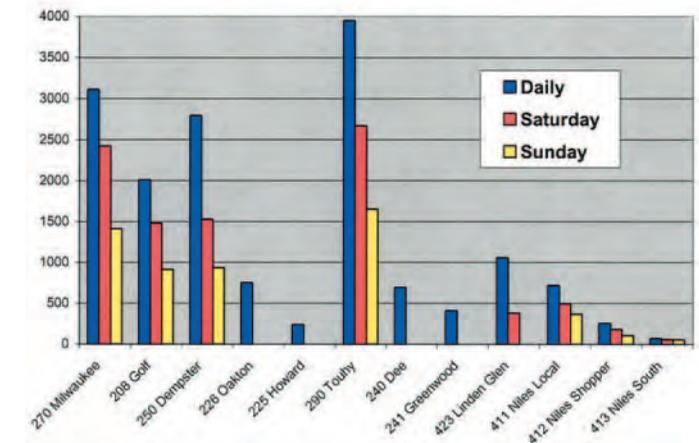
An analysis of daily boardings along the #270 route confirms where the important transfer points and destinations are located. Four of the five highest activity bus stops for the Pace #270 are in the Village of Niles—the fifth is the Jefferson Park Transportation Center

Pace Service in the Niles Milwaukee Avenue Corridor

	NAME	FARE BOARDINGS*	PEAK / OFFPEAK HEADWAY	WEEKEND SERVICE	WEEKDAY HOURS OF SERVICE	% OF ROUTE MILES IN NILES
Pace Regular	270 Milwaukee Avenue	3,110	10 / 20	Yes	18	24%
	208 Golf Rd	2,099	30 / 30	Yes	13	12%
	250 Dempster	2,795	20 / 30	Yes	19	27%
	226 Oakton	749	30 / 60	Yes	13	14%
	225 Central Howard	238	30 / --	No	Peak	39%
	290 Touhy	3,948	10 / 20	Yes	19	19%
	240 Dee Road	691	25 / 60	No	12	19%
	241 Greenwood Talcott	410	30 / 60	No	13	24%
	423 Linden CTA-Glens-Harlem	1,056	20 / 30	No	12	11%
Niles	411 Niles Local Service	Free	30 / 30	Yes	8	100%
	412 Niles Shopper Special	Free	45 / 45	Yes	8	100%
	413 Niles South End Special	Free	45 / 45	Yes	8	100%

Data Source: Pace Average Weekday Boardings, May 2005

Pace Boardings for Routes Operating in Niles, 2005



The #270 stops in Niles with the highest boardings are:

- Golf Mill mall, with over 100 boardings,
- Dempster and Milwaukee, with over 100 boardings,
- Touhy and Milwaukee, with 50 to 100 boardings,
- Oakton and Milwaukee, with 50 to 100 boardings.

Pace and Niles Free Bus Routes

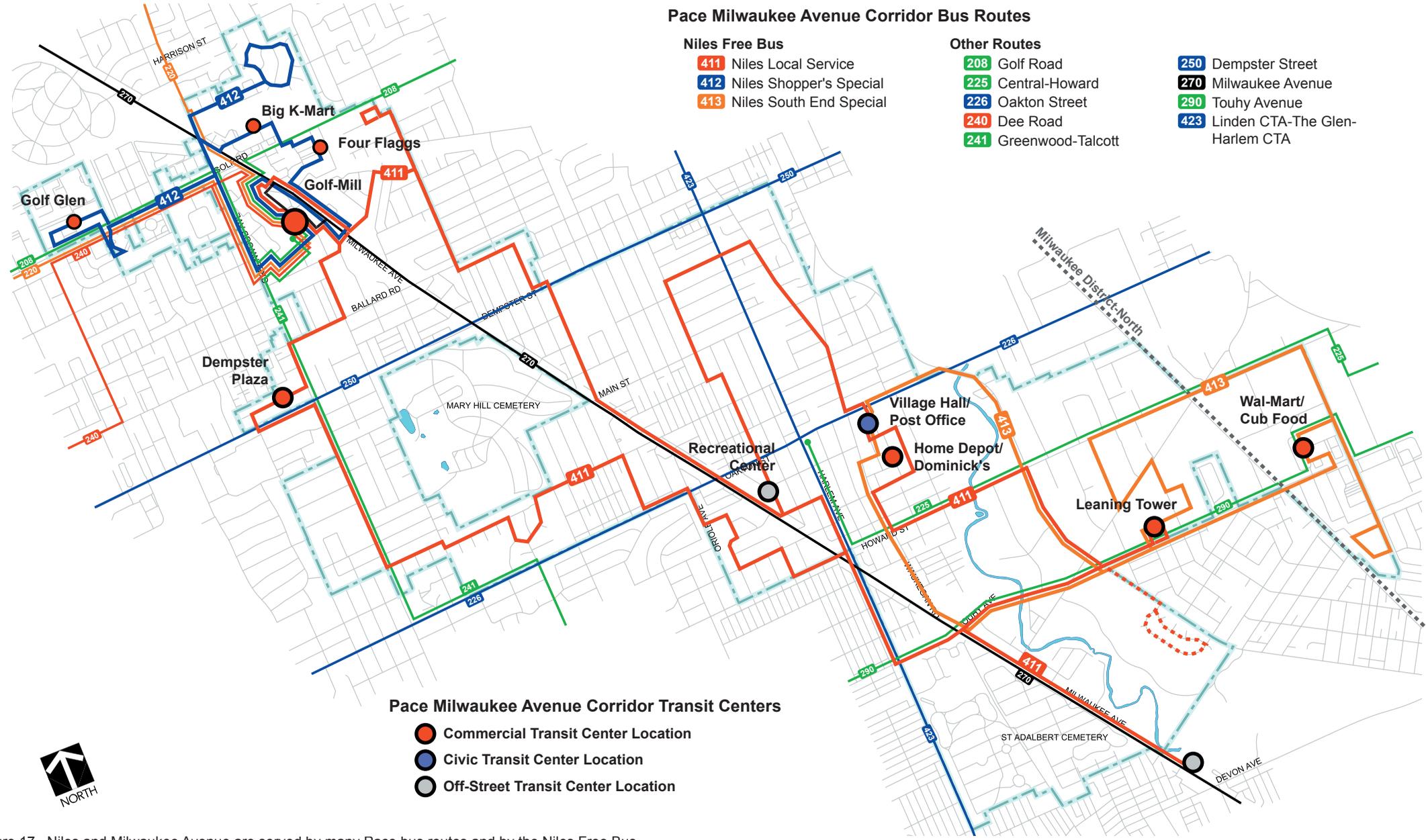


Figure 17. Niles and Milwaukee Avenue are served by many Pace bus routes and by the Niles Free Bus.

This survey shows the importance of the routes that cross Milwaukee Avenue to generating riders on the #270, but also the importance of the commercial nodes at Golf Road and Oakton Street as transit rider destinations. Most telling is the number of boardings at Oakton and Milwaukee, a fair portion of which are more likely associated with the shopping center than with transfers from the #226 operating on Oakton with an average of 749 weekday riders.

Niles Free Bus Service

The Niles Free Bus Service is a highly successful service dating to the early 1970s, providing additional transit mobility for village residents. Three Niles Free Bus circulator routes provide access to areas of the village that regular Pace routes do not reach directly. The Niles Free Bus Service operates seven days a week between approximately 9:00 am and 5:00 pm. A summary of Free Bus routes is as follows:

#411 Local Service provides circulator service to the Village Recreation Center, Trident Community Center, Dempster Plaza, Golf Mill Shopping Center, Public Library, Ballard Plaza, and Notre Dame High School.

#412 Shopper Special links village residents with shopping and other destinations including the Golf Mill Shopping Center, Library, and Four Flags Shopping Center.

#413 South End Special destinations include the Village Crossing, Target in Touhy, the Leaning Tower, YMCA, Pointe Plaza, Public Library, and the Civic Center Plaza.

Transit environment and facilities

Comments from Niles residents during the planning process indicated the importance of the Pace #270 for daily commuters, as well as connections to the CTA for trips to downtown Chicago and O'Hare Airport. However, residents also pointed out a key issue in regard to transit patronage: it is difficult to cross Milwaukee Avenue as a pedestrian to access the bus! These comments

point to the way daily routines and decisions regarding transit patronage are related not only to routes, transfers, and destinations, but also to the total experience of the environment around transit stops and access routes, transit facilities, and the level and speed of available service. Potential riders who find it too difficult to access a bus stop will instead drive in their automobile. A goal for the Plan is to address this interface between the pedestrian and transit facilities.

Once at the bus stop, provision of shelter from rain and snow is desired, and in this area the Village of Niles has been successful in providing attractive and clean shelters. The Village currently has an agreement with an advertising concession to pay for the installation and maintenance of its bus shelters, which are not provided at every stop, but are at some main stops. Although the transit center at Golf Mill mall is a very important transfer point the actual facility is little more than a typical bus shelter. As part of its upgrades along Milwaukee Avenue, Pace is interested in providing amenities at major stops on par with those of a typical rail station.

Planning for improved operational efficiencies

A primary goal of the Milwaukee Avenue Plan is to improve transit efficiencies through application of new bus transit concepts, facilities, and technologies. General approaches to improving bus efficiencies are to:

1. Place stops on the far side of intersections and use signal technologies to help the bus clear the intersection.
2. Create a bus turn-out lane on the far side of intersections so that traffic can pass the stopped bus and clear the intersection.
3. Where a far-side stop is not possible, create a bus-only queue jump lane on the near side of the intersec-

tion paired with new signal prioritization technologies.

The planning process explored how these general approaches to improving transit efficiencies can be applied along Milwaukee Avenue. However, the development of new bus operational concepts is in a nascent phase, and application in any real world context must be considered in the light of existing constraints and competing goals. Buses operate in the mix of other vehicular traffic along Milwaukee Avenue, and consideration of how stopped buses impact other traffic is important to the goal of improving overall traffic flow. For instance, provision of bus turn-out lanes at major stops will help the overall flow of traffic on Milwaukee Avenue; however, there is concern about bus travel being slowed if buses move out of the drive lane and then have to wait for traffic to clear to rejoin the flow. Given the complexity of the issues, the actual design of new bus facilities will require further traffic engineering and modeling.

The scope of the Milwaukee Avenue Plan is to present a concept level plan that begins to weigh a number of factors in regard to new transit facilities. Major intersections are analyzed to find a preferred stop location and roadway design concept, while recognizing constraints due to existing development and available right of way. Making choices between near-side stops versus far-side stops is aided by an assumption that signal prioritization for the bus will become available, and that potential redevelopment sites can be used as opportunities for gaining additional right of way and constructing a set of transit and pedestrian facilities. The Plan promotes a flexible approach to improving bus efficiencies, exploring opportunities for creating new transit facilities were they are presented.

Milwaukee Avenue BRT Concept

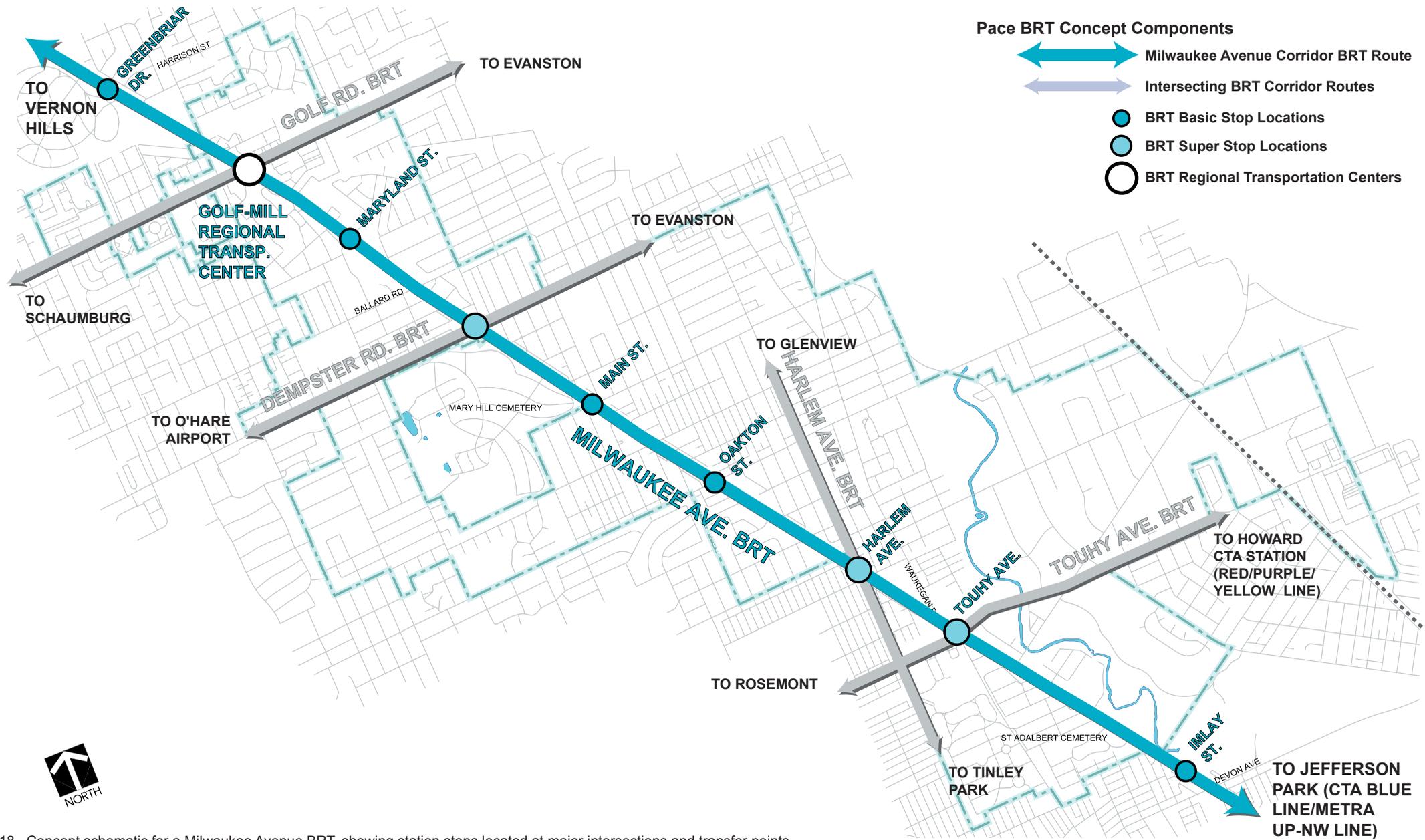


Figure 18. Concept schematic for a Milwaukee Avenue BRT, showing station stops located at major intersections and transfer points.



Bus Rapid Transit Concept

Bus transit operators in cities around the world are working to provide more efficient and comfortable service to bus riders, and to this end have combined a number of planning and technological innovations under the umbrella concept known as “bus rapid transit.” The concept, also referred to as BRT, is flexible and can be applied as a optimal project including facilities such as an exclusive bus transitway separate from other traffic, or implemented as incremental steps to improving operational efficiencies and rider amenities.

Recent planning efforts by Pace, including the Vision 2020 document approved in 2001, have set goals for implementing bus rapid transit projects in strategic corridors in the Chicago metropolitan region. Milwaukee Avenue in the Village of Niles has been identified by Pace as a priority for bus rapid transit, as a Line Haul Arterial Route. The new BRT would operate along the #270 route, but would not necessarily replace that service. It is not possible to create a separate bus-only lane along the length of the corridor, rather the Milwaukee Avenue BRT will take shape as a set of incremental improvements that increase efficiencies for Pace operations and its riders.

In terms of service to the village, the Niles Free Bus offers the advantage of a local circulator to the Milwaukee Avenue BRT. Current Free Bus routes overlap with Milwaukee in a number of areas and, if needed, routes can be adjusted to maximize the interface between the BRT and Free Bus. Specifically, the #413 should utilize the Touhy BRT station and the #411 should use the Touhy, Howard, Oakton

and Main BRT stations. The #412 should continue to act as a circulator to the shopping centers at Golf Road, operating from a proposed new transit transfer facility at Golf Mill mall.

The concept for the Milwaukee Avenue BRT includes the following operational and facility elements:

1. Limited stops at half-mile to one-mile increments to speed travel times.
2. BRT stop locations at major intersections to facilitate transfers to other BRT, other Pace routes, and to the Niles Free Bus.
3. Dedicated bus-only turn-out lanes at all BRT stops.
4. Traffic signal technologies that favor bus movement through intersections. These fall into two categories depending on which side of the intersection the stop is located:
 - For stops located on the far side of the intersection, devices on a BRT bus send a signal to the traffic light which extends the green signal until the bus passes through.
 - For stops on the near side of an intersection, a queue-jumping signal on traffic lights that allows a device on the bus to communicate with the signal, and momentarily hold all other traffic, and thereby allow the bus to accelerate through the intersection and continue to the next stop at the front of the line of vehicles.

5. Transit stations at BRT stops with rider comfort amenities, such as marked loading platform areas (raised or at-grade), platform canopies and benches, and heated enclosures.
6. Information displays at BRT stations that provide real-time information on expected bus arrival times through GPS tracking of actual bus locations.
7. Station platform fare ticketing to speed boardings.
8. Transit-oriented development at BRT station sites that emphasize provision of an safe and attractive pedestrian environment, including sidewalks, plaza areas, and storefronts set up on the sidewalk.

When combined these technological, facility, and site planning improvements will enhance the efficiency of bus transit along Milwaukee Avenue, and provide a more comfortable and predictable experience for transit patrons.

Key Issues and Plan Direction

The analysis of existing conditions, including the physical environment of the Milwaukee Avenue corridor and the current real estate market, led to the identification of key issues in the corridor. Interviews with residents, business and property owners, developers, and Village staff and officials, and workshops sessions conducted during the spring and summer of 2005 assisted the planning team in understanding the community's hopes and visions for improving Milwaukee Avenue. In addition, Pace and the RTA provided a planning framework with their bus rapid transit concept.

Identification of key issues provides focus and direction for making the plan. A summary of key issues and plan direction is provided below, organized by the three main issue areas of transit, traffic, and redevelopment.

Transit issues and direction

Issue: Capitalize on the unique transit opportunities in Niles by applying the BRT concept to Milwaukee Avenue and Pace Route #270.

Direction: Identify BRT stop locations at major intersections, transfer points, and destinations.

Consider optimal transit station sites given current constraints and future redevelopment opportunities.

Issue: Buses stopped in the traffic lane.

Direction: Reduce number of stops for BRT buses and seek space in the right of way for bus turn-out lanes.

Issue: Allow for quick transfers from the Milwaukee Avenue BRT to the Golf Road BRT, which has been

funded.

Direction: Seek to locate a major transfer facility closer to Golf Road than the current facility south of the mall.

Issue: Poor pedestrian environment for transit access.

Direction: Provide concepts for basic pedestrian facilities, including a consistent sidewalk and seek to create a safer and more attractive pedestrian realm through crosswalk and streetscape concepts.

Traffic issues and direction

Issue: Interruptions to traffic flow due to stopped buses.

Direction: Reduce number of stops and recommend locations for dedicated, bus only turn-out lanes at major intersections.

Issue: Traffic congestion at major intersections, particularly north of Oakton Street.

Direction: Find space in the right of way to create a northbound left-turn lane north of Oakton Street. Consider the potential for left-turn lanes at other locations.

Issue: Traffic slowed by turning vehicles.

Direction: Reduce the number of curb cuts, and local street intersections, and control access to private property.

Issue: Confusing and potentially hazardous circulation patterns.

Direction: Suggest illustrative models for site planning to provide understandable parking layouts and access points.

Redevelopment issues and direction

Issue: Existing sites with poor site planning.

Direction: Provide illustrative model site plans to apply on sites that are not likely to be completely redeveloped in the near future, which show preferred solutions for controlling access, arranging parking, and providing a sidewalk.

Issue: Vacant and underutilized property.

Direction: Identify potential redevelopment sites and explore redevelopment concepts.

Issue: Finding space for bus turn-out lanes and left-turn lanes.

Direction: Analyze extent of existing public right of way and provide concept plans for including new bus and turn lanes as part of site plan improvements and redevelopment concepts.

Issue: Improve the aesthetics of the corridor.

Direction: Provide concept level design direction for streetscape elements.

Issue: Chaotic urban form and lack of architectural quality.

Direction: Provide basic principles for planning along the whole corridor, and concepts for site planning on redevelopment sites.

Issue: Desire for a pedestrian shopping area.

Direction: Identify area in the corridor that is most amenable to pedestrians and storefront shopping, and provide concepts for improving the pedestrian realm.

Issue: Lack of place-making business clusters or destinations, and civic space amenities.

Direction: Identify character districts along the length of the corridor in order to direct improvements and create market niches.

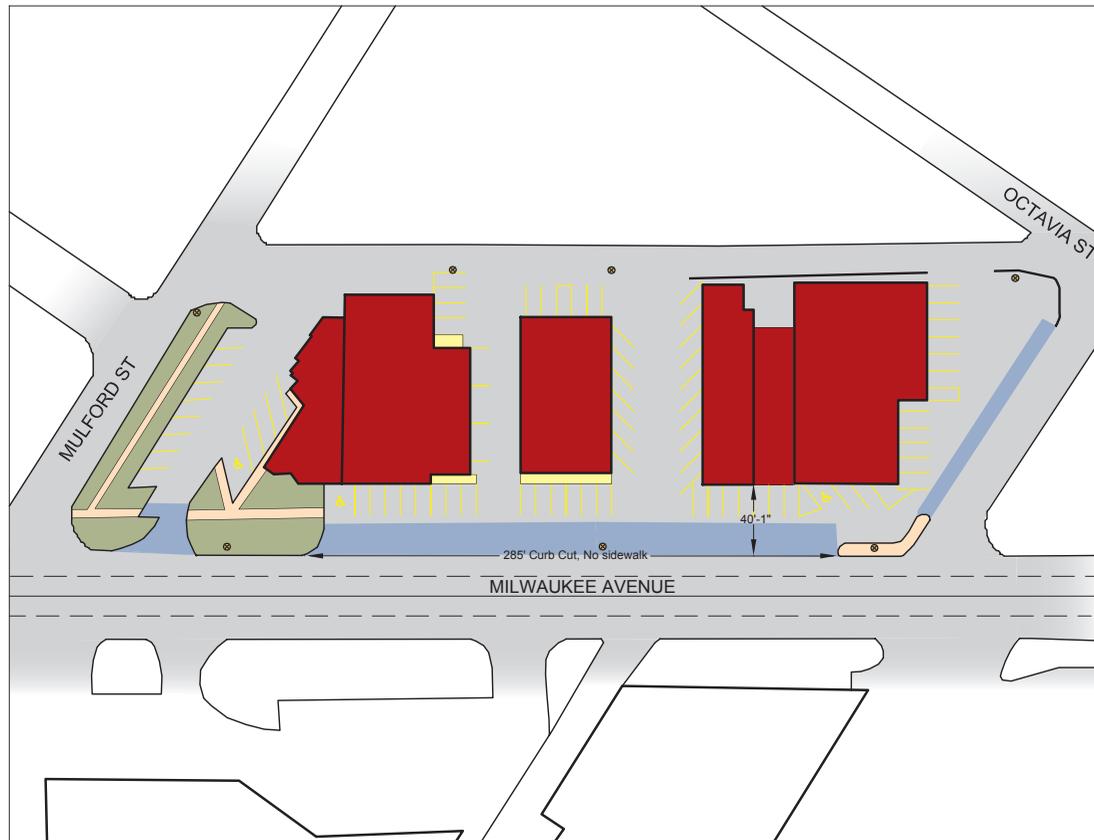
Issue: Trend to high-density residential development south of Touhy.

Direction: Encourage a mix of uses that support neighborhood development, while also maximizing the retail potential at the intersection of Touhy and Milwaukee.

Issue: Potentially weakening market for increased retail space and declining lease value of older, non-competitive space.

Direction: Explore opportunities for including new residential and office uses into the mix of land uses along the corridor. Encourage redevelopment of aging strip malls.

Illustrative Model Site Plan Improvements



Existing Conditions

- 76 Parking spaces (3 handicapped)
- Inconsistent parking layout
- Uncontrolled Access
- Storefront visibility blocked by parked vehicles
- Little or no landscaping
- Inconsistent internal sidewalk



Proposed Improvement

- 94 Parking spaces (4 handicapped)
- 9'x18' Parking stalls
- Controlled Access
- Better storefront visibility
- Landscaped permitted
- Street trees
- Consistent internal sidewalk

Figure 19. Illustrative plan shows how an existing site with a single bay of parking and a 40-foot building setback can be reconfigured to control access, add a sidewalk, and provide space for landscaping. The recommended site improvements add nearly 20 additional parking spaces.

Milwaukee Avenue Plan

Principles for Corridor Development

This Plan recommends strategies to guide reinvestment in a manner that addresses the three main areas of transit, traffic, and redevelopment. In most locations, it is through coordination of improvements to the public realm in concert with new private development that the goals of the Plan are most achievable. When a property is redeveloped, the Village of Niles should work with the property owner and developer to provide basic infrastructure that fosters the goals of the Plan.

A set of principles should guide the Village's oversight of improvements in the corridor as they pertain to the public realm for pedestrians and traffic movement:

Principle One:

A consistent sidewalk should be provided along all sites, segments, and on both sides of Milwaukee Avenue.

Principle Two:

Access to sites should be controlled and curb cuts limited along Milwaukee Avenue. Consolidation of curb cuts should be encouraged along block frontage, and individual parcels should have no more than a single curb cut along Milwaukee Avenue, unless the size of the parcel and intensity of development warrants more access points.

Principle Three

When property is redeveloped, right of way for dedicated bus lanes and turn lanes should be secured as part of the site plan approval process, specifically on sites near major intersections or to allow efficient access to new development sites. In most cases, these lanes will be provided within existing public right of way, with an easement to be provided for repositioning the sidewalk, if additional space is needed.

Principle Four

Village Public Works Department should work with property owners to install a standard set of streetscape elements in the sidewalk zone—in the public right of way or on sidewalk easements—with elements to include decorative street lamps, highway lights, parking lot fencing, and bus shelters where needed.

Compliance with the first four principles is necessary to reach the goals outlined in this Plan and should be considered required, especially for approval of new construction or major site upgrade projects.

In addition to these principles regarding the public realm adherence to the following principles should be encouraged in regard to the aesthetics of the corridor and private development, including:

Principle Five

A standard of material and architectural design quality should be met for new structures in the corridor, as is appropriate to the importance of Milwaukee Avenue as the village's main street.

Principle Six

Site plans should include landscaping and plantings should be maintained.

Principle Seven

A balance should be established between the pedestrian realm along the public sidewalk and the location of automobile parking and depth of building setbacks, with a preference for parking to the rear and side of buildings and minimal building setbacks.

Urban Character Districts

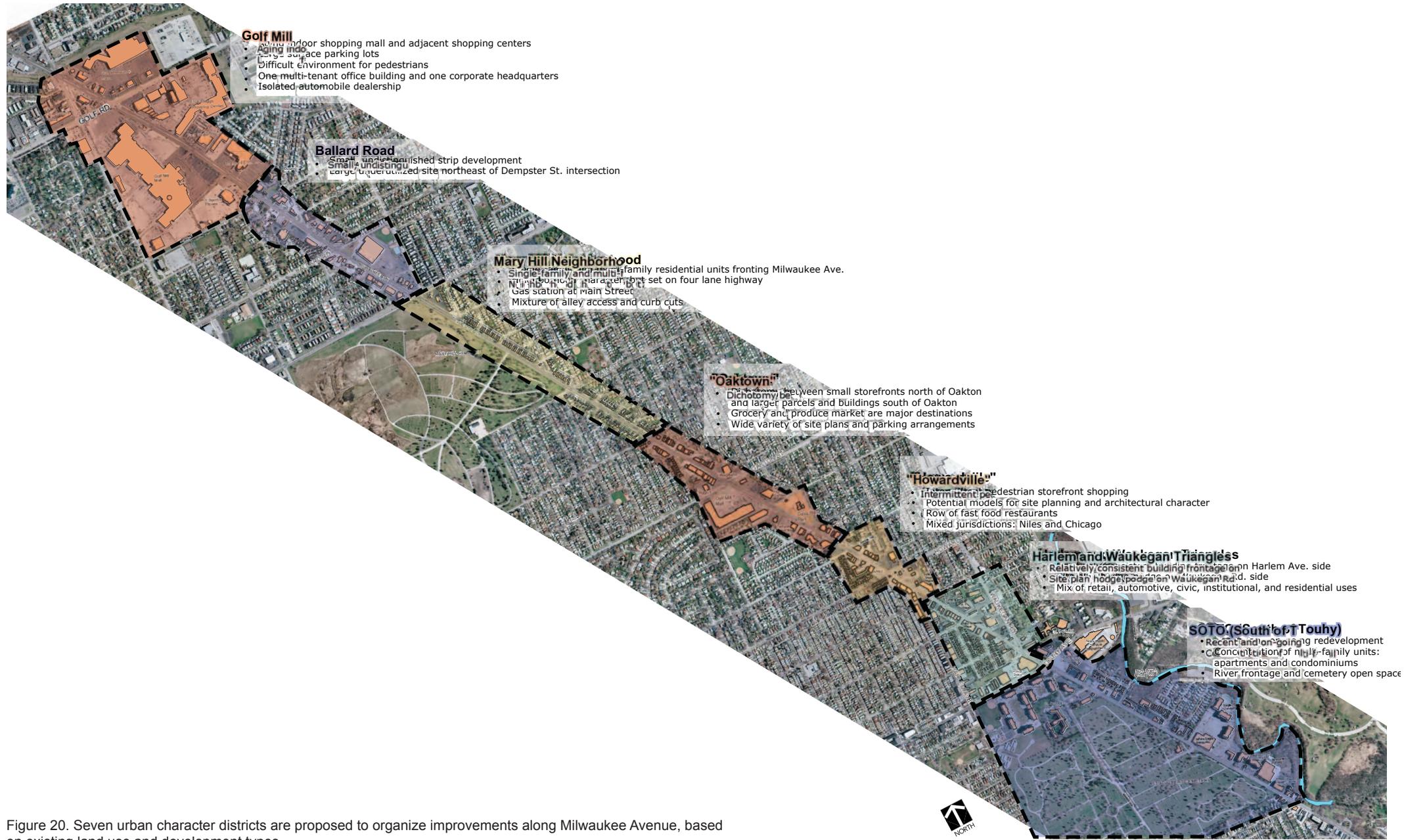


Figure 20. Seven urban character districts are proposed to organize improvements along Milwaukee Avenue, based on existing land use and development types.

Urban Character Districts

The analysis of existing land use and urban form, and the need to divide the five-mile long corridor into manageable segments, led to the concept of defining Milwaukee Avenue as seven urban character districts. Looking at the corridor as a series of districts is helpful to understanding the existing character of development, as well as suggesting potential approaches for each area in regard to future development.

The seven urban character districts are:

- SoTo, or South of Touhy
- Harlem and Waukegan
- Howardville
- Oaktown
- Mary Hill
- Ballard Road
- Golf Mill

Defining and naming districts is very useful to the planning process, especially in terms of placemaking. At present, locations along Milwaukee Avenue are commonly identified by cross street or main intersections. The proposed districts help to shape this understanding of the corridor by either using the cross streets as district boundaries, or main intersections as the center and defining feature of the district. For instance, Touhy Avenue defines the district to its south, while Oakton Street bisects its district with the intersection as the focal point.

Looking at the corridor as a series of districts makes it easier to discern land use patterns and development trends. Clearly the SoTo district is trending to high-density residential development, but it is unlikely that this trend will extend to other districts. The Oaktown, Howardville, and Harlem and Waukegan districts form the commercial center of the corridor in terms of the Niles community, and provide the best opportunity for improvement as a pedestrian shopping area. The Mary Hill neighborhood district has a stable residential pattern of development and no changes to the residential uses are anticipated. Of the seven, the Ballard Road district is most in need of a conscious effort to add placemaking attributes, including new development that will bring architectural character to the district, along with streetscape amenities that create civic space for pedestrians. Golf Mill is a regional shopping destination and an important transfer point for transit riders.

The Milwaukee Avenue Plan is organized by district, with the Plan addressing concepts for improving the function and aesthetics of each district and the overall corridor in regard to:

- Redevelopment opportunities
- Urban character
- Traffic and circulation
- Transit
- Pedestrian environment
- Streetscape

An overall concept plan is given for each district, followed by illustrative plans showing concept details on selected sites and streetscape concepts.

Concept Plan for SoTo



Figure 21. Concept plan elements for the SoTo District.

SoTo, or South of Touhy

Redevelopment opportunities and urban character

The South of Touhy District, “SoTo” for short, exhibits a more urban character than much of the rest of Milwaukee Avenue to the north. A continuing transition to new residential condominium and mixed-use buildings with retail and dwellings is anticipated.

Potential redevelopment areas include:

- Touhy Avenue to Harts Road area.
- Expansion of Eagle Point at the White Eagle site.
- Janitorial supply site.

Traffic and circulation

Recommended improvements for traffic flow and safety include:

- A new southbound left turn lane for the redevelopment project extending from Touhy to Harts Road, with a preferred alignment at Newark Avenue. A southbound left turn lane at Harts Road is also desirable, but is dependent on redevelopment of the property south of Harts Road to gain right of way for the necessary roadway taper.
- A bus turn-out lane for northbound buses at Touhy Avenue, integrated with the proposed redevelopment project.
- A bus turn-out lane for southbound buses by the Veteran’s Memorial.
- Future traffic signal and turn lane at Eagle Point to serve further intensification of uses that will come with

continued redevelopment. Pending approval by IDOT.

Transit facilities

Proposed improvements to transit service and rider amenities include:

- A Touhy Avenue BRT stop with stations.
 - A near-side stop for northbound buses with queue-jump lane and signal at Touhy allowing buses to go before other vehicles. A near-side stop is recommended due to constraints north of Touhy and the ability to coordinate construction of the queue jump lane, pedestrian facilities, and station with the proposed redevelopment project. Design of the queue jump lane will need to account for right turn movements by other vehicles. The station should be located as close as possible to the intersection to facilitate transfer to the #290 Touhy route bus.
 - A far-side stop for southbound buses at Touhy and signal preemption to extend green signals and allow buses through to far-side station. Space exists for this station on public property, and station design should complement the Veteran’s Memorial and fountain.
- ### Pedestrian environment and streetscape
- Recommended improvements to the pedestrian environment include:
- Crosswalk improvements and pedestrian safety zones on all four approaches to the Touhy Avenue intersection, see Figure 28 on page 55 for details and illustration.
 - Marked crosswalks and a self-activated pedestrian warning light and sign at the entrance to Eagle Point.

- A new traffic signal at Eagle Point, as part of a redevelopment project, pending approval by IDOT.

- A wide sidewalk on the eastside of Milwaukee Ave., specifically integrated with the proposed redevelopment project from Touhy to Harts Road.

Recommended streetscape elements include:

- New decorative street lamps scaled to the level of pedestrians and to illuminate the sidewalk.
- Relocation of higher, highway lighting to the edge of the sidewalk zone.
- New sidewalks at redevelopment sites, with a minimum 8’ width and wider where possible.
- A landscaped parkway where possible.

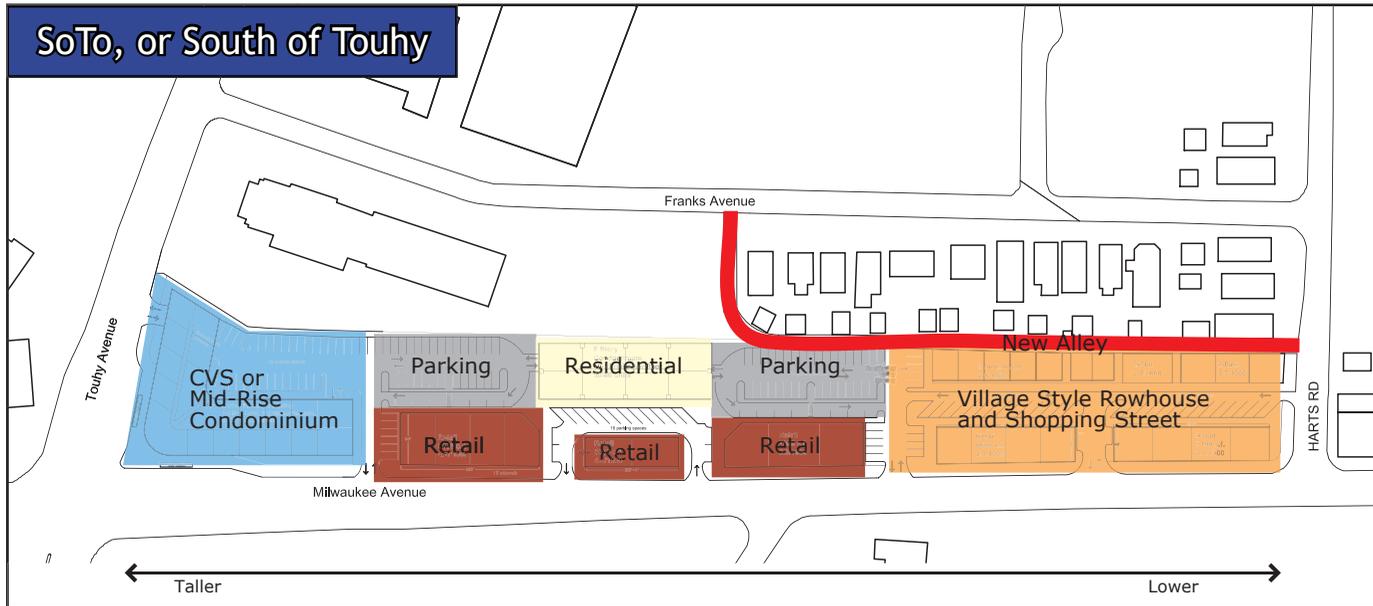


Figure 22. Plan schematic for redevelopment site at the corner of Touhy and Milwaukee in the SoTo District.



Figure 23. Site development test for redevelopment site in the SoTo District.

SoTo District Site Development Concept

The vacant site at the southeast corner of the Touhy Avenue intersection and all the property south to Harts Road was considered a high priority redevelopment site during the planning process. A developer is actively working to assemble the property into a single redevelopment project. Preliminary concepts by the developer sought a mix of condominium units and retail space, including a drug store at the Touhy Avenue corner.

Camiros developed conceptual site plans for the site to meet the desired amount of residential units and commercial space, while also illustrating an application of design principles appropriate for the SoTo district. To maintain the urban character of the district a set of design principles is recommended, including:

- Bring building facades up to meet the sidewalk
- Locate parking to the back or side of the lot.
- Divide retail into a number of storefronts, rather than single-facade strip malls.
- Mix retail on the ground floor with dwelling units on upper floors.
- Create unique public spaces between buildings and avoid overly large parking lots.

The resulting concept plans shown here sought to make the most of the high profile corner at Touhy, while minimizing impacts on an existing cluster of single-family houses on Franks Avenue.

SoTo, or South of Touhy

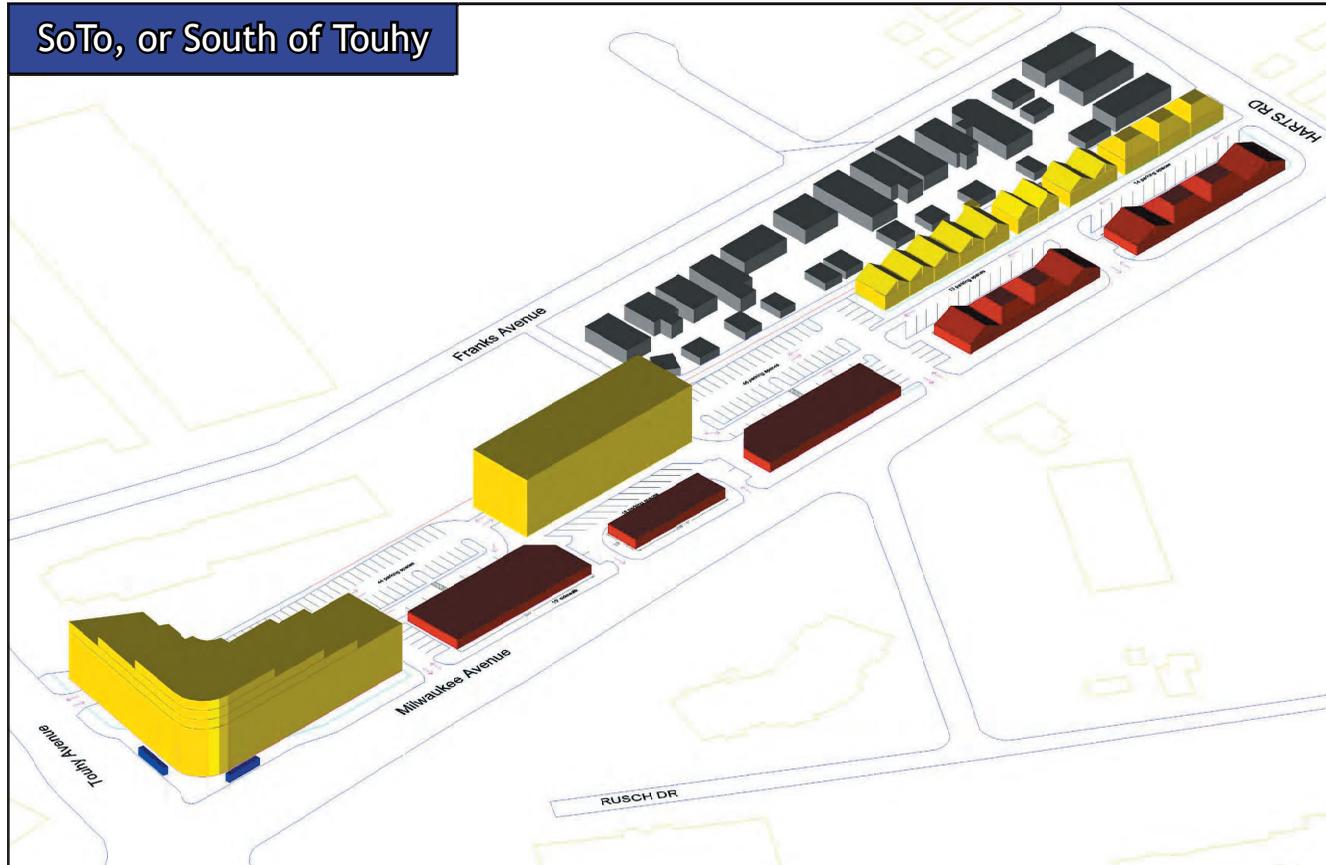


Figure 24. A three-dimensional extrusion of the SoTo conceptual site plan shows the potential to create a landmark building at the corner of Touhy and Milwaukee Ave. The corner building would have a mix of retail on its ground floor and dwelling units on upper floors, and would require underground parking for resident units. Transit stations are shown on the Milwaukee and Touhy Ave. sides of the site, with bus turn-out lanes on both streets. A second residential building is shown to the back and middle of the block with small retail buildings fronting on the sidewalk. The south end of the site near Harts Road is designed with rowhouse type dwellings in scale with the houses across the alley to the east. The concept is to create a thematic setting for boutique-style shops through the use of gabled and hipped roofs on the row-houses and the facing retail buildings, and to create a street setting for the shops and parking area, rather than the typical strip mall layout. The emphasis is on placemaking, which also includes small outdoor plazas between the middle residential building and the adjoining retail buildings.



Figure 25 (above). A computer simulated perspective showing the massing of buildings along the village shop street, with larger residential buildings in the distance.



Figure 26 (above). A perspective sketch showing the bus turn-out lane at the southeast corner of the Touhy Avenue intersection. The dedicated bus lane improves traffic flow by allowing cars to pass the bus at the transit station on the corner. The recommended relationship between the curb, parkway, sidewalk, and building facade is also shown, along with recommended street lighting concept with shorter decorative lamps lighting the pedestrian zone on the sidewalk, and higher street light extending out to light the highway.



Figure 27. Concept plan elements for both the Howardville District and the Harlem and Waukegan District.

Harlem and Waukegan

Redevelopment opportunities and urban character

The district defined by Harlem Avenue and Waukegan Road is the southern section of the most walkable part of the Milwaukee Avenue corridor, and combined with the “Howardville” and “Oaktown” districts can be conceived as the pedestrian shopping area. However, significant improvements to the public realm are needed to create a safe and attractive environment for pedestrians. Therefore, the recommendations for the Harlem and Waukegan district focus on concepts for public works. Construction of a consistent sidewalk and new streetscape will make the area more attractive for new private investment. On the west side of Milwaukee Avenue, building facades should continue to be built to match the existing setback line. On the east side of the avenue, the setbacks are varied, therefore the key feature recommended is a railing system installed to define a street edge

Potential redevelopment areas include:

- The triangular site on the east side of Milwaukee Avenue at the Waukegan intersection.
- On the north end of the district, where a triangular site is formed by the intersection with Harlem Avenue.

Traffic and circulation

Recommended improvements for traffic flow and safety include:

- A new parallel parking lane along the west side of Milwaukee Avenue that provides a consistent and understandable parking arrangement and is wide enough (10' minimum) to allow for easy movements into and out of spaces.

Transit facilities

The recommended BRT stop would nominally be the Harlem Avenue stop, which would have the northbound stop and station in the Howardville district, and the southbound stop on the point of the triangle formed by Harlem and Milwaukee, near Birchwood Avenue in the Harlem and Waukegan district. The concept is outlined in the text for both districts, with illustrative graphics shown on pages 56 and 57.

Recommended improvements to transit service and rider amenities include:

- A Harlem Avenue BRT stop, with stations in the area of Harlem, Howard, and Birchwood.
- Construction of a transit plaza with a BRT station for the northbound buses on the White Castle triangle site, as shown on the “Howardville” district plan. The site is in the City of Chicago and will require coordination between the two municipalities and Pace. This location would mean the stop would be to the far side of the Harlem intersection and the near side of Howard, with the appropriate transit signal priority set-up for each signal.
- A far-side BRT station for the southbound bus south of the Harlem Avenue intersection at the small park.
- Signal preemption for southbound buses at Harlem, holding green to allow bus through to far-side station.

Pedestrian environment and streetscape

Recommended improvements to the pedestrian environment include:

- Construction of a consistent sidewalk on the west side

of Milwaukee Avenue along the whole stretch from Harlem to Waukegan.

- Construction of a curb to clearly define the sidewalk zone and disallow parking of vehicles on the sidewalk.
- Division of the sidewalk into walking and utility zones, with a clear area in front of storefronts for walking and location of street lamps and highway lighting in the utility zone next to the curb.
- Improved crosswalk striping at the intersections of Milwaukee with Waukegan and Harlem and count-down walk signals.

New streetscape elements include:

- New pedestrian-level decorative street lamps.
- New decorative highway lights.
- A railing system along the east side of the street, and other areas with open parking lots, that defines the pedestrian zone and forms a faux street wall

“Howardville”

Redevelopment opportunities and urban character

“Howardville” is immediately north and south of Howard Avenue, where businesses like Schmeisser’s Meats and Amici Restaurant are the nucleus for creating a new boutique shopping, entertainment, and cafe dining district. The concept for the district is to move away from franchise fast food restaurants that cater to drive-through traffic, and encourage and promote development of new businesses that will enliven the street scene. Coordination between Niles and the City

Harlem and Waukegan



Sketch shows concept for a decorative railing system which is used to enclose large parking lots and define a street edge along the sidewalk. Decorative street lamps are combined with the post for the railing. Existing condition at right.



The plan for a potential redevelopment site at Harlem Ave. shows a new building set on the existing build-to line, and parking to the north.



Sketch shows how a consistent sidewalk and new lane for parallel parking can be installed in existing space between building facades and the drive lane. Existing condition at right.



Harlem and Waukegan

SoTo, or South of Touhy

The site design approach at the flat-iron site, where Waukegan meets Milwaukee, is to place a small building (a bank with drive through lanes) at the point of the triangle and a small retail building stretching across the site from Milwaukee to Waukegan. A new crosswalk is also shown across Waukegan Road



The sketch below illustrates the pedestrian safety improvements shown in the plan to the left, at the intersection of Touhy and Milwaukee. Design features include:

- decorative warning strips on both sides of the crosswalk.
- pedestrian safe zone with barrier planters,
- "countdown" walk signals,
- and a BRT station and new development.

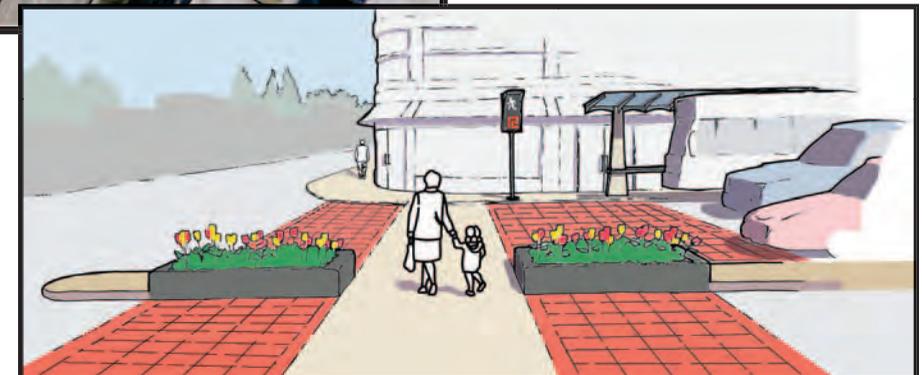


Figure 28. Illustrative plan drawing for reconstructing the sidewalk and streetscape in the Harlem and Waukegan District. Related sketches show how a consistent sidewalk and new lane for parallel parking can be accommodated, and illustrate the recommended streetscape concept which includes decorative pedestrian level street lamps and new highway lights.

"Howardville"



Figure 29. The concept shown in this illustrative detail plan is to redevelop the block bounded by Harlem, Howard, Nora, and Birchwood. This would require relocation of businesses and the cooperative participation in the redevelopment project of all property owners, including owners of nine houses fronting on Howard and Nora Ave. Removal of the aging Niles Shopping Center and the two fast food restaurants immediately north of the strip mall is the key redevelopment opportunity.

The concept is to create a cultural and entertainment center on the block which would be a destination on Milwaukee Ave. The illustrative plan shows a two-story bookstore anchor, an art gallery, cafe, and small theater. Many other types of businesses are also possible, instead of this arrangement or program.

A row of townhouses lines Nora Ave. to complement the existing houses across the street. The whole development is served by a parking garage, which could be topped with a small boutique hotel and day spa. Crowds attending performances at the theater or gallery opening would build the market for more restaurant and boutique businesses in Howardville.

A smaller redevelopment effort is another possibility, including only properties fronting on Milwaukee and Harlem; however, without gaining additional depth for new uses and providing for parking and access, any redevelopment project will be confronted with the same difficulties in site planning that are already evident.

The proposed transit plaza is also shown, with bus-only lanes along Milwaukee and Harlem, and a taxi stand along Howard. The plaza has a fountain as a central feature, a sculptural element, decorative paving, benches, and landscaped areas.

“Howardville”

of Chicago will be needed to foster improvements to existing buildings and redevelopment on both sides of Milwaukee Avenue.

Potential redevelopment areas include:

- Block bounded by Harlem, Howard, Nora, and Birchwood, including or excluding the nine houses (see page 56).
- Gas station and truck rental sites on the west side of Milwaukee south of Jonquil Terrace.
- Automobile repair site on the east side of Milwaukee between Octavia Avenue and Jonquil Terrace.
- Triangle with White Castle hamburger restaurant between Harlem and Milwaukee at Howard Street, which is in the City of Chicago.

Traffic and circulation

Recommended improvements for traffic flow and safety include:

- A new left-turn lane, southbound to Birchwood, if a redevelopment project allows increased right of way to the north and south of the intersection. The Village could consider closing Birchwood as part of a redevelopment project, however, traffic impacts would need to be carefully studied.
- Potential street closures at Octavia Avenue and/or Jonquil Terrace.
- Improvements to site development, specifically, elimi-

nation of long, open curb cuts and redesign to controlled access and diagonal parking.

- A north bound bus turn-out lane at lane along the White Castle site.
- A south bound bus turn-out lane south of Harlem at the Village-owned park triangle.

Transit facilities

The Plan highlights the potential to transform the triangle formed by Harlem, Howard, and Milwaukee (currently a hamburger restaurant within the City of Chicago) into a transit plaza. This plaza would have

turn-out lanes for the northbound bus on Milwaukee and for southbound buses operating on Harlem. This type of use on similar triangles is found elsewhere in Chicago. The plaza would not only be a prominent part of the Milwaukee Avenue BRT, but would also be a central urban design feature for adjacent redevelopment projects.

Recommended improvements to transit service and rider amenities include:

- A Harlem Avenue BRT stop, with stations in the area of Harlem, Howard, and Birchwood.



Figure 30. Illustrative sketch of a BRT station on the triangle between Howard and Harlem shows the dedicated bus-only lane along Milwaukee Ave. The BRT station includes a large canopy and platform (or boarding area) and a display showing real-time information on when the next bus will arrive (reading 8 minutes).

"Oaktown" Concept Plan



Figure 31. Concept plan elements for both the Oaktown District.

- Construction of a transit plaza with a BRT station for the northbound buses on the White Castle triangle (see Figures 29 and 30).

- The northbound stop would be to the far side of the Harlem intersection and should have signal preemption to extend the green signal until buses cross Harlem; it would also be to the near side of Howard and should include a queue-jumping signal that allows northbound buses to go before other vehicles.

- A far-side BRT station for the southbound bus south of the Harlem Avenue intersection at the small park, in the Harlem and Waukegan district.

- Signal preemption for southbound buses at Harlem, holding green to allow bus through to far-side station.

Pedestrian environment and streetscape

Recommended improvements to the pedestrian environment include:

- A consistent sidewalk on both sides of Milwaukee Avenue.

- Site improvements that allow space to construct new sidewalks by eliminating curb cuts and controlling access.

- Pedestrian safe zones at the Howard Avenue intersection similar to those proposed for Touhy Avenue intersection (see Figure 28).

- Streetscape improvements in the Howardville district should follow the same principles as those discussed for the Harlem and Waukegan district. New pedestrian level street lamps, bollards, and a railing system would help to create a better pedestrian environment.

“Oaktown”

Redevelopment opportunities and urban character

Improvements to the “Oaktown” district focus on supporting the Oak Mill Mall, improving traffic circulation and addressing site planning issues. While full-scale redevelopment of the Oak Mill Mall remains a possibility in the future, an incremental approach to using the existing buildings is recommended for the short term. The importance of the full-service grocery store and contracts to continue its tenancy are important considerations. The Plan shows how to work with the existing structures and the growing market demand for medical offices in the mall building. Improvements north of Oakton should focus on controlling traffic movements to retail properties through the recommended site planning model.

Traffic and circulation

Recommended improvements for traffic flow and safety include:

- A new left/center turn lane extending from Oakton Street north to Monroe Street.

- Potential street closures at Cleveland and Keeney streets.

- A bus turn-out lane for northbound buses by the Walgreens just north of Oakton.

- A bus turn-out lane for southbound buses next to the Oak Mill Mall.



Figure 32. Illustrative plan for the Oak Mill Mall area.

“Oaktown”

Transit facilities

The concept plan recommends relocating the north-bound bus stop from the southeast corner of Oakton Street and Milwaukee to a new stop on the far-side of the intersection, next to the Walgreens store. This relocation would require creation of a bus turn-out lane north of Oakton, in place of the existing landscaped boulevard between the curb and sidewalk (see Figure 32). Currently, there are bus shelters both north and south of Oakton for southbound buses, but a new BRT stop and station should be located on the far side of the intersection.

Recommended improvements to transit service and rider amenities include:

- An Oakton Street BRT stop with stations.
- A far-side stop for the northbound bus next to the Walgreens.
- A far-side stop for the southbound bus at Oak Mill Mall.
- Signal preemption for north and south bound buses at Oakton, holding green to allow buses through to far-side stations.

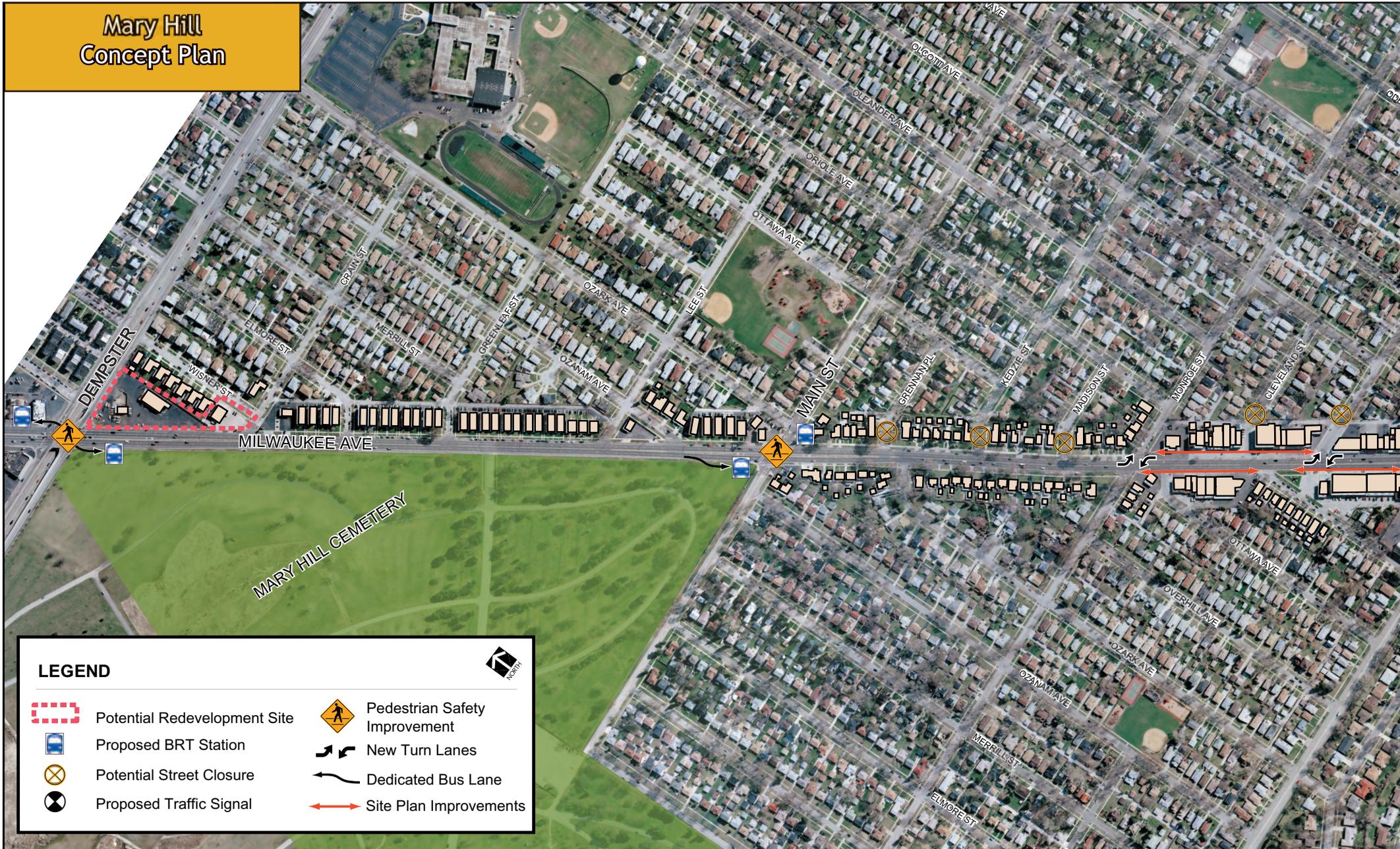
Pedestrian environment and streetscape

The Oaktown district has a consistent sidewalk on both sides of the street south of Oakton Street. However, north of Oakton there are a number of blocks that do not have a sidewalk or curb.

Recommended improvements to the pedestrian realm:

- Elimination of the long curb cuts, construction of consistent sidewalks, and controlled access to parking areas.
- New pedestrian level decorative lamps and location of street lights and other furniture out of the walk zone.
- Crosswalk improvements at the Oakton intersection, similar to those shown at the Touhy and Milwaukee intersection, including a delineated walk zone, pedestrian safe zones, and countdown walk signals.
- A gateway feature should be designed for the transition from the residential area to the Oaktown commercial district.

Mary Hill Concept Plan



LEGEND	
	Potential Redevelopment Site
	Proposed BRT Station
	Pedestrian Safety Improvement
	Potential Street Closure
	Proposed Traffic Signal
	New Turn Lanes
	Dedicated Bus Lane
	Site Plan Improvements

Figure 34. Concept plan elements for the Mary Hill District.

Mary Hill

Redevelopment opportunities and urban character

The Mary Hill district is a stable residential area and no redevelopment projects are anticipated that involve residential properties. However, the commercial land uses near Dempster may be considered redevelopment opportunities. The main issue in the Mary Hill neighborhood district is in regard to pedestrian crossings at Main Street and Crain Street. The park facility at Main and Ottawa is a destination for pedestrians crossing Milwaukee Avenue at Main Street, and students who attend Notre Dame High School cross Milwaukee at Crain Street to access a southbound bus stop and shelter, which is located on the west of Milwaukee at Crain. Current lack of a bus turn out south of Dempster precludes locating a stop there, so that buses don't stop traffic in the Dempster intersection. Correction of this problem is the main recommendation for the district.

Another issue the Plan addresses is the many local streets connecting to the east side of Milwaukee Avenue between Monroe and Main Street. The Plan suggests studying the potential for closing these streets, with the vacated land creating a potential development site for new houses.

Traffic and circulation

Recommended improvements for traffic flow and safety include:

- A bus turn-out lane for southbound buses immediately south of Dempster Street, which will require a negotiation of an easement from Mary Hill Cemetery.

- A bus turn-out lane may be possible for southbound buses at Main Street, again, if the cemetery is amenable to providing space.

- Closure and vacation of access to Milwaukee Avenue from Madison Street, Kedzie Street, and Grennan Place.

Transit facilities

Note that a Dempster Street BRT stop will straddle the Mary Hill and Ballard Road districts. The southbound stop and station would be in the Mary Hill district. The northbound stop is discussed in the Ballard Road district recommendations. The station design at Main Street should be modest, in order to have little impact on surrounding residential uses.

Proposed improvements to transit service and rider amenities include:

- A Main Street BRT stop and Dempster Street BRT stop.
- Near-side stops for both northbound and southbound stops at Main Street, which is necessary due to constraints of existing development include residential uses on the west side of Milwaukee and a gas station on the northeast corner of the intersection.
- Queue-jumping signals for both the northbound and southbound buses at Main Street.
- A far-side BRT stop at Dempster for south bound buses next to the cemetery, if possible.
- Elimination of bus stop currently at Crain Street, with service provided at Dempster Street.

Pedestrian environment and streetscape

Proposed improvements to the pedestrian environment include:

- A sidewalk along the west side of Milwaukee Ave. along the cemetery property is desired. This would be especially useful as a bike route, however is dependant on agreement from the cemetery owners.
- New pedestrian level lighting.
- Installation of pedestrian safe zones should be considered at Main Street.
- Elimination of bus stop at Crain Street to discourage pedestrian crossings without a signal.

Proposed streetscape elements include:

- New pedestrian level lighting that complements the residential neighborhood.
- A new decorative fence along the cemetery.
- A gateway feature should be designed for the transition from the residential area at Monroe Street to the Oaktown commercial district.

Ballard Road Concept Plan



LEGEND

	Potential Redevelopment Site		Pedestrian Safety Improvement
	Proposed BRT Station		Proposed Traffic Signal
	Potential Street Closure		New Turn Lanes
	Proposed Traffic Signal		Dedicated Bus Lane
	Site Plan Improvements		

Figure 34. Concept plan elements for the Ballard Road District.

Ballard Road

Redevelopment opportunities and urban character

The area between Dempster Street and Maryland needs redevelopment and enhancements that will add character beyond that of its current nondescript strip malls. Fortunately, this district has the largest single redevelopment opportunity in the corridor in the triangular parcel of land on the northeast corner of Dempster and Milwaukee. Redevelopment of this site, if held to high standards for site planning and architectural design, has the potential to create a new destination along Milwaukee Avenue and a new aesthetic for the Ballard Road district. Such a major investment will necessitate an upgrade to properties and the public realm on the west side of Milwaukee as well, and other redevelopment opportunities may emerge as the district is transformed.

Potential redevelopment areas include:

- The former Sports Authority site on the triangle formed by Milwaukee, Ballard, Washington, and Dempster.
- Block on the west side of Milwaukee between Oak and Elizabeth streets.

Traffic and circulation

The Ballard Road area was constructed with heavy traffic levels in mind and currently has capacity to handle existing and new traffic. However if a large development project is undertaken on the site bounded by Ballard, Washington, and Dempster, then a traffic signal will be warranted at its main entrance from Milwaukee Avenue. Alignment of turn lanes to the main entrance of this new development will need to be coordinated with turn lanes to Oak Street, and closure of Elizabeth

Avenue should be considered given its proximity to the Dempster intersection.

Recommended improvements for traffic flow and safety include:

- Installation of a new traffic signal between Ballard Road and Dempster as part of redevelopment of the former Sports Authority site, if the intensity of development warrants.
- A bus turn-out lane north of Dempster Street for the northbound BRT.

Transit facilities

The design of transit facilities in the Ballard Road district is to an extent dependent on the proposal for the former Sports Authority site. If the development is intense, and right of way can be secured, then a dedicated bus lane should be accommodated along the whole block from Dempster to Ballard. If this lane is feasible, then, stops and stations could be located at both Dempster and Ballard Road, given the efficiency of travel in the dedicated lane. (Note that given this uncertainty, only a stop is shown at Dempster Street on the concept plan, Figure 34, but the illustrative plan, Figure 35, shows the potential for the bus lane and Ballard stop.)

Recommended improvements to transit service and rider amenities include:

- A Dempster Street BRT stop with full stations, and at Ballard Road if warranted by redevelopment. Note that a far-side stop south of Dempster would be in the Mary Hill district, and it is described on page 63.
- A continuous, dedicated bus lane along the east side of Milwaukee Avenue, from Dempster to Ballard.

- Far-side stops at Dempster Street for northbound and southbound buses.
- Signal preemption for north and southbound buses at Dempster, holding green to allow bus through to far-side station.
- A near-side stop at Ballard Road, if a dedicated bus lane is feasible, paired with a queue-jump signal.

Pedestrian environment and streetscape

Given the need to prioritize investments in the public realm along the whole five mile length of Milwaukee Avenue in Niles, work on a new streetscape in the Ballard Road area will most likely wait until a redevelopment project is proposed for the former Sports Authority site. That redevelopment project and new sidewalk and streetscape amenities should follow the principles recommended in the plan, specifically the use of pedestrian level street lamps to light the sidewalk and higher lights to illuminate the roadway. However, the style of lighting used in the two districts north of Dempster may vary from those used to the south.

Proposed improvements to the pedestrian environment, as shown in the redevelopment plan (see Figure 35), include:

- A wide sidewalk along the east side of Milwaukee Avenue, from Dempster to Ballard Rd.
- Continuous building frontage next to the sidewalk.
- A wide landscaped buffer between the curb and sidewalk.



Figure 35. Illustrative plan for redeveloping the former Sports Authority site on the northeast corner of Milwaukee and Dempster.

Ballard Road

The triangular site bounded by Milwaukee, Ballard, Washington, and Dempster presents a ready opportunity for redevelopment. The site is large enough to create a development that serves a number of different community needs, and the illustrative plan, Figure 35, shows how land uses can be mixed to foster a lively center of activity throughout the day and evening. The project could be planned as a retirement community (called Niles Court here for discussion purposes), with the attraction of shopping, dining, and professional services available in the development.

Niles Court Development Program

	100,000 sq. ft. of retail and hospitality
	40,000-80,000 sq. ft. of medical and professional office
	175 residential units with indoor parking
	592 parking spaces
	Bus stations
	15' sidewalk and plaza spaces
	Interior courtyards and landscaping
	Water Feature

Niles Court Development Concept Plan

Retail

Beginning with a retail base, the illustrative plan shows both big box, medium sized, and boutique space in buildings fronting on Milwaukee Ave. Approximately 100,000 sq. ft. of new retail space is shown in the

concept plan. The biggest space could accommodate a franchise home goods store, which is one business that the market analysis identified as a potential opportunity in the corridor. The existing liquor store is retained in a new building, as is an existing restaurant at the Dempster corner.

Office

The grand entrance off Milwaukee Avenue is flanked by two professional office buildings, which are conceived as primarily medical offices, but could also include other types of office businesses. Each of the two office buildings has a 10,000 sq. ft. footprint, with the total number of floors to be determined by the development proforma. The nearby Lutheran General Hospital, a mile west of the site on Dempster, offers a potential market for this office space. Providing medical or other professional services would be an on-site amenity to potential residents of new condominium or apartment dwellings.

Residential

Four condominium or apartment buildings are shown framing two internal courtyards. The courtyards create an amenity for the whole development, including outdoor seating for restaurants and cafes, and provide an opportunity to create a quiet place away from the bustle of Milwaukee Ave.

Public realm

The site plan explores opportunities for designing both internal public spaces and a new streetscape along the site's Milwaukee Avenue frontage. Internal courts are shown with water features, landscaping, and hardscape seating areas for adjacent cafes and shops. These courts are the defining urban design feature of this concept plan and illustrate how well-designed amenities can create a place and destination on Milwaukee Avenue. The streetscape is designed with a wide landscaped

parkway, wide sidewalk, and storefronts that open onto the sidewalk. The main entrance has an allee of flowering trees leading to a roundabout feature, which could include a fountain or sculpture.

Transit amenities

A dedicated bus lane extends along the whole length of the site from Dempster to Ballard Road. A BRT station is provided for buses running on Dempster, with another station located around the corner on Milwaukee to facilitate quick transfers. Having the dedicated bus lane makes it possible for buses to remain out of the general flow of traffic all the way to Ballard, which also makes stopping at a second station before Ballard efficient.

Parking

Parking is arranged around the outside of the site, with a small forest of trees in landscaped islands softening the look and feel of the parking area. The apartment or condominium buildings provide an internal garage for residents.

Complementary redevelopment

This illustrative plan aligns the main entrance of the Niles Court development, and the proposed turn lanes and new traffic signal, to a new street that is a combined entrance for Oak and Elizabeth streets. This alignment would require redevelopment of the block frontage between Oak and Elizabeth. While this adds to the scope of the Niles Court project, it also promotes the concept of securing the major investment on the east side of Milwaukee by carrying the redevelopment across the street, and connecting both sides with attractive complementary development and pedestrian facilities.

Golf Mill Concept Plan



LEGEND

-  Potential Redevelopment Site
-  Proposed BRT Station
-  Potential Street Closure
-  Proposed Traffic Signal
-  Pedestrian Safety Improvement
-  New Turn Lanes
-  Dedicated Bus Lane
-  Site Plan Improvements

Figure 36. Concept plan elements for the Golf Mill District.

Golf Mill

Redevelopment opportunities and urban character

Although Golf Mill Mall is in a class of older malls around the country that are undergoing large-scale redevelopment and repositioning, Golf Mill remains competitive in its market and will continue in the future with the same basic structures as today. Plans are being implemented to add a cinema to its west side, which will bring a needed entertainment venue to the mall and Milwaukee Avenue. At this time no changes are anticipated for properties on the east side of Milwaukee Avenue, with the exception of Golf Milwaukee Plaza where a former Kmart is to be replaced by a Wal-Mart store in the same basic configuration on the site.

Traffic and circulation

Milwaukee Avenue in the area of Golf Mill Mall is a wide multiple lane highway which has the capacity for current traffic levels. No improvements to the roadway are anticipated at this time for the movement of general traffic, however, substantial changes to bus routes are recommended, as described below.

Recommended improvements for bus movement along public roadways include:

- A bus turn-out lane along the north side of the Golf Mill Shopping Center property for southbound and eastbound bus routes (Routes 270 and 208), dependent on location of a new transit facility at this location.

Transit facilities

The Plan focuses on concepts for the proposed bus rapid transit along Milwaukee Avenue, and bus rapid transit service to be implemented on Golf Road. The Golf Road BRT received funding from the federal gov-

ernment in the 2005 transportation bill.

Golf Mill mall is an important transfer point between a number of Pace bus routes including:

Route #270
Route #208
Route #220
Route #240
Route #241
and Niles Free Bus Routes #411 and #412.

Although served by these many routes, the current transit facility is little more than a bus shelter located near the south end of the mall. Buses circulate to the transfer facility from Milwaukee Avenue, Church Street, and drives interior to the mall property. While the current location offers some advantages due to its close proximity to the mall building, some of the routes to this facility are inefficient. Specifically, the current route of the westbound Golf Road bus, Route #208, is to exit Golf Road turning south on Milwaukee Avenue, enter the mall property near its south end to the transfer facility, and then circulate to Church Street and go north on Greenwood Avenue and make a left turn at the intersection back to Golf Road. This route adds an average of 5 to 7 minutes to the Route #208 and is inconsistent with the concept of bus rapid transit. In a similar fashion, the Route #270 exits Milwaukee to access the current transfer facility and then backtracks to Milwaukee Avenue via Church Street.

In order to provide for efficient transfers from BRTs operating on Golf Road and Milwaukee Avenue it is important to provide a transit facility near the intersection of the two roadways. In addition, Pace should make a substantial upgrade with a new facility in keeping with the BRT concept and the importance of the Golf Mill

transfer point.

A concept for relocating the transit facility is provided in the Plan, however, the managers of Golf Mill Shopping Center expressed their concern about any loss of parking spaces. Contracts with mall tenants regarding available parking spaces may constrain the potential for relocation. A survey is needed to determine the extent of public right of way along Golf Road and how the proposed facility might fit. Preliminary design of this facility should also consider methods for mitigating any loss of parking spaces, which could include the construction of some structured parking.

The recommended improvements to the transit facilities include:

- Relocation of the transit transfer facility to the north end of the mall property along Golf Road.
- Design and construction of a high-capacity BRT station.

Pedestrian environment and streetscape

The scale of development at Golf Mill district is not conducive to pedestrian access and the existing environment is hostile to pedestrians. In fact, walking from Golf Mill to Four Flaggs is difficult given the large parking lots and wide roadway. Improvements for pedestrians should take a lower priority than in other districts, yet provision of sidewalks and marked crosswalks should be a goal.

Recommended improvements to the pedestrian environment include:

- Installation of sidewalks along Golf Road and marked crosswalks at the intersection with Milwaukee Avenue.

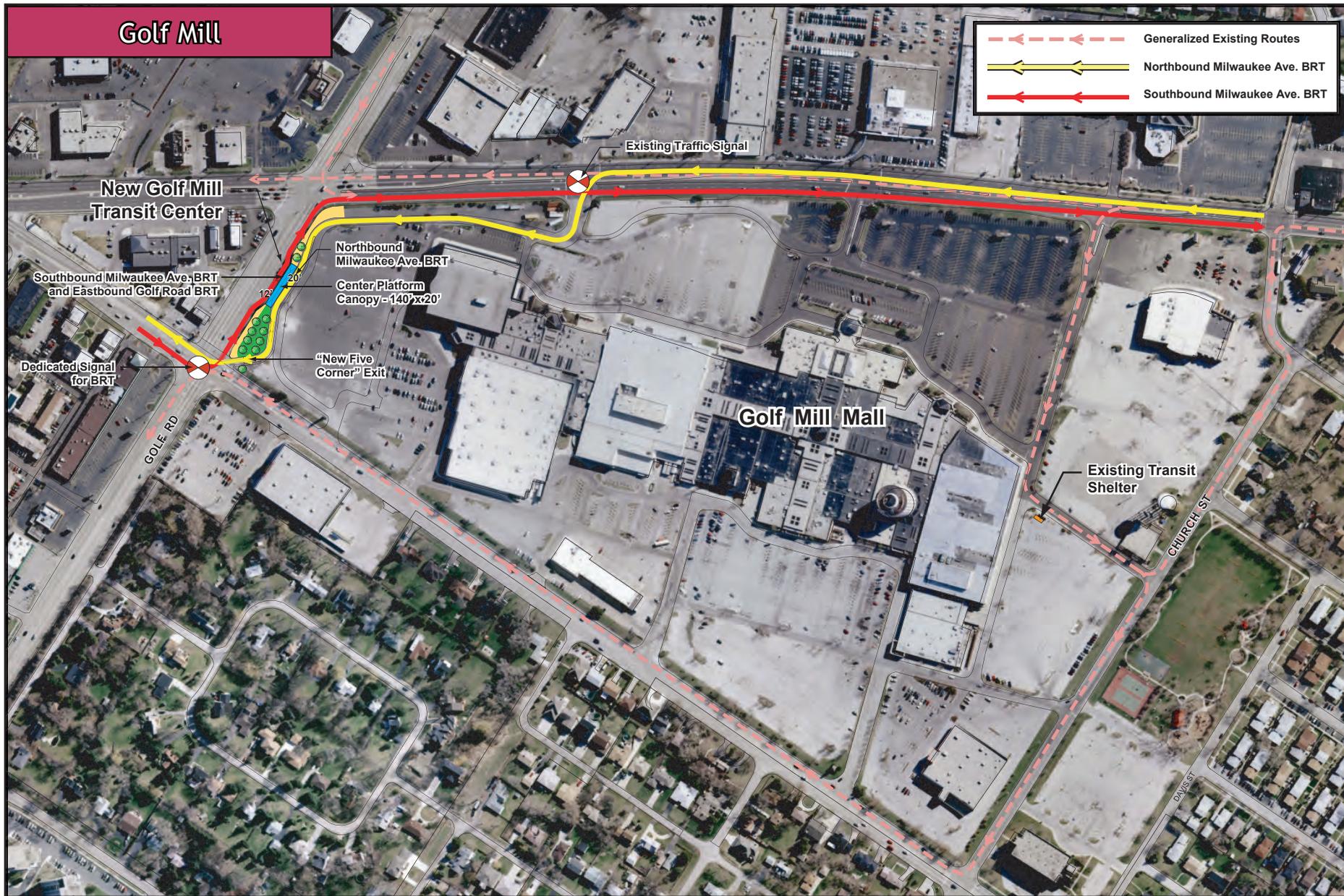


Figure 37A. Illustrative plan for relocating the Golf Mill transit transfer facility to Golf Road. See enlargement on facing page.

Golf Mill

Figure 37B.

Golf Mill Transit Center

The illustrative plan shows details for a new subregional bus transit transfer facility located along Golf Road at the north end of the Golf Mill Shopping Center. A dedicated bus-only turn-out lane is provided along the south side of Golf Road, for use by southbound Milwaukee Avenue BRT buses and by eastbound Golf Road BRT buses.

A center platform configuration is used to allow easy transfers from one bus to another by simply crossing to the other side of the 20-foot-wide platform. The platform is long enough to accommodate two articulated buses. A canopy covers the whole length of the platform. The northbound and westbound side of the platform is accessed by buses via an existing circulation lane within the shopping center parking lot.

The concept is predicated on creating a new exit from the shopping center lot at the southeast corner of the intersection of Golf Road and Greenwood Avenue. Addition of this fifth corner to the intersection will allow buses to exit the mall area much faster. A dedicated traffic signal for buses would hold the other traffic for approximately 15 seconds as buses either cross Golf Road to continue north on Milwaukee Avenue, or turn west onto Golf Road. Further exploration is needed to understand the impacts on the mall parking lot, with the goal of keep any loss of spaces to a minimum.



In addition to the Milwaukee Avenue BRT and Golf Road BRT, this transfer facility should be used by regular Pace routes and the Niles Free Bus that use the existing transfer facility at Golf Mill mall. Using this facility for all bus routes serving the area will make transfers between routes efficient.

Routes that should use the new Golf Mill transfer center include:

- Route #270
- Route #208
- Route #220
- Route #240
- Route #241
- and Niles Free Bus Routes #411 and #412.

Implementation Strategies and Next Steps

Coordination and Partnerships

Realizing the goals of the Milwaukee Avenue Plan will require coordination between the Village of Niles, IDOT, Pace, and private land owners. Indeed, given the overlapping goals for improvements in the areas of transit, traffic, and redevelopment, implementation requires more than coordination, but a real spirit of cooperation and partnership. Partnerships should include agencies and departments responsible for the highway, local roads, and transit facilities. Coordination is needed to construct public works in regard to the sidewalk and streetscape. And the general public and private property owners must be engaged with Village officials and staff to shape improvements to the public realm and guide future real estate development.

IDOT and Pace

Because Milwaukee Avenue is an Illinois highway, the Illinois Department of Transportation has jurisdiction over alterations to the roadway, standards for installations within the public right of way, and manages the function and maintenance of the roadway. While IDOT standards can conflict with other goals, it is also a great benefit to the Village to have IDOT as a partner and potential funding source. A surprising number of Niles residents mentioned that they appreciated the snowplowing that IDOT maintains on Milwaukee Avenue, even though space to store plowed snow is an issue. This can be a metaphor for implementation: with IDOT plowing the way to a better Milwaukee Avenue projects are more likely to get funded and built, yet all designs must meet IDOT standards.

Recognition of IDOT standards is necessary, but an innovative approach to some issues will also be helpful, particularly in regard to innovative planning and technologies for creating a Milwaukee Avenue BRT. Pace

planners and engineers will need to promote the BRT concepts to IDOT in order to secure their approval. Two examples of elements in the BRT concept that will challenge IDOT and Pace to work together illustrate this point:

1. Special traffic signals that give preference to BRT buses will cause minor delays to other traffic at intersections. Of course, this technology combined with turn-out lanes will also aid the overall flow. Pace will need to be prepared to make its case.
2. The creation of a new “five-corner” intersection to allow buses an exit from the regional transit facility at Golf Road and Greenwood Avenue may be seen by IDOT as a radical change to the operation of the intersection. Again, Pace will need to make the case that in order to make bus rapid transit a reality along the region’s major arterials, many of which are IDOT roadways, innovative solutions should be considered.

Of course, the private property owner in the second example, the owners of Golf Mill mall, will also need to be involved in the process.

IDOT and the Village of Niles

Some of the proposed plan elements will require close coordination between the Village and IDOT. The majority of recommended actions in the Plan should win hearty approval by IDOT, but other elements, particularly in regard to the pedestrian realm will require active promotion by the Village. Key areas for cooperation include:

1. Closure of local street access where possible and beneficial to traffic flow. IDOT should welcome these street closures.

2. Elimination of curb cuts, which again IDOT should approve and fund through grant programs when possible.
3. The installation of crosswalk warning strips at major intersections and barriers that create an island safe zone will require careful design to win IDOT approval.
4. Creation of new turn lanes will require coordination between the Village, IDOT, and owners of private property.
5. Installation of sidewalks, controlled access points, and parallel parking spaces may require changes to the existing roadway design, although it is not certain that these projects will require additional right of way.
6. Design and construction of new streetscape elements will need to meet IDOT standards, both for the performance of the new highway lights and their position relative to the drive lanes. This should be relatively easy to meet these standards while also improving the aesthetics of the corridor.

Village of Niles and private property owners

In order for Milwaukee Avenue to remain competitive with new shopping destinations in neighboring communities it is recommended that the Village become more active in promoting redevelopment and selective in its development review process. It is within the powers available to the Village to set standards for new development, as well as ask for upgrades to existing structures and sites. Revisions to the zoning code to provide clear standards for new development should be addressed. In addition, private developers may ask for assistance from the Village in regard to infrastructure or variances. In turn, the Village should hold developers to a high standard for site design and architecture

quality. Milwaukee Avenue is a great location to do business, and the Village should hold high standards for how the corridor is developed in the future.

During the planning process a number of property owners and developers expressed interest in the concepts portrayed in this Plan. Some owners were excited by the concepts for site plan improvement, but were unsure how to proceed and how to work with adjoining property owners. Other properties owners became interested in the possibilities that their property held as a redevelopment site. A real willingness to work with the Village on project development and site design was displayed. In order to build on this excitement generated by the planning process, the Plan will conclude with an examination of strategies for implementation and possible next steps.

Strategies and Next Steps

Strategies for implementation include both geographic and organizational approaches. Beginning with strategies by district, the Village should consider the following steps:

SoTo

The private market is taking the lead in transforming the area south of Touhy. The Village should work to ensure high quality redevelopment, especially at the southeast corner of Touhy and Milwaukee.

Harlem and Waukegan

The key to improving this district is to construct a consistent sidewalk on the west side of Milwaukee Avenue and design, select, and install new streetscape elements from Harlem to Waukegan and to Touhy. Funding this construction project should be a high priority of the Plan implementation, with potential sources discussed

in the next section. In addition to the streetscape, the Village should work with property owners on redevelopment and upgrade projects.

“Howardville”

Turning Howardville into the cultural and entertainment center of Milwaukee Avenue will require a great deal of imagination and follow through on the part of property owners and the Village. A working group of property owners and business owners to discuss possible redevelopment and marketing approaches could be useful. It is critical that the Village of Niles reach out to elected officials and staff in the City of Chicago to set agreed upon goals for improving both sides of the avenue around Howard Street. Creation of the transit plaza could be a key amenity to spur interest and new investments.

“Oaktown”

The short term focus in Oaktown should be on site plan improvements that control access north of Oakton. The Village could offer incentives including site design assistance and potentially assistance with construction costs, if a funding source can be secured.

Mary Hill

The key Plan action in the residential neighborhood near Mary Hill cemetery is to relocate the bus stop from Crain Avenue to Dempster and to consider closing local street access between Main and Monroe streets. Relocating the bus stop is dependent on negotiating right of way from the cemetery, which the Village and Pace should work together on. Closing local street access will require a neighborhood planning process to discuss the potential benefits and impacts of closing local roads, how traffic patterns may change and how many trips will be diverted to other streets. The most interesting part of this planning process may be to

consider how new homes might be built on the vacated street right of way, or if other uses or arrangements might be acceptable to adjoining property owners.

Ballard Road

Redevelopment of the former Sports Authority site should be a priority for the Village. The current structure on the large site detracts from the overall appeal of the area. The Village should work with the current owners to resolve lease holder issues and make it clear that the current vacancy is not an acceptable use of the land. At the same time, the Village should use the Plan to market the site to potential developers.

Golf Mill

Planned additions to the Golf Mill Shopping Center and reuse of the former Circuit City building should be encouraged by the Village. The Village should also coordinate with Pace to engage the owners of the mall and IDOT in a discussion about relocating the transit transfer facility.

In short, there are projects that can be worked on all along Milwaukee Avenue. Priority should be given to improving the public realm, to improving traffic flow, and to working with Pace on an incremental approach to transit infrastructure. Which projects get built first is of course dependent on which projects can find funding, primarily through grants.

Organizational Strategies

While planning concepts and project by project strategies are important to future improvements along Milwaukee Avenue, perhaps just as important is the creation of organizational structures that will encourage and guide the Village's efforts. The plan making process was guided by a steering committee of interested local businesses and property owners, with representation

from the Niles Chamber of Commerce and Village staff. Creation of an ad hoc committee by the Village, to guide the implementation of the Plan and promote redevelopment and reconstruction in the corridor, should be considered. This committee could provide a forum and advice to property owners who want to make improvements in a coordinated and cooperative manner with other property owners in their vicinity.

The ad hoc committee could also continue the discussion of issues that remain unresolved in terms of Village policy at the end of this planning process, specifically in regard to preferred urban form, including issues of street frontage, off-street parking location, building massing, and land-use mix. The Milwaukee Avenue Plan makes recommendations covering these issues, but the process of community discussion has only begun, and will continue as redevelopment projects are proposed.

Another potential organizing strategy is to form special service districts or business improvement districts (BIDs) along portions of the corridor. BIDs have gained in popularity over the last decade and provide a way for business and property owners to jointly fund projects and maintenance through a special assessment.

At the Village level, the Village of Niles should consider hiring a planner, as a full-time or part-time position, or through an ongoing service agreement with a private consulting firm. The Village should also consider adding a formal site plan review process to its zoning ordinance, and appoint Village staff to a site plan review committee. In regard to the Village Zoning Ordinance, no map changes are recommended at this time, however, a review of the ordinance may be useful, specifically in regard to adding basic site development standards to the code.

Funding Sources

Certain elements of the Milwaukee Avenue Plan will require expenditure of public funds, and other aspects will be realized by guiding private development. Specific funding sources for public works improvements and transit projects are identified below.

CMAQ

Known by its acronym, the Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality, improvement program is one of the best available programs for funding projects along Milwaukee Avenue. The program is jointly funded by the Federal Highway Administration and Federal Transit Administration and seeks to reduce tailpipe emissions from vehicles by improving traffic flow. Certainly traffic stuck in congestion is one of the most wasteful forms of pollution, and the Chicago area is a high priority for utilization of CMAQ funds. The Milwaukee Avenue Plan is full of concepts that realize the goals of the CMAQ program, including:

- Eliminating curb cuts and closing local street access.
- Creation of dedicated bus lanes.
- Promotion of transit ridership.

Grant applications should be made through IDOT as planning progresses on specific projects.

SAFETEA-LU

The Federal Highway bill for 2005, formally entitled Safe Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users, is the umbrella bill funding transportation projects for the next six years. Milwaukee Avenue in the Village of Niles has funds earmarked in the bill for resurfacing the roadway from Harlem Avenue south past the village limit to Devon

Avenue. The Village sees this as its best opportunity to implement the traffic, parking, and streetscape improvements outlined in the Plan for the Harlem and Waukegan district. Certainly, construction of new curbs and sidewalks, and installation of new street lights should be accomplished at the same time as this planned resurfacing. However, the Village of Niles will need to find a separate funding source for these improvements to the pedestrian infrastructure. The first step is for the Village to estimate how much the planned improvements will cost and then refine the streetscape design development. Once a funding source is found, construction documents can be developed and included as part of the total project.

ITEP

The Illinois Transportation Enhancement Program is a potential source of funds for constructing pedestrian facilities along Milwaukee Avenue. As an outgrowth of the Milwaukee Avenue Plan process, the Village of Niles submitted a grant application for \$1.8 million to the ITEP program in September of 2005. Notification of grant recipients will occur in January 2006.

STP

The Surface Transportation Program is another potential funding source. These federal funds are managed by a Council of Mayors in the Chicago region, and Niles is part of the Northwest Council of Mayors. The council receives and allocates an annual budget for funding local roadway improvement projects, including acquisition of new right of way.

Tax Increment Financing

Many municipalities use TIFs to fund public infrastructure improvements as part of redevelopment efforts. An existing TIF on the south end of the Milwaukee Avenue corridor is funding work to increase

sewer capacity, which supports the development of new residential units in the area. While it is not anticipated that any funds will be available from this existing TIF for projects recommended in this Plan, consideration may be given to how, or if, to use TIF to further the implementation of the Milwaukee Avenue Plan. Certainly, the projects envisioned in the Plan have many public works components that could be eligible for TIF funds.

Conclusion

The Milwaukee Avenue Plan is an outline for change along Niles' most important commercial corridor. As such, the Plan addresses the total environment of the corridor through a discussion of issues related to transit, traffic, and redevelopment. Improvements in each of these areas will require coordination between different government agencies and jurisdictions. Follow-up studies will be needed to implement the Milwaukee Avenue BRT, taking the concepts developed in this Plan to the next level of preliminary engineering. Daily efforts will also be required on the part of Village staff and officials, business and property owners, residents, and interested citizens. In a real sense, the effort to implement the Milwaukee Avenue Plan can begin everywhere along the corridor, with each property owner working to improve the look and function of their property. Public efforts will require focus and perseverance, with each successful project confirming the potential for Milwaukee Avenue.