

DEVELOPER DISCUSSION PANEL

Skokie Summary Report (November 2015)



Regional
Transportation
Authority



Urban Land
Institute

Introduction

The Regional Transportation Authority (RTA) has invested over \$4 million of its own funds and leveraged over \$6 million of local and Federal funds during the past 15 years to complete approximately 90 transit-oriented development (TOD) planning studies through the RTA's [Community Planning](#) program. This program funds TOD planning studies and implementation assistance that promote walkable, mixed-income, mixed-use development co-located and/or well-connected to retail and business uses in transit station areas, while also increasing overall access to transit. From the RTA's perspective, pursuing and achieving implementation of these plans can result in more efficient transit operations, improved access to transit services and a potential for increased ridership for all three of our Service Boards (Metra, Pace and CTA). Implementation efforts can also increase private investment in TOD areas while promoting the principles of sustainability and livability.

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



Discussion Participants

Urban Land Institute & Regional Transportation Authority

Paul Ivers- President, DR Horton

Tony Manno- Project Manager, Regional Transportation Authority

Mary Ellen Martin- Vice President & Chief Operating Officer, Morningside USA

Cindy McSherry- Executive Director, ULI Chicago

Matt Nix- Principal, REVA Development Partners

Shawn Temple- Managing Director, P3 Advisors LLC

Greg Terwilliger- Vice President, Novak Construction Company

Art Zwemke- Manager, Robert Arthur Land Company

Village of Skokie

Honorable George Van Dusen - Mayor

John Lockerby - Village Manager

Peter Peyer, AICP - Director of Community Development

Tom Thompson - Economic Development Coordinator

Leslie Murphy - Economic Development Specialist

Steve Marciani, AICP - Planning Supervisor

Carrie Haberstich, AICP - Planner/CDBG Administrator

Nathan Kriska, ALA - Building and Zoning Supervisor

Background

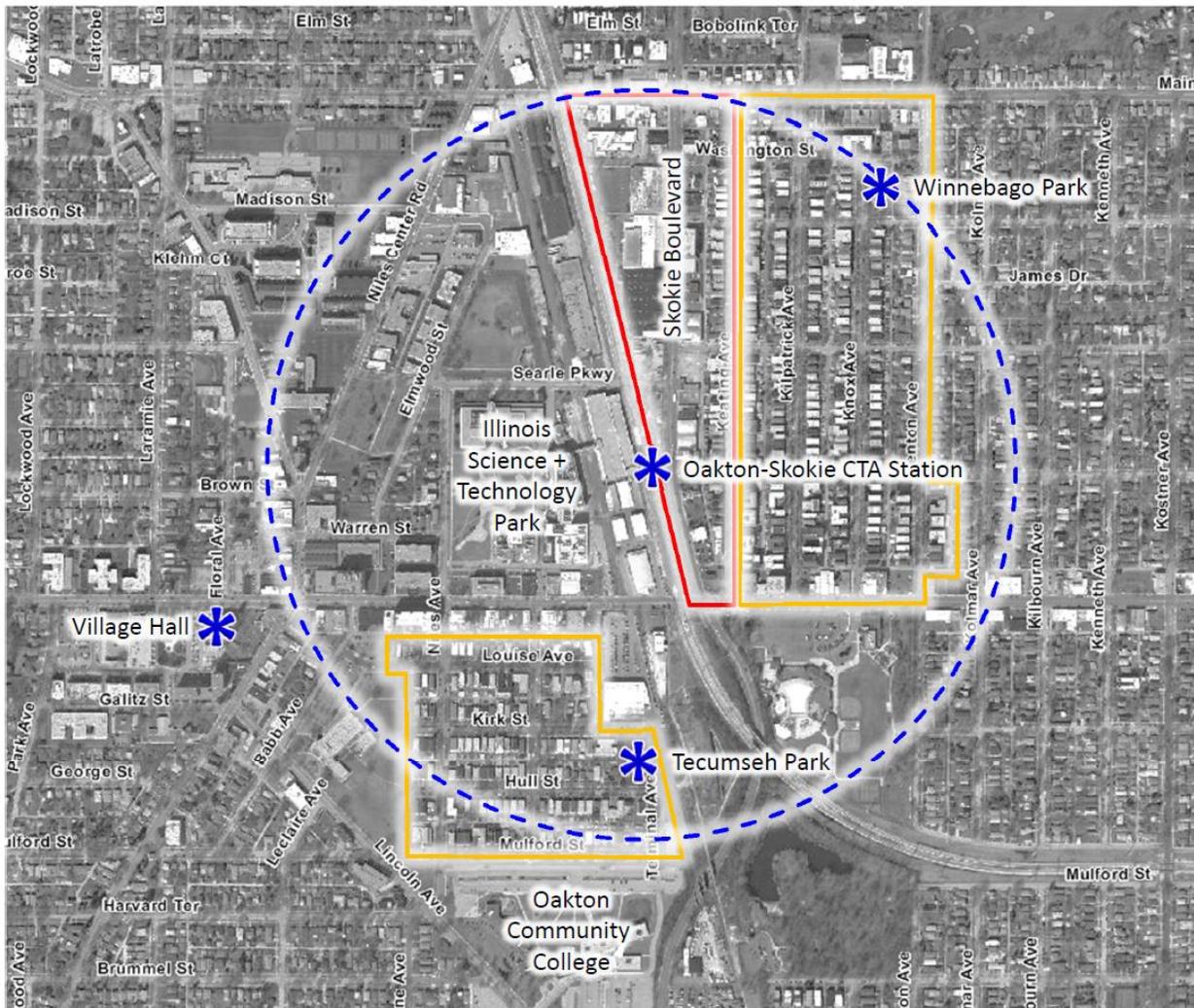
The Village of Skokie has enjoyed a strong planning and implementation history in part by partnering with the RTA on various efforts to study economic development opportunities and the expansion of transit in the community. Completed in September 2003, the [Skokie Swift Station Location Feasibility Study](#) assessed the feasibility of new intermediate stations on the CTA Yellow Line. This study determined that a stop at Oakton Street would be ideal due to projected ridership demand, long-term development potential and best access to connected bus routes. In 2012, the Oakton-Skokie CTA Yellow Line Station was built using a combination of Federal, State and local funds that included Innovation, Coordination and Enhancement (ICE) funds administered by the RTA for streetscape, landscape and pedestrian access improvements. Additionally, in 2005, the Village completed the [2020 Plan for Sector A: Downtown](#) to provide development direction by determining appropriate and compatible building forms and uses based on the Village's vision, market opportunity, and development potential.

There are numerous vacant and underutilized properties that line the east side of Skokie Boulevard (US Route 41) east of the station in Skokie's Downtown. The Village is interested in attracting development investment to continue to boost ridership and increase Downtown activity. To facilitate and attract new development, the Village rezoned the corridor properties to a CX Core Mixed-Use district with a first floor storefront retail use requirement. Additionally, a new R5 Transit-Oriented Housing district has been drafted to allow and encourage higher-density residential development in the Downtown residential neighborhoods. The Village is currently soliciting feedback from the development community before adopting this new district to ensure that the new regulations are realistic and feasible. Mixed-use development is envisioned along both the Skokie Boulevard and Oakton Street corridors and high-density residential is planned for the neighborhoods, especially to the east and south.

A Developer Discussion Panel was held in Skokie on July 10, 2015 to provide feedback to the Village on the challenges being faced for development in the Oakton-Skokie Station Area, the highest and best uses of key available sites that can support transit service, appropriate density for the station area neighborhoods, and how the Village may best attract and encourage development in the Downtown area. This report summarizes the discussion, the panel's recommendations and suggested strategies to attract new development.

Study Area

The focus area for this discussion surrounds the Oakton-Skokie CTA Yellow Line Station located at Oakton Street and Skokie Boulevard and includes the Illinois Science + Technology Park (IS+TP), Downtown Skokie, and the Winnebago Park and Tecumseh Park neighborhoods.



Key Recommendations

Skokie Boulevard

- The Village should retain the CX Core Mixed-Use zoning designation (yet maintain the retail street use as a preference and acknowledge challenges and allow flexibility) and also continue to require 15' first floor ceiling heights in any new development in hopes of accommodating first floor restaurant/retail now or in the future. The parking requirements for the area will need to be examined if stand-alone retail and fast food uses are allowed.
- Larger, auto-oriented and fast food uses may be more appropriate than mixed-use residential uses along Skokie Boulevard due to its traffic volume, speed of cars, and shallow lots.
- Multi-family will be tough to attract to this corridor. Workforce or blended affordable/tax credit housing might be more feasible here.
- It is understood that there are two active developments along this corridor with first floor commercial, one of which is fully approved. Consideration should be given to encourage mixed-use developments south of Madison Street, while staying open/receptive to other commercial development opportunities.
- Village financial assistance should be considered as a development incentive for utility relocation and the widening of the north/south alley east of Skokie Boulevard.

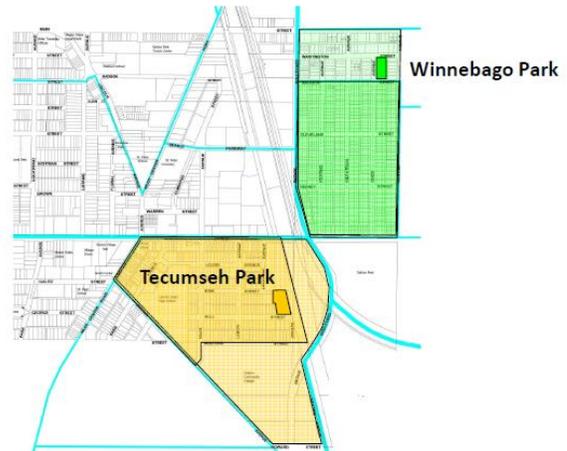


Skokie Boulevard (Photo Credit: RTA)

Key Recommendations

Winnebago Park & Tecumseh Park Neighborhoods

- The housing stock is solid; encourage the rehabilitation of the 2, 3 & 4-flats
- Seek out or solicit developers to acquire multiple apartment buildings and offer a master lease to incoming international IS+TP companies
 - A master lease can accommodate new employees looking for housing near work
 - This will encourage the rehab, updating and upkeep of multiple properties in either neighborhood
- Explore creating a cul-de-sac at the western end of Cleveland Street (east of the alley) to disconnect the street from Skokie Boulevard
 - This will protect the neighborhood from constant cut-through traffic from Skokie Boulevard (alternate routes would need to be developed)
 - This would also create a larger parcel of land along Skokie Boulevard
- A bike share station in each neighborhood would connect residents and Oakton Community College's Skokie Campus to Downtown businesses along Oakton, the CTA Station and the IS+TP



Winnebago & Tecumseh Park Housing Stock (Photo Credit: Google Street View)

R5 Transit Area Housing Zoning Regulations

- The Village should adopt the draft R5 zoning district regulations, increasing the allowable density and charging a fee in lieu of parking relief to create a fund for a future parking structure in the area.

Illinois Science + Technology Park (IS+TP)

- Encourage international companies that are interested in locating at the IS+TP to encourage employees to live in a nearby neighborhood
- Work with Forest City Enterprises (the developer of IS+TP) to encourage more of its employees to visit Downtown businesses and utilize the public space in the IS+TP for public events- activating this space will create activity to/from the Oakton corridor
- Consider continuing Lamont Avenue southbound through to Oakton Street, creating a continuous street that will create a visual and pedestrian connection from the IS+TP to the Oakton Corridor and through the Tecumseh Park neighborhood to Oakton Community College.

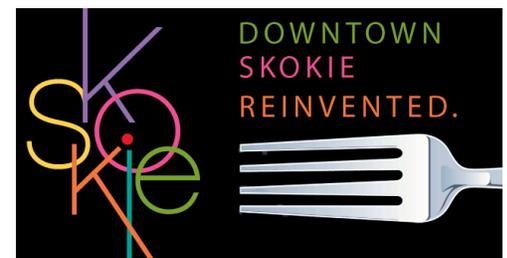


Source: <http://www.scienceparkillinois.com>

Key Recommendations

Oakton Street Corridor (from CTA Station to Floral Avenue)

- Focus on attracting multi-family apartment or mixed-use development at each end of the corridor to create a walkable TOD district along Oakton Street as gateways
- Crafty Beaver Site (Lumber Yard):
 - This site has the greatest TOD opportunity in the Oakton Downtown area
 - Create an incentive/offer package to encourage Crafty Beaver to relocate to an underutilized parcel possibly along Skokie Boulevard (north of the CTA station), Dempster Street, or elsewhere in the community. This incentive package could include reduced land cost and land development assistance (utilizing TIF funds, etc.)
 - Facilitate developer interest in this site to encourage a mixed-use commercial/residential project
- Explore launching a local bike share program (such as “Divvy” Bikes) with docking stations at Oakton Community College, the IS+TP, multiple locations Downtown, and near the CTA station
 - Strategically-located docking stations near activity centers connected to Downtown Skokie amenities can encourage use and create perception of “coolness”
 - Highlight the “quick trip” a bike could offer a student or employee interested in going to Downtown Skokie for lunch but may not have time otherwise
 - Consider the use of bike lanes to guide bicyclists and provide wayfinding
- Raise awareness of Downtown restaurants and businesses by working with the business owners to offer discount cards or VIP cards to students and IS+TP employees
- Focus marketing efforts on highlighting the diverse international food and culture of the Village
- Continue to support existing businesses with retail incentive programs/packages, streetscape improvements, and marketing campaigns



Key Recommendations

St. Peter School Site (Lincoln Avenue & Niles Center Road)

- Explore attracting a charter school or international school at this location to reuse the existing structures and to continue to maintain the cultural diversity of the Village, while balancing the initiative with the costs to bring the buildings up to code.
- Consider encouraging the archdiocese to issue an RFQ to solicit interest in rehabilitating part of the existing school site to be loft-style rental apartments. This type of housing could attract a younger generation of renters to the Village.



St. Peter School (Photo Credit: Google Street View)