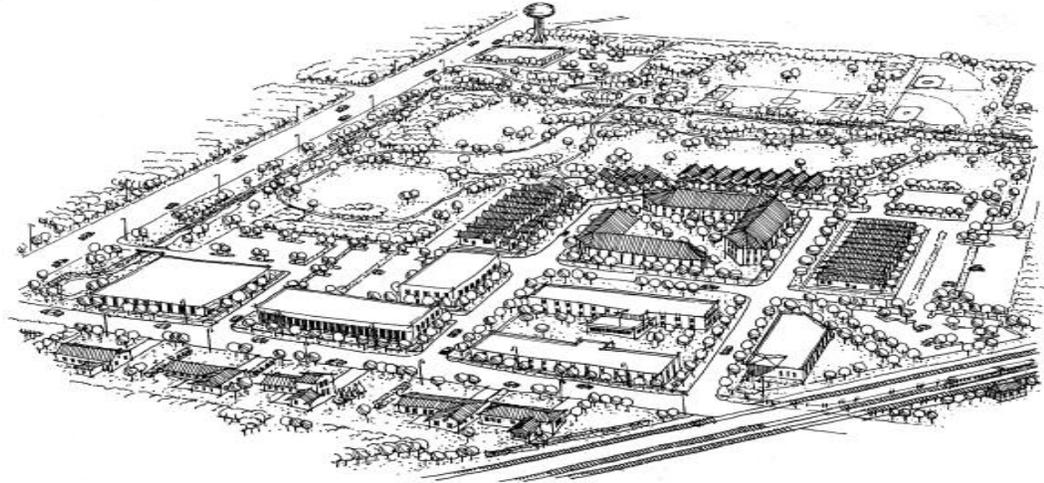


Village of Robbins

TRANSIT ORIENTED DEVELOPMENT STUDY



A NEIGHBORHOOD REDEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

Prepared for:
Village of Robbins
South Suburban Mayors
and Managers Association
Regional Transportation
Authority

Prepared by:

URS
CERC
nipc

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Executive Summary



Executive Summary

The Transit Neighborhood Redevelopment Strategy presented in this report is a unique opportunity for the Village of Robbins to launch a village wide renaissance with a redesigned station area as its catalyst. The redevelopment is focused around the Robbins Metra station, which has the potential to become a focal point of the Robbins community and a destination for residents, business owners, and Metra riders.

The Village of Robbins, located southwest of Chicago, Illinois, currently faces many challenges, including a population that declined by over 25% between 1980 and 2000. The commuter transit amenities in Robbins consist of a gravel commuter parking lot and a shelter for passengers only on the inbound side. Private development around the station is restricted by the large amount of property designated as floodplain, and conditions of blight and tax-delinquency are prevalent.

The Village of Robbins has recognized an opportunity to build on existing infrastructure improvements and development attraction efforts, while addressing many of the issues facing their community through the creation of this neighborhood redevelopment strategy centered around the Robbins Metra station. With the leadership of Village of Robbins Mayor Irene Brodie and a group of concerned citizens, the Village has partnered with the Regional Transportation Authority, and the South Suburban Mayors & Managers Association, to oversee a Transit Oriented Development Study for the station area. A successful redevelopment strategy for this area will create a new neighborhood with increased housing and retail opportunities, restored floodplain, enhanced park and open space facilities, and improved transit amenities that improve the quality of life for Village residents and attract additional commuters.

URS Corporation and Community Economic Redevelopment Corporation (the URS Team) evaluated existing historic, physical, environmental, and economic conditions in the Village of Robbins in order to identify opportunities for transit oriented development around the Robbins Metra station. The URS Team's analysis of physical and environmental conditions in Robbins found that a lack of open space and prevalence of floodplain designated property discourage private investment in the area around the station. This analysis identified an opportunity in the underutilized area around the Metra station to improve conditions and create an attractive transit neighborhood development. The URS Team recommends that the Village of Robbins target development in locations that are not constrained by a floodplain designation, and that they integrate open space development and floodplain mitigation into the Metra station area redevelopment.

The market study conducted by the URS Team indicated that there is a demand for new housing in the Village of Robbins and that new housing combined with the market created by Metra riders may support retail development, such as a grocery store, near the Metra station. A transit oriented development offers the opportunity to create a complementary mix of residential and commercial uses, within walking distance of the Metra station that will meet the demands of the area market.

The URS Team's transit analysis indicated that the condition of the station shelter, platforms, and parking facilities should be enhanced in order to encourage Metra ridership and create an attractive focal point for the transit oriented neighborhood. The URS Team specifically recommends 199 new parking spaces, with opportunity for future expansion, reconstruction of Metra platforms, and construction of a new warming shelter at the Robbins Metra station. Pedestrian access to the station can be enhanced through development of a pedestrian friendly neighborhood west of the station, and enhanced sidewalks, crossings and lighting around the station area. Metra has programmed dollars to initiate improvements at the station, pending the results of the study.

A Transit Neighborhood Development

An understanding of the constraints and opportunities present in Robbins led to the creation of a master redevelopment plan for the Robbins station area and an implementation strategy to assist the Village of Robbins in making this vision a reality. The mixed-use neighborhood master redevelopment plan presented in this report completely redesigns the 90-acre area around the Robbins Metra station. In addition to transit amenity improvements, the plan also recommends a variety of uses for the surrounding area, designed to work synergistically to attract new investment to the Village, make the Metra station more attractive to area commuters, and improve the quality of life for Robbins residents. The plan also identifies over 350 new residential units in and around the station, including single family homes, townhouses, condominiums, rental apartments, and senior apartments.

The master redevelopment plan also calls for approximately 68,000 square feet of new retail space, including the Village's first grocery store. The proposed retail development is concentrated at street level along 139th Street and is designed to serve residents of Robbins and Blue Island and Metra riders who can easily travel between the Metra station and the new retail development.

Approximately 40 acres of the redevelopment area is dedicated to open space and parks. The open space and park areas are concentrated on land designated as floodplain, which is largely unsuitable for other types of development. The plan provides valuable recreation facilities for residents of Robbins, a service that is currently lacking. The presence of an attractive greenway connecting the Metra station, retail and commercial development,

new residences, and park facilities makes the area attractive to residents and business owners. It helps to transform the station area into a destination for residents from throughout the Village of Robbins and surrounding areas, contributing to the Village's renaissance as a quality place to live and do business.

This new transit neighborhood will have an enormous impact on the area around the Robbins Metra station. The neighborhood improves access for Metra commuters, provides a variety of new housing and retail development, and converts the floodplain into a community asset in the form of attractive recreational space. This transit neighborhood also has the potential to become a catalyst for additional improvements throughout other neighborhoods and the beginning of a village-wide revitalization.

Implementation

The URS Team has developed an implementation strategy to accompany the master redevelopment plan for this transit neighborhood and to help the Village to attract investment in the community and increase Village revenues. This neighborhood has the potential to be an economic engine for the Village fueled by new commuters who make the proposed homes, parks, and shops of the neighborhood their destination. However, making this vision a reality will take a great deal of dedication, time, and financial support from the Village of Robbins and other stakeholders. The implementation strategy helps to make this process clearer and provides some initial recommendations for development. The implementation strategy is divided into four phases of completion. The projected cost of development for the entire project is estimated to be \$119 million.

Phase I of implementation focuses on land acquisition. Although the Village has initiated this process, success will require outside investment and support from all stakeholders. Implementation of Metra station area improvements is recommended for Phase I. These improvements include construction of new platforms and warming shelter, and the creation of 148 parking spaces for use by Metra commuters. Phase I also includes development of senior housing at the assisted living center that is underway, and 37 additional units of senior housing with retail at street level. Phase I is estimated to cost \$22.6 million to implement.

Phase II focuses on development of 34 acres of park and open space, which will enable the Village to address floodplain constraints as they move forward with the project. This phase includes development of 80 single-family housing units south of 139th Street, which the Village is already pursuing, as well as development of an additional 51 spaces of Metra commuter parking. Phase II is estimated to cost \$35.2 million to implement.

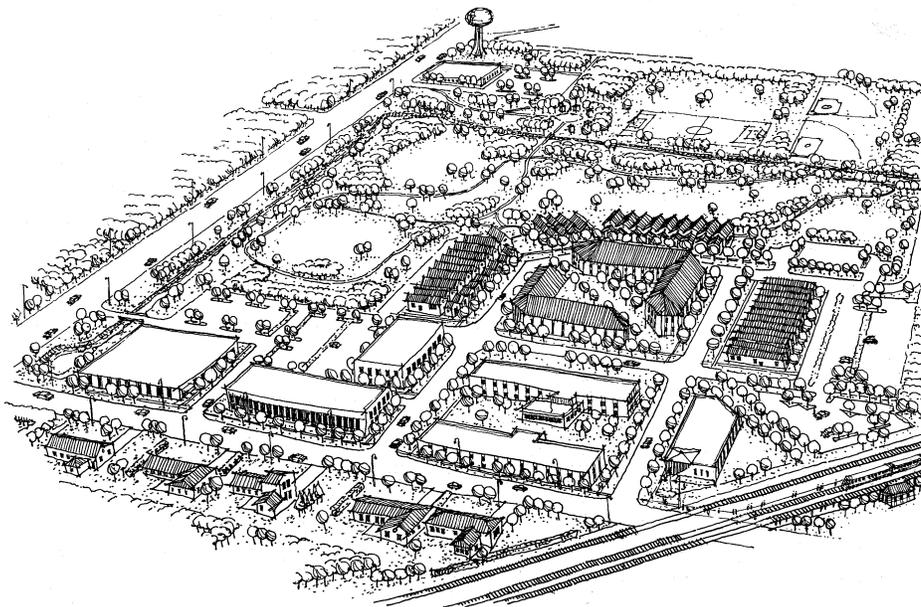
Phase III concentrates on residential development, including 70 attached, owner-occupied townhomes, 80 condominiums, and 40 rental apartments. Development of a commercial/retail facility at the corner of 139th Street

and Kedzie Avenue is also recommended. Development costs for Phase III are approximately \$58.3 million.

Phase IV includes the development of a second retail/commercial space and the completion of an additional 13 acres of park and open space to create a greenway through the entire 90-acre project area. Further expansion of Metra commuter parking facilities is possible in this Phase; the number of available spaces could be doubled through development of property east of the railroad tracks in Blue Island. Phase IV also includes development of 12 acres of industrial property. This phase is expected to cost \$7.1 million to implement.

The URS Team has developed an index of funding program and tools, the Funding Tool-Kit, which the Village of Robbins and the proposed development agency may utilize to pursue their redevelopment goals. These tools can help to bridge the gap between development costs and traditional financing strategies. The implementation strategy also recommends a funding summit, to be hosted by the Village of Robbins, involving elected officials, public agencies, and private lenders. The funding summit may help the Village of Robbins shape their redevelopment program and more effectively leverage outside funding sources.

The development recommendations, implementation strategy, and funding tool-kit contained in this report are designed to help the Village of Robbins realize the vision presented in this report. The successful reformation of the area around the Robbins Metra station into an attractive transit neighborhood will allow the Village of Robbins to build upon infrastructure improvement and development programs that are already underway and once again become a destination community that offers vibrant neighborhoods, commuter access, and a high quality of life for all its residents.



Robbins Metra Station and Proposed Transit Neighborhood Redevelopment

I. Overview



A. PROJECT BACKGROUND

The Village of Robbins, an inner-ring suburban community, located in Southern Cook County, has recognized the need to stimulate investment and revitalization within the Village.

In 2001, Robbins was awarded a grant through the Regional Transportation Authority's Regional Technical Assistance Program (RTAP) to conduct a transit oriented development study for the area around the Robbins Metra station. The Village teamed with the South Suburban Mayors & Managers Association (SSMMA), and the Regional Transportation Authority to conduct a transit-oriented development study. The Village of Robbins envisioned the recommendations from the study would stimulate community reinvestment. The study was coordinated by a project committee, which included:

- Regional Transportation Authority (RTA)
- South Suburban Mayors and Managers Association
- Village of Robbins
- Metra

A consultant team led by URS Corporation and including Community Economic Redevelopment Corporation (CERC) (URS Team) was engaged to conduct a study of the area around the Robbins Metra station and create a redevelopment plan. The Northeastern Illinois Planning Commission (NIPC) also participated on the project as a partner and a regional resource during the planning and public outreach process.

B. KEY OBJECTIVES

The RTA and the Village of Robbins retained the URS Team to investigate the redevelopment potential of the area surrounding the Robbins Metra station and recommend a conceptual redevelopment plan. The plan is based on the premise that any redevelopment project should embrace the vision of sustainable development and be guided by the three principles of sustainability. Therefore, the goals of this redevelopment include:

Social Equity:

- Develop a vision for the station area based on community participation and consensus
- Improve the quality of life for members of the Robbins community

Environmental Enhancement:

- Provide good stewardship of assets for the Village of Robbins
- Promote the use of all modes of transportation

Economic Return:

- Leverage investment in the Robbins community
- Diversify the Village of Robbins economy

The goal of a socially, environmentally, and economically sustainable redevelopment for the Village of Robbins is achieved through adherence to the principles of Transit Oriented Development, which include:

- Compact and efficient land use
- Diversity and mix of uses
- Pedestrian-friendly physical design

C. PURPOSE AND SCOPE

The URS Team's approach to revitalization of the area surrounding the Robbins Metra Station included the completion of the following tasks:

Task 1: Data Collection:

The URS Team collected and analyzed a variety of data related to environmental conditions, the local residential and commercial real estate markets, existing land use, and transportation access and circulation. The survey of existing conditions included both assets and constraints to development.

Task 2: Public Involvement:

The URS team worked with the Village of Robbins to involve identified stakeholders in the redevelopment planning process. Outreach included presentations to the Village, the Plan Commission, a public meeting and survey, and the creation of a Project Advisory Board.

Task 3: Circulation Plan:

Circulation alternatives were analyzed that address multi-modes, particularly pedestrian movement. Shared parking arrangements were identified as well as the alternatives for station location. The configuration of the local road and pedestrian walkway network was evaluated to interweave the transit environment into the community.

Task 4: Identify Transit-Oriented Development Opportunities:

The URS Team used the analysis of existing conditions in the Village of Robbins to identify opportunities for transit oriented development that are consistent with historic, physical, environmental, and economic conditions.

Task 5: Develop A Concept Plan:

The URS Team then created a development plan for the station area, based on identified transit oriented development opportunities and an understanding of the station area's context within the wider Robbins area. The plan is represented by an illustrative vision of the station area.

Task 6: Creation Of Financing Tools And Strategies:

This list of financing tools and mechanisms lays out options for how the Village or developers can maximize public and private resources to implement the project. A matrix developed by the URS Team outlines potential federal, state, and other public sources of financing for the project, as well as private financing resources.

Task 7: Final Report:

This final report is a summary of the planning process and information collected and evaluated by the URS Team. It also presents the Concept Plan for the station area, which was developed based on these evaluations, and serves as a guide to redevelopment for the Village of Robbins.

II. Findings & Analysis



Findings & Analysis

A. CULTURAL, ENVIRONMENTAL, & LAND USE ANALYSIS

The URS Team reviewed a variety of data related to the historic and current conditions of the south suburban region, the Village of Robbins, and the Robbins station area. This information was analyzed in the process of developing the concept plan for the Robbins station area. The Cultural, Environmental, and Land Use Analysis provides an understanding of the primary development opportunities and constraints facing the Village of Robbins from a physical perspective. Appendix A provides an overview of the Geographic Information Systems (GIS) data that was gathered and analyzed as part of this stage of the transit oriented development study.

The Village of Robbins faces challenges typical of many industrial communities and communities with large minority populations. The Village's population has declined steadily over the past few decades; this has had a negative impact on the Village's financial condition. A large percentage of property is blighted or unsuitable for development, which has depressed investment in the area. As businesses and residents have migrated out of Robbins and the Village's tax revenues have decreased, it has become increasingly difficult to provide the level of services and amenities that Robbins residents deserve. Open space and recreational facilities, for example, are severely lacking in Robbins. The combined effect of these issues is extensive blighted property throughout the Village, and a lack of new investment in the community.

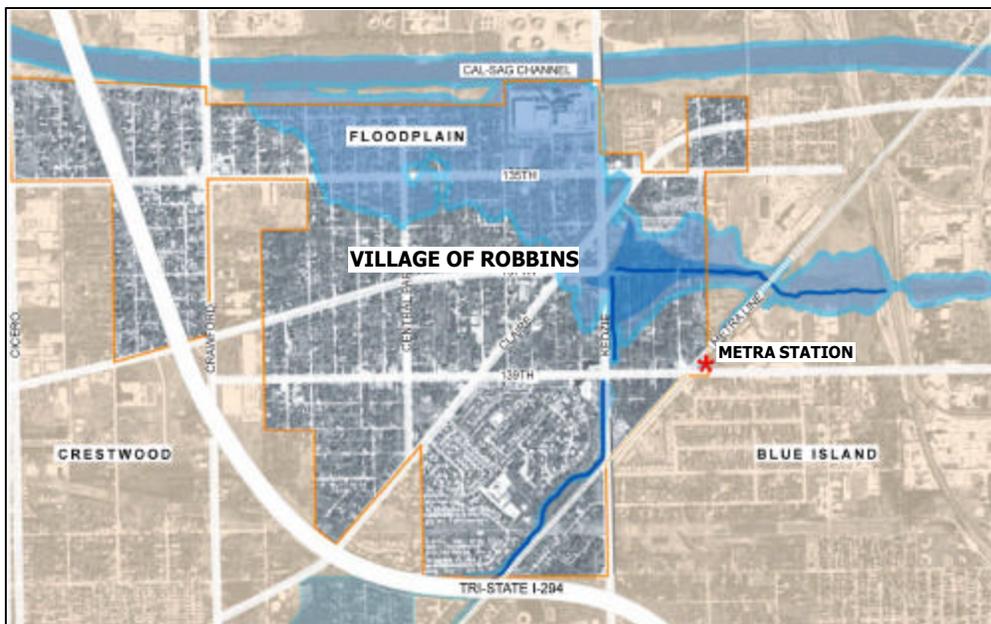


FIGURE 1: VILLAGE OF ROBBINS

The Village of Robbins, Illinois is located in southern Cook County, approximately 20 miles southwest of downtown Chicago. The Village of Robbins occupies approximately 1.5 square miles of land within Bremen Township. Neighboring communities include Crestwood, Midlothian, Blue Island, Alsip, and Posen. A notable geographic landmark is the Calumet Sag Channel, located immediately north of the Village. Robbins is situated between two major roads, I-294 and I-57 and adjoins the Calumet Sag Channel. Midlothian Creek flows from the south edge of the Village to the northeast corner, , and feeds into the Little Calumet River east of the Village.

History

The Robbins community has a rich history. The Village of Robbins was incorporated in 1917 and is named for the Village's original realtor and subdivider, Eugene Robbins. Robbins is one of the oldest African American governed towns in the northern United States. The Village is the site of the first African-American airport and school of aviation, founded by noted aviatrix Bessie Coleman. The Village has also been home to S. B. Fuller, the nation's first African-American millionaire, and Samuel L. Nichols, the inventor of cellophane and a former mayor of Robbins.

The Village of Robbins has a strong tradition as a bedroom community, and families have made the community their home for generations. In recent decades, however, the Village has been challenged to maintain its historic standard of living and sense of community. Robbins has seen a decrease in population; many of its small businesses have closed their doors, and homes in many of its older neighborhoods have been poorly maintained or abandoned. The current condition of many buildings in Robbins is deteriorated and the community has seen a lack of new investment.

General Demographic Overview

Population

The current population of Robbins according to the 2000 census is 6,635 people (Robbins is represented by census tract 8243). This is an 11.5% decrease from the 1990 census and represents nearly a 27% decrease in population since 1980. This is in contrast to the other cities and villages located in Bremen Township; the Township experienced a modest 1% increase in population between the 1990 census and the 2000 census.

According to the 2000 census figures, nearly one-third (32.3%) of all Robbins residents are under the age of 18. Approximately 13% (12.77%) are over the age of 65. The median age of all residents is 32.

According to Census figures for 1990 and 2000, households decreased in size from an average of 3.37 people per household in 1990 to 3.13 people per household in 2000. Female Head-of-Household families were the largest household group comprising nearly 41% of all households compared to

27.1% for married households and 24.9% for non-family households. Female Head-of-Household families represent a larger percentage of the overall population than in either Bremen Township, where 15.4% of households are classified as Female Head-of-Household, or Cook County, where 15.6% of households are classified as Female Head-of-Household.

Household Income

The 2001 projected median household income for a household of four in Robbins is \$34,965. This is significantly lower than the projected median household income for Blue Island (\$51,991) and Midlothian (\$65,320) (Claritas Inc.). In 1990, Robbins median family income was \$25,141 and trailed significantly behind Blue Island (\$34,179) and Midlothian (\$41,535). Robbins lower median income is explained in part by the higher concentration of children and elderly which are typically non-wage-earning populations (45% of total Robbins population is composed of children and elderly, versus 38% for the entire township). Another factor that skews the median income numbers for Robbins is the relatively large concentration of Cook County Housing Authority units.

Employment

Approximately 40% of all Robbins residents 16 years and older are employed. This is up slightly since 1990. The largest concentrations of these residents are employed in Retail/Service (22.9%), Administrative support (14.8%), and Professional/Managerial (14.4%). The fact that over 50% of Robbins residents are not in the workforce is consistent with the large number of elderly and young children. During the 1990’s, unemployment in Robbins was reported as high as 20%. This high unemployment level is reflective of the large number of cyclical retail and service jobs within the southwest suburban region.

Floodplain & Stormwater

The location of Midlothian Creek and the abundance of designated Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) floodplain within the Village of Robbins

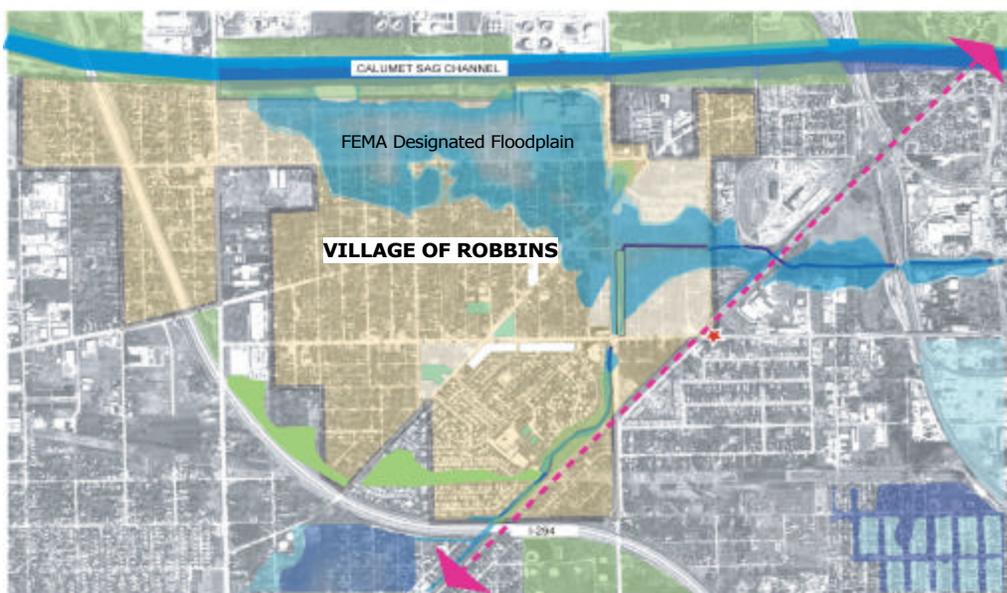


FIGURE 2: FEMA DESIGNATED FLOODPLAIN IN THE VILLAGE OF ROBBINS

Robbins currently create constraints to development. Development is limited along key corridors adjacent to the floodplain and seasonal flooding limits access while reducing the utilization of other areas of the Village. The potential exists to create a dynamic redevelopment plan for the Village of Robbins, centered about Midlothian Creek and the floodplain. Recognizing and addressing existing conditions can help the Village improve stormwater management within the Village and the watershed, and open up new opportunities for land use.

Over 20% of the Village of Robbins is located within a regulatory floodplain, a significant portion of the community. Floodzone data from FEMA Flood Insurance Rate Map for Cook County shows that floodplain is concentrated in the northern portion of Robbins and south of Robbins. Water in these areas of the 100-year floodplain can reach depths of between 1-3 feet.

The URS Team confirmed, through review of historic photos and documents, that an abundance of wetlands and natural marsh is native to the Robbins area. A 1938 aerial of the Village, below, shows the historic presence of wetland areas. The residents of Robbins commonly referred to the areas now labeled FEMA floodplain as “the bottoms”.

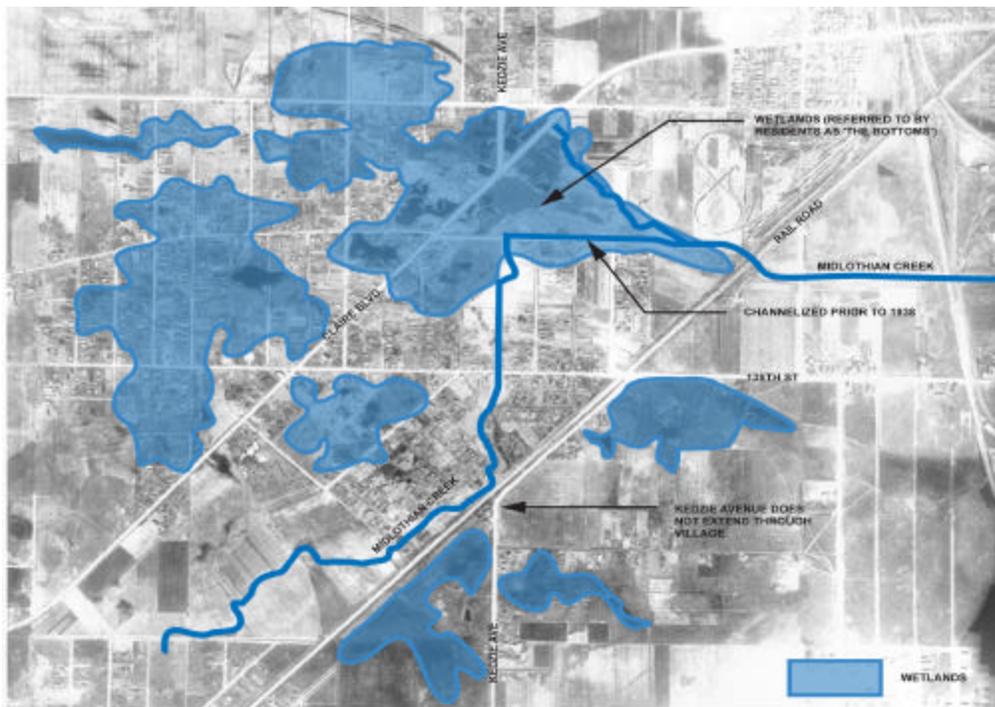


FIGURE 3: Floodplain Conditions in the Village of Robbins, 1938

Properties that are designated by FEMA as floodplain are unattractive for development because of the potential for flooding. In many cases, public or private investment in development at these properties is restricted or prohibited because of their floodplain designation.

The Village of Robbins administers the “MODEL FLOODPLAIN ORDINANCE FOR VILLAGE OF ROBBINS”, which is consistent with guidance on development of floodplain provided by the Illinois Department of Natural Resources, Division of Water Resource Management. The ordinance defines floodplain property as either floodway (floodplain adjacent to a watercourse that is needed to store and convey the existing 100-year frequency flood discharge with no more than a 0.1 foot increase in velocities) and floodfringe (that portion of the floodplain outside the floodway).

The ordinance allows for some permitted construction in floodfringe areas when construction includes protection against flooding, does not adversely affect drainage and when any infill of floodplain is compensated at a minimum 1:1 ratio by converting additional property to floodplain. The ordinance prohibits all development in floodway areas, with the exception of water dependent uses, flood control structures and recreational facilities.



Midlothian Creek travels through the Village of Robbins. It currently presents a constraint to development at many locations, such as along Kedzie. There is potential to transform the Creek into an attractive natural resource and a community asset.

Land Use Analysis

Existing development within the Village of Robbins includes a mixture of commercial and residential development. The Village administers a zoning code, and recently developed a comprehensive plan to guide land use and development within Robbins. Both of these are valuable tools for future planning and development. The URS Team reviewed the Village’s existing comprehensive plan and zoning regulations to ensure the transit oriented development’s compatibility with other existing and proposed development initiatives within the Village. The URS Team also reviewed the Village’s existing comprehensive plan and zoning code in the context of physical and environmental conditions throughout the Village, which revealed a disconnect between existing floodplain designations and targeted development zones.

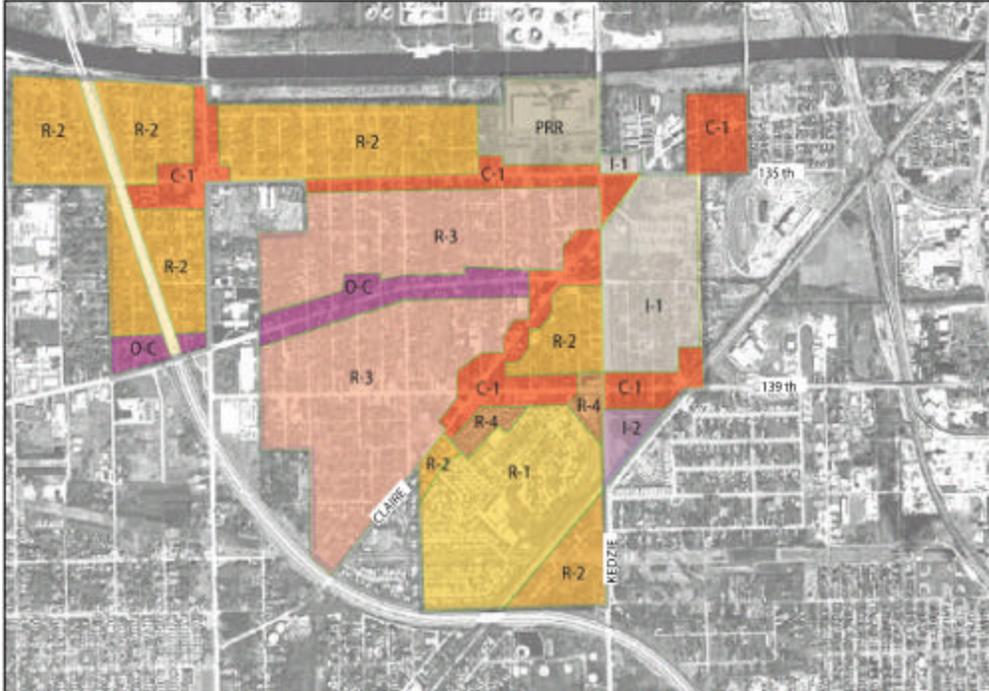


FIGURE 4: VILLAGE OF ROBBINS EXISTING ZONING

The existing zoning plan for the Village of Robbins, shown in Figure 4, illustrates the variety of development in Robbins. A large percentage of land within the Village is reserved for residential uses (signified with an R). Commercial development is concentrated along major arterial roads, including 135th Street, South Claire Boulevard, and 139th Street east of South Claire Boulevard.

Several areas are zoned for industrial development, including the area east of Kedzie Avenue between 135th and 139th. Residential development and a mobile home park currently occupy this area. The former Foster-Wheeler Facility, a waste to energy incinerator, is identified with a PRR zoning designation. This facility closed in 2000. There are no operating industrial developments in the Village of Robbins.

The area immediately east of the Metra station is currently zoned for industrial use, with property along 139th Street and east of the existing Metra station and platform designated for commercial development.

Zoning in the Village of Robbins is marked by a number of incompatible or non-conforming uses within designated zones. A visual survey of properties revealed numerous instances of residential development within designated commercial or industrial zones, and retail or commercial uses within designated residential zones. This suggests previous attempts to stabilize areas by maintaining some active commercial uses within structures where strict adherence to zoning might otherwise bar these uses. This inconsistency in the urban landscape represents an impediment to future development.

The Village of Robbins current comprehensive plan, shown in Figure 5, was developed by Campbell Tiu Campbell and Thomas J. Coates. The plan recommends targeting several areas of the Village for development of various types. Commercial development is focused at several high-traffic intersections, along 135th Street and at several locations along Kedzie Avenue. Industrial development is recommended for the area east of Kedzie Avenue between Midlothian Turnpike and 135th Street.

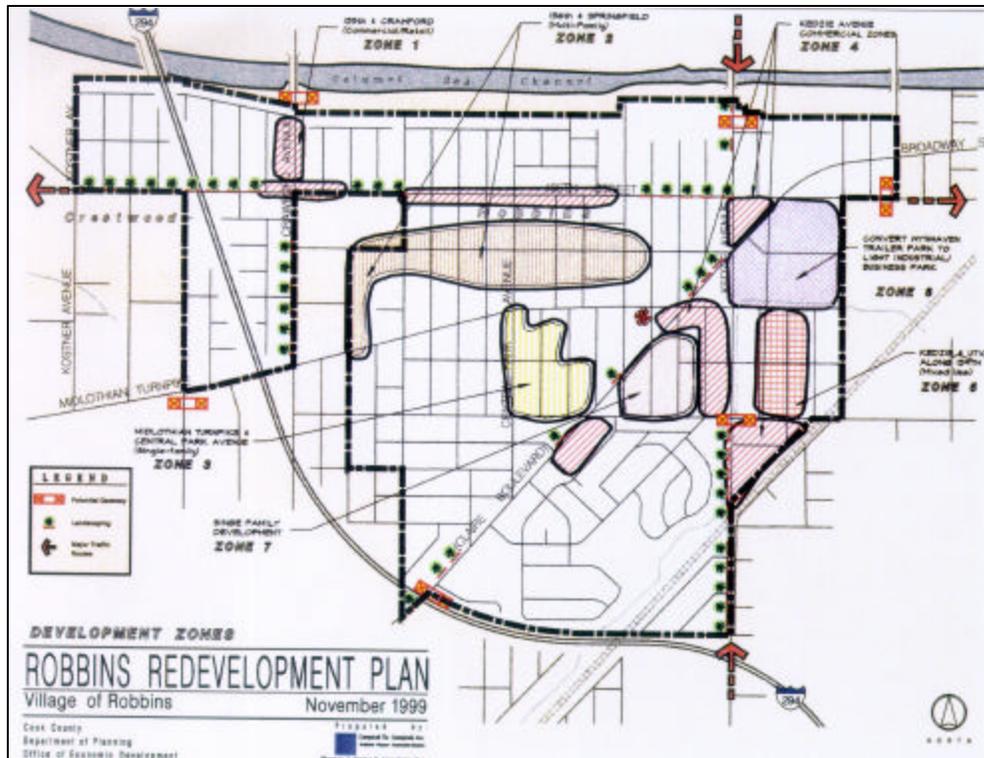


FIGURE 5: EXISTING COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

A review of the existing comprehensive plan in comparison with the location of existing floodplain reveals that a number of the targeted development zones are, like much of the Village of Robbins, located within floodplain. Figure 6 shows the targeted development zones identified by the current Comprehensive Plan and designated FEMA floodplain areas.

The development constraints represented by the floodplain properties are a significant impediment to implementation of these targeted development zones. Incentives for development of these areas would have to compensate for the difficulty associated with developing within a floodplain. In addition, if areas within the targeted development zones were to be removed from the floodplain through infill and elevation, other areas of the Village would need to be identified for excavation and conversion to floodplain.

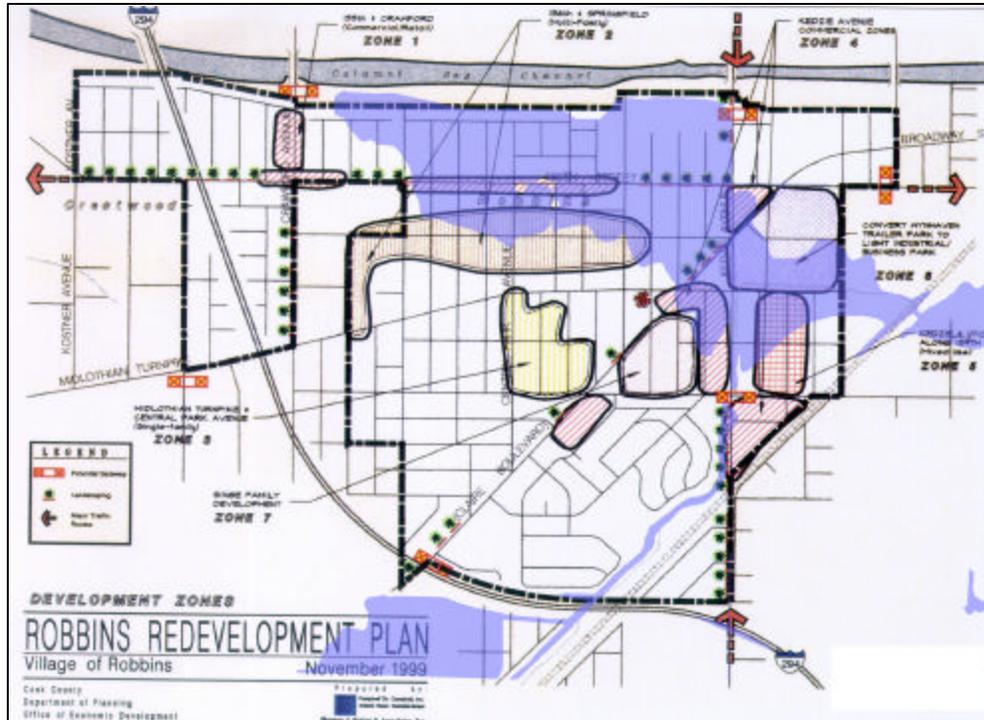


FIGURE 6: EXISTING COMPREHENSIVE PLAN WITH FEMA FLOODPLAIN OVERLAY

Open Space

The Robbins community is underserved by open space and recreational facilities; there is very little property available for these purposes in the Village. The Robbins Eagles youth football team, which competed in the 2001 national championship tournament, must find practice facilities in neighboring communities, because no adequate space exists in Robbins. The Village of Robbins and the Robbins Park District share the goal of acquiring more open space and recreational facilities. A limited number of neighborhood recreational areas have been developed to date. The few facilities that exist are well maintained by the Park District and are popular spots for residents to picnic or bring their children to a playground.

Regional access to open space exists north of the Village along the Calumet-Sag Channel and at Cook County Forest Preserve land to the east of the Village, along the Little Calumet River. There is opportunity to create regional greenways that connect to the Village of Robbins. Figure 7 illustrates the potential relationship between the Village of Robbins and existing open space in surrounding areas. A greenway connecting Robbins with these areas would provide access for Robbins residents to Cook County Forest Preserves to the east, large neighborhood parks to the south, and open areas along the Calumet Sag Channel to the north. All of these areas appear on the Northeastern Illinois Regional Greenways Plan, indicating their regional significance and the potential for connection with surrounding open space areas.

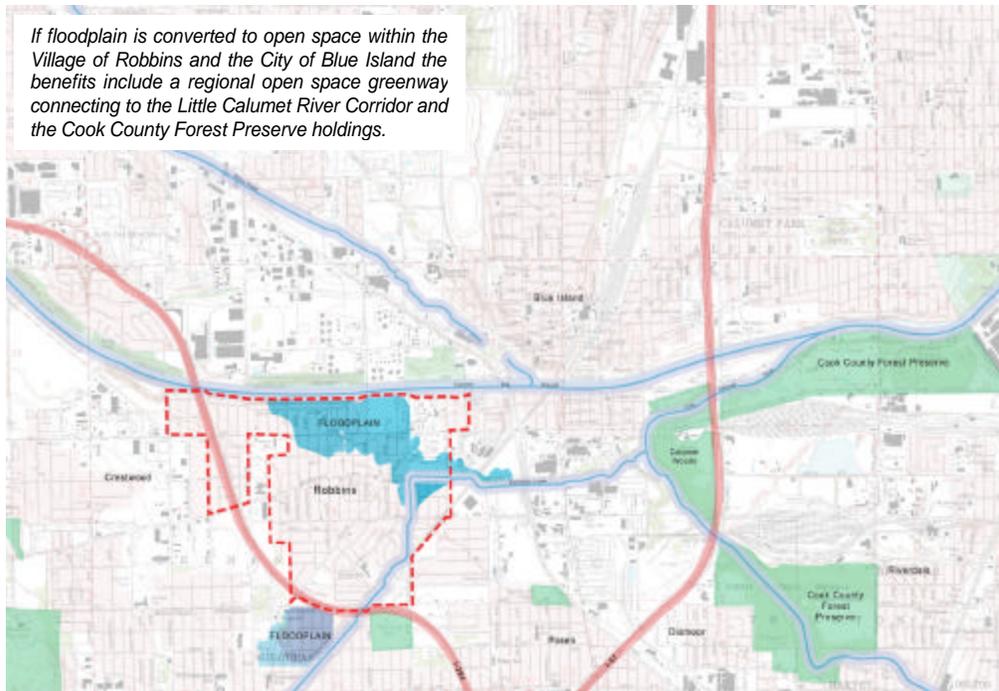


FIGURE 7: REGIONAL OPEN SPACE PLAN

Recommendations

The Village of Robbins has the opportunity to convert the creek and the floodplain into an attractive feature around which recreation, natural areas, and residential development could be planned. This approach would allow the Village to address stormwater management issues and the current lack of open space and recreational facilities. This approach would also allow the Village to target development to areas that are not constrained by floodplain and therefore more suitable for development.

This approach requires a revision to the current Village Comprehensive Plan. Given the constraints on development within the floodplain, the URS Team recommends targeting the area immediately north of 139th Street, and west of the Metra station for a mixture of commercial and medium to high density residential development that is integrated with an open space and stormwater infiltration area.

The URS Team has developed a Village-wide conceptual land-use plan that demonstrates immediate approaches to addressing the development constraints presented by Midlothian Creek and extensive floodplain designated property. The plan recommends that the Village of Robbins focus development around the existing floodway and, by converting floodplain land to park areas and greenspace, convert a development constraint into an asset for the community. Focusing development in these areas allows for targeted investment of city, state and federal resources and creates a catalyst for future redevelopment efforts.

The areas adjacent to the floodplain would then be more attractive for private development. The opportunity would be improved for the development of new neighborhoods, commercial corridors, employment centers, and civic places. In addition, floodplain areas can be consolidated by converting land that is less attractive for development into floodplain and freeing up sites that were previously designated as floodplain for development.

This approach provides dual benefits to the Village of Robbins by targeting development in areas that are outside the floodway and therefore less encumbered by regulatory restrictions and more attractive to investors. This also makes currently undevelopable land available for conversion to open space. This newly created open space can provide recreational opportunities in the form of playing fields and parks that are currently not widely available to Robbins residents. The open space becomes an asset to the community, making adjacent land more attractive for development. It can also create a connection or greenway throughout various areas of the Village.

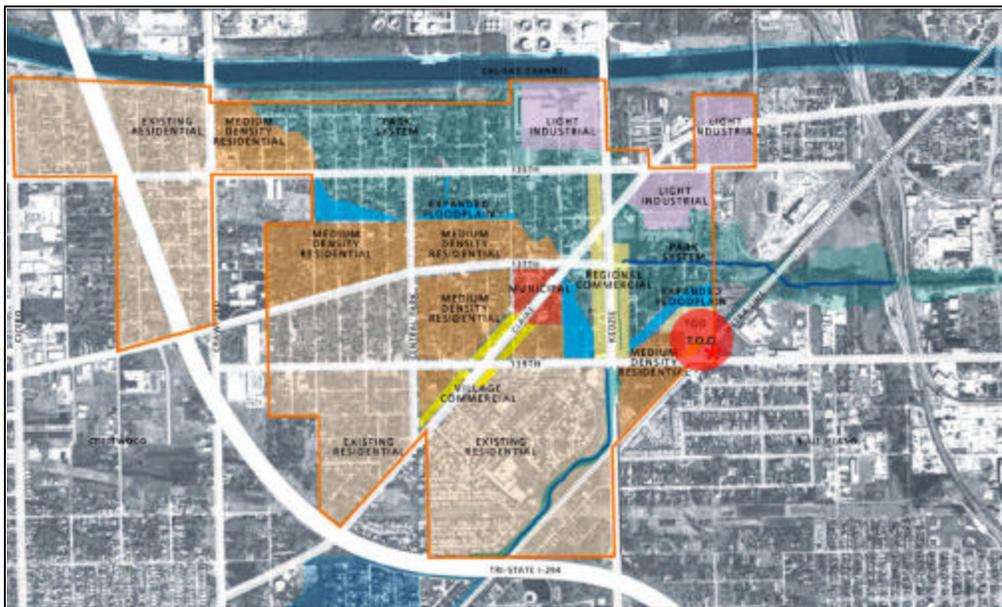


FIGURE 8: A BLUEPRINT FOR A ROBBINS RENAISSANCE

The village-wide land use plan prepared by the URS Team allows the Village of Robbins to integrate designated floodplain property and Midlothian Creek into development around the Robbins Metra station. The URS Team has also prepared a proposal for creating a Village Stormwater Management Plan, which will help the Village of Robbins address stormwater management and floodplain issues in the long term. If implemented, the outcome of the Plan will confirm the feasibility of developing a comprehensive stormwater management plan, which could include relocating Midlothian Creek. The plan will be checked from an engineering, permitting, and economic perspective. Other issues, such as aesthetics and natural resources should also be looked at to determine feasibility.

The Proposal suggests ten major steps that should be taken to begin evaluating the stormwater management plan:

- Task 1: Define Project Objectives
- Task 2: Project Coordination and Management
- Task 3: Refine Strategic Plan
- Task 4: Data Collection (Focus on Existing Records)
- Task 5: Field Work (Walk-Through, Topographic Survey, Wetland Determination and Hydraulic Survey)
- Task 6: Develop Conceptual Designs
- Task 7: Hydrologic and Hydraulic Modeling
- Task 8: Alternatives Analysis and Summary
- Task 9: Present Recommendations
- Task 10: Feasibility Study (Summary of Findings and Recommendations)

Additionally, the Village should develop a Mitigation Plan that is consistent with new FEMA regulations under the Disaster Mitigation Act of 2000. This Plan allows the Village to be eligible for federal dollars to implement the Tasks above.

B. MARKET ANALYSIS

The URS Team has conducted a review of existing market conditions for residential and commercial real estate markets in the Village of Robbins and surrounding areas. The URS Team then analyzed these market conditions to identify development opportunities and constraints within the TOD study area and the Village of Robbins.

Transit Oriented Development Opportunities

The market analysis indicated a demand for a range of new housing development styles in the Village of Robbins. The market analysis also indicated a demand for neighborhood retail development within walking distance of the Metra station to serve residents and Metra riders. The market need for neighborhood retail and housing expansion directly supports the viability of a Transit Oriented Development (TOD) that would serve community residents, transit riders, and Blue Island residents in the southwestern section of that town. Additionally, the need for housing within Robbins as replacement housing for existing residents and market opportunities for first-time homebuyers and seniors represents housing initiatives that are supportive of a TOD development.

Housing

Robbins Housing Overview

The housing market in Robbins has been stagnant for several years. The large number of older structures combined with the very small number of newly constructed dwelling units has been a key contributor to the Village's decline in population. The few homes that have been constructed in recent years have sold at prices higher than recent home development in neighboring Blue Island for a similar housing product. The fact that existing single-family housing stock continues to experience moderate sales demand is indicative of the continuing viability of Robbins as a bedroom community. However, housing development is constrained by tax rates that are higher than surrounding communities, infrastructure that is not as well maintained as in surrounding communities, and a lack of readily available land for development.

Housing Demand

Between 1980 and 2000 the Village of Robbins experienced a decrease both in terms of the number of households and in household size. These trends are shown in Table 1. The decrease coincides to some degree with fewer available housing units, though the decline in population has outpaced the decrease in housing.

TABLE 1

Comparison of Change in Housing Units
Versus Change in Population

	1980	%Change (1980-1990)	1990	%Change (1990-2000)	2000
Housing Units	2446	-5.0%	2322	-7.9%	2138
Total Population	8853	-15.3%	7498	-11.5%	6635

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 1980, 1990, & 2000

The Village's population is projected to decline through year 2010, based upon historic trends. This is in part due to "cyclical decline"; fewer habitable units are available because of disinvestment or deterioration and a lack of new development, which forces both current and prospective residents to move elsewhere.

There are two trends evident within the current age characteristics in Robbins that affect the future housing market. The population between 35-44, which is a prime target market for home ownership, is increasing. In addition, the concentration of single-parent families with lower household incomes has resulted in decreased revenues from property taxes and sales taxes, which are used to pay for diverse community services, while the demand for these types of services for families remains high.

Housing affordability for rental or for-sale housing is critical to maintaining a healthy housing market within any community. The U.S. Department of Housing Urban Development (HUD) defines the housing affordability threshold as 30% of income. When this percentage is applied to the 2001 projected median income for Robbins, monthly total housing costs should not exceed \$874 to remain consistent with the HUD affordability index. The median rent within Robbins is \$251, according to the 2000 census. Based upon current rental rates within Robbins and the surrounding communities, most families will be able to find rental housing within their affordability range.

Table 2 shows average mortgage affordability rates for each household income range and the number of Robbins households in each range. These estimates are based on HUD definitions of housing affordability and 1990 and 2000 census data. The projected 2001 median household income for a family of four is \$34,965 according to Claritas, Inc. projections. The projected 2001 household distribution by income range and mortgage affordability ranges for each income group are shown in more detail in Appendix B.

TABLE 2

**2001 Estimated Mortgage Affordability
for Village of Robbins**

Household income	# of HH	Average Mortgage Affordability
Less than \$5,000	190	\$ -
\$5,000 - \$9,999	188	\$ 7,151
\$10,000 - \$14,999	139	\$ 23,240
\$15,000 - \$24,999	225	\$ 50,054
\$25,000 - \$34,999	310	\$ 85,807
\$35,000 - \$49,999	280	\$ 123,349
\$50,000 - \$74,999	93	\$ 180,557
\$75,000 - \$99,999	35	\$ 252,066
\$100,000 - \$149,999	16	\$ 375,418
\$150,000 OR MORE	14	\$ 464,804

Total Households: 1,985

2001 Median Income \$ 34,965

Source: CERC, 2001.

Table 3 outlines the market value of homes within Robbins using data provided by the Claritas, Inc. This analysis shows a median home value in Robbins of \$68,606, which when compared with housing affordability estimates shown in Table 2, illustrates that the majority of households within Robbins (62.6%) could affordably support a mortgage at or above the level necessary to own homes priced at the median level.

TABLE 3 - 2001 OWNER OCCUPIED PROPERTY VALUES

UNDER \$25,000	5.56%
\$25,000 TO \$49,999	20.49%
\$50,000 TO \$74,999	32.17%
\$75,000 TO \$99,999	22.63%
\$100,000 TO \$149,999	16.60%
\$150,000 TO \$199,999	1.43%
\$200,000 TO \$299,999	0.87%
\$300,000 TO \$399,999	0.08%
\$400,000 TO \$499,999	0.00%
\$500,000 +	0.17%
MEDIAN PROPERTY VALUE	\$68,606

SOURCE: Claritas, Inc., 2001.

Single-Family

Robbins housing stock is primarily single-family residential dwelling units. Single-family dwellings make up 57.9% of all structures. According to the 2000 Census, vacancy of single-family dwelling units is 2.5%. A high vacancy rate among single-family dwelling units suggests that a large renter population is occupying the single-family structures; at least 20% of the Robbins single-family structures are renter-occupied. This is down since the 1990 census, which indicated that 25% of single-family structures were renter occupied.

Inventory

As with all dwellings within Robbins, the single-family housing stock is aging. Less than 3% of all the current housing stock was built between 1980 and 2000. Units constructed prior to 1960 make up 56.7% of all housing units. The development of new housing units within Robbins is minimal, and currently will not offset the rate at which existing housing will fall below values that make it economically feasible to maintain. Replacement housing and rehabilitation will need to be strategically addressed in the Village's planning for future redevelopment to address this issue.

The majority of Robbins single-family units are bungalows. They range in price from \$50,000 to \$80,000 depending on a variety of factors. Most of the bungalows have one or one and a half bedrooms making them less desirable in the current housing market. Golden Acres is an area that features larger three to five bedroom homes that are distinguished by larger yards, masonry exteriors, and a variety of designs and finishes. Among the most expensive homes in Robbins, the area continues to see development of new homes that meet or exceed the overall quality exhibited throughout the neighborhood and in the surrounding communities. The area has approximately 70 homes and has good access to Kedzie Avenue and to the Metra station. These homes range in price between \$80,000 and \$140,000 for existing structures.

According to the Multiple Listing Service of Northern Illinois, in 2001, a total of forty-two home sales were recorded, in Robbins with a median sale price of \$40,000. In January 2002, a total of five home sales were recorded in Robbins with a median sales price of \$39,000. The locations of the 2001 and January 2002 home sales within the Village of Robbins are shown in figures provided in Appendix C. In April 2002, there were nine homes listed for sale in Robbins, and the median listing price for these homes is \$51,000. Most of these housing units are three bedroom homes with one bathroom.

Single-Family Development

Very little new construction of single-family homes is occurring outside of the Golden Acres area in the Village of Robbins. The Village of Robbins has recently signed an agreement with a developer for 20 new single-family homes in Robbins. Three homes are currently under construction, based on successful pre-sales. The selling price of homes in the development will range from \$129,000 to \$140,000.

A number of factors contribute to this relatively low level of development, including the fact that Robbins has significantly higher property tax than surrounding communities like Blue Island and Midlothian. The largest concentration of new housing within the immediate area is in southwestern Blue Island, immediately adjacent to Robbins. This development has a combination of new city infrastructure, lower taxes, TIF support and an existing stable neighborhood with homes similar to those in the Robbins Golden Acres development, which have made this area a more attractive market for potential homebuyers.

Single-family development in Robbins is also constrained by the large number of abandoned or substandard structures and the flood plain, which covers approximately 20% of the Village's entire landmass. These factors restrict and in some cases prevent both the government and private financing mechanisms that are necessary to complete any new construction projects.

Rental Housing

Robbins' rental housing is primarily contained within units owned and operated by the Cook County Public Housing Authority and the Lydia Nursing Home facility. The balance of the multi-family dwellings are within the Wynn Haven mobile home park, flats above retail or commercial buildings, and in 2- to 4-unit and 6- to 12-unit structures built between 1950 and 1970. Many of the smaller multi-family buildings are converted houses. The 2000 median rental rate in Robbins is \$251, up only 2.4% from 1990 (not adjusted for inflation).

Robbins multi-family housing stock was built entirely before 1980. Construction of a new senior housing facility adjacent to the 139th Street Metra station at 139th and Utica represents the first multi-family development since 1980. This facility will house 125 apartments and will create over 40 full-time jobs for area residents. The Village of Robbins estimates the cost of this project at approximately \$7 million. Construction of a second senior housing development adjacent to St. Peter Claver Catholic Mission on Claire Boulevard is planned for September 2002. This development, estimated to cost approximately \$6 million to \$7 million, will contain seventy (70) one-bedroom apartments and one manager's two-bedroom apartment. Previously, the newest multi-family developments have been the Cook County public housing facilities. All currently existing "market rate" rental units in Robbins were built prior to 1970.

A survey by CERC indicated rental ranges between \$120 and \$225 per month for apartments and some poorly kept single-family houses within Robbins. The majority of these units are two bedroom units.

The fact that the Robbins sub-market, which includes Robbins, Blue Island, Alsip, Midlothian and Posen, has had no new multi-family development in recent years, suggests that factors additional to the high property tax rate in Robbins are discouraging development. Rental rate investigation outside of Robbins indicates that current rental levels would be insufficient to support new multi-family construction. Additionally the relatively inexpensive homeownership opportunities have meant a shift towards homeownership for traditional renter populations.

Public Housing

Robbins is home to three public housing developments. These developments represent over 300 of the Village's 2,138 dwelling units. The Cook County Housing Authority Units are available only to families who make 50% or less of the Areas Median Income (AMI). The majority of these residents make less than 30% of AMI. The rents are based upon 30% of the household

incomes. Rents at the three facilities currently range from \$245 to \$0 with the lowest income families receiving support checks monthly from the housing authority for utility costs.

According to Cook County Housing Authority, there is an increasing need for public housing within the south suburbs. A number of factors, including the displacement of Chicago Housing Authority residents by the numerous redevelopment projects within the city and the decrease in affordable housing stock within the city, seem to be contributing to this demand.

While no additional public housing units are contemplated within Robbins, it is likely that the community could become targeted for public housing development if market pressures continue to increase demand for public housing within the south suburbs.

Retail

Robbins has both historically and currently a very small number of retail uses. Its retail largely consists of community and service based retailers. The potential for development activity around the 139th Street Metra station increases the potential for retail development within the community. This market analysis reviewed retail within Robbins, the sub-region, and within the key service clusters that serve Robbins currently. It identifies potential market opportunities for retail development and the extent to which the specific retail uses can be supported by existing consumer demand both with Robbins and Blue Island.

There is evidence and support of a need for new neighborhood based retail in Robbins. This retail will likely need the benefits provided by being close to transit, locations on or immediately adjacent to high traffic arterials, and development support or stimulus such as tax relief or other financial support. This new retail will likely displace some existing retail, much of which is in substandard structures or in locations that hurt their sales opportunities.

Robbins Retail Inventory

Robbins has approximately 35 currently operated or closed retail establishments. The retail uses are clustered in two categories: Food and Liquor establishments and Restaurant, Bar, and Lounge establishments. The remaining facilities are primarily service-based businesses with the smallest group represented by product retailers. A detailed list of retail businesses within Robbins is provided in Appendix D.

In addition to the retail uses listed above, Robbins has an outdoor flea market. The flea market is informally structured and occurs three times weekly, on Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday, at the southeast corner of Claire and 139th Street. The Robbins flea market currently operates only when weather permits. The Village has indicated a desire to develop and promote the flea market as a regional retail use.

In order to develop the flea Market, Robbins would have to relocate its flea market into a space that can be shared with some other use. The building would either need to be publicly owned or financed from public funds, as the income stream would be insufficient for financial underwriting by a commercial lending institution. One opportunity might be to combine it with a farmers market on Saturdays and lease out the space for other uses during the evening hours. Given Robbins' lack of recreational facilities, a combined facility that would allow sports or other recreation would be possible.

Competing Centers

Two sub-regional shopping clusters located within the adjacent towns of Blue Island and Midlothian service Robbins. These two towns provide for a very large variety of retail uses typical to community shopping centers and "main street" retail. Because both of these communities are larger in size, have higher median incomes and have well-established retail districts, Robbins does not compete favorably against these retail clusters.

Midlothian

Midlothian is immediately adjacent to Robbins along Robbins' southwestern edge. Midlothian has two primary commercial corridors. The one most proximal to Robbins is along Crawford-Pulaski between 144th Street and 147th Street. This corridor is a combination of neighborhood and community retail uses with a significant number of service businesses including government offices. A large number of the stores are located in the strip center at 144th and Pulaski that includes numerous uses and a Secretary of State's office. The corridor represents the largest commercial cluster within a 2.5-mile radius. It has approximately 49 retail, service and restaurant uses with over 300,000 square feet in total space.

The second Midlothian commercial corridor is along 147th Street, east of Crawford-Pulaski. This area is marked by comparison goods retailers including a number of car dealerships. This corridor extends east beyond the Midlothian Metra station. This area is less accessible to Robbins residents because the I-294 expressway blocks connections between Robbins and Midlothian except at Kedzie and Crawford-Pulaski. A survey of the retail uses by type for each of the two Midlothian corridors is included in Appendix D.

Blue Island

Blue Island is immediately east of Robbins. While Blue Island's largest commercial concentration is industrial, it has a sizeable retail base. Most of Blue Island's retail is situated along the Western Avenue corridor. From its border with the City of Chicago at 119th Street to the old downtown at 135th and Old Western, it's a typical main street retail setting. The two busiest nodes are at 127th Street and in "downtown" Blue Island between 127th and 133rd Street.

Western Avenue at 127th Street has seen the most recent development of retail stores. A combination of stand-alone retail uses including fast food, grocery, drug store and auto repair anchor the corner and the entire block from Western east to Vincennes. Assorted older and smaller uses extend north towards the Chicago city limits. Moving south from 127th, Western has an assortment of smaller retail establishments including fast food, sit down restaurants, a bowling alley, a theatre, numerous bars, an antique mall and an assortment of clothing and shoe stores. Adjacent blocks and upper floor uses include professional offices, the public Library, City Hall, Fire Department and St. Francis Hospital. Old Western Avenue has six restaurant and drinking establishments. These range from a Mexican fast food restaurant to the Maple Tree Inn, a Cajun restaurant with a regional reputation and significant nightly clientele.

Collectively the Blue Island retail is more neighborhood-like than that of Midlothian. Given its immediate proximity to Robbins, it likely serves a fair number of Robbins residents. Still the Blue Island retail corridor is not a walkable distance, and the City has even noted its desire to create retail along the border with Robbins to better serve its residents in the southwestern part of the Village. The presence of these neighborhood retail uses, while not eliminating the feasibility of neighborhood retail in Robbins, significantly diminishes the amount of square footage that a Robbins based facility would likely be able to support.

Consumer Expenditures and Market Potential: Trade Area analyses

The trade area analysis for the Transit Oriented Development is based upon the 2000 Census statistics on population, income and expenditure levels. The specific consumer items distribution is based upon historical expenditure levels by category for this geographic region and taking into consideration certain consumption trends. The primary trade area is Census tract 8243, which includes portions of Blue Island.

TABLE 4

Primary Trade Area (Census Tract 8243) Population Profile

Population	Households	Median HH Income(2001)	Average HH Size
8,604	2,527	\$34, 965	3.25

Source: Claritas, Inc., 2001.

For radius data collection purposes, the intersection of 139th and Kedzie is designated as the “baseline intersection” because of the high traffic counts. Because of the predominance of neighborhood and commercial retail within the 1-mile radius from the baseline intersection, this market analysis excluded a calculation for the secondary trade populations as the potential capture rate for this population is minimal.

This market analysis also reviewed the supplemental trade area of consumers who are brought into the area as a result of the Metra station. Currently the Robbins station averages approximately 95 weekday boardings. The potential sales income from this population could only be considered if the retail development were within 1/4 mile radius of the Metra station or within walking distance from its parking lot, preferably both.

Table 5 is an evaluation of the amount of retail supported by the primary trade area population alone without factoring in the added expenditures of supplemental consumers. This is the baseline information that prospective retail developers would use to determine initial feasibility of a new development.

Retail Type	Total Potential Market	Gross Space Supported Total Trade Area (square feet)
Food at home	\$ 5,091,767	15,918
Food Away from home	\$ 3,256,319	12,720
Apparel and services	\$ 2,714,139	14,671
Footwear	\$ 515,853	2,759
Other apparel products and services	\$ 261,403	1,494
Entertainment	\$ 2,465,250	14,087
TV, radio, sound equipment, video	\$ 875,977	4,562
Personal Care Products and services	\$ 557,566	1,828
Reading	\$ 232,203	1,488
Household furnishings and equipment	\$ 1,757,516	8,788
Total	\$ 17,727,993	78,315

Note: Total retail potential assumes a capture rate of 30% for food at home, 10% for comparison goods.
 SOURCE: CERC, 2001.

Transit Oriented Development Retail Opportunities

Transit Oriented Development (TOD) is a general description implying higher density land uses and activities designed to encourage ridership on transit. TOD retail refers to any of a number of retail uses that are complementary to transit use in that they either directly encourage or directly benefit from transit use. TOD retail ranges from newsstands to department stores. Their placement within transit centers is driven by the market demographics surrounding the transit centers and market competition within those same markets. A listing of typical TOD supported commercial and retail uses and their typical square footages is included in Appendix E.

Given the currently low ridership volumes at the Robbins station, the retail created here must be supportable by current market demand. That demand is a function of both the current Robbins retail market, competing sub-regional and community retail clusters outside of Robbins and the ability to relocate existing businesses with an established client base into the TOD retail facility.

Robbins currently lacks a retail base both for neighborhood and convenience shopping, causing residents to travel outside of the Village to meet many of their basic needs. The community's several small convenience/liquor stores are scattered throughout the Village with most located along the Village's boundaries. The physical condition, product selection and cleanliness of the stores make them unappealing to potential secondary consumers. Most notably, Robbins does not have many of the stores that would be easily supported by its current population such as video stores, gas stations and drug stores. The proposed redevelopment at the Robbins Metra station offers an opportunity for retail that capitalizes on secondary consumers passing through the area or travelling to the Metra station. The three major traffic arterials, 135th, Kedzie and Claire all have sufficient traffic counts to support neighborhood or convenience retail that is clean, well lit and safe.

Industrial/Commercial

Robbins does not currently have any active commercial or industrial uses within its boundaries. This market assessment attempts to look at the current industrial and commercial real estate marketplace within the south suburban submarket. This review does not seek to be conclusive as to the viability of any proposed or contemplated commercial industrial uses within Robbins.

Current Inventory and Competing Centers

The south suburban communities of Blue Island, Alsip and Midlothian all have strong historical industrial corridors. The regional shift from manufacturing to distribution and assemblage industries has impacted these communities as it has many others within the region. In the last five years, little new commercial and industrial development has occurred. In Blue Island, the most recent facilities include the Jefferson Metals recycling facility and a series of smaller commercial owner/occupants in a series of single story commercial buildings.

Alsip has lost several of its manufacturing based businesses over the last ten years. The number of vacant commercial industrial buildings is evident along the 127th Street and Pulaski corridors. New commercial uses have been smaller distribution facilities including food distribution and warehousing facilities proximal to I-294.

Midlothian has maintained most of its small number of commercial industrial uses. These uses are limited in number and size and have survived due to being material providers to local industries. The commercial uses in nearby Posen have decreased steadily over the last ten years in spite of their proximity to I-57. The commercial section along 147th Street has lost over 60% of its businesses over the last 10 years.

Robbins has very little land available which is suitable for industrial development. The space available for commercial development is also limited but depending on the nature of the commercial uses could be integrated within the community. The Wynn Haven Mobile home park has been described as a potential site for an industrial park. The many challenges for this site including floodway and floodplain, ingress and egress issues and its proximity to the most desirable retail parcels within Robbins suggest the need for a creative design and configuration to any proposed industrial park in this location.

The Foster-Wheeler facility remains closed, although proposals for its reuse include conversion to a waste transfer station and construction of a power plant. The Foster-Wheeler waste to energy facility represents a tremendous financial investment. The Village has gathered a group of partners and is pursuing a plan to secure absolute ownership of the former waste to energy facility located in the Village. The Village's plan is divided into three phases, with the final phase scheduled for completion prior to December 1, 2002. The Village estimates the acquisition cost for the facility to be approximately \$15 million. Village officials expect that acquisition will allow the Village

ownership and operating control over the facility, and that the reuse of the facility will provide significant economic benefit to the Village.

Recommendations

There are a number of market-based opportunities for development within Robbins. Realization of these opportunities will require the Village to remove the constraints to development that currently deter and in many cases prevent new capital investment within the community.

The market analysis indicates a need for both housing and transit supportive retail. The transit oriented development design concept presented here offers the opportunity to provide these complementary uses in one area.

The URS Team recommends a mix of housing development within the station area. The market analysis indicates a demand for housing for first-time homebuyers, families and seniors. All of these may be integrated into the redevelopment area with a mixture of single family detached homes and townhomes, condominiums and rental apartments, with a number of these targeted towards seniors.

The URS Team also recommends retail development focused along 139th Street. This retail should focus on uses that will serve both area residents and Metra riders and should provide convenient access for cars or pedestrians from the Metra station and the surrounding residential areas of Robbins and Blue Island.

There is potential for long-term development of additional commercial and industrial development along Kedzie and 137th Street, north and west of the Metra station. Phasing of the redevelopment program should focus initial development of housing and retail/commercial on areas closest to the Metra station and 139th Street.

The opportunity for transit oriented housing and retail development around the Robbins Metra station needs to be balanced against current constraints to development. The URS Team recommends a range of programs and activities, listed below, to promote development and private investment with the redevelopment area and throughout the Village of Robbins.

Slum & Blight

The elimination of substandard structures is a critical need within Robbins. A combination of factors has allowed these conditions to persist. The floodway eliminates the ability to use some private sector and governmental financing sources. The low property valuations and level of repairs necessary make many properties ineligible for rehabilitation or improvement loans. Very low-income households lack the income necessary to take out a mortgage because they cannot afford to pay the cost of the loan.

The prevalence of substandard structures prevent private and in some cases public funding for new housing within the Village. The URS Team recommends that the Village undertake a slum and blight study to qualify areas within the Village for Slum and Blight funds which would include

acquisition, demolition and rehabilitation dollars. The Village should continue its current activities in the area of acquisition and demolition but should do so with consideration of specific targeted development areas as defined within the Village's comprehensive redevelopment plan.

Financial Incentives Package

New development activities within Robbins will require economic support. The higher real estate tax rate in Robbins makes on-going property ownership costs higher than in neighboring communities. Along with the other development barriers outlined previously, this is a deterrent to potential developers. Collectively this makes the financial risk of developing in Robbins far greater than the financial reward.

A financial incentives package should be developed by the Village to help attract development. Initial steps such as Tax Increment Financing (TIF) and public improvements and land assemblage could be sufficient to seed initial development efforts. Other avenues could include U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Section 108 and Community Development Block Grant (CDBG), Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT), or Department of Commerce and Community Affairs (DCCA) funding programs as layered financing for both developers and homebuyers. The Funding Tool-Kit prepared by the URS Team as part of this report provides a list of programs and tools that the Village of Robbins may use to develop their financial incentives package.

Housing Development Incentives

- **Single-Family Rehab Program:**

The Village of Robbins should develop a program that would address the need for rehabilitation activities to help preserve housing that is still habitable and meets building code requirements. Coordination with organizations such as Community Investments Corporation (CIC), which have developed programs for markets where homes often do not meet conventional loan criteria, could provide a program model. Again funds should be targeted to development zones in which single-family rehab is an area priority.

- **Replacement Housing Program:**

The aging of Robbins existing housing stock is an immediate and very critical issue. Robbins needs to undertake a replacement-housing program where it purchases existing older housing stock and constructs replacement housing that is either leased or sold back to the residents of these homes. The deficit between the respective costs could be made up through a number of layered financing sources, which would provide grants and or low-interest loans.

- **Financial Incentives for Homeownership:**

A program to provide financial incentives to new home purchasers in Robbins is needed to create a competitive advantage over other

competing communities. Low cost second mortgages, tax rebates or other similar programs could be initiated. This would lower the cost of home ownership in Robbins and likely attract purchasers whom without the program would not consider Robbins as a place in which to purchase a home.

Retail/Commercial Development Incentives

- Commercial Development Zones:

Determine where commercial development will be allowed and the restrictions on its development and operation. Non-conforming uses within the district should be relocated or acquired and redeveloped. Retail and commercial uses should be regulated as to hours of business. Streetscape improvements and beautification should be implemented. A business district committee made of current and proposed business owners should be developed to address things including cooperative advertising, security and capital improvements. The Village should seek funding for physical building improvements including façade rebate and other capital improvements. Areas within the Village, which currently have retail establishments, which are not slated for future commercial use, should be eliminated.

- Neighborhood Retail Development:

By actively working to recruit neighborhood retail stores to occupy new commercial developments, Robbins can learn what economic barriers it must overcome to attract development. This also gives the Village's Development Corporation hands-on experience as it works through the RFP/RFQ process and crafts a development incentive package for other development initiatives on behalf of the Village.

Commercial/Industrial Incentives

The consultant team recommends the following actions to stimulate commercial/industrial development.

- Create a TIF district for both real estate and sales taxes as part of its strategy to attract commercial and industrial activity.
- Gain site control of contiguous land parcels to facilitate the development process by either owner occupants or commercial tenants.
- Establish commercial and industrial zoning ordinances that promote new development but provide greater flexibility than competing communities as another mechanism to attract development.

C. TRANSPORTATION & CIRCULATION ANALYSIS

The transit oriented development study is focused around the Robbins Metra station, located on 139th Street, 2 blocks east of Kedzie Avenue. Existing station facilities consist of a gravel parking lot and open air shelter. RTA, Metra and the Village of Robbins have recognized the opportunity to enhance the existing transit amenities to create a more inviting station area for commuters and residents. Metra has allocated funds for Fiscal Year 2003 for improvements to the platforms and warming shelter. The URS Team reviewed existing transit amenities and has recommended improvements to the Metra station area that will complement the development of a transit neighborhood and help to attract new riders to the Metra station.



Existing transit amenities at the Robbins Metra Station: (from left) platform, shelter, and parking lot.

The Robbins Metra Station

Metra provides commuter rail service between Joliet and downtown Chicago, via the Rock Island District (RI) Line. The RI line also has station stops in communities southwest and north of the Village of Robbins. As a gateway into the Village, the Metra station offers a logical focal point for economic and community development.

The Robbins Metra station is situated on the border between the Village of Robbins and the City of Blue Island. Currently, the station is a covered but not fully enclosed warming shelter. The station is located on the east side of the tracks, and therefore separated from existing parking and downtown retail in Robbins. Freight and commuter trains using the railway often stop at the 139th Street intersection, blocking pedestrian and vehicle traffic. The station is inhospitable to pedestrian activity and existing land use does little to draw commuter and destination usage to the station and the surrounding community.

The Robbins station has regular peak rush hours service, and is a flag stop during non-peak, mid-day and evening hours. At a flag stop, trains stop to discharge passengers on notice to the conductor and pick-up passengers on station platforms visible to the engineers. Ridership from the Robbins station is lower than average for stations on the line. In 1999, an average

of 94 passengers a day boarded at the Robbins Metra station. By comparison, a daily average of 1,144 passengers boarded the train at the Midlothian station, which is located approximately 1.2 miles south of Robbins on the Rock Island line. A daily average of 954 passengers boarded the train at the RI Vermont Street station in Blue Island during 1999, and 264 passengers boarded Metra Electric District trains at the Blue Island (Vermont Street) station in 1999. The Vermont Street station is approximately 0.8 miles north of the Robbins station. There is a likely correlation between the lack of available parking at the Robbins station and the comparatively low ridership at the station.

The majority (91%) of passengers boarding Metra trains at the Robbins station in 1999 were traveling inbound towards Chicago. Over 75% of the passengers boarded prior to 8:30 AM and disembarked at the station between 2:30 and 7:30 PM.



Off-peak passengers must “flag” the train’s engineer to request a stop at the Robbins Metra station.



Passengers must cross a set of tracks to board an inbound (to Chicago) Metra train.

Responses to a 1999 passenger survey conducted by Metra indicate that approximately 50% of riders at the Robbins station drive there alone. Thirty percent of riders at the Robbins station arrive by walking. Approximately 10% of riders are dropped off and 10% carpool.

A license plate survey conducted by Metra at the Robbins station in 1997 indicated that most riders are residents of Robbins. Other surrounding communities where riders originated included Harvey, Blue Island, Crestwood, Melrose Park, Midlothian, Richton Park, and University Park. Other Metra stations used by Robbins residents include Midlothian, Oak Forest, and Vermont Street/Blue Island.

Parking

Parking for the Metra Station consists of a gravel parking lot across the tracks east of the station’s shelter. A survey conducted by Metra in 1999 indicates that 22 parking spaces were available in a parking lot and on the street at the Robbins station, and that 100% of these spaces were filled. The number of parking spaces available in Robbins was lower than any other station on the RI line in the 1999 Metra survey.

The area available for Metra station parking has been expanded within the past year by removing railroad ties that were stored in part of the lot. The parking lot can currently accommodate 40 to 50 cars. Even at this expanded capacity, the parking available at the Robbins station is still smaller than for most stations on the Rock Island District Line. The Prairie Street station was shown to have the second fewest number of parking spaces in the 1999 Metra survey; with 48 spaces. Approximately 482 parking spaces are available in Midlothian, according to the 1999 survey, and according to Metra, 844 spaces are available in Blue Island.

Metra Station Access

The Robbins station is accessible by car from 139th Street. This east-west connector street intersects with several major north-south arterial streets within Robbins. These arterial streets include Kedzie Avenue and Claire Boulevard, which connects the southwest corner of the village with the northeast corner. The Village of Robbins and the Metra station do not offer convenient access to the interstate, but Interstate 294 can be accessed near 127th and Cicero in Crestwood and Interstate 57 can be accessed near 127th and Ashland. Pace also provides bus service to the Village along two routes, but does not provide service directly to the Metra station. Commuters must walk two blocks to connect between Pace service along Kedzie Avenue and the station.

1998 IDOT traffic counts provided by Chicago Area Transportation Study illustrate the station's proximity to several high traffic corridors. Traffic counts reviewed by the URS Team show that approximately 4,900 vehicles travel through the intersection at 139th and the railroad tracks each day. Approximately 21,900 vehicles per day pass through the intersection of 139th and Kedzie Avenue, located two blocks west of the Metra station. Approximately 14,200 vehicles per day travel through the intersection of 139th Street and Western Avenue, located six blocks east of the station.

Local access streets pass through the TOD area, all of which are owned and maintained by the Village of Robbins. These streets provide access to existing development within the area, primarily residential. The roads also serve as an entrance to a junkyard located in Blue Island on the border between Blue Island and Robbins.

Pedestrian access to the Metra station is possible via 139th Street. Pedestrians or bicyclists traveling from areas of Robbins west of the Metra station must cross the railroad tracks to reach the Metra station shelter and platforms. Access to the Metra station could be enhanced through improved sidewalks along 139th Street, clearly marked pedestrian pathways throughout the neighborhood west of the Metra station, and designated safe pedestrian crossings at the Metra tracks.

Recommended Transit Amenity and Circulation Plan

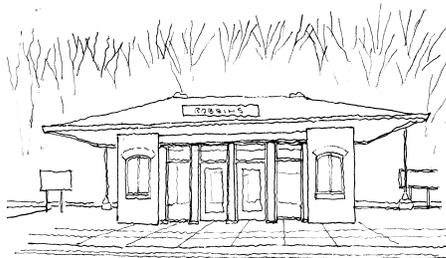
The Robbins Metra station has the potential to attract and accommodate increased numbers of riders. The station is located adjacent to existing

residential development in the City of Blue Island and a senior housing complex that is under development immediately west of the station. This represents the opportunity for development that will build upon the Metra station as an asset and a gateway into the Robbins community. The Village of Robbins has several infrastructure improvement projects underway or planned for areas around the Metra station. These include the \$3 million 137th Street reconstruction, to be completed by September 2002; resurfacing of Claire Boulevard; and the \$4 million Village-wide Inflow/Infiltration Corrective Action Program, designed to ensure that the Village's sewer system performs at peak efficiency. Improvements at the Metra station and in the immediate surrounding area will complement these infrastructure improvement projects and further improve development capacity for the Village. The concept plan also recommends a new street grid that improves access to the station area.

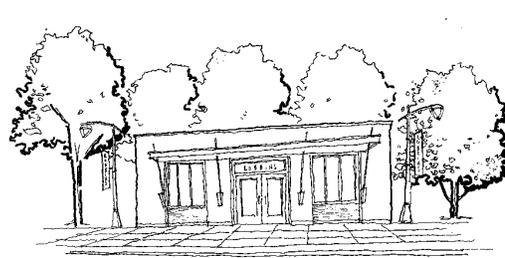
The Metra facility itself should be enhanced to promote accessibility and accommodate new users. Recommended improvements include an enhanced shelter that is visually appealing and provides a sense of safety and protection from the elements to transit riders. A proposed warming shelter design is shown in Figure 9. Metra has allocated funds for Fiscal Year 2003, which will be used to build a new warming shelter, and replace existing platforms.

The transit shelter should provide a secure and welcoming environment for Robbins residents and Metra riders. The facility should also serve as gateway into the Village, welcoming Metra riders and drivers and pedestrians traveling westbound on 139th Street into the newly developed transit neighborhood and the Village of Robbins. The station facility and the wider transit neighborhood has the potential to symbolically mark this entrance to the Village of Robbins and serve as an inter-connecting "seam" with the City of Blue Island, which is located immediately west of the station.

Platforms should be rebuilt to Metra specifications to accommodate riders boarding and disembarking from cars along the length of the Metra trains servicing the station. Metra has allocated money for platform improvements in Fiscal Year 2003. These platform improvements will complement the newly designed warming shelter and provide an improved environment for passengers boarding or exiting trains at the Robbins station.



Architectural Style: Prairie



Architectural Style: Modern

**FIGURE 9: ROBBINS METRA STATION
Proposed Warming Shelter Design Options**

Parking capacity and lot condition should also be improved. Metra and the Village of Robbins are already working to expand the parking facilities at the Robbins Metra station. Parking lots should be accessible to 139th Street for vehicle exit and entry. The parking facilities should also provide safe and convenient access for pedestrian traffic between the lots and the warming shelter and platforms. High visibility will be important for commuter parking and attracting new riders in the early phases of development. Therefore, obstructions that may block the line of sight from 139th Street to the parking area should be avoided. Development of new parking should consider the long term redevelopment plan for the transit neighborhood, and accommodate shared parking between the Metra station, new housing and commercial development and provide access for pedestrian traffic between these destinations.

Pedestrian access to the Metra station should be improved through the enhancement of the crossing at the railroad tracks and 139th Street. Sidewalk and lighting improvements along 139th Street should also be implemented to enhance the safety and convenience of pedestrian travel between the Metra station and Pace bus service along Kedzie Avenue. The URS Team recommends future evaluation of a pedestrian underpass at the railroad tracks near 139th Street to provide a safe route for pedestrians even when trains are stopped on the tracks. Development in the area west of the Metra station should address pedestrian access to the station through creation of attractive pathways connecting the station, retail and housing options, and recreation facilities.

The transit neighborhood is designed to provide mutual benefits between the Metra station and neighborhood residential and commercial development. Access to Metra service helps to attract development to the area around the station. Over time, as development progresses, the increased housing and retail amenities become a destination and promote increased ridership.

Additional transit amenity improvements may become warranted if the redevelopment is successful in attracting new development and increasing Metra ridership at the station. These improvements could include an enhanced station, expanded parking facilities, elimination of the mid-day flag stop in favor of a regular Metra stop, and a pedestrian underpass connecting development west of the train tracks with the station.

III. Recommended Concept Plan



The Master Redevelopment Plan includes recommendations for development of specific lots into residential, commercial, and open space and recreational uses. The Master Redevelopment Plan is accompanied by a Land Use Plan, Transit Amenity Plan, and a Stormwater and Open Space Plan for the area around the Robbins Metra Station. The Transit Amenity Plan presents recommendations specific to the Metra station and its related amenities, while the Stormwater and Open Space Plan addresses the utilization of existing floodplain area for open space, recreational facilities, and targeted residential and commercial development. The Land Use Plan is meant to assist the Village with decisions related to zoning and development. The URS Team has also developed a palette of urban design elements that the Village can reference for public areas or when soliciting developers for individual projects. This pallet of urban design elements is included as Appendix H.

The mixed-use neighborhood master redevelopment plan completely redesigns the 90-acre area around the Robbins Metra station. The plan includes a variety of uses, designed to work synergistically to attract new investment to the area, increase Metra ridership and improve the quality of life for Robbins residents. The plan identifies over 350 new residential units in and around the station, including single family homes, townhouses, condominiums, rental apartments and senior apartments.

The master redevelopment plan also calls for approximately 68,000 square feet of new retail space, including the Village's first grocery store. The proposed retail development is concentrated at street level along 139th Street and is designed to serve new residents of the area and Metra riders who can easily travel between the Metra station and the new retail development.

Approximately 40 acres of the redevelopment area is dedicated to open space and parks. This enables the Village to address development issues related to floodplain conditions at a large portion of property in the Village and the development area. The development also provides valuable recreation facilities for residents of Robbins, a service that is currently lacking. The presence of an attractive greenway connecting the Metra station, retail and commercial development, new residences and park facilities makes the area attractive to residents and business owners. It helps to transform the station area into a destination for residents from throughout the Village of Robbins.



PERSPECTIVE SKETCH OF ROBBINS REDEVELOPMENT MASTERPLAN



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MASTER REDEVELOPMENT PLAN PERSPECTIVE

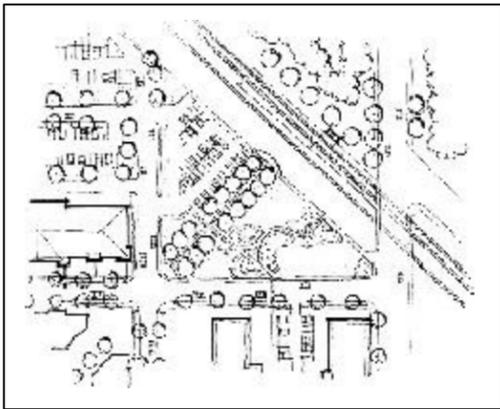
June 2002



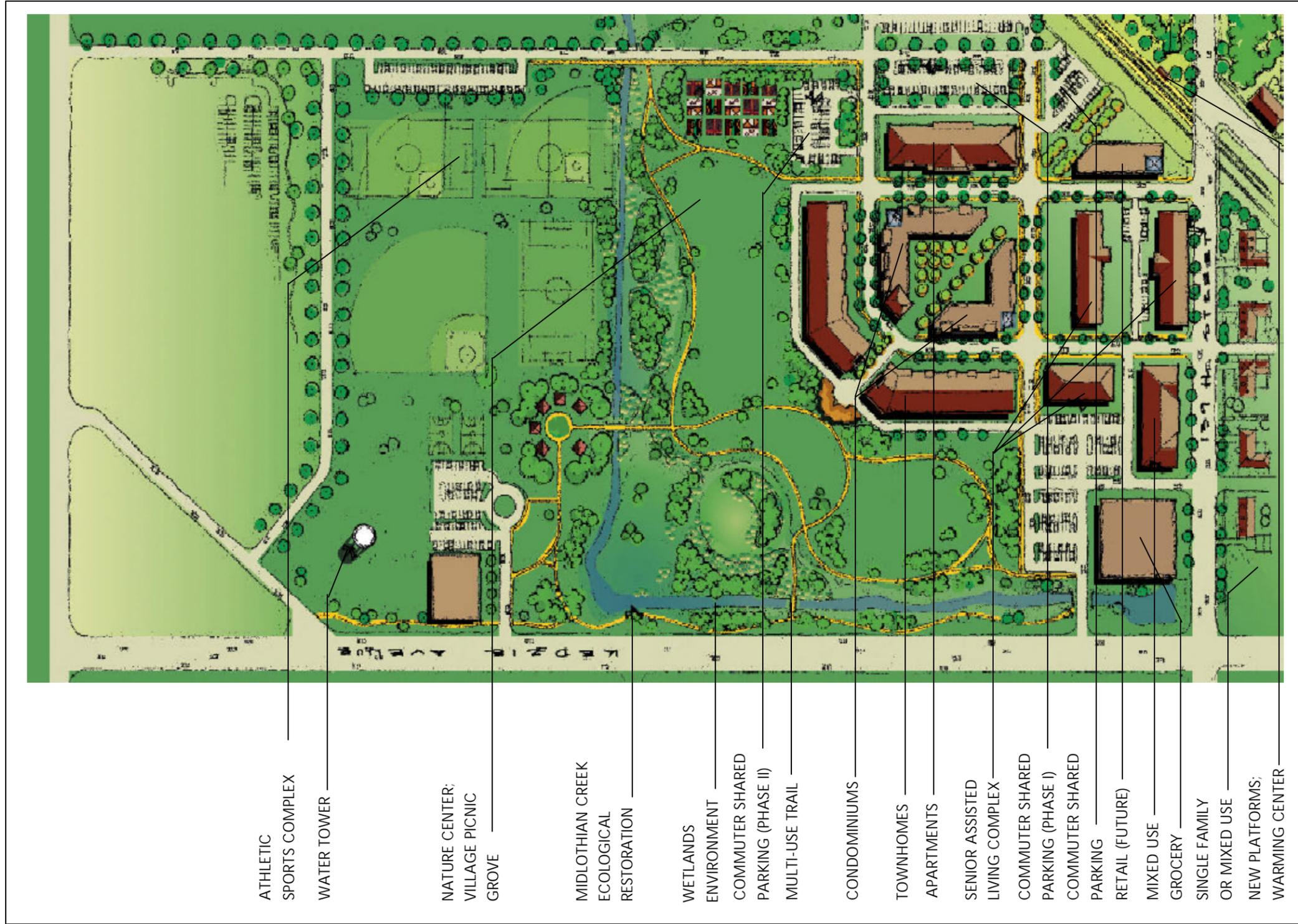
Regional Transportation Authority

FIGURE 10A

During early phases of development, the corner at 139th Street, west of the railroad tracks will serve as a civic green connecting the commuter parking to the platforms and the warming shelter. In future phases, this corner may be developed as transit-oriented retail.

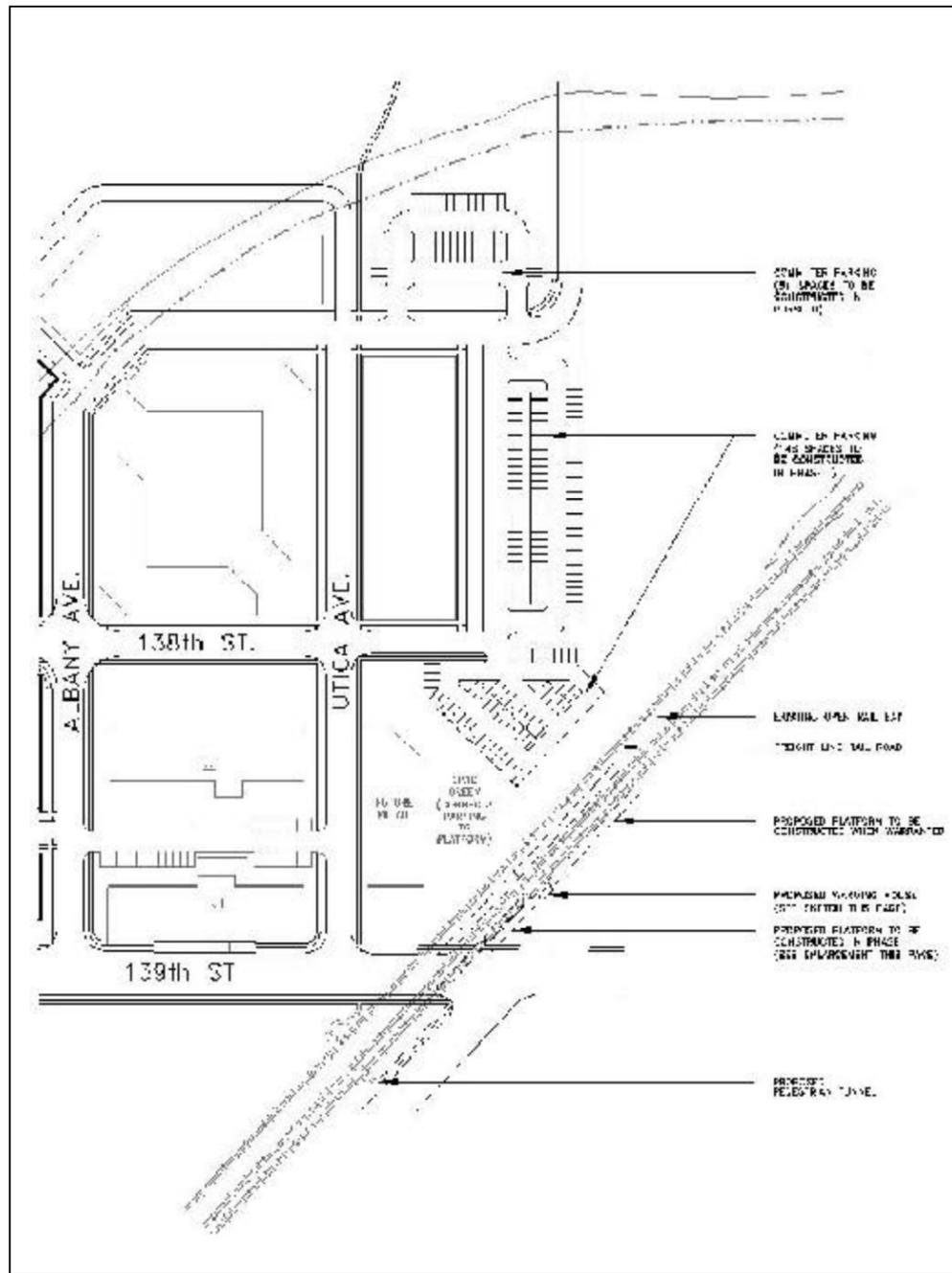


PLAN DETAIL

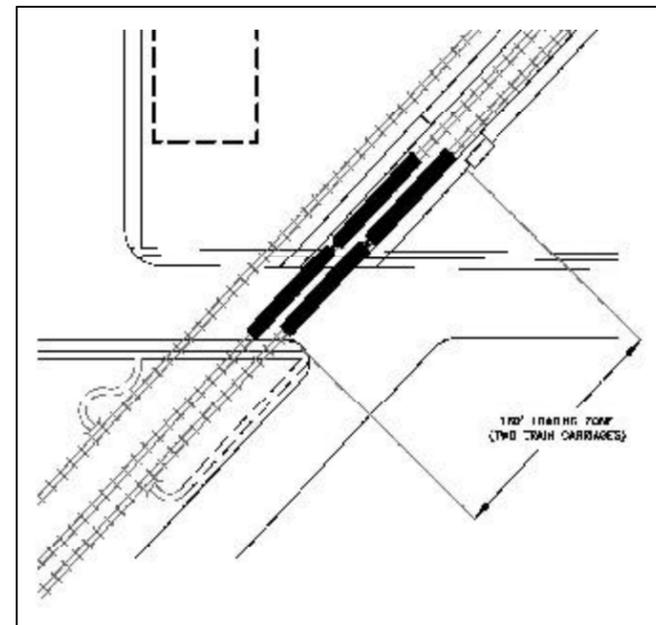


- ATHLETIC SPORTS COMPLEX
- WATER TOWER
- NATURE CENTER; VILLAGE PICNIC GROVE
- MIDLOTHIAN CREEK ECOLOGICAL RESTORATION
- WETLANDS ENVIRONMENT
- COMMUTER SHARED PARKING (PHASE II)
- MULTI-USE TRAIL
- CONDOMINIUMS
- TOWNHOMES
- APARTMENTS
- SENIOR ASSISTED LIVING COMPLEX
- COMMUTER SHARED PARKING (PHASE I)
- COMMUTER SHARED PARKING
- RETAIL (FUTURE)
- MIXED USE GROCERY
- SINGLE FAMILY OR MIXED USE
- NEW PLATFORMS; WARMING CENTER

MASTERPLAN



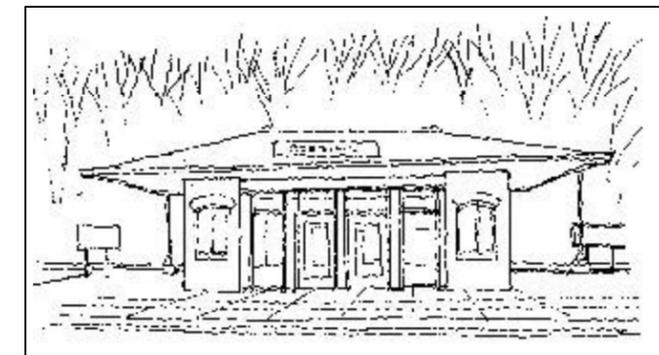
TRANSIT AMENITY PLAN-STATION AREA



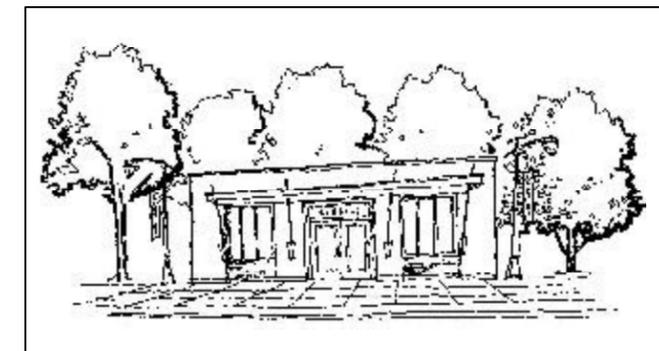
TRANSIT AMENITY PLAN DETAIL

- Transit Amenities:*
- Warming Shelter
 - Signage
 - Lighting
 - Platforms: Phase I & Expansion platforms
 - Increased Parking
 - Phase I: 148 Spaces
 - Phase II: 51 Spaces
 - Phase III: TBD
 - Improved Pedestrian Access

In each of the phases, the walk from the commuter parking lot will be lit, signed, safe, open and with clear views to the platform environ. In Phase I, the walk will traverse through a park area at 139th Street. In the future, a commercial/retail building could replace the park. The result will be a pleasant journey in by new comfort services and along a neighborhood streetscape.



**OPTION 1:
ROBBINS WARMING HOUSE
PRAIRIE STYLE**



**OPTION 2:
ROBBINS WARMING HOUSE
MODERN STYLE**

80% of all walls to be clear glass for security/visibility

The interiors of both the options are to be heated, weatherproof and designed to meet Metra's architectural standards.



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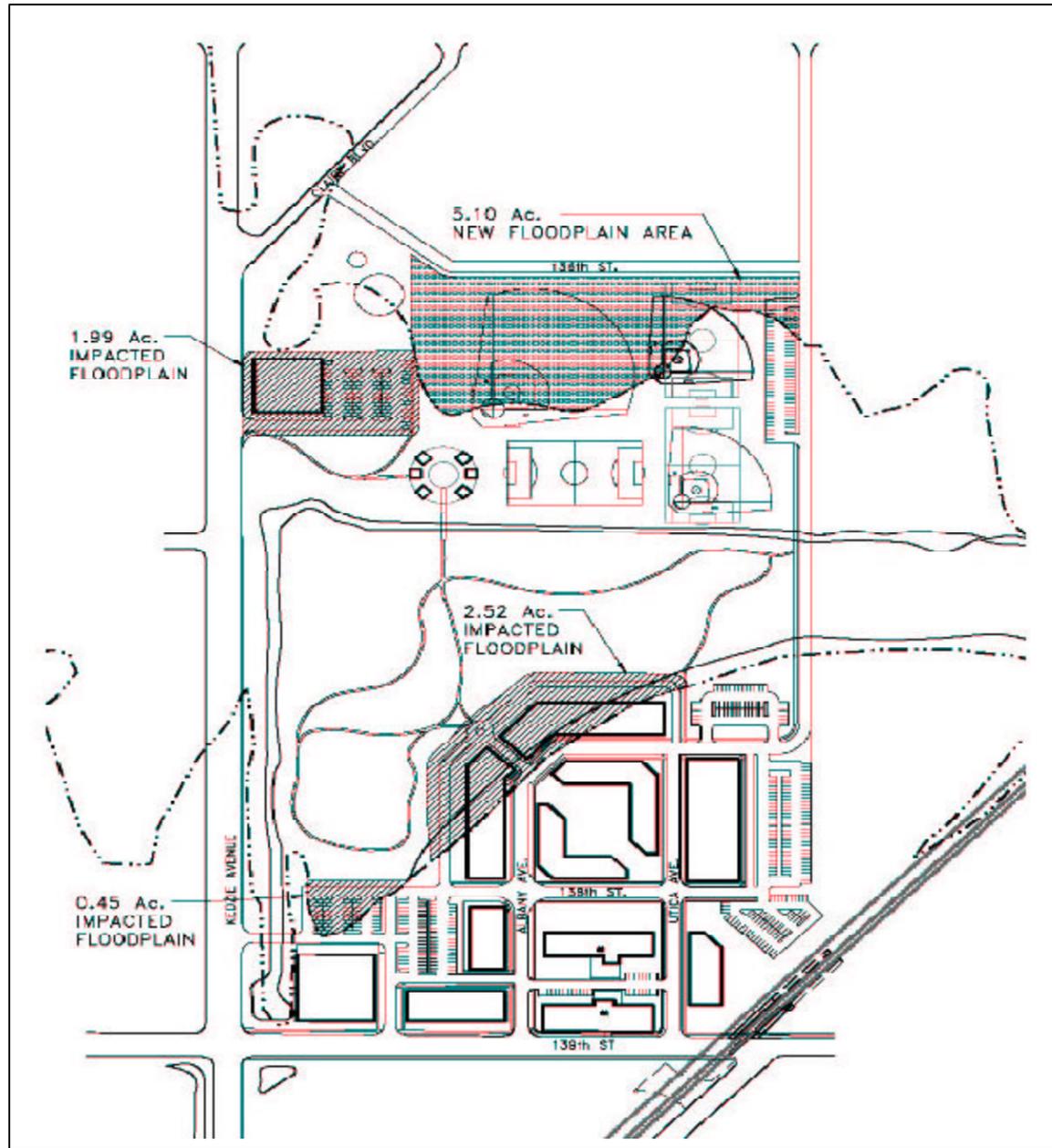
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TRANSIT AMENITY PLAN

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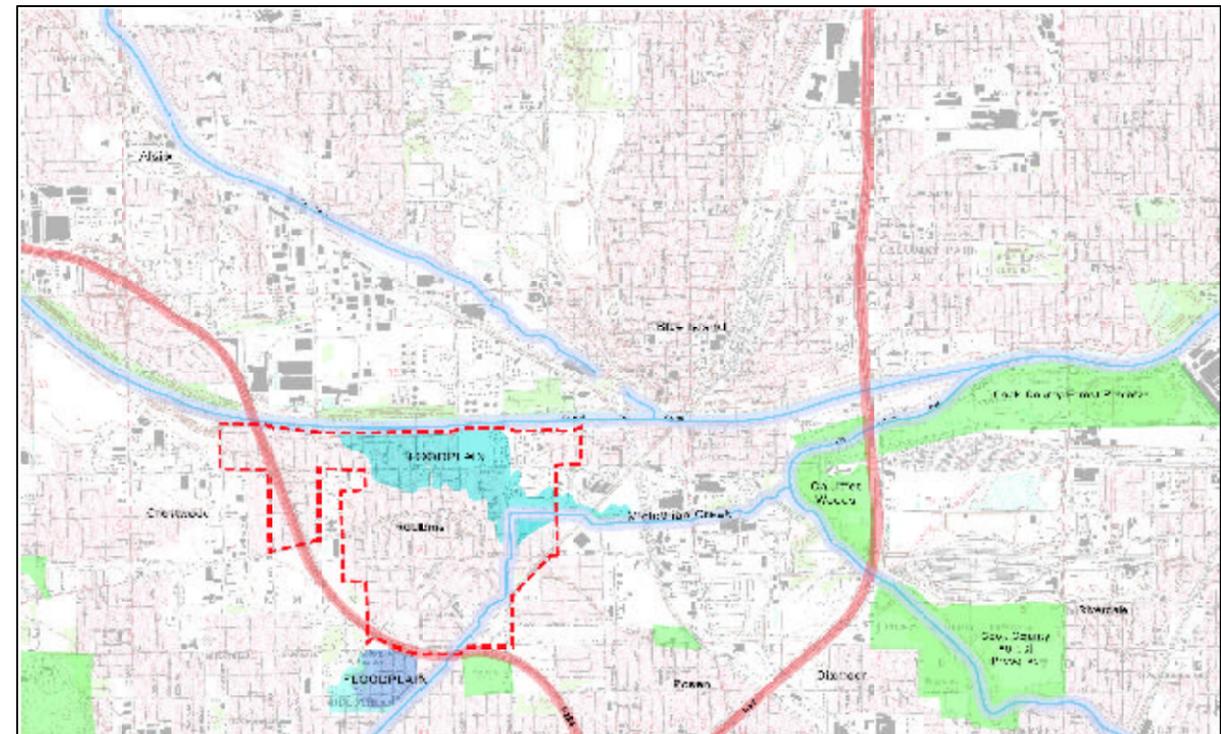
FLOODPLAIN PLAN

If floodplain is converted to open space within Village of Robbins and the City of Blue Island the benefits include regional open space greenway connecting to the Little Calumet River Corridor and Cook County Forest Preserve holdings.

Parcel N- Park (note: the Robbins Park District should overlay a needs analysis to confirm park facilities and program):

- Floodfringe and Floodway converted into recreational and natural open space
The park will serve as a gateway theme and vista from the Metra line along Kedzie Avenue.
- Designed to maximize groundwater infiltration, reduce surface water erosion, and improve water quality
- Midlothian Creek to be improved by relocating through the center of the park, stabilizing the banks with bio-engineering techniques, or adding riffles and other aeration and habitat devices

- Shared parking with Metra Station in Parcel A,B and C
- Abandon 137th Street
- Convert Blue Island Salvage/Junk yards into additional open space within floodfringe
- Develop active park complex north of Midlothian Creek with little and adult league ballfields and soccer fields, concession, restrooms, picnic shelters, community gardens, tot lots, skating park, tennis or basketball courts
- Develop a passive natural park south of Midlothian Creek with native landscape areas, treatment wetlands for stormwater management, walking paths, bicycle trails, interpretive signage and outdoor classrooms



REGIONAL OPEN SPACE PLAN



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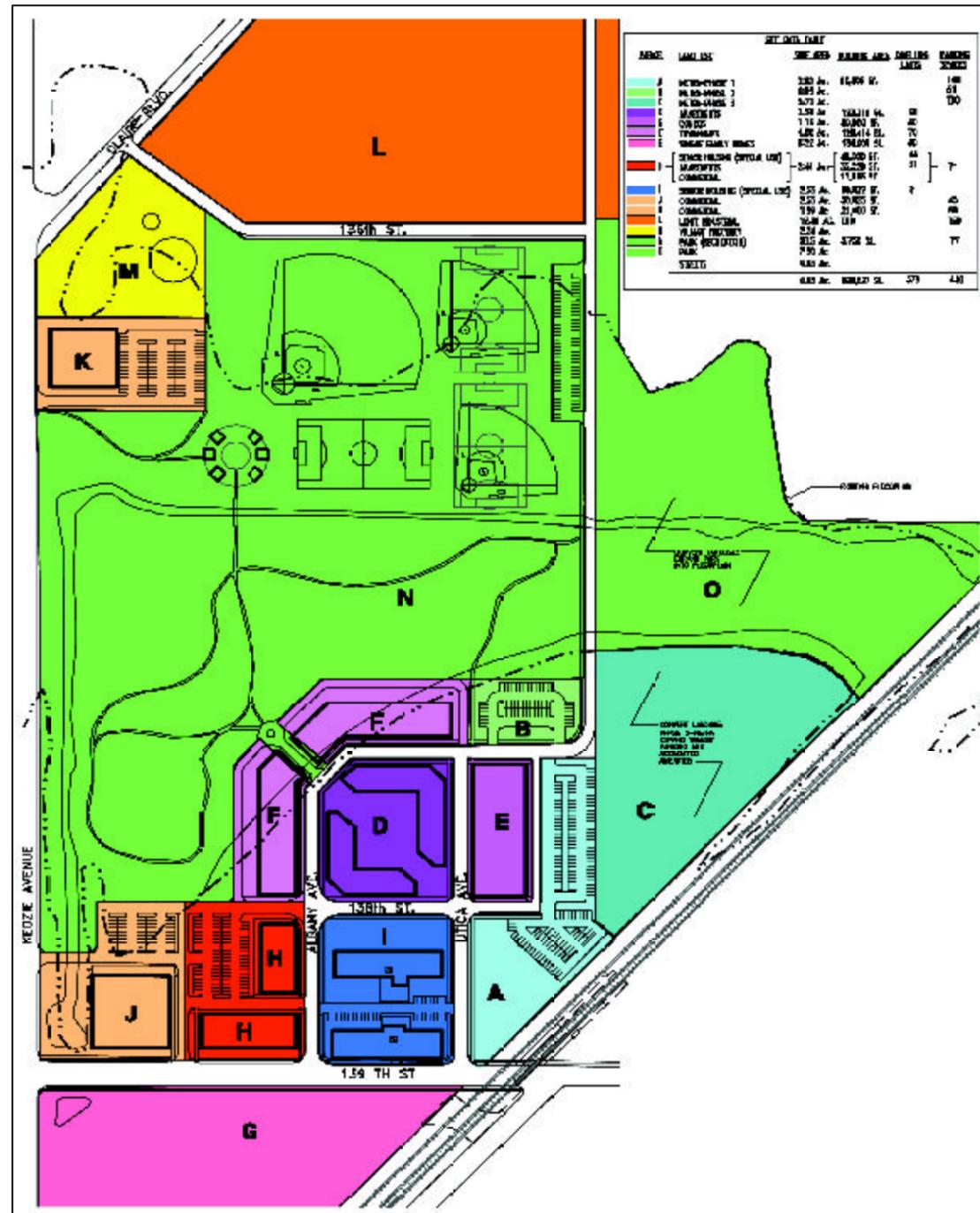
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Robbins

Transit-Oriented Development Study
STORMWATER & OPEN SPACE PLAN
June 2002



Regional Transportation Authority



LAND USE PLAN

DESCRIPTION OF LAND USE COMPONENTS

Parcel D: Condominiums

- For sale apartments-80 Units (35 Dwelling Units/acre)
- Average unit size 1000 S.F.
- Building Area: 96,000 S.F.

Parcel E: Rental Apartments

- 40 Unit (35 Dwelling Units/acre)
- Average unit size 900 S.F.
- Building Area: 43,200 S.F.

Parcel F: Townhouse

- 70 Units (25 Dwelling Units/acre)
- Average unit size 2200 S.F. including attached garage
- Floodplain compensation required elsewhere in TOD

Parcel G: Single Family South of 139th Street

- 80 Units (9 Dwelling Units/acre)
- Average lot size 3750 S.F.
- Average unit size 2200 S.F. (assumes 15% total area dedicated to right-of-way)

Note: The URS Team originally preferred a mixed-use destination use (perhaps the relocated flea market or community/youth center) including a shared parking facility. The parking would serve the mixed-use development and commuters. This type of development was deemed preferable to a single-family development due to the location underneath the grade separation of Kedzie Avenue and the proximity to the rail.

- Coordinate a pedestrian underpass along 139th Street in future phases as relief to the obstacle of stopped freight rail traffic

Parcel H: Senior Housing

- 44 Units (35 Dwelling Units/acre)
- Average unit size 900 S.F.
- Building Area: 48,000 S.F.

Parcel H: (Mixed-Use) Apartments Above Retail

- 37 Units (35 Dwelling Units/acre)
- Average Unit Size 800 S.F.

COMMERCIAL/RETAIL

Parcel I: Assisted Living Center

- This is a current development and Phase I is under construction.
- Recommend modifying plans of Phase II to accommodate retail on first floor to serve residents of center and Village

Parcel O: Affects to Blue Island

- Vacate 137th Street east of Kedzie Avenue
- Remove junk yards and access in Robbins
- Develop 139th Street corridor as a connector interweaving the two communities
- A new neighbor on the Robbins side of the tracks can improve the connection to California Gardens.



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LAND USE PLAN

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IV. Recommended Implementation Strategy



Recommended Implementation Strategy ---

An implementation strategy is critical to the success of any redevelopment project. The master redevelopment plan prepared by the URS Team for the Robbins Metra station and surrounding area presents a vision for the long term revitalization of the area into a transit neighborhood development, which includes a mixture of housing, retail, open space, recreation areas, parking and Metra access. The recommended implementation strategy presents an overview of the many steps that the Village of Robbins must take to achieve this transit neighborhood vision. This strategy includes a phasing plan, estimated development costs, recommendations for land acquisition and a funding summit, and a tool-kit of funding mechanisms to assist the Village with implementation of their redevelopment plans.

A. PHASING AND IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

The 90-acre Village of Robbins Transit Oriented Development Project includes 13 individual sites that are targeted for various end uses, including residential, commercial, mixed-use, parks and open space, and parking. The projected cost for the entire proposed redevelopment is \$120 million. The redevelopment implementation strategy prepared by the URS Team divides the program into four phases. Figure 14 shows target parcels for each of the four phases of the program. This phased approach to development allows the Village of Robbins to prioritize and pursue individual projects as they work towards their goal of a revitalized transit neighborhood.

Phase I

Phase I begins with four immediate projects. These include acquisition of Village property along Kedzie, which is complete, and the development of the assisted living center, which is already underway. This phase also includes the development of 148 spaces of parking for use by Metra commuters; Metra platform and warming shelter improvements. The Village and Metra have initiated efforts to acquire property for development of Metra parking and Metra has allocated funding for Fiscal Year 2003 to pay for improvements. These activities may be considered Phase I-A.

A primary focus of the first phase is the assembly of land within the 90-acre development site. Phase I also includes development of a 44-unit senior apartment building, and a mixed use development that includes 37 units of senior rental housing and 7 retail spaces.

Phase II

The second phase concentrates primarily on the development of 34-acres of park and open space. This is an important step, because a large percentage of the 90-acre development area sits in a 100-year flood zone and is

unsuitable for development. The park and open space land can remain in or be returned to floodplain. This allows the Village to address the constraints created by the floodplain and focus new residential and commercial development on the most appropriate portions of the site. Phase II also includes creation of an additional 51 commuter parking spaces, and the development of 80 units of single-family housing to the south of 139th Street, a project that the Village of Robbins is already pursuing with a private developer.

Phase III

The third phase of the project concentrates on the development of a wide range of housing types, including 70 attached owner-occupied townhomes, 80 condominiums units, and 40 rental apartments. The development of housing helps to provide a market for planned retail development and encourages use of the adjacent Metra station. This phase also includes the development of a 30,625 square foot commercial/retail space at the corner of 139th Street and Kedzie Avenue.

Phase IV

The fourth phase of the project includes the development of a second commercial/retail space totaling 21,000 square feet and the development of 12 acres of land as light industrial. This phase also includes the completion of 13 acres of park and open space development to create a greenway that will run through the entire 90-acre project area. Phase IV may also include further expansion of Metra commuter parking and the evaluation of stormwater management improvements and enhancements to Midlothian Creek within the transit neighborhood development area.

The Redevelopment Agency

The URS Team recommends that the Village of Robbins establish a redevelopment agency and utilize an advisory committee process to specifically administer all phases of this project. The advisory committees will support the redevelopment agency and focus on specialized areas such as housing, social and community services, transportation, economic development, and parks and open land development. These advisory committees will be comprised of area residents, representatives from public/private entities, community groups and others with the common interest in redeveloping this area of Robbins. Advisory committee participation insures that all activities undertaken by the redevelopment agency include the participation of a broad constituency. Such broad participation is crucial for such large and long-term plans as this. It ensures on-going interest and support and it keeps the project moving forward.

The redevelopment agency is extremely crucial for the land assemblage portion of the project. We estimate that land assemblage and preparation for development alone will cost \$4.3 million dollars. This cost is one that the redevelopment agency will get back. When each of the redevelopment parcels are marketed to prospective developers, the cost of the parcel to the developer should equal the cost of acquiring it and preparing it for development. At the time the Village receives reimbursement for its initial site assemblage and preparation costs, it can decide whether or not this money should be used to offset some of the individual project development gaps. Of course this decision depends on how the Village financed land assemblage and site preparation. If this activity were financed via grants, reinvesting the money would be the optimal way to reduce the cost of developing any of these sites for prospective developers and could be used to lure developers to the project.

B. ESTIMATED REDEVELOPMENT COSTS

The projected development cost for all four phases is an estimated \$120 million dollars. This includes costs associated with land assemblage and site preparation in addition to hard and soft construction costs for each of the individual development projects. Additional detail on the development costs for each phase is included in Table 6.

Total Phase I development costs are approximately \$19.5 million. . This includes costs associated with the construction of Metra platforms and a new warming shelter; development of 148 spaces for commuter parking, a 0.5-acre park, and roadways; and construction of a mixed-use development and senior apartments. Phase I-A development costs are approximately \$1.4 million; these costs are related to Metra commuter parking expansion and transit amenity improvements.

The total financing gap in Phase 1 is \$1.3 million. The financing gap refers to the difference between projected development costs and the projected amount of traditional financing, or mortgage, that the project will be able to secure. The Funding Tool-Kit, provided in Appendix I, includes resources that may be used to offset the financing gap between development costs and a traditional mortgage loan. The financing gap for Phase I does not include costs associated with land assembly and site preparation, which the URS Team recommends the Village undertake early in the redevelopment project.

Total Phase 2 development costs equal approximately \$35.3 million, which includes the development of 34-acres of parks and open space, development of 51 spaces of Metra commuter parking, and the development of 80-units of single-family, owner-occupied housing. The total financing gap in Phase 2 is \$24.9 million and is largely associated with the development of the single-family housing project. Low Income Housing Tax Credits offer a means for bridging this gap. The value of tax credits on such a project is estimated to be \$21 million dollars, which would eliminate most of the anticipated financing gap associated with the development of this housing project.

Development costs for Phase 3 are estimated to be \$58.3 million. This estimate includes the development of 70 attached townhomes, 80 condominiums of various sizes, 40 rental units of various sizes, and 30,625 square feet of commercial/retail space. The estimated total financing gap in Phase 3 is \$9.3 million with the majority of the gap associated with the development of the commercial/retail space. This gap is based on current rents in the Village of Robbins. As this project moves forward, and the Robbins commercial market proves itself, commercial retail per square foot lease rates may increase, making the proposed commercial development more viable and reducing the projected financing gap. This same concept is likely to be true for the residential projects recommended for development in Phase 3.

Phase 4 total development costs equal an estimated \$7.1 million, which includes the development of 13.3 acres of parks and open space, the development of 21,000 square feet of commercial/retail space, further expansion of Metra commuter parking facilities by approximately 200 additional spaces, and the marketing of the land allocated for Light Industrial for development. The total projected financing gap in Phase 4 is \$4.4 million and is largely associated with the development of the retail/commercial space. As with the commercial development proposed for Phase III, it is anticipated that retail/commercial rents will increase as the project and the local market develop, and this financing gap will be reduced.

C. LAND ACQUISITION

Land acquisition and assembly is a critical element of the redevelopment implementation strategy outlined in this report. While a large portion of

the land targeted for this redevelopment program is underutilized, it is not readily available for development at this time. The property is under varied ownership and includes a mix of undeveloped, abandoned and unoccupied sites. Developers are typically unwilling to expend the considerable time and expense obtaining site control unless there is a very strong market, which is not currently the case in Robbins.

The Village of Robbins has initiated a village-wide land acquisition process to acquire tax delinquent vacant land, which includes residential and commercial property. The Village has contracted with a legal firm to assist in implementing this land acquisition strategy. The Village plans to utilize Cook County's No Cash Bid Process to identify, purchase and market tax delinquent land. This program allows the Village to acquire the land by purchasing the delinquent tax certificates of properties. After filing the appropriate motions and allowing time for the state mandated redemption period, the certificates are taken to deed. For vacant land the redemption period is 6 months, and for residential property, two years. The Village's first phase submission for acquisition is approximately 537 parcels.

The URS Team recommends that the Village of Robbins continue current land acquisition efforts, and implement a land acquisition program to consolidate and make available for development the targeted properties within the station area, as shown in Figure 14. This includes land around the Metra station, east of Kedzie Avenue between 137th and 139th, and land adjacent to the Kedzie/Claire Avenue intersection. This land will be critical in laying the groundwork for any TOD retail development as well as addressing the issues of streetscape and safety. The land acquisition strategy should include an aggressive acquisition and demolition program for homes that are identified as blighted.

An effective land acquisition program should be implemented in cooperation with Metra, which is targeting sites adjacent to the existing station for increased parking and related transit facility improvements. Properties targeted for acquisition by the Village of Robbins for Metra are shown in Figure 15.

The Village may create a financial program to allow it to purchase land for the TOD area and to pay current residents prices that enable them to relocate within Robbins without financial hardship. This could be accomplished through a lease-buy back program or ground leases to subsequent developers with ground lease proceeds split between the Village and the original homeowners. This could be done in conjunction with infrastructure improvements or other county and state funded initiatives that are bond financed.

D. FUNDING STRATEGIES

A successful redevelopment program requires financial and technical support from a variety of public and private sources. The revitalization program for the Robbins TOD presented in this report involve a broad range of projects that will require additional funding by the Village or other public agencies and incentives to leverage private investment in the redevelopment.

Funding Tool Kit

The URS Team has compiled an index of funding programs and tools, which the Village of Robbins may access through the various phases of the redevelopment program. This funding tool-kit is included in Appendix I.

An initial step in this redevelopment program, URS prepared an application on behalf of the Village of Robbins to Governor Ryan's Green Communities Demonstration Program. A copy of the application is included as Appendix J. The Village was notified that they have been selected to participate in the Green Communities Demonstration Program and awarded a grant in the amount of \$110,000. The grant award will provide funding for public outreach activities and the creation of a Village wide environmental vision. This is a unique opportunity for the Village to expand upon the public outreach and focused visioning exercise conducted under the RTAP grant.

The URS Team also recommends that the Village establish a TIF district as a first step in their redevelopment implementation. The TIF district will make money available for necessary public improvement and help attract development to the station area.

Funding Summit

The URS Team has developed an approach to a funding summit, which will allow the Village of Robbins to build upon the understanding of development opportunities and constraints that was gained during this Transit Oriented Development Study.

Purpose and Format

The funding summit is envisioned as an event that includes representatives from the public and private sector with experience and connections to programs that may provide financial support for various phases of the Robbins redevelopment. The event is designed for the Village of Robbins to present their comprehensive plan for revitalization of the Robbins station area and to request feedback from public-private sector representatives regarding obstacles to receiving additional funding. The Village can use this input to modify the redevelopment concept and implementation plan to create a more desirable and viable project. The funding summit also generates

excitement for the Village's redevelopment program among managers of public funding programs and private investors and financial institutions.

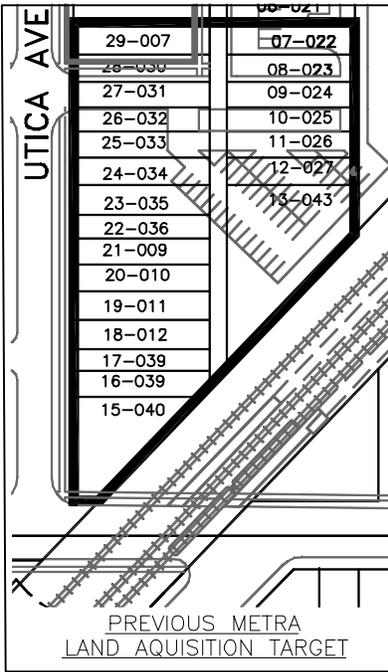
The URS Team recommends that the funding summit be held early in the redevelopment planning process because it is designed to provide valuable input for the Village of Robbins as they move into the implementation phases of this project.

A meeting location that is convenient to the majority of invited participants is recommended. The Village of Robbins may invite a bank to provide meeting space and lunch for participants. A number of banks have boardrooms in their main branch buildings that provide sufficient meeting space. A meeting location on LaSalle Street or other nearby Loop location is convenient for the majority of the invitees who have offices in downtown Chicago.

Participants

The Village of Robbins, as the manager of their redevelopment program, should serve as host for the funding summit. South Suburban Mayors & Managers is also an appropriate host for the summit, either as a representative of the Village or as co-host. The URS Team recommends soliciting a keynote speaker such as U.S. Representative Jackson or another well respected elected official. This keynote speaker will help to generate interest among the invitees and may be asked to serve as titular co-host for the event to emphasize their involvement in the funding summit and support for the Village of Robbins' redevelopment program.

The URS Team recommends a facilitator be selected who can oversee the presentation of Robbins' redevelopment plans, as well as breakout discussions of the program among invitees. NIPC is an example of an organization that is known in the Chicago region for their involvement in planning and redevelopment programs. NIPC has experience facilitating meetings of this type, and is familiar with the Robbins station area redevelopment. A list of recommended participants is included in Appendix K.



LOT#-PIN#	
PRIVATE OWNERSHIP	25-033 24-034
PRIVATE OWNERSHIP	12-027
PRIVATE OWNERSHIP	07-022 08-023 09-024 10-025 11-026
PRIVATE OWNERSHIP	17-039 16-039 15-040
PRIVATE OWNERSHIP	20-010 19-011 18-012 13-043 23-035 22-036 21-009
PRIVATE OWNERSHIP	26-032
PRIVATE OWNERSHIP	28-030
PRIVATE OWNERSHIP	27-031
PRIVATE OWNERSHIP	04-019 05-020 06-021

- LEGEND**
- PREVIOUS METRA LAND ACQUISITION TARGET (1.95 Ac.)
 - RECOMMENDED METRA LAND ACQUISITION TARGET (3.72 Ac.)

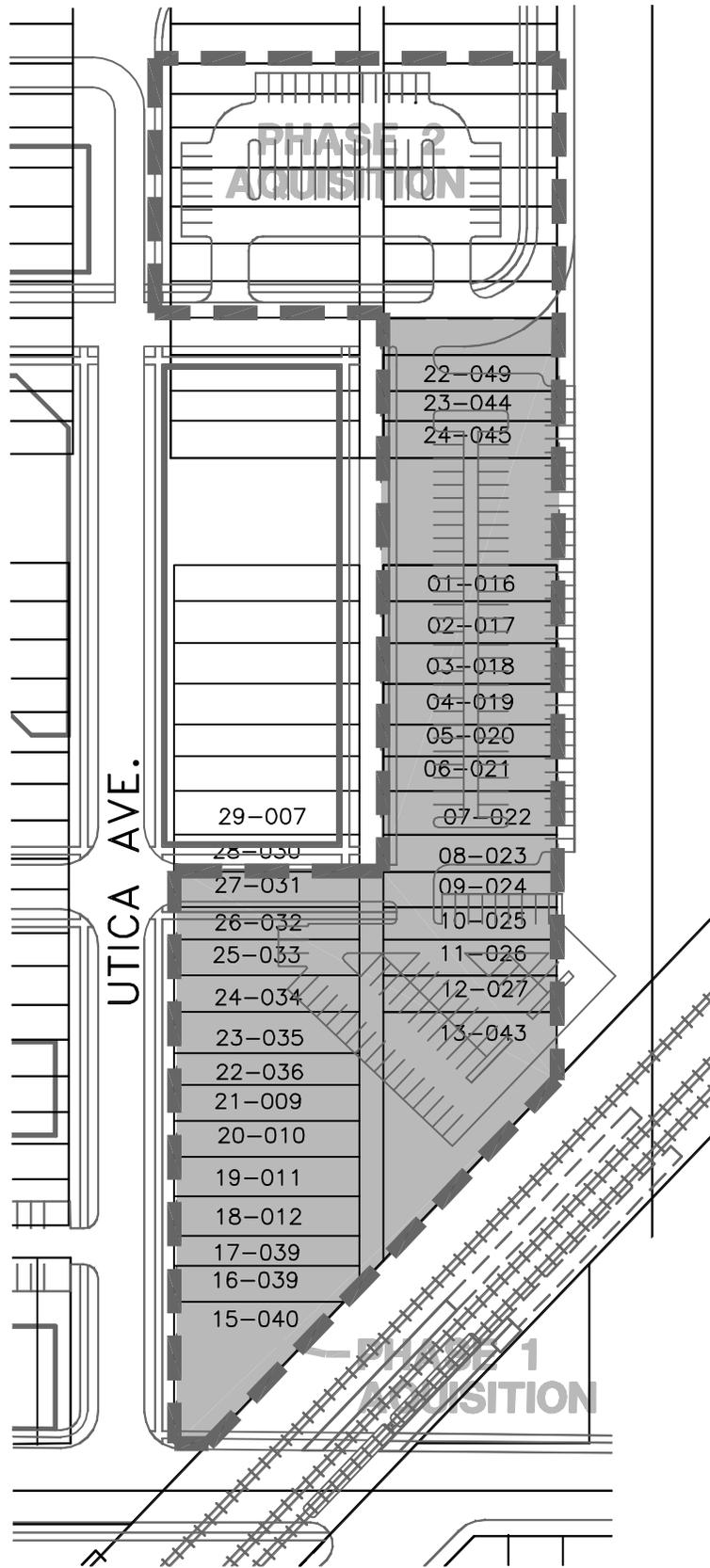


Figure 15: Recommended Metra Land Acquisition Target

Table 6: Redevelopment Cost Estimates

Village of Robbins Transit Oriented Development Project
Project Phasing and Development Cost Projections

Phase	Development Site Description	Status	Land Acreage	Bldg. Sq Ft	Land Assemblage (Acquisition, Demolition and Clearance)	Estimated Construction Costs (hard and soft)	Total Development Costs	Sources of Financing				
								Estimated Mortgage Proceeds (6)	Tax Exempt Financing (6)	Sale of Land to Developers (7)	Gap ⁽⁸⁾	
Phase 1 (Years 1-5)												
Phase 1A												
	Village Property	Completed	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
	Assisted Living Facility	Project underway	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
	Metra Parking (148 Spaces) ⁽¹⁾	not started	2.65	n/a	\$135,415	\$518,000	\$653,415	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$653,415
	Transit Amenity Improvements ⁽²⁾	not started	n/a	n/a	n/a	\$750,000	\$750,000	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$750,000
	Reinvestment of Land Assemblage Cost									\$135,415		(\$135,415)
	Total Phase 1A		2.65	-	\$135,415	\$518,000	\$1,403,415	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$135,415	\$1,268,000
Phase 1B												
	Land Assemblage (total development area) ⁽³⁾	not started	89.86	n/a	\$4,591,846	n/a	\$4,591,846	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$4,591,846
	Senior Housing	not started	1.24	35,214	\$63,109	\$8,220,458	\$8,283,567	\$887,479	\$6,069,340	\$0	\$0	\$1,226,748
	Park/Open Space ⁽⁴⁾	not started	0.49	n/a	\$25,039	\$49,000	\$74,039	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$74,039
	Residential Development	not started	1.40	n/a	\$71,540	\$49,000	\$120,540	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$120,540
	Mixed-use Development	not started	1.24	35,214	\$63,109	\$9,153,894	\$9,216,803	\$1,490,318	\$4,435,405	\$0	\$0	\$3,291,080
	Reinvestment of Land Assemblage Cost									\$222,798		(\$222,798)
	Total Phase 1		7.91	70,428	\$398,211	\$18,348,152	\$19,497,963	\$2,477,797	\$10,504,745	\$398,211	\$0	\$10,708,456
Phase 2 (Years 6-10)												
	Open Space / Park ⁽⁵⁾	not started	34.10	n/a	\$1,742,510	\$3,410,000	\$5,152,510	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$5,152,510
	Single Family Residential	not started	8.22	176,000	\$420,042	\$29,677,222	\$30,097,264	\$8,400,000	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$21,697,264
	Metra Parking (51 Spaces)	not started	1.05	n/a	\$33,655	\$178,500	\$212,155	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$212,155
	Reinvestment of Land Assemblage Costs									\$2,162,552		(\$2,162,552)
	Total Phase 2		43.37	176,000	\$2,216,207	\$33,087,222	\$35,249,774	\$8,400,000	\$0	\$2,162,552	\$0	\$24,919,377
Phase 3 (Years 11-15)												
	Townhomes	not started	2.86	175,144	\$148,146	\$27,901,745	\$28,049,891	\$4,691,257	\$21,407,584	\$0	\$0	\$1,948,550
	Condominium/Apartments	not started	2.38	98,000	\$121,618	\$16,240,120	\$16,361,738	\$3,000,000	\$12,054,282	\$0	\$0	\$1,307,476
	Rental Apartments	not started	1.16	43,200	\$59,276	\$7,424,012	\$7,483,288	\$888,731	\$5,481,474	\$0	\$0	\$1,113,063
	139th Street Commercial/Retail	not started	2.47	30,625	\$128,217	\$6,256,205	\$6,384,422	\$1,922,131	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$4,462,291
	Metra Parking (estimated 200 Spaces)	not started	3.70	n/a	\$188,070	\$700,000	\$888,070	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$888,070
	Reinvestment of Land Assemblage Costs									\$453,257		(\$453,257)
	Total Phase 3		12.57	344,969	\$642,327	\$57,624,082	\$58,466,409	\$10,502,219	\$38,943,720	\$453,257	\$0	\$9,267,213
Phase 4 (Years 16-20)												
	Open Space / Park	not started	13.20	n/a	\$674,530	\$1,320,000	\$1,994,530	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$1,994,530
	Kidzie Commercial/Retail	not started	1.99	21,000	\$101,689	\$4,433,472	\$4,535,161	\$1,318,033	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$3,217,128
	Light Industrial	not started	11.72	n/a	\$598,892	n/a	\$598,892	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$598,892
	Reinvestment of Land Assemblage Costs									\$1,375,101		(\$1,375,101)
	Total Phase 4		26.91	21,000	\$1,375,101	\$5,753,472	\$7,128,573	\$1,318,033	\$0	\$1,375,101	\$0	\$4,435,439
	Total Project Area		89.86	612,397.00	\$4,591,846	\$115,013,328	\$120,302,119	\$22,696,049	\$49,448,465	\$4,349,121	\$0	\$49,330,485

Notes:

⁽¹⁾ Metra Parking development costs are estimated at \$3,500 per space.

⁽²⁾ Transit amenity improvements include platforms, lights, warming shelter, signage and improved crossings at 139th Street. Metra has allocated \$750,000 for FY 2003 for improvements.

⁽³⁾ To insure that the cost of redevelopment remains as low as possible it is important to secure site control immediately, before land costs begin to escalate through speculation. We estimate land acquisition costs to be approx. \$51,000 per acre. This calc. assumes a per lot acquisition cost of \$40,000, factoring in the fact that 89% of total Robbins properties are currently tax delinquent. This schedule both reflects the cost of land assemblage alone and on a per project basis.

⁽⁴⁾ Based on a sampling of similar projects, the cost to develop this small corner park is approximately \$100,000 per acre.

⁽⁵⁾ Per USG cost estimates the cost to develop this Open Space/Park is equal to \$100,000 per acre.

⁽⁶⁾ Estimated Mortgage Proceeds are based on the amortized value of sales or rents collected. All calculated at 8.5% interest over 20 years.

⁽⁷⁾ Tax exempt financing assumes tax credit syndication. See per project development budgets for more details regarding these estimations.

⁽⁸⁾ It is assumed that the village, through an independent redevelopment agency, will administer the land assemblage and preparation activities. The agency will be reimbursed for the costs of land assemblage and preparation through the sale of assembled development sites to developers. Also, the total cost of assemblage and preparation by the redevelopment agency could be reduced through the use of available resources as identified in the funding tool kit, thereby reducing the individual project development gaps identified above.

⁽⁹⁾ The gap is filled through the utilization of Grants, TIF, and other municipal, county, state, federal and private resources. See the funding toolkit in this report for an evaluation of sources that could be used to fill the gap by project.