North Avenue

Village of River Forest

Corridors Plan

Adopted February 8, 2010

HOUSEAL LAVIGNE ASSOCIATES

Lake Street

Madison Street

Harlem Avenue

Village of River Forest, Illinois
Corridors Plan

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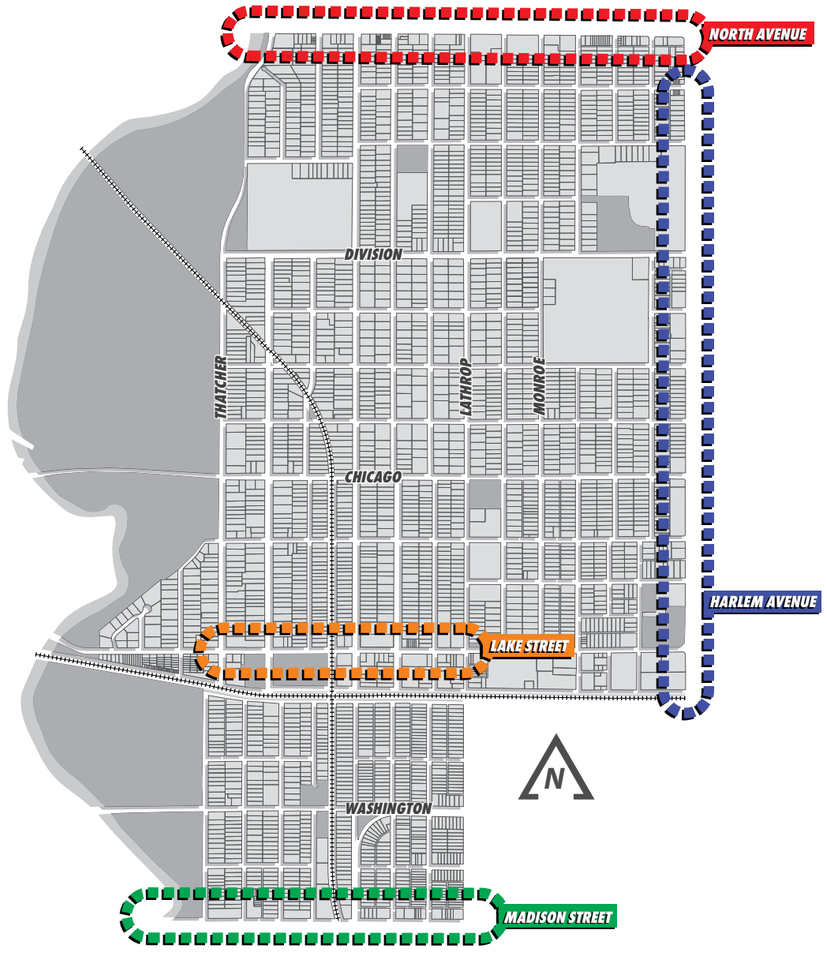
This Plan outlines the Village's long-range plan for improvement, redevelopment, beautification, and overall revitalization of the Madison Street Corridor, North Avenue Corridor, and Harlem Avenue Corridor, With a parking strategy to the Lake Street Village Center Area



Introduction

This document presents the *River Forest Corridors Plan* for the Village of River Forest, Illinois. The Plan outlines the Village's long-range plan for improvement, redevelopment, beautification, and overall revitalization of the Madison Street Corridor, North Avenue Corridor, and Harlem Avenue Corridor. The Plan also includes a parking strategy for the Lake Street Village Center Area. The Plan establishes a foundation for future decision-making regarding land use and development, circulation and access, and overall beautification within the corridors. The Plan includes an analysis of existing conditions and planning influences; recommendations regarding land use and development, streetscape and beautification; and traffic and parking. The Plan also presents a variety of tools for consideration with regard to approaching development in a more creative manner, given the physical constraints and economic realities of certain areas within the Village.

The *River Forest Corridors Plan* should serve as foundation for future decision-making for matters relating to all aspects of the corridors. The Plan should be used as a guide to implement needed changes in the Zoning Ordinance and should be used as a guide when reviewing and evaluating development proposals for properties within the corridors. Although the Plan contains detailed recommendations and policies for a number of improvements and actions, it also sets the basic framework to guide activities and change, allowing room for adjustment as conditions and potentials change. Finally, the Plan serves as an important marketing tool to promote River Forest and the corridor's unique assets and advantages. The Plan should be used to achieve the desired vision for the corridors, while helping to attract desirable new development to the Village.

The Plan has been developed over several months with substantial community input and participation from Village residents, elected and appointed officials, Village staff, and representatives from the local business community.

Background to the River Forest Corridors Plan

The Village of River Forest received an Illinois Tomorrow Corridor Planning Grant from the Illinois Department of Transportation to conduct a study and develop a plan for the Village's perimeter corridors – Madison Street, North Avenue, and Lake Street. The purpose of the study was to examine the land use, development, transportation, and beautification aspects of the corridors in an attempt to promote desirable economic development and land use in a manner compatible with and coordinated with transportation improvements. The study also included an examination of the parking situation in the Lake Street Corridor Village Center Area.

The Village's commercial/mixed-use corridors represent the community's primary commercial areas and contribute significantly to the economic health of the community. However, redevelopment and commercial revitalization along the corridors is hindered by shallow lot depths, lack of parking, adjacency to residential areas, and obsolete/dated building inventory. The corridors also generally lack the image, appearance, and overall character that is reflective of the River Forest community. It is for these reasons that the *River Forest Corridors Plan* was initiated.

Core Principles

Although the different sections of this Plan address many specific aspects of the corridors, there are several fundamental considerations that are essential to River Forest. Rather than addressing these each in the Plan in different sections, they are presented here and should be considered and appropriately integrated into all aspects of corridor planning, development, and improvement activity.

- **Promote Responsible Economic Development –** A priority for the Village is to enhance the economic strength and development potential of the corridors in a responsible and appropriate manner. There are many obstacles and challenges confronting commercial development and businesses along the corridors and the Village must be committed to creatively and cooperatively approaching the revitalization of the corridors.
- **Protection and Enhancement of Residential Neighborhoods –** The Village's established residential neighborhoods help to define the community and are recognized as one of the Village's greatest and most valuable assets. That being said, in many places along the corridors, commercial and residential uses are immediately adjacent to one another. When commercial redevelopment is proposed, adjacent residential areas will be effected – this is often unavoidable. For all projects, efforts must be made to accommodate reasonable and desirable development while protecting the character and integrity of adjacent residential neighborhoods.
- **Historic Character and Context –** The Village has a rich and valued history that is reflected in the many historic structures that exist throughout the community. As redevelopment and other improvement projects take place throughout the corridors, careful consideration must be taken to protect and enhance the historic structures and character of the Village. The Village's Historic Preservation Commission could serve a vital role in identifying and implementing strategies to enhance the Village's historic character and resources.
- **Encourage Sustainable Development Practices –** The Village should support the use of "green" technologies and sustainable practices in all new development along the corridors. Building techniques and development methods have advanced significantly and are constantly evolving to produce more responsible, sustainable, and desirable approaches to development that dovetail harmoniously with a community's broader economic development initiatives. These practices reduce energy consumption and are less taxing on the Village's infrastructure systems.

Planning Process

Over the past twelve months, a planning process has taken place with the Village of River Forest that included interviews, workshops, meetings, and discussions with area business and property owners, residents, staff and officials, local real estate professionals, and more. A detailed inventory and assessment was conducted of the corridors' existing conditions and planning influences. A detailed market study and assessment was also conducted to ensure a thorough understanding of market conditions prior to the development of planning concepts and recommendations.

The result of all of the preliminary data collection, assessment, and community outreach was used to formulate preliminary concepts, which were reviewed and discussed with the Plan Commission. Based on feedback from the community, including residents, business and property owners, and appointed and elected officials, the final *River Forest Corridors Plan* was prepared.

Organization of the River Forest Corridors Plan

The *River Forest Corridors Plan* consists of nine sections presented in a concise, illustrative format to more clearly communicate the recommended concepts and actions.

Introduction

This section provides a brief overview and purpose of the *River Forest Corridors Plan*, background to the Plan, and an outline of the planning process.

Section 1: Community Outreach

This section presents on overview of the five separate Community Outreach activities that took place during the planning process. These outreach efforts offered important insight on local issues, concerns and opinions that were used to develop the Corridors Plan.

Section 2: Market Overview

This section provides an overview of the market study conducted to assess the Village and each of the four corridors, within the context of the competitive landscape. The study analyzed the extent the locations and intensity of neighboring residential and commercial activities influence what takes place within the Village.

Section 3: Development Approaches and Tools

This section presents a variety of different strategies for accommodating and possibly incentivizing redevelopment along the Village's mixed-use corridors including: 1) Economic Incentives; 2) Creating Cul-de-sacs; 3) Alley "Shifting"; 4) Commercial Expansion; and, 5) Use Relocation.

Section 4: Corridor Beautification Framework

This section provides recommendations for improvements and aesthetic enhancements to both public and private realms along the Village's corridors. The components of this section include: 1) Streetscape Zones; 2) Primary Streetscape and Beautification Components; 3) Implementation of Streetscape Components; 4) Landscaped Medians; and, 5) Design and Development Guidelines.

Section 5: Madison Street Corridor Plan

This section provides recommendations for improving the appearance and function of the Madison Street Corridor, and identifies redevelopment opportunities and strategies that could transform the Corridor's overall character and environment.

Section 6: North Avenue Corridor Plan

This section provides recommendations for improving the appearance and function of the North Avenue Corridor, and identifies redevelopment opportunities and strategies that could transform the Corridor's overall character and environment.

Section 7: Harlem Avenue Corridor Plan

This section provides recommendations for improving the appearance and function of the Harlem Avenue Corridor, and identifies potential land use conversion opportunities that could enhance the Corridor's overall character and environment.

Section 8: Lake Street Village Center Parking Strategy

This section presents specific recommendations for providing new public parking lots in the Village Center Area.

Section 1:

Community Outreach

Community outreach efforts offered important insight on local issues, concerns and opinions and were used to inform the recommendations of the Corridors Study

Community park.

Road underpass.

The community was engaged in five separate Community Outreach activities at the outset of the planning process. Outreach activities, undertaken by the Consultant, involved elected officials, residents and representatives of the business community. These outreach efforts offered important insight on local issues, concerns and opinions that were used to inform Corridors Study recommendations. This section summarizes each of the following outreach activities:

A ***Plan Commission Initiation Meeting*** was conducted by the Consultant with seven members of the Plan Commission on August 26, 2008 at the River Forest Village Hall.

A ***Community Workshop*** was conducted at the Village Hall on October 2, 2008 with eleven River Forest residents.

A ***Business Workshop*** was conducted with representatives of the River Forest business community on the evening of October 10, 2008. Each corridor was represented by at least two businesses at the workshop.

An on-line ***Resident Questionnaire*** was posted on the Corridors Study project website between September and December of 2008. Eighty residents responded to the questionnaire which was comprised of a mix of multiple choice and open-ended response questions regarding existing conditions within the four corridors. The on-line questionnaire was used to solicit residents' feedback, but is not considered a statistically valid survey instrument.

An on-line ***Business Community Questionnaire*** was posted on the Corridors Study project website between September and December of 2008. Eight representatives from the local business community responded to the questionnaire which was comprised of a mix of multiple choice and open-ended response questions regarding the existing business climate within the four corridors. Each corridor was represented by at least one business in responses to the questionnaire. The on-line questionnaire was used to solicit business owners' and managers' feedback, but is not considered a statistically valid survey instrument.

In addition to the Community Outreach activities summarized in this section, several one-on-one confidential, Key Person Interviews were conducted with local business owners, property owners, service providers, institution representatives, developers, commercial brokers, residential brokers, and other key stakeholders. Theses interviews provided significant insight into many of the issues and opportunities within the corridors from the prospective of those most involved.

Plan Commission Initiation Meeting

On August 26, 2008, a Plan Commission meeting was held at Village Hall with seven commission members. Feedback from this Plan Commission meeting reflects the opinions and comments stated during meeting dialogue, and includes a summary of participant responses to the meeting questionnaire. Commission Members had an opportunity to identify issues and concerns confronting the Corridors Study area, desirable and undesirable uses, and development types.

The following is a summary of the input received from discussions with the Plan Commission, including answers from a questionnaire that asked Commissioners specific questions pertaining to the Corridors Study area which includes Madison Street, Harlem Avenue, North Avenue, and Lake Street (Village Center Area – Lathrop to Thatcher). The items highlighted below represent issues discussed by the Plan Commission and are not planning recommendations.

Madison Street Corridor:

Plan Commissioners cited the need to add some type of attraction into this corridor such as a cultural center/theatre. Overall, the corridor is seen as being unattractive, with specific properties such as Hines Lumber, Pete's Automotive, and the Community Center noted as having poor appearances. Specific uses, such as Hines Lumber, were identified as businesses that needed to relocate out of the Corridor. In additional to commercial uses for the Hines Lumber site, residential uses including assisted living and retirement facilities were also discussed. Streetscaping should be continued down this corridor to reflect the character of River Forest such as street lighting and streetscaping. Other issues with this corridor included a need for improved parking (possibly diagonal), the railway crossing, and overall better uses for commercial sites.

Harlem Avenue Corridor:

Overall, the Corridor was seen as very fragmented between small retail, residential, and institutional uses. Commissioners would like to see more attractive multi-family units in this corridor that is reflective of the character of the Village. Some cited the potential for student housing in the Corridor for Concordia University. In addition to traffic and parking concerns, specific transportation issues included the need for safe left turn movements, dangerous intersection at Central and Harlem, and traffic congestion at Lake and Harlem. Other issues included the need to install gateway signage for vehicles traveling from North Avenue to Lake Street, and the addition of plantings within the Corridor.

North Avenue Corridor:

This Corridor was noted as being appropriate for larger shopping areas with parking and restaurants. Some streets should be explored for new cul-de-sacs, however, there should be no new alleys created. Traffic near Montessori School was cited as a concern. Commissioners would also like to see the area's overall appearance improved, marginal residential properties redeveloped, a potential redevelopment of Dominick's, and parking in the corridor enhanced, and some questioned the parking provided at the townhomes near the CVS.

Lake Street Corridor:

Plan Commissioners cited the need to improve parking in this Corridor as a primary concern and specifically mentioned Keystone Park as an area that needs more parking and traffic control. Commissioners would also like to see the appearance of the railway overpass improved. Overall some stated that this Corridor should have an appropriate historic character.

Most important Corridor Issues:

When asked to identify their most important issues for the Corridors most stated that these areas should better reflect the character of River Forest by improving their appearance and aesthetics. Other main issues included improving parking, transportation flow, circulation safety, and the need to attract viable businesses and a mix of uses including restaurants.

Desirable Uses/Development:

Commissioners would like to see upscale shops, quaint shops such as a general store, more restaurants (not fast food), and national chains, added throughout the Corridors. Specific uses such as a Crate and Barrel were cited as being desired in the Town Center. Lake Street Corridor was seen by some Commissioners as an area that could be strengthened into a Business District.

Undesirable Uses/Development:

When asked what they would not like to see in the Corridors, Commissioners mentioned the following: fast-food restaurants, big box stores, resale shops, strip malls, parking in the front, used car lots, service stations, more condominiums/townhomes, and overall they would not like to see more of what the Village already has.

View looking northwest on Madison Street.

View from southwest corner of Madison Street and Forest Avenue.

Community Workshop

On October 2, 2008, a community workshop was held at Village Hall with eleven community members in attendance. Feedback from this community workshop reflects the opinions and comments stated during workshop dialogue, and include a summary of participant responses to a questionnaire. River Forest residents had an opportunity to identify issues and concerns confronting the Corridors Study area, desirable and undesirable uses, and development types.

The following is a summary of the input received from discussions with community members and answers from a questionnaire that asked those in attendance specific questions pertaining to the Corridors Study area which includes Madison Street, Harlem Avenue, North Avenue, and the Village center area of Lake Street between Lathrop and Thatcher Avenues.

Madison Street Corridor:

The general appearance of the Madison Street Corridor was of greatest concern to Village residents. It was noted by several that the aging retail storefronts and strip centers within the corridor combine with a lack of streetscaping to yield an appearance that was not in keeping with River Forest's community character. Community members believed that additional landscaping such as tree plantings and the possible creation of a planted median could do much to enhance the corridor's appearance. Nearly all community members stated that strip retail centers were undesirable for the Corridor. Residents also wished to see the addition of bike lanes and racks, pedestrian-scale street lighting, and traffic calming measures to provide a more pedestrian-friendly environment. The availability of parking and the cost of parking were also concerns stated by several residents.

While some stated that they did not wish to see any additional condominium development within the Corridor, if residential development were to occur, others wished to see it included in traditional, mixed-use buildings. Residents stated a desire to see reinvestment in existing storefronts and buildings prior to any new development. It was stated that any new development that is to occur should honor the architectural styles established within Downtown Forest Park to the east and should preserve and not threaten the existing single family character in the surrounding neighborhood.

Harlem Avenue Corridor:

Overall, participants at the community workshop wished to see Harlem Avenue become more pedestrian-oriented. Similar to Madison Street, residents suggested the addition of a landscaped median and bike lanes. It was stated that the general beautification of Harlem Avenue would help create the opportunity for gateways into the community at several intersections. In particular, the intersections of Harlem Avenue with Division Street, Lake Street, and North Avenue were noted as significant entrances to the community that were in need of attention. Residents would also like to see more attractive multi-family units in this corridor that are reflective of the character of the Village.

North Avenue Corridor:

Heavy traffic along North Avenue was the most significant issue noted by residents. The traffic has made driving conditions poor along the Corridor and dangerous for pedestrians attempting to cross the busy thoroughfare. Truck traffic in particular was noted as a nuisance with regard to noise and air pollution and some expressed a desire to ban trucks from North Avenue all together. Traffic along the corridor is having a negative impact on the surrounding residential neighborhood prompting some community members to suggest the creation of cul-de-sacs at some side street intersections. As with the other corridors, residents noted a need for streetscaping, bike lanes, and traffic calming.

Lake Street Corridor:

Community members identified Lake Street as the desired location for more restaurants within the Village. In general, residents wished to see more businesses locate within the corridor. The corridor is viewed as a downtown area where residents would like more opportunities to shop, eat, drink, and socialize. While streetscaping was not stated as an explicit concern, many expressed a desire to see additional greenery and also valued the existing architecture within the corridor. Bike lanes and additional parking for businesses and the Metra commuter rail station were also some of the items residents wished to see within the corridor.

Most important Corridor Issues:

In addition to improving the general health of the retail and commercial environments within the corridors, residents viewed sustainability as one of the most important issues related to the future of the corridors. Several community members stated the need to include sustainable design principles such as LEED architecture and pedestrian friendly design within future plans for the corridors.

Desirable and Undesirable Uses/Development:

Residents felt that the retailers locating within the corridors need to become more of a reflection of the Village's character. Community members wish to see more restaurants and shops within traditional mixed-use buildings as opposed to strip centers. Retail, office, and residential uses were all mentioned as desirable uses for the corridors, but it was stressed that new retail should align with the character of the community and all uses should be accommodated in buildings that honor local architecture.

Business Workshop

On October 10, 2008, a business workshop was held at Village Hall with ten representatives of River Forest businesses in attendance. All ten participants operated businesses within one of the corridors. Feedback from this business workshop reflects the opinions and comments stated during workshop dialogue, and include a summary of participant responses to a questionnaire. River Forest businesses were given the opportunity to identify issues and concerns confronting the Corridors Study area, desirable and undesirable uses, and development types.

The following is a summary of the input received from discussions with members of the business community and answers from a questionnaire that asked those in attendance specific questions pertaining to the Corridors Study area which includes Madison Street, Harlem Avenue, North Avenue, and the Village center area of Lake Street between Lathrop and Thatcher Avenues.

Madison Street Corridor:

Businesses cited traffic and pedestrian safety as their primary concerns regarding the Madison Street Corridor. It was stated that traffic moved too quickly along Madison Street and this combined with a lack of any streetscape buffer to yield a lack of safety for patrons visiting businesses within the Corridor. Congestion near the railroad crossing and a lack of on-street parking were also noted as problems within the Corridor.

Comments made by businesses located along Madison Street indicated that River Forest residents are unaware of what services and goods were provided by businesses within the Corridor. Comments made by representatives of businesses outside of the Corridor support this claim, with workshop attendees stating that Madison Street had a "mish-mash of businesses" or that they were least familiar with the Madison Street Corridor in general. Similar comments noted the odd juxtaposition of dated commercial and residential buildings and newer development.

Harlem Avenue Corridor:

In general, workshop participants noted that Harlem Avenue had a "chopped up feel", exhibiting a myriad of uses that lacked any sense of cohesion. Traffic congestion along Harlem Avenue and a need for additional parking were the concerns most cited by businesses. The heavy traffic along the Corridor was also noted as a contributor to the poor surface conditions along portions of the roadway. One business representative offered the renovation of existing alleyways as one means of providing additional parking and rear access to the Corridor's commercial buildings.

North Avenue Corridor:

Heavy traffic along North Avenue was the most significant issue noted by businesses. Some stated that they believed left-turn lanes could improve the situation. Businesses also cited a need for additional on-street parking which is minimal within the Corridor. It was noted that this lack of parking combines with heavy traffic to yield an unsafe pedestrian environment and limits the level of foot traffic businesses experience. Moreover, some noted that patrons could not easily travel from one side of the Corridor to the other, limiting any potential spill over from patrons visiting neighboring Elmwood Park. One business representative suggested that installing a light and crosswalk at the intersection of Park and North Avenues might improve this situation.

Businesses also stated that, unlike the other three corridors, North Avenue lacked focus, implying that it was not viewed as a commercial destination by local residents. Some workshop participants noted that this lack of unity within the Corridor was partially the result of inconsistent signage for Corridor businesses and the dated appearance of much of the Corridor's buildings.

Lake Street Corridor:

Traffic safety concerns were also noted for the Lake Street Corridor. While the streetscaping and sidewalks were adequate to accommodate business patrons, some stated that children attending the Corridor's two schools were in danger due to a lack of traffic safety precautions at nearby intersections and crosswalks. It was also noted that parking was insufficient and particularly difficult to find at the beginning and end of school days when students are being dropped-off or picked-up. Some also noted that the provision of bicycle racks may also help patrons more easily access the Corridor's businesses.

Business workshop participants stated that local architecture adds to the Corridor's character and that new development should be guided by the Corridor's historic building stock. The addition of consistent architectural features would also aid in unifying the Corridor. Some businesses stated that corridor-specific signage and additional streetscaping would contribute to this as well.

Most important Corridor Issues:

Overall, business workshop participants cited traffic congestion and the related issue of pedestrian safety as one of the most critical issues facing River Forest's corridors. Businesses stated that signage, streetscape improvements and beautification projects could do much to improve pedestrian safety and establish a unique and consistent feel throughout each of the corridors. This in turn could help increase foot traffic and facilitate the mutually beneficial movement of patrons between River Forest and the communities on opposite sides of Madison Street and Harlem and North Avenues. Moreover, business representatives noted that these improvements may help ensure that the physical appearance of the River Forest's corridors and their businesses better fit with the character of the community.

Most important thing the Village can do to improve the business environment:
The most often cited task that River Forest businesses believed the Village could do in order to improve the local business environment was to establish a better sense of community amongst local businesses. This recommendation was not limited to establishing a physical sense of place along the corridors, but also related to creating a forum wherein business representatives could gather and directly inform the Village of their needs and desires. Business workshop participants also stated a need for River Forest residents to know what businesses existed within the corridors and noted the important role the Village could play in getting the word out.

Resident Questionnaire

A Resident Questionnaire for the Village of River Forest's Corridors Study was posted online between September 12, 2008 and December 31, 2008. Eighty residents participated in the questionnaire and provided their opinions regarding the existing conditions within the Madison, Harlem, North and Lake Corridors and potential changes that could be made to better meet the needs of the community. Their input has been combined with input from the River Forest business community and used to craft the goals and objectives of the Corridors Study. Below are some highlights from the questionnaire results. Numbers or percentages shown in parentheses following a survey response answer refer to the number or proportion of residents who selected that response. Several questions permitted multiple responses, so indicated percentages may not add to 100.

Madison Street:

Twelve (15%) of the survey participants stated that they lived closest to the Madison Street corridor and between 46 (58%) and 72 (90%) participants responded to questions related to the Madison Street corridor.

Over 70% of residents identified overall appearance as a significant issue facing the Madison Street corridor. The need for new development was also identified by many (46%) as a significant issue. The other issues related to parking, traffic, the mix of uses, and presence of undesirable uses were chosen by between 11% and 19% of participants. Residents indicated that retail (64%) and restaurants (54%) were the two most desirable uses while the majority of residents (63%) viewed apartments as an undesirable use for the Madison Street corridor. Mixed-use commercial-residential (38%) was also identified as a desirable use. Residents were inconsistent with respect to what uses were either desirable or undesirable for the Madison Street corridor. Many uses had similar proportions of respondents that found them to be desirable and undesirable. For example, entertainment was identified as a desirable use by 29.2% of residents while another 25.4% identified entertainment as an undesirable use for the Madison Street corridor.

Residents were also asked to identify, in their own words, what they believed to be the number one issues facing the Madison Street corridor. While response varied, three over arching issues could be identified:

- Need for a pedestrian and bike friendly environment;
- Fast moving traffic with limited parking for patrons and residents; and
- Poor appearance of the corridor with a general lack of coherence amongst its buildings.

Residents noted that this 'run-down' appearance contributed to a lack of identity within the corridor or that the identity of River Forest's Madison Street was derived from the fact that it was not as well kept or successful as the Forest Park portion of the corridor. When asked what the Village could do to address issues in the corridor, most of the solution offered by residents centered on creating façade improvement and streetscaping programs to improve the appearance of the corridor, create more pedestrian amenities, and attract new development.

North Avenue:

Twenty-five (32%) of the survey participants stated that they lived closest to the North Avenue corridor and between 45 (56%) and 65 (81%) participants responded to questions related to the North Avenue corridor. An overwhelming proportion of respondents (85%) identified traffic as one of the most important issues facing the North Avenue corridor. Overall appearance (46%) and parking (47%) were the next most cited significant issues facing the corridor.

When asked to identify desired uses within the North Avenue corridor, 64% of participants selected restaurants while another 50% selected retail. Services received sixteen votes (26%) as a desirable use. A large proportion (61%) of residents identified apartments as an undesirable use. Residents were generally against townhomes and condominiums (40%) though some believed these uses to be desirable (16%) for the corridor. Residents appear to be evenly split on whether entertainment is a desirable (27.9%) or undesirable use (30.4%) for the North Avenue corridor.

An open ended question asking residents what they believed was the single most important issue facing the North Avenue corridor received a variety of comments. The great majority of the 48 responses submitted related to the single issue of traffic and congestion. Many residents noted that North Avenue is heavily trafficked by fast-moving cars and trucks which make parking and access to River Forest businesses difficult. The heavy traffic also made it extremely difficult for pedestrians to cross North Avenue at any point between Harlem and Thatcher Avenues. The auto-oriented nature of the corridor was also said to impede foot traffic. All of these issues were thought to negatively impact the success of existing businesses and the potential for new development.

When asked what they believed should be the Village's primary action regarding the North Avenue corridor, the majority of recommendations centered on relieving traffic congestion and creating more parking. Specific recommendations included the creation of left-turn lanes and installing additional stoplights. Some suggested continuing some of the traffic controls established farther east within the Oak Park portion of the corridor. It was also recommended by some that certain local streets be turned into cul-de-sacs to limit through traffic entering local neighborhoods. However, others stated explicitly that creating physical barriers should be avoided and that traffic should be controlled using other less invasive methods. Other suggestions related to beautifying the corridors, making it more amenable to pedestrians, and improving the appearance of businesses.

Some residents spoke to traffic improvements related to Keystone Montessori School traffic that were developed and agreed upon, but a decision to implement was postponed based on the outcomes of this Corridors Study

Harlem Avenue:

Nine (12%) of the survey participants stated that they lived closest to the Harlem Avenue corridor and between 33 (41%) and 51 (64%) participants responded to questions related to the Harlem Avenue corridor. Residents identified traffic (82%) and overall appearance (49%) as the most important issues facing the Harlem Avenue corridor. All other issues were selected by less than 20% of survey participants.

Residents identified retail (46%), mixed-use commercial-residential (44%), and restaurants (41%) as desirable uses for the Harlem Avenue corridor. Apartments (54.7%) was the only use consistently identified by residents as an undesired use within the corridor. Survey participants were divided on other uses as either desirable or undesirable. For example, office uses were identified by 20% of residents as a desirable use, but another 15% noted this to be an undesirable use for the corridor.

When asked to describe the most critical issue facing the Harlem Avenue corridor, many residents replied with a single word: traffic. Nearly 75% of the 41 responses regarding the corridor's number one issue were related to traffic. Heavy traffic along Harlem Avenue was said to make road conditions increasingly bad, contribute to a non- pedestrian friendly environment, and detract from local resident quality of life. Other issues identified included the poor appearance of some businesses and older multi-family residential in the northern portion of corridor as well as the perceived deteriorating condition of Cummings Square Park Memorial.

Many residents stated that the Village should focus on mitigating traffic problems in the corridor and that its future actions should include minimizing the number of curb cuts along the corridor, improving entry and exit controls for existing drives, repairing and maintaining the roadway, improving the operation of existing signals, and limiting truck traffic. A number of residents also recommended that the Village take action in improving the appearance of the corridor by updating or replacing older, unattractive structures and working with neighboring Oak Park to beautify the corridor in a cohesive manner.

Lake Street:

Thirty-eight (49%) of the survey participants stated that they lived closest to the Lake Street corridor and between 38 (48%) and 50 (63%) participants responded to questions related to the Lake Street corridor. The need for new development was identified by 50% of participants as one of the important issues facing the Lake Street corridor. Several other issues were also identified as important including traffic (31%), overall appearance of the corridor (29%), parking (27%), and a mix of uses (23%).
The large majority of participants identified restaurants (70%) and retail (62%) as desirable uses for the Lake Street corridor while apartments (53%) were selected by most as an undesirable use. Resident opinions were mixed with regard to the desirability of several uses including condominiums for which 24% selected desirable and 26% selected undesirable. Participants were generally in favor of both mixed retail-office and services (38%), though some viewed these uses as undesirable (7% and 13% respectively).

A wide variety of responses were given regarding the singular most important issue facing the Lake Street corridor. Residents touched on many issues including:

- Heavy rush hour and school related traffic;
- The need for additional parking;
- Vacancy problems in storefronts, limited retail options, and the need for new shops; and
- A lack of or loss of a hometown or downtown feel.

Residents stated that the most significant thing the Village could do to improve the Lake Street corridor would be to do something to attract businesses and create a 'Downtown River Forest'. It was emphasized by some that the Village should work to fill commercial vacancies before allowing for the construction of any new space. Recent improvements to the corridor's appearance were also noted as a positive step.

Business Community Questionnaire

A Business Community Questionnaire for the Village of River Forest's Corridors Study was posted online for approximately four months during which time a total of eight representatives from local businesses took part in the survey. The questionnaire was used to obtain feedback regarding the business environment within the Madison, Harlem, North and Lake Corridors and potential changes that could be made to better meet the needs of the local business community. This input has been combined with input from corridor residents and used to craft the goals and objectives of the Corridors Study. Below are some highlights from the questionnaire results. Numbers or percentages shown in parentheses following a survey response answer refer to the number or proportion of residents who selected that response. Several questions permitted multiple responses, so indicated percentages may not add to 100.

Participating Businesses:

The majority (63%) of questionnaire participants have their businesses located in the North Avenue corridor. The remaining participating businesses were split evenly amongst the other corridors with two businesses located in both the Lake Street and Harlem Avenue corridors and one business in the Madison Street corridor. The businesses surveyed were comprised of a diverse group of with a myriad of business types including a dental office, primary and secondary education institutions, a real estate office, a commercial management office, a restaurant, a retailer, and business services.

Madison Street:

Nearly 63% of respondents identified overall appearance as one of the most important issue facing the Madison Street corridor. Traffic and the need for new development were the next most cited significant issues facing the corridor, being chosen by 50% of participants. When asked to identify desired uses within the Madison Street corridor, 63% of participants selected mixed-use, commercial-residential while 50% selected condominiums, retail, and restaurants. Townhomes and services both received three votes (38%) as desirable uses. While most did not answer the question regarding unwanted uses, the answers of the three who did respond were evenly split with the least desired use being entertainment with two votes.

Answers to an open ended question asking participants to identify the single largest issue facing the Madison Street corridor were varied. Some of the issues listed included difficulty attracting new business, traffic and parking, and a general lack of familiarity with the corridor by others. When asked what the Village could do to address issues in the corridor, participants stated that incentives such as tax breaks could be offered to new businesses locating within the corridor. One participant also spoke to the need for the Village to work with existing businesses to improve conditions and meet their needs. Other ideas offered to improve the Madison Street corridor included allowing for mixed-use development and funding streetscape and façade programs to make the River Forest portion of the corridor more comparable to Forest Park portion of the corridor.

Harlem Avenue:

Responses to questions relating to the Harlem Avenue corridor were limited to four businesses. Parking and traffic were identified as the most important issues facing the Harlem Avenue corridor, receiving votes from four (100%) and three (75%) participants respectively. These businesses also expressed a desire for additional service providers and retailers along the corridor (75%). Mixed-use was not identified as a desirable use by any participants. With regard to unwanted uses, entertainment was unanimously selected and any form of housing was also generally considered undesirable.

The overall appearance of the corridor, traffic congestion and parking were identified as the number one issues facing the corridor by participants. Business representatives stated that the Village could create a biking and walking path to improve connections to trains to the south and increase pedestrian traffic along the corridor.

North Avenue:

Responses to questions relating to the North Avenue corridor were limited to four businesses. Participants identified the need for new development and overall appearance as the most important issues facing the North Avenue corridor with each receiving three votes (75%). Other issues receiving votes included traffic, parking, and undesirable uses. Apartments were identified as the least desirable land use within the Corridor. The North Avenue corridor currently has a significant presence of apartments. No other use received more than one vote as an unwanted use.

A wide variety of uses were identified as desirable uses for the North Avenue corridor. All four participants selected retail and three chose restaurants (75%) as desirable uses. Condominiums, entertainment, and mixed-use commercial-residential each received two votes (50%) as desirable uses. It should be noted that North Avenue is the only corridor in the Corridor Study in which entertainment was identified as a preferred or desirable use.

Participants nearly unanimously identified traffic (or congestion) and parking as the most significant issues facing the North Avenue business climate. Business representatives spoke to a frustration with limited amounts of parking for businesses and difficulties patrons have entering and exiting access drives. The appearance of the corridor was also viewed as a challenge. Participants stated that the number one action the Village could take to improve the corridor's business climate would be to invest in façade improvements and streetscaping that functions to encourage pedestrian traffic while working to improve traffic controls.

Lake Street:

Responses to questions relating to the Lake Street corridor were limited to three or four businesses. The need for new development was identified as the corridor's primary issue, receiving two votes, while others receiving one vote included overall appearance, parking and traffic. It should be noted that parking and traffic appear as a top rated issues for all corridors. Uses that were classified as desirable included mixed-use retail-office and mixed-use commercial-retail, receiving three and two votes respectively. Condominiums, retail, and restaurants were also identified as desirable uses by half of the participants. Entertainment was the only use receiving at least two votes (67%) as an unwanted use within the Lake Street corridor.

When asked about the most critical issue facing the corridor, business representatives noted a need for additional development west of the Jewel located at Jackson Avenue. Traffic related to the corridor's schools was also cited as interfering with business operations along the corridor. Participants stated that traffic control and improvements to the appearance of the corridor, namely in regard to vacant storefronts, should be the Village's primary focus of action within the corridor.

Market Overview

A market study identified how residential and commercial activities taking place within the Village are being shaped by the presence of the same activities in surrounding communities

View looking north from the southwest corner of Lake Street and Harlem Avenue.

View looking west down Lake Street in the Village Center Area.

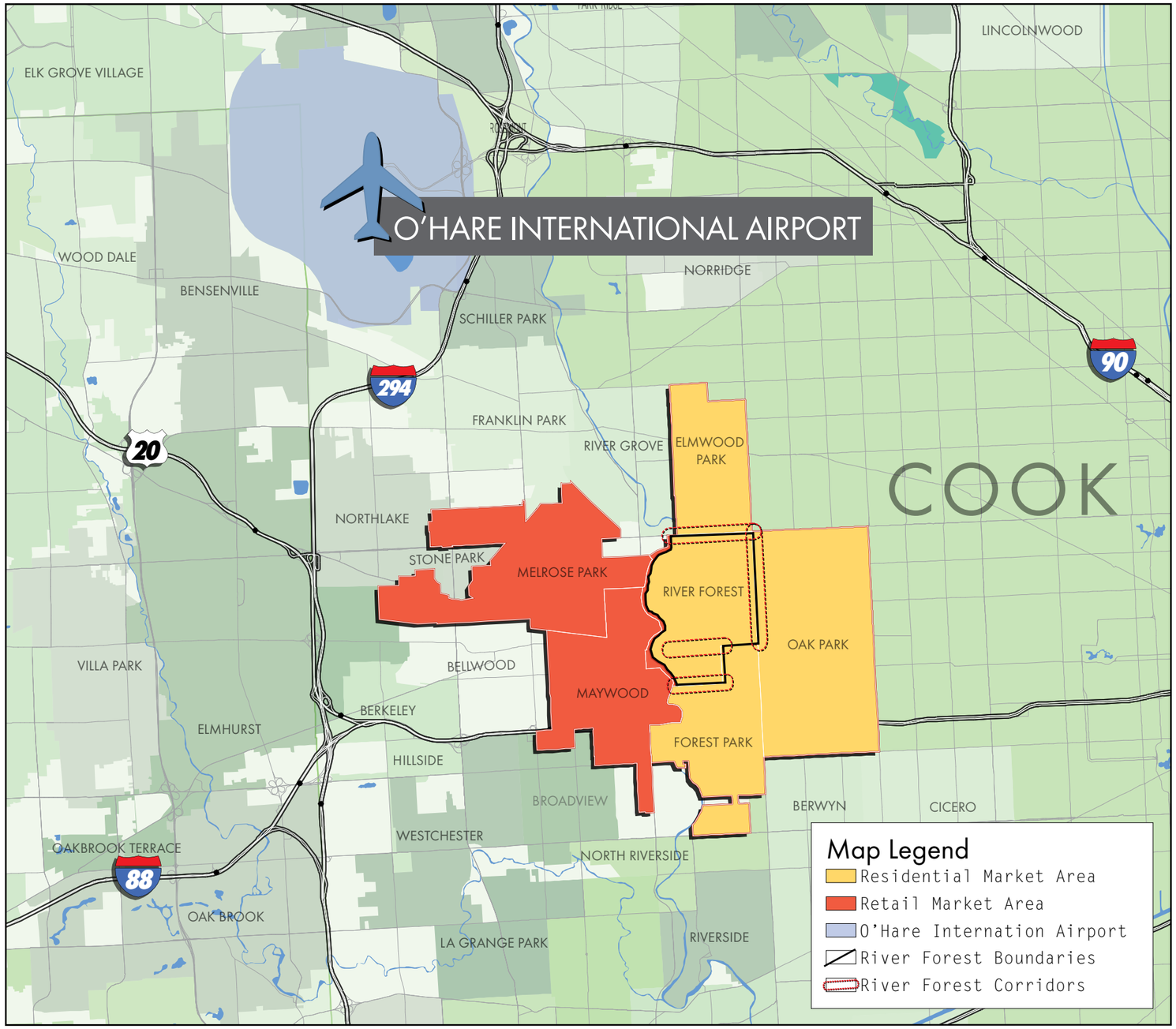
River Forest is an affluent community of 11,400 located approximately nine miles west of Downtown Chicago. The relatively compact Village is just 2.5 sq. mi. and is bordered by the communities of Elmwood Park on the north, Oak Park on the east, Forest Park on the south and Melrose Park and Maywood to the west. The North Avenue, Harlem Avenue, and Madison Street corridors and Des Plaines River help form the borders with these communities. Lake Street passes though the heart of River Forest's "Downtown" and lays at the Village's historic center adjacent to Metra's Union Pacific West line. A market study was conducted to assess the Village of River Forest and each of the four corridors within the context of the competitive landscape. This study analyzed the extent the locations and intensity of neighboring residential and commercial activities influence what takes place within River Forest and vice versa.

NOTE: The market assessment was initiated at the beginning of the planning process and has since been used to inform Corridors Study recommendations. While the data discussed here represents a snapshot of market conditions in the fall of 2008, the market has not changed significantly since that time. Data has been verified to ensure that observed demographic and market trends and projections or plan recommendations were not significantly impacted.

Defining the Market Area

Data from ESRI, a nationally recognized provider of demographic and economic data, was used to estimate current demographic trends (2008) and projections (2013) for River Forest and the surrounding communities of Elmwood Park, Oak Park, and Forest Park. These communities comprise the market area for residential development in the four corridors. Supply and demand of retail and office space from Melrose Park and Maywood was considered in addition to the aforementioned municipalities in identifying potential commercial opportunities within the four corridors. Collectively, these areas represent the region within which River Forest will compete with other retail destinations for consumers.

River Forest Market Area



Demographic Data

Population and Households

The demographic study area is defined as those areas located within River Forest and the surrounding communities of Elmwood Park, Forest Park, and Oak Park. Chart 1 on page 13 depicts population growth within the study area between 2008 and 2013. The study area population is an aging population that is anticipated to decline by over 800 (0.8%) over the next five years. Positive growth is projected for those aged 15 to 34 and those aged 55 to 74. The most significant decline in population is projected to occur for those aged 35 to 44.

The total number of households within the study area at this time is estimated at 43,896. The study area has witnessed a decline of 1,100 households since the time of the last U.S. Census in 2000. Over the next five years total households within the study area are projected to decrease by another 362 households, or 0.8%, to 43,534. The proportion of owner-occupied households is also projected to decrease from 62% in 2008 to 60.5% in 2013.

Households and Income

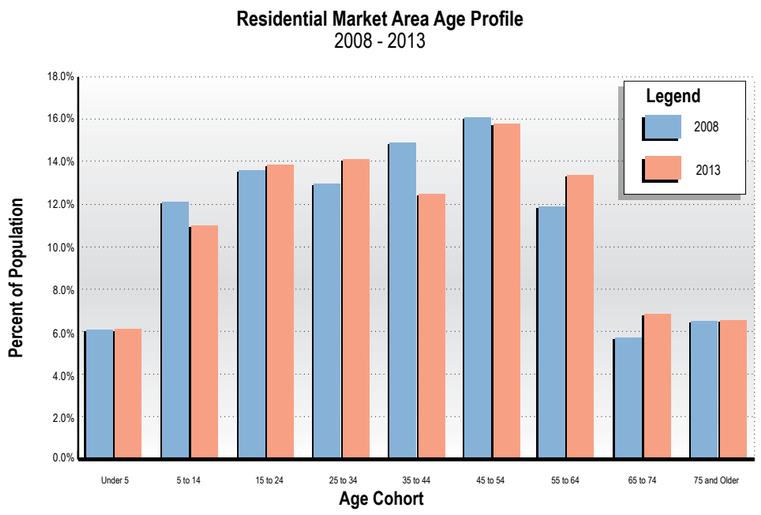
Chart 2 on page 13 depicts household growth within different income brackets based on the age of the householders. While overall growth is negative, this decline is mainly occurring in households earning less than $50,000 annually. Households in this category accounted for over 79% of projected negative household growth within the study area. The income category anticipated to experience the most growth is comprised of those households earning between $100,000 and $150,000 a year. This group is projected to increase by over 1,900 households (36.9%) over the next five years.

The number of households aged 35 to 54 is expected to decrease within the study area. While the other three age cohorts depicted in Chart 3 (page 13) are projected to post moderate gains of between 4.0% and 10.0%, those households aged between 35 and 54 are projected to decrease by 11.0%. The cohort witnessing the largest increase is for those households aged between 55 and 64, which is predicted to increase by 759 (10.0%) between 2008 and 2013.

Despite a small decrease in the number of households, the aggregate income within the study area is projected to increase by over $500 million between 2008 and 2013. This is due to an anticipated increase in the average and median household incomes across all age cohorts. Gains in average household income are predicted to range from 7.4% for those householders under 25 to a 19.1% increase for those householders aged 65 to 74. Median incomes are projected to increase by between 9.1% and 34.4% with the largest increases taking place in the youngest cohorts (under 34) and oldest cohorts (over 65).

The Village of River Forest exhibits a pattern of growth similar to the larger study area. The Village is projected to decrease by 50 households, or -1.2%, between 2008 and 2013. While the Village as a whole is projected to experience a loss of households, the only age cohort projected to decline is those householders aged 35 to 54 (-16.4%). Younger households and households aged 55 to 64 are anticipated to increase by over 14%. The number of households over 65 is projected to remain near its 2008 estimate, increasing by just 0.8%. Similar to the larger study area, the majority of household loss is expected to occur in households earning less than $50,000 per year. Some negative growth is also projected to occur in households earning between $150,000 and $250,000, however growth in the highest income brackets compensates for these losses.

Chart 1: Population Profile for River Forest and Surrounding Communities



Residential Market

Attached Single Family Homes

Chart 4 on this page depicts the annual average sales price and total number of attached single family homes sold in the market area between September 1, 2005 and September 1, 2008. The average sales price and units sold are also broken down by the number of bedrooms. The sales price average for all attached single family homes reached a high of $254,231 in 2006 and 2007 before falling to $221,115 over the course of the past year. The volume of sales has also dropped steadily over the last three years. Between August 2007 to August 2008, 487 attached single family homes were sold within the market area, representing a 58% decline in sales volume from same period ending two years earlier (2006).

There has also been a corresponding increase in the average market time, going from a low of approximately three months (89 days) in 2006, to a high of nearly five months (145 days) in 2008. The types of size of condominiums and townhomes being offered did not appear to vary much over the three year time span. Homes with one- and two-bedrooms remained the dominant unit type and comprised nearly 80% of all units sold between 2007 and 2008. Three bedroom units posted the next largest sales volume over this time period, comprising 19.5% of units sold.

Table 1 on page 14 details MLS activity for both active and closed listings in the market area as of September 2008 based on unit type. The great majority (80.1%) of condominium units sold between September 2007 and September 2008 have sold for between $100,000 and $300,000. Units sold for between $150,000 and $200,000 comprised over 30% of all sales. Over half of all currently active condominium listings have asking prices within a similar range of between $100,000 and $200,000. The median sales price for the 342 closed condominium listings since last September was $188,388 while the 418 currently marketing units have a slightly higher median asking price of $195,250.

With 76 closed listings, considerably fewer townhomes than condominium units were sold in the market area over the past year. The median sales price for these units was $295,000. The majority of townhomes sold (58%) had sales prices of between $250,000 and $400,000. Unlike the asking price profile of for-sale condominium units that closely mirrored that of recently sold units, the majority of for-sale townhomes are priced well below those townhomes that have sold over the past year. There were 82 currently active listings as of September 2008 with a median asking price of $250,000, a figure that is 15% lower than that of recently sold townhomes. Moreover, the number of units within each respective price category is much more evenly distributed with townhomes being listed across a wide range of price points.

A look at asking prices within comparable townhome developments and actual sales within those developments indicates a decline in asking prices of similar units over the past year. For example, units currently being marketed at the Residences at the Grove development in Forest Park are listed at prices less than those units which sold recently at the development (See Table 2 on page 14) . This phenomenon can be linked to national and regional trends and a slide in sales price across the study area. As indicated previously, the average sales price for attached single family homes dropped 13% between September 2007 and September 2008.

Chart 2: Estimated Households by Income

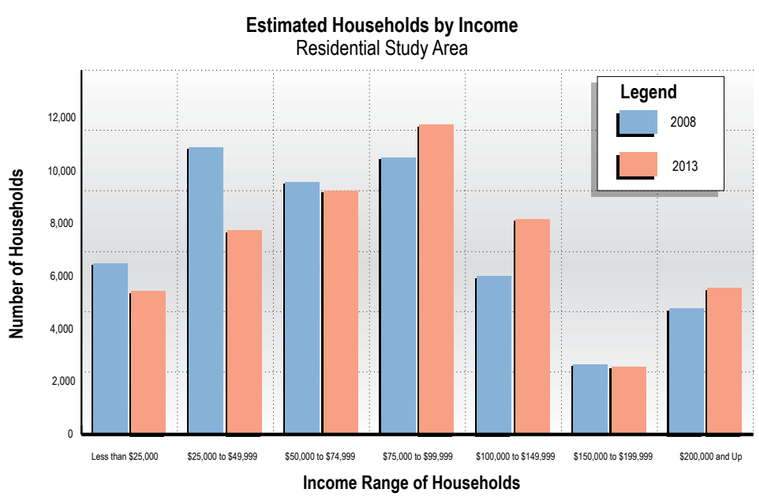


Chart 3: Change in Market Area Households by Age and Income

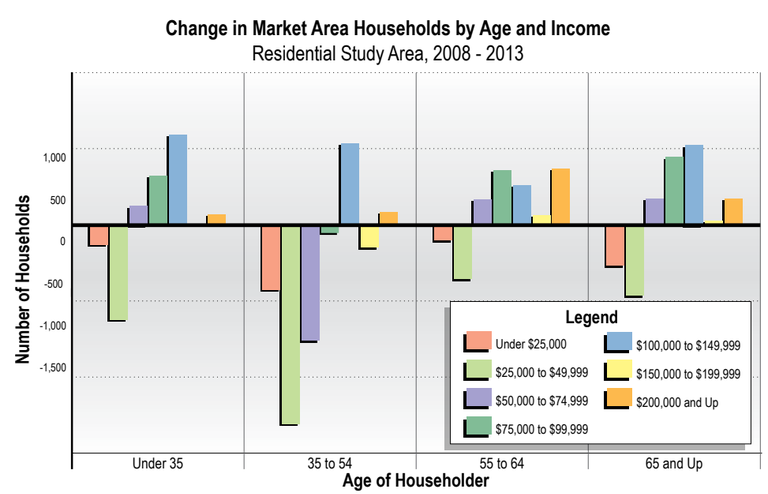


Chart 4: Annual Average Sales Price for Attached Homes: 2005 - 2008

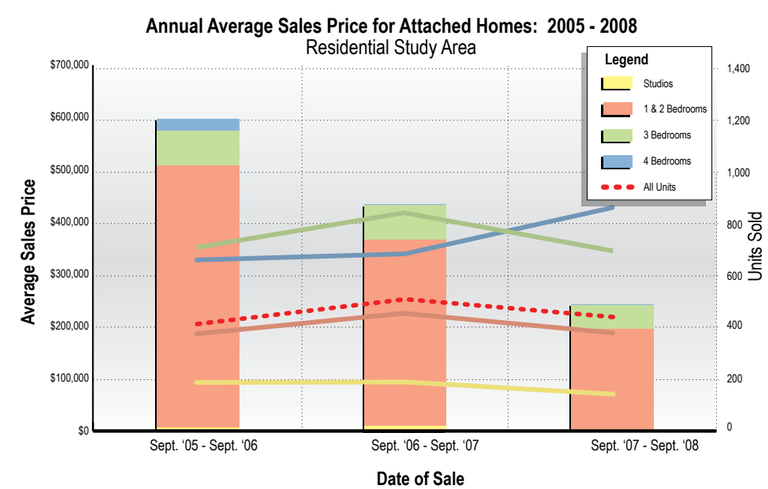


Table 1. Attached Single Family Units by Type, September 2008

Condominiums - Closed

Sales Price	Number	Percent
Below $100,000	20	5.8%
$100,000 - $149,999	68	19.9%
$150,000 - $199,999	105	30.7%
$200,000 - $249,999	66	19.3%
$250,000 - $299,999	37	10.8%
$300,000 - $349,999	4	1.2%
$350,000 - $399,999	14	4.1%
$400,000 and Over	28	8.2%
Total	**342**	**100.0%**
Median	$188,388	
Average	$214,838	
Average per BR	$123,473	

Condominiums - Active

Asking Price	Number	Percent
Below $100,000	13	3.1%
$100,000 - $149,999	106	25.4%
$150,000 - $199,999	109	26.1%
$200,000 - $249,999	73	17.5%
$250,000 - $299,999	39	9.3%
$300,000 - $349,999	25	6.0%
$350,000 - $399,999	14	3.3%
$400,000 - $499,999	18	4.3%
$500,000 and Over	21	5.0%
Total	**418**	**100.0%**
Median	$195,250	
Average	$229,015	
Average per BR	138998.109	

Townhomes - Closed

Sales Price	Number	Percent
Below $150,000	16	21.1%
$150,000 - $199,999	2	2.6%
$200,000 - $249,999	3	3.9%
$250,000 - $299,999	19	25.0%
$300,000 - $349,999	17	22.4%
$350,000 - $399,999	8	10.5%
$400,000 and Over	11	14.5%
Total	**76**	**100.0%**
Median	$295,000	
Average	$293,640	
Average per BR	$134,303	

Townhomes - Active

Asking Price	Number	Percent
Below $150,000	7	8.5%
$150,000 - $199,999	20	24.4%
$200,000 - $249,999	11	13.4%
$250,000 - $299,999	13	15.9%
$300,000 - $349,999	10	12.2%
$350,000 - $399,999	12	14.6%
$400,000 and Over	9	11.0%
Total	**82**	**100.0%**
Median	$250,000	
Average	$278,614	
Average per BR	$133,055	

Source: Multiple Listing Service of Northern Illinois and Houseal Lavigne Associates

Table 2. Residences at the Grove - Townhomes

Recently Sold Units

Unit #	Sale Date	Sale Price
513 Grove Lane, #B	May 2008	$455,000
519 Grove Lane, #B	July 2008	$370,000
520 Grove lane, #C	July 2008	$410,000
523 Grove Lane, #B	April 2008	$436,500
Average		**$417,875**

Units Currently in Marketing

Unit #	BR	BA	Size (sf)	Asking Price	Price psf
507 Grove Lane, #A	2	2.5	1,888	$360,102	$191
511 Grove Lane, #A	2	2.5	1,708	$360,543	$211
503 Grove lane, #B	2	2.5	2,357	$399,049	$169
501 Grove Lane, #C	3	2.5	2,420	$431,083	$178
Typical	**2**	**2.5**	**2,093**	**$387,694**	**$187**

Source: Chicago Tribune and Focus Development

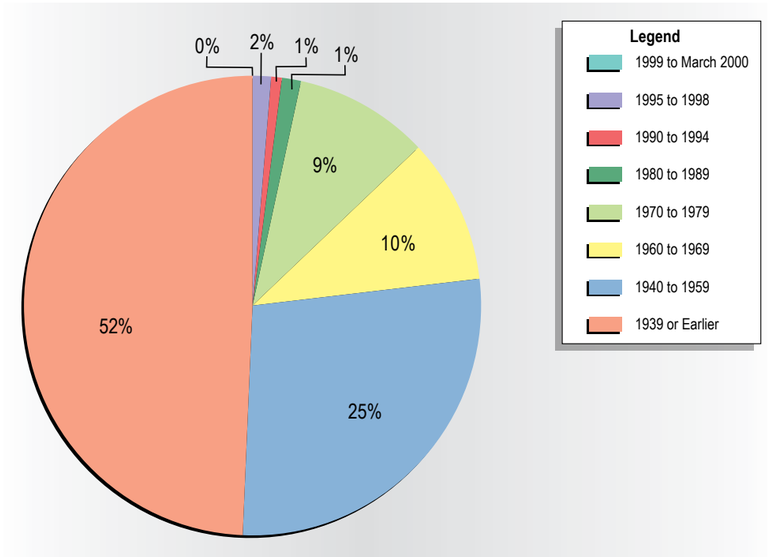
Housing Stock and Building Permits

Generally speaking, River Forest and surrounding communities were established in the early portion of the 20th century and are essentially 'built out' with few opportunities for new development without the intensification or replacement of existing uses. As of the 2000 Census, over 96% of River Forest's housing stock was built prior to 1980 while nearly half of all housing units were in structures built prior to 1940.

As indicated by building permit activity (See Chart 6 on page 15), new construction within the study area has been limited, with 132 housing units constructed between 2000 and 2007. It is also estimated that the total number of housing units in River Forest increased by just 36 over the same period. Taken together, these two figures indicate that over 70% of recent housing activity taking place within River Forest has been in in-fill, replacement housing.

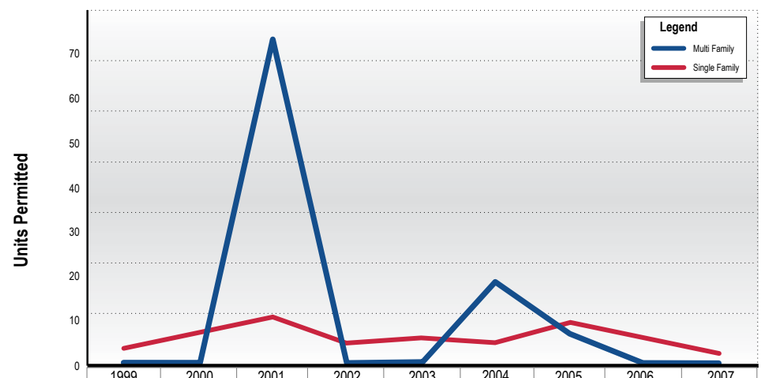
Between 2004 and 2007, the four communities within the residential market area combined to permit an average of 67 single family homes and 125 multi-family units per year. Most recently, in 2007, a total of 134 housing units were constructed with 78 (58%) of those units in townhome and condominium projects. Over this time period, between 50% and 54% of units permitted in Elmwood Park, Oak Park, and River Forest were multi-family projects. Comprising nearly 83% of its permitted units during this time period, new construction in Forest Park has been more heavily oriented toward multi-family development.

Chart 5: Age of River Forest Housing Stock



Source: US Census and Houseal Lavigne Associates

Chart 6: Units Permitted in River Forest: 1999 – 2007



	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
Single Family	3	6	9	4	5	4	8	5	2
Multi Family	0	0	64	0	0	16	6	0	0

Comparable Residential Developments

Lake Street, Madison Street, Harlem Avenue, and North Avenue are established corridors with few detached single-family homes. As such, townhomes and condominiums are the likeliest type of residential uses to be integrated into any development along these routes. These product types have different unit size averages and price points and will be evaluated separately. There are several for-sale residential projects currently marketing in the study area offering a range of product that may be appropriate along the corridors. These projects form the competitive landscape for any residential development to occur within the corridors and serve as the basis for an understanding any proposed product types or pricing. The Residential Market Area Figure on page 16 depicts the locations of each of these.

Condominiums

The majority of the condominium units currently marketing in River Forest and the surrounding area are in mid-rise mixed use buildings with residential units located above ground floor office or retail space. Some of the units currently marketing are located in mid-rise elevator buildings. As indicated by the Multiple Listing Service (MLS) data, the majority of condominium units in the residential market area are one and two-bedroom units comprising 41% and 48% of all units respectively. The distribution of units currently marketing is slightly different with two-bedroom units comprising the lion's share and the next largest group being comprised of three-bedroom units. Two-bedroom units within the developments detailed in Table 3 on this page have a typical unit size of between 1,200 and 1,800 square feet with a median size of 1,400 square feet. Three-bedroom units range in size from 2,300 and 2,900 square feet with a median size of 2,400 square feet. The asking price per-square-foot for condominiums ranged from approximately $190 to $320 with the typical asking prices for two- and three-bedroom units being near $345,000 and $450,000 respectively.

Information regarding townhome developments currently being market in and around River Forest is summarized in Table 4 on this page. All townhome units currently marketing are two- or three-bedroom units with the majority of units being the latter. This coincides with the townhomes sold over the past year of which 55% were three-bedroom units. The townhomes currently being marketed range in size from just over 2,000 square feet, two-bedroom model with 2.5 baths to a 3,100 square foot three-bedroom model with 4.5 baths. Average asking prices range from just under $400,000 to as high $550,000 for these models respectively. Townhome units are typically being offered at between $170 and $250 per square foot. In taking an average of all units offered, the typical townhome is a 2,500 square foot, three-bedroom unit with thee baths and has an asking price of $525,000 or $210 per square foot.

Product Type Size & Pricing

The following tables (Tables 3, 4 and 5 on this page) represent potential unit sizes and price points for product types for which there is market support. Information is based both the MLS data and information on comparable residential developments discussed above. These figures will serve as a guide in the next section where the number of potential home buyers within the market area is assessed.

Table 3. Condominiums for Sale in River Forest and Surrounding Communities, August 2008

Community	BR	BA	Size (sf)	Asking Price	Price psf
Average 1 BR, 1 BA	1	1.0	842	$232,583	$270
Average 1 BR, 2 BA	1	1.5	1,194	$299,900	$251
Average 2 BR, 1 BA	2	1.0	1,140	$275,400	$242
Average 2 BR, 2 BA	2	2.0	1,282	$341,481	$257
Average 2 BR, 2.5 BA	2	2.5	1,944	$492,252	$254
Average 3 BR, 2 BA	3	2.0	1,525	$354,750	$233
Average 3 BR, 3 BA	3	2.5	3,000	$899,900	$300
Average 3 BR, 2.5 BA	3	2.5	2,624	$532,933	$201
Average 3 BR, 3.5 BA	3	3.5	2,415	$608,667	$187
Average 4 BR, 4 BA	4	4.0	2,950	$950,000	$322
Average 5 BR, 2 BA	5	2.0	-	$519,000	-

Source: Various real estate search engines and developer websites, Houseal Lavigne Associates

Table 4. Townhomes for Sale in River Forest and Surrounding Communities, August 2008

Community	BR	BA	Size (sf)	Asking Price	Price psf
Average 2 BR, 2.5 BA	2	2.5	2,088	$395,853	$201
Average 2 BR, 3.5 BA	2	3.5	2,022	$465,900	$231
Average 3 BR, 2.5 BA	3	2.5	2,290	$577,524	$253
Average 3 BR, 3.5 BA	3	3.5	2,844	$479,145	$170
Average 3 BR, 4.5 BA	3	4.5	3,100	$549,900	$177

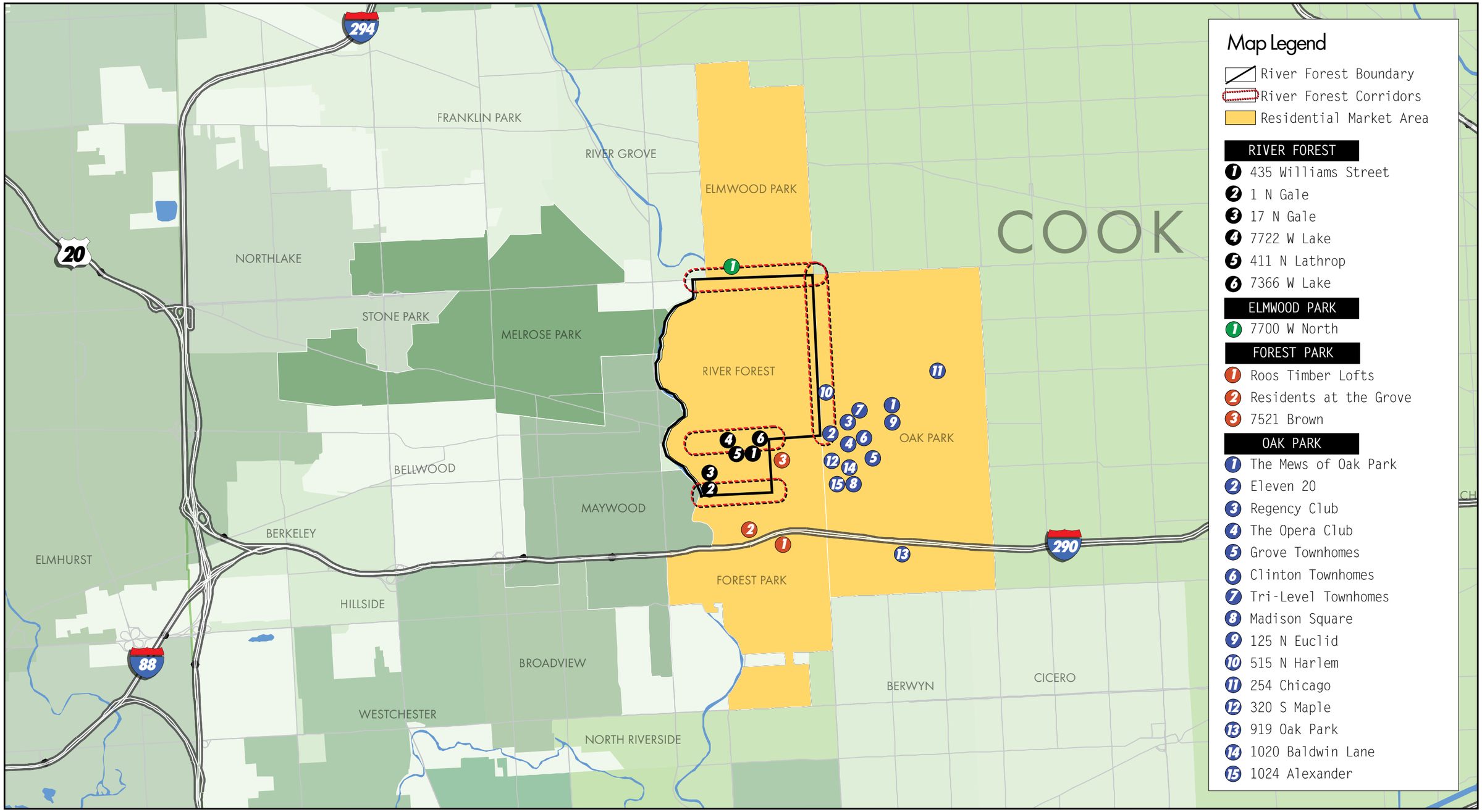
Source: Various real estate search engines and developer websites, Houseal Lavigne Associates

Table 5. Typical Unit Size and Pricing by Product Type

	BR	BA	Size (sf)	Price	Price PSF
Townhomes	2	2.5	2,000	$430,000	$215
	3	3	2,500	$550,000	$220
Condominiums	1	2	900	$234,000	$260
	2	2	1,400	$357,000	$255
	3	2.5	2,400	$576,000	$240

Source: US Census and Houseal Lavigne Associates

Residential Market Area



Target Market Age & Income Breakdown

The next step in analysis of the residential market is assessing the number of households that would be "eligible" to purchase those units based on household income and age of householder. Put simply, the demand for housing will be determined by the sales price of residential units and the types of product offered. Traditionally, young professionals (under 35) and empty nester (age 55 and over) households are the predominant buyer of multi-family units while families (age 35 to 54) are the predominant buyer of single family homes. By examining how many householders fall into various age and income cohorts, the demand for units of a given type of housing can be estimated.

Income Requirements

The minimum household income necessary to afford a market supportable condominium or townhome unit is estimated to be approximately $100,000. This considers the ability to put at least 10% down on a purchase and acceptable benchmarks of percentage of income allocated toward housing (30%). A maximum income threshold of $250,000 was also used, so as not to overstate the market. Those individuals earning greater than $250,000 may still be attracted to and locate to one of the units, but will likely seek the opportunity to purchase a single family home or more expensive unit elsewhere.

This "pool" of households is further refined to exclude those buyers that do not meet the probable age cohort of someone seeking a unit in the defined market area or the product type proposed. Multi-family units in locations such as this are typically purchased by a combination of first-time home buyers looking for a more affordable means of building equity, empty nester households looking to downsize and those individuals who want to own their own home without the maintenance responsibilities. These buyers are typically aged between 25 to 34 and 55 and older respectively.

Mobility Index

After establishing a base line of those households able to afford and likely to purchase a unit, a "mobility index" is then used to ascertain the percentage of households moving each year within given age and income cohorts. This index is derived from historic patterns recorded by the US Census and further refined. It identifies the propensity for a household in a given age bracket to move from their current residence. For the purposes of this analysis, it was determined that 23% of households aged 25 to 34 would be likely to move while 9% of middle-aged (35 to 54) households would be likely to move. Lastly, it was determined that only 4% of those households aged 55 and over would be likely to move in any given year.

Home Purchase Eligibility

The next step of the analysis is to determine how many households, of those deemed eligible, are homeowners. In other words, of those meeting minimum income requirements, which households are in the financial position to obtain a mortgage and finance a home? According to market data, approximately 55% of the 25 to 34 year old age cohort, 77% of 35 to 54 year old cohort, and 82% of the 55+ cohort have the propensity to purchase a home. This further refines the market and potential buyers of product in the market area. Tables A5 in the appendix reflects the above analysis.

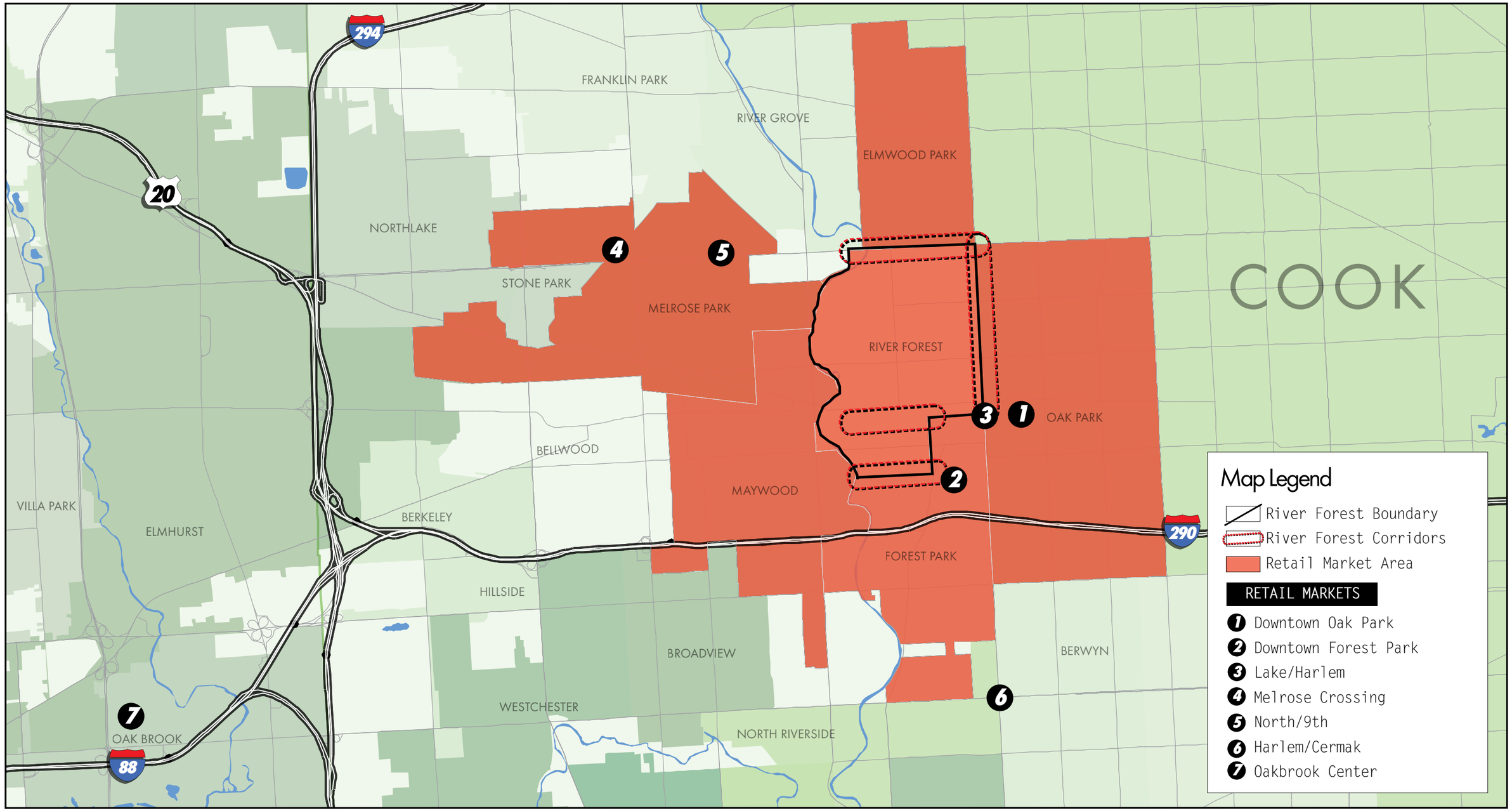
Preliminary Feasibility

After refining the overall pool of households through the aforementioned procedure, the estimated pool of qualified purchasers of multi-family units within the residential study area is 268 households. Given the relative close proximity of the Corridors to one another, River Forest itself can be treated as a Subject Site. It is assumed that not all these households would choose to locate within River Forest. River Forest, as a community, will likely be able to capture a percent of these households that is proportionate to its contribution of population to the total residential market area.

Using this proportion, which is 11%, it is likely that River Forest would be able to capture 29 households annually. This figure represents the potential number of buyers that could likely be attracted to River Forest as a whole and is not indicative of how many residential units could likely be supported in any particular location or corridor within River Forest. For example, as residential development occurs within River Forest, the projected demand of 29 additional units could be accommodated in the form of one or two large condominium buildings along one corridor or as a larger number of townhome and duplex condominium buildings scattered throughout all four corridors.

Chauncey Williams House in River Forest, built by Frank Lloyd Wright in 1895.

Retail Market Area



Retail Market

The potential for retail demand is based on several factors, perhaps the most significant being travel time. Consumer decisions are motivated by the amount of time that it takes to get from point to point. A site located two miles from a heavily populated subdivision may take longer to get to than a site five miles away due to traffic, road infrastructure, highway access, at-grade train crossings and other influences. The juxtaposition of retail agglomerations is equally impacted by these influences. A particular retailer may have two stores located relatively close together in terms of mileage, but when measured in travel time, they are catering to entirely different market areas.

Exactly how far a consumer will travel and where retailers are located, is primarily dictated by store type and characteristics of a retail node. The International Council of Shopping Centers (ICSC) and The Urban Land Institute (ULI) categorize shopping centers utilizing several criteria. The following is an overview of shopping center classifications.

- Large Regional and Super Regional Malls containing department stores (Macy's, Nordstrom), fashion and apparel (Talbots, Ann Taylor) and home furnishings (Restoration Hardware, Crate and Barrel) attract customers from a trade area that can extend up to 25 miles or travel times from 20 to 30 minutes. Oakbrook Center approximately seven miles to the southwest of the River Forest is a local example of this type of retail center.
- Lifestyle Centers such as Burr Ridge Village Center include some of the same users as Regional Malls, including large format bookstores (Borders, Barnes & Noble), but do not have anchors. The typical trade area is approximately 8 to 12 miles and 15 to 30 minute travel times.
- Community Centers are typically comprised of a mix smaller retailers in addition to several big box discount stores (Target, Meijer), home improvement stores (Home Depot, Menards), Sporting Goods (Sports Authority, Dick's), attract from a three to six mile trade area and/or 10 to 15 minute drive-times.
- Neighborhood Centers typically attract from within three miles or a drive of less than 10 minutes and are usually anchored by a grocery store (Dominick's, Jewel). The River Forest Town Center on the southwest corner of Lake Street and Harlem Avenue would be classified as a neighborhood center.

Defining the retail market for the study area requires understanding the context in which development would reasonably occur. In an effort to assess the retail market potential for the four corridors, data was gathered from the combined area of the communities of River Forest, Oak Park, Forest Park, Elmwood Park, Maywood, and Melrose Park. The boundary of this market area is generally within a five to ten minute drive time from the intersection of Lake Street and Park Avenue in the heart of River Forest.

Retail Concentrations Surrounding River Forest

As indicated on the Retail Market Area Figure on page 18, the Harlem Avenue, Lake Street, Madison Street and North Avenue Corridors are located between several different commercial nodes of activity. The retail environment in River Forest and surrounding communities is primarily characterized by traditional in-line storefronts intermingled with mid-twentieth century strip retail centers. New development in the retail market area is limited in scale and is mainly comprised of in-fill redevelopments and renovations to the more dated shopping centers. The following summaries offer a description of these commercial nodes.

- The intersection of North Avenue and 9th Avenue in Melrose Park is surrounded by a mix of significant uses that make the intersection a destination for local and regional shoppers. The intersection is at the epicenter of over 700,000 square feet of retail space in four centers with anchors such as Best Buy, Target Greatland, Menard's, Jewel-Osco, and Office Max. Several stand-alone stores also add to this retail concentration with retailers such as Walgreen's and Value City Furniture lining North Avenue. This intersection is also the location of several large employers and including Gottlieb Memorial Hospital, several office buildings, and a branch of Lincoln College of Technology. Lastly, local attractions are also located near the intersection of North and Ninth Avenues include Kiddie Land (a small amusement park) and Maywood Racetrack. These uses all contribute to an average traffic count of between 46,000 and 51,000 vehicles per day along this portion of North Avenue.
- Melrose Crossing is a 328,000 square foot shopping center located on the east side of Mannheim Road between North and Armitage Avenues. The center is anchored by Burlington Coat Factory, A.J. Wright, and Tony's Finer Foods. Melrose Crossing is located adjacent a Navistar plant that employs 1,500 workers in Melrose Park and is two miles west of the North Avenue and 9th Avenue retail concentration.
- Downtown Oak Park lies just to the east of River Forest along Lake Street between Harlem and Forest Avenues. While the retail space in the Downtown area is predominantly occupied by independent retailers, national tenants include Borders, GAP, Caribou Coffee, Old Navy, Pier 1 Imports, Lane Bryant, Starbucks, and Cosí. This area has seen increased investment in recent years and has become a destination among shoppers in the western Chicago-area. The newest addition to Downtown Oak Park is the redevelopment of 1.8 acres of land to the southeast of the intersection of Harlem and Lake. The preliminary proposal, accepted in July 2008 by the Village Board, includes 67,000 square feet of retail, 200 rental units, and a 500-car parking garage. The project, being developed by Avalon Bay Communities, is adjacent the CTA's Harlem Green Line stop and is anticipating a LEED Silver rating upon completion.
- The Lake Street and Harlem Avenue intersection represents the focus of new retail development activities for the entire market area. The intersection serves as the western anchor for the Downtown Oak Park and is the location of River Forest's most significant retail center, River Forest Town Center. This center is comprised of nearly 150,000 square feet of retail space built in two phases, the most recent of which opened in 2002. Anchor tenants at the Town Center include Whole Foods, Petco, and Talbot's. The former Linens N' Things, which is now vacant, used to anchor the second phase of the center. Also of note is that the 60,000-square-foot Jewel-Osco approximately one-quarter mile west of the Town Center is reportedly one of the grocery chain's highest grossing stores.
- Downtown Forest Park is located to the south and east of River Forest along Madison Street between Harlem and Des Plaines Avenues. This retail corridor is characterized by small, in-line storefronts and is predominantly comprised of independent retailers. Nearly fifty restaurants, retailers, and entertainment venues line this half mile stretch of Madison Street to form a consistent street wall that yields an inviting 'main street' character. In addition to a dozen eateries and bars, businesses offer a healthy mix of goods and services and include florists, shoe stores, several art galleries, a theater, a hardware store, salons, clothing boutiques, and books and records stores.
- The intersection of Cermak Road and Harlem Avenue is located approximately two miles south of River Forest and is the center of a large retail concentration with over 1.8 million square feet of space. The largest center at this intersection is North Riverside Mall, a regional shopping center anchored by Carson Pirie Scott, JC Penney, Sears, and Steve & Barry's. Several other shopping centers adjacent this intersection are home to bib-box tenants including Burlington Coat Factory, Circuit City, Jewel-Osco, Kohl's, Marshall's, Office Depot, Petco, Tony's Finer Foods, and Toys R' Us. The majority of the space within this retail concentration was built in the 1950's and 1960's and has seen little updating or renovation since. North Riverside Mall is the exception to this statement, as it was renovated in 2007.
- Oakbrook Center is a super regional, outdoor mall located approximately nine miles west of River Forest along I-290 and I-88. The 2.1 million-square-foot center is known for its upscale retail tenants and is anchored by Bloomingdale's Home Store, Lord & Taylor, Macy's, Neiman Marcus, Nordstrom, and Sears. The center was first built in 1976, but was renovated and expanded in 2001, to become the largest in the U.S. While not immediately proximate to the study area, research indicates that Oak Brook Center serves as the regional shopping draw to areas including River Forest.

Market Support for Retail Development

Measures of distance or driving time are typically used to delineate the retail market area for a given location. This methodology treats all retail centers equally with respect to the quality of retail tenants, services, and goods offered. However, the assumption of a level playing field with regard to a consumer's shopping experience is not always applicable. As described previously, the area surrounding River Forest exhibits a wide variety of retail centers and shopping districts that vary in age, amenities, type, and overall quality. Given this retail context, it is not safe to assume that a consumer travelling from a central location within River Forest would be as likely to visit North Riverside Mall as they would North Avenue in Melrose Park despite their relatively equal proximity. Taking this varied competitive landscape into consideration, the retail market area (shown in the Retail Market Area Figure on page 18) has been defined as the communities of Elmwood Park, Forest Park, Maywood, Melrose Park, Oak Park, and River Forest.

To assess the potential for retail development the analysis compares projected spending by market area households to the existing supply of retail space. This provides an indication of "surplus" or "leakage" for each retail category. A surplus in any given category indicates that there is at least enough retail space in that category to accommodate demand from households in within the designated market area. Conversely, leakage (also known as a "gap") indicates that demand for goods in a given retail category have exceeded the supply and consumers are spending their dollars outside of the market area. In this context, leakage serves as a means of gauging retail competition and identifying potential opportunities for growth within the market area.

A determination as to whether there is enough leakage to support additional retail space is made by dividing the "gap" amount by an average sales-per-square-foot. While leakage is represented as a monetary loss, this calculation translates this dollar amount into the potential square feet of supportable retail space. If the resulting square footage is within the range of the typical retail format of a given type of retailer, a preliminary conclusion can be made that the market can support additional development in that particular category. For example, if it is determined that there is a "gap" in consumer expenditures of $1 million in a store type that averages $200 per square foot in sales revenue, then it can be estimated that the market is underserved by approximately 50,000 square feet in that particular category. If the average store for that category is 50,000 square feet, then the market indications are that there is support for one more store. If the average store size is 20,000 square feet, the market could potentially support two to three more stores. However, if the "gap" indicates support for an additional 20,000 square feet and the average store size is 50,000 square feet, there is not enough demand to support an additional store.

Sales-per-square-foot revenues vary by individual retailers and location. However, an examination of benchmarks pertaining to typical sales and store sizes can be applied to yield a better understanding of supportable retail square footage. As indicated in the data contained in Table 6 on this page, there is market support for additional retail development in several key retail categories in the retail market area. Market potential is indicated for home furnishings, furniture, building materials, general merchandise including department stores, and food services including both full-service and limited-service restaurants.

Market potential was also indicated for auto-related businesses including automotive dealerships and gas stations. While significant demand for these products may exist, the availability of appropriate sites and the location of nearby competitors make it difficult to quantify demand for these uses within the River Forest corridors. Moreover, market potential as expressed in dollars and cents cannot be easily translated to supportable number of locations due to the nature of the products they sell. It should also be noted that demand for auto parts retailers indicated in Table 6 on this page may be somewhat overstated as many consumers visit general merchandise stores, repair shops, and dealerships to purchase these goods and services.

The retail gap analysis method also obfuscates any potential for small-scale, independent retailers within a study area. National retailers are used to determine the potential square feet of supportable space within a given category and may understate the demand for niche retail such as hobby or boutique apparel shops and personal service providers such as dry cleaners or florists. This type of retail potential varies on a case-by-case basis and typically will locate within a successful retail node.

For example ten to twenty percent of a suburban downtown retail environment might be occupied by niche or specialty retailers. These retailers do not follow a typical formula for development other than they seek locations proximate to activity. Creating the environment for those retailers to sustain is important in that they (1) offer additional retailing options to an area, (2) provide options that may not exist elsewhere in the market area and (3) in some cases collectively form a destination environment. These users also can occupy spaces that may not otherwise be suitable for traditional retailers without significant investment in the space by either the property owner or business owner. This helps to keep overhead low for property owners and in turn rents lower for the end user.

Market support is not synonymous with what actual retail space could be built within River Forest's corridors. Indications of market potential are for the defined market area and must be further refined in terms of applicability to the individual corridors. In addition to considering opportunity and site constraints, the potential shown in Table 6 on this page must be tempered to account for the retail context surrounding River Forest. For example, retail agglomerations and destinations such as Oak Brook Center and Downtown Chicago that are beyond the defined market area will continue to attract residents and expenditures. This is, however, somewhat offset by the fact that visitors from outside of the market area will also patronize local businesses.

A portion of the potential indicated in Table 6 on this page could be captured at sites within the River Forest Corridors. The amount of viable retail space that can be accommodated varies for each corridor and depends upon a myriad of factors, most notably the location and quality of opportunity sites and the type of development located in and around those sites. This section details the challenges and opportunities of attracting and retaining successful development within each of the corridors.

Table 6. Consumer Spending Profile Summary - Local Trade Area

Industry Group	Retail Gap	Typical Sales per Square Foot	Potential GLA (sf)	Typical Size (sf)	Potential Locations
Auto Parts, Accessories, and Tire Stores	**$4,581,401**	**$205**	**22,376**	**7,075**	**3**
Furniture & Home Furnishings Stores	**$33,693,455**	**$305**	**110,470**	**27,718**	**3**
Furniture Stores	$25,754,698	$355	72,548	35,000	2
Home Furnishings Stores	$7,938,757	$254	31,255	20,436	1
Bldg Materials, Garden Equip. & Supply Stores	**$39,148,120**	**$303**	**129,202**	**109,310**	**1**
General Merchandise Stores	**$137,742,444**	**$252**	**459,141**	**114,172**	**4**
Department Stores Excluding Leased Depts.	$60,928,568	$247	247,175	119,687	2
Other General Merchandise Stores	$76,813,876	$264	290,686	100,385	2
Food Services & Drinking Places	**$62,245,684**	**$443**	**140,551**	**5,808**	**23**
Full-Service Restaurants	$30,344,208	$461	65,860	7,391	8
Limited-Service Eating Places	$17,705,054	$425	41,659	4,225	9
Special Food Services	$11,120,893	$400	27,802	5,000	5
Drinking Places - Alcoholic Beverages	$3,075,529	$400	7,689	5,000	1

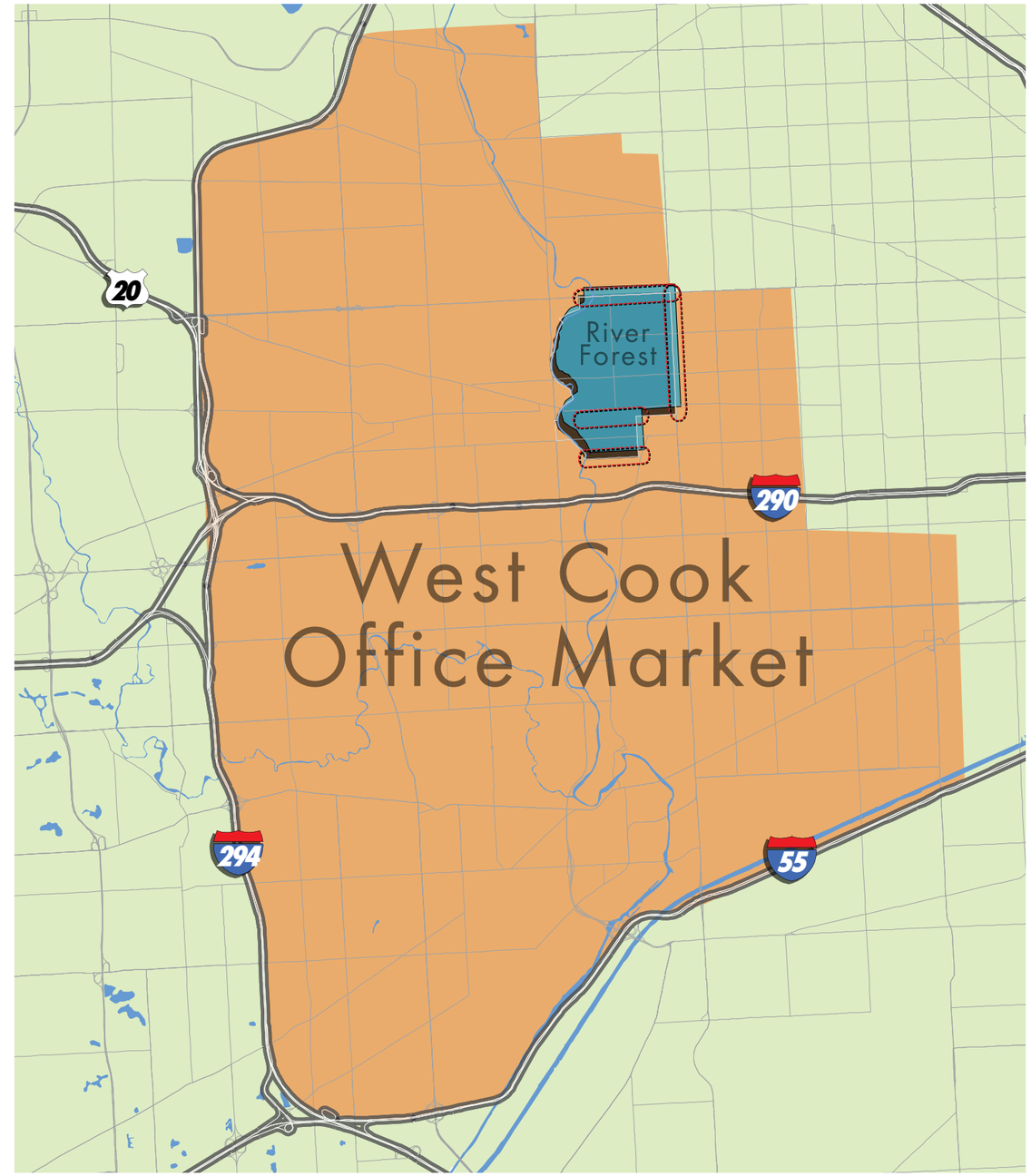
Office Market Area

Office Market

River Forest and its neighboring communities are generally considered to be part of the West Cook office market. The Office Market Area Figure on this page illustrates the West Cook office market and its boundaries. Large scale office development tends to cluster unless individual user or corporate needs dictate otherwise. This is driven by accessibility to bases of employment, services, transportation and amenities. The Chicago Central Business District, the O'Hare corridor and I-88 are examples. To that end, the West Cook market has not experienced much office development in recent years.

In the second quarter of 2008, the West Cook market had no new space under construction and had experienced a negative net absorption of 16,182 square feet. West Cook also had a direct vacancy rate of 20.4% which was second only to the South Suburbs which had a slightly higher vacancy rate of 23.6%. Similarly, West Cook also had the second lowest asking lease rate

At 1.1 million square feet, West Cook comprises 1.0% of all leasable area in the Chicago region and is the smallest office market. Nearly 92% of this space was located in classes other than Class A buildings. While this is a relative ranking of quality, in this area Class C space can best be characterized as space located in mid-20th century low and mid-rise buildings with limited amenities. The North Avenue corridor has the largest concentration of office space in River Forest with professional office uses in the form of several medical and financial service offices. Large scale office development is not likely to occur in River Forest. Any new development will more likely be in the form of mixed-use space with offices located above ground floor retail. Potential may exist for the rehabilitation and upgrading of older existing office space within the corridors as well.



Market Implications for Each Corridor

This discussion seeks to highlight the larger opportunities that have been identified in the previous sections within the local, corridor-specific context.

Madison Street

Commercial: The pedestrian friendly 'main street' qualities that characterize Forest Park's Madison Street give way to a more auto-oriented retail environment as Madison Street travels west and into River Forest. A number of retail strip centers and townhomes intersperse among smaller stretches of inline retailers. With the exception of a few vacancies on its eastern end, River Forest's Madison Street Corridor appears to be in relative good health. Similar to its Forest Park counterpart, businesses within the Corridor are chiefly comprised of small, independent retailers. Average daily traffic counts for Madison Street are 12,800 which would limit the likelihood of attracting national or regional tenants. There is a notable concentration of restaurants near Ashland Avenue on the southern side of Madison Street in Forest Park. Several vacant store fronts in River Forest, as well as an automotive repair shop, sit opposite these five restaurants. Given the health of the remainder of the corridor and the limited opportunities created by a one-sided corridor, this area represents a valuable asset the Village can take steps to improve. Building off of the success of the Forest Park portion of the corridor, restaurants/bars may be supportable and appropriate for this area of Madison Street. The number and scale would be dependent upon the availability of sites.

Residential: Existing residential uses and recent development provide some of the foundation for potential new residential units. Depending on the site and how it is integrated into the Madison Street environment, condos, townhomes or rowhome development could be supported in this corridor. An appropriate sized and scaled mixed-use development could include condominium units above retail as well.

Harlem Avenue

Commercial: The 1.35 mile corridor is bordered by a mix of single family and multi-family homes with retail scattered between the two major intersections with North Avenue and Lake Street. The majority of the retail is located on the east side of the street in Oak Park. Institutional users also comprise a significant component of Harlem Avenue frontage with a portion of the Dominican University campus taking up a quarter-mile stretch just south of North Avenue. Harlem Avenue is a four-lane, primary arterial with traffic counts of between 28,300 and 32,500 vehicles per day making it highly attractive to national retail tenants such as CVS, Old Navy, GAP, Borders, and Pompeii. The largest concentration of commercial space within the corridor is at Harlem Avenue where River Forest abuts the western edge of Downtown Oak Park.

The Chicago Avenue, Division Street, and Erie Street intersections also serve as foci for auto- and convenience-oriented retailers such as gas stations, mini-marts, banks, a fast food restaurant, and a local fitness club. Intensification of uses at these minor intersections may offer the best opportunity for additional retail development within the Corridor. Downtown Oak Park and the River Forest Town Center will continue to serve as the dominant retail centers in the local area and will likely continue to orient retail opportunities on the corridor to those sites that are contiguous with those nodes. In addition to both full-service and limited-service restaurants, the Corridor could likely support a mix of specialty retailers.

Residential: Multi-family residential development currently exists throughout the Harlem Avenue corridor. This corridor could absorb some of the demand for new condominium units, but townhome or rowhome style development would be better accommodated along the Madison or Lake Street corridors. Depending on the site capacity (site depth in particular), location and access, development could be integrated into either a mixed use or stand alone development.

North Avenue

Commercial: North Avenue runs the length of River Forest's northern border and adjoins the community of Elmwood Park. Between Harlem and Thatcher Avenues, the Corridor experiences an average of 35,000 vehicles a day making it the most heavily trafficked corridor in River Forest. Residential uses are most prominent on the western third of the Corridor where multi-family buildings front both the north and south sides of the street. As one travels east, these residential uses give way to a commercial corridor with a mix of mid-twentieth century retail centers. Compared to the other corridors, the North Avenue Corridor is relatively balanced with regard to the number of commercial buildings on either side of the street. However, the majority of the commercial space along the Corridor is office space. Larger scale retail uses would be both appropriate and supportable along the North Avenue corridor.

Residential: The development patterns and context of the North Avenue corridor does not lend itself well to new residential development. In that the other three corridors are better suited for residential (to varying degrees), the North Avenue corridor is best positioned for commercial development.

Lake Street

Commercial: As Lake Street travels between Lathrop and Thatcher Avenues, the Corridor accommodates a myriad of uses including several schools and churches, townhomes, single family homes, mid-rise condominium buildings, mixed-use commercial buildings, parks and ball fields. All retail uses are found on the south side of the street while institutional and single family residential uses dominate the north side of the street with a dearth of opportunities for future commercial development. Thus, despite being located in the heart of River Forest, Lake Street is similar to the other corridors in that its retail environment is one-sided in nature. Unlike the other corridors, however, the Lake Street Corridor is pedestrian friendly with commercial buildings that address tree-lined sidewalks. The retail in this portion of the Corridor, which experiences an average daily traffic count of 14,600 vehicles, is more indicative of a suburban downtown. Several small, locally-owned businesses offer a variety of personal services including floral design, spa services, home design, auto repair, and dry cleaning. There are also several storefronts currently available for lease which is likely due to a combination of factors including, the size and/or obsolescence of the space, the lack of a cohesive core of uses and the nature of the competitive environment, particularly within the other corridors and adjacent communities.

Similar to the Madison Street Corridor, the Lake Street Corridor is suitable for restaurants, entertainment and niche retail. Perhaps more than any other location within the Village, the Lake Street corridor has the potential to function as more of a downtown or town center.

Residential: Given the existing environment and the function of the corridor, some of the indicated market support for condominiums and townhomes may be accommodated in the Lake Street Corridor. This corridor could accommodate both stand alone residential development as well as residential above retail. The exact nature of the development will be dependent upon the availability and location of sites.

Development Approaches and Tools

One of the biggest challenges facing the successful revitalization and redevelopment of the Village's mixed-use corridors is the shallow lot depth and limited availability of parking

An example of new construction, Good Earth Cafe, on Madison Street in the Village.

View looking southwest down Lake Street.

One of the biggest challenges facing the successful revitalization and redevelopment of the Village's mixed-use corridors is the shallow lot depth and limited availability of parking. These challenges make it difficult for sites to be developed in a manner that provides contemporary building footprints and tenant space with adequate parking and site amenities. If the Village is serious about attracting and accommodating desirable, high quality new development, a variety of development strategies will need to be considered.

This section of the Plan presents a variety of different strategies for accommodating and possibly incentivizing redevelopment along the Village's mixed-use corridors. The strategies presented in this section utilize existing Village assets such as streets and alleys as leverage for incentivizing desirable new development. This section also presents other development considerations such as commercial area expansion and the strategic relocation of certain existing businesses. Although these strategies may not be applicable or even desirable at all locations, they do represent a viable approach to accommodating new development. In the Village's quest for corridor revitalization and desirable economic development, these strategies can provide the necessary incentives and development creativity needed for success.

This section focuses on both economic/financing incentives, as well as physical development approaches to encourage the successful revitalization and redevelopment of the Village's corridors.

The development approaches and tools include:

- **Economic Incentives -** Funding mechanisms available to the Village include, but are not limited to, the creation of a new Tax Increment Finance (TIF) district, Business Development District (BDD), or Special Service Area (SSA). The Village could also establish a Sales Tax Rebate program.
- **Creating Cul-de-Sacs –** By selectively "cul-de-sac"-ing certain intersecting side streets, Village right-of-way can be used to develop public parking areas for adjacent and nearby commercial development.
- **Alley "Shifting" –** By "shifting" alleys away from the adjacent residential properties and utilizing the alley as a parking lot driving aisle, larger building footprints, additional parking, perimeter landscaping and buffering could be provided.
- **Commercial Expansion –** By permitting residential properties to be assembled into adjacent commercial properties via market forces and transactions with willing sellers, larger/more contemporary developments could be accommodated.
- **Use Relocation –** By relocating specific existing uses, local businesses could stay in the Village and key sites could be developed with more appropriate uses.

Economic Incentives

There are several incentives and development mechanisms that can be utilized or expanded upon by the Village to facilitate redevelopment within the corridors. Funding mechanisms available to the Village include, but are not limited to, the creation of a new Tax Increment Finance (TIF) district, Business Development District (BDD), or Special Service Area (SSA). The Village could also establish a Sales Tax Rebate program.

The following section briefly describes some of the economic development tools available to the Village as it implements the recommendations of the Corridors Study. These tools can be used to fund a variety of projects and activities ranging from land acquisition and road construction to facade improvements and advertising. The mechanisms the Village chooses to utilize will be largely dependent on the scale and timing of redevelopment.

Tax Increment Financing (TIF)

Tax increment financing (TIF) is a powerful tool that the Village has used effectively in the past. TIF utilizes future property tax revenues generated within a designated area or district to pay for necessary improvements and incentivize further reinvestment. As the Equalized Assessed Value (EAV) of properties within a TIF District increases, the incremental growth in property tax over the base year that the TIF was established is reinvested in the area. Local officials may then issue bonds or undertake other financial obligations based on the growth in new tax revenue within the district.

The maximum life of a TIF district in the State of Illinois is 23 years although the TIF district can be extended via approval from the Illinois state legislature. Over the life of a TIF district, the taxing bodies present within the district, such as school or park districts, receive the same amount of tax revenue that was generated in the base year in which the TIF was established. There are provisions that allow for schools to receive additional revenue.

TIF funds can typically be used for infra¬structure, public improvements, land assemblage and in offsetting the cost of development – including but not limited to engineering, storm-water and other site related issues.

A study must be undertaken prior to the establishment of the TIF district to determine what areas and projects would be eligible to receive tax increment financing. Given the issues and opportunities in the Village, the availability of TIF funding could serve as an incentive for developers to pursue projects in line with the goals and objectives of the Corridors Study.

Business Development Districts (BDD)

A Business Development District (BDD) would allow the Village to levy up to an additional 1% retailers occupation tax, 1% hotel tax, and/or 1% sales tax within a designated district. The Village can also form a Business District Development and Redevelopment Commission to oversee development and redevelopment within the district.

Similar to a TIF district, a BDD has a maximum life of 23 years. BDD legislation also permits municipalities to utilize tax revenue growth that has been generated by BDD properties to fund improvements in the district.

BDD funds can be used for a multitude of things including infra¬structure improvements, public improvements, site acquisition, and land assemblage. Given the limited amount of funds that a BDD is capable of generating, compared to a TIF district, BDD is well suited to fund small scale improvements and property maintenance programs.

Special Service Areas (SSA)

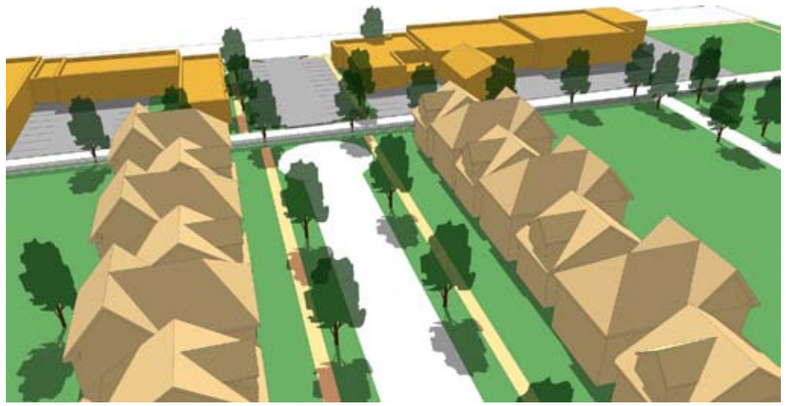
Special Service Areas (SSA) provide a means of funding improvements and programs within a designated area. In an SSA, a small percentage is added to the property tax of the properties within the service area. The revenue received from this targeted increase is channeled back into projects and programs benefiting those properties. An SSA can only be established if a majority of both property owners and electors within the defined area do not object to its implementation. SSA's are particularly useful in areas with a concentration of businesses such as River Forest's corridors.

SSA funded projects can include such things as marketing and advertising assistance, promotional activities and events, streetscape and signage improvements, property maintenance services. SSA's can also be used to fund revolving loan funds or façade improvement programs.

Sales Tax Rebate

A Sales Tax Rebate is a tool used by municipalities to incentivize businesses to locate to a site or area. The rebate is offered as a percentage of the annual sales tax revenue generated by the establishment and is typically tied to bench marks such as the greater the sales volume, the greater the proportion of the rebate. Sales tax rebate percentages can range from 1% to 100% and are dependent on the goals and objectives of the local municipality. Sales tax rebates have proven effective in attracting new businesses and encouraging redevelopment and renovation.

Creating Cul-de-sacs



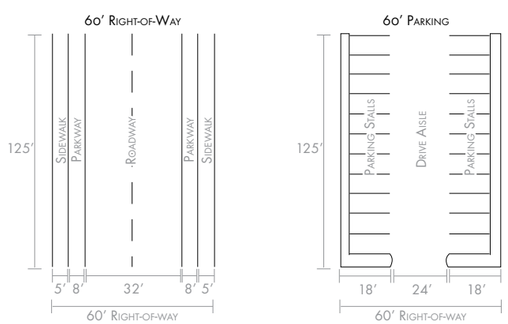
Creating Cul-de-sacs

Using cul-de-sacs in strategic locations can improve traffic flow along corridors and could create opportunities for providing public parking within the Village's existing right-of-way. By providing public parking in this manner, adjacent and nearby businesses could benefit greatly, especially in areas where parking is already in short supply. This technique can serve as a powerful incentive for attracting and accommodating desirable new development.

This approach can also serve as a valuable tool as a way of providing parking in areas where small lot size and shallow lot depth are prohibiting factors that thwart redevelopment. By using cul-de-sacs to provide public parking in the right-of-way, an adjacent or nearby site may be able to utilize a greater percentage of the site area for building footprint and less for surface parking, resulting in a larger, more viable, and possibly more flexible building design with a greater leasable and usable floor area.

Although cul-de-sacs can provide parking opportunities and improve traffic flow and safety along a corridor, careful consideration must be given to the resulting traffic flow and circulation that will result from installing a cul-de-sac. The *River Forest Corridors Plan* identifies several intersecting side streets along Madison Street and North Avenue that have a potential to be converted to cul-de-sacs. Several properties along these corridors currently suffer from shallow lot depth and in some areas limited parking availability, which in turn can limit development/redevelopment potential. Cul-de-sacs should be considered on a case-by-case basis as a potential way of addressing current issues.

Adjacent is the basic geometry and dimensions demonstrating the conversion of standard public right-of-way into standard off-street parking.



Scenario 1: Existing Ashland Avenue No Cul-de-sac

Single family homes are oriented towards Ashland Avenue, with rear loaded garages oriented towards alleyways located behind the property. A mixture of office, retail/commercial and public/semi-public uses face Madison Street with parking in the rear. Currently, this is a full access intersection.

Scenario 2: Creating a Cul-de-sac for Ashland Avenue

In this concept, access to the alleys remains open from Madison Street and side streets so that business patrons continue to have unrestricted access to parking at the rear of the storefronts. Currently, the parcels fronting Madison Street have a 125 foot depth. Using only the existing 60 ft. right-of-way, an additional 24 parking spaces could be gained for the benefit of local businesses. Should "cul-de-sac"-ing occur in conjunction with redevelopment, many other configurations are possible. The area could then be enhanced with additional landscaping or fencing.

Benefits of Creating a Cul-de-sac

The concept of "cul-de-sac"-ing existing intersecting side streets offers substantial benefits to surrounding property owners and improves traffic flow in congested corridor areas. Specifically, creating a new cul-de-sac offers the following benefits:

- *Creating cul-de-sacs on residential streets near commercial areas provides additional parking and increased development potential for adjacent commercial properties.*
- *Full traffic access will be directed to larger through streets and those with signalized intersections.*
- *Restricting access from select side streets will improve safety and efficiency of traffic flow throughout the River Forest corridors.*
- *Creating cul-de-sacs on residential streets will minimize the amount of cut-through traffic on certain local streets, by eliminating direct vehicular access to commercial.*
- *Pedestrian access can still be maintained via sidewalks and pedestrian paths.*

Alley "Shifting"

Benefits of Alley Shifting

To increase the redevelopment potential along Madison Street and North Avenue, the Village should consider relocating existing alleys.

Currently, the Madison Street and North Avenue corridors suffer from shallow lot depth and limited parking availability, which in turn offers limited development/redevelopment potential. The figures on this page illustrate two potential alleyway scenarios along Madison Street, and the impact that alley relocation can have on the redevelopment potential of a site.

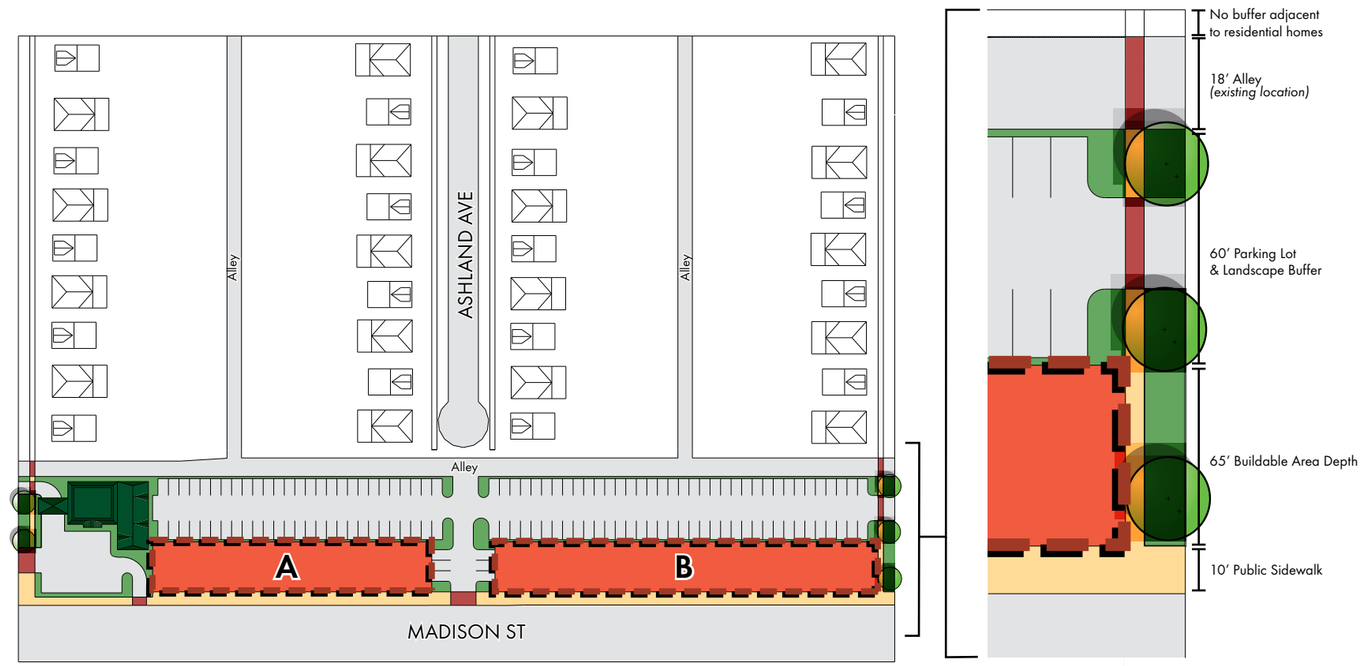
For purposes of illustrating the concept, each scenario assumes the following:

- Creating a cul-de-sac with Ashland Avenue;
- 153 ft. total depth (including 125' lot depth and 18' adjacent alley width and 10' public sidewalk);
- Total redevelopment of the properties between Lathrop and Ashland and all but one property between Ashland and Franklin;
- Centrally located curb cut on the Ashland Avenue alignment.

By permitting the alley to be shifted south so that it functions as both the alley and a parking lot drive aisle, the site is able to accommodate an increase in the buildable area of the block. This may drastically increase the redevelopment potential of the area, without causing detriment to the Village.

The adjacent single family neighborhoods will continue to have access to the alleyway from side streets, and the amount of traffic on Ashland Avenue will be reduced. Additionally, attractive landscaping will further buffer and separate single-family neighborhoods from commercial development and parking areas.

This development strategy should be applied along both Madison Street and North Avenue, where applicable, as a means of providing incentive for new desirable development.



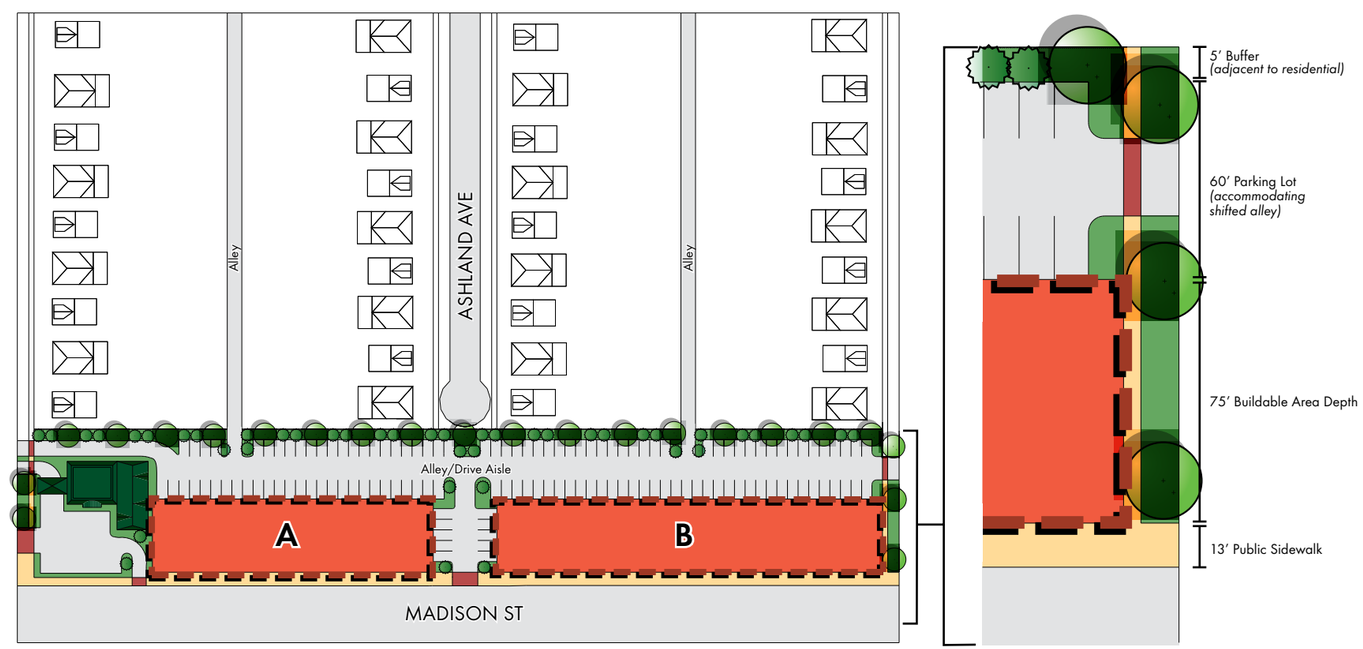
Scenario 1:

Alley in Existing Location

Adjacent is a rendering of the available buildable area should redevelopment occur along Madison Street, the alleyway remain in its current location, and Ashland Avenue be cul-de-sacked.

The existing building on the northeast corner of Madison and Franklin, adjacent to building A is envisioned to remain along Madison Street, and therefore is not included as buildable area for a potential redevelopment site.

- ***Site A:*** *17,550 square feet*
- ***Site B:*** *24,050 square feet*
- ***Parking:*** *134 spaces*



Scenario 2:

Alley "Shifted" South

This rendering illustrates the available buildable area should the alley be shifted 18 feet to the south and function as both the alley and a parking lot drive aisle. This scenario results in more landscaping and screening along the adjacent residential properties, more off-street parking, and greater square footage for buildings A and B.

- ***Site A:*** *19,500 square feet*
- ***Site B:*** *27,750 square feet*
- ***Parking:*** *134 spaces*

The total buildable area available for redevelopment with this scenario is 47,250 square feet, which is 5,650 square feet (13.6%) more space than Scenario 1 where the alley remains in its current location.

Commercial Expansion

Currently, the Village of River Forest's perimeter commercial corridors (Madison Street and North Avenue) are hindered by shallow lot depth. Even with implementation of alley shifting and use of cul-de-sacs, it is possible that expansion of commercial areas into adjacent residential areas may be proposed in the future. Although there is not any one particular area where this strategy should be encouraged, it is also not recommended that this concept be specifically prohibited along the commercial corridors.

The existing commercial lot depth is approximately 125 feet for most properties along the corridors. These shallow lot depths are often inadequate to accommodate contemporary development practices in a manner that includes adequate buffering and setbacks, off-street parking, building size, and more. Lot depth is one of the most critical components for development consideration. One way to overcome this obstacle is to allow commercial properties to expand through market activity that includes the acquisition and consolidation of adjacent residential properties, via willing buyers and sellers.

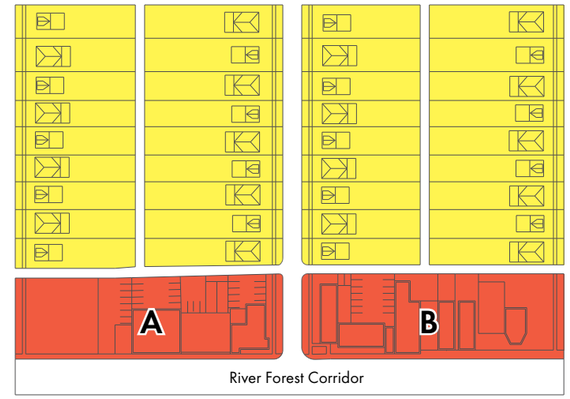
The Village should not provide incentives for, or assist in any way, with the acquisition or consolidation of adjacent residential properties for purposes of commercial expansion along the perimeter corridors. However, the Village should carefully consider such a proposal on its specific merits for such development that is deemed desirable and appropriate. This approach to commercial development is often very costly and difficult for a developer, and frequently results is substantial local opposition.

If commercial expansion is to be a viable development option in the future, such development must be of the highest quality and provide extensive buffering and screening from the adjacent residential properties. Site and building design must be attractive when viewed from all sides and directions and lighting and outdoor activity should be designed to minimize impact on adjacent property. Circulation and access should be provided in a manner that minimizes impact on surrounding areas.

Expansion of existing commercial areas in seldom easy and if considered, should always be done with sensitivity toward and in cooperation with adjacent residential neighbors. If done correctly, commercial expansion can dramatically improve commercial areas in a manner that is respectful of and compatible with the Village's residential areas.

Site Characteristics

Site A : 1 acre, 125 ft. lot depth
Site B: 1.1 acres, 125 ft. lot depth

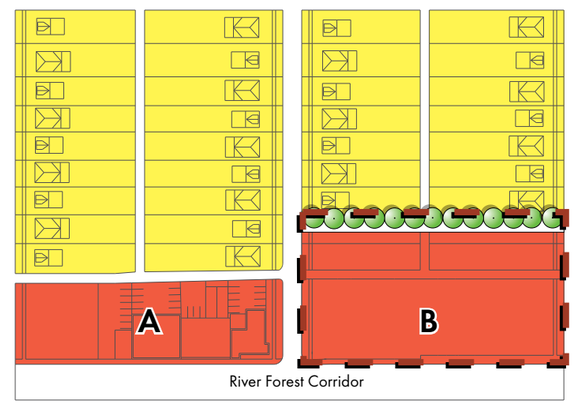


Existing Configuration

This sample existing configuration illustrates two blocks, A and B, fronting one of the Village's Corridors. The commercial parcels have a lot depth of approximately 125 feet, with an alley situated at the rear. Single-family, detached homes are located behind the commercial parcels. The existing configuration provides minimal buffering between the single-family uses and commercial uses, and the alleyway serves as the primary buffer. The commercial uses have located their parking at the rear of site, adjacent to the single-family homes.

Site Characteristics

Site A : 1 acre, 125 ft. lot depth
Site B: 1.99 acres,225 ft. lot depth

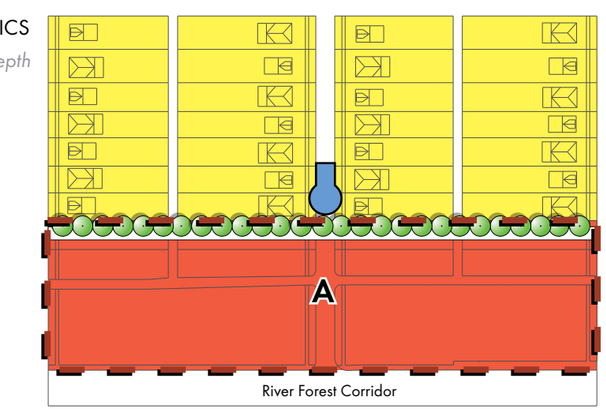


Option 1

Option 1 illustrates a scenario where only one block, Commercial Block B, expands into the residential subdivision. By increasing the commercial lot depth by two residential lots (approximately 100 feet), an additional .89 acres is gained. This larger site provides opportunities for larger commercial or mixed-use development. In this scenario, the alleyway has been shifted and extensive landscaping and buffering is incorporated on the site to minimize negative impacts on the single family homes. A site this size possesses more commercial viability than a smaller block like Block A.

Site Characteristics

Site A: 4.25 acres, 225 ft. lot depth



Option 2

Option 2 illustrates a conceptual scenario where an alleyway does not exist separating the residential and commercial properties. In this option, both commercial blocks A and B expand into the residential subdivision. In this option, the blocks are combined to provide one consolidated redevelopment site totaling approximately 4.25 acres. To maximize the redevelopment potential of this site, the residential street could then be cul-de-sacked to eliminate through traffic and any limitations to site design.

A site this size could be very desirable for a number of commercial uses. Increased lot depth, additional parking, and more buildable acreage will attract new commercial developers. Similar to Option 1, intensive buffering should be implemented adjacent to the single family homes. Attractive landscaping and high quality fencing will help separate the two uses from each other, and mitigate any negative impacts that could occur.

**For illustrative purposes, residential properties are 50 feet wide by 185 feet deep, alleyways are 18 feet wide, and the road right-of-way is 60 feet.*

Relocation of Existing Uses

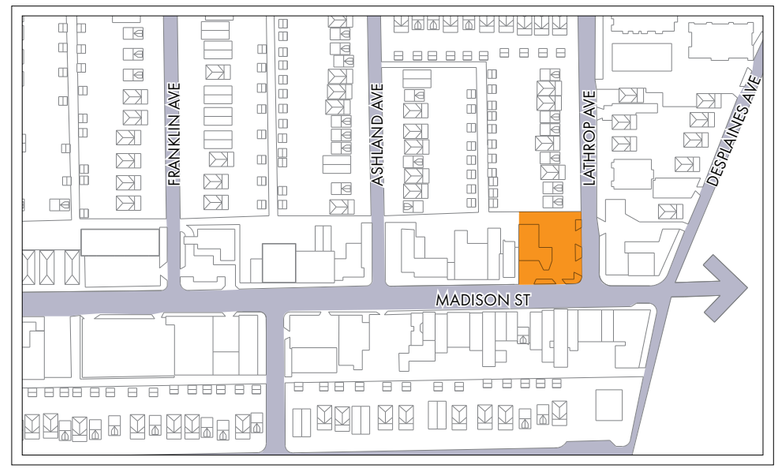
Benefits of Relocating Uses

Sometimes existing uses may be desirable to have within a community but are located on properties, or within areas, that are not well suited for the use, given the surrounding uses and development patterns. The relocation of existing uses to other sites is a technique that is utilized by communities throughout the region, state, and country. Although it is not an easy task, use relocation can, and should, result in a "win-win" for the municipality and the business/property owner.

Successful relocation of existing uses requires that (1) a suitable and "more desirable" site is found that will accommodate and hopefully improve conditions for the business, and (2) that the new site is improved and developed in a manner that accommodates and hopefully improves conditions for the business. Even if both of these components are met, the real trick is finding a way for such a relocation to be paid for while minimizing or eliminating costs and operating burdens for the business to be relocated. Such a relocation often requires some dedication and allocation of public funds and/or must be made part of a larger development effort.

As part of the examination of uses along the Village's perimeter corridors, two uses have been preliminarily identified for possible relocation: Pete's Automotive and Keystone Montessori. Although these uses both provide valuable services for the residents of River Forest and the surrounding areas, the Village would be better served if the uses could be successfully relocated to other areas of the Village.

Pete's Automotive



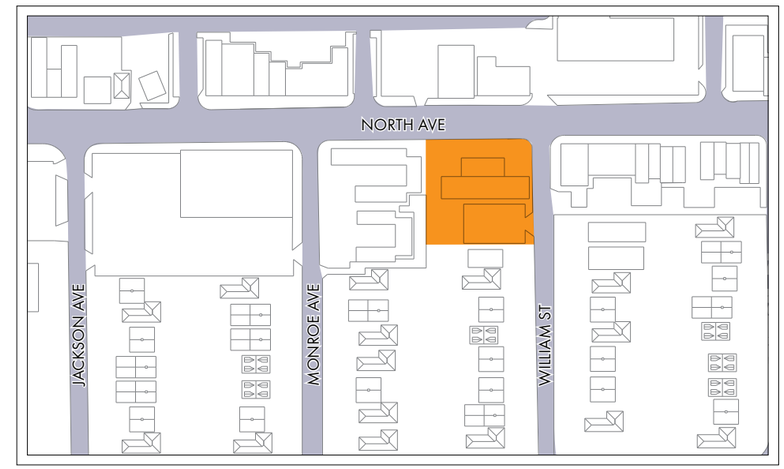
Pete's Automotive occupies a key site along the Madison Street at the eastern most edge of the corridor adjacent to Forest Park. Located on the northwest corner of Madison Street and Lathrop Avenue, "Pete's" serves as the visual gateway into the Village for those traveling westbound along Madison Street. As River Forest and Forest Park strive to improve and revitalize the corridor, Pete's Automotive presents a level of visual and use incompatibility for the area.

The use itself relies heavily on outdoor storage of vehicles, yet provides absolutely no screening of the cars and activity from adjacent properties. Further, the nature of the use itself is more in-line with light industrial/intense commercial service uses, rather than the retail and restaurant uses that exist and are desired for the area.

Although the owner has indicated no desire to sell, relocation may be an option. A site may exist within the Village or surrounding communities that could better accommodate the outdoor storage needs of the use in a manner that was less impacting on surrounding properties and provided a larger site for the business's needs. Relocating the use could serve as a catalyst for revitalizing the Madison Street Corridor. It is unlikely that the properties immediately adjacent to "Pete's" would be a desirable location for new retail or restaurant development, given the appearance and nature of the auto repair business.

One possible relocation site for the use could be the Hine's Lumber site. With "Hine's" closing, the property could be redeveloped with Pete's Automotive as a component, leaving the current "Pete's" site open to redevelopment for more desirable uses. This concept is illustrated and further discussed in the Madison Street Corridor section of the Plan (page 50).

Keystone Montessori School



Keystone Montessori is a desirable use to have in the Village of River Forest, but it's current location in the commercial district along busy North Avenue may not be ideal.

Discussions with Keystone Montessori representatives reveal that the school is not necessarily opposed to the concept of relocation, but the challenge is finding a property and facility that will accommodate the school and that can be realized in a financially responsible and feasible manner. Cost and availability of alternative sites are the problem. Other sites such as the Oilily property were discussed as part of this process, but the building is too small and the cost of upgrading/enlarging the facility is too high, among other potential issues.

The school currently makes payments to the Village in lieu of taxes, an agreement reached as part of the school's planned development approval to allow the school to be located in the North Avenue commercial district. If the school were to relocate out of the commercial district, it may be in a position to eliminate or reduce payments to the Village. Not-for-profit tax-exempt uses are not typically desirable in commercial zoning districts. Ideally, primary commercial corridors should be used for revenue generating businesses that strengthen the community's tax base.

The Keystone Montessori site is not a priority development site. The school is a community asset and is supported by my families with in the Village. However, the location of the school on North Avenue is not ideal and the Village should work with the school to explore relocation opportunities that would work for and benefit the school and the Village in the long term.

Corridor Beautification Framework

Streetscape improvements along the Lake Street Corridor provide a distinct enhancement to the corridor that make it unique to River Forest, and distinguish the corridor from surrounding communities

Gateway signage at the southwest corner of Lake Street and Harlem Avenue.

Attractive streetscaping in the Village Center area.

The Village has designed and implemented a very attractive streetscape improvement program along the Lake Street Corridor. Recent improvements along Lake Street include street trees, planters, street furniture, bicycle racks, gateway features, wayfinding signage, and more. The streetscape improvements provide a distinct enhancement to the Corridor that make it unique to River Forest, distinguishing the Corridor from surrounding communities. One of the streetscape and beautification goals for the Village's other commercial/mixed-use corridors should be to apply the Lake Street streetscape components in an appropriate fashion in order to create a similar look along the Village's other corridors.

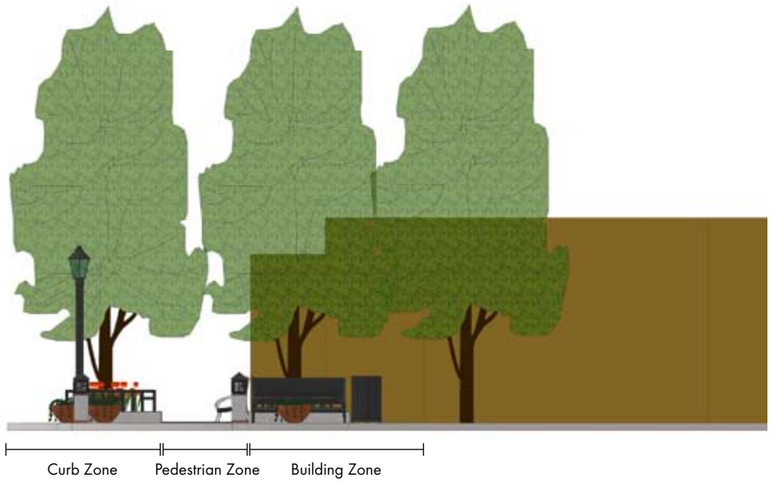
In addition to the streetscape and public realm components, the development of private property along the corridors will also have a significant impact on the overall character and appearance of the Corridor. Design and Development Guidelines can be a useful tool during the development review and approval phase to ensure that local development is of high quality and reflective of the desired Village character. Guidelines are not meant to dictate the design or architecture of building, but rather establish a baseline for quality development.

This section presents recommendation for improvements and aesthetic enhancements to both the public and private realms along the Village's commercial/mixed-use corridors. Many of these improvements can be implemented as part of development along the corridor, while other components will likely require public funds to complete. Collectively, these streetscape and beautification components can transform the appearance and overall character of an area, making it a more desirable place to open a business, invest in new development, shop, dine, visit, and live.

This section covers the following:

- **Streetscape Zones –** Highlights and describes the different streetscape zones that comprise a corridors' edge treatments.
- **Primary Streetscape Components –** Provides a breakdown of the different streetscape components that should be applied to the Village's perimeter corridors.
- **Implementation of Streetscape Components –** Illustrates the visual impact and overall character that can be achieved by incorporating and implementing variety of streetscape components in a coordinated manner.
- **Landscaped Medians –** Presents the concepts of landscaped medians as an additional method for enhancing the corridors.
- **Design and Development Guidelines –** Provides basic guidelines for new development by addressing components such as architectural style, building materials, building orientation, parking lot screening, lighting and landscaping, outdoor dining, and signage.

Streetscape Zones



Streetscape design refers to the overall design of a street, including the road, sidewalks and pedestrian amenities, landscaping, and the character of the adjacent building facades. A memorable street is typically a street oriented towards the pedestrian experience. Attention to detail and the use of quality materials is important in achieving a successful streetscape design along the Village's commercial/mixed-use corridors.

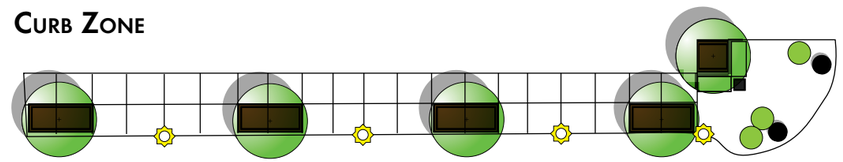
Typical sidewalks have three zones: a building zone, a pedestrian zone, and a curb zone. For a streetscape to be successful, it must have a clear path of travel for pedestrians. The path of travel is most commonly found in the center of the sidewalk.

The curb zone is the area of a sidewalk closest to the adjacent roadway. This section is typically the location of streetscape amenities such as landscaping and street lights. The curb zone acts as a buffer between pedestrians and automobile traffic. Along Madison Street, it is recommended that the sidewalks/curb zone be enlarged at intersections. This is often referred to as a "bulb-out." Bulb-outs accommodate additional streetscape elements such as planters, bollards, and benches. They serve as a traffic calming measure and screen on-street parking from intersection traffic.

The pedestrian zone is most commonly located in the center of the sidewalk, between the curb zone and the building zone. The pedestrian zone includes a clear path of travel and pedestrian amenities such as trash receptacles and benches.

The building zone is the sidewalk area closest to adjacent buildings. The building facade is the most prominent feature in this zone. Building facades in the building zone should be designed to facilitate retail activity. Large windows allow pedestrians to look into shops, and architectural details add texture and life to storefronts. Certain areas may also include sidewalk displays or outdoor dining areas. Along sections of Madison Street and North Avenue, many of the existing buildings are situated directly along the sidewalk, leaving minimal space for outdoor dining areas and sidewalk displays. Should redevelopment occur along the corridors, amenities like outdoor seating should be encouraged.

Curb Zone



Curb Zone Components

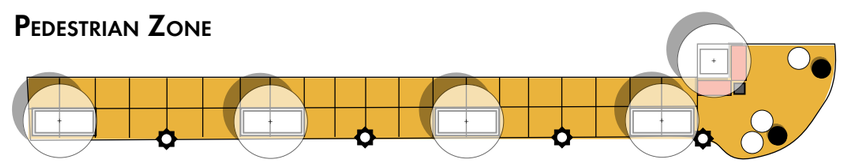
- Streetlights
- Street trees
- "Bulb-out"
- Movable planters
- Bollard Lighting
- Trash receptacles

The spacing of streetlights and street trees should be uniform throughout a corridor, with additional bollard lighting at intersections to illuminate pedestrian areas. Streetlights should be located between street trees so that the tree canopy does not interfere with illumination coverage.

Streetlights should be at the pedestrian-scale, which is 12 to 15 feet tall. They should be ornamental in style, and consistent with the Village's streetlights along the Lake Street Corridor. White light sources, such as metal halide, fluorescent, and compact fluorescent luminaries, are recommended so as not to cast a yellow glow on the street.

Street trees should be planted on all streets to provide a visual frame to the street and shade and comfort to visitors. Street trees with a higher or lighter canopy are recommended so that storefronts are not blocked. They should be planted in raised planters with decorative fencing around them for added aesthetic appeal.

Pedestrian Zone



Pedestrian Zone Components

- Sidewalk/Path of Travel
- Street furniture
- Trash receptacles
- Textured pavement/paver treatment
- Enhanced crosswalks

The main components of the pedestrian zone are the sidewalk and street furniture. The sidewalk should be a clearly defined area with minimal obstacles and protruding objects such as low hanging signs or awnings. It should have minimal grade changes, a firm and slip resistant surface, and good lighting. Rest areas with street furniture are encouraged in the zone as well.

Benches are essential to making a sidewalk pedestrian friendly. They should be located in high-use or high-pedestrian traffic areas.

Trash receptacles should also be present at frequent intervals and near benches so that their use is convenient for pedestrians.

Building Zone and Perimeter Parking Lot Zone

The design and physical appearance of the building and perimeter parking lot zone contributes directly to the livability and success of the pedestrian areas in each of the Village's corridors.

Building facades should be visually stimulating to encourage people to linger in the area. Door and window openings, building height and bulk, and storefront design all play an important role in creating an attractive facade.

In areas where parking is immediately adjacent to pedestrian areas, a continuous streetwall effect should be maintained through landscaping, high quality wrought iron fencing, or a masonry/stone wall. This will ensure good design standards, while buffering and separating parking lots from adjacent sidewalks and streets. By providing an attractive visual and physical screen in between parking lots and the right-of-way, the pedestrian atmosphere of the corridor will be enhanced, and aesthetics will be maintained.

Successful streets and right-of-way improvements should create an intimate pedestrian atmosphere, an "outdoor room," for residents and business patrons. Much of this atmosphere can be attributed to the bulk and proportion of buildings as they relate to the street and one another.

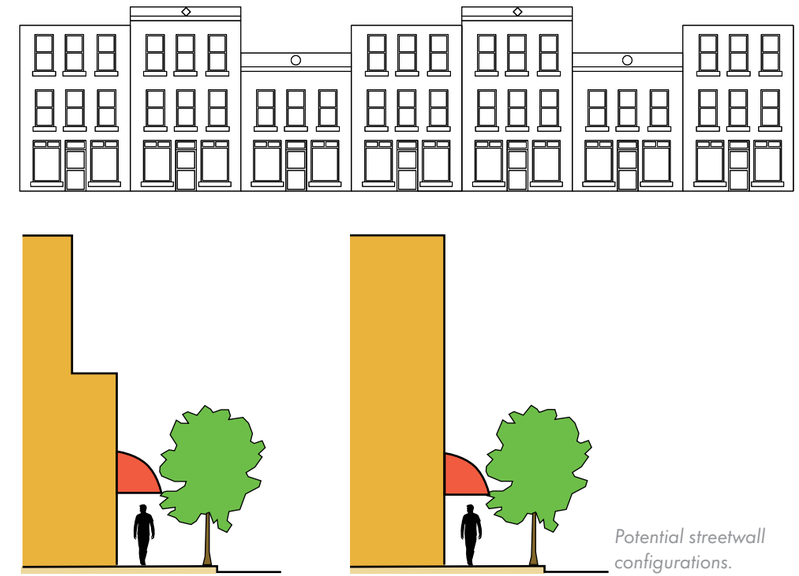
Along Madison Street and Lake Street, development in the building zone should be comprised of buildings that are compatible with the scale and character of surrounding area, with building heights typically ranging from 2-4 stories. Buildings of this height contribute to a sense of enclosure and an intimate and pedestrian scale. If redevelopment is proposed at a height greater this, upper-floor setbacks or other architectural approaches should be considered to provide visual relief to passersby and emphasize the lower levels of the buildings where the commercial businesses are located. Also included in the building zone are outdoor dining areas/displays. Outdoor dining and activities can play an important role in the vitality of an urban corridor. In warmer months, people benefit from and enjoy being in the outdoors, which is why these outdoor activities are so desired. As redevelopment occurs in the corridors, opportunities for outdoor dining should be encouraged.

Along North Avenue and Harlem Avenue, or other areas where a continuous streetwall is not maintained, the Village should work with property owners and/or IDOT to install streetscaping improvements. At no point along any of the Village's corridors should a parking area be directly adjacent to a public sidewalk without some form of barrier. Even for areas where there is almost no separation, a decorative wrought iron fence could be installed between the pedestrian and vehicular realm.

Building Zone Components

- Building facades
- Outdoor dining/display
- Canopies

Example of pedestrian friendly streetwall along Lake Street.

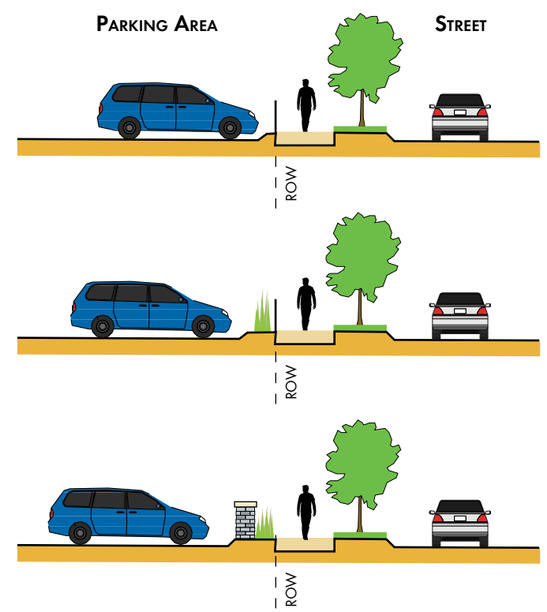


Potential streetwall configurations.

Perimeter Parking Lot Zone Components

- Decorative wrought iron fencing
- Landscaping
- Low masonry walls

Example of good perimeter parking lot buffering on Lake Street.



Parking lot screening with no setback and the addition of a wrought iron fence.

Parking lot screening with a two foot setback and the addition of landscaping and a wrought iron fence.

Parking lot screening with a five foot setback and the addition of landscaping and a stone wall.

Primary Streetscape and Beautification Components

The Lake Street Corridor streetscape improvements should serve as the model for the Village's other commercial mixed-use corridors. The streetscape improvements and amenities along Lake Street provide a menu of high quality and attractive components that have applicability along the other corridors and will help unify the appearance of the Village commercial areas and better distinguish River Forest from neighboring communities.

This streetscape palette has been well designed and is reflective of the desired character for the Village's commercial/mixed-use corridors. Primary streetscape components include the following:

- Gateway Signage
- Wayfinding Signage
- Bicycle Racks
- Crosswalks
- Street Trees & Planters
- Lights & Banners
- Bollard Lighting
- Wrought Iron Fencing
- Street Furniture

Looking east down Lake Street in the Village.

Attractive perimeter parking lot landscaping employing the Village's wrought iron fence.

Gateway Signage

In an effort to announce one's arrival into the Village, gateway features should be employed in key locations. Gateway features can be achieved through signage at the ground level or through unique architectural elements. Attractive landscaping, lighting, and other vertical design features should complement the signage and architectural elements to help feature the Village.

The Village has already developed an attractive gateway feature, as illustrated in the photo above. The simple design of this feature is tasteful and eye catching, without being overly intrusive to the surrounding landscape. It blends nicely into the environment, and contributes positively to the character of the Village.

While these signs are employed in a few select locations in the Village, they should be erected at key Village entryways and major intersections along the corridors, and in front of key Village amenities.

Wayfinding Signage

Monument wayfinding features assist people in finding important community landmarks, while enhancing the streetscape and "Sense of Place" in a community. Creating a "Sense of Place" for an area is different than committing to enhancing an area; rather, it is taking advantage of available opportunities to design a destination where people want to live, work, and recreate. It makes a community unique from those around it.

Similar to gateway features, wayfinding features should consist of signage complemented by landscaping and lighting. The Village has created an attractive wayfinding sign to direct residents and visitors to key landmarks within the Village, such as the Village Hall, as illustrated above. Wayfinding features should be erected at key locations to direct people to other destinations such as parks, education facilities, and other Village destinations.

Bicycle Racks

It is important to provide adequate bike racks throughout the corridors to make streets more bicycle friendly and encourage modes of transportation other than driving a car. Bicycle racks should be located in the curb zone with a 3 foot minimum clearance from other street furniture.

Crosswalks

To improve visibility and safety, pedestrian crosswalks within each of the corridors should be made prominent and noticeable by employing a change in paving materials, texture, and color. Using a colored material such as brick will emphasize that pedestrians have the right-of-way over vehicular traffic.

In addition to improving visibility and safety, clearly demarcated crosswalks will enhance the streetscape in each of the corridors. A uniform design should be developed that will help differentiate the Village from surrounding communities. Each of the perimeter corridors discussed in this plan serves as a corporate boundary, and enhancing these corridors will create a dynamic, attractive periphery around the Village that illustrates the Village's proud heritage and bright future.

Street Trees & Planters

Street trees are one of the most effective ways to enhance a streetscape and beautify an area because they add four-season color, visual interest, and texture to a street. They can be complemented with planted landscape beds or raised planters with seasonal flowers and decorative fencing as illustrated above.

Lights & Banners

Street lighting is an important contributor to the overall character of an area and provides for a safe and attractive environment. Similar to Lake Street, a combination of street lighting may be required to accommodate appropriate lighting levels in different areas.

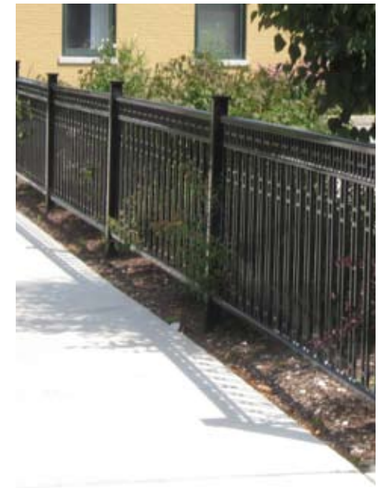
Even in areas where larger "cobra head" fixtures are required, smaller scaled lighting should be utilized to create the desired atmosphere and character. Increasing the frequency of lighting in certain areas can also enhance the pedestrian environment and sense of place.

Bollard Lighting

Small pylons or special bollard fixtures should be used to highlight crosswalks and street corners for pedestrians and vehicular traffic. These bollards can incorporate lighting fixtures, street names, or remain strictly decorative. They can be implemented to further define the Village's boundaries, and enhance the pedestrian realm.

Bollards are streetscape elements that can also be used to prevent traffic from encroaching in pedestrian areas.

Wrought Iron Fence



Decorative wrought iron fencing is an important component of the Lake Street streetscape improvements and should also be used along the other corridors. In areas where parking lot screening options are limited, decorative fencing contributes significantly to screening and separating parking areas adjacent to public sidewalks.

The Village has also successfully incorporated decorative fencing into recent developments to further reinforce the overall "theme" of streetscape and site improvement components. Where used, however, decorative fencing must be of high quality and design, as lesser quality fencing can detract from the quality appearance of a site. The fencing used along the public areas along Lake Street serves as an excellent example of high quality and attractive fencing.

Street Furniture

Street furniture are small scale amenities located in the public realm that add a human element to the streetscape. They include benches, tables and chairs, trash receptacles, drinking fountains, and other items as desired. Street furniture is oftentimes located within the curb zone of the sidewalk, but may be situated in the pedestrian zone as well. It is typically clustered at intersections or mid-block locations, and other areas where pedestrians tend to group.

A clear palette and high quality design of streetscape furniture, consistent with Lake Street corridor improvements, should be implemented to create a unique character for the Village, and maintain a sense of uniformity.

Implementation of Streetscape Components

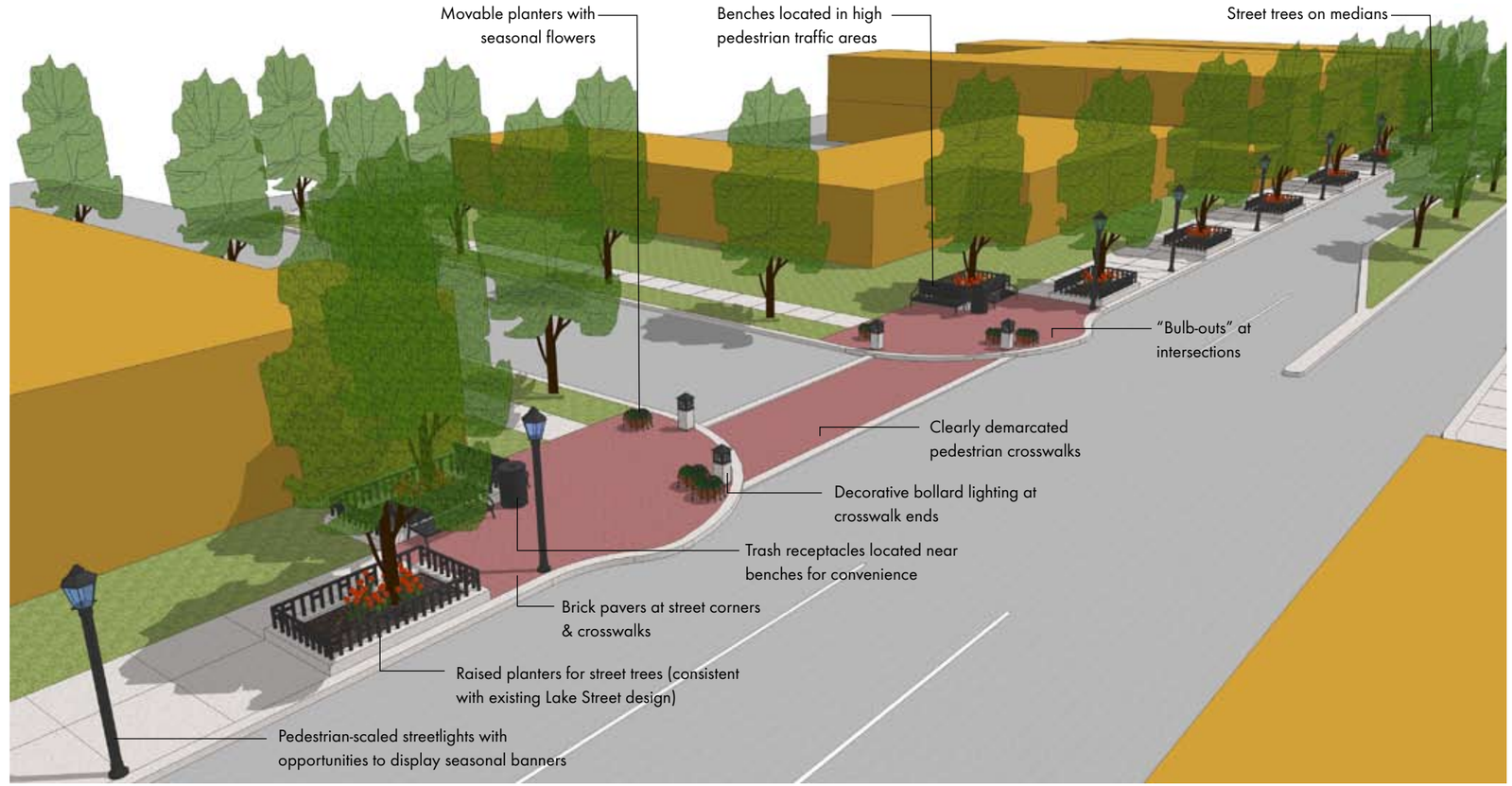
This page presents a combination of the primary streetscape components to form an attractive, pedestrian-oriented corridor environment. A memorable street is one that is typically oriented towards the pedestrian experience, thus pedestrian enhancement concepts focus predominantly on streetscape design.

Streetscape design refers to the overall design of a street, including the road, sidewalks and pedestrian amenities, landscaping, and the character of the adjacent building facades. Attention to detail and the use of quality materials is important in achieving a successful streetscape design along each of the Village's commercial/mixed-use corridors.

Proposed pedestrian enhancements are envisioned to extend the entire length of Madison Street, North Avenue and Harlem Avenue. The overall goal of enhancing the Village's streetscape is to improve pedestrian activity and safety along the corridors while enhancing the corridors overall character, appearance, and sense of place. Streetscape projects can help spur economic redevelopment and revitalization along the corridors and provide more attractive gateways and a unique identity for the Village of River Forest.

Enhancing the pedestrian areas along each of the corridors can help achieve the following:

- Establish a unique identity for the Village.
- Create unified districts in the Village.
- Strengthen the community's sense of place.
- Improve pedestrian mobility and safety.
- Enhance the overall character, appearance, and image of the corridors.



Prioritizing the Pedestrian Realm

The principle goal of the proposed streetscape improvements is to enhance the pedestrian atmosphere of the Village's auto-oriented corridors. Pedestrian-friendly streets are designed to be more accommodating to pedestrian traffic than conventionally designed streets, which are typically designed for the automobile. This concept of "Complete Streets" is being systematically embraced and implemented at the local, county, and state levels, and provides for all modes of transportation, including walking, biking, vehicles, transit, and more. Pedestrian friendly streets promote smart growth, context sensitive design, walkable neighborhoods, and innovative development approaches. Streets that are accommodating to pedestrians also enhance overall street liveliness and help in creating sense of place.

Landscaped Medians

The recommended landscape includes shade trees, flowering ornamental trees, shrubs, perennials and turf grass. Annual plantings and spring bulbs are included in limited, highly visible areas to achieve maximum impact while keeping maintenance expectations within reason

An example of how landscaped medians can enhance a road.

An example of a landscaped median in a traditional downtown setting.

The streetscape components discussed on the previous pages of this section apply to the outside edges of the Village's Corridors. In certain areas of the Village, predominantly along Madison Street, opportunities exist to enhance the center of the street through landscaped medians. North Avenue and Harlem Avenue are under IDOT jurisdiction and existing traffic volumes and roadway configuration will likely not accommodate the installation of landscaped medians. These obstacles, however, do not apply to Madison Street, where landscaped medians could be installed.

Generally, landscaped medians offer several benefits, including:

- **Safety —** Medians separate lanes of oncoming traffic and can reduce traffic speeds.
- **Environmental —** Landscaped medians incorporate trees and other plantings that help reduce the urban heat island effect.
- **Stormwater Management —** Medians can be designed to collect and store stormwater, reducing the amount that enters storm sewers.
- **Aesthetics —** Median plantings contribute to the "greening" and beautification of the Village, helping to establish a sense of place that is reflective of the community's overall character.

Planted center medians will have an impact on the character of a corridor. Landscaped medians should include shade trees, ornamental trees, shrubs, perennials, and annuals/spring bulbs in key accent areas to achieve maximum impact while keeping maintenance expectations within reason. The medians can be irrigated and may incorporate accent lighting and electric outlets for seasonal lighting. Low decorative wrought iron fencing may also be incorporated, further tying in the other streetscape enhancement s along the corridor.

In addition to improving the appearance of a corridor, landscaped medians can serve as traffic calming enhancements, resulting in reduced traffic speeds and safer traffic operations. To bring a new level of traffic calming and enhanced appearance to the Village's street network, a series of landscaped medians should be installed where feasible along Madison Street. Landscaped boulevards will help green the Village's public realm and unify the corridor. A new sense of visual interest can be brought to the Village's corridors to provide a pleasant environment for those living in and visiting the area.

Landscaped medians also provide attractive locations for gateway signage. Their location in the center of the street allows gateway signs to be highly visible for motorists traveling through a corridor. The western most edge of the Madison Street Corridor may be an ideal location for a Village gateway feature located within a landscaped median.

Design and Development Guidelines

Site Design

Private development has a significant impact on the atmosphere of the Village's corridors. Since individual parcels are oftentimes viewed as separate development projects, it can be difficult to create a consistent, attractive development pattern if appropriate guidelines are not put into place. The design of private developments should begin with the design of the sites they are located on to maintain consistency and compatibility throughout the Village's corridors. It is important that guidelines promote compatibility rather than uniformity to address site design.

These guidelines for site layouts promote high quality improvements and developments that will complement and enhance the overall character of the Village. They are intended to create attractive and appropriate development that is designed to accommodate vehicular orientation and traffic circulation, while providing safe and attractive pedestrian circulation and amenities. The guidelines do not attempt to dictate site design; rather, they strive to promote high quality, compatible, attractive development.

For the sake of these guidelines, the use of the word "corridor" may refer to the Madison Street, North Avenue or Harlem Avenue corridors – whichever is applicable to the future development scenario. The photographs are from nearby communities to visually illustrate some of the guidelines presented in this section of the Corridors Plan.

Landscape & Site Features

A building is first experienced through the site which it is located on. To establish a stronger feeling of compatibility amongst different sites, the patterns and materials used in the development of the site should be considered. A strong sense of identity and continuity can be established through the repetition of a common collection of materials used on sites within a corridor. A common theme has been established for streetscape components, but a common theme should also be established for plants and lighting, and for how these features should be organized on a site. It is the intention of these guidelines to establish continuity in the details of site development and maintain compatibility as a corridor.

- *Develop landscape patterns that frame public spaces for people such as plazas, pocket parks, or attractive building entrances.*
- *Perennial and annual plants should be included in plans to add color and interest to building fronts, parking areas and the overall streetscape.*
- *Lighting fixtures should be consistent within a site to create a strong identity and reinforce a sense of place within the corridor.*

Building Orientation & Placement

The Village's corridors are defined by an established street grid with buildable blocks of varying sizes. Problems in continuity result when a site, or block, determines its own building orientation. The Corridors Plan strives to promote pedestrian oriented developments that are accommodating to the vehicular traffic present along each of the Village's main corridors. It is the intention of these guidelines to orient buildings towards areas of pedestrian activity, and create consistent orientation towards the primary street which they are located on (Madison Street, North Avenue and Harlem Avenue).

- *Design buildings with the primary axis of the building parallel to the corridor which they are located on.*
- *Discourage service and loading facilities and drive-through's from an orientation that allows them to be visible from the corridor.*
- *Buildings should be oriented to the corridor in a traditional manner, with primary entrances facing directly onto the street.*
- *In areas of high pedestrian activity, buildings may be approached by pedestrians from all sides. Architectural treatments should be required at all publicly accessible or viewable sides of a building.*
- *In areas of high pedestrian activity, sites where buildings do not fully occupy the street edge should be filled with active uses such as sidewalk cafes, outdoor sales areas, or pocket parks to promote pedestrian activity. Outdoor dining facilities are encouraged throughout the Village to enhance pedestrian areas and create gathering places. If located adjacent to a public sidewalk, they should be clearly demarcated with a wrought iron fence or other distinguishing feature.*
- *Utilities and trash receptacles should not be visible from the corridor and should have 100% year-round screening through the use of masonry walls and landscaping.*

Parking Character

Automobile parking will remain an important element of the urban development pattern, but its impact on the pedestrian experience and visibility from the corridor should be minimized by ensuring that buildings are the focus of a development, rather than parking areas. Parking areas should be seen as places of human activity not just a place to store automobiles; and, as a result be attractive and even inviting spaces.

- *Provide entries to parking areas at midpoints of blocks and perpendicular to streets, using the smallest amount of driveway area/curb cut as possible. Parking areas should be provided at the sides or rear of new development where possible.*
- *Strongly discourage the development of new parking facilities adjacent to areas of high pedestrian activity.*
- *Parking areas should be screened from view along sidewalks and roadways through the combined use of low masonry walls, hedge plantings and shrubs.*
- *Parking areas should include one landscape island for every 16 parking spaces to create an attractive tree canopy and human element to the parking lot.*
- *Along Madison Street, develop and improve on-street parking areas to encourage street-level activity and to protect pedestrian areas. Parking spaces along the street are oftentimes the most desired parking available due to their easy access and close proximity to consumer destinations.*
- *Should a parking structure be necessary, design the structure as a building rather than a ramp to improve the appearance and functionality of it. The structure should be designed so that cars and lighting are largely obscured from street views or nearby residential areas. Parking structures should be placed internally in a new development where possible.*

Perimeter Conditions

Development proposals typically are designed for strictly the parcel at hand, rather than being accomodating to surrounding uses and activities. Undesirable amenities such as utilities, loading docks, trash receptacles and uninterrupted facades oftentimes face adjacent properties.

To ensure that new developments are sensitive to adjacent properties, development proposals should include an overall site plan showing adjacent uses and buildings to address any adverse impacts. The following items are encouraged:

- *Extensive perimeter landscaping to provide a buffer between different land uses.*
- *Where applicable, pedestrian linkages should connect to adjacent properties and side streets to promote pedestrian activity and increase site accessibility.*

Signage

Signage is typically reviewed under a separate sign permit application process; however, streets and sidewalks are often lined with cluttered signs that detract from the character of a community. These guidelines are intended to emphasize important components of the Village's Sign Code to ensure that the Village's corridors are not cluttered with excess signage and reflect quality sign standards.

- *Wall signage consisting of internally illuminated, individually projected letters mounted flat on the building face work well with traditional building materials and architecture, and enhance the appearance of new commercial development.*
- *Internal illumination is discouraged on monument signs. Externally lighted signs should be acceptable if they are compatible with the buildings predominant architectural components.*
- *Only one ground sign per business per street frontage should be permitted.*
- *Architectural compatibility should be emphasized in signs on buildings.*

Design and Development Guidelines

Building Design

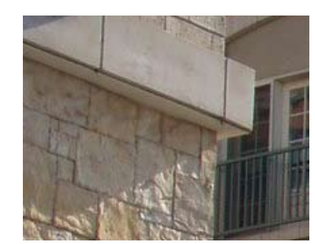
Compatibility throughout the Village's corridors is achieved through the implementation of unified streetscape components in the public realm and complementary site and building designs in the private realm. Though each of these elements is important, people often identify a place from its building; therefore, building designs much respond with great sensitivity to the opportunities of place-making. These guidelines for buildings promote high quality improvements and developments that will complement and enhance the overall character of the Village. The guidelines do not attempt to dictate architectural style; rather, they strive to promote high quality, compatible and attractive development.

Building Design & Architectural Style

The architectural style of new buildings need not be a historic replica, but should offer high quality and compatible interpretations of the traditional architectural styles present within the Village. The design of new construction along the corridors should respect the character of surrounding buildings in the Village by incorporating horizontal and vertical articulation and variations in massing. This will reduce the possibility of having a single dominant building along a corridor. While the size of new developments may vary along the Village's corridors, the appearance of a smaller building can be achieved through careful attention to scale and details, combined with the use of a series of repeated modules. Older buildings within the Village should be examined for cues of scale, building materials and details.

The use of quality materials and materials that lend an enduring quality to new buildings should be used on all buildings. Variations in roof forms and wall planes should further complement the building and add visual interest. Additional guidelines for quality architectural style and building design include:

- *Encourage buildings which do not exceed four stories in height in keeping with the character of the Village's older areas, and to maintain compatibility with adjacent residential properties.*
- *Should a building exceed three stories in height, step upper floors back from street level facades a minimum of 10 feet; terminate the building with a cornice or roof line that is viewable from the street.*
- *Distinguish the street level of the building from upper levels through the use of an intermediate cornice, a change in building materials and additional detailing.*
- *Buildings should be designed with a sense that street level and second stories are predominantly windows. Windows facing sidewalks, plazas or pocket parks should be transparent glass to maintain visibility. The use of mirrored, tinted or opaque glass should not be allowed.*
- *Buildings should have a strong pedestrian orientation with display windows, attractive detailing, and convenient and welcoming entrances oriented towards the corridor and pedestrian areas. Main building entrances should not be permitted off of side streets or the rear of the building.*
- *Encourage retail, dining and entertainment uses that open directly onto a public street or publicly accessible pedestrian way (rather than through an interior lobby).*
- *Orient pedestrian oriented uses toward a public plaza or outdoor space created adjacent to the building.*
- *Building entrances should be distinguished from the rest of the building façade.*
- *Use earth tones or muted colors on buildings; lighter colors or bright colors should be used only in minor accents. Colors may be further defined by the Village to achieve overall compatibility among buildings, with the overall goal being a composition which no single building stands out or overpowers the surrounding buildings.*
- *Encourage the development of usable rooftop spaces.*
- *Rooftop mechanical equipment and other objectionable elements should be screened from public view with materials that are architecturally consistent with the facades of the building. If a parapet is used for screening, its height should be included in the calculation of building height.*
- *Buildings should be designed with attention to the cornice or parapet in an effort to build consistency with the Village's historic buildings; contemporary interpretations of the parapet are encouraged.*
- *Long, blank facades which are visible from public rights-of-way should not be allowed. Facades greater than fifty (50') feet in length should incorporate recesses and projections along the façade.*
- *Significant architectural elements should be highlighted with subtle building lighting; light fixtures should be designed and oriented to produce minimal glare and spillover onto nearby properties.*



Section 5:

Madison Street Corridor

The Madison Street Corridor is characterized by a number of single and multi-tenant retail establishments, rental and owner-occupied multi-family residential, service uses, and institutional/civic uses

Breit and Clean Cleaners and Breit & Johnson Sports - a new planned development on Madison Street.

A key redevelopment site along Madison Street.

The Madison Street Corridor presents a tremendous opportunity for the Village to improve its tax base, improve the overall appearance and image of the community, and create a more attractive and viable commercial/mixed-use environment. The Corridor is located at the southern edge of River Forest and shares the south side of the corridor and areas east of Lathrop Avenue with the Village of Forest Park. The pedestrian friendly 'main street' qualities that characterize Forest Park's Madison Street tend to give way to a more auto-oriented retail environment as Madison Street travels west of Des Plaines Avenue and into River Forest.

The building stock is predominantly dated to the mid-twentieth century with majority of buildings being constructed in the 1950's and 60's. Streetscaping and landscaping are minimal within the Madison Street Corridor creating a relatively uninviting environment for potential patrons and local businesses. All parcels within the corridor were originally zoned Commercial (C2), however there are several planned developments now in place. The Madison Street Corridor is characterized by a number of single and multi-tenant retail establishments, rental and owner-occupied multi-family residential, service uses, and institutional/civic uses. Commercial properties along the corridor have a relatively shallow lot depth and are bordered to the north by established single-family residential neighborhoods.

The Madison Street Corridor Plan focuses on improving the appearance and function of the corridor and identifies redevelopment opportunities and strategies that can transform the corridor's overall character and environment. The primary goal of the Village should be to work creatively and cooperatively with property owners and developers to realize desirable and viable redevelopment, install streetscape improvements to improve the appearance and safety of the public/pedestrian realm, and make modifications to the roadway to improve the safety and operations of the Corridor. The commercial and multi-family use areas along Madison Street are expected to change significantly over time. The established single-family residential neighborhoods located north of the commercial corridor are expected to remain.

This section contains the following:

- Existing Conditions Analysis
- Corridor Land Use Plan
- Development Pattern
- Key Redevelopment Sites
- Illustrative Development Concepts
- Beautification Framework
- Roadway Improvements
- Transportation Framework Plan

8020 W Madison
Use - Civic Center
Zoning - C2 (PD 2420)
Comp Plan - Public/Semi-Public
Height - 1 story

1 N Gale
Use - Multi-Family Residential
Zoning - C2 (PD 2299)
Comp Plan - Multi-Family Residential
Height - 5 stories
Age - 18 years

7952-7956 W Madison
Use - Multi-Family Residential
Zoning - C2
Comp Plan - Commercial/Multi-Family
Height - 3 stories
Age - 41 years

THATCHER AVENUE TO GALE AVENUE

The River Forest Civic Center comprises the block located between Thatcher and Gale Avenues . Roughly two-thirds of the block is covered by the 1960's-era building while the remaining portion serves as a parking lot for visitors to the center.

Urban Design / Landscaping
The parking lot area is devoid of landscaping and is directly adjacent the sidewalk along both Thatcher Avenue and Madison Street. There is no landscaping or streetscaping to screen the parking area or delineate between the parking area and sidewalk.

Traffic Flow / Parking
The civic center's parking lot is accessed via two drives from Gale Avenue. A covered walkway leads from the parking lot to the building's entrance along Madison Street. There is no vehicular access from Madison Street.

GALE AVENUE TO KEYSTONE AVENUE

A five-story condominium building that was constructed in 1990 is located on the northeast corner of Gale Avenue and Madison Street. Adjacent this building, on the northwest corner of Keystone Avenue and Madison Street is an older three-story condominium building from the 1960's.

Urban Design / Landscaping
The mid-rise condominium building abuts Madison Street and faces north while two rows of townhomes to the north form an interior courtyard. The courtyard and right-of-way areas located adjacent the sidewalk are heavily landscaped with a mix of deciduous trees and conifers. The small side yard and front walkway adjacent the multi-family building to the east are fenced using a low-profile wrought iron fence with a pair of mature trees located adjacent the Keystone Avenue sidewalk. This building has two front entrances along Madison Street where landscaping is limited to some low-lying shrubs.

Traffic Flow / Parking
The mid-rise building residents access an enclosed, lower level parking garage using two drives from Madison Street. The residents of the multi-family building to the east utilize a parking area located in middle of the block that is accessed via Madison Street. An alleyway bisects the block and is flanked by the mid-rise condominium building and townhomes to the west and the two-story multi-family building parking area on the east.

7900 W Madison
Use - Commercial (Retail)
Zoning - C2 (PD 2899)
Comp Plan - Commercial
Height - 1 story
Age - 4 years

7820 W Madison
Use - Commercial (Retail)
Zoning - C2
Comp Plan - Commercial
Height - 1 story
Age - 40 years

KEYSTONE AVENUE TO FOREST AVENUE

A recently opened garden center and café occupies the block between Keystone and Forest Avenues. The site was previously a parking lot for the civic center.

Urban Design / Landscaping
The garden center has a wrought iron fence around its perimeter that allows those passing by to view the center's current outdoor offerings. The center also has a well landscaped sign that occupies the center of a small plaza that sits adjacent the Madison Street sidewalk. The parking lot has landscaped islands as well as perimeter landscaping.

Traffic Flow / Parking
The garden center has a surface parking lot for its patrons on the northwest corner of Forest Avenue and Madison Street. Ingress and egress are provided by a drive on both Madison Street and Forest Avenue.

FOREST AVENUE TO THE RAILROAD

The Hines Lumber Co. (1968) operates a home center and lumber yard on the block located between Forest Avenue and railroad tracks to the east. The railroad tracks are operated by Canadian National and cross Madison Street at-grade.

Urban Design / Landscaping
With the exception of a strip of lawn between Forest Avenue and the sidewalk, the Hines property is devoid of landscaping. The building sits immediately adjacent to the Madison Street sidewalk, but the only entrance into the building is provided on the west side of the building. The curb height is minimal in this portion of the corridor such that the roadway is nearly even with the sidewalk. There is no streetscaping or parking available to buffer pedestrians from Madison Street traffic.

Traffic Flow / Parking
The home center fronts Forest Avenue with dual rows of parking in front and an access drives along Madison Street for use by patrons and deliveries on either side of the buildings. On-site parking is located in front of the building along Forest Avenue. One curb cut exists on Forest Avenue and two on Madison Street. The easternmost curb cut is primarily for loading and storage purposes.

7800 W Madison
Use - Multi-Family Residential
Zoning - C2 (PD 3091)
Comp Plan - Commercial/Multi-Family
Height - 3 stories
Age - 2 year

7762-7774 W Madison
Use - Multi-Family Residential
Zoning - C2
Comp Plan - Commercial/Multi-Family
Height - 3 stories
Age - 47 years

7756 W Madison
Use - Commercial (Retail/Office)
Zoning - C2 (PD 2197)
Comp Plan - Commercial
Height - 1 story
Age - 23 years

THE RAILROAD TO PARK AVENUE

To the east of the tracks, the northwest corner of Madison Street and Park Avenue is occupied by a new townhome development.

Urban Design / Landscaping
The development is oriented toward Park Avenue with the rear of some of the residential units addressing Madison Street. A wrought iron fence and landscaping are used to separate the residential property from the Madison Street sidewalk. Landscaping along Madison Street is sparce due to overhead utilities and small setbacks.

Traffic Flow / Parking
The building is surrounded by a service drive that residents use to enter their rear loading garages. This drive has two exits both along Park Avenue. Residents utilize a central walkway leading from Park Avenue to enter their units from the front.

PARK AVENUE TO FRANKLIN AVENUE

A cluster of four, three-story apartment buildings stretch along the corridor to the east of Park Avenue. These aging buildings are of similar architectural style to that of the apartment building further west at Keystone Avenue. Comprising the eastern portion of this block, on the northwest corner of Franklin Avenue and Madison Street, is a retail strip center. The center's tenants include two medical offices, a pharmacy, a medical supply store, a discount cigarette shop, and a cash and loan store.

Urban Design / Landscaping
The multi-family buildings are clustered tightly together with minimal landscaping in between. The adjacent shopping center also has minimal landscaping limited to low shrubs along the western edge of the property and a pair of low plantings on either side of the parking lot entry from Franklin Avenue. There is no delineation between the parking area and sidewalk.

Traffic Flow / Parking
All buildings within the block abut an alleyway that provides access to a surface parking lot for residents and a rear loading area for businesses in the strip center. Parking for patrons of the strip center is provided by a front loading surface lot with access from both Madison Street and Franklin Avenue.

7722 W Madison
Use - Commercial (Retail/Service)
Zoning - C2 (PD 3121)
Comp Plan - Commercial
Height - 1 story
Age - 2 years

7716 W Madison
Use - Commercial (Office)
Zoning - C2 (PD 2226)
Comp Plan - Commercial
Height - 1 story
Age - 38 years

7706-7708 W Madison
Use - Commercial (Retail)
Zoning - C2
Comp Plan - Commercial
Height - 1 story
Age - 50 years

7700 W Madison
Use - Commercial (Office)
Zoning - C2
Comp Plan - Commercial
Height - 1 story
Age - 68 years

FRANKLIN AVENUE TO ASHLAND AVENUE

A recently constructed commercial building houses a sporting goods store and cleaners on the northeast corner of Franklin Avenue and Ashland Avenue. The remainder of the block located between Franklin and Ashland Avenues is comprised of three single-story commercial buildings. A medical research firm occupies the office building on the west, a sporting goods store occupies the central building, and a dental office is located at the east end on the northwest corner of Ashland Avenue and Madison Street.

Urban Design / Landscaping
The newer building on the northeast corner of Madison Street and Franklin Avenue has a wrought iron fence and landscaping along the parking area and perimeter of the site. The building is set back from the sidewalk, unlike the remainder of the block. The older buildings on the eastern portion of the block form a consistent streetwall. Landscaping is limited to a row of trees on the eastern end of the block adjacent Ashland Avenue. Streetscaping is also minimal with no parkway between the sidewalk and roadway.

Traffic Flow / Parking
The building to the west provides customer parking in the front with access via Franklin and an exit on Ashland Avenues. The other three buildings have surface parking available in the rear with access provided by an alley-way and a mid-block drive. On-street, parallel parking is also provided along this portion of Madison Street.

7620 W Madison
Use - Commercial (Office)
Zoning - C2
Comp Plan - Commercial
Height - 1 story

7614 - 7616 W Madison
Use - Commercial (Office)
Zoning - C2
Comp Plan - Commercial
Height - 1 story

7610-7612 W Madison
Use - Mixed-Use (Residential/Office)
Zoning - C2
Comp Plan - Commercial
Height - 2 story

7600 W Madison
Use - Commercial (Service)
Zoning - C2
Comp Plan - Commercial
Height - 1 story
Age - 94 years

ASHLAND AVENUE TO LATHROP AVENUE

A social services agency operates from the single-story office building that occupies the northeast corner of Ashland Avenue and Madison Street. To the east of that building is a pair of currently vacant, single-story commercial buildings. These are located adjacent a pair of smaller, traditional, mixed-use buildings that offer ground floor commercial space with residential units above. Commercial space in one of these buildings is vacant while the other houses an insurance agency. The streetwall established by these buildings ends where an automotive repair shop occupies the northwest corner of Lathrop Avenue and Madison Street.

Urban Design / Landscaping
The buildings within the western portion of the block form a consistent streetwall along Madison Street. The two mixed-use buildings mimic the traditional architecture found to the east and south in Forest Park. The age of these buildings is unknown as they were listed as exempt properties by the Cook County Assessor. Like elsewhere along Madison Street, there is no parkway, streetscaping, or landscaping improvements along this stretch of the Corridor. The auto repair facility is particularly unsightly due to the appearance of the building and unscreened outdoor storage of vehicles.

Traffic Flow / Parking
The automotive repair shop is located away from the street and accommodates parking along both Madison Street and Lathrop Avenue. Parking for the buildings to the west is provided by surface lots in the rear that are accessed via an alleyway that runs the length of the block. On-street, parallel parking is also provided along this portion of Madison Street.

Madison Street Land Use Plan

The primary land use objective for the Madison Street Corridor is to maximize commercial land use and development, providing a sound mix of uses, with a preference for retail and restaurant. Mixed-use development, with commercial on the ground floor with residential and/or office on the upper floors, is also desirable although limited parcel size and depth make such development especially challenging. New "stand alone"/ ground floor residential is not recommended as it does not reinforce the objective of maximizing the commercial potential of the Corridor. All land use and development within the Corridor should be implemented in a manner that reinforces a pedestrian environment with building orientation toward Madison Street.

The paragraphs below describe the desired land use and development for the Madison Street Corridor on a block-by-block basis. A map of the recommended land use is provided on the following page, along with a brief description of the different land use designation categories.

Lathrop to Ashland

This is a key block within the corridor as it serves as the eastern gateway into the Village. Redevelopment of this block is essential to successfully extending the pedestrian-oriented mixed-use atmosphere that exits east of Des Plaines Avenue. It is the recommendation of this Plan that the block be targeted for coordinated retail or mixed-use development. If the block does redevelop, the streetwall development pattern, buildings at or near the sidewalk, should be maintained.

Although the block currently includes viable operating businesses, relocation of these properties and redeveloping the block would serve as a catalyst for the corridor. Market forces, incentives, relocation assistance, willing participation of business and property owners, and other cooperative or market approaches should serve as the means to redevelop the block. "Forcing" existing businesses to leave via condemnation or other more forceful methods is not recommended. Such an undertaking will require the creative cooperation and coordination of several parties, including existing businesses and property owners, developers, and the Village.

Pete's Automotive Services is a well respected and appreciated business in the community. However, the nature of the business requires that numerous cars be stored outside on the site in plain sight. No screening or fencing of outdoor storage is provided. This makes for an unattractive gateway into the Village and the use itself is not particularly compatible with restaurants, quality retail, and an overall pedestrian environment. It is inconsistent with the development pattern to the south, east, and west along Madison Street. Relocation of the business to a different/better location within the Village or nearby community would be preferred, possibly as part of a new development on the Hines Lumber site (this concept is further explored on page 50). If the use is to remain, the Village should consider developing new zoning regulations for screening of outdoor storage in a way that would improve the appearance and operations of the site.
The remainder of the block from Pete's west to Ashland is also a prime candidate for redevelopment as commercial retail of mixed-use. The Lutheran Family Services buildings add little vitality or interest to the corridor and occupy a potentially strategic retail location along the corridor.

Ashland to Franklin

The corner of Madison and Franklin is home to the relatively recent dry cleaning/sporting goods store development. The new development provides high quality building materials and design and parking lot screening and landscaping. The development serves as a model of quality materials and application and has been noted by other business within the corridor as an attractive development that "raises the bar" for the corridor. The areas of the block east of this new development contain a medical lab, Gunzo's (a regional destination for hockey equipment sales and repair), and a dental/medical building. All of these uses are appropriate for the corridor, but the buildings are unattractive and provide little architectural interest and do not contribute to an engaging pedestrian environment. Should this section of the block redevelop, efforts should be taken to incorporate the existing uses into the new development, ideally with retail uses on the ground floor and office uses above.

Franklin to Park

The existing commercial "strip center" suffers from an overall unattractive appearance. If the existing buildings are to remain, efforts should be made to improve the appearance of the building, landscaping, and sites. The surface parking lot serving the commercial use should be improved with perimeter landscaping and wrought iron fencing detail, similar to the treatment installed at the dry cleaners to the east. The building itself could be improved with a uniform building sign application and façade updating and treatment. If the site redevelops, commercial/retail/mixed-use would be appropriate. If the multi-family uses west of the commercial building redevelop, commercial/retail// mixed use is recommended. The older residential structures should not be replaced with new residential development. Residential units may be an upper floor component of a mixed-use development with commercial on the ground floor, but ground floor and stand alone residential development is not recommended.

Park to Railroad

This block contains a relatively new 6-unit townhouse development. Unfortunately, the orientation of the building puts the garage/rear elevation facing Madison Street, which is less than ideal. The Village should work with the property owners to improve the level of screening and attractiveness provided by the landscaping along Madison Street and Park Avenue. Consideration should also be given to utilizing a new color for the garage doors facing Madison Street. The existing white color of the garage doors increases the prominence and presence of the doors along the corridor.

Railroad to Forest

The Hines Lumber is closing their operations on the site and the property is for sale. The site is a priority redevelopment for the Madison Street Corridor and could serve as a catalyst for corridor improvement. The site is the largest on the corridor and provides an excellent opportunity for new development. Due to the size of the site, it can accommodate a variety of development options, including a larger single building and tenant or multiple buildings and uses. A variety of conceptual development scenarios for the site are explored on page 50 of this document. The site should be developed as commercial or mixed-use, with a strong preference for retail or restaurant. However, other potentially desirable uses could include a relocated Pete's Automotive (which would then allow for the redevelopment of the corner of Lathrop and Madison) or commercial along Madison Street with residential uses on the north end of the property.

To the north of Hines Lumber is the Village Public Works garage and north of that is the vacant Oilily office building. While it is anticipated that the Public Works facility will remain, the Oilily site is appropriate for office or public facility reuse of the existing structure, or residential redevelopment of the site. The adaptive reuse of the existing structure for the Park District Headquarters would be an ideal use for the site.

Forest to Keystone

This block contains a greenhouse and garden center use that occupies the entire block. This block should remain a unified commercial development.

Keystone to Gale

This block front contains two multi-family residential developments, the River Commons condominium development and a smaller apartment building on the eastern portion of the block. The River Commons condominium, on the northeast corner of Madison Street and Gale Avenue, is considered an asset to the community, and reflects the high quality and character of River Forest. The development extends well into the single-family area to the north, but has been designed and landscaped to be compatible with the surrounding uses.

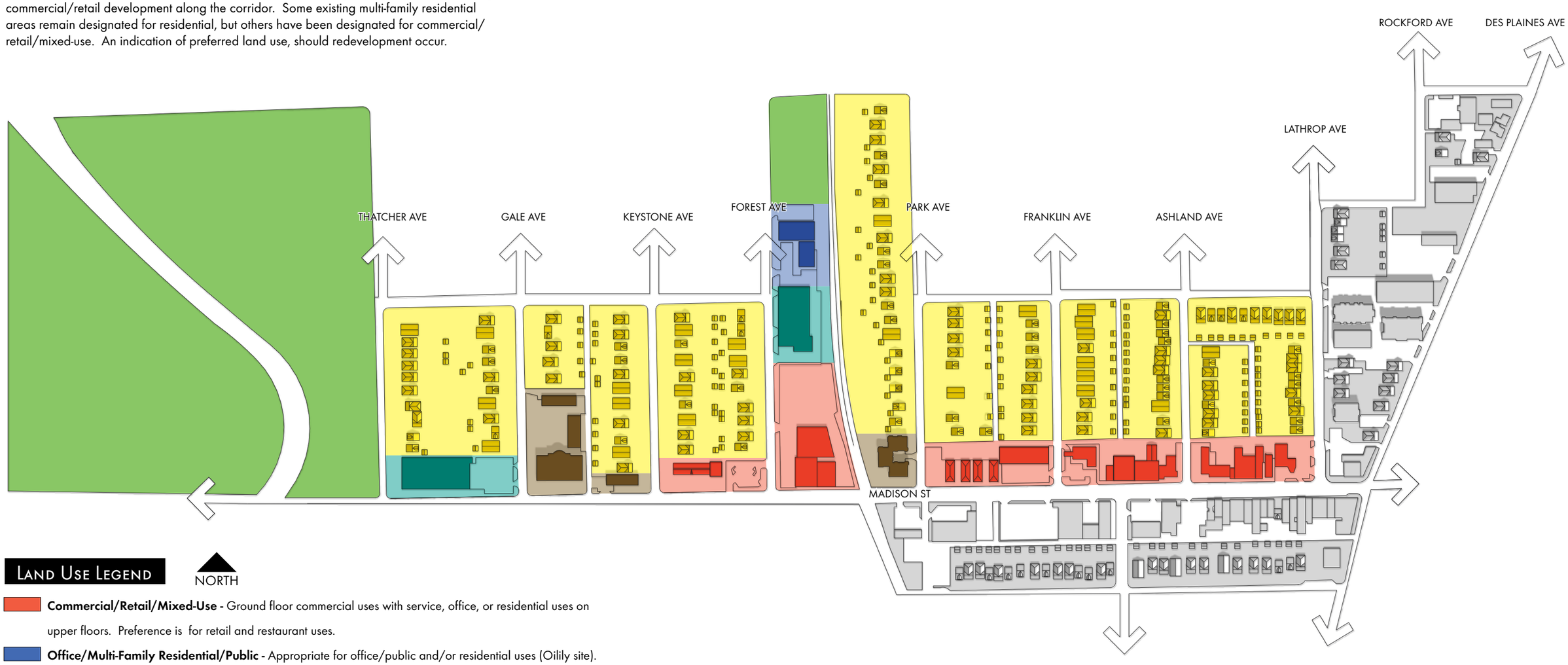
The appearance and condition and of the apartment building on the east half of this block has been improved in recent years and should continue to be maintained and upgraded. Unlike the "deep" development of the River Commons, the smaller condominium building is located only on the shallow lot fronting Madison Street.
The River Commons property is designated as multi-family as is the smaller apartment building to the east. Due to is small size and very shallow lot depth, commercial redevelopment of the apartment property is unlikely.

Gale to Thatcher

The Community Center, which occupies the entire block frontage, is an asset to the Madison Street corridor and the River Forest community. It is a stable use that attracts residents from throughout the Village as well as from neighboring communities. It is not anticipated or recommended that the Community Center site be redeveloped for another use, or be expanded to the north beyond its existing property. To improve the appearance of the block, the existing Community Center parking lot should be improved with both perimeter and internal landscaping, possibly incorporating decorative wrought iron fencing as well.

Land Use Plan

The Land Use Plan for the Madison Street Corridor consists of five (5) different land use category designations. The designations contained on the map do not necessarily reflect the current use of the properties along the Corridor, but rather, indicate the desired and planned use of the properties. The land use designations reflect the Village's emphasis on prioritizing commercial/retail development along the corridor. Some existing multi-family residential areas remain designated for residential, but others have been designated for commercial/retail/mixed-use. An indication of preferred land use, should redevelopment occur.



Land Use Legend

NORTH

- **Commercial/Retail/Mixed-Use -** Ground floor commercial uses with service, office, or residential uses on upper floors. Preference is for retail and restaurant uses.
- **Office/Multi-Family Residential/Public -** Appropriate for office/public and/or residential uses (Oilily site).
- **Multi-Family Residential -** Townhomes and/or condominiums.
- **Single-Family Residential -** Single-family detached residential.
- **Public/Semi-Public -** Public facilities and institutions (Community Center; Public Works Garage)
- **Open Space/Forest Preserve -** Areas designated specifically for open space, parks, and forest preserve.
- **Village of Forest Park**

Maintaining a Streetwall Along Madison Street

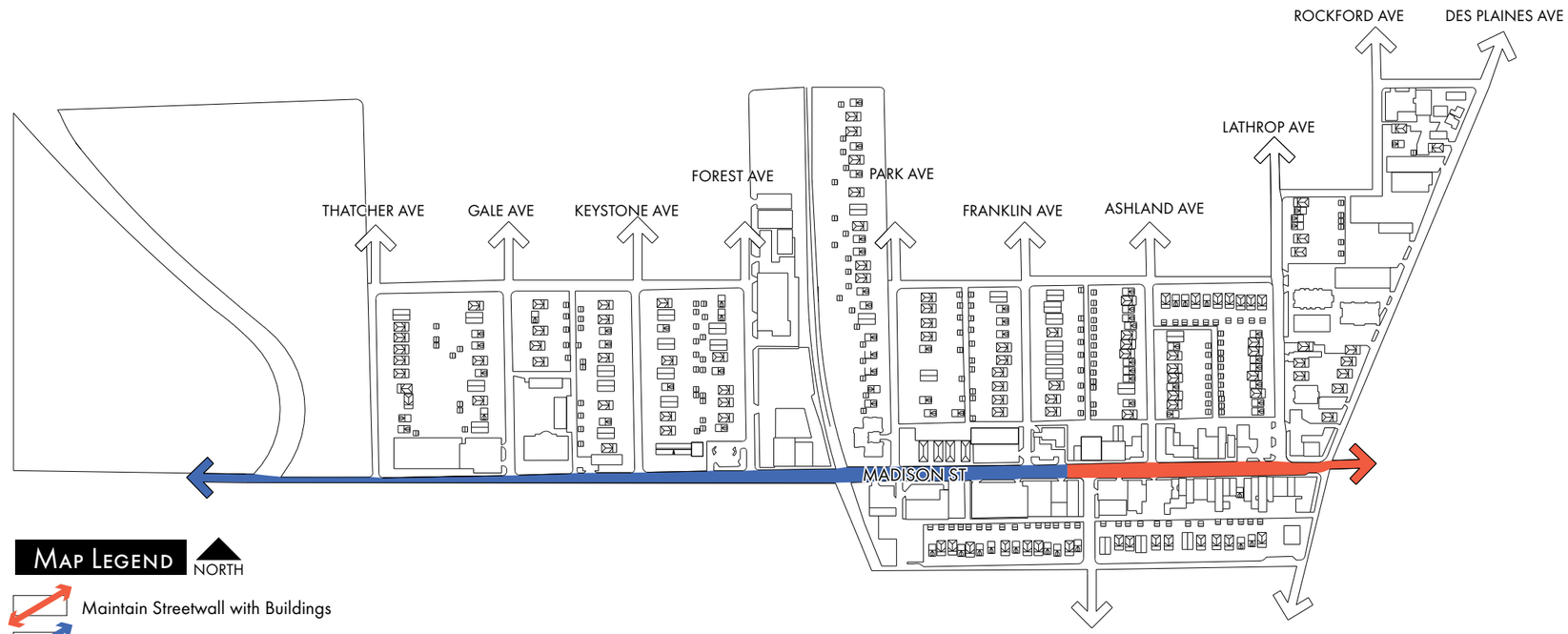
A key design recommendation for the Madison Street Corridor is the maintenance of a traditional streetwall, particularly for the areas west of Franklin Avenue. A streetwall is the term used to describe a continuous row of buildings, side-by-side, that have the front of the buildings at or near the sidewalk, as is the case along Madison Street east of Des Plaines Avenue. The success of Madison Street as a pedestrian-oriented corridor can be undermined by a discontinuous streetwall that provides large gaps between building, buildings setback a substantially from the sidewalk, and parking areas adjacent to sidewalks without perimeter landscaping, fencing, or screening. Where a streetwall is maintained, a more inviting pedestrian environment is provided.

Certain portions along Madison Street are unique in the Village because a streetwall is provided on both sides of the street. A streetwall along only one side of the street lacks the impact and pedestrian sense of place that is provided by opposing streetwalls. For this reason, it is especially important to maintain a traditional building streetwall along the north side of Madison Street in River Forest. The south side of Madison Street east of Jackson Avenue is in the Village of Forest Park and maintains a traditional building streetwall. All redevelopment and improvement east of the dry cleaners along the north side of Madison Street should provide and enhance a traditional building streetwall along Madison Street.

Maintaining an attractive streetwall will create a "Main Street" type atmosphere that is more appealing and creates a better pedestrian atmosphere. Pedestrian amenities, in combination with a strong streetwall, can be a powerful tool in enhancing the character and experience of the Madison Street corridor. An attractive and effective streetwall is further enhanced by incorporation of the following:

- Windows on the ground floor.
- High quality materials and architecture.
- Attractive lighting fixtures at a pedestrian scale.
- Attractive, high quality signage.
- Crosswalks with clear demarcation.
- Landscaping/Streetscaping elements.

Although it is desirable to maintain a streetwall of some kind along the entire Corridor, maintaining a building streetwall west of Franklin Avenue is less important, as no building streetwall is maintained on the south side of the street. In fact, much of the south side of the corridor has parking lots and open space (cemetery) fronting the corridor. For properties west of Franklin Avenue where a building streetwall cannot be maintained, a streetwall of landscaping, decorative fencing, and low masonry/stone walls should be utilized. These amenities will separate parking lots from the adjacent sidewalk in an attractive manner, and enhance the pedestrian atmosphere of the corridor.



Map Legend NORTH

Maintain Streetwall with Buildings

Maintain Streetwall with Combination of Buildings, Perimeter Fencing and Landscaping

This photo of Lake Street in River Forest illustrates a successful streetwall with many unique pedestrian amenities incorporated. In locations where the streetwall varies in depth, a streetwall is maintained through quality wrought iron fencing and landscaping.

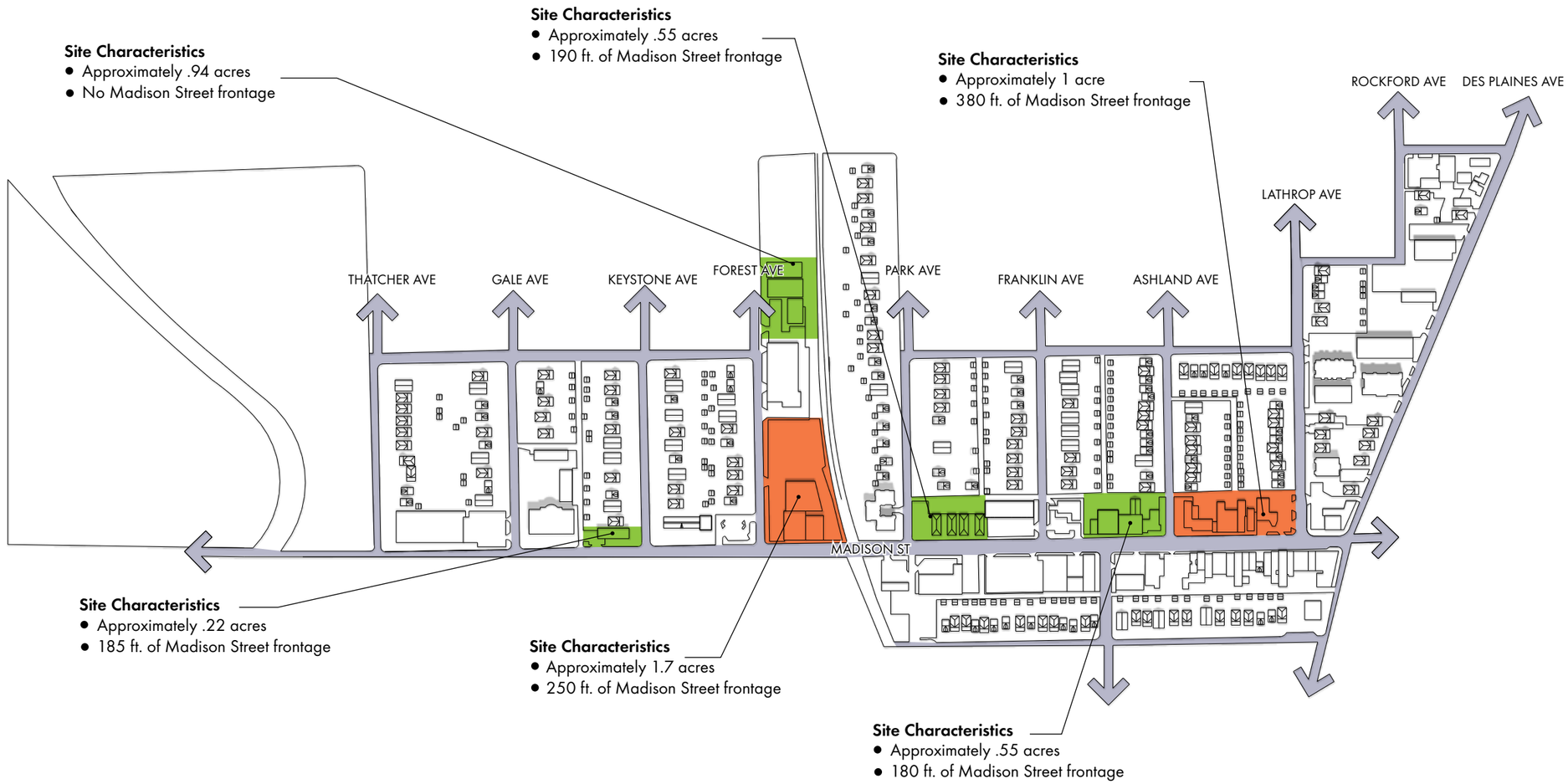
Key Redevelopment Sites

Currently, there is an opportunity for revitalization and redevelopment of several vacant or underutilized properties along the Madison Street Corridor. Although changes in land use are recommended to occur throughout much of the Corridor over time, two priority redevelopment sites and four secondary redevelopment sites have been identified.

Although any site could be a candidate for redevelopment given the right circumstances, the identified sites represent properties that are currently for sale, are home to incompatible and/or undesirable uses, or consist of buildings that are dated, under parked, or suffering from functional obsolescence.

The Priority Redevelopment Sites include (1) the block between Lathrop and Ashland and (2) the Hines Lumber site, and represent catalytic development opportunities that can begin to dramatically transform the overall character of the Corridor. The Secondary Redevelopment Sites include areas that have a likely potential for redevelopment but would likely provide a lesser impact that the priority sites.

Alley shifting, use of cul-de-sacs, and commercial expansion should be evaluated as potential development incentives in key locations.



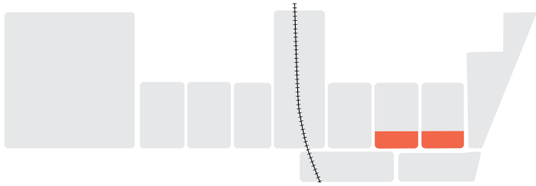
Map legend

NORTH

- Priority Redevelopment Sites
- Secondary Redevelopment Sites
- Local Roadways

Illustrative Development Considerations

Lathrop Avenue to Franklin Avenue



Existing Configuration

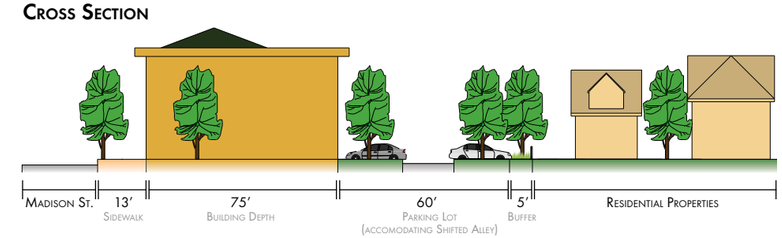
Redevelopment Option A

This concept illustrates a potential redevelopment scenario for the block between Lathrop and Ashland Avenues. The concept shows the existing building remaining on the block between Ashland Avenue and Franklin Avenue. Although this concept shows the redevelopment of an entire block, it maintains the alley in its current location and does not include a cul-de-sac on Ashland Avenue. This concept shows a building with approximately 23,000 square feet of floor area and 72 off-street parking spaces.

Redevelopment Option B

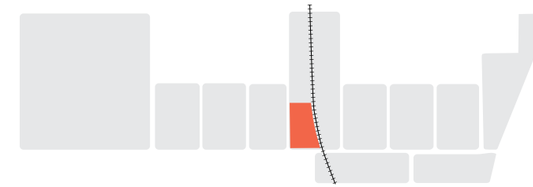
This redevelopment concept illustrates a possible redevelopment scenario if a cul-de-sac was installed on Ashland Avenue, the alley was shifted to the south, and both blocks, Lathrop to Ashland and Ashland to Franklin were redeveloped in a coordinated fashion. The surface parking provided in the rear of the site is sufficient to provide parking for ground floor retail and dining establishments, but would not provide enough parking to accommodate upper floor residential and office uses. Parking for upper floor uses would likely need to be provided in a parking garage below ground. This concept shows 34,000 square feet of floor area and 134 off-street parking spaces for the two blocks.

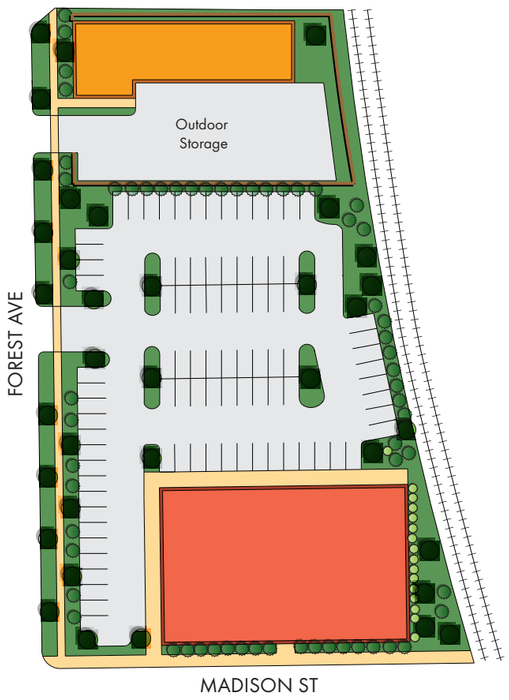
Cross Section



Illustrative Development Considerations

Hines Lumber Site

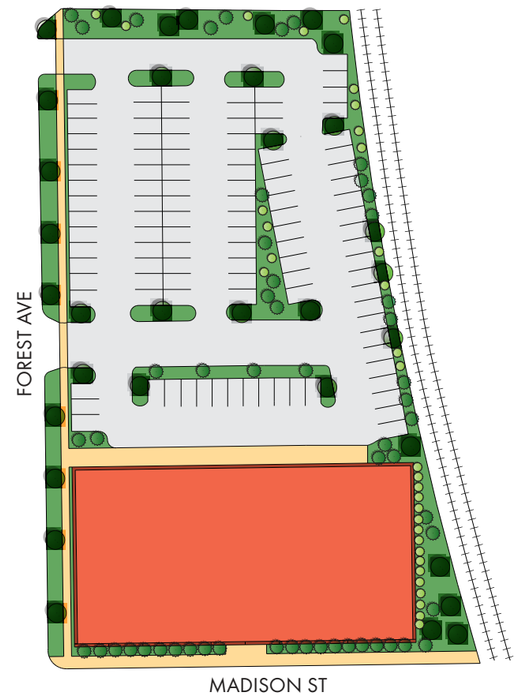




Redevelopment Option A

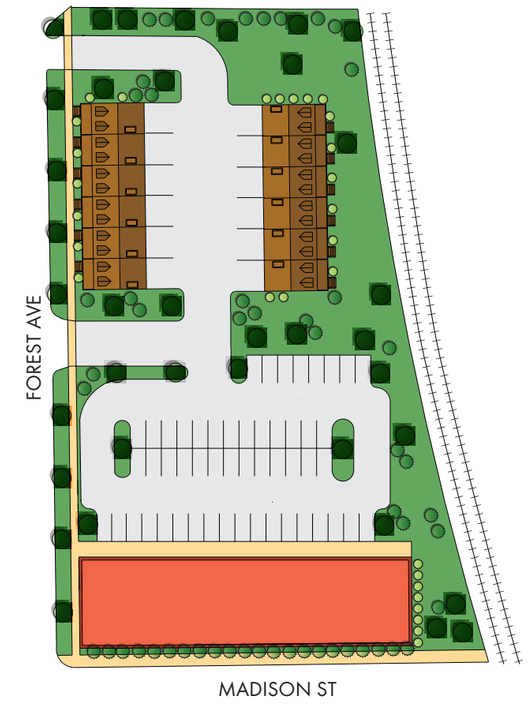
Redevelopment Option A illustrates an approximately 15,225 square foot commercial retail building fronting Madison Street with parking provided at the rear of the building. A retail building this size would require approximately 61 parking spaces at a parking ratio of 4 parking spaces per 1000 square feet of floor area. This concept provides 80 parking spaces, providing greater flexibility depending on the type of retail or restaurant use proposed.

Relocated Pete's Automotive is situated on approximately 20,550 square feet of land along the north portion of the site, with a 5,350 square foot building. Pete's Automotive is currently situated on approximately 15,000 square feet of land on the northwest corner of Madison Street and Lathrop Avenue. Should the business decide to relocate, approximately 5,500 square feet of land and 1,000 square feet of building space would be gained through this concept. The use would be situated adjacent to the Village's Public Works facilities. Extensive landscaping and fencing would screen the outdoor storage areas and create an attractive and heavily landscaped site perimeter.



Redevelopment Option B

Redevelopment Option B maximizes the commercial potential of the site. A 24,000 square foot commercial retail building fronts Madison Street, with parking provided in the rear of the site. Using a parking ratio of 4 parking spaces per 1000 square feet of commercial space, 96 parking spaces are required. This concept provides 103 parking spaces in an attractively landscaped site.

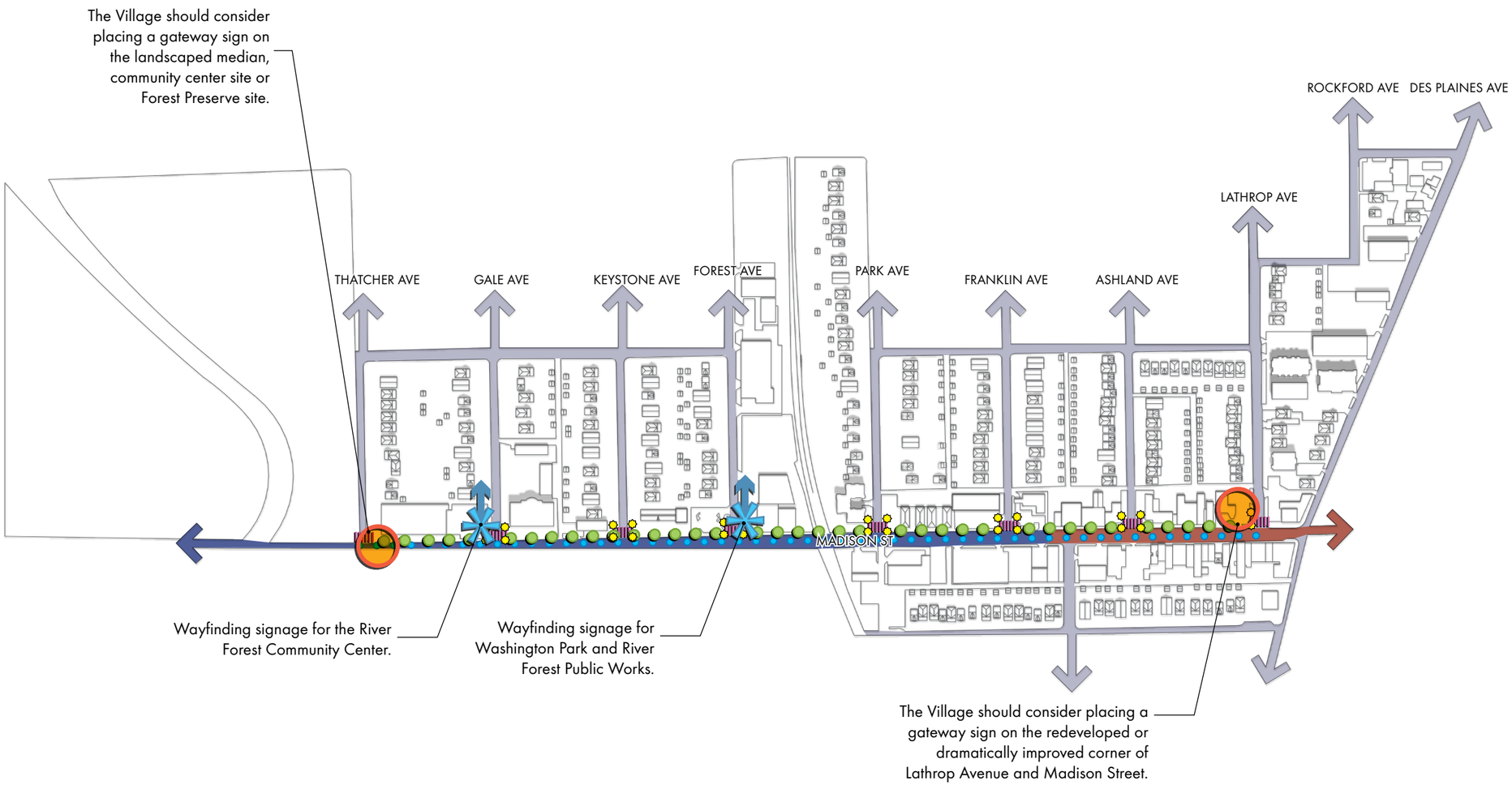


Redevelopment Option C

Redevelopment Option C incorporates commercial retail space and multi-family housing on the redevelopment site. An 11,250 square foot commercial retail building fronts Madison Street, and 12 row-home units with rear-loaded garages are located on the northern portion of the site. The multi-family housing provides increased compatibility with adjacent residential areas along Forest Avenue. Using a parking ratio of 4 parking spaces per 1000 square feet of floor area, 45 parking spaces would be required for the site. This Concept provides 52 parking spaces.

Beautification Framework

Utilizing the primary streetscape and beautification components presented in Section 4, this Beautification Framework Plan identifies the recommended locations for the different streetscape components. The specific/exact location of key components will likely required coordination with property owners and developers along the corridor to ensure appropriate integration. If implemented according to this framework, the recommended improvements could transform the appearance of the corridor.



Map legend

NORTH

- Gateway Signage
- Wayfinding Signage
- Crosswalk Enhancements
- Bollards
- Street Trees
- Village Banner Program
- Maintain Streetwall
- Streetwall to Vary in Depth
- Local Roadways

Transportation

Transportation Recommendations

Madison Street's existing roadway geometry can be modified to encourage a more pedestrian oriented streetscape and enhanced gateway to the Village of River Forest. Along the western half of the corridor, sufficient road width is available to accommodate a 12'-15'foot wide median that could serve as a suitable gateway for vehicles traveling eastbound on Madison Street. The landscaped median could also incorporate left hand turning lanes at key intersections to provide for safe and efficient vehicle movement through the corridor. Curbs and bump outs should be incorporated into any streetscape plan to provide more clearly defined on-street parking locations that the current roadway configuration.

From the Canadian National railroad tracks to Des Plaines Avenue, the existing streetscape can be upgraded with improved medians to prohibit dangerous turning movements and connect River Forest with the Village of Forest Park's streetscape improvements to the east. Programmed Improvements

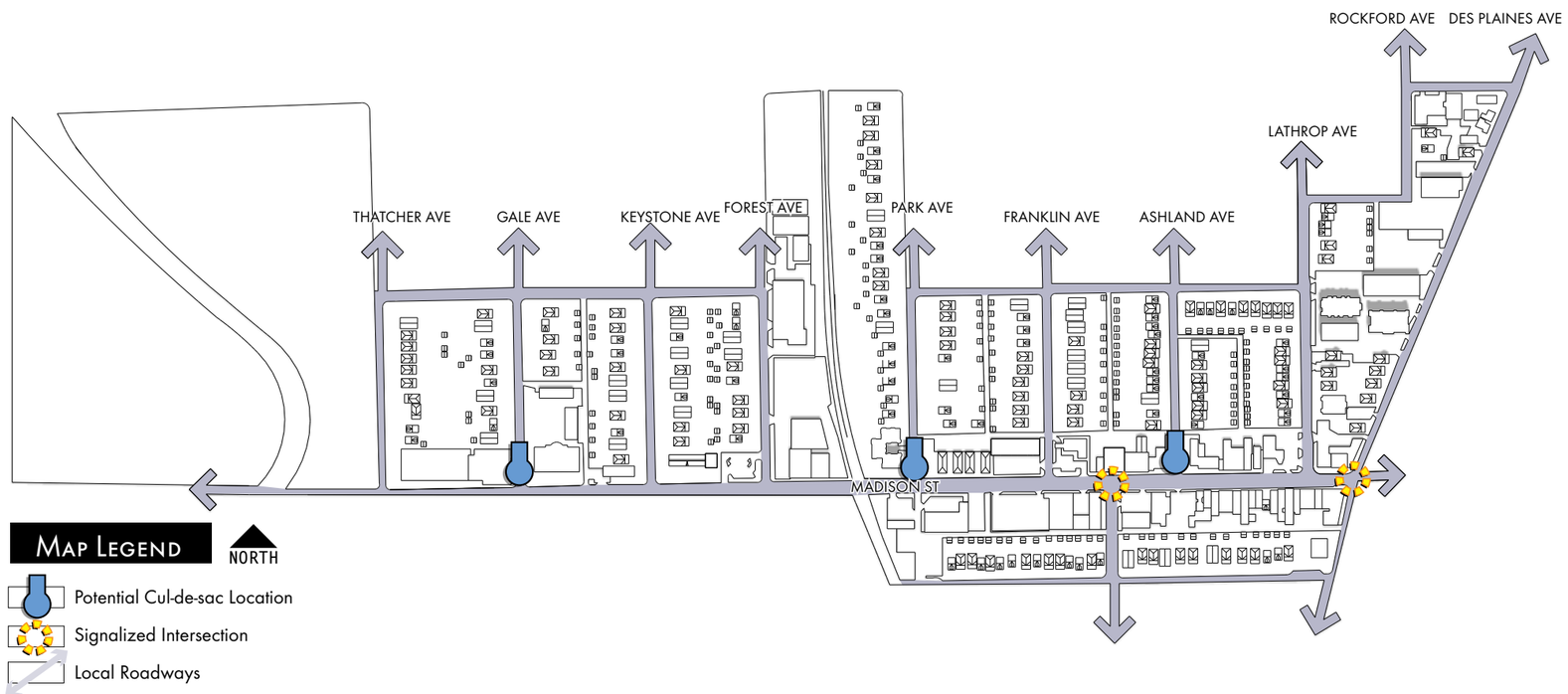
The Madison Street Transportation Plan encourages the exploration of creating cul-de-sacs on intersecting residential streets as a means of providing much needed parking and to serve as a development incentive. Creating cul-de-sacs is a concept outlined in Section 3: Development Strategy Considerations, that recommends restricting access from select side streets to major traffic corridors. It is used to improve the safety and efficiency of traffic flow throughout a corridor. Full access will instead by directed to larger through streets and those with signalized intersections. Creating cul-de-sacs will also provide additional public parking and increased development potential for adjacent commercial properties. The figure below highlights locations where the creation of cul-de-sacs would be beneficial in the Corridor. Roads that have not been designated as potential cul-de-sac locations serve as important through streets in the Village. Most have a viaduct at the north end, or provide access to an important community facility such as the River Forest Maintenance facility located on Forest Avenue.

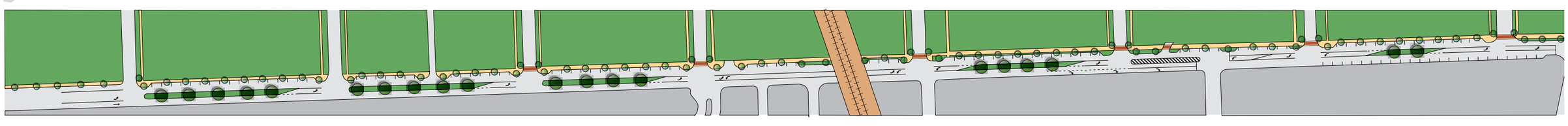
Short Term Transportation Improvements

- In conjunction with Forest Park and IDOT, install pedestrian countdown timers on Madison Street at Des Plaines Avenue.
- Develop a striping standard / striping program for pedestrian cross walks that have a higher level of visibility.
- Develop an interim striping plan for the corridor that would test the feasibility of adding a median along the corridor and reducing the number of travel lanes west of the Canadian National railroad tracks.
- Where possible, eliminate single lot curb cuts to small development parcels, in conjunction with redevelopment.

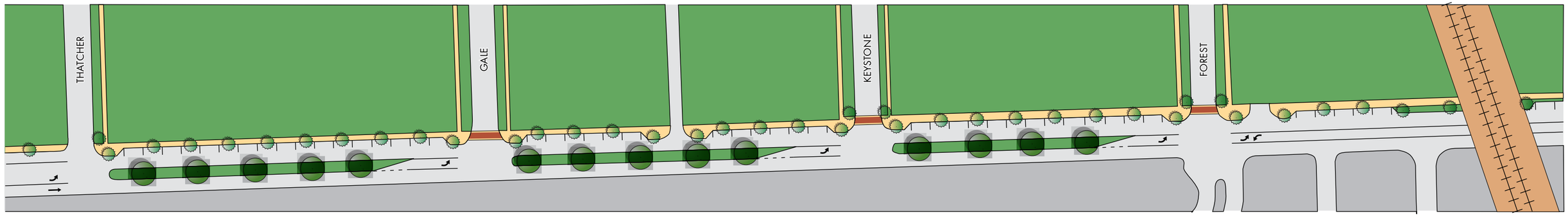
Long Term Transportation Improvements

- If validated by the interim striping plan, develop a streetscape enhancement program for the corridor which would include improved on-street parking areas, landscaped or paved medians, street trees and pedestrian scale lighting.
- Conduct a detailed study of adding a cul-de-sac and perpendicular parking at Ashland Avenue, in conjunction with redevelopment of the adjacent parcels.
- Install a second pedestrian crosswalk across Madison Street at Jackson Boulevard if the existing driveway on the north side of Madison Street can be closed.

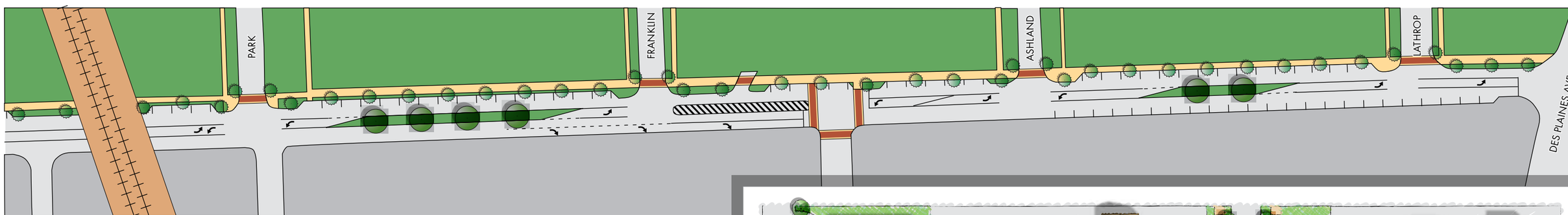




Roadway Improvements

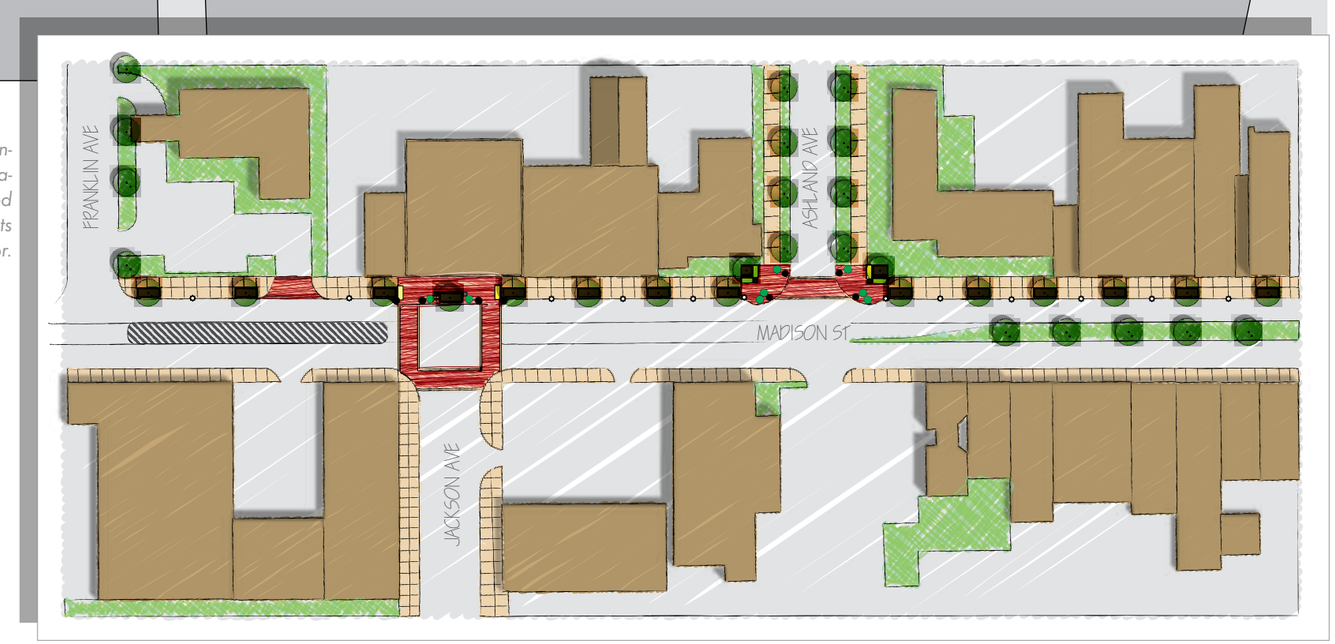


Thatcher Avenue to Railroad Right-of-way



Railroad Right-of-way to Des Plaines Avenue

The adjacent figure illustrates a conceptual rendering of how transportation improvements will be combined with streetscaping improvements along the Madison Street Corridor.



Section 6:

North Avenue Corridor

the Corridor experiences an average of 35,000 vehicles a day making it the most heavily trafficked corridor in River Forest

Grandma Sally's Restaurant on North Avenue.

View looking southwest from the intersection of Monroe Avenue and North Avenue.

The North Avenue Corridor is a heavily trafficked Strategic Regional Arterial (SRA). North Avenue runs the length of River Forest's northern border and adjoins the community of Elmwood Park. Between Harlem and Thatcher Avenues, the Corridor experiences an average of 35,000 vehicles a day making it the most heavily trafficked corridor in River Forest. Residential uses are most prominent on the western third of the Corridor where multi-family buildings front both the north and south sides of the street. As one travels east, these residential uses give way to a commercial corridor with a mix of retail, office and service uses.

Development along the corridor is challenging due to the shallow lot depths, adjacent residential neighborhoods, existing built-out development pattern, and access issues related to the volume and speed of corridor traffic. Commercial uses should remain the priority along North Avenue, with residential uses remaining in their current locations or as part of the upper floors of mixed-use development. Similar to the other corridors, North Avenue presents a tremendous opportunity to improve the overall appearance and character of the Village. Also similar to other corridors, revitalization and successful redevelopment along the Corridor will likely require a creative and cooperative approach involving the Village, property owners, and developers.

This section contains the following:

- Existing Conditions Analysis
- Corridor Land Use Plan
- Key Redevelopment Sites
- Illustrative Development Concepts
- Beautification Framework Plan
- Transportation Plan – Cul-de-Sac and Parking Configuration Options

7227 W North ave
Use - Commercial (Retail/Service)
Zoning - C1
Comp Plan - Commercial
Height - 1 story
Age - 43 years

7225 W North ave
Use - Commercial (Restaurant)
Zoning - C1
Comp Plan - Commercial
Height - 1 story
Age - 58 years

7201 W North ave
Use - Commercial (Service)
Zoning - C1 (PD 2374)
Comp Plan - Commercial
Height - 1 story
Age - 31 years

7329 W North ave
Use - Commercial (Service)
Zoning - C1
Comp Plan - Commercial
Height - 1 story
Age - 57 years

7315 - 7323 W North ave
Use - Commercial (Service)
Zoning - C1
Comp Plan - Commercial
Height - 1 story
Age - 17 years

7301 W North ave
Use - Commercial (Restaurant)
Zoning - C1
Comp Plan - Commercial
Height - 1 story
Age - 36 years

7325 W North
Use - Commercial (Retail/Service)
Zoning - C1
Comp Plan - Commercial
Height - 2 stories
Age - 54 years

7311 - 7313 W North
Use - Commercial (Retail/Service)
Zoning - C1
Comp Plan - Commercial
Height - 1 story
Age - 52 years

HARLEM AVENUE TO BONNIE BRAE PLACE

Two single-story retail buildings occupy the southeast corner of Bonnie Place and North Avenue. The building to the west is occupied by a tire shop while the building to the east is a small diner. Finally, the southwest corner of Harlem and North Avenues is occupied by a gas station.

Urban Design / Landscaping
The tire shop is oriented toward and setback from Bonnie Brae Place with no setback along North Avenue. The small diner to the east also has no setback. The gas station property is mostly devoid of landscaping with one tree located toward the end of the property on both Harlem and North Avenues.

Traffic Flow / Parking
The tire shop has a parking and service area on the west side of the building with access via both North Avenue and Bonnie Brae Place. An alleyway bisects the block and provides access to rear parking for the diner. The gas station has parking adjacent this alley, but is separated by a fence. The store addresses North Avenue, but large curb cuts provide access to both North and Harlem Avenues.

BONNIE BRAE PLACE TO CLINTON PLACE

A real estate agency occupies the single story building on the southeast corner of Clinton Place and North Avenue. Immediately to the east is a specialty foods grocer that utilizes the ground floor of a two-story mixed-use building with apartments above. The building to the east, in the center of the block bounded by Clinton Place and Bonnie Brae Place, is a commercial strip center with several medical and dental offices. The single story building to the east of this center is the location of a hair salon and cigarette shop. The southwest corner of the Bonnie Brae Place and North Avenue is occupied by a casual dining restaurant.

Urban Design / Landscaping
The westernmost buildings continue the streetwall established on the previous block. The central building is setback from North Avenue with a front parking lot and two access drives. There is no delineation between the parking area and the sidewalk. The building to the east of this parking area reestablishes the streetwall.

Traffic Flow / Parking
On-street parking is provided in this portion of the Corridor. In addition to the front surface lot, the centrally located building has parking in the rear that can be accessed via an alley to the south that bisects the entire block. The building on the west fronts both North Avenue and Bonnie Brae Place and has parking provided on a surface lot to the west of the building with access via a drive from North Avenue and the alley.

7353 W North
Use - Commercial (Service)
Zoning - C1
Comp Plan - Commercial
Height - 2 stories
Age - 47 years

7357 W North
Use - Commercial (Service)
Zoning - C1
Comp Plan - Commercial
Height - 2 stories
Age - 55 years

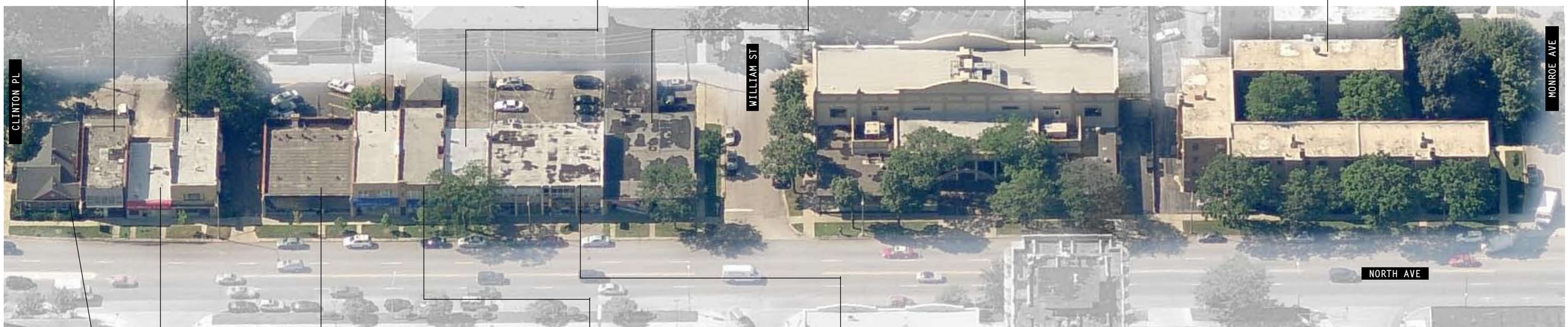
7365 W North
Use - Commercial (Service)
Zoning - C1
Comp Plan - Commercial
Height - 2 stories
Age - 53 years

7369 W North
Use - Commercial (Service)
Zoning - C1
Comp Plan - Commercial
Height - 1 story
Age - 50 years

7377 – 7379 W North
Use - Commercial (Retail/Service)
Zoning - C1
Comp Plan - Commercial
Height - 1 story
Age - 54 years

7401 W North
Use - School
Zoning - C1 (PD 2797)
Comp Plan - Commercial
Height - 1-3 stories

7429 W North
Use: Multi-Family Residential
Zoning - C1
Comp Plan - Commercial
Height - 4 stories
Age - 55 years



7351 W North
Use - Commercial (Service)
Zoning - C1
Comp Plan - Commercial
Height - 1 story
Age - 58 years

7355 W North
Use - Commercial (Retail/Service)
Zoning - C1
Comp Plan - Commercial
Height - 1 story

7361 - 7363 W North
Use - Commercial (Retail/Service)
Zoning - C1
Comp Plan - Commercial
Height - 1 story
Age - 54 years

7367 W North
Use - Commercial (Service)
Zoning - C1
Comp Plan - Commercial
Height - 2 stories
Age - 55 years

7371 – 7375 W North
Use - Commercial (Service)
Zoning - C1
Comp Plan - Commercial
Height - 1 story
Age - 50 years

CLINTON PLACE TO WILLIAM STREET

This block between William Street and Clinton Place is comprised of a string of approximately 10 one- and two-story mixed-use and commercial buildings all of which front North Avenue. The southeast corner of William Street and North Avenue is occupied by a single-story retail building that is the location of a shoe store and dance studio. Adjacent this building is a pair of two-story office buildings with a real estate office, medical office, travel agency, and several vacant spaces. To the east of this building are three two-story, mixed-use buildings with ground floor office and retail space with apartments above. Tenants in these three buildings include a chiropractic office, dental office, insurance agency and two financial service providers. The center of the block is occupied by a single-story retail building which is home to a chiropractic office and salon. Two, one-story and two, two-story commercial buildings occupy the south-west corner of Clinton Place and North Avenue. Tenants include a dog groomer, two medical offices, and an orthodontic office.

Urban Design / Landscaping

The commercial buildings along this block are all from the late 1940's and early 1950's. A parking lot access drive off of North Avenue represents the only break in the block's streetwall. With no setback, landscaping along the block is minimal. Several sidewalks cut through a landscaped parkway that runs the length of the block.

Traffic Flow / Parking

Parking for all of the buildings along this block is located in the rear with an alleyway running the length of the block providing access from William Street and Clinton Place.

WILLIAM STREET TO MONROE AVENUE

This block is occupied by two large users. A pair of four-story, 'C'-shaped apartment buildings occupy the southeast corner Monroe and North Avenues. While the buildings address Monroe Avenue, the northernmost building fronts North Avenue with ground floor office space. The building to the east, on the southwest corner of William Street and North Avenue, is an Montessori elementary school that addresses North Avenue. The building front North Avenue with a single story before tapering up to a three-stories away from the street.

Urban Design / Landscaping

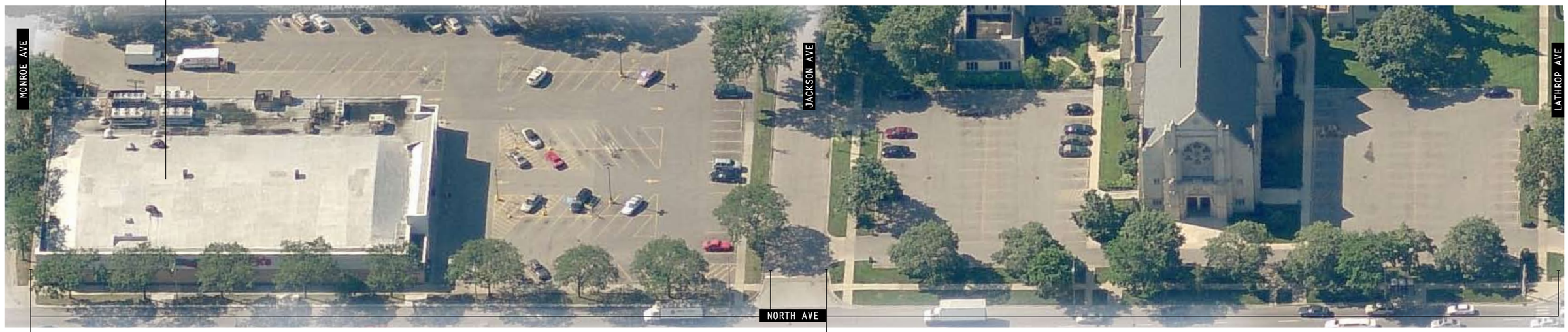
The multi-family buildings have a pair of courtyards that abut one another to form a sizable open space along Monroe Street. The school's glass arcade maintains the streetwall established by the apartment building to the west. A parkway landscaped with several mature trees runs the length of the block.

Traffic Flow / Parking

A narrow drive that runs behind the two multi-family properties provides residents with some parking. The drive can be accessed via both North Avenue and Monroe Street. Street parking is also possible along this portion of Monroe Street. Vehicular access to the school's rear parking lot is from William Street.

7501 W North
Use - Commercial (Retail)
Zoning - C1
Comp Plan - Commercial
Height - 1 story
Age - 50 years

7617 W North
Use - Church
Zoning - PRI (PD 2883)
Comp Plan - Public/Semi-Public
Height - 2/4 stories



MONROE AVENUE TO JACKSON AVENUE

Dominick's grocery store occupies the entire block front in between Monroe Avenue and Jackson Avenue.

Urban Design / Landscaping
The Dominick's fronts Jackson Avenue, but is situated closest to North Avenue. It has visible wall signage from each street and attractive street trees to enhance the streetscape. Pedestrian amenities are situated around the entire perimeter as well.

Traffic Flow / Parking
Access to the Dominick's is provided off of Lathrop Avenue. There is a substantial surface parking lot located on the south and west sides of the building.

JACKSON AVENUE TO LATHROP AVENUE

A Catholic Church and school occupy the block bounded by Lathrop and Jackson Avenues. Another large user occupies the entire block to the east.

Urban Design / Landscaping
The church itself is located in the middle of the block with the school behind it to the south and surface parking areas occupying both the northwest and northeast corners of the block. The building itself fronts both streets while the entrance is located on the west adjacent a large surface parking lot occupies the western and southern portions of the block. Landscaping within the parking lot is minimal.

Traffic Flow / Parking
Access to the church parking lots is provided via a pair of drive on both Lathrop and Jackson Avenues. Access to the store's parking lot is provided via a pair of drive on Jackson Avenue. A secondary entrance is also located along Monroe Street to the south of the store.

7617 W North
Use - Commercial (Retail)
Zoning - C1
Comp Plan - Commercial
Height - 2 stories
Age - 54 years

7605 W North
Use - Commercial (Retail)
Zoning - C1
Comp Plan - Commercial
Height - 1 story
Age - 60 years

7601 W North
Use - Commercial (Retail)
Zoning - C1
Comp Plan - Commercial
Height - 1 story
Age - 59 years

1540 N Ashland
Use - Multi-Family Residential
Zoning - C1
Comp Plan - Commercial/Multi-Family
Height - 2 stories
Age - 59 years

7711 W North
Use - Multi-Family Residential
Zoning - C1
Comp Plan - Commercial/Multi-Family
Height - 1/2 stories
Age - 50 years

1539 – 1545 N Franklin
Use - Multi-Family Residential
Zoning - C1
Comp Plan - Commercial/
Multi-Family
Height - 2 stories
Age - 51 years

LATHROP AVENUE TO ASHLAND AVENUE

Commercial use is the sole use on this block. A vacant home furnishings store, now for sale, occupies a two-story commercial building on the southeast corner of Ashland and North Avenues opposite the apartment building. Another commercial building is located to the east of this building, on the southwest corner of North and Lathrop Avenues. Tenants of the single-story building include a chiropractic clinic, animal hospital, and Starbucks.

Urban Design / Landscaping
A vacant building, now for sale, fronts both streets at the corner, and is partially setback from North Avenue to allow for a surface parking lot and loading area in the central portion of the block. The remaining buildings have no setback and form a consistent streetwall on both North and Lathrop Avenues.

Traffic Flow / Parking
Furniture store patrons take advantage of a surface lot located in front of the store's loading area while patrons of the other businesses utilize a rear surface lot located off of Lathrop Avenue. The furniture store also has several angle parking spots located on its western side, off of Ashland Avenue.

ASHLAND AVENUE TO FRANKLIN AVENUE

Multi-family residential is the sole use on the block between Franklin and Ashland Avenues. The southeast corner of the block is occupied by a five-unit townhome building while a one- and two-story apartment building occupies the middle of the block. A two-story apartment building occupies the southwest corner of Ashland and North Avenues.

Urban Design / Landscaping
The townhome building on the western portion of the block is setback from the sidewalk by only a few feet. As a result, the front doors of some units in the multi-family building open directly onto the North Avenue sidewalk. The majority of the centrally located 'L'-shaped building is setback from the street with a smaller one-story section addressing North Avenue creating a courtyard for residents. The building to the east is 'C'-shaped and addresses Ashland Avenue with a small courtyard. A secondary entrance to this building is located off of North Avenue.

Traffic Flow / Parking
Parking for residents of the central apartment building and townhomes to the east are provided in a surface lot between the two buildings. This lot is accessed using North Avenue. Residents in the easternmost building utilize a drive off of Ashland Avenue to access a small parking area on the south side of the building.

7753 - 7761 W North;1540 – 1544 N Franklin
Use - Multi-Family Residential
Zoning - C1
Comp Plan - Commercial/Multi-Family
Height - 2 stories
Age - 50 years

7777 W North
Use - Multi-Family Residential
Zoning - C1
Comp Plan - Commercial
Height - 2/3 stories
Age - 43 years

7811 – 7813 W North
Use - Multi-Family Residential
Zoning - C1
Comp Plan - Commercial/Multi-Family
Height - 2 stories
Age - 51 years

1535 N Forest
Use - Multi-Family Residential
Zoning - C1
Comp Plan - Commercial / Multi-Family
Height - 5 stories
Age - 40 years

7929 W North
Use - Commercial (Retail)
Zoning - C1 (PD 2968)
Comp Plan - Commercial
Height - 1 story
Age - 7 years

7765 W North
Use - Multi-Family Residential
Zoning - C1
Comp Plan - Commercial
Height - 1 story
Age - 52 years

1540 N Park
Use - Multi-Family Residential
Zoning - C1
Comp Plan - Commercial / Multi-Family
Height - 3 stories
Age - 46 years

7827 W North
Use - Multi-Family Residential
Zoning - C1
Comp Plan - Commercial / Multi-Family
Height - 3 stories
Age - 46 years

7907 – 7919 W North;1536 – 1546 N Forest
Use - Multi-Family Residential
Comp Plan - Commercial / Multi-Family
Zoning - C1
Height - 2 stories
Age - 51 - 54 years

FRANKLIN AVENUE TO PARK AVENUE

A two-story mixed-use building with apartments above ground floor office space occupies the southeast corner of the block bounded at Park Avenue. A single-story commercial building is located in the middle of the block between this building and a pair of rowhome buildings located on the southwest corner of Franklin and North Avenues. The commercial tenants in the building include a dental office and fitness center.

Urban Design / Landscaping
The Franklin/Park block has several large street trees in the parkway and around its perimeter. Parkways and sidewalks line each of its bordering streets- North, Franklin, and Park Avenues.

Traffic Flow / Parking
The Franklin/Park block has three curb cuts off of North Avenue, providing access for business patrons and multi-family residences.

PARK AVENUE TO FOREST AVENUE

A cluster of five, two-, three- and five-story multi-family buildings comprise the block between Forest and Park Avenues.

Urban Design / Landscaping
The Park/Forest block has several large street trees in the parkway and around its perimeter. Parkways and sidewalks line each of its bordering streets- North Avenue, Park Avenue, and Forest Avenue.

Traffic Flow / Parking
Vehicular access to buildings between Park and Forest Avenues is provided through three, mid-block drives from North Avenue as well as a drive from both Forest and Parks Avenues. Parking for the largest of these buildings is provided by a first floor garage while residents elsewhere in the block utilize surface parking lots. Several mid-block curb cuts provide access to the parking areas that intersperse amongst the different buildings. No vehicular access is provided via the neighboring side streets.

FOREST AVENUE TO THATCHER AVENUE

The southeast corner of Thatcher and North Avenues is occupied by a recently constructed CVS Pharmacy (2001). Five, two-story multi-family buildings form the remainder of the block to the east to Forest Avenue.

Urban Design / Landscaping
The corner of Thatcher and North Avenues is well landscaped and has a decorative monument that informs visitors that they are entering River Forest. No landscaping is provided along the eastern portion of the Thatcher/Forest block and no delineation is made between the sidewalk and residential driveways. The buildings in this area are architecturally similar to other multi-family buildings found in the Harlem Avenue and Madison Street Corridors and were built in the mid-twentieth century.

Traffic Flow / Parking
The CVS has access drives on both Thatcher and North. A curb cut that runs nearly the entire length of the block provides pull-up parking for residents of the multi-family buildings.

New construction in the Village at the southeast corner of North Avenue and Thatcher Avenue.

Key redevelopment site at the southeast corner of North Avenue and Ashland Avenue.

North Avenue Land Use Plan

The North Avenue Corridor Land-Use Plan emphasizes commercial land uses along the corridor and maintains the single-family area south of the commercial/mixed-use businesses fronting North Avenue. Retail and restaurant uses should be prioritized, although a healthy mix of uses along the Corridor should be the Village's ultimate goal. Residential uses exist within the Corridor, but now new "stand alone" residential development is recommended. If new residential is realized, it should be part of the upper floors of a commercial/mixed-use development.

With the heavy volume of traffic, the Corridor presents excellent opportunities for commercial development. The commercial parcels along North Avenue range in depth from approximately 115 feet to 235 feet. The majority of commercial lots now along the corridor (mainly found from Harlem Avenue to William Street) are only about 115 feet deep. Because new commercial developments along such corridors, if unconstrained by lot depth, are typically 200 feet deep, the 115 foot depth is a challenging obstacle to overcome and it does have implications for the types of buildings and businesses that can be expected. Where deeper development parcels exist or can be created, the variety of potential users increases.

Bonnie Brae to Jackson

The properties fronting North Avenue in this area of the corridor are designated for commercial/retail/mixed-use. Ground floor uses should consist of commercial/retail uses, with office and possibly residential uses located on the upper floors. Commercial development is the priority along this section of the corridor and small "token" commercial spaces should not be proposed to justify larger residential developments. The shallow lot depth will be a limiting factor in terms of potential redevelopment, especially along the blocks east of William Street. Property assembly and redevelopment will improve the chances of more contemporary and viable redevelopment by providing flexibility and options for parking and site design.
The block between Monroe Avenue and Jackson Avenue contains a single commercial use. The food store has expressed interest in the past in updating and expanding its current facility to accommodate a larger store and additional parking, more reflective of its typical suburban operations. Expanding the business would require incorporating adjacent single-family homes into the commercial expansion, or possibly expanding to the east by "cul-de-sac"-ing Monroe Avenue and including the block between Monroe Avenue and William Street.

Jackson to Lathrop

This block includes Saint Vincent church and school. Saint Vincent contributes significantly to the Village's and North Avenue Corridor's character, image, and architectural integrity. Saint Vincent is a strong asset to the community and corridor, and should remain. It is not anticipated nor recommended that the site be redeveloped.

Lathrop to Ashland

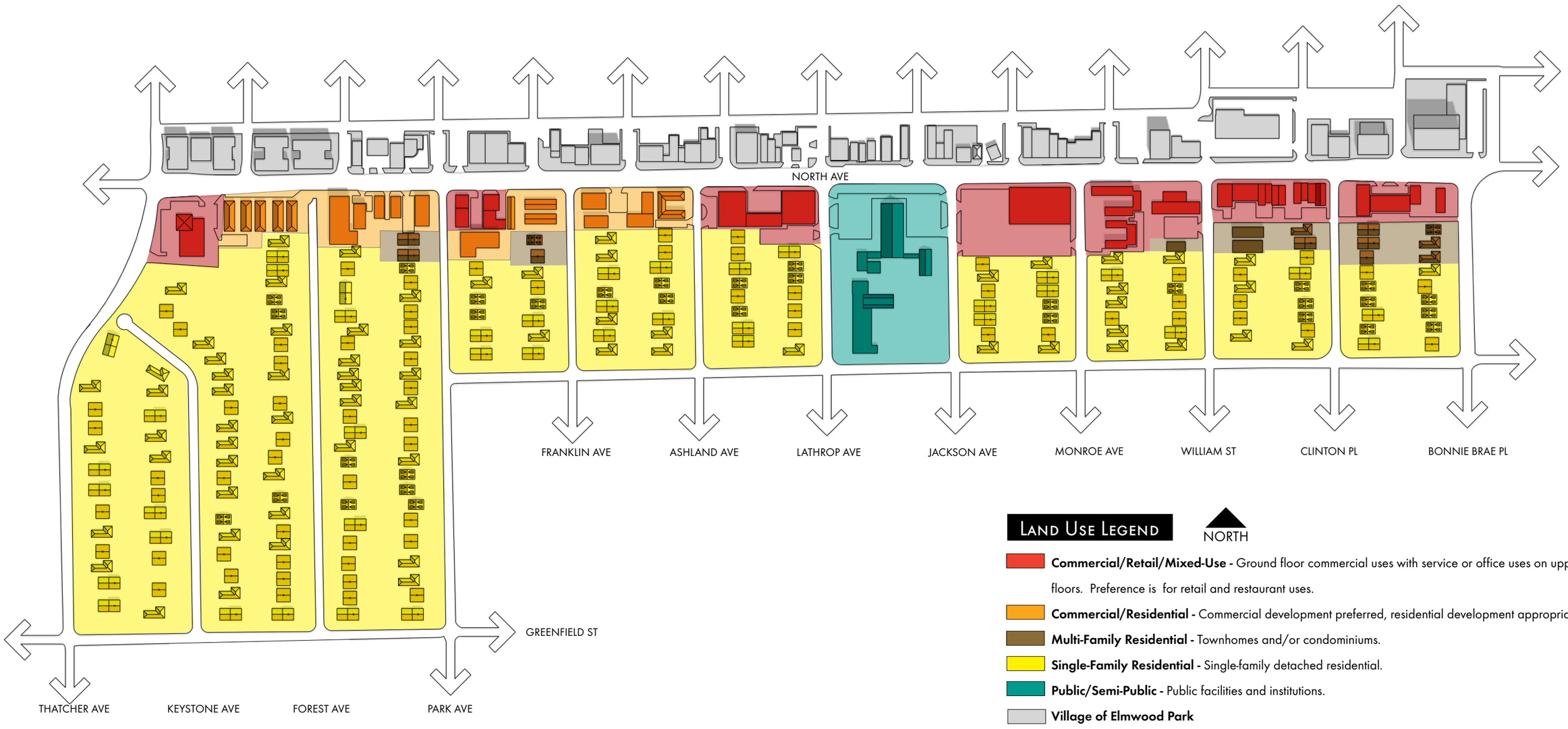
This block is designated for commercial/retail/mixed-use. This block includes the former furniture store, now for sale, which is now sale and a priority redevelopment opportunity. Any future use or redevelopment of the block should prioritize retail uses, but could also accommodate a commercial/mixed-use development.

Ashland to Thatcher

These blocks are primarily developed with multi-family residential uses. Commercial uses exist on the southeast corner of Park Avenue and North Avenue and on the southeast corner of Thatcher and North Avenue. The relatively new CVS development on the corner of Thatcher and North Avenue should serve as a model for use of quality building materials and use of extensive landscaping and buffering to screen commercial activity from adjacent residential neighborhoods. If the existing commercial uses at Park Avenue are to remain, the quality and appearance of the buildings and grounds must be maintained. If redevelopment occurs, quality commercial development should be a priority of the Village. For sites currently improved with multi-family residential uses, redevelopment for new residential use, as well as commercial uses, is considered appropriate.

The existing town-home buildings on the east half of block between Forest and Thatcher are inconsistent with the character of the Village, largely due to the design of the buildings as well as the congestion of parking along North Avenue. If the existing townhomes are to remain, an improved parking situation should be explored to improve the safety and appearance of the area. Options for improved parking are provided later in this section of the Plan.

Land Use Plan

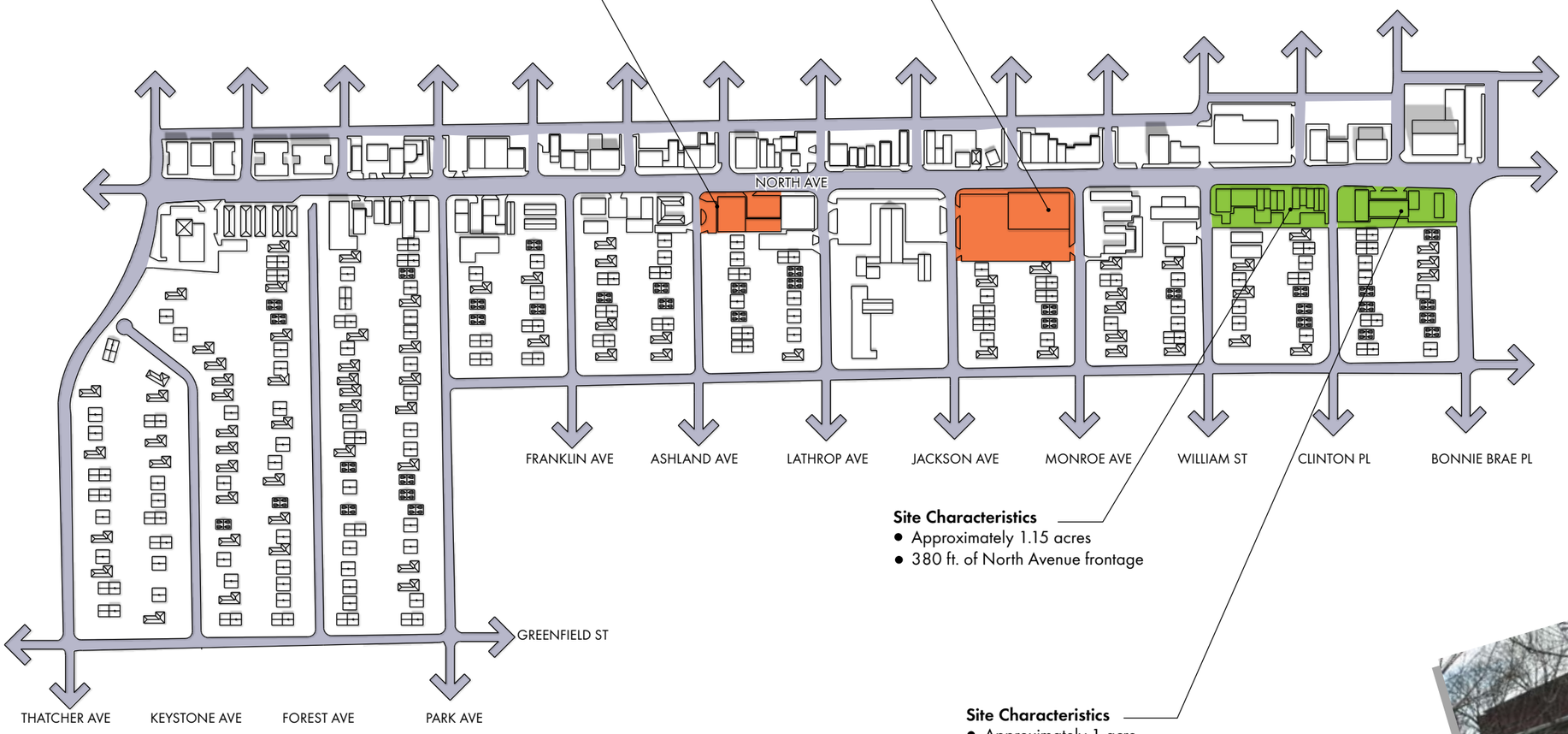


Key Redevelopment Sites

Several block fronts and properties along North Avenue are potential redevelopment opportunities. Many of the existing properties suffer from a lack of parking, dated/obsolete building design and floor space, and inadequate buffering along adjacent residential properties. Although any site is a potential redevelopment site, this Plan identifies priority redevelopment sites, based on availability and property size – Plunkett Furniture and Dominic's. If redeveloped, both sites should prioritize commercial retail uses. Office, service, and possibly residential uses could also be a component of a mixed-use development.

When addressing redevelopment sites, the following policies are recommended:

- The Village should work with individual property owners and developers to creatively approach development to maximize benefit to all parties.
- Development should be well planned and consisting of high-quality materials and attractive 360 degree architecture.
- Adjacent residential properties should be appropriately screened and buffered from new development.
- All building and developments should be oriented toward North Avenue.
- Curb cuts should be kept to a minimum upon redevelopment to minimize traffic and congestion problems along the Corridor.
- Alley shifting, use of cul-de-sacs, and commercial expansion should be evaluated as potential development incentives in key locations.

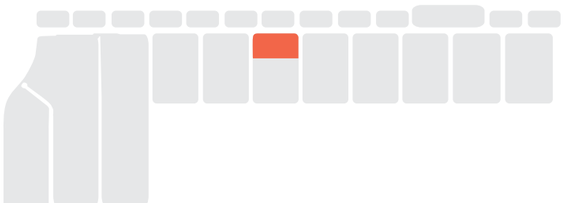


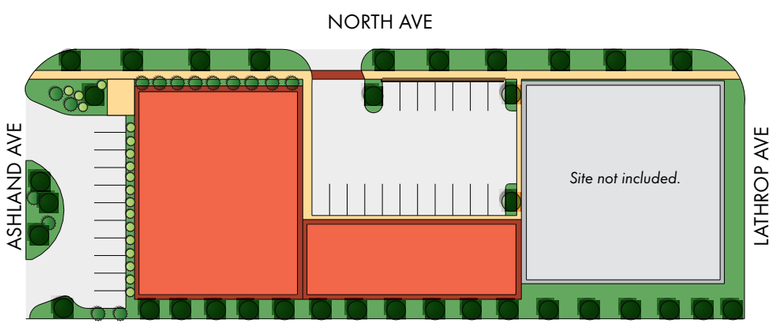
Map Legend NORTH

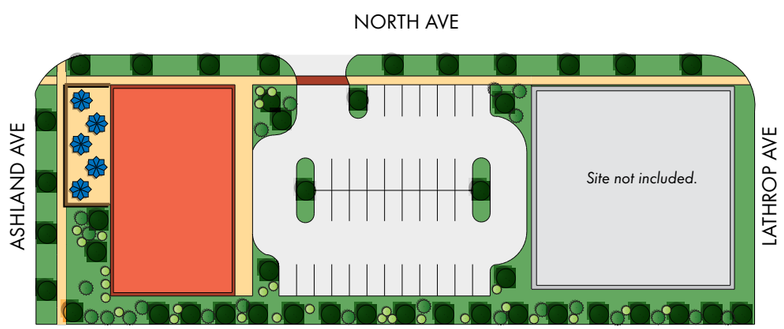
- Priority Redevelopment Sites
- Secondary Redevelopment Sites
- Local Roadways

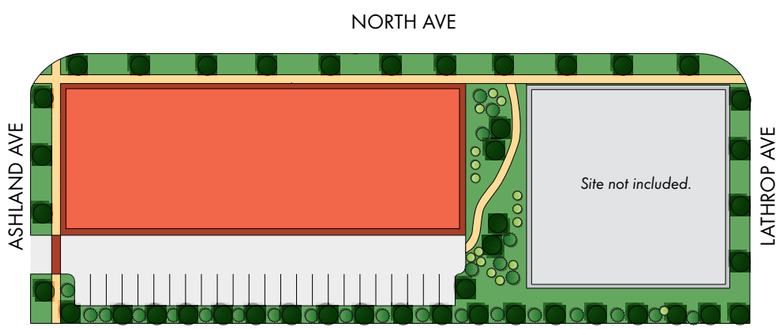
Key Redevelopment Sites

Plunkett Site









Redevelopment Option A - Adaptive Reuse

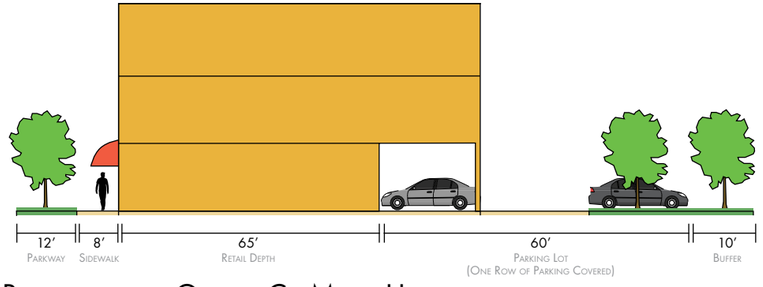
Option A recommends adaptive reuse of the former Plunkett building. Adaptive reuse is the process of adapting aged buildings or other structures for purposes different than those initially intended. It allows unique architectural details to be retained while changing the primary function of the structure. Adaptive reuse is often viewed as a key factor in land conservation and reducing urban sprawl because it is more environmentally efficient and environmentally responsible than building new construction.

Depending on the type of development/ land use proposed for this site in the future, the former Plunkett building may prove to be obsolete. There are limitations with the site's current design in regards to parking availability and warehouse space. Though some off-street parking is available off of Ashland Avenue, the total number of parking stalls provided is inadequate to accommodate commercial retail or restaurant uses since much of the building was previously used as warehouse space.

If the site were to be adaptively reused, site improvements such as the installation of additional landscaping should occur.

Redevelopment Option B - Retail

Should the site be redeveloped, a commercial retail or restaurant use should take advantage of the prominent corner location. Option B recommends the construction of a 7,800 square foot building on the southeast corner of North Avenue and Ashland Avenue, with an attractively landscaped outdoor dining area where parking was previously provided. A building of this size would require a minimum of 32 parking spaces. 37 parking spaces are provided in this concept, but should additional parking become necessary, the parking area adjacent to Ashland Avenue could be maintained instead of, or adjacent to, the outdoor dining area.



Redevelopment Option C - Mixed Use

Redevelopment of the Plunkett site with a mixed use building is the most aggressive type of redevelopment envisioned. It could include ground floor retail uses fronting North Avenue, with office or residential units on upper floors.

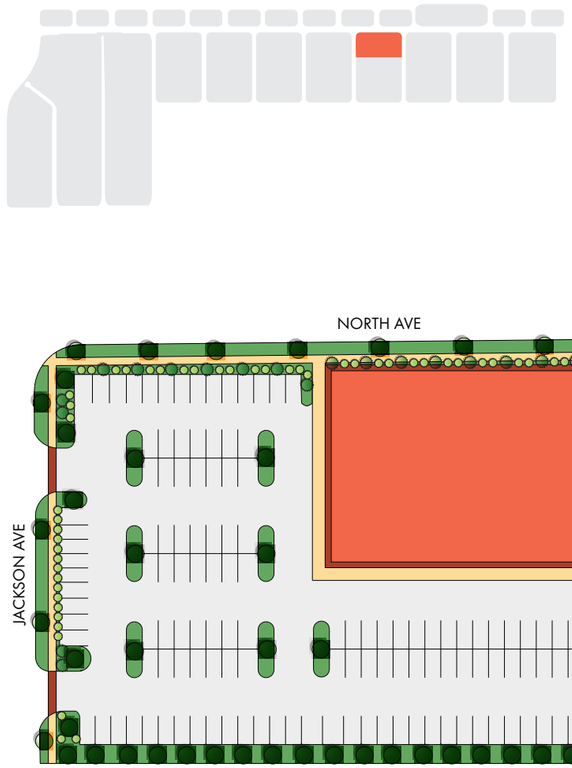
A design such as the one illustrated above would provide approximately 16,000 square feet of commercial space, requiring 64 parking spaces. 24 surface parking spaces are provided, with an additional 24 covered parking spaces.

This redevelopment scenario anticipates the creation of a cul-de-sac on Ashland Avenue to gain an additional 24 parking spaces. This will ensure adequate parking for the ground floor retail uses fronting North Avenue.

Parking for the office and/or residential units on the upper floors will need to be provided below grade.

Key Redevelopment Sites

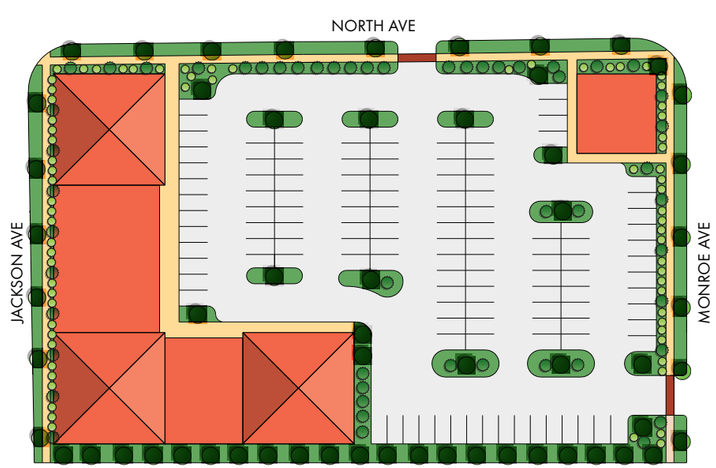
Dominicks Site



Redevelopment Option A - Adaptive Reuse

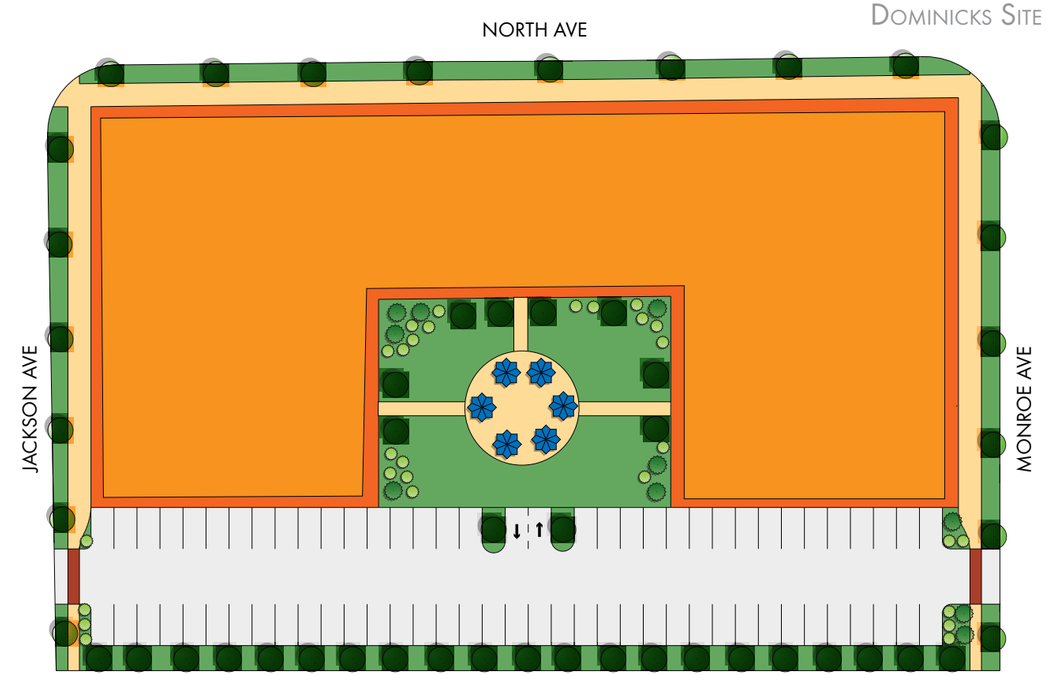
Option A recommends adaptive reuse of the Dominick's building. The existing building is approximately 30,000 square feet and could accomodate a specialty food or beverage store, book store, home furnishings or electronic store.

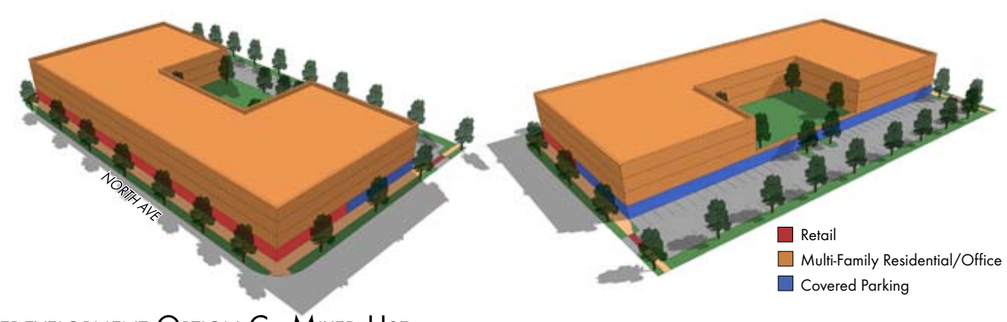
If the site were to be adaptively reused, site improvements such as the installation of additional parking lot landscaping and buffering adjacent to the single family homes should occur should occur.



Redevelopment Option B - Retail

Option B recommends a more traditional style of commercial development with a small commercial outlot on the southwest corner of North Avenue and Monroe Avenue, and a larger commercial building wrapping around the back corner of the site. Approximately 26,000 square feet of commercial retail is provided through this concept, which requires a minimum of 104 parking spaces. 124 parking spaces are provided on the site to provide flexibility with future commercial uses.





Redevelopment Option C - Mixed Use

Redevelopment of the Dominick's site with a mixed use building is the most aggressive type of redevelopment envisioned. It could include ground floor retail uses fronting North Avenue, at-grade covered parking in the back of the building, with office or residential units on upper floors.

A design such as the one illustrated above would provide approximately 30,000 square feet of retail space, requiring 120 parking spaces. 72 surface parking spaces are provided, with an additional 72 covered parking spaces.

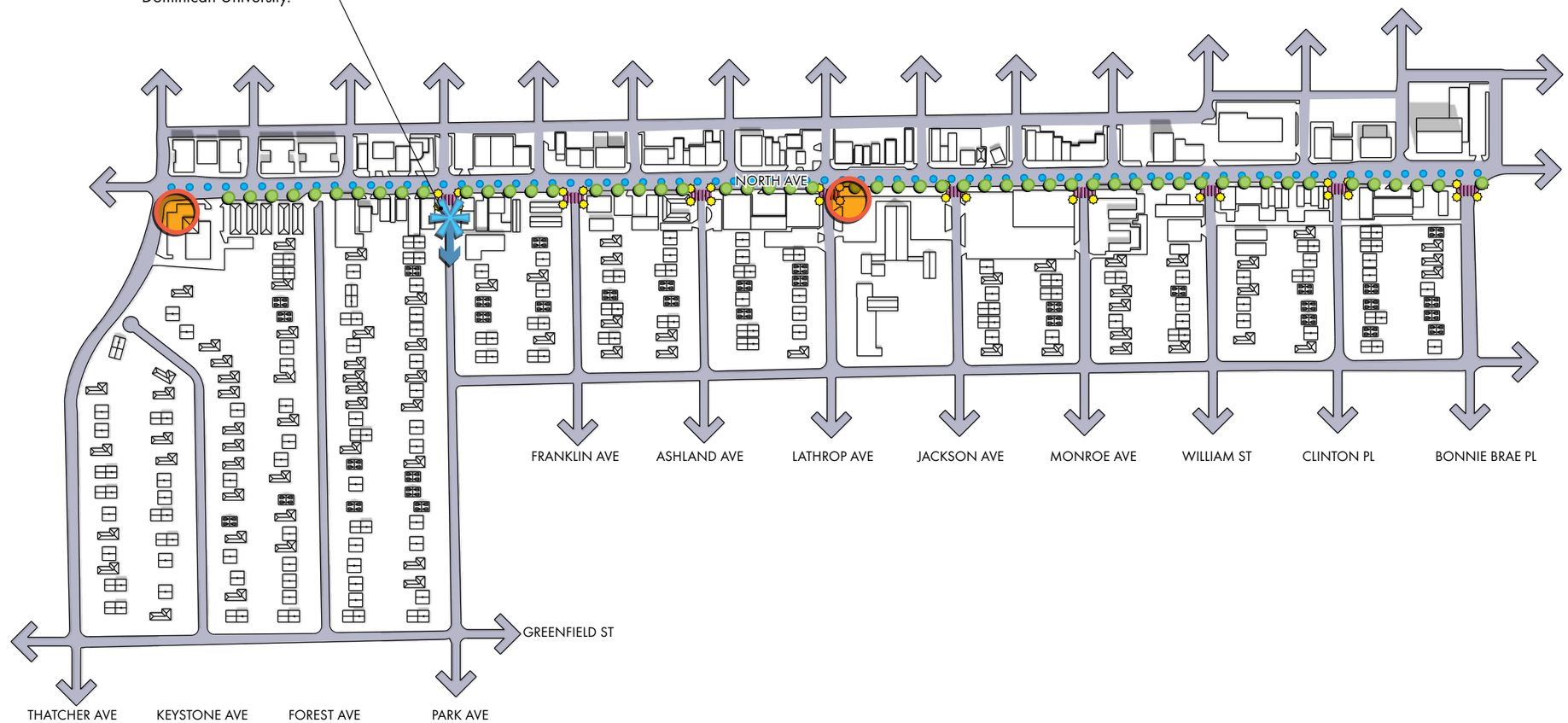
Parking for the office and/or residential units on the upper floors will need to be provided below ground in a parking deck.

An attractive courtyard is situated above the covered parking areas for residents and/or employees to enjoy.

North Avenue Corridor

Beautification Framework

Utilizing the primary streetscape and beautification components presented in Section 4, this Beautification Framework Plan identifies the recommended locations for the different streetscape components. The specific/exact location of key components will likely required coordination with property owners and developers along the corridor to ensure appropriate integration. If implemented according to this framework, the recommended improvements could transform the appearance of the corridor.



Map Legend NORTH

- Gateway Signage
- Wayfinding Signage
- Crosswalk Enhancements
- Bollards
- Street Trees
- Village Banner Program
- Maintain Streetwall
- Streetwall to Vary in Depth
- Local Roadways

Traffic passing St. Vincent Ferrer Church on North Avenue.

Signalized intersection along North Avenue.

Transportation Recommendations

Due to North Avenue's heavy traffic volume and IDOT designation as a Strategic Regional Arterial (SRA), any streetscape improvements and traffic calming amenities will need to be balanced with IDOT's requirements for effective traffic flow within the corridor. Average annual daily traffic will remain high or increase within the corridor, necessitating the existing number of lanes, lane widths, and signal locations. The eastern half of the corridor, from Lathrop Avenue to Harlem Avenue has the greatest potential to benefit from streetscape improvements that would encourage pedestrian activity and economic development.

Programmed Improvements

Short Term Improvements

- Work with neighboring Elmwood Park and IDOT for the installation of Pedestrian count-down timers at Harlem, Lathrop, and Thatcher, in that order.
- Develop a striping standard / striping program for pedestrian cross walks.
- Prepare detailed traffic studies for potential cul-de-sacs along the North Avenue corridor, beginning with Forest Avenue. Coordinate cul-de-sac design with the River Forest Fire Department to ensure fire truck access.
- Where possible, eliminate single lot curb cuts to small development parcels, in conjunction with redevelopment.

Long term Improvements

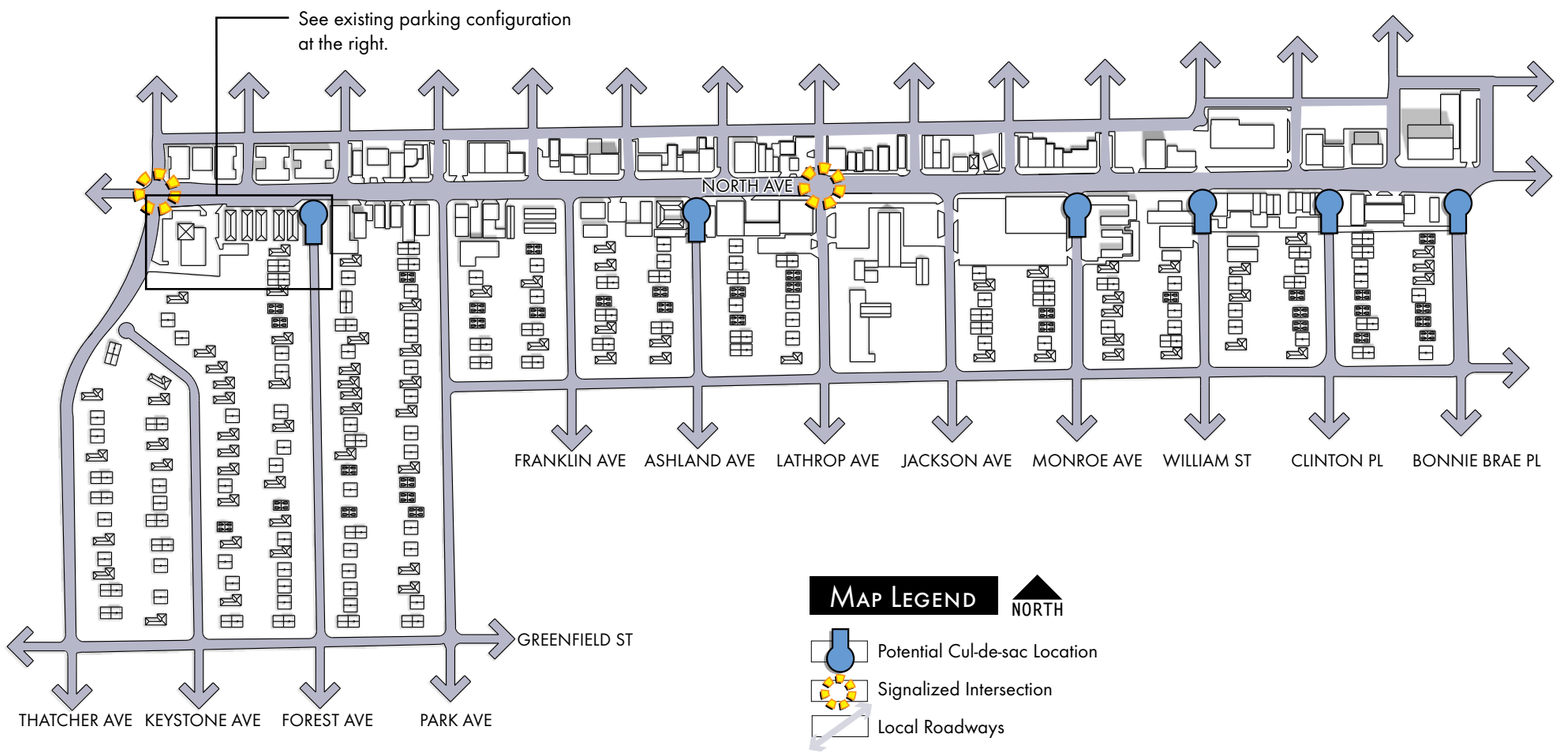
- Cul-de-sac Forest Avenue to accommodate removal of existing nose-in parking from North Avenue (adjacent to CVS Site).
- Develop Streetscape / Lighting plan for eastern half of corridor. Improved on-street parking is recommended between Monroe Street and Bonnie Brae Road.
- Coordinate a complete restriping of existing parking spaces on street with future IDOT resurfacing project.
- Relocate existing Pace bus shelter at Lathrop Avenue to Dominick's site in conjunction with streetscape enhancement project or redevelopment / renovation of existing Dominick's site.

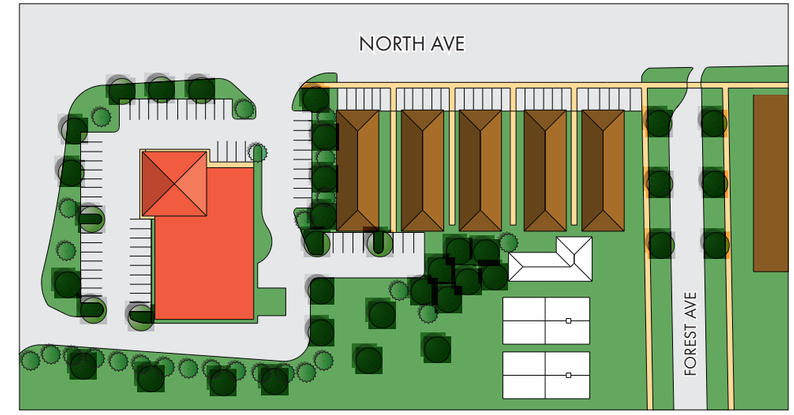
Cul-de-sac and Parking Configuration Options

Transportation Plan

The cul-de-sac and parking configuration options identified for the North Avenue corridor are recommended to improve the safety and efficiency of traffic flow along North Avenue, while increasing parking availability for existing land uses and providing redevelopment incentives. Roads designated at potential cul-de-sac locations are primarily used as residential streets that do not accommodate a significant amount of through traffic, and the benefits of creating a cul-de-sac outweigh and impacts of traffic movement they may cause.

Roads that have not been designated as potential cul-de-sac locations serve as important through streets in the Village. Most have a viaduct at the south end, or do not align with a street on the north side of North Avenue in Elmwood Park.





Existing Parking

Above is a rendering of the existing conditions and parking availability for the multi-family housing at the southwest corner of North Avenue and Forest Avenue. Total, there are 49 parking spaces available for residents. While some parking is provided adjacent to the CVS parking lot, approximately 30 parking spaces have direct access to North Avenue, forcing residents to back out onto a major arterial street.

The above rendering illustrates the dangers and lack of appeal the current parking configuration has. The Plan recommends that the Village work closely with property owners to improve and enhance the existing parking configuration to provide a more attractive streetscape along North Avenue, as well as to improve the safety and efficiency of traffic flow in the area. Potential parking configurations may include "cul-de-sac"-ing Forest Avenue and/or relocating some or all of the parking spaces into a better configuration while improving the parking situation for residents. A close working relationship between the Village and the residents is essential to successfully address the current conditions.

Section 7:

Harlem Avenue Corridor

Harlem Avenue is a 1.35 mile corridor that is best characterized by a diverse mix of uses

McDonald's on Harlem Avenue.

Gateway sign situated at the southwest corner of Harlem Avenue and Lake Street.

Harlem Avenue is a heavily trafficked Strategic Regional Arterial (SRA). As it passes adjacent to River Forest, Harlem Avenue serves as the Village's 1.35 mile long eastern edge, separating River Forest from neighboring Oak Park. Harlem Avenue carries between 28,000 and 32,000 vehicle trips per day.

The River Forest side of the corridor is dominated by residential uses, with pockets of commercial and public/institutional uses. Residential uses consist of single-family detached homes, apartment and condominium buildings, and townhomes. Public/Institutional uses also comprise a significant component of Harlem Avenue frontage with a portion of the Dominican University/Priory campus taking up a quarter-mile stretch just north of Division Street. Areas at and near several intersections along the Corridor are improved for auto- and convenience-oriented retailers such as gas stations, convenience stores, banks, and a fast food restaurant. The Town Center Shopping Centers occupies the area south of Lake Street. Zoning within the Harlem Avenue Corridor is varied and includes multi-family and single family residential (R2, R3, R4), Public/Recreational/Institutional (PRI), Commercial (C1, C2), and Office/Research/Industrial/Commercial (ORIC). Several planned developments are also in place.

Redevelopment along the corridor is especially challenging due to the relatively small size of commercial properties and the extent of the existing residential development fronting the Corridor. Traffic improvements are also challenging to implement because Harlem Avenue's SRA designation.

The Land use Pan for the Corridor reflects the existing land use pattern, but broader concepts are explored for creating new commercial areas.

This section contains the following:

- Existing Conditions Analysis
- Corridor Land Use Plan
- Land Use Conversion Concepts
- Beautification Framework Plan
- Transportation Plan

7201 – 7265 W Lake
Use - Commercial (Retail)
Zoning - ORIC
Comp Plan - Corridor Commercial
Height - 1 stories
Age - 6 years

500 – 600 N Harlem
Use - Park
Zoning - PRI
Comp Plan - Park/Open Space/Private recreation
Height - 1 story

CENTRAL AVENUE TO QUICK AVENUE

The southwest corner of Lake Street and Harlem Avenue is occupied by River Forest Town Center, a 150,000 square foot shopping center that opened in 2002. Across the street, on the northwest corner of the intersection, the Cook County Forest Preserve maintains its headquarters and a park that stretches north to Quick Avenue. The park's amenities include a baseball field, bus shelter, and several tennis courts operated by the Oak Park Tennis Club. Also located on the Forest Preserve District's property is the historic Cummings Memorial.

Urban Design / Landscaping
While the majority of the center is located away from the street, a bank and a couple of eateries with outdoor seating occupy the corner. Landscaping is minimal at the corner and is limited to a row of young trees planted in a landscaped strip that surrounds the adjoining parking lot. Several pedestrian-scale light posts and several trees separate pedestrians on the sidewalk from Lake Street and Harlem Avenue traffic. The park to the north is comprised of a mix of open space areas and stands of mature trees. Trees run along the length of the park along the Harlem Avenue sidewalk. Overall streetscape amenities and appearance are strong at this corner.

Traffic Flow / Parking
Parking for visitors to the shopping center is provided by a large surface lot located between the main shopping center and a pair of outlot buildings. Access to the center is provided by one-way entry and exit along Lake Street and Harlem as well as a pair of drives from Bonnie Brae Place to the west. Visitors to the park and tennis club utilize a mid-block drive from Bonnie Brae Place to access a small surface parking lot.

7200 W Quick
Use - Single Family Residential
Zoning - R2
Comp Plan - Single Family Residential
Height - 2
Age - 100

620 N Harlem
Use - Commercial
Zoning - C2
Comp Plan - Commercial
Height - 2 stories
Age - 25

630 N Harlem
Use - Commercial (Service)
Zoning - C2
Comp Plan - Commercial
Height - 1 story
Age - 33

7200-7214 W Oak
Use - Multi-Family Residential
Zoning - R4
Comp Plan - Multi-Family Residential
Height - 4 stories

750 N Harlem
Use - Commercial (Service)
Zoning - C2
Comp Plan - Commercial
Height - 1 story

QUICK AVENUE TO CHICAGO AVENUE

Single family homes occupy the southern portion of the block between Quick and Oak Avenues, facing Quick Avenue. A fast-food restaurant is located immediately north of these homes. Farther north along Harlem Avenue and adjacent this, on the southwest corner of Oak and Harlem Avenues, is a small bank with several drive-thru lanes. This juxtaposition of residential uses with auto-oriented commercial users is characteristic of the Corridor.

Urban Design / Landscaping
The single family homes in this portion of the Corridor are traditional in their architectural styling. The home located adjacent Harlem Avenue has a low-profile wrought iron fence in its front yard and a eye-level privacy fence along its backyard with several mature trees in both areas. The auto-oriented nature of the commercial buildings results in proportionally large paved surfaces with minimal landscaping. Both businesses attempt to minimize the visual impact of this by having landscaped areas along their sidewalks.

Traffic Flow / Parking
The single family homes facing Quick Avenue have rear loaded garages that are accessible by an alleyway connecting to Quick Avenue. Previously, the alleyway intersected with Harlem Avenue, but has since been disconnected with the installation of landscaping. The fast-food restaurant has two access points off of Harlem Avenue, one serving as an entrance and one service as an exit. The circular access drive provides several on-site parking spaces for patrons to utilize as well. The bank at the corner of Oak Avenue and Harlem Avenue has one access point off of Oak Avenue, and one off of Harlem Avenue. The access point off of Oak Avenue is for ingress only, while the access point on Harlem Avenue is for egress only. The bank has a four-lane drive through and no on-site parking.

OAK AVENUE TO CHICAGO AVENUE

Multi-family housing occupies the majority of the block, in addition to a gas station at the southwest corner of Chicago Avenue and Harlem Avenue.

Urban Design / Landscaping
The multi-family housing in this portion of the Corridor has centralized open space with walking paths and shade trees for use by residents, as well as extensive landscaping to provide a buffer from Harlem Avenue. The buildings have been constructed with the same masonry materials which visually unifies the development. The gas station on the northwest corner of Chicago Avenue and Harlem Avenue offers minimal landscaping to lessen the visual impact of the auto-oriented use.

Traffic Flow / Parking
Access to the multi-family buildings is provided by an alleyway with an ingress point on Oak Avenue, and an egress point Harlem Avenue. Alleyway traffic flows in a clockwise direction around the development, and the alley provides parking for residents. The gas station has two large curb cuts off of Chicago Avenue, and one large curb cut off of Harlem Avenue for vehicular access.

800 N Harlem
Use - Commercial (Service)
Zoning - C2 (PD 2537)
Comp Plan - Commercial
Height - 2
Age - 35

818 - 842 N Harlem; 7205 & 7204 W Iowa; 906 - 938 N Harlem
Use - Single Family Residential
Zoning - R2
Comp Plan - Single Family Residential
Height - 1 / 2 stories
Age - 22 – 85 years

946 N Harlem
Use - Church
Zoning - PRI
Comp Plan - Public/Semipublic
Height - 1 story

CHICAGO AVENUE TO AUGUSTA STREET

The bank located on the northwest corner of Chicago Avenue and Harlem Avenue is only minimally setback from the sidewalk and helps reestablish a streetwall in the corridor. With the exception of this bank and a small church on the southwest corner of Augusta Street and Harlem Avenue, the two blocks located between Chicago Avenue and Augusta Street are occupied by single family homes, the great majority of which were constructed in the 1920's and 30's.

Urban Design / Landscaping
The architecture of the bank building incorporates some prairie-style elements , but its overall design is not noteworthy. The bank parking lot is bordered by trees on three sides but has minimal landscaping along Harlem Avenue. The single family homes in this section of River Forest are mix of one and a half- and two-story buildings, all of which are setback from the street approximately 75 feet. The sidewalk that runs the length of this two block portion of the corridor is well-shaded and somewhat protected from traffic due to the large number of mature trees and landscaping located within and adjacent to the residential lots.

Traffic Flow / Parking
The bank has both a parking lot for patrons as well as a drive-thru area that can be accessed via a pair of one-way entrances along Harlem Avenue and a two-way drive along Chicago Avenue. There is no alley to provide rear access to the single family homes with lots on the east and west of the block abutting one another. Lack of an alleyway requires these homes to have driveways that connect to the busy Harlem Avenue. Iowa Street bisects this portion of the Corridor and homes on either side of this intersection have driveways off of Iowa. The church has a parking lot that is accessed via a one-way entrance from Harlem Avenue and an exit onto Augusta Street.

1002 N Harlem
Use - Single Family Residential
Zoning - R4
Comp Plan - Multi-Family Residential
Height - 2 stories
Age - 84 years

1010 N Harlem
Use - Multi-Family Residential
Zoning - R4
Comp Plan - Multi-Family Residential
Height - 5 stories
Age - 36 years

1020 N Harlem
Use - Multi-Family Residential
Zoning - R4
Comp Plan - Corridor Commercial
Height - 6 stories
Age - 28 years

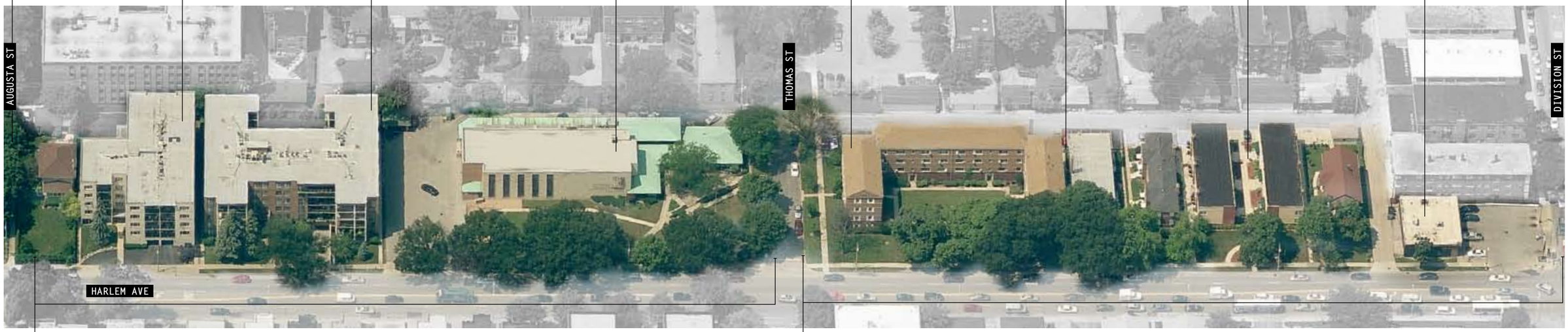
1040 N Harlem
Use - Temple
Zoning - PRI
Comp Plan - Public/Semi-Public
Height - 1-3 stories

1100 – 1114 N Harlem
Use - Multi-Family Residential
Zoning - R4
Comp Plan - Multi-Family Residential
Height - 4 stories
Age - 57 years

1118 – 1130 N Harlem
Use - Multi-Family Residential
Zoning - R3
Comp Plan - Multi-Family Residential
Height - 2 stories
Age - 54 years

1134 – 1136 N Harlem
Use - Multi-Family Residential
Zoning - R4
Comp Plan - Multi-Family Residential
Height - 2 stories
Age - 83 years

1140 N Harlem
Use - Commercial (Retail)
Zoning - C2
Comp Plan - Commercial
Height - 1 story
Age - 26 years



AUGUSTA STREET TO THOMAS STREET

A single family home occupies the northwest corner of Augusta Boulevard and Harlem Avenue. A pair of multi-family buildings are located adjacent to this home to the north. A religious institution is located to the north of these buildings, on the southwest corner of Thomas Street and Harlem Avenue.

Urban Design / Landscaping
The single family home is oriented toward Augusta Street and has a sizable sideyard that adjoins Harlem Avenue, utilizing a hedge row for privacy. The southern multi-family building has minimal landscaping while the northern multi-family building is well-landscaped. The temple is offset from Harlem Avenue and is fronted by a small open space area and playground with an established tree line that runs the length of the property between the sidewalk and road.

Traffic Flow / Parking
Residents of the single family home utilize a driveway from Augusta Street. The multi-family building to the south is what is commonly referred to as a four-plus-one with four residential stories located above an underground garage that occupies half a floor above grade. The northern multi-family building is five stories, but also has an underground garage that is accessed from Harlem Avenue. Visitors to the temple utilize a parking lot and alleyway that forms the property's southern and western boundaries with access via both Harlem Avenue and Thomas Street.

THOMAS STREET TO DIVISION STREET

Multi-family housing occupies a majority of the block. These buildings are similar in age to the majority of multi-family housing in the Corridor and date to the 1950's and 60's. The southwest corner of Division Street and Harlem Avenue is the location of a convenience store.

Urban Design / Landscaping
The southernmost building is 'C'-shaped and addresses Harlem Avenue with a central courtyard. A stand or mature trees occupies the majority of this property's frontage along with a portion of the rowhome buildings to the north. A set of four "barrack" style rowhome buildings occupy the central portion of the block and are oriented east-west with residents sharing small, central parkways. The northernmost residential building is a small, two-story apartment building from the 1920's. The corner convenience store is a typical small scale design.

Traffic Flow / Parking
All residents within the multi-family buildings utilize a rear alleyway for parking. The alleyway runs the length of the block before turning east to Harlem Avenue on the south side of the commercial property. The store addresses Division Street, but large curb cuts provide access to both Division Street and Harlem Avenue.

1200 – 1400 N Harlem
Use - University / Park
Zoning - PRI (PD 2591, 2643, 3220)
Comp Plan - School/Park/Open Space

DIVISION STREET TO GREENFIELD STREET

Dominican University operates the Priory conference center and recreational fields in the block located between Greenfield and Division Streets. This quarter-mile stretch of the Harlem Avenue Corridor is bordered by a soccer field, garden, baseball field, and an uninterrupted tree line.

Urban Design / Landscaping
The Priori has a garden that occupies the central portion of the block. The remainder of the block is occupied by open space. All university buildings are located at the interior of the block outside of the corridor.

Traffic Flow / Parking
This portion of Harlem Avenue has no points of access or parking facilities as Priori visitors utilize drives from Greenfield and Division Streets to access the site.

7200 W Greenfield
Use - Single Family Residential
Zoning - R4
Comp Plan - Single Family Residential
Height - 2 stories
Age - 71 years

1406 - 1442 N Harlem;
7203 - 7213 W LeMoyne;
7202 - 7212 W LeMoyne
Use - Multi-Family Residential
Zoning - R4
Comp Plan - Multi-Family Residential
Height - 2 stories
Age - 58 years

1508 – 1534 N Harlem
Use - Multi-Family Residential
Zoning - R3
Comp Plan - Multi-Family Residential
Height - 3 stories
Age - 55 years

7201 W North
Use - Commercial
Zoning - C1
Comp Plan - Commercial
Height - 1 story
Age - 31 years

GREENFIELD ST TO LEMOYNE STREET

A two-story single family home occupies the northwest corner of Greenfield Street and Harlem Avenue to the north of the Dominican University property. This home is setback from both streets and addresses Greenfield. The block located between this home and LeMoyne Street is occupied by a cluster of 10 barrack style rowhome buildings. The two-story rowhome buildings date to 1950.

Urban Design / Landscaping
The single family home is oriented toward Augusta Street and has a side yard that adjoins Harlem Avenue, utilizing a low row of shrubs to delineate the lot line. The rowhome buildings that occupy central portion of this block are oriented east-west with residents sharing small, central parkways.

Traffic Flow / Parking
Residents of the single family home utilize a driveway from Greenfield Street. Vehicular access and parking for the multi-family homes is provided by an alleyway that stretches between Greenfield Street toward North Avenue before turning east to Harlem Avenue on the south side of the commercial property.

LEMOYNE STREET TO NORTH AVENUE

The block located between LeMoyne Street and North Avenue is occupied by 9 courtyard-style condominium buildings. The three-story courtyard buildings date to the 1940's. A gas station occupies the southwest corner of North and Harlem Avenues.

Urban Design / Landscaping
The courtyard buildings are organized as sets of three, with each set in a 'C'-shape pattern that addresses Harlem Avenue. These courtyard buildings are setback approximately 55 feet from the roadway with areas of open space in between. The gas station property is mostly devoid of landscaping with one tree located toward the end of the property on both Harlem and North Avenues.

Traffic Flow / Parking
Vehicular access and parking for the multi-family homes is provided by an alleyway that stretches between Greenfield Street toward North Avenue before turning east to Harlem Avenue on the south side of the commercial property. The store addresses North Avenue, but large curb cuts provide access to both North and Harlem Avenues.

Land Use Plan

As it is developed and exists today, the Harlem Avenue Corridor in River Forest is not a "commercial corridor"

Commercial service and multi-family residential uses at the intersection of Harlem Avenue and Oak Avenue.

First Church of Christ - Small public/semi-public use along Harlem Avenue.

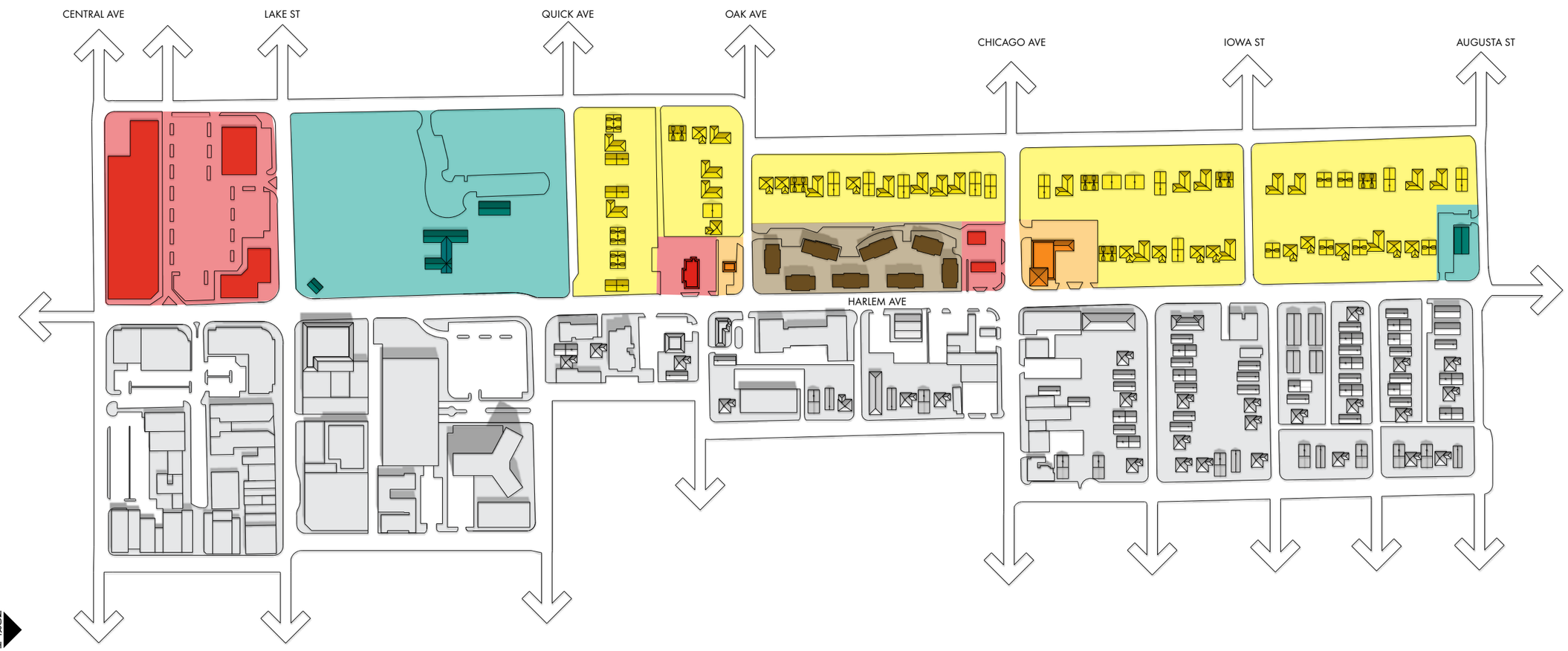
As it is developed and exists today, the Harlem Avenue Corridor in River Forest is not a "commercial corridor". The Land-Use Plan for the Corridor reflects the existing land use pattern. Commercial areas remain commercial, residential areas remain residential, and public/institutional/open space areas remain as well.

With the exception of the Town Center south of Lake Street, commercial areas along the corridor are very small and consist of neighborhood convenience type uses. On the other hand, the residential areas are quite large and numerous, as are the institutional uses along the corridor. It is for these reasons that the Plan does not recommend any changes to the existing land use pattern.

Harlem Avenue Corridor

Land Use Plan

Central Avenue to Augusta Street



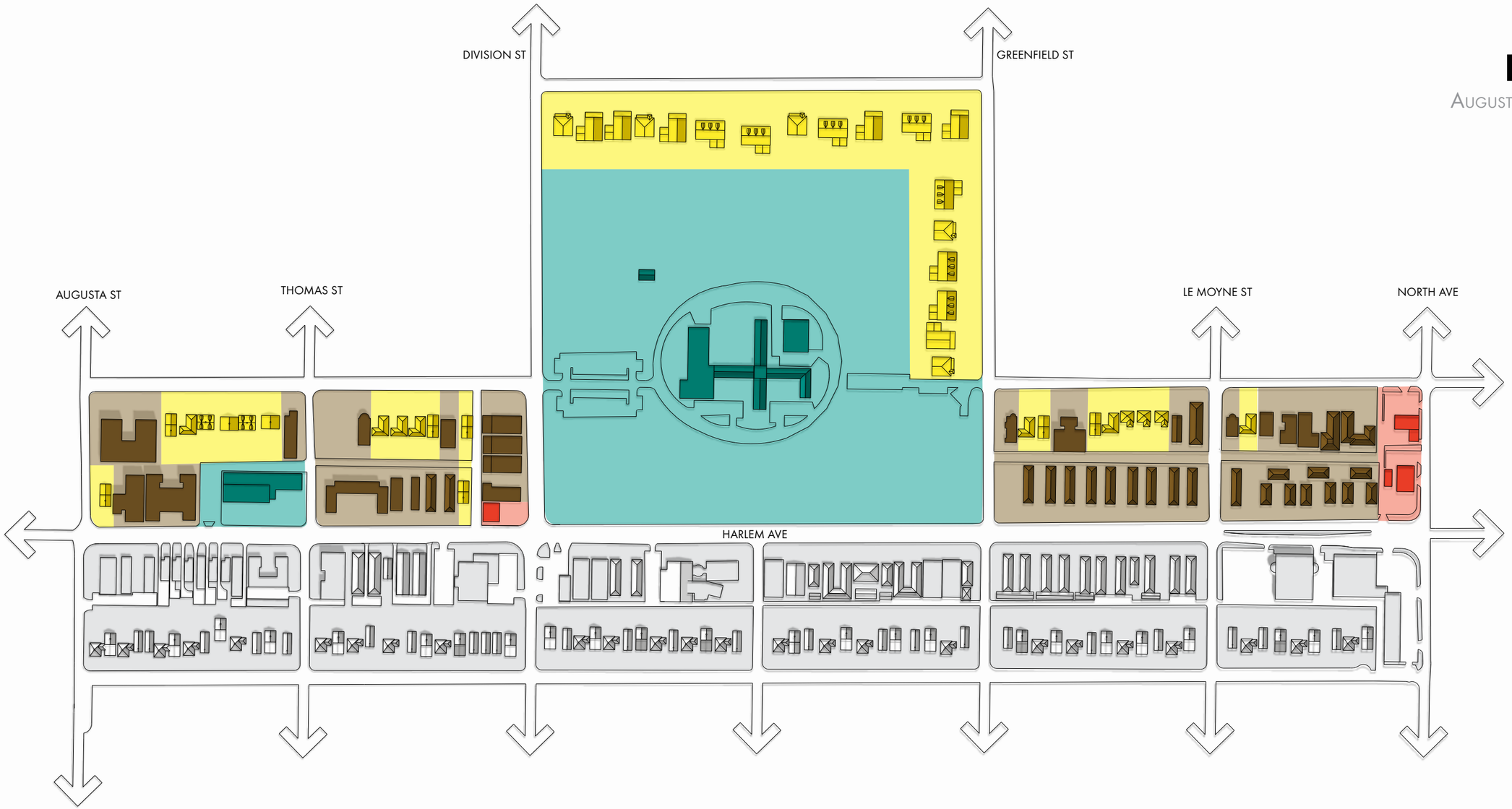
Land Use Legend

- **Commercial/Retail -** Ground floor commercial uses. Preference is for retail and restaurant uses.
- **Multi-Family Residential -** Townhomes and/or condominiums.
- **Single-Family Residential -** Single-family detached residential.
- **Public/Semi-Public -** Public facilities and institutions.
- **Village of Oak Park**

Harlem Avenue Corridor

Land Use Plan

Augusta Street to North Avenue



Land Use Legend

N

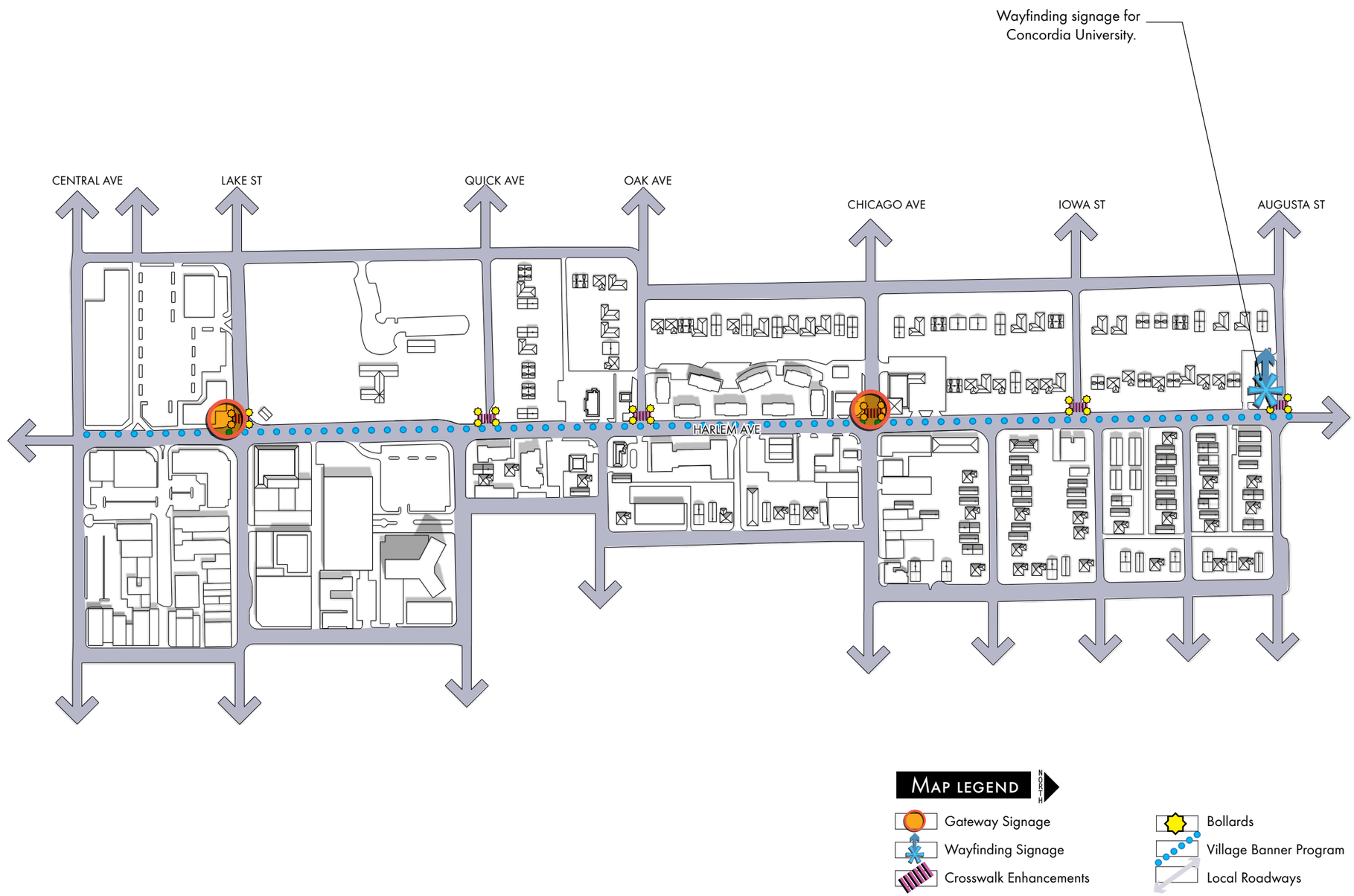
- **Commercial/Retail -** Ground floor commercial uses. Preference is for retail and restaurant uses.
- **Multi-Family Residential -** Townhomes and/or condominiums.
- **Single-Family Residential -** Single-family detached residential.
- **Public/Semi-Public -** Public facilities and institutions.
- **Village of Oak Park**

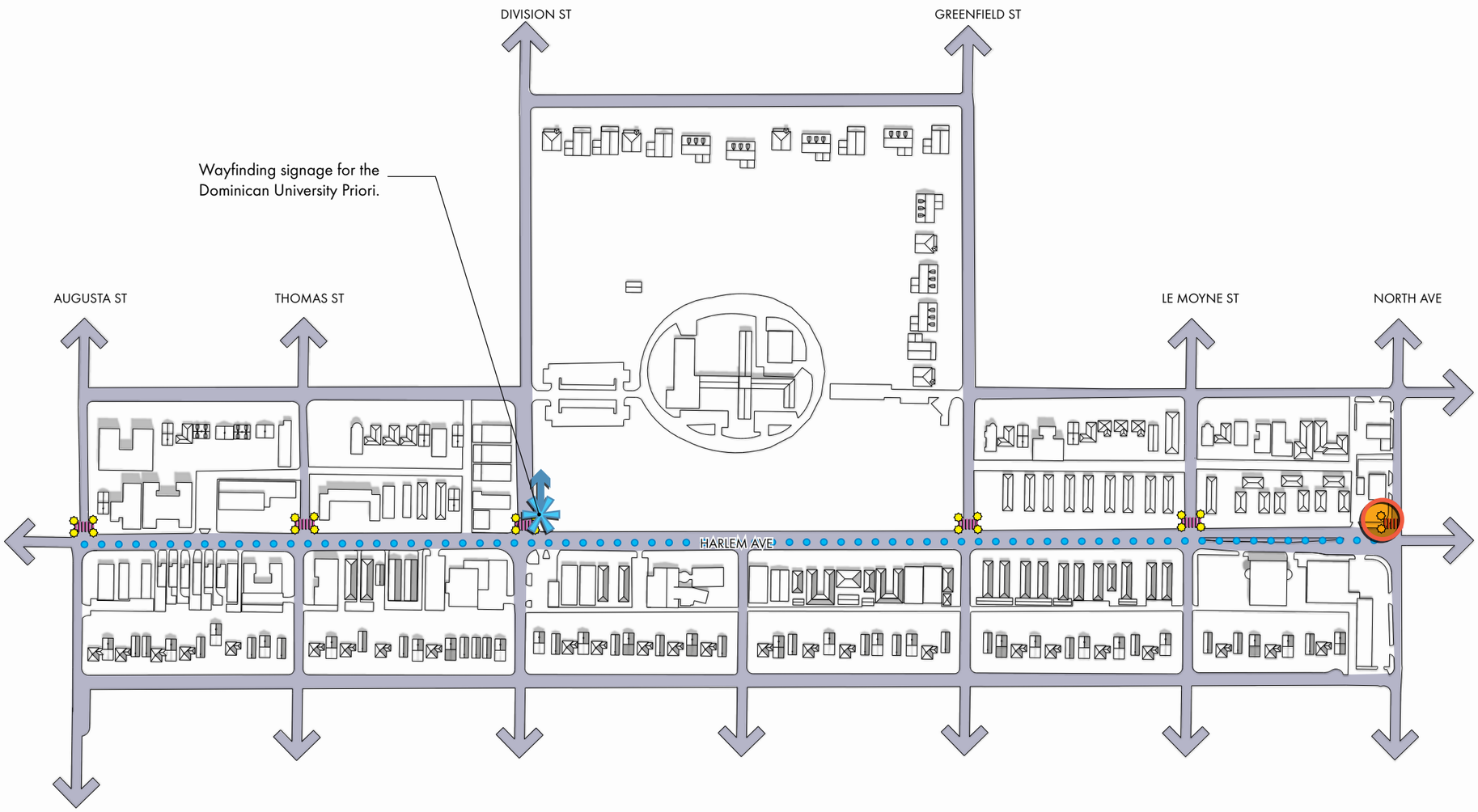
Harlem Avenue Corridor

Beautification Framework

Central Avenue to Augusta Street

Utilizing the primary streetscape and beautification components presented in Section 4, this Beautification Framework Plan identifies the recommended locations for the different streetscape components. The specific/exact location of key components will likely required coordination with property owners and developers along the corridor to ensure appropriate integration. If implemented according to this framework, the recommended improvements could transform the appearance of the corridor.





MAP LEGEND

NORTH

- Gateway Signage
- Wayfinding Signage
- Crosswalk Enhancements
- Bollards
- Village Banner Program
- Local Roadways

Transportation

Transportation Recommendations

Due to Harlem Avenue's heavy traffic volume and IDOT designation as a Strategic Regional Arterial (SRA), any streetscape improvements and traffic calming amenities will need to be balanced with IDOT's requirements for effective traffic flow within the corridor. Average annual daily traffic will remain high or increase within the corridor, necessitating the existing number of lanes, lane widths, and signal locations.

Programmed Improvements

Short Term Improvements

- In conjunction with Oak Park and IDOT, install pedestrian countdown timers on Harlem Avenue at Lake Street, Chicago Avenue, Division Street, and Augusta Avenue.
- Conduct a study into optimizing the existing pedestrian timings at Lake Street and Harlem Avenue.
- Develop a striping standard / striping program for pedestrian cross walks that have a higher level of visibility. Coordinate the proposed striping with any striping program in Oak Park that may include Bike lane striping.
- Where possible, eliminate single lot curb cuts to small development parcels, in conjunction with redevelopment.

Long Term Improvements

- Coordinate future streetscape improvements within downtown River Forest and Oak Park in conjunction with the Harlem Avenue viaduct project.
- The existing high-density apartments located between Chicago Avenue and Oak Avenue, if redeveloped can include a block of on-street parking in conjunction with proposed improvements.

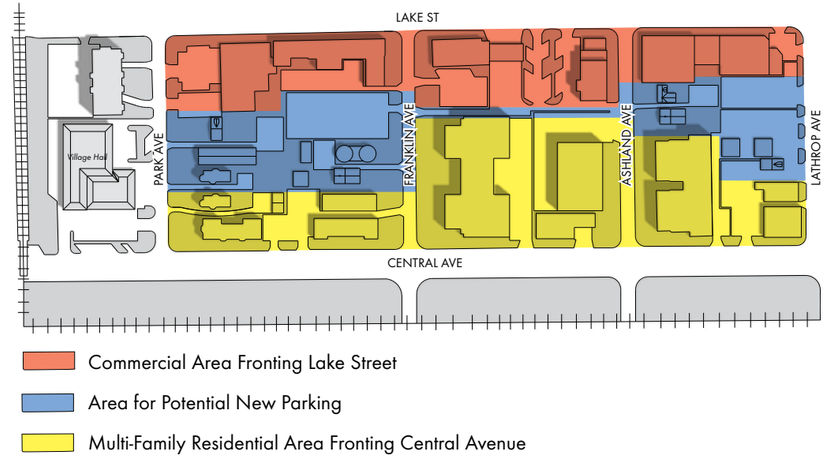
Intersection of Harlem Avenue and Chicago Avenue.

Traffic stopped near the Harlem Avenue and North Avenue intersection.

Village Center Area Parking

Unlike the other corridors, Lake Street could largely be classified as pedestrian friendly with commercial buildings that address tree-lined sidewalks

View looking southwest along Lake Street.



The purpose of this section is to provide a parking plan/strategy for the Village Center Area of River Forest. The Village Center Area, situated along Lake Street between Lathrop Avenue and the railroad tracks just west of Park Avenue, is an area developed in a traditional pedestrian-oriented manner. The area is comprised primarily of commercial/mixed-use buildings fronting the sidewalk along Lake Street, multi-family residential development along Central Avenue, with smaller residential structures in between. The Village Hall, Police, and Fire Facilities are also located within this Village Center Area.

Off-street parking in the area is in short supply and has been noted by area developers and brokers as having a negative impact on the businesses and development potential of the area. Because many of the older commercial buildings were developed with little or no off-street parking, it is difficult for individual property owners to provide needed parking. In such situations, it is important for the municipality to assist with the provision of parking in order to help smaller scale historic commercial areas survive and even thrive.

Off-street parking in the Village Center Area should be enhanced through the provision of new smaller public parking lots, strategically located in the areas between Lake Street and Central Avenue, although not fronting along Lake Street. The approach would provide needed parking for shoppers and visitors to the area, and if area employees were directed to the lots, more conveniently located on-street parking would be available for customers. Also, if public parking lots were established adjacent to commercial properties, opportunities for public/private partnerships may arise as commercial properties seek redevelopment.

On-street parking throughout the Village Center Area should be maximized in all areas, as it provides essential and convenient parking for businesses in the area. The 2-hour time limit is appropriate for on-street parking as it prevents employees and commuters from parking on the street all day and occupying spaces intended for and needed for customers of local businesses. The one exception to the 2-hour limit may be for the area along the north side of Lake Street across from Corus Bank. To better accommodate the adjacent townhome residents and other downtown residents, this areas could be signed for resident permit parking, allowing them to parking longer that 2 hours if the proper permit was displayed. This same technique is used elsewhere in the Village to prevent commuter parking restriction from negatively effecting adjacent residents.

The following pages present the specific recommendations for providing new public parking lots in the Village Center Area. The Plan relocates Village Hall parking off of Lake Street and creates connected parking on multiple blocks.

Parking Strategy Analysis

A The parcel at the southeast corner of Lake Street and Park Avenue currently serves as a parking lot for the Village Hall. Consideration should be given to relocating this parking lot, so that quality commercial development can be present along this prominent corner of Lake Street.

Net Loss: 22 Parking Spaces
Net Gain: 7,080 sq. ft. Potential Commercial Space

B Consideration should be given to purchasing the lot at the northeast corner of Park Avenue and Central Avenue, directly across from the Village Hall. This lot can provide parking for Village Hall employees and patrons, without consuming any valuable commercial space along Lake Street.

Net Gain: 37 Parking Spaces

C Consideration should be given to constructing a parking lot on the east side of Park Avenue that would provide connectivity to the existing parking lot to the east along Franklin Avenue. Development of parking at this location would likely require the purchase of one complete property and a portion of another. The close proximity of this area to Lake Street make it a desirable location for parking.

Net Gain: Approximately 21 Parking Spaces

D Consideration should be given to constructing a parking lot on the east side of Ashland Avenue that would provide connectivity to the existing parking lot to the east along Lathrop Avenue. Development of parking at this location would likely require the acquisition of two properties along Ashland Avenue, and a portion of the adjacent property to the east. This would create a nice sized parking area that spans the entire length of the block and is close walking distance to commercial buildings along Lake Street.

Net Gain: 25 Parking Spaces

Schematic Parking Lot Layout

GRAPHIC SCALE

100 0 50 100

(IN FEET)
1 inch = 100 ft.