

The Village of Elmwood Park has many opportunities and several key issues in creating a more vibrant station area. Most significantly, Metra has recently completed a freight track re-alignment and has improved the Elmwood Park Station with a new depot and shelter, new platforms and landscaping. In addition, the Village has completed construction of Central Park and approved a new townhouse development adjacent to the train station. Beyond the station, the Village's strongest asset is their well-maintained residential neighborhoods with single-family bungalows. However, Elmwood Park does not have a vibrant business district adjacent to the station nor does it have a "downtown" identity. Conti Circle is a mixed use district with retail, housing, and public facilities, but it does not have a strong connection with Grand Avenue nor the station. In addition, due to competitive market forces and auto dependent shoppers, Grand and Harlem Avenues need a new vision for the future. The biggest issue the Village faces is focusing limited resources on creating a vibrant retail district adjacent to the station, which will attract even more residential development, potential customers, and Metra commuters.

Figure 5: Planning Opportunities graphically highlights several key physical attributes that will serve as "building blocks" of a successful Elmwood Park Station Area. Building blocks are developments that provide the "Three D's" of TOD - Design, Diversity and Density - such as Conti Parkway, Central Park and traditional single family neighborhoods. Figure 5 also highlights many opportunities for future improvements and redevelopment potential, especially along Grand and Harlem Avenues. Lastly, Figure 5 highlights certain areas as susceptible to change due to zoning and market conditions that may prompt redevelopment in the future.

Future Land Use

- Conti Parkway contains properties that are susceptible to change over time, and have potential as future mixed-use development sites, including:
 - Large single-story retail building at Sunset Drive and Conti Parkway
 - Prominent single-story funeral home in the long-term future (10+ years)
- Future redevelopment on Conti Parkway should focus on closing the "retail gaps" that isolate the viable business district between Westwood and Sunset Drives:
 - Along Sunset Drive, between Grand Avenue and Conti Parkway
 - Along Conti Parkway's western perimeter
 - Along Conti Parkway's eastern perimeter
- Conti Parkway contains a significant amount of multi-family apartment buildings, which may

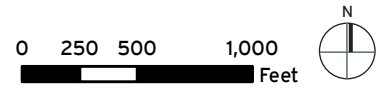


FIGURE 5
Planning Opportunities

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- Elmwood Park Metra Station
- Study Area Boundary
- Village Boundary
- Potential "Gateway" Locations
- Streetscape Improvements Needed
- Station Area Building Blocks
- Areas with Redevelopment Potential
- Areas Susceptible to Change
- Areas in Need of Facade or Site Improvement
- TIF District



be susceptible to change in the future (10+ years) due to age and/or market conditions.

- A multi-family apartment building has recently been approved for a conversion to condominiums.
- New multi-use buildings with ground-level retail and condos above may create a more vibrant business environment for investors.
- In the immediate station area, Grand Avenue does not contain many retail businesses typically preferred by commuters, so there is future redevelopment potential for underutilized or non-transit supportive properties, such as:
 - The Car Wash and Brown's Chicken, north of the RR tracks
 - True Value Hardware, due to building and site obsolescence
 - The fast-food site at the corner of Grand Avenue and 75th Court
- In 1983, the Grand and Harlem crossroads became a tax-increment finance (TIF) district that inherently encourages redevelopment, which was used for Circuit City; therefore, additional opportunities exist for future development, such as:
 - The TIF district should be viewed as a distinct area that requires coordination with the City of Chicago on future improvements.
 - The entire south side of Grand Avenue, between Harlem and 73rd Avenue, could be redeveloped due to building and site obsolescence.
 - The west side of Harlem Avenue, between Circuit City and Altgeld Street, could be redeveloped due to building and site obsolescence.
 - Depending on competitive market forces, Circuit City may have the potential for redevelopment in the long-term future (10+ years)
- The overall appearance of Grand Avenue is unimpressive and uninviting for passerby customers, so the Village should focus on streetscape and site improvements for problem properties.
 - Although some businesses have improved their sites, other businesses have not and drag down the district – "one apple can spoil the bunch."
 - The Village should proactively encourage its façade program to problem properties, and enforce code and maintenance regulations.
- Since the traditional single-family residential neighborhoods are Elmwood Park's greatest asset, the Village could consider re-zoning certain blocks to limit new condo development



and multi-family development.

Transit Facilities, Routes, and Service

- Coordinated bus shelters with benches could be installed along Grand Avenue at key intersections to visually highlight bus stops and promote usage.
- Due to the recent at-grade railroad crossing accident on Grand Avenue, the National Transportation Safety Board will be investigating the at-grade crossing of Metra's Milwaukee District West Line to determine a recommendation for future action on a proposed grade separation of Grand Avenue. However, since economic development along Grand Avenue between Conti Parkway and Harlem Avenue is a key focus of the Station Area Plan, any future infrastructure recommendation for the at-grade crossing will not affect the recommendations of this Plan.

Access, Circulation, and Parking

- There is potential for a cul-de-sac on 76th Avenue, north of Grand Avenue, to create a more pedestrian-friendly connection from the Station to Conti Parkway.
 - This concept would help reduce conflicts between pedestrians and vehicles.
 - This concept would create a slightly larger site for any future redevelopment projects.
- Pedestrian access at 75th Avenue across Grand Avenue is limited to a 30-second cycle, which could be increased to encourage pedestrian crossing and safety.
- Due to the distance between signaled crossings, a traffic light may be appropriate for 74th and Grand Avenues to encourage pedestrian crossings.
- Since Circuit City's secondary parking lot is underutilized, the Village could consider a shared use parking policy, a municipal parking lot, or redevelopment.
- Due to limited parking on Conti Parkway, a two-hour limit for on-street parking could be established and enforced to minimize employee and commuter parking.
 - On-street parking within adjacent residential neighborhoods could be encouraged for employees and commuters, but time limits should be established to minimize residential concerns.
- Due to limited commuter parking along Marwood Avenue, the Village could establish a free



permit system for commuters to limit residential parking during established hours and increase commuter parking opportunities.

Urban Design Features

- Since it is a gateway arterial that shows the community's "public face", Grand Avenue could be the focus of a "grand" streetscape improvement project.
 - Since overhead wires are absent along Grand Avenue, street trees could be planted at 30-foot intervals.
 - Parking lot landscaping with minimum 4-foot screening heights could be required for new businesses, and encouraged for existing businesses.
 - New pedestrian lampposts and overhead street lighting could be installed from Sunset Drive to Harlem Avenue.
 - New gateway features could be developed to "book end" the Grand Avenue district at Sunset Drive and Harlem Avenue intersections.
 - New plazas and small open spaces could be encouraged in new development projects for outdoor dining and public gathering spaces.
 - Depending on future land uses, parking, and access configurations, the turning medians could be redeveloped as landscaped medians or removed to permit on-street parking.
- Coordinated pedestrian signage, kiosks, and landscaping could be used to create the appropriate visual cues for linking Conti Circle and Elmwood Station. The Village would need to seek funding for these type of improvements at the station; Metra is not able to fund such improvements.
- New plazas could be incorporated into future development immediately north of the station in order to visually connect the station with Grand Avenue.
- Although mixed use development is permissible along Grand Avenue, the Village could officially designate Grand Avenue between Sunset and Harlem Avenues as a mixed use zone to encourage residential above commercial uses.

