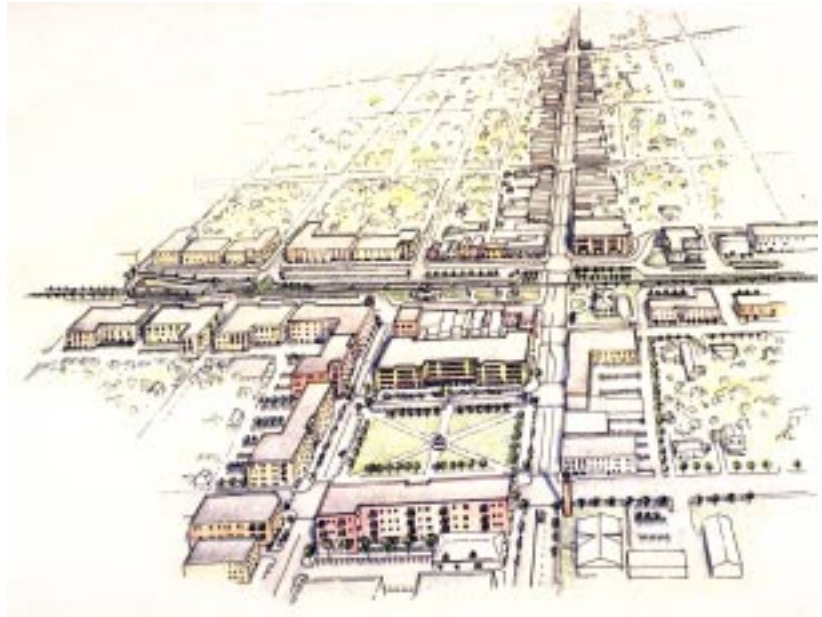


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*Village of Westmont*  
***Transit-Oriented  
Development  
Study***



*Final Report*  
*for*  
*The Village of Westmont*  
*Regional Transportation Authority*

*prepared by*

*Farr Associates Architecture and Urban Design*  
*Community Economic Redevelopment Corporation*  
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This Westmont/Regional Transportation Authority (RTA) study concludes that the Village of Westmont has an opportunity to redevelop its downtown in a manner which can improve the town's image, offer greater retail choices, increase housing options, strengthen its role as a transit node and make downtown a vital destination. The body of this study identifies that three of the four necessary elements for a robust redevelopment approach are clearly in place: 1) market demand, 2) available redevelopment sites and 3) broad community support for redevelopment. The only open question is whether the leadership of Westmont will be able to continue their commitment to lead, and fund, a comprehensive multi-year project to implement the core of the recommendations of this report. It is important to note that individual desire alone will likely not be adequate to maintain progress during leadership transitions over the next 5 to 15 years. Mechanisms must be put in place to clearly define the goals and direction of the effort — to institutionalize the plan — so the intent of the plan can be carried forward over the long term.

The report outlines four different levels of intervention that Westmont can take towards implementing downtown redevelopment. These strategies range from the least active involvement on the part of Village officials and staff (“Market Driven”) to the most aggressive stance (“Village as Developer”). In order to implement any of the strategies, two key things will be required of Westmont leadership :

- 1) A period of review, debate, and evaluation of this report resulting in a memorandum of understanding between the Mayor, the Trustees, and staff which a) formally adopts the plan and b) outlines the level of commitment which the Village of Westmont is prepared to make to implement a multi-year redevelopment plan.
- 2) A commitment to empower a professional redevelopment team (combining staff and outside consultants) to implement the individual projects which literally build the plan.

The redevelopment of a downtown requires that every individual redevelopment project serve a greater vision. Over the last several years, Westmont has built several new and mostly successful civic buildings: a library, a police and fire station, the new Westmont Center, and currently underway, a new Village Hall. There is no doubt that extensive thought went into each of these projects at the time they were completed. However, they probably all represent missed opportunities because they were planned as individual building projects rather than parts of a comprehensive plan.

The summary sections below correspond to the chapters in the report and cover the

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most critical recommendations in each.

### *Community Process and Consensus*

The planning process for Westmont included a robust community participation process involving over 150 people in two major public meetings. The meetings generated a series of publicly supported goals:

1. *Residents want a more lively and retail-oriented downtown*
2. *Downtown access and parking for retail should be improved*
3. *Residents desire a diverse community and housing affordability*
4. *Village should take an active role in promoting and developing the downtown*

The public design session (charrette) resulted in a consensus plan and three variations (A, B, and C), and demonstrates strong public support for major downtown change including:

- More downtown housing in higher-density configurations. (All of the plans show 1,000 to 2,000 additional dwelling units).
- New mixed-use development with ground floor retail and upper level housing (three to four stories tall).
- Improved retail mix and less service-oriented low-traffic uses.
- More civic open space.

### Recommended Plan — Alternative “C”

The plan recommended in this report is Alternative “C”, a scheme that includes all the elements of the publicly generated Consensus Plan and also proposes redevelopment of the under-utilized area on Cass Avenue between the Burlington Northern Santa Fe (BNSF) tracks and approximately Richmond Avenue. Please see the plans and commentary included in the “Charrette” section of Chapter 2: Community Process and Consensus in the body of the report.

### *Zoning, Land Use, and Urban Design*

#### Zoning

The current zoning ordinance prohibits or discourages most of the elements in the Consensus Plan. Residential densities are limited to just 4 to 5 dwelling units per acre – far below ideal for transit-oriented development (TOD) and creation of a lively pedestrian retail environment. In business districts, low maximum site-to-building ratios and height limits preclude the higher-density development needed for a lively downtown. In addition, the mixed-use building types favored in the public meetings cannot be built without variances under the current zoning rules.

The easiest way to create zoning that is appropriate for the type of development



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proposed in this report would be to create an overlay zone incorporating a series of interrelated recommendations such as:

- Create a new zoning designation allowing/encouraging mixed-use buildings.
- Mandate that new commercial and mixed-use buildings be built to the lot line.
- Increase building height maximums and site-to-building ratio limits for commercial and mixed-use developments to allow for a four-story streetwall.
- Mandate ground-floor active retail on Cass Avenue, Burlington Avenue, Quincy Street and other downtown streets undergoing commercial redevelopment.
- Increase density of residential districts by reducing minimum lot sizes and setback requirements.
- Increase residential building height maximums and modify site-to-building ratios to allow for four- to five-story buildings.
- Develop building design standards with architectural review to assure the construction of “destination” quality architecture on high-visibility, high-image sites.

#### Land Use and Urban Design

Land use and urban design patterns in the downtown have a direct impact on the liveliness of the public environment. Current patterns are the combined result of the form of existing building stock and the historical shift of retail to outlying malls and strip development. The tenor of downtown is diminished due to a number of related issues:

- Service commercial uses predominate and contribute to the low activity levels.
- Retail storefronts have seen little care and improvement despite good historic character. Window displays are dull and rarely change.
- Vacant parcels and surface parking detract from the pedestrian environment.
- Noncontributing uses, such as the warehousing along east Quincy Street, are not bringing any benefits to the downtown.
- Low-density housing around the core means few residents to populate downtown streets.

Retail trends show a shift away from shopping at malls and back to street-based retail, and with the right adjustments, Westmont can participate in this national downtown retail revival. Critical items include more downtown housing, room for retail growth, visual improvements to buildings, and redevelopment of key sites.

#### Recommendations for the Use of Village Controlled Land

Use Village-owned land to help spur appropriate development activity:

- Develop new higher-density housing on Village land at Burlington Avenue, east of Cass Avenue.

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- Make the train station a destination beyond commuter hours (for example: a ticketmaster or hot-tix facility, a visitor center, or a small childrens' art gallery).
  - The new Village Hall should have ground floor retail uses and accessible multi-use parking (i.e. weekend shopping use).

#### Urban Design Recommendations

- Improve appearance of facades through a rebate program.
- Fix the water tanks (screening or murals).
- Improve the pedestrian environment: better lighting and streetscape, traffic calming, mid-block crossings.
- Changes to infrastructure should be carefully designed and implemented to minimize negative impact on the retail and pedestrian environment.

#### ***Transportation***

##### Public Parking Conclusions/Recommendations

- Add diagonal spaces on east/west cross streets for shoppers and increase parking behind buildings for longer-term use and employees.
- Improve parking management: adjustment of time limits, enforcement, signage, marketing.
- Maintain/reserve key sites for future parking decks with retail at the ground floor.

By implementing and enforcing a variety of time limits, signage/marketing programs, and designating employee parking locations, the parking supply in downtown Westmont should be adequate for all users.

##### Metra Commuter Parking Conclusions/Recommendations

Given that existing Metra parking is at full capacity, additional commuter parking is desired.

- Existing parking areas west of Cass Avenue along the Burlington Northern Santa Fe (BNSF) right-of-way (r-o-w) should be rearranged more efficiently to gain additional spaces.
- East of Cass Avenue, new parking could be provided in the BNSF r-o-w on both the north and south side of the railroad (note: this will require discussions with the BNSF).

##### Movements/Circulation Conclusions/Recommendations

The major constraint is the difficulty of circulation between the north and south portions of the downtown — Cass Avenue is the only at-grade crossing within one mile of the downtown.

- To improve the internal circulation for shoppers, a grade-separated local access road is proposed. It represents a large capital expense, but would provide the





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ability to circulate within the retail area of the downtown without interference at the at-grade crossing. Note that the overpass is an important enhancement to the Consensus Plan, but is not a required element. Also, each of the three alternative plans (“A”, “B”, and “C”) would greatly reduce the need for the overpass.

- Add traffic calming elements, such as bulb outs at intersections to reduce the incentive for through-traffic to use Cass Avenue.

#### Pace Bus Service Conclusions/Recommendations

- Consider increasing/reworking bus service to serve growing populations.
- Reorganize bus circulation to reduce vehicle conflicts and improve efficiency.

#### Pedestrians/Bicycles Conclusions/Recommendations

For improved accommodation of pedestrians and bicycles, the following strategies are recommended:

- Add streetscaping elements, including landscaping, street trees, and decorative lighting, but take care to limit negative impact on retail.
- Add clearly marked mid-block pedestrian crossings on Cass Avenue.

#### ***Housing Market Assessment***

Westmont currently has a slight oversupply of housing units tempered by the fact that more of the housing stock is renter-occupied. Thus, Westmont has more rental housing than it needs, but has room to increase the number of owner-occupied units. To justify a demand for new housing units, the project must draw from a larger pool of potential home buyers. In addition, most new housing development in recent years has been on the periphery of Westmont, especially to the south. Residential development downtown will likely not take place without a plan in place to guide and encourage development.

- Encourage the development of condominiums and townhomes rather than rental units in the Primary Trade Area (within 1 mile of downtown).
- Make it easy for developers to build housing above retail and streamline the approval process for favorable developments.
- Create a master plan for increasing downtown population by 2,000 residents over ten years representing 800-1,000 units of housing.

#### ***Commercial Market Assessment***

The goal of the Westmont downtown shopping district should be to distinguish itself from local strip shopping centers, capitalize on Metra commuters, and compete better with neighboring downtowns as a destination shopping district. The existing downtown business district has approximately 160,000 square feet of ground floor retail of which the majority are service-oriented and do not contribute much to downtown liveliness.

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Retail uses are predominantly local merchants, with no national retail presence.

The retail assessment found that demand exists for increasing retail space in downtown Westmont. Three customer groups are potentially available – residents, outside visitors, and commuters. Retailers must respond to the needs of each if they expect to capture their business.

#### Recommendations — Location of Retail

- Create policies which encourage the orderly replacement of ground-floor service uses with retail uses on streets designated to become exclusively retail (likely Cass Avenue between Burlington Avenue and Irving Street, and elsewhere).
- Market the convenience retail identified in the RTA survey (coffee shop, newsstand, dry cleaners, ATM, fast food, convenience items, cards/gifts) for vacant spaces nearest to train station.

#### Recommendations — Merchandising/Downtown Management

- Improve downtown management and organization: coordinated advertising, marketing events, extended store hours.
- Evaluate the creation of a Special Service Area to help fund downtown improvements.
- Improve retail displays and merchandising for shops.
- Market to capture commuter traffic: adjust retail business hours, post retailer information in the Metra station, offer discounts to Metra commuters.
- Strategically market to attract grocery, apparel, home decorating, etc. shops either to occupy existing rental space or infill development.

#### *Implementation Strategy Options*

The four different levels of intervention that Westmont can take towards implementing downtown redevelopment are:

Level 1: Market Driven – This strategy might best be described as low investment and low return. It accepts the status quo and is unlikely to result in the sort of major downtown redevelopment that Westmont seeks to bring about.

Level 2: Village as Limited Catalyst – Referred to elsewhere in the report as “housekeeping”, this addresses structural problems. We highly recommend that this agenda be implemented whether or not the Trustees decide to pursue a more proactive redevelopment strategy. Housekeeping recommendations from all sections are summarized in Appendix 1.

Levels 3 & 4: A More Proactive Stance – Village as Direct Catalyst and/or Developer.

These levels represent a more robust level of redevelopment of downtown including



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activities such as acquiring land for redevelopment, working with developers, and providing incentives for key deals as necessary to get them built in the next 3 to 5 years.

Based on the public participation in this study, there is clearly significant support for taking major steps in downtown redevelopment. In the public meetings, there was a shared sense that something big needed to be done to turn downtown around, and without deep involvement from the Village, very little is likely to happen.



### *Background*

Westmont, Illinois is a western suburb of Chicago, with a 1999 population of about 23,000. Located approximately 24 miles west of the Chicago Loop, the town is well served by three major interstate highways as well as the Metra/Burlington Northern Santa Fe line which provides convenient access to downtown Chicago. Originally an agricultural trading stop along the Burlington Northern Santa Fe (BNSF) Railroad line from Chicago to Aurora, Westmont grew into a commuter community and developed mainly around the train station. Not until the 1960s did auto-oriented development begin to pull the commercial activity from downtown and change the character of Westmont. Today, the downtown business core suffers from retail management, parking, and accessibility issues, lacks national retailers, and is made up of mostly service-oriented businesses and professional offices.

### *Study Impetus*

The impetus for this study lies in the recognition by the Regional Transportation Authority (RTA) and its service boards (Metra and Pace) that transit can be a benefit to community character and vitality.

Simultaneously, the desire of elected officials and village staff of Westmont to do something to revitalize downtown – to strengthen its role as a transportation hub and to reestablish it as a destination for shopping, living, and working – led the community to work with the RTA on a Transit-Oriented Development Process. The RTA and its service boards have an interest in increasing ridership at the Westmont Metra station and in the continued viability of Metra's BNSF rail corridor. The Village and the Westmont Main Street Association want to enliven downtown. The purpose of this study is to layout a plan to accomplish the objectives of all the interested parties by redeveloping downtown Westmont.

### **Principles of Transit-Oriented Development**

The principles of transit-oriented development (TOD) are universal and simple. They establish a framework for urban centers and neighborhoods alike to achieve a greater sense of community, mobility, economic growth, identity, and diversity. At the most basic level, TOD brings together transit, retail, residential, and civic uses in a way that benefits all these uses. In the right quantities and arrangement, TOD can help a downtown increase its sense of vitality and activity, improve retail viability, and increase transit use and thereby help reduce area congestion and pollution.

Westmont is an ideal location for TOD because it has an established Metra station and ridership. Many of the needed elements are already in place. Downtown is friendly to pedestrians and has significant retail space. There is housing near downtown, although densities are somewhat low for a TOD. In short, there is great opportunity to fill in the

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missing elements and fine tune the downtown area based on existing strengths.

The principles of TOD include:

### *Transit*

A transit center providing a commuter link to the Chicago Loop creates an ideal opportunity for TOD. Traditionally, the permanence of rail transit provides more confidence for private investment in the area. In addition to the main transit stop, other supporting transportation elements are necessary to create a truly intermodal transportation hub, such as reliable feeder bus service, bicycle and automobile accessibility, and a pedestrian friendly-environment.

### *Mix of Uses*

When housing, shopping, parks, and public facilities are all within walking distance of the transit center, the critical mass of activity needed for a successful TOD can be achieved. Ideally, a variety of uses downtown results in activity 18 hours a day, thereby increasing vitality and the sense of security and safety. Multi-story buildings, with retail on the ground floor and housing or offices above, are the typical building type for mixed-use development. Convenient services and shops (such as day-care, dry cleaners, pharmacy, and a market) should be available as a commuter walks from the train station to his/her home.

### *Pedestrian-Friendly Environment*

Creating an environment that is continuously comfortable and rewarding for pedestrians is essential for transit-oriented development. Ample sidewalks, human-scaled lighting, compact development, narrow streets, interesting retail displays, and a mix of uses nearby, all help to achieve this objective. This kind of environment can increase the distances people are willing to walk compared to typical suburban commercial development patterns. Figure 1.1 shows typical comfortable TOD walking distances in terms of time (@ 3 mi/hr). Three minute and five minute walk times are easily achievable in well designed TOD settings.

### *Housing*

Housing nearby is critical to TOD. Higher density development near the TOD center generates the population needed to support retail and commercial uses, and allows commuters to walk rather than drive to the station.

### *Public Gathering Spaces*

A village green or public square near civic uses can be a vital element of any TOD. This space can be used for a variety of events such as outdoor concerts, farmers markets, and public gatherings. On most days, however, it can function as a place for neighbors to meet, workers to eat their lunch, and for neighborhood children to play.

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## Study Area Boundaries

For the physical aspects of the plan, the study area is bounded by Naperville Road to the north, Dallas St. to the south, Grant St. to the west, and Warwick Ave. to the east; except between Burlington Ave. and Richmond St., where the eastern border is roughly Wilmette Avenue to the east and Washington Street to the west (See Figure 1.1 below). In the market study portion of the report, the “Primary Trade Area” refers to the area within a one-mile radius of the Metra station, which is about twice the area of the Study Area Map (See Figure 1.1 below). The market report also refers to the “Secondary Trade Area” which includes everything within a three-mile radius of the Metra station. Examining this larger area is necessary to determine housing and retail needs and is useful when discussing demographics.



*Figure 1.1 Study Area Boundaries*  
*The map to the right illustrates the approximate study area for the Westmont TOD study*





### **Community Participation**

Robust community input is essential to formulating a plan which best meets the community's needs and which will engender community support. The Westmont TOD Study planning process had public participation from a fairly large dedicated core of around 100 people. Nearly one-half of 1% of the population of Westmont participated directly in the planning process, a far greater number than opinion polling routinely relies on for constructing an accurate picture of public opinion. In addition, the planning session participants were characterized by a diversity of views and represented many key constituencies: downtown business owners, transit riders, downtown residents, and residents at large.

For the Mayor and Trustees faced with the decision on what course of action to take to redevelop downtown, this chapter will provide fairly clear input on the desires of many key constituencies. Participating citizens were asked their views on the health of the downtown and what should be done to improve it. Throughout the process the participants gave consistent and clear feedback. The tools used to solicit that input are recounted herein along with the results of the community process.

### **Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats**

At the first public meeting in Westmont, Farr Associates used the SWOT Process (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats), a planning tool that helps identify both a community's core assets and limitations. The SWOT process dissects the various systems that make up a community such as infrastructure, local economy, transportation, demographics, available land parcels, land uses, zoning, political climate, and the natural environment, to determine community perceptions of the study area.

The SWOT analysis took place in Westmont on October 7, 1999. By engaging in a group discussion, residents, business people, village staff, and elected officials identified the perceived strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats of downtown Westmont. This discussion opened a dialog about the existing conditions of the area and the potential of future growth to improve the quality of life.

The list of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats identified by SWOT participants can be found in Appendix 3. From this exercise, the consultants gained a better understanding of the concerns and priorities of the residents, which evolved into the goals of the project.

### **Image Preference Survey**

In addition to the SWOT process, Farr Associates conducted an Image Preference

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Survey (IPS) which also took place at the October 7 meeting. The IPS is a tool used to guide the formulation of design standards for architectural character and scale, various land uses, street treatment, the pedestrian realm and other urban design issues.

A group of community residents, business and property owners, village staff, and elected officials were shown slides of carefully selected photographs. Some of the slides were of the study area, others were of neighboring towns and still others were of various locations throughout the country. The participants were asked to rate each image by how much it appealed to them. At Westmont's IPS, a total of 41 pairs of images were divided into the following five categories:

*First Impressions:* The character of a place upon arrival

*Civic/Feature Buildings:* The character of prominent public buildings

*Pedestrian Realm:* The pedestrian character of downtown streets

*Storefronts:* Downtown commercial land uses

*Housing:* Various single-family and multi-family residential types

The group viewed each pair of slides and rated each image from -10 to +10, based on how much they liked the characteristics represented. In addition to assigning a numeric value to each image, the participants were also asked to choose adjectives they would use to describe each image. Examples of the adjectives used include "quaint", "friendly", "warm", "barren", "ugly", "tacky", etc. Farr Associates then compiled both the quantitative and qualitative data from the IPS, and drew conclusions about what residents would most prefer new development to look like.

The results of the Image Preference Survey are summarized in Appendix 4. The following narrative describes those results.

### *First Impressions*

The photos that rated the highest in this category were described as quaint, historic and traditional. The participants liked the images of the historic civic buildings and the train station greeting visitors. The favored images displayed ground-floor retail, on-street parking, public space, multi-story buildings, and well-maintained facades. The pictures that were least favorable in this category were described as barren, ugly, and unwelcoming. These images showed empty parking lots with no trees, little auto or pedestrian traffic, visible electrical wires, featureless water tanks and blank walls.

### *Civic/Feature Buildings*

The images of civic buildings that were preferred showed buildings with welcoming facades and a variety of architectural detail. They ranged from historic to modern to neo-traditional in character. They were described as inviting, charming, historic, and

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wonderful. Poorly rated were images of buildings with few windows, little activity, unadorned facades, and garage doors facing the street. These buildings were described as boring, cold, and sterile.

### *Pedestrian Realm*

Of the slides in this category, the participants preferred those illustrating well-maintained storefronts, wide sidewalks, trees, on-street parking, lively ground-floor retail, and calm auto traffic. These were described as appealing, charming, spend the day, and fun. Conversely, they did not like poorly maintained sidewalks, uninteresting storefronts, plastic and neon signage, blank walls, strip malls, buildings behind parking lots, and single story commercial buildings. The adjectives used for these images included seedy, rundown, dangerous and lousy.

### *Storefronts*

The preferred images of storefronts showed clean, well-kept facades with large windows, contemporary signage, trees, street lamps, brick sidewalks, and two-story historic buildings. These images were called clean, quaint, and pedestrian-friendly. The group disliked sterile facades with no windows on the second floor, no signs, awnings or displays. Adjectives used to describe these images included tacky, sterile, ugly and boring.

### *Housing*

Participants preferred images of three-story, dense apartment buildings that are well-landscaped, with large windows, small setbacks, facade details, ground-floor retail and historic facades. They described these images using the words unique, friendly, pretty, and Wrigleyville. They did not like buildings that lacked windows and landscaping, high-rises, cookie cutter designs, or factory-like characteristics. The participants said the buildings looked like a dormitory, an air conditioner, and a tomb.

### *Conclusion*

The input from residents made it clear that there is broad community support for a major downtown intervention. The Village can be confident that policy implementation that would address design issues would be favored among residents. The results of the IPS indicate the need for design standards for new construction in Westmont. Standards should include requirements such as:

- 75% of a storefront should be used for window displays
- Setbacks for commercial buildings should be no more than 5 feet
- Setbacks for residential buildings should be no more than 15 feet
- Sidewalks on retail streets should be at least 12 feet wide where possible
- Building facades should be kept clean and well-maintained

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- Traffic calming mechanisms such as narrowing of the street at intersections (bulb-outs), on-street parking, and other devices should be used to improve the pedestrian environment.

The IPS and SWOT processes revealed a number of desires for redevelopment of the Westmont downtown area that would likely have broad public support. The Consultant Team organized and summarized this community input into policies for which there was broad public support in a summary titled “Westmont Goals”. This summary, (included below) was distributed and reviewed at the public charrette and was broadly accepted as having captured community sentiment from the earlier public meetings. Those items are summarized below:

### **Westmont Goals**

#### Residents want a more lively and retail-oriented downtown

- Improve appearance of public way and businesses
- Increase quantity, variety, and quality of retail
- Make more walkable and pedestrian friendly
- Enhance downtown as a destination

#### Downtown access and parking for retail should be improved

- Take advantage of high traffic levels (retail benefit)
- Manage/reduce through-traffic as possible
- Manage parking resources
- Link areas along Cass Avenue north and south of the tracks

#### Residents desire a diverse community and housing affordability

- Maintain ability to stay in the community as one ages
- Provide a range of housing types and prices
- Increase downtown population

#### Village should take an active role in promoting and developing the downtown

- Market the downtown to regional shoppers
- Create market and opportunity for new retail development
- Recruit new retail businesses that fit

### **The Charrette**

*Charrette, noun. An intensive design session intended to produce a result for a given situation. From the French for “cart” and based on the 19th Century Beaux Arts period when artists would strive feverishly to complete their work, even painting in the cart on the way to the exhibition.*

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A public design charrette was held to begin the process of physically redesigning the downtown within the study area. The event, lead by Farr Associates, was attended by approximately 60 Westmont stakeholders including several Village officials.

The session opened with a review of the results of the earlier public activities — the Image Preference Survey and the SWOT Analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats). Through discussion with the residents present, the general direction of, and community preferences for, downtown redevelopment noted above was confirmed. A summary of the current development market was presented along with a general discussion of market forces and issues to help guide the charrette.

### *A Long Term Plan*

The participants were divided into seven groups containing seven to nine people and a facilitator from the consultant team to assist at each table. Working independently, the teams were charged with developing a long-term concept or concepts (potentially 50 years) for the downtown area. As discussion at each table proceeded, the facilitator recorded the ideas generated on a base map using colored markers to indicate proposed land uses, building footprints, special features, and other elements. At the end of the hour, each team reported the results of their session to the overall group.

Though they worked independently, many common elements appeared in the plans that showed clear community support for the following concepts:

- New retail development on blocks near the Metra station, with housing above
- Housing above retail along Cass Avenue
- Redevelopment of key areas east of Cass Avenue, along the tracks, into housing
- An auto bridge over the tracks

The Consensus Plan, described below incorporates the concepts developed collectively at the charrette and forms the basis for three alternatives — A, B, and C — that were generated to make the most of station area redevelopment. All of the alternatives have certain advantages and disadvantages as noted in the discussion below. The Consensus Plan and the Alternatives are illustrated on pages 2-12 through 2-16. The recommended alternative is “C”.

### **Consensus Plan** (see illustration on page 2-12)

#### *New and More Mixed-Use development along Quincy Street and Burlington Avenue west of Cass Avenue*

Quincy Street and Burlington Avenue have the advantage of foot and auto traffic generated by Metra use, and they have good visibility from Cass Avenue. Existing retail along these streets will benefit from and help support new retail. Along with Cass

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Avenue, this area forms a *Core Retail Area* that would include retail at the ground floor with three stories of residential above. The Metra parking should be a shared parking resource made available for retail shopping use at times that are off-peak for commuters (weekends and after 3 PM on weekdays), and clearly marked as such.

#### *Auto Overpass Connecting Quincy Street and Burlington Avenue*

This link over the tracks would reduce dependence on the often clogged Cass Avenue at-grade crossing to connect retail on both sides of the tracks. It would be a low speed connection that would be designed to discourage use by through-traffic seeking to avoid the at-grade crossing. If built, the overpass should be designed as a civic feature with appropriate architectural character and include pedestrian access over the tracks. It represents a large capital expense, but would provide the ability to circulate within the retail area of the downtown without interference at the at-grade crossing. This would make Westmont's downtown traffic able to circulate in a fashion somewhat similar to Hinsdale or La Grange. Note that the overpass is an important enhancement to the Consensus Plan, but is not a required element. Also, each of the three alternative plans ("A", "B", and "C") would greatly reduce the need for the overpass.

#### *Additional Metra Commuter Parking in Existing Lots (R-O-W Strategy)*

By building a low retaining wall along the track/platform edge, in the side of the railroad right-of-way (R-O-W) a substantial number of spaces can be added to the existing Metra commuter parking on Quincy Street and Burlington Avenue. 100 to 200 spaces could be added depending on configuration and placement of the proposed auto bridge and bus area. The additional spaces could also be utilized for shared parking with the retail during commuter off-peak hours. The ability to implement this aspect will require cooperation from the Burlington Northern Santa Fe (BNSF) railroad, owners of the R-O-W.

#### *New Metra ROW Parking West of the Existing Station Parking*

This new lot, which would require purchase of land and vacation of existing use (low-density residential), would provide about 75 additional commuter parking spaces with good proximity to the station. If the R-O-W strategy noted above could be used here, an additional 30% of spaces could be added.

#### *New Metra Parking East of Cass Avenue*

Additional Metra commuter parking could be added east of Cass Avenue bordering the tracks. On the north side, near the water plant, parking could be added before any redevelopment of that area. On the south side, new Metra commuter parking could be executed in conjunction with redevelopment. It appears that as many as 200 or more Metra spaces could be added here assuming parking along the railroad right-of-way (R-O-W) and residential configurations similar to those illustrated beginning page 2-12.

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### *Future Structured Parking*

The existing parking lot at Cass Avenue and Burlington Avenue should be reserved for a parking structure to accommodate future demand (assuming new retail development). The ground floor should provide retail frontage on both streets. The entire structure should be designed to be compatible with other downtown buildings. When built, some portion could be used as joint-use Metra commuter parking, depending on daytime retail parking need.

### *Higher Density Housing East of Cass Avenue along Burlington Avenue*

More housing is crucial to increasing activity levels in the downtown and supporting retail viability. Currently, most of the existing residential areas near downtown are developed at quite a low density — only three to five dwelling units per acre. Additional medium density development could occur east of Cass Avenue along the BNSF line. With Village operations to be consolidated in the new Village Hall, the area near the water storage tanks could be redeveloped with new three to five story condominiums to bring a wider range of housing types and prices, and a greater population, to the downtown.

### *Higher Density Housing East of Cass Avenue along Quincy Street*

The existing land uses in this area contribute little to downtown activity and also brings truck traffic onto downtown streets and into the residential area along Quincy Street. As above, higher density housing here will expand housing opportunities and increase the number of downtown residents. Consideration should be given to relocating the existing businesses. Manufacturing and warehousing are not appropriate, generally, for the downtown. However, the hardware store could contribute to the downtown and a site could be made available if desired.

### *Improved Pedestrian and Retail Environment Along Cass Avenue*

Cass Avenue, north of the tracks, is currently the primary pedestrian-oriented retail in the downtown. The block between Irving Street and Burlington Avenue has many buildings of good architectural character that help create a pleasant environment. However, the many service-oriented and low-traffic businesses tend to reduce the appeal to the pedestrian. The charrette demonstrated strong desire to see current retail on Cass Avenue become more active and less service-oriented, and for the upper floors to become housing. Better streetscaping, and making Cass Avenue easier to cross were also included.

### *More Mixed Use Development Along Cass Avenue South of Tracks*

Retail activity south of the tracks on Cass Avenue does not currently contribute to downtown character or activity. Some of the buildings are eyesores (the Brown's Chicken and the Aldi's) and few of the others are of interesting architectural character.



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Ironically, the new Westmont Centre only emphasizes the poor quality of this part of Cass Avenue. The streetwall is interrupted by parking lots and inconsistent setbacks. Housing breaks the desired continuity of retail frontage. New development that mixes retail and housing vertically (with housing above and relatively continuous retail frontage) in combination with the right retail mix would help extend the pedestrian-oriented area of the Station and provide space for new businesses.

### *Improve Retail Mix and Merchandising Along Cass Avenue*

The many service-oriented uses along Cass Avenue north of the tracks reduce the desirability of the street for both pedestrians and auto traffic. Bland or nonexistent window displays offer few rewards to the strolling pedestrian and many of these uses generate little of the foot traffic that can help make the street a lively and active place. Improving the retail mix is difficult, because unlike a typical mall, decision-making (ownership) is in the hands of many. Facade improvements, better window displays and signage, longer hours, and a more active role by the Village were all suggested as ways to improve this area.

### **Alternatives A, B, & C**

These alternatives keep all of the aspects of the Consensus Plan and offer additional retail and residential space. Each of the alternatives also adds a new public space for the downtown, an element frequently mentioned in the public meetings as a desirable addition. The public space becomes the focal point for most of the additional retail/housing development. Each of the alternatives offers certain advantage and disadvantages as outlined below, but the most compelling plan is Alternative C for the reasons described below.

#### *Alternative "A"*

This alternate scheme shows a new mixed-use center developed around a new park/square northwest of Cass Avenue and Burlington Avenue. This idea, though it can't be described as a consensus element per se, was generated during the charrette by one of the groups and does represent a frequent comment that the downtown would benefit from additional civic-oriented public space.

#### Alternative "A" Advantages:

- It provides a civic square/park that could be used for events such as farmers' markets and festivals. A desire for a larger public gathering place was expressed several times during the public process.
- It provides for expanded retail space (compared to the Consensus Plan) and an extension of downtown in a civic setting.
- It creates a traffic system that serves a substantial retail area and that does not depend on crossing the tracks. This system allows vehicles to loop into the new square and back to Cass Avenue in a manner similar to the downtowns in



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the villages of Hinsdale, La Grange, and other nearby communities. The overpass would still enhance the overall system, but would not provide as great a benefit as in the Consensus Plan.

- It is an opportunity for extensive redevelopment that can be tailored to create adequate and appropriate parking including critical on-street spaces in front of all retail shops.
- It creates an opportunity to convert lower density older housing to higher density condominiums overlooking the new park/square.
- It reduces the need for and reliance on the auto bridge. The bridge would still be beneficial, especially to link to businesses south of Cass Avenue, however it could be phased in at a later date.

Alternative “A” Disadvantages:

- It will likely be difficult to attract retailers to the parkside stores due to a lack of visibility from Cass Avenue, the key traffic route.
- It would require relocation of the church at Irving Street and Lincoln Street or reconfiguring the church to work as a freestanding building that would complement the park/square.
- It displaces several parking lots that are joint use facilities for Metra. These spaces would need to be reallocated elsewhere in the community.
- To be implemented, it would require purchase of a substantial amount of additional land and displace a number of homes.

*Alternative “B”— North Cass Avenue Square*

This option proposes a creation of two new streets connecting Cass Avenue to Lincoln Street between Burlington Avenue and Irving Street with a narrow park or square that opens to Cass Avenue. It builds on the existing retail activity along Cass Avenue and provides green space combined with new on-street parking.

Alternative “B” Advantages:

- Like Alternative “A”, this scheme provides a space for civic activities, reduces the need for the auto bridge, and expands the retail space available in the district.
- Unlike “A”, this option provides excellent visibility from Cass Avenue and the significant traffic flow on that street.
- It reduces the amount of residential property to be acquired and/or converted, compared to “A”.
- It maintains a connection to the commercial uses on Burlington Avenue and Cass Avenue allowing a vehicular loop that is independent of the railroad crossing.
- New retail development on Burlington Avenue and Quincy Street, especially west of Grant Street could be done in a later phase.

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Alternative “B” Disadvantages:

- It would, however, require removal of several businesses and buildings on the east side of Cass Avenue that are currently occupied.
- It displaces several parking lots that are joint use facilities for Metra and would need to be reallocated elsewhere in the community.
- To be implemented, it would require purchase of a substantial amount of additional land and displace a number of homes, though substantially less than “A”.

*Alternative C — South Cass Avenue Square — Recommended*

This alternative is the recommended option. It provides many benefits and takes good advantage of existing resources. Similar to “B”, it proposes a park/square open to Cass Avenue. One additional street would be built. The resulting square would be lined with mixed-use buildings with retail at the ground floor and residential above.

Alternative “C” Advantages:

- Like Alternatives “A” and “B”, Alternative “C” provides a space for civic activities and expands the retail space available in the district.
- Also similar to Alternatives “A” and “B”, it creates a traffic system that serves a substantial retail area and that does not depend on crossing the tracks. This system allows vehicles to loop into the new square and back to Cass Avenue in a manner similar to the downtowns in the villages of Hinsdale, La Grange, and other nearby communities. The overpass would still enhance the overall system, but would not provide as great a benefit as in the Consensus Plan.
- It is also near the existing Metra parking which could be used for retail parking during prime shopping hours — after 5 P.M. and on weekends — when it is not needed for Metra use.
- Unlike “A” and “B”, it redevelops land that is currently either vacant, underutilized, or does not contribute to the retail district — including the former Aldi’s site and parking lot, and some grade-level low-density housing that faces busy Cass Avenue.
- It would tie into the planned redevelopment of the Village Hall.
- Buses to and from the Metra Station could have secondary stops in the square, helping to feed retail there and allowing commuters to easily board the bus home after shopping. (Note: these buses are currently designed for limited feeder service. Secondary stops in the square would require enough customer demand to justify changes in Pace operations.)
- Commuters who park in the church lots on south Cass Avenue would be encouraged to pass through the square to and from the train, increasing retail viability and pedestrian activity.
- It maintains a connection to the commercial uses on Quincy Street allowing a vehicular retail loop that is independent of the railroad crossing.

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- New retail development on Burlington Avenue and Quincy Street, especially west of Grant Street could be done in a later phase.

Alternative “C” Disadvantages:

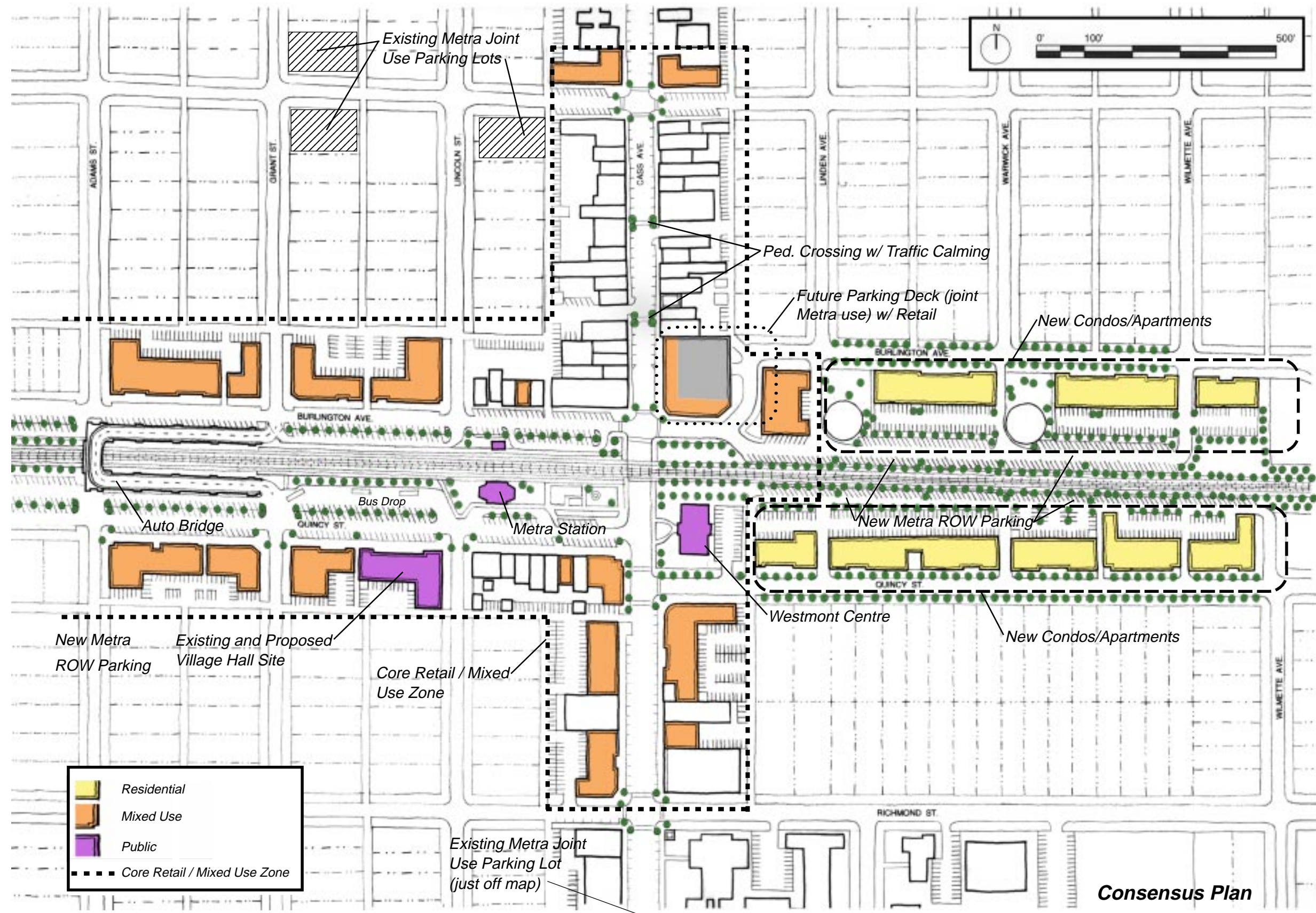
- Like all of the alternatives, to be implemented, it would require purchase of a substantial amount of additional land and displace a number of homes — about the same amount as “B”, though substantially less than “A”.

*Conclusion*

To put in place, any of the alternatives will require substantial commitment from the Village. Several key features are fundamental to success:

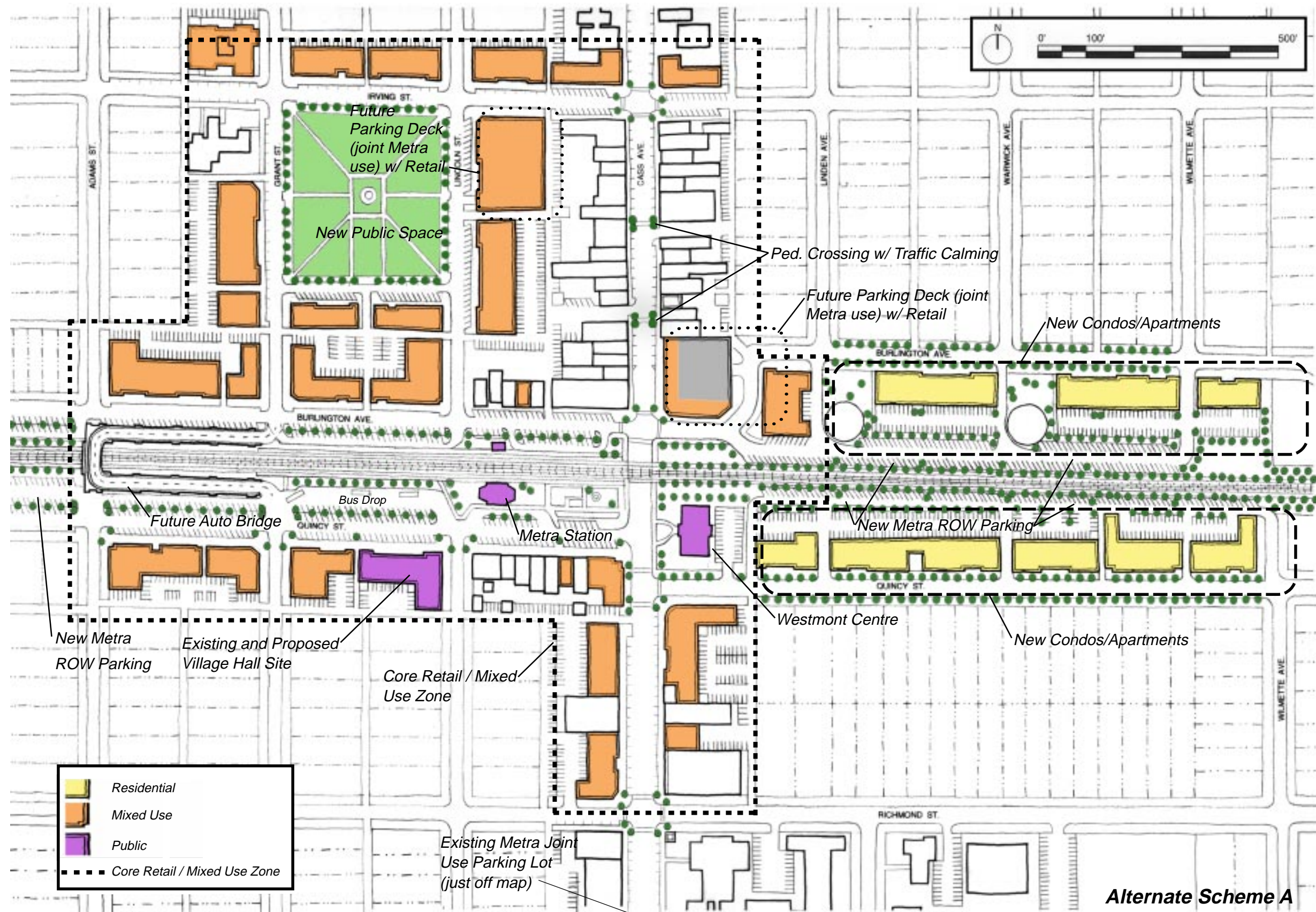
- 1) The public space, which provides a focal point for the redevelopment and, perhaps most important, visibility from Cass Avenue (for Alternate “B” and “C”).
- 2) Ultimately, redevelopment must occur on all sides of the public space. Partial infill is unlikely to stimulate the downtown to achieve its full potential.
- 3) The continuity of retail frontage is very important. Parking lots, blank walls, and non-retail uses interrupting the line of storefronts can severely impact retail viability. Gaps of as little as 40 feet have been shown to reduce the likelihood that pedestrians will continue down the street.
- 4) Adequate and appropriate parking is critical to success. Providing, today, for a future parking structure will ensure that capacity will be available for all users within the study area. Parking development in the right locations and forms can help ensure that commuters will pass through the new district and generate the foot traffic the helps recruit retailers.





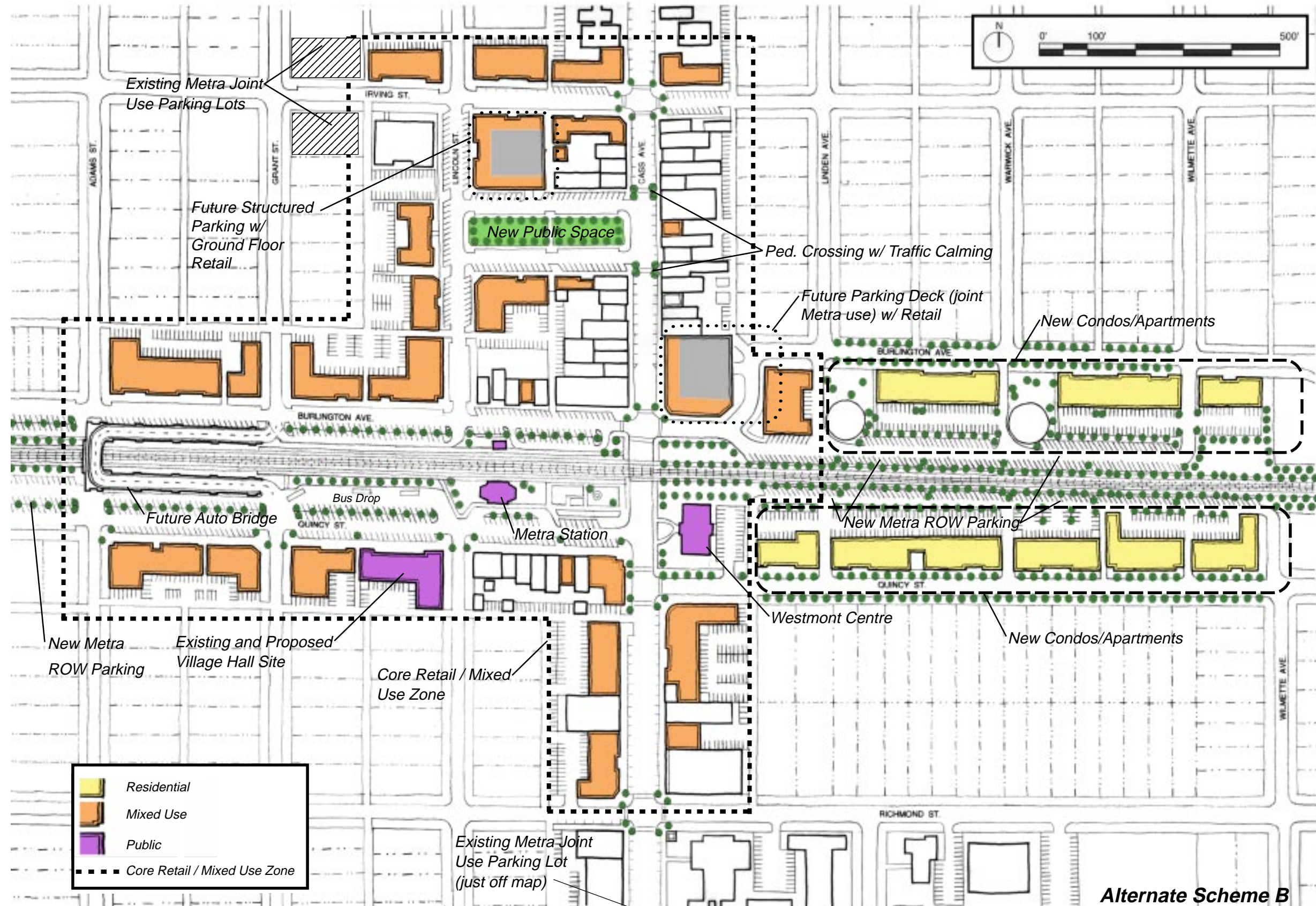
**Consensus Plan**





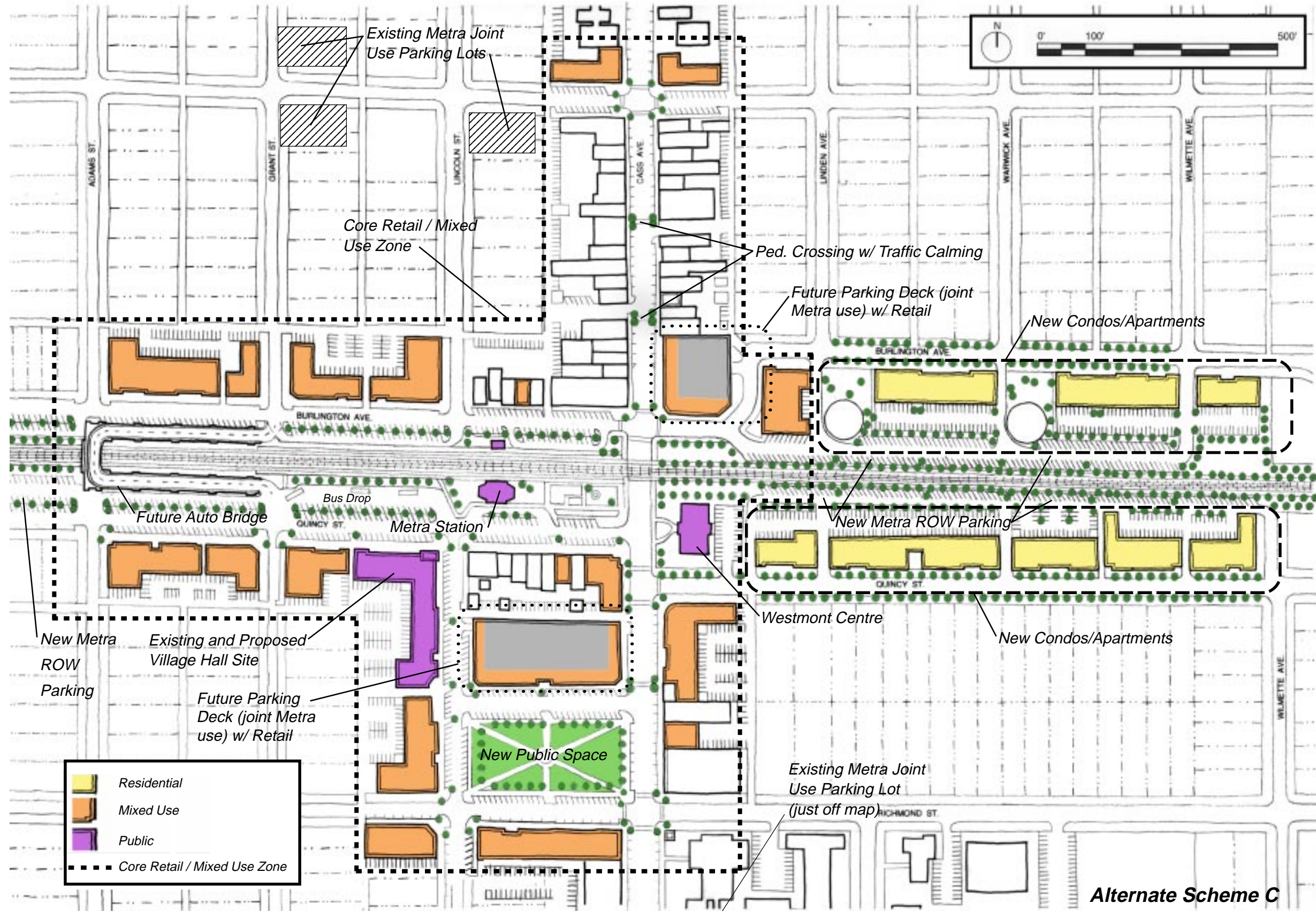
**Alternate Scheme A**



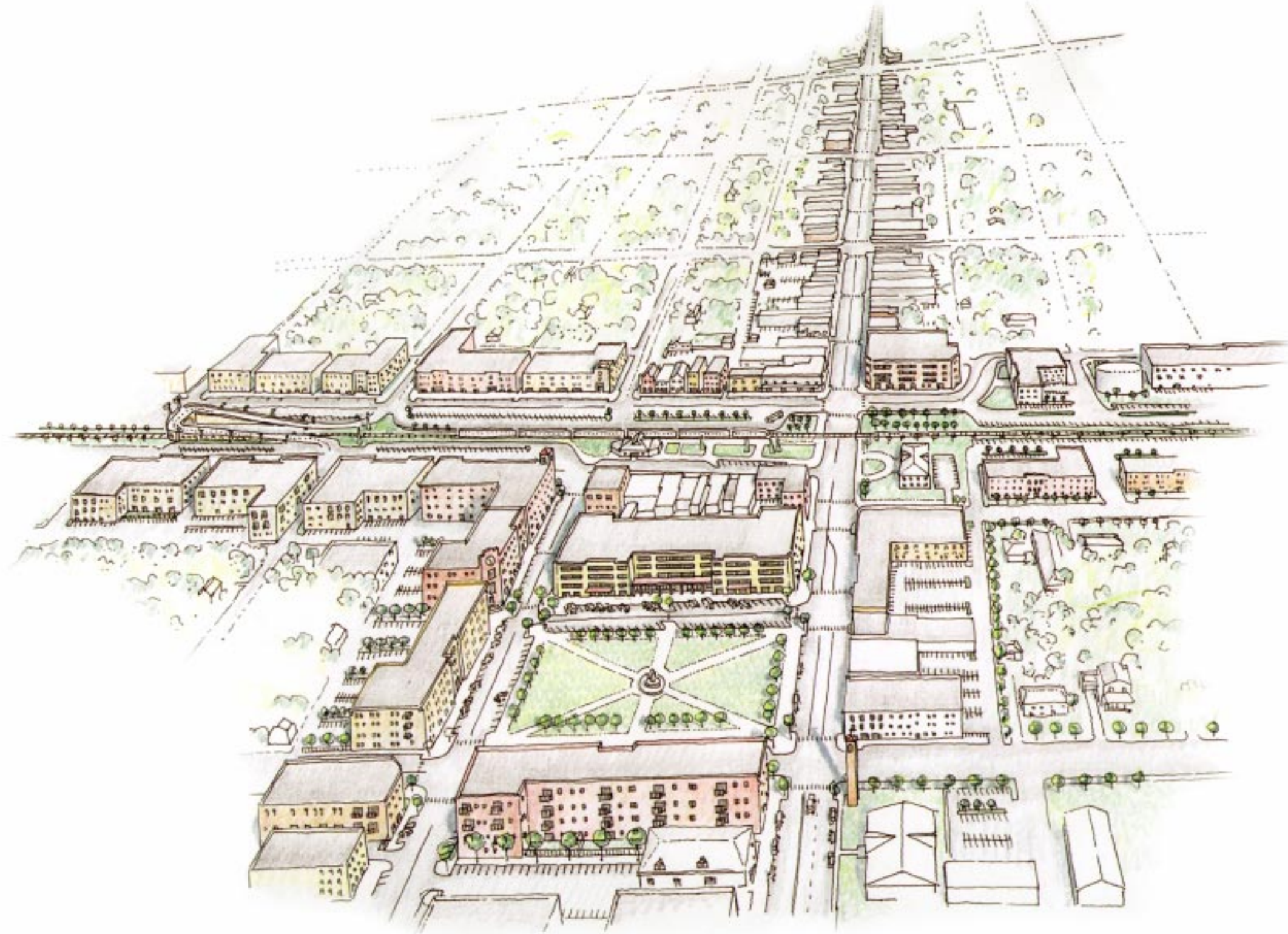


**Alternate Scheme B**









**Alternate Scheme C View North**



## CHAPTER 3: ZONING, LAND USE & URBAN DESIGN

### Zoning

Westmont's zoning is fairly standard, with several different residential and commercial zone designations, one office/research zone and one manufacturing zone. There are three different residential zones, mainly distinguishable by density levels, two commercial zones and one manufacturing zone within the study area. The chart below provides the specific requirements for each of these zones. The map on page 3-3 illustrates each existing zoning category.

Existing Zoning						
Zone	Permitted Uses	Max height	Min lot width	Min lot area	Max FAR	Min Setback
R-3	single family homes, schools**	35 feet (R) 45 feet (NR)	60 feet (SFD) 100 feet (NR)	7,800 square feet	0.4*	35 feet
R-4	single or multi-family homes, schools**	35 feet (R) 45 feet (NR)	60 feet (SFD) 22 feet (SFA) 27 feet (SFSD) 75 feet (TFD) 60 feet (MF) 100 feet (NR)	ranges by use from 7,800 square feet for MF to 12,000 for SFA and SFSD	0.75	25 feet
R-5	single or multi-family homes, schools**	35 feet (R) 45 feet (NR)	60 feet (SFD) 22 feet (SFA) 27 feet (SFSD) 75 feet (TFD) 60 feet (MF) 100 feet (NR)	ranges by use from 7,800 square feet for MF to 10,000 for SFA and SFSD	0.75	25 feet
B-1	limited business	40 feet	None	None	0.8	5 feet
B-2	general business	45 feet	None	None	0.8	10 feet
B-3	special business	125 feet	None	40 acres	0.5	50 feet
M	manufacturing	45 feet	100 feet	20,000 square feet	0.8	30 feet
**R-3, R-4, and R-5 also allow special uses such as churches, golf courses, and art galleries		R=residential, NR=non-residential SFD=single-family detached SFA=single-family attached SFSD=single-family semi-detached TFD=two-family detached MF=multi-family			* .4 for the first 9,000 square feet of lot area plus .2 for the lot area greater than 9,000 square feet	

### Residential zoning issues

Most of the requirements for residential districts in Westmont's zoning ordinance limit new development that might otherwise create higher density pedestrian-friendly

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environments. Some examples of this are as follows:

The minimum lot area of 7,800 square feet for single-family residential creates a maximum dwelling unit per acre (du/ac) calculation of about four or five. This density is hardly enough to create the critical mass needed for a TOD. The residential districts also have minimum front setbacks of either 25 or 35 feet, resulting in the large distance of about 115 to 135 feet between front doors across the street from each other. It is difficult to achieve a sense of enclosure on a street when the buildings are so far apart. Minimum heights set at 35 feet, and floor area ratios (FARs) of .4 and .75 preclude the ability to build a three or four-story multi-family structure that would be appropriate for TOD redevelopment in this area.

The current parking requirement of 2.5 spaces per dwelling unit in a multi-family residential development is too high for the redevelopment effort proposed. To include this amount of parking in new multi-family development is to preclude the possibility of achieving the desired densities, especially without any shared-use provisions. Also, those living within walking distance of the train station, as well as many commercial and public amenities will likely use their cars less than the typical suburban residents, and therefore have fewer cars and need fewer parking spaces. Residential parking requirements in a TOD setting could be as low as 1 space per dwelling unit.

### *Business District Zoning Issues*

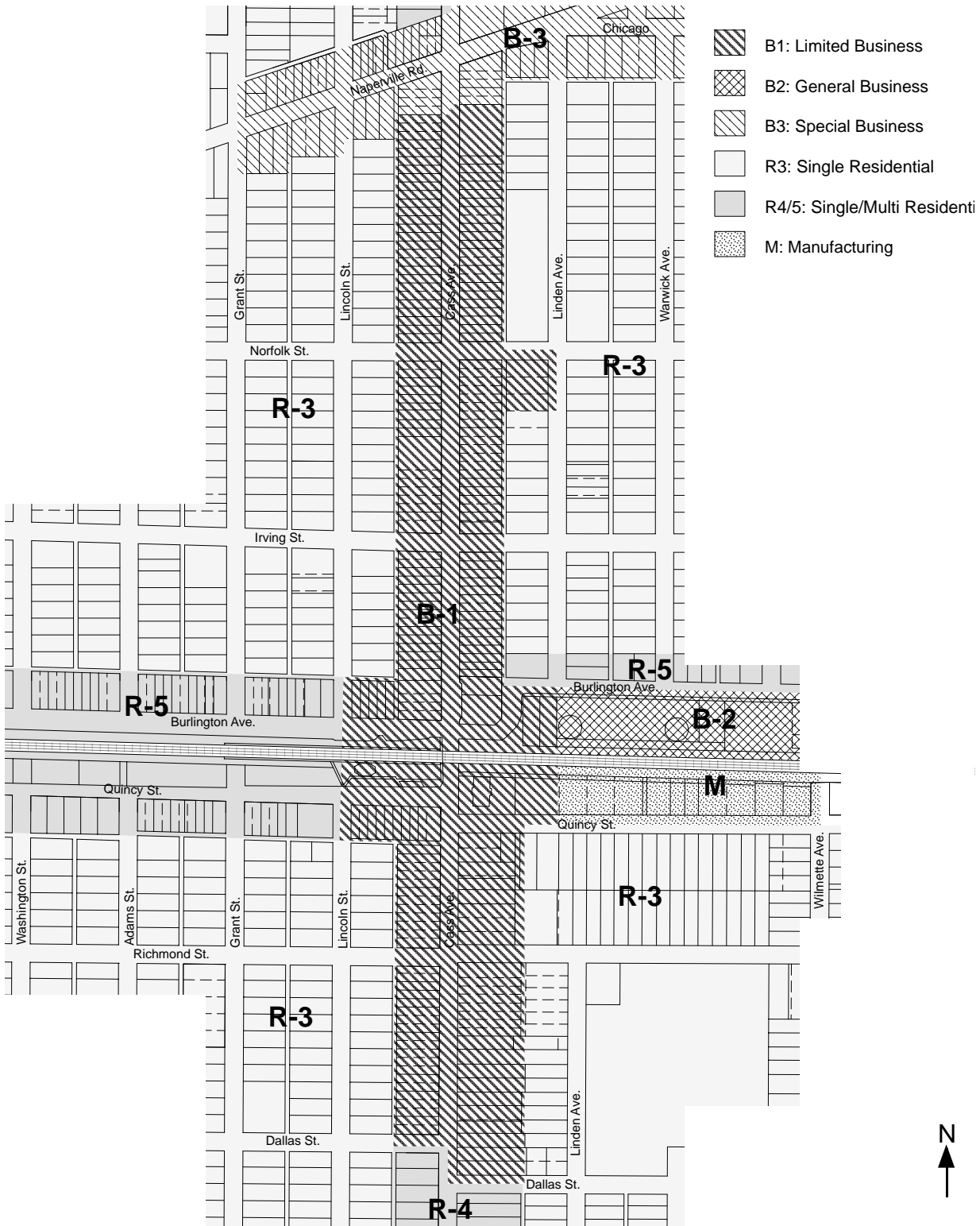
Business district zoning requirements also preclude TOD possibilities, but these requirements pose different issues than those of the residential zones.

Front setbacks in the business districts are somewhat more appropriate than those for residential uses. The setbacks of five or 10 feet make it possible to frame the public space of the street which is necessary for a comfortable pedestrian environment. However, the low maximum FAR of .8 and height limits of 40 or 45 feet, do not allow for the type of higher-density development needed for TOD.

The amount of parking required for commercial development in Westmont ranges from one space for every 200 square feet of commercial development to one space for every 600 square feet, depending on the volume of patronage. Again these requirements are too high to achieve the desired densities of TOD. In addition there is no provision for shared parking even though the proximity of various uses within a district (all within walking distance of transit) will reduce the dependence on the automobile in this district and thus reduce the need for parking.

The zoning code does not allow for a mix of uses in any district. A downtown building with retail on the first floor and housing units above, for example, is illegal in Westmont. This type of development is crucial for the success of transit-oriented development and is supported by the charrette participants.

## Existing Zoning



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## Zoning Recommendations

### *Commercial and Mixed-Use*

- Create a new zoning designation for mixed-use buildings.
- Allow upper floor conversions between office and residential uses without requiring a zoning change.
- Mandate that new commercial and mixed-use buildings be built to the lot line in the study area. No setbacks should be allowed on Cass Avenue, Burlington Avenue, Quincy Street or other downtown streets undergoing commercial redevelopment.
- Increase building height maximums and FAR limits for commercial and mixed-use developments to allow for four-story streetwall and five-story building height with upper-level setbacks in the study area.
- Mandate ground-floor retail on Cass Avenue, Burlington Avenue, Quincy Street and other downtown streets undergoing commercial redevelopment.

### *Residential*

- Increase density of residential districts in the study area by reducing minimum lot sizes and setback requirements for all residential zones in the study area. For example in R-4 and R-5 districts, the minimum lot area for a two-bedroom apartment is 5,300 square feet. This figure is many times the reasonable desired minimum and the same is true for the setback requirements.
- Increase building height maximums and FAR limits for residential developments to allow for four-story streetwall and five-story building height with upper-level setbacks in the study area. Current height restrictions of 35 feet allow only for buildings up to three stories.

### *Parking*

- Reduce the on-site parking requirements for both residential and commercial uses in the study area. The requirement to provide 2.5 parking spaces per dwelling unit is not achievable in the study area. 1.5 spaces per unit would be much better in a TOD, although one space per unit is ideal.
- Allow shared use parking spaces and joint-lots (such as those used by Metra commuters) to be counted in parking requirements for residential and commercial uses.

### *Design Standards*

- Develop building design standards with architectural review to assure the construction of “destination” quality architecture on high-visibility, high-image sites.
- Require a minimum 75% of wall area to be glass on ground-floor storefronts on Cass Avenue, Burlington Avenue, Quincy Street, and other downtown streets undergoing commercial redevelopment to avoid blank walls and uninviting pedestrian zones.

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- Set maximum limits for on-site parking in the study area.

The easiest way to create zoning that is appropriate for the type of development proposed in this report would be to create a special overlay zone for the study area that incorporates the above recommendations, rather than changing the requirements for the existing zoning designations.

*Zoning Resources / Models (see Appendix for details)*

City of Austin, TX Urban Design Guidelines and TOD ordinance

City of Chicago Landscape Ordinance

City of Chicago Strip Mall Ordinance

### **Land Use and Urban Design**

In addition to nearby competing commercial districts, several land use elements prevent Westmont from having a more vibrant downtown. Like most railroad suburbs in the Chicago region, Westmont's downtown consists of a central commercial core, including a Metra station and public facilities, surrounded by residential uses. A map of existing land uses can be found on page 3-7.

Although the commercial core is at near-full occupancy, a significant amount of land within walking distance of the Metra station is underutilized or does not contribute to a TOD setting. Examples of this are as follows:

- Service commercial uses on the ground floor
- Vacant parcels and surface parking
- Noncontributing uses
- Low-density housing

*Service commercial uses on the ground floor*

About two-thirds of the businesses on Cass Avenue are service-oriented, including many professional offices, (note the bold diagonal hatch on the land use map, page 3-7). Only one-third of the businesses are retail shops or restaurants. Generally speaking, a mix of shops and restaurants generate more foot traffic and activity on a commercial street than do service businesses. The limited number of retail uses on Cass Avenue do not generate a sufficient amount of foot traffic to create a lively street environment. Research shows that about 60% of all shopping occurs during evenings and weekends, yet many businesses are closed at these times.

*Vacant parcels and surface parking*

The numerous underutilized parcels of land are prime redevelopment sites. These include some surface parking lots, vacant parcels, and lots that are currently used as parks in inappropriate locations. One parking lot in particular is at a key location, at the

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northeast corner of Cass Avenue and Burlington Avenues. Of course, consideration of such sites must be coordinated to ensure parking needs are met during redevelopment activities.

### *Noncontributing uses*

The manufacturing zone just south of the tracks and east of Cass Avenue does not contribute to the TOD environment. Land that does not directly benefit from its close proximity to the train station, or a dense urban core, can function just as well in a location further from downtown, and be redeveloped for more intense uses. Also, one point of contention among local residents is the site of the water storage tanks just north of the tracks, east of Cass Avenue. Complaints are that the tanks are featureless and create an eyesore in such a visible location downtown.

### *Low-density housing*

The housing that surrounds the business core is developed at about four to five units per acre. This low-intensity use of land in close proximity to the business core and Metra station adds to the overall lack of activity and vitality downtown.

## **Recommendations for the Use of Village Controlled Land**

- Offer the land vacated by the Village offices on Burlington Avenue just east of Cass Avenue for redevelopment as housing.
- Make the Metra Station a destination during non-commuter hours as well. Share the space for some compatible use such as a ticketmaster or hot-tix facility, a visitor center, or a small childrens' art gallery (flat displays could be hung on station interior walls with other kinds of exhibits displayed in the vacant office area).
- Design Village Hall to conform with this downtown TOD plan, specifically designing the parking lot to easily convert to ground-floor retail with deck parking above in the future should the need arise.

## **Urban Design Recommendations**

The diagrams, "Urban Design Issues" and "Urban Design Opportunities" on pages 3-8 and 3-9, summarize many of the key aspects of the existing downtown from an urban design perspective. As noted by the participants in the community process, the downtown area has a number of weaknesses including some areas in poor physical condition and building facade changes over time that have diminished original architectural character. A key issue with residents was the view to the water storage tanks.

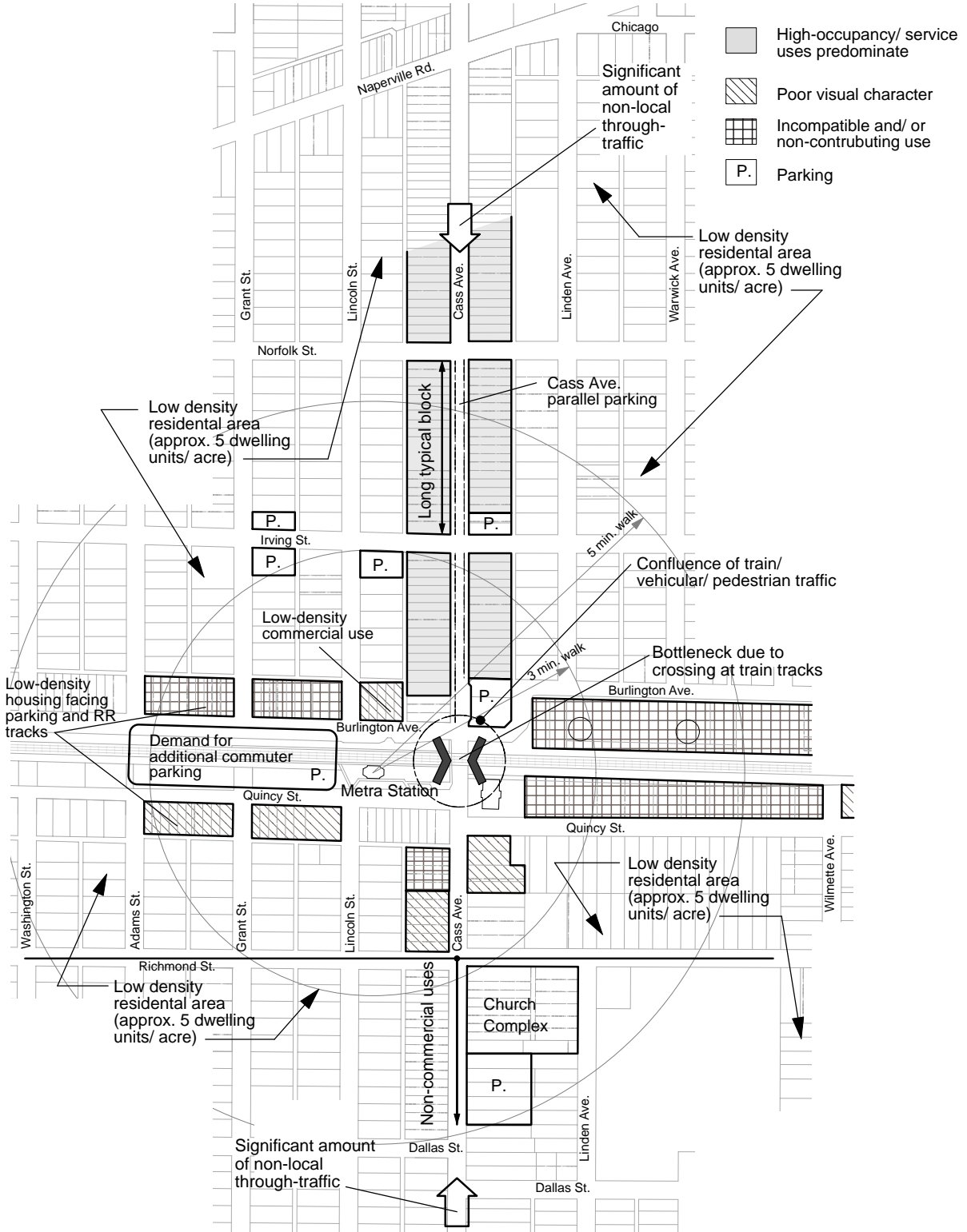
Strides the Village has made in improving downtown landscaping, such as that along Cass Avenue, should continue. Lighting on Cass Avenue, Quincy Street and Burlington Avenue can be improved. The focus should be on creating a walkable downtown environment that is pleasant to be in and supports retail activity. Specific

# Existing Land Use












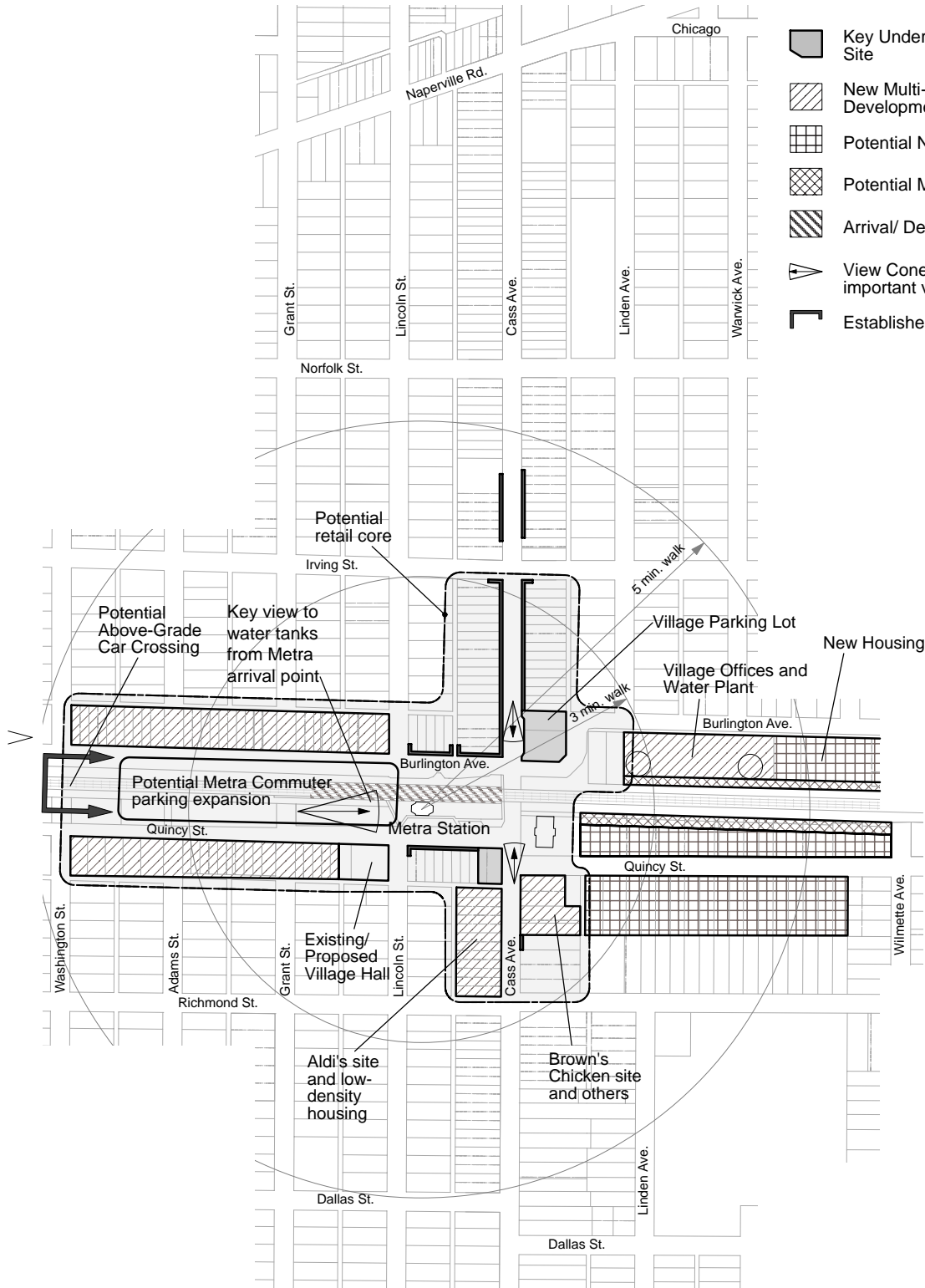
# Urban Design Issues





# Urban Design Opportunities

-  Key Underutilized Image Site
-  New Multi-Use Infill Development
-  Potential New Housing
-  Potential Metra Parking
-  Arrival/ Departure Zone
-  View Cone--important vista
-  Established Street Wall



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recommendations include:

### *Appearance*

- Improve appearance of facades through a rebate program.
- Submit application for landmark designation for certain buildings in the study area to the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency. Photograph and otherwise document the appearance of several historically significant buildings on the block of Cass Avenue between Burlington Avenue and Irving Street, as well as a few possible buildings on Quincy Street, just south of the Metra station. These buildings are identified in the Photo Log in the appendix.
- Improve water tank image by screening or painting them. One idea that came out of the design charrette was to paint murals on these to improve the appearance.
- Replace Cobra-head light fixtures with special lighting on Cass Avenue, Burlington Avenue, and Quincy Street and other downtown streets undergoing commercial redevelopment. Lower fixtures that are meant to light the way for pedestrians as well as cars are preferable for improving the street appearance.
- Design and implement a streetscape scheme for the study area including plantings, trees, benches, trash receptacles, and drinking fountains. Landscaping along the r-o-w would be subject to Metra and BNSF design guidelines.
- Develop guidelines for downtown retail signage that balance variety and interest with appropriate scale, size, and sense of unity for the district.

### *Pedestrian Experience*

- Add on-street parking where it does not currently exist to act as a pedestrian buffer from the street.
- Narrow street widths and add traffic calming elements (narrowed intersections, on-street parking, special pedestrian crossings, and others) at intersections along Cass Avenue north and south of the tracks. These will slow traffic and make it easier to walk across the street.
- Changes to infrastructure should be carefully designed and implemented to minimize negative impact on the retail and pedestrian environment.
- Although some people find parallel parking along Cass Avenue difficult, parking on both sides of the street creates a protective buffer for pedestrians.

### *Resources (see Appendix 7 for details)*

Experience Illinois (Pilot Project) Illinois State Treasurer's Office

Open Space Lands Acquisition and Development (OSLAD), Illinois Department of Natural Resources.

Historic Tax Credits

Tax Incremental Financing (TIF)

Illinois Development Finance Authority MicroLoan Program

### **Transit Growth Opportunities**

Central to this study are the needs of RTA and its service boards, Metra and Pace. Obviously, opportunities for growth in transit rely in large part on factors outside the realm of this study, namely the general growth in population in the surrounding community. DuPage County overall grew at a rate of more than 10% between 1990 and 1999, and in the same period population within a five-mile radius of the station increased almost 8%. Taking advantage of this increase will require a variety of improvements to station access including new or expanded parking facilities, improved bus service, and accommodation of other modes.

There is also significant opportunity for population growth within walking distance of the station area. Depending on the choices Westmont makes regarding redevelopment of the area, as many as 1,000 net new dwelling units could be built within about 1/4 mile of the station. Such a local increase would provide the critical mass to drive significant increases in ridership and help create a vibrant and active downtown area.

### *Surface Parking*

The Consensus Plan and Alternates A, B, and C, include provisions for new commuter parking in a variety of ways. Reconfiguring the existing facilities near the station could provide approximately 100 to 200 new spaces by constructing a retaining wall within the BNSF right-of-way near the platform edge; thereby adding roughly 25 parking spaces per block unit on both sides of the track. There is room to add diagonal parking at the south curb of Quincy Avenue, as well, though this parking should probably be reserved for shoppers, much as the parallel parking today. The final increase would depend on how much of the area would be required for Pace bus use, whether the proposed overpass was built, and how far west the retaining wall scheme were built. Utilization of BNSF railroad r-o-w east of Cass Avenue in a similar fashion could yield as many as 200 additional spaces or more depending on final plan configuration (see Chapter 2, p. 2-12 through 2-16).

The cost for such spaces would be more than typical surface parking due to construction of the retaining wall, but considerably less than structured parking while maintaining good proximity to the station. Additional r-o-w parking will require the cooperation of the BNSF railroad, owner of the right-of-way. Feasibility and the actual increase in spaces will be subject to specific guidelines of the BNSF such as set back requirements.

Currently commuters use about 460 of the available 540 Metra spaces (see Table 4.3 – Parking Lot Use). If all of the improvements noted above could be implemented,

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there would be a net increase of 300 to 400 spaces (a potential increase of 85%) within easy walking distance of the station.

### *Deck Parking*

Today, deck parking is probably cost-prohibitive for either commuters or retail. However, as redevelopment of the Village proceeds deck parking will become a more attractive option. This will be particularly true as Westmont becomes more of a destination. Deck parking could be an important shared resource between Metra and other downtown visitors and shoppers. Locations for future decked parking should be identified today and steps should be taken to ensure that interim development does not preclude creation of one or more future parking structures (see Alternate C, page 2-15 for recommended locations). In the short- to medium-term time frame, the municipal parking lot at Cass Avenue and Burlington Avenue would remain as surface parking, with the potential to convert to deck parking in the future, when the need arises. Each of the alternative schemes (see pages 2-12 to 2-15) identifies an additional site to be reserved for potential decked parking. These sites assume 1) a need to be near shopping and the Metra station, and 2) incorporation of retail at the ground floor to maintain a pedestrian-oriented street environment.

### *Bus Access*

Almost 11% of Metra commuters boarding at the Westmont station arrived by Pace bus rather than driving. This indicates a clear opportunity to enhance bus service and examine bus movements and boarding areas within the station area. Growth of both multi- and single-family residential south of downtown suggest increased bus service could be a benefit to Pace and Metra. Relocating the bus staging area could improve circulation within the parking area and enhance access for buses and other vehicles.

## **Circulation and Parking Plan**

The circulation and parking plan addresses the needs of all modes and users: auto drivers, Metra commuters, pedestrians, Pace bus riders, and bicyclists. Addressing the relationship between the transportation system and surrounding land use is fundamental to this plan. The underlying principal is that each mode and user is not separate unto itself, but is integrated in a system that is functional, yet accommodating and interconnected. Central to this study are the needs of RTA and specifically of Metra, the primary transit provider. Pace also has a crucial role to play given the existing feeder bus services connecting to the Metra station.

### *Public Parking*

#### On-Street

Within the area bordered by Naperville Road to the north, Dallas Street to the south, Lincoln Street to the west, and Linden Street to the east, there are approximately 300

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on-street parking spaces (counted in the Fall of 1999). The Village of Westmont Police Department conducted an occupancy survey of on-street spaces between Cass Avenue and Naperville Road. These surveys showed an average occupancy rate of 42% on the west side of Cass Avenue and 19% on the east side of Cass Avenue.

The on-street parking spaces typically have two hour parking limits. Parking on Cass Avenue north of the railroad is unrestricted, while P.M. peak (4:00 – 6:00) period parking restrictions are in place south of railroad tracks to Dallas Street. These restrictions are in place to allow as many vehicles as possible to cross the tracks between trains. However, the Village has indicated that they will be upgrading the traffic control system at the Cass/Burlington Avenue/BNSF intersection. Once the traffic control system is upgraded, the peak hour restrictions could be eliminated.

#### Off-Street

Off-street parking includes two types: public lots and private lots/spaces. There are three public, off-street surface lots managed by the Village of Westmont (see map, Figure 4.1):

- Cass/Norfolk (44 spaces)
- Cass/Irving (25 spaces)
- Cass/Burlington (50 spaces)

The Cass/Burlington lot is the most heavily used, ranging from about 40 to 60 percent occupied. Occupancies of the other two lots range from about 20 to 50 percent. These lots, however, are not very visible from the bordering streets, especially Cass Avenue. The Cass/Irving lot is next to Toons Funeral Home, and generally assumed to be parking only for the funeral home. The Cass/Norfolk lot is next to Manning School. The Village sells parking permits to the school employees. The Village sells passes for employee parking at the Cass/Burlington lot for \$25 per quarter, and metered spaces are available to the public. Improved signage and advertising by businesses would improve visibility and increase use for all lots.

In addition to these public lots, some off-street parking is available behind some buildings, with access via alleys. Some of these spaces are used for employees, while some are available to customers.

A recent survey of businesses (discussed in more detail in Chapter 7: Commercial Market Assessment) included questions regarding parking. Of the businesses that responded, about 75% revealed that they control some amount of parking, primarily behind buildings with alley access and generally used by employees, while three stated that employees park on-street. Although most businesses control some amount of parking, it is typically only a few spaces. Overall, there is a lack of parking for longer-term needs and employees.

*Conclusions/Recommendations*

- On-street parking for the short-term (two hour), is generally available. However, there are opportunities to add additional on-street parking. Diagonal parking spaces could be added on cross-streets where sufficient right-of-way exists. This has already been implemented on Norfolk Street west of Cass Avenue. As noted above, P.M. peak period restrictions on south Cass Avenue could be eliminated with the traffic control system improvement at Cass Avenue and the railroad. For a better mix of time periods, the spaces on the cross-streets could have a longer time period of four hours, to accommodate those shoppers needing longer than two hours. The diagonal spaces on Norfolk Street are four-hour spaces.
- For longer-term and employee parking improvements, there is an opportunity to expand the parking available behind buildings. North of the railroad, these spaces would be accessed via new “alleys”, one west of Cass Avenue and one east of Cass Avenue (see Alternate C, page 2-15). South of the railroad, these spaces would be accessed via existing alleys. An additional opportunity is the use of residential streets for employee parking. Currently, parking on residential streets is limited to four hours, primarily to prohibit commuter parking in the neighborhoods. An employee permit program could be designed to allow employees of downtown businesses to park on residential streets during weekdays.
- Management of the overall parking systems is very important. Time limits and meter-feeding should be consistently monitored and enforced. By implementing a variety of time limits, locations, employee parking locations, and signage/marketing programs, the parking supply in downtown Westmont should be adequate for all users, but only if it is properly managed and regulations are enforced.

**Metra Commuter Parking**

The Westmont Metra Station accommodates approximately 6,749 boardings weekly (Metra data, Fall, 1999). About 85% of the 1,300 daily boardings occur during the A.M. peak period. About 97% of these boardings are traveling in the peak direction (inbound in A.M./outbound in P.M.). This level of ridership is comparable to Hinsdale, Western Springs, and LaGrange Road stations (see Table 4.1).

<b>Table 4.1–Area Boardings, 1999</b>	
<b>Station</b>	<b>1999 Boardings</b>
Downers Grove, Main Street	2,277
Fairview Avenue	550
Westmont	1,282
Clarendon Hills	957
West Hinsdale	378
Hinsdale	1,156
Western Springs	1,179
La Grange Road	1,496
Source: Metra Office of Planning and Analysis, October 1999	

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In 1999, Metra completed a “Mode of Access” study to determine how commuters get to their boarding station. The Westmont station was about 15 percentage points lower than the Metra system average for those who drove alone and parked (Table 4.2). Conversely, about 11% of commuters boarding at the Westmont station arrived by bus, compared to a Metra system average of about 4 percent. These numbers are a result of two primary factors: Metra parking is near capacity and Pace Bus operates multiple feeder routes between neighborhoods to the south and the station.

	<b>% of Responses - Westmont</b>	<b>% of Responses - Systemwide</b>
Drove Alone and Parked	39%	54%
Walked	24%	23%
Dropped Off	20%	13%
Carpool	3%	4%
Took Bus	11%	4%
Rode Bike	0%	1%
Other	3%	1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: Metra Office of Planning & Analysis, 1999

Seven surface lots provide parking for Metra commuters (see Table 4.3 and parking map, Figure 4.1). Overall, Metra parking is about 85% occupied, which is reaching its “effective” supply (typically 85-90% of total parking).

<b>LOT</b>		<b>CAPACITY</b>	<b>USAGE</b>
<b>A</b>	Metra lot between Quincy and railroad	96	79
<b>B</b>	r-o-w south of railroad, on Quincy St.	33	29
<b>C</b>	r-o-w north of railroad, on Burlington St.	248	197
<b>D</b>	Bethel Lutheran Church, northeast quadrant of Grant St. and Irving Ave.	27	27
<b>E</b>	Bethel Lutheran Church, southeast quadrant of Grant St. and Irving Ave.	31	31
<b>F</b>	1st Methodist Church, southeast quadrant of Lincoln St. and Irving Ave.	33	29
<b>G</b>	Holy Trinity Church, southeast quadrant of Cass Ave. and Richmond St.	74	69
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>542</b>	<b>461</b>

Source: Metra Office of Planning and Analysis, October 1997

For the parking along the railroad r-o-w north and south of the railroad, the Village sells monthly passes, which are typically oversold by 10 percent. The Village reports that there are 330 people on the waiting list for Metra parking, requiring a wait of about one year. The spaces north of the railroad west of Hudson Street are metered. Two Bethel



Lutheran Church lots have collection boards for daily parking fees. The lots at First Methodist and Holy Trinity churches require monthly permits. After 10:00 A.M. and on weekends, Metra parking spaces on Quincy Street and Burlington Avenue are open for general use.

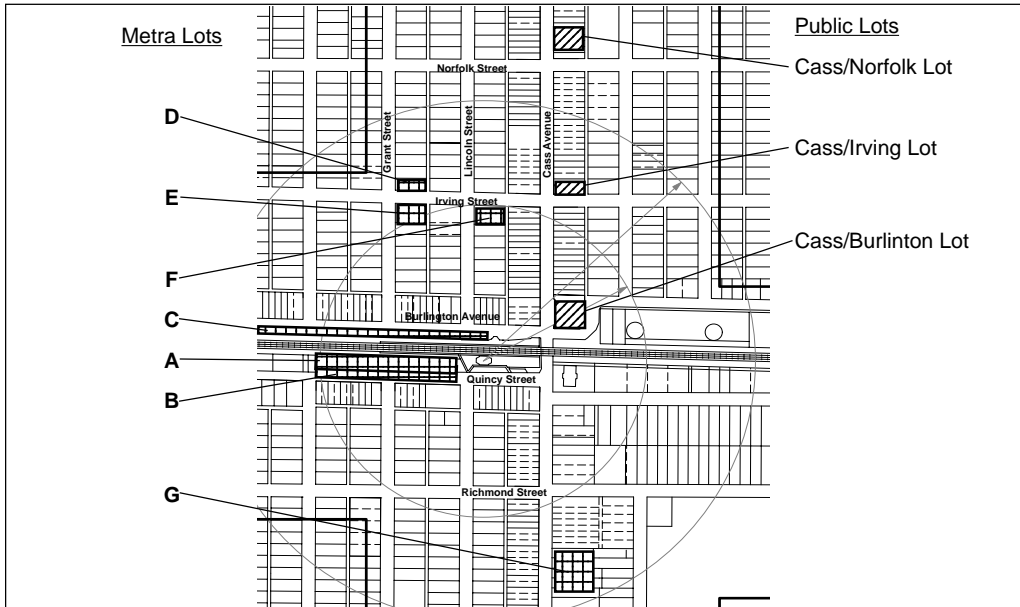


Figure 4.1 Parking Map

### Conclusions/Recommendations

- Given that existing Metra parking is near capacity, additional commuter parking is desired. However, it should be located such that it does not isolate the station area from the downtown area. Along Burlington Avenue west of Cass Avenue, the existing parking area could be designed more efficiently to gain additional spaces. A retaining wall could be constructed to move the parking closer to the railroad, which would allow enough room for a second row of parking spaces. East of Cass Avenue, additional parking could be provided in the r-o-w on both the north and south side of the railroad. This would require the cooperation of the BNSF, the r-o-w owner.

### Vehicular Access

#### Roadway Jurisdiction

Between Naperville Road and 55th Street, the Village of Westmont maintains jurisdiction for all roads and signals. The Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) maintains jurisdiction of Naperville Road and the traffic signal at Naperville Road and Cass Avenue. DuPage County maintains jurisdiction of 55th Street and the traffic signal at 55th Street and Cass Avenue.

#### Volumes

Village of Westmont traffic counts (1997) show that Cass Avenue between Ogden Avenue and 55th Street carries about 19,000 average daily traffic (ADT). Naperville



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Road carries about 10,000 ADT and 55th Street carries about 18,000 ADT. Intersection volume data supplied by the Village (Traffic Logging Data System, August, 1999) shows that about 22,000 vehicles travel through the intersection of Cass Avenue and Burlington Avenue each day, with about 8 percent traveling during the peak hour.

The Village-Wide Traffic Study for Westmont (1997), provided by the Village, included an analysis of through traffic on Cass Avenue. This kind of study uses license plate analysis to establish the probable destinations of passing traffic. The study found that during the peak hours, only about one-third of the traffic was generated from Westmont, indicating a high level of through-traffic (not destined for Westmont).

### *Movements/Circulation*

The downtown area is severed by the Burlington Northern Sante Fe Railroad, which constrains vehicle circulation. Cass Avenue is the only at-grade crossing in the Village of Westmont. The closest other at-grade crossings are located at Fairview Avenue in Downers Grove and Prospect Avenue in Clarendon Hills. The Cass Avenue crossing is an at-grade, triple-track crossing.

At the intersection of Cass Avenue and Burlington Avenue, with the railroad traveling along the south side of the intersection, movements are allowed from all directions. There are no turn restrictions and left-turn lanes and signal phases are provided. The Village has stated that the intersection control will be improved, moving the signal mast and stop bars controlling the northbound movements to be located south of the railroad track. This improvement is to keep vehicles from queuing on the railroad tracks, particularly the left-turn movement onto westbound Burlington Avenue. During the P.M. peak hour (5:00 – 6:00 P.M.), the eastbound movement on Burlington Avenue to southbound Cass Avenue backs up significantly due to frequent trains. This should see some improvement when the traffic control at the intersection is improved to better accommodate train interruptions.

The intersections of Quincy Street with Cass Avenue are offset by about 100 feet. Left-turns are allowed from northbound Cass Avenue to westbound Quincy Street. Quincy Street is one-way westbound for the block between Cass Avenue and Lincoln Street. Eastbound traffic must travel south to Richmond Street.

### *Conclusions/Recommendations*

- A major constraint is the lack of circulation between the north and south portions of the downtown, without travelling Cass Avenue across the railroad tracks. To improve the internal circulation, a grade-separated local access road is proposed. This overpass would be designed to accommodate low volumes — only those vehicles circulating through the downtown. It would connect each end at Grant Street. From Grant Street it would elevate to its full height, crossing over Adams Street. Note that the overpass is an important enhancement to the Consensus Plan, but is not a required element. Also, each of the three alternative plans (“A”, “B”, and “C”) would greatly reduce the need

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for the overpass.

- It is recommended to change Quincy Street between Cass Avenue and Lincoln Street to two-way, with peak period left-turn restrictions (from Quincy St. to Cass Ave.). This would allow for better traffic flow within the downtown. The peak period turn restrictions would address concerns of vehicles making left-turns and stopping on the railroad tracks, or blocking southbound traffic while trying to merge into northbound traffic. Note that all buses leaving the station are southbound and would not be affected by this restriction.
- To minimize through-traffic along Cass Avenue, traffic calming strategies and design, including highlighted pedestrian crossings, street trees, bulb outs at intersections, and additional on-street parking where none currently exists are proposed. The pedestrian crossings would be constructed with different materials such as pavers. These would be located near the new “alleys” to rear building parking. Improved signage of parking locations will also serve to improve circulation.
- The Village’s plan to upgrade the traffic control at Burlington Avenue and Cass Avenue is supported to more efficiently move traffic across the railroad tracks.

### **Pace Bus Service**

Three Pace feeder routes service the Westmont Metra station: Routes 661, 662, and 665. Additionally, Route 715 travels along Cass Avenue with stops in downtown Westmont. Routes 661 and 662 serve the southern portion of Westmont. Route 661 provides service between the Metra station and 63rd and Fairview, including the Willow View Apartments, The Ponds, Willow West, and The Piers. Route 662 provides service between the Metra station and 63rd and Williams, serving the Twin Lake Towers, Cass Lake Village, Ashford, and Radcliffe. Route 665 provides service between Darien and the Metra station. On all three feeders routes, service is provided during peak periods only, generally from about 5:30/6:00 a.m. – 8:30 a.m. and about 4:30 p.m. – 7:00 p.m. Of these 3 routes, Route 662 carries the highest number of riders and has seen the most growth, as shown in Table 4.4–Average Daily Pace Ridership.

<b>Year</b>	<b>Route 661</b>	<b>Route 662</b>	<b>Route 665</b>
1996	52	80	64
1997	55	112	72
1998	52	133	74
1999 (7 months)	59	155	74

Source: Pace

Field reconnaissance shows that at key train arrival times, these buses are full, including standees. During the evening peak period it was observed that due to the

large numbers, many commuters cannot get to the station area and must wait unprotected from weather for the bus.

The large number of people waiting for the buses also impedes the flow of commuters coming from the trains walking to their vehicles or those being picked up. There are also a few “gaps” in the schedule where Pace feeder buses cannot get back to the station in time to meet the next train. As shown in Table 4.5–Commuter Train and Bus Service, for example, Route 661 does not get back in time to connect with P.M. train 1271, which has the highest number of alightings of all of the P.M. trains. Commuters using Route 661 must wait several minutes for the next bus to arrive.

<b>A.M. Inbound Trains</b>			<b>Pace Bus Connections</b>					
<i>Train</i>	<i>Departs Westmont</i>	<i>Arrives Chicago</i>				<i>Metra Ridership</i>	<i>% of Metra Using Pace</i>	
			<i>661</i>	<i>662</i>	<i>665</i>			
1206	5:52	6:34	5:45	N/C	N/C	74	6%	
1218	6:46	7:17	6:36	6:26	6:37	245	21%	
1226	6:58	7:34	N/C	6:52	N/C	106	9%	
1234	7:17	7:53	N/C	N/C	N/C	84	7%	
1238	7:31	8:02	7:17	7:21	7:18	175	15%	
1248	7:52	8:22	7:46	7:41	N/C	179	16%	
1256	8:05	8:38	N/C	7:58	7:56	142	12%	
<b>P.M. Outbound Trains</b>			<b>Pace Bus Connections</b>					
<i>Train</i>	<i>Departs Chicago</i>	<i>Arrives Westmont</i>				<i>Metra Ridership</i>	<i>% of Metra Using Pace</i>	
			<i>661</i>	<i>662</i>	<i>665</i>			
1249	4:34	5:17	5:19	5:19	5:19	94	8%	
1255	4:54	5:27	N/C	N/C	N/C	128	11%	
1261	5:08	5:40	5:42	5:42	5:42	172	15%	
1271	5:30	6:01	N/C	6:03	N/C	227	20%	
1275	5:38	6:15	6:17	N/C	6:17	64	6%	
1281	6:00	6:41	6:43	6:43	6:43	87	8%	
1285	6:20	7:00	7:02	7:02	7:02	60	5%	
Source: Metra 1999 On/Off Counts			N/C = no connections					

Route 715 provides service between the Wheaton Metra Station on the Metra/UP West Line and Argonne National Lab, traveling along Cass Avenue through Westmont. Over the last few years, ridership has remained relatively stable, carrying about 450 riders per day.

The drop-off/kiss-n-ride area is located south of the railroad tracks adjacent to the train station. This area has limited space and is also used for Pace bus staging.

**Conclusions/Recommendation**

- The southern Westmont area is growing with both multi- and single-family residential. Pace should review all three routes and focus on expanding feeder bus service. Alternative options could be to add an additional vehicle that could alternate between Route 661 and 662 to fill in some of the gaps, or alternatively, use the extra vehicle on Route 665 to include additional Westmont stops, especially near 59th or 60th Streets. This could include

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stops at park-n-rides, such as small shopping centers along Cass Avenue.

- The bus staging area should be relocated from the drop-off/kiss-n-ride area to the r-o-w south of the railroad. This should be relocated to the curbside close to the railroad tracks. The new bus staging area should have streetscaping to be more visible and attractive.
- For more efficient traffic operations overall, consideration should be given to the following concept: Left turns from northbound Cass Avenue to westbound Quincy Street could be eliminated during the peak periods (except buses). A traffic signal is located at Richmond Street. As an optional routing, buses could turn left (west) onto Richmond Street and then right (north) onto Lincoln Street, which would provide direct access into the relocated bus staging area. During the A.M. peak period, riders would alight immediately next to the station. During the P.M. peak, boarding would take place in the new staging area. If this concept was implemented, it could be timed to coincide with completion of the redevelopment in the area from Richmond Street to Quincy Street and Cass Avenue to Lincoln Street (assuming Alternate C is chosen). It should be noted that with restricted left turns at the Cass Ave. / Quincy Street intersection, all northbound traffic destined for Metra parking will operate west on Richmond Street and north on Lincoln Street.

### **Pedestrians/Bicycles**

All streets are shared with pedestrians and bicycles. Although streets are designed to move vehicles efficiently, safe and efficient pedestrian and bicycle linkages are critical, particularly for the downtown area. Two major barriers exist for pedestrians and bicycles in downtown Westmont: the railroad tracks and Cass Avenue. One pedestrian level railroad crossing exists near the Westmont train station, as well as at Cass Avenue. During the morning peak period, a traffic control officer is present to prevent commuters from crossing when the gates are down.

Crossing Cass Avenue is difficult due to the volume of traffic on that street. Two areas are particularly difficult: north of the tracks between Burlington Avenue and Irving Street, and south of the tracks at the offset intersections with Quincy Street. The north section is difficult due to traffic queued up at the intersection of Burlington Avenue and Cass Avenue. The south section is expected to be improved when the traffic control system at Cass Avenue, Burlington Avenue, and the railroad is upgraded.

### *Conclusions/Recommendations*

For improved accommodation of pedestrians and bicycles, the following strategies are recommended:

- Add streetscaping elements, including landscaping, street trees, and decorative lighting. These elements change the visual appearance of an area, can help slow traffic, and enhance the environment for all users. Care should be taken to avoid undue impact on retailers. Construction should be limited/ managed carefully. Streetscape should be considered from the standpoint of increasing sales — (e.g. street trees can block store signs; storefronts, not

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decorative elements should be the compelling views on the street) These elements change the visual appearance of an area, which can both slow traffic and enhance the environment for all users.

- Add mid-block pedestrian crossings on Cass Avenue in the blocks just north and south of the tracks.
- Implement an enhanced pedestrian crossing on Cass Avenue north of the railroad tracks. Used in conjunction with curb extensions, this would place emphasis on the crossing and draw more attention from motorists.
- Support Metra improvements to the railroad platform/waiting area. These improvements include signage and waiting areas.
- Where possible, construct curb extensions, or bulb-outs, to narrow the street by widening the sidewalk or landscaped parking area. These extensions make pedestrian crossings easier and provide a visual narrowing along the road to alert the driver. Although this significantly improves pedestrian movement, bicyclists must travel along the extension. Suggested locations include both directions of Cass Avenue between Irving Street and Richmond Street.

*Resources (see Appendix 7 for details)*

DuPage County/ HUD -Community Development Block Grant program

Illinois Department of Transportation—RAIL/RAIL PASSENGER

Illinois Department of Transportation—HIGHWAYS/GRADE CROSSING PROTECTION

Illinois Department of Transportation—HIGHWAYS/TOWNSHIP BRIDGES

Illinois Department of Transportation—HIGHWAYS/HIGH-GROWTH CITIES ASSISTANCE

Illinois Department of Transportation—Illinois Transportation Enhancement Program

Surface Transportation Program (STP) and Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement (CMAQ)

Illinois Department of Transportation

The Transportation Improvement Program

Tax Incremental Financing (TIF)

Illinois Development Finance Authority—LOCAL GOVERNMENT LEASE PROGRAM

Illinois Development Finance Authority—DEBT FINANCING ASSISTANCE



This section provides a housing market assessment for downtown Westmont. The first part looks at overall housing market trends in Westmont and outlines the advantages and disadvantages of downtown as a site for new residential development as part of the larger transit-oriented redevelopment activity around the Metra Station.

### **Overall Housing Market Trends**

The Village of Westmont is bordered by the communities of Darien, Downers Grove, Oak Brook, Willowbrook, Clarendon Hills, and Hinsdale. Compared to these neighboring municipalities, Westmont's housing market most closely resembles those of Downers Grove and Darien in terms of price range and age of the housing stock.

The majority of new residents in Westmont are either families seeking affordable single family housing or single renters. The Village is among the most affordable communities within central DuPage County and convenient for individuals who work elsewhere in the county. With its quality schools, access to major transportation routes, and availability of homes in a wide price range, Westmont's housing market is strong. However, additional types of housing will broaden the market of potential home buyers and renters in the Village and strengthen the overall economic base. This will allow current residents to remain in the Village when their housing needs change. Opportunities for additional housing development, particularly near the downtown core, are favorable in the existing market.

One of the most outstanding characteristics of Westmont's housing market is the wide price range and affordability of its homes. This is in large part due to the large percentage of small, older homes predominately in Westmont's downtown core stretching between 55<sup>th</sup> Street and Ogden Ave. to the north. At the same time, Westmont has a newer stock of higher priced single family homes located around its perimeter. Since the 1990s several new subdivisions have been constructed with homes averaging three or more bedrooms. Since 1995, the Village of Westmont issued 349 building permits for residential units, double the number issued between 1990 and 1995.<sup>1</sup> Westmont should take steps to ensure that future development reflects a character distinctive of Westmont and not an "extension" of neighboring communities.

Seventy-five percent of Westmont's housing units were built after 1960, however, in the market Primary Trade Area (defined as the one- mile core surrounding the downtown), over half the homes were built prior to 1959.<sup>2</sup> The presence of older residences contributes to the attraction of home buyers seeking affordable resale homes. Due to overall similarities in style and scale, these houses create a consistent

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residential character in Westmont's older neighborhoods. Conversely, an aging housing stock may present concerns including deferred maintenance issues and an increase in "tear downs" in which a larger new home is built on one or two lots previously occupied by a smaller, older home. A local broker noted an increasing number of tear downs in Westmont. The Village of Westmont can establish guidelines to ensure that new residential construction does not occur in a manner that disrupts the scale and character of existing neighborhoods.

While the majority of units in Westmont's downtown are owner-occupied, the 1990 census reported that half of all housing units in Westmont were renter-occupied. Rental units are predominately located in the southern section of Westmont, in large multi-story complexes built in the 1970s. Only eight percent of the single family detached housing stock was renter-occupied in 1990. Rental units in Westmont are distributed in buildings of varying densities.

According to the 1990 U.S. Census, a person 65 or older headed twenty percent of owner-occupied homes.<sup>3</sup> The Village can take a proactive approach to address the needs of homeowners who may no longer be able to maintain their homes and seek alternative living arrangements by planning for senior housing development and services. One such alternative is the development of condominiums downtown. Westmont has a lower percentage of condominium/townhouse units compared to neighboring towns.

Vacancies in the multi-family rental market for the southeast portion of DuPage County are around 3 percent.<sup>4</sup> Average rents in Class B Apartment complexes are \$1,129 for three bedroom three bath units, \$781 two-bedroom/one bath units, \$660 for one-bedroom units and \$505 for studio apartments.<sup>5</sup> Occupancy levels are strong and multi-family residences near the Metra station would likely be attractive in the local rental market. Rental housing would help increase downtown density and vitality and support retail, making it a desirable residential use. However, given that a large percentage of Westmont's housing stock is rental, the Village may wish to focus on for-sale housing units.

#### *Typical Sales Prices*

Westmont is known for its housing affordability relative to other nearby suburbs in DuPage County. Local brokers report that the main attraction of home buyers to Westmont is price. Current sales prices for single family attached homes range from \$98,900 to \$160,000 for two bedroom homes, \$106,000 to \$325,000 for three bedroom homes, and \$160,000 to \$525,000 for four bedroom homes. The average size of new units is slightly more than three bedrooms per unit, with at least two bathrooms. Median home prices are slightly lower in Westmont than the surrounding communities. Single family attached homes (a category which includes condominiums and



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townhomes) range in price from \$58,000 for a one bedroom condominium to \$275,500 for a newly constructed three bedroom townhome.<sup>6</sup>

Local real estate brokers indicate that Westmont is known for its affordable single family homes, which are in high demand. Because of the large percentage of elderly homeowners, local brokers see a demand for housing for seniors wanting to move to maintenance-free housing. One broker recommended development of mixed-use residential (condominiums above retail) in the downtown area as ideal for residents of Westmont aged 55 and older.

### **New Residential Developments**

New residential developments in Westmont have primarily consisted of single-family homes and townhomes in the upper price ranges on the periphery of Westmont. Citadel on the Pond, located north of Ogden Avenue and West of the Oakwood Subdivision contains 145 two-bedroom 2-bath townhomes, ranging from 1,600-2,100 square feet starting at \$205,000. Fairfield Subdivisions, located in the southeast portion of Westmont, includes a total of about 90 four-bedroom 2-bath homes from 2,670 to over 3,700 square feet priced from \$435,000. At the Park Avenue Townhomes development, townhouses are priced from \$325,000 and up, while condominiums start at \$164,000.

### **Locational Advantages and Disadvantages**

The proposed redevelopment area is in a central location, well-connected to transportation routes including Metra and Pace service, as well as access to four major highways. Residents can easily walk to the Metra commuter rail station. The area has adequate nearby shopping with a small grocery located within a half-mile and a Jewel Food Store and Dominick's one mile away. Given the residential nature of the surrounding area, new residential development will blend in well with existing land uses.

The perceived disadvantages of the redevelopment area are mainly related to traffic congestion during peak rush hours. If no physical improvements were undertaken downtown, adding residential development could cause further congestion in the area. It is assumed that new development would be designed with ample parking and would take place in conjunction with traffic improvements to the area. In addition, current industrial uses are not compatible with residential development east of Cass Avenue. Some relocation of current businesses may be necessary to implement a TOD plan for development of housing in the station area.

### **Housing Recommendations**

Community Economic Redevelopment Corporation (CERC) analyzed the demand for housing units based upon Westmont's projected population growth to year 2004,

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average household size, the existing number of housing units built and those planned (as per Westmont building permit information). The analysis found that overall, it appears that Westmont currently has a slight over-supply of housing units. The oversupply is tempered by the fact that a larger than average percentage of the housing stock is renter-occupied (i.e., Westmont has more rental housing than it needs, but has room to increase the number of owner-occupied units.) While the single-family housing market is strong in Westmont, any new residential development in downtown Westmont will need to be created as a “destination.” Because Westmont is not growing at the same rate as the rest of DuPage County, to justify a demand for new housing units, the project must draw from a larger pool of potential home buyers. In addition, most new housing development in recent years has been on the periphery of Westmont. Residential development downtown will likely not take place without a plan in place to guide and encourage development.

- Broaden the Market. Encourage the development of condominiums and townhomes rather than rental units in the Primary Trade Area by advertising this intention in developer Requests for Proposals (RFPs). Given location, planned housing, and market conditions and trends CERC recommends the Village create a long-term housing plan, which is beyond the scope of this study. This plan should encourage the development of a combination of townhomes and condominiums in the immediate station area. Currently there are few condominium options in Westmont and housing of this type should be marketable close to the Metra Station. The number of units would need to be determined at the time development was to occur, based on market conditions at that time. Condominiums are desirable to address the changing lifestyle needs of persons 55 and over who are seeking a housing product with less maintenance than ownership of a single-family residence. Many of these households currently live within a half-mile of the Metra station.
- Make it easy for developers to build housing above retail in the Primary Trade Area. Streamline the permitting and approval process for favorable development proposals.
- Create a plan for increasing downtown population by 2,000 residents over ten years representing 800-1,000 units of housing.

*Resources (see Appendix 7 for details)*

Historic Tax Credits

Federal Home Loan Bank Community Investment Program (CIP)

Tax Increment Financing (TIF)

*1 Northeastern Illinois Planning Commission, Village of Westmont Building Department*

*2 1990 United States Census*

*3 1990 United States Census*

*4 Apartment Report, Draper and Kramer, Winter, 1998*

*5 Ibid.*

*6 Multiple Listing Service*

This section provides an assessment of the commercial market in downtown Westmont. The assessment both complements the work of Westmont Main Street in creating a viable downtown and examines opportunities for creating a transit-oriented development. The purpose of the commercial assessment includes the following:

- To determine whether the businesses in the station area offer the right mix of goods and services for the population they serve;
- To recommend types of businesses that might be willing to locate in Westmont;
- To look at how businesses can work to enhance Westmont as a destination.

The study design included a Merchant Survey (conducted in October 1999) to assess current business characteristics and concerns. In addition, RTA conducted a survey in July, 1999 that contributes to understanding the potential consumer demand from daily Metra commuters.

### **Business District Overview**

The Westmont train station at Cass Avenue and Quincy Street forms the center of downtown Westmont and creates an open greenspace lined on the north and the south sides by small retail shops and businesses, located in one to two-story structures. Many of these structures have been converted from residential uses, and several have apartments on the second floor. The Chamber of Commerce, tourist information center, and Westmont Main Street office are sited in the new “Westmont Centre” building on the southeast corner of Cass Avenue and train tracks.

The business district has approximately 160,000 square feet of ground floor retail space in 48 structures. The area includes over 120 businesses including professional services, small restaurants, and a number of barber/ beauty shops and home remodeling and furnishings businesses. The most prevalent feature of downtown Westmont is that the majority of businesses are service-oriented. Retail uses are predominantly local merchants, with no national retail presence. The lack of national chains is significant — because of their established consumer bases and name recognition, national chains have the ability to draw new retail to an area.

According to 1998 retail data from the Illinois Department of Revenue, Westmont retail sales are strong compared to DuPage County and the State of Illinois in all but three retail categories: general merchandise, apparel, and furniture/household and radio. This indicates a lack of retail uses of those types in Westmont. Currently Westmont residents are traveling outside of the Village to purchase the majority of these types of goods.

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Over half of all businesses in downtown Westmont are services, not retail. Almost thirty percent of stores are restaurants and bars, with the largest group of retail stores fitting into the “Miscellaneous retail” category, including stores selling gifts, used merchandise, books, collectibles, and other small-ticket items. The next largest group of retail shops are those selling furniture and home remodeling supplies/ products and building material and supply stores. These stores mainly concentrate on a particular specialty, not providing a wide range of goods in one store. Given the existing collection of these stores, there may exist a potential niche for Westmont offering home furnishings and remodeling items.

### *Competing Retail Areas*

When assessing the potential for retail expansion, it is important to consider the competing shopping areas within the trade area under consideration. Two super-regional and four regional shopping centers are located within four miles of downtown Westmont. In addition, four community shopping centers and seven neighborhood centers are located within a three-mile radius of downtown. In order to compete with local shopping centers, downtown Westmont needs to be able to offer a different shopping experience for the consumer — an alternative to the local mall or regional “power center.”

While the downtown shopping district does not currently function as a shopping center, with shops being individually owned and managed, it is comparable to a neighborhood shopping center in size, trade area, and types of businesses. In addition, currently shopping downtown is comparable to shopping at a strip center as a “shopping experience” in terms of seeking convenience and finding smaller stores that one can get in and out of quickly. Alternatively, one main difference between downtown and neighborhood centers is the lack of an anchor store and the lack of density of retail uses.

The goal of the Westmont downtown shopping district should be to distinguish itself from local strip shopping centers, capitalize on Metra commuters, and compete better with neighboring downtowns as a destination shopping district. Based on the strengths of Westmont’s location, surrounding population and physical design improvements, the downtown district has the potential to compete well in the retail market as a niche or destination shopping area. Given the space requirements of anchor stores such as a grocery store, downtown Westmont is not currently suited for this type of development. However, future potential may exist as national chains experiment with new store formats.

Westmont downtown businesses offer most of the goods and services typically used by commuters. However, based on the business survey and RTA survey, the relationship between commuters and local businesses could be strengthened to

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benefit both commuters and business owners.

### **Business Survey**

Surveys were sent to all of the businesses on the Westmont Main Street database. Of the 124 mailed, 38 were completed and returned, a response rate of thirty percent. The following summarizes the results from those businesses who responded to the survey.

- The response group employs over 150 people.
- Just over half of the group owns their business premises.
- The average length of time businesses have been located downtown is twenty years. The oldest business is 35 years old.
- Only one-third of businesses open before 9 a.m., however, over half have hours extending to or past 6 p.m. The majority of businesses have limited hours on Saturdays, few are open on Sunday. Several businesses may agree to stay open later on a common night.

### *Trade Area*

Businesses in downtown Westmont draw customers from between a mile and over ten miles away. While a typical neighborhood center has a trade area of 3 miles, personal service businesses with a long-time clientele are able to retain customers who may have moved away and opt to return to a business they know well. Almost a third of respondents report their customer base is within a mile; 38% attract customers within 3 miles, 10 percent have a customer base within 5 miles, and 13 percent attract customers from over ten miles away. Those businesses considered destinations for their ability to attract regardless of distance are primarily personal services, and two are retail businesses who have outside salespersons, meaning those customers are not actually traveling to Westmont to shop.

Additional comments on the business survey primarily address physical issues that are seen as concerns to local business owners, as summarized in the list below.

- Very few businesses report trying special promotions for commuters. Of the five respondents who have, one estimates 20 to 30% of their revenues are from Metra commuters.
- One third of businesses surveyed open prior to 9 a.m. which makes their services available to commuters during the morning rush hours. Over half stay open until 6 p.m. or later at least one day a week. Given the fact that over half of commuters surveyed leave Chicago between 5 and 5:30, it may be beneficial for some businesses to expand their evening hours to capture more of the commuter market.
- Most downtown businesses are open part of the day Saturday, almost none are open on Sundays. Weekend hours may attract more customers, however, a change in hours would need to be well publicized and part of a larger marketing effort business owners could make as a group. If new retail comes



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to downtown Westmont, other businesses should strongly consider offering expanded weekend hours.

- Parking is one of the most frequently noted concerns of business owners surveyed. Many businesses lack employee parking and park on Cass Avenue, utilizing spaces for potential customers of their own and other nearby shops. Because the majority of customers arrive by car, parking must be addressed to attract any new retail businesses.

### *Recommendations Based on Business Survey*

While the business mix is lacking in retail establishments, the presence of long-standing personal service businesses draws clientele who would not otherwise come to downtown Westmont. Unfortunately, due to a lack of a variety of retail establishments and other uses this clientele most likely does not stay in downtown Westmont to shop.

A weak connection exists between downtown businesses and Metra commuters. Only 12% of owners surveyed have tried marketing to commuters. These businesses have done direct mail to monthly parking permit holders, window displays, and fliers.

Opportunities exist for new business that can invest in the purchase and improvement of existing buildings to help revitalize the downtown.

### **RTA Survey Findings**

The Village of Westmont and the Regional Transportation Authority (RTA) conducted a survey of Metra passengers boarding at the Westmont station between 6:56 a.m. and 8:05 a.m. on July 13, 1999. Of the 825 surveys handed out, 340 were returned yielding a response rate of 41%. The survey was designed to better understand how well commuters know and use the businesses around the rail station, and to assess commuter attitudes toward using businesses near the Metra station. The survey also covers demographic and ridership information. The following section summarizes key findings of the survey results.

#### *Perceptions of Station Area Businesses*

Patronage of businesses in the Metra Station area depend partly on commuters knowledge and familiarity with those businesses and whether they feel it is convenient to shop there while in the area. The following findings address issues of familiarity, location, and convenience of businesses near the Westmont Metra station:

- 62% of respondents are familiar with businesses in the station area.
- Most commuters see very little or no advertising around the Metra station (71%). 50% report they are able to see more than five businesses from the

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Metra station parking lot.

- One of the ways that businesses can better take advantage of business potential of commuters is by having hours convenient to morning and evening rush hour passengers. The RTA survey found that 48% agreed that businesses near the Metra station generally have convenient hours; almost a third of respondents did not agree that hours were generally convenient.
- 71 percent agree that businesses near the Metra station are conveniently located. In addition, 65% of commuters responded that they would walk 1-2 blocks out of their way to patronize a business. And, 69% responded that they would be more likely to use businesses if they were located nearer or within the station building. These findings suggest commuters currently feel businesses are convenient but would be more likely to use businesses nearer to the station.
- Only 21% of respondents go home after work and return at night to patronize businesses in the station area. When asked whether they would rather shop at businesses near their home than at similar businesses near the Metra station, only thirty seven percent agree. 40% are just as likely to shop at Metra station area businesses as they would be to shop near home. This finding suggests the strong potential for increasing business to commuters on their way home by offering the right products and services.
- Over half of the respondents agree that having businesses near the Metra Station makes using Metra service more desirable; moreover, 74% agree that having a Metra Station near businesses makes using those businesses more desirable. Half the respondents agree that they shop at stores they would not know of except for seeing them on their way to and from the train.
- In response to whether businesses near the Metra Station generally have what they need, 43% agreed and 34% disagreed.
- Commuters were asked to specify the top five businesses out of a given list of business types they would most likely patronize in the station area. The highest ranked businesses were coffee stand, ATM, newsstand, fast-food restaurant, convenience store, drug store, dry cleaners, card/gifts shop and grocery store. An overwhelming majority (74%) responded that they would patronize these businesses in the station area if they were open earlier in the morning and 74% would patronize these businesses in the station area if they were open later in the evening.
- 69% of commuters surveyed agree that the location of the Metra station is an important factor in their decision of where to live.

### *Commuter Profile*

Demographic information was collected as part of the RTA survey. Results are summarized below.

The largest group of passengers boarding at the Westmont station began their trip in Westmont (62.6%), followed by Darien (22.6%), Downers Grove (5.3%), and Clarendon Hills (2.9%). The remaining passengers traveled from

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ten other surrounding towns to board at Westmont. The largest group of respondents (47 %) drove alone to the station and parked. Walking, being dropped off, and taking the bus to the Metra station were tied as the second most common method of getting to the train. Of those who walked, the average distance was five blocks.

Over half of survey respondents live in single family homes, 20% live in apartments, followed by townhomes and condos.

### *Key Findings*

Half the respondents said they would not know of stores downtown unless they saw them on their way to and from the train. Since just over half of the respondents' trip originates in Westmont, this finding suggests that the train station is a great asset to area businesses, drawing potential customers that would otherwise not be aware of their existence. The Metra station attracts a demographic group that has higher than average incomes and currently more than 1,200 people board the train each day. While commuters primarily support convenience uses, because they travel through the area daily, new businesses get exposure to potential customers who may return on their way home or during the weekend to shop

Commuters are not averse to patronizing businesses near the Metra station instead of those closer to home. Many of the commuters are from Westmont and therefore live in the primary trade area of downtown Westmont and may not see a conflict between choosing a business downtown and a neighborhood business. However, in general this is a positive indication that commuters would patronize station area businesses on their way home if offered the goods and services they need.

Location of current businesses does not appear to be a deterrent to whether commuters patronize their services. The majority responded that businesses were "conveniently located," which is somewhat of a surprise given the issues of traffic congestion and pedestrian concerns reported from business survey respondents and Metra riders alike. At the same time, 69% responded that they would be more likely to patronize businesses near or inside the train station.

Currently the greatest number of commuters surveyed drive to the station and park. It is recommended that Pace and the Village find ways to increase bus ridership. A greater number of persons riding Pace helps support station area businesses as commuters can opt to take a later bus in order to shop in local stores.

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Of those businesses Metra commuters report being most likely to patronize, (coffee stand, convenience store, etc.) most of these businesses are found in the downtown area, however, not all are within a block of the station.

### **Commercial Recommendations**

New businesses look for a variety of factors in choosing a new site including demographics of the surrounding area, customer attraction and general appearance of the potential shopping district, adequacy of parking, adequate foot traffic, and cost of property. Westmont demographics are supportive of retail uses in general because the population is growing and households in Westmont and surrounding DuPage County have higher than average incomes and purchasing power. Our analysis shows that there is demand for the following retail uses: apparel, footwear, and a small food store. However, competing shopping destinations and the current physical conditions of the downtown business district limit the attraction of substantial new retailers to downtown Westmont in the short-term. The following recommendations are aimed at helping Westmont's downtown to better compete with other local shopping districts, to attract new retail uses, and create a transit- oriented development benefiting downtown businesses and residents.

### **Retail Location and Merchandising**

#### *Location of Retail*

- Create policies which encourage the orderly replacement of ground-floor service uses with retail uses on streets designated to become exclusively retail (likely Cass Avenue between Burlington Avenue and Irving Street and elsewhere).
- Market the convenience retail identified in the RTA survey (coffee shop, newsstand, dry cleaners, ATM, fast food, convenience, cards/gifts) for vacant spaces nearest to the train station.
- Provide bare bones commuter services such as coffee, snacks, and newspapers (free-standing or in the station building).

#### *Merchandising/Downtown Management*

- Fund a downtown manager and organization.
- Create a website to provide information and maps about downtown shops, service businesses, and downtown events searchable by category. Include information on transit schedules and/or links to providers web sites (e.g. Metra's web site).
- Evaluate the creation of a Special Service Area which could help fund improvements and create a more vested interest on the part of merchants.
- Implement coordinated advertising programs for downtown businesses.

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- Organize events such as a farmers' market and evening concerts coordinated with sidewalk sales or extended store hours to increase sales of downtown businesses.
  - Improve retail displays and merchandising techniques for retail stores.
  - Market to capture commuter traffic by: adjusting hours of business for downtown retail, posting a map and directory of downtown businesses including hours in the Metra station, installing a display case at the train station to advertise local businesses, and offering discount coupons available at the ticket window or by showing a Metra pass or ticket.
  - Strategically market to attract grocery, apparel, home decorating, etc. shops either to occupy existing rental space or infill development. To do this the town would need to hire a national broker to recruit developers and retailers.

### *Conclusion*

The retail assessment found that demand exists for increasing retail space in downtown Westmont. The Westmont business community wants to attract various populations to their downtown, and each target group has slightly different needs, requiring different approaches for retail development. One population is local Westmont residents, who currently shop for daily needs such as food, clothing and shoes at competing shopping centers partially because these uses do not exist downtown. Second, they want to provide variety of specialty shops for visitors and others seeking a unique shopping experience different from going to a mall (which also includes Westmont residents). Third, they want to build the relationship between commuters and local businesses. These goals require overlapping, but distinct strategies. The common strategies include improving the physical characteristics of the downtown shopping district and providing an increase in available retail space. Marketing strategies and the types of new retail to target should be determined based on the target consumer group. The Village may want to focus on first strengthening the commuter-merchant relationship and then look at long-term attraction of new retail. Long-term attraction would focus on retailers providing goods Westmont residents currently purchase outside of Westmont and retail uses complimentary with an increase in residential uses downtown. Concurrently, the Village can more fully develop downtown as a destination for visitors to Westmont.

We also recommend the Village begin working to amend zoning ordinances to support urban design guidelines set forth in the TOD plan, as described in the previous chapter. Additionally, as part of an overall business strategy, the Village should consider ordinances that will address businesses downtown that currently appear to be vacant due to inconsistent business hours. An ordinance setting forth minimum hours of operation has been used in other municipalities



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as a strategy to address inactive businesses and potentially free up retail space that is currently under-utilized. Westmont’s growing residential market and demographic characteristics create strong potential for a revitalized downtown and transit-oriented development.

*Resources (see Appendix 7 for details)*

Tax Incremental Financing (TIF)

Federal Home Loan Bank Community Investment Program (CIP)

Contact: Federal Home Loan Bank of Chicago 312-565-5824

Illinois Development Finance Authority—LOCAL GOVERNMENT LEASE PROGRAM

Historic Tax Credits

Experience Illinois (Pilot Project) Illinois State Treasurer’s Office

Illinois Development Finance Authority MicroLoan Program

Women’s Self Employment Project (WSEP)



## CHAPTER 7: IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY OPTIONS

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As noted in the Executive Summary, this study concludes that the Village of Westmont has an opportunity to redevelop its downtown in a manner which can improve the town's image, offer greater retail choices, increase housing options, strengthen its role as a transit node and to make it a vital destination. It is clear that three of the four necessary elements for a robust redevelopment approach are in place: 1) market demand, 2) available redevelopment sites and 3) broad community support for redevelopment. The only open question is whether the leadership of Westmont will be able to continue their commitment to lead, and fund, a comprehensive multi-year project to implement the core of the recommendations of this report. It is important to note that individual desire alone will likely not be adequate to maintain progress during leadership transitions over the next 5 to 15 years. Mechanisms must be put in place to clearly define the goals and direction of the effort — to institutionalize the plan — so the intent of the plan can be carried forward over the long term.

There are four different levels of intervention that Westmont can take towards implementing downtown redevelopment:

- 1) Market Driven,
- 2) Village as Limited Catalyst,
- 3) Village as Direct Catalyst, and
- 4) Village as Developer

This section addresses implementation options for the Village of Westmont as they work to redevelop their downtown business district. The chapter is designed to provide a “road map” for determining next steps based on the Village's goals and objectives and level of commitment to those goals. First, in order to decide upon an implementation strategy, the Village needs to determine its short term and long term vision and priorities for creating change in downtown Westmont. The Village has before it a recommended plan for the downtown. If the Village chooses to adopt the recommended plan, it will require further refinement. What elements should be addressed first? What will be the process for implementing the plan in detail? “Chart A” (pg. 7-5) outlines the decision-making process whereby, based upon the Village's objectives and level of commitment, a strategy can be chosen.

### **Levels of Commitment**

Chart A refers to level of commitment — this includes determining the level of resources the Village is willing and able to commit to an implementation plan which

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include:

- **Financial:** There are many steps to implementing a development plan. What is the Village willing and able to fund?
- **Staff:** Does current Village staff have the time, capacity, and expertise to adequately complete work related to new initiatives and coordination of redevelopment? Is the Village willing to hire additional staff to see the project through to completion?
- **Technical support:** If Village staff do not have the technical capacity to implement redevelopment activities, is the Village able to hire or access technical assistance resources?

The implementation strategy chosen will affect timelines and the plan of action to be taken in the decision-making outline. The strategy options are outlined in “Chart B” (pg. 7-6 and 7-7). The Village may decide to adopt one strategy for the short-term and make the internal changes necessary to adopt a more aggressive strategy in the future in order to realize long-term goals. Choosing a strategy is critical because it guides every “next step” possibility. The strategies are discussed below.

The four different levels of interventions that Westmont can take toward implementing downtown redevelopment are:

Level 1: Market Driven. This represents the least commitment on the part of Westmont. This strategy might best be described as low investment and low return. It accepts the status quo and is unlikely to result in the sort of major downtown redevelopment that Westmont seeks to bring about.

Level 2: Village as Limited Catalyst. The next level encompasses all of the recommendations described in the report as “housekeeping”. In other words, Level 2 essentially addresses structural problems. (Note: We highly recommend that the housekeeping agenda (summarized in Appendix 1) be implemented whether or not the Trustees decide to pursue a more proactive redevelopment strategy.) The housekeeping agenda is focused on improving the current main street business environment through physical changes, focused structural changes, and through changes in zoning. Physical items would include facade renovations, streetscape improvements, traffic calming, circulation improvements, and parking and signage along Cass Avenue. Structural change items include a higher level of business promotion and development, active parking management, and adding staff and/or consultants to address specific needs as they arise. Zoning items include updates to require that new public and private sector development be built to the appropriate land use and character. This is an important item since much in the current zoning code precludes the kind of development this study found would be supportable by the citizenry of Westmont.

Levels 3 & 4: A More Proactive Stance—Village as Direct Catalyst and/or Developer As the community process revealed, there is broad public support for a more robust level of redevelopment to create momentum in the rebuilding of downtown. In the public meetings, there was a shared sense that something

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big needed to be done to turn downtown around. This approach would require that the Village take a more active stance at the level of providing a Strong Catalyst and or even acting as Developer to implement key portions of the downtown plan. These levels include activities such as acquiring land for redevelopment, working with developers to solicit and negotiate proposals to develop high quality projects on key sites and incent a handful of key deals as necessary to get them built in the next 3 to 5 years.

Finally, "Chart C" (pg. 7-8) provides examples of how the various strategies translate into actions taken by the Village, and expected outcomes of each strategy. The actions and outcomes listed on Chart C are a limited sample and only provided as examples. Once the Village determines their goals and possible strategy, multiple options can be considered.

### **Implementation**

In order to implement either the limited (Level 2) or proactive strategies (Levels 3 & 4), two key things will be required of Westmont leadership :

- 1) a period of review, debate and evaluation of this report resulting in a memorandum of understanding between the Mayor, the Trustees and staff formally adopting the plan and outlining the level of commitment which the Village of Westmont is prepared to make to implement a multi-year redevelopment plan and,
- 2) a commitment to empower a professional redevelopment team (combining staff and outside consultants) to implement the individual projects which literally build the plan.

Over the last several years, Westmont has built several new and mostly successful civic buildings: a library, a police and fire station, the new Westmont Center and, currently underway, a new Village Hall. There is no doubt that extensive thought went into each of these projects at the time they were done. However, they probably all represent missed opportunities because they were done as individual building projects rather than parts of a comprehensive plan.

The redevelopment of a downtown requires that every individual redevelopment project serve a greater vision. Each new idea or project, as it develops, should be measured against the goals defined for the redevelopment effort, and an effort should be made to make that project serve multiple goals and work in concert with other projects. In this way, the greatest benefit can be achieved.





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## Chart A. Sample Decision-Making Outline

### I. Determine Objectives

Examples:

#### Short Term

- Maintain historic character of downtown Westmont
- Strengthen existing economic base: for example, set business district guidelines such as standard hours of operation, support Main Street initiatives, form a Business Improvement District.
- Develop and adopt design guidelines and a master plan for downtown Westmont.
- Develop stronger commuter-business relationship through improved marketing and advertising.

#### Long Term

- Increase amount of retail space available downtown
- Attract new retail businesses currently lacking downtown.
- Annually revisit Westmont's downtown plan and revise as needed.
- Reconfigure station area to accommodate increased ridership and meet commuter-consumer needs.

#### Outcomes

- Increase vitality of downtown Westmont
- Increase sales base.
- Strengthen Westmont's image as a progressive municipality.
- Increase transit ridership and patronage of downtown businesses.

### II. Prioritize Objectives

What short-term goals can we address with existing capacity?

What are we committed to accomplishing first?

### III. Determine level of commitment

What staff are we willing or able to commit to Village objectives?

If we do not have the staff, can we commit to creating new positions?

### IV. Timeline for completion

What are our 1, 2, and 5 year milestones?

### V. Plan of Action

Who will do what and when?

## Chart B. Strategy Options

### 1. Market Driven Strategy

Description	Pros	Cons
<p>Under this strategy, the Village does "nothing" and lets market forces determine the direction of downtown development</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No community resources are required</li> <li>There is no conflict between Village and public opinion — Village does not risk offending anyone by taking unpopular action.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Timeliness: Cannot ensure the timing of new development activity thereby risking reaction due to unmet expectations.</li> <li>Lack of synergy between different development activities.</li> <li>Loss of Opportunity: No ability to build on momentum of other entities interested in making things happen.</li> <li>Loss of Opportunity: Financial resources and low interest rates.</li> <li>No guarantee Village will get desired components. (e.g. a grocery store is desired but not developed).</li> </ul>

### 2. Village as "Limited Catalyst"

Description	Pros	Cons
<p>Under this strategy, the Village takes minor action to indirectly affect redevelopment possibilities.</p> <p>Actions can include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* <u>Zoning changes</u> such as new designation for mixed-use buildings, mandating ground-floor retail, etc.</li> <li>* <u>Financial programs of incentives</u> to businesses and/or building owners</li> <li>* <u>Tax incentives</u> for targeted new businesses</li> <li>* <u>Creation of Tax Increment Financing District</u></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reduces cost of entering market, through use of financial incentives thereby increasing chance new development will occur.</li> <li>Allows potential developers to have a better understanding of Village objectives.</li> <li>Encourages desirable but marginal developments and makes them more likely to occur.</li> <li>Increases the likelihood of achieving the desired development outcomes – e.g. particular uses can be enforced through zoning.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Timeliness: Cannot ensure the timing of new development activity.</li> <li>Required Village to hire additional professional staff to structure and implement programs.</li> <li>Requires capital outlays to implement, with no guarantee of success.</li> <li>Synergy with other entities is not ensured because Village involvement is still limited (e.g. others could develop something incompatible).</li> <li>The end product is not sure to meet the desires of the Village in its redevelopment of downtown.</li> </ul>

## Chart B. Strategy Options (continued)

### 3. Village as "Direct Catalyst"

Description	Pros	Cons
<p>Under this strategy, the Village takes more direct actions such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Village assembles land for development/redevelopment.</li> <li>* Village issues Requests for Proposals for Village controlled land.</li> <li>* Village provides financial assistance and/or incentives for desired projects.</li> <li>* Village makes changes to infrastructure to enhance downtown for pedestrians and retail shops.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Allows the Village to influence the level of market interest by offering incentives or making cost of entering market lower for developers.</li> <li>• Increases likelihood of achieving desired outcomes – Village can dictate land uses on Village controlled land.</li> <li>• Redevelopment can more easily include public participation – speculation risk is reduced.</li> <li>• Village can have a better sense of redevelopment timeliness.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Will require Village to hire additional outside professionals to implement development initiatives.</li> <li>• Requires capital investment by the Village.</li> <li>• Requires coordination efforts to implement a long-range vision with numerous development entities.</li> </ul>

### 4. Village as Developer

Description	Pros	Cons
<p>Under this strategy, the Village would adopt a Master Plan for the proposed development area and take direct responsibility for the redevelopment of downtown.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provides a mechanism for redevelopment that is in the direct control of the Village.</li> <li>• Can ensure implementation of Master Plan and other desired Village outcomes.</li> <li>• Enables Village to directly coordinate redevelopment activities with other entities.</li> <li>• Enables Village to develop projects that are desirable but would not occur under current market forces.</li> <li>• Can include broad public participation in development and adoption of Master Plan and development process.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Requires Village to create a development entity to carry out development activities.</li> <li>• Requires financial commitment of Village.</li> <li>• Village assumes financial and other risks of development.</li> </ul>

Chart C. Examples of Strategy Option Choices

Objective	Issues/ Limitations	Strategy Option	"Limited Catalyst"	"Direct Catalyst"	Village as Developer
Increase population in downtown Westmont	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lack of available land on which to develop.</li> <li>Incompatible zoning.</li> <li>Few multi-family units downtown.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Market Driven</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Downtown may lose units through conversion to service businesses or "teardowns" as has historically occurred.</li> <li>Due to lack of available, assembled land, no new units will be built.</li> </ul>	<p><b>"Limited Catalyst"</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Developers will consider building, but may find other areas "easier" – e.g. vacant land and fewer zoning issues.</li> <li>Limited control over outcomes or timeliness.</li> <li>Can require that service businesses occupy upper floors.</li> <li>Can reduce cost of entering market, spurring development.</li> </ul>	<p><b>"Direct Catalyst"</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Village can issue Request for Proposal for specific development desired.</li> <li>Can market sites for development.</li> <li>Village has a better chance of achieving goals.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Village as Developer</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Village decides and develops amount, type, and location of housing.</li> <li>Will increase tax base.</li> <li>Greater control over outcomes.</li> </ul>
Increase number of retail businesses downtown	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Not enough new structures of vacant exiting space for new stores</li> <li>Insufficient market demand for certain desired new stores</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Vacancies filled randomly (if and when they exist). No targeting of particular businesses.</li> <li>Limitations to attraction of national retailers: inadequate or not assembled land or space.</li> <li>No or limited control over outcomes.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Businesses owners may have added incentives and capacity to make improvements.</li> <li>Can reduce cost of entering market, thereby increasing likelihood of development.</li> <li>Can reconfigure land uses to make space available for wider range of development possibilities.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Allows Village to target desired types of retailers.</li> <li>Increases likelihood that desired outcomes will occur.</li> <li>Minor influence on timeliness of redevelopment.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provides a direct mechanism to improve retail district.</li> <li>Village can market directly and recruit new retail.</li> </ul>



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## **APPENDIX 1: HOUSEKEEPING RECOMMENDATIONS**

In making the recommendations contained in this report, the Consultant team has tried to avoid planning platitudes which call for no action in favor of detailed, specific action items to be addressed by the Mayor, Trustees and Village staff. The “housekeeping” recommendations are those things that should be addressed regardless of the level of intervention chosen by the Village (see Executive Summary and Chapter 7: Implementation Strategy Options). These items are basic to creating a vital and sustainable downtown. These recommendations, culled from the chapters above, are summarized here:

### **Zoning**

#### *Commercial and Mixed-Use*

- Create a new zoning designation for mixed-use buildings.
- Allow upper floor conversions between office and residential uses without requiring a zoning change.
- Mandate new commercial and mixed-use buildings be built to the lot line on commercial streets in the study area.
- Increase building height maximums for commercial and mixed-use developments to allow for four-story streetwall and five-story building height with upper level setbacks in the study area.
- Mandate ground-floor retail on Cass Avenue, Burlington Avenue, Quincy Street and other downtown streets undergoing commercial redevelopment.

#### *Residential*

- Increase density of residential districts in the study area by reducing minimum lot sizes and setback requirements and providing for adequate buildable area (ratio of lot to building) for all residential zones in the study area.
- Increase building height maximums for residential developments to allow for four-story streetwall and five-story building height with upper level setbacks in the study area.

#### *Parking*

- Reduce the on-site parking requirements for both residential and commercial uses in the study area.
- Allow further reductions for shared use lots.
- Set maximums for on-site parking in the study area.

#### *General*

- Create overlay zone for downtown area that incorporates the above changes.

#### **Use of Village Controlled Land**

- Offer the land vacated by the Village offices on Burlington Avenue just east of Cass Avenue for redevelopment as multifamily housing.

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- Make the Metra Station building a destination by using it for a complimentary use that will activate the station during non-commuter hours.
  - Design Village Hall to conform with this downtown TOD plan, specifically designing the parking lot to easily convert to ground-floor retail with deck parking above in the future.

## **Urban Design**

### *Appearance*

- Improve appearance of facades through a rebate program.
- Submit application for landmark designation for certain buildings in the study area to the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency.
- Improve water tank image by screening or painting them.
- Replace Cobra-head light fixtures with special lighting to Cass Avenue, Burlington Avenue, Quincy Street and other downtown streets undergoing commercial redevelopment.
- Design and implement streetscape scheme for the study area including plantings, trees, benches, trash receptacles, and drinking fountains.
- Develop building design standards with architectural review to assure the construction of “destination” quality architecture on high-visibility, high-image sites.
- Require minimum 75% glazed area on ground-floor storefronts on Cass Avenue, Burlington Avenue, Quincy Street and other downtown streets undergoing commercial redevelopment.
- Develop guidelines for downtown retail signage that balances variety and interest with appropriate scale, size, and sense of unity for the district.

### *Pedestrian Experience*

- Narrow street widths and add grooved pavement before and after crosswalks along Cass Avenue north and south of the tracks to slow traffic and make it easier to cross the street.
- Changes to infrastructure should be carefully designed and implemented to minimize negative impact on the retail and pedestrian environment.

## **Housing**

### *Broaden Market*

- Encourage the development of condominiums and townhomes rather than rental units in the study area by advertising this intention in developer RFPs.
- Make it easy for developers to build housing above retail in the study area
- Create a master plan for increasing downtown population by 2,000 residents over ten years.

## **Commercial**

### *Location of Retail*

- Create policies which encourage the orderly replacement of ground-floor service uses with retail uses on streets designated to become exclusively retail (likely Cass Avenue between Burlington Avenue and Irving Street and elsewhere).
- Market the convenience retail identified in the RTA survey (coffee shop, newsstand, dry cleaners, ATM, fast food, convenience, cards/gifts) for vacant spaces nearest to

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train station.

- Provide basic commuter services such as coffee, snacks, and newspapers. Ideally this should occur at a nearby store (such as currently exists) or be provided in the station by the same merchant.

### *Merchandising/Downtown Management*

- Fund a downtown manager and organization.
- Create a website to provide information and maps about downtown shops and service businesses, Metra and Pace service, and downtown events searchable by category.
- Evaluate the creation of a Special Service Area.
- Implement coordinated advertising programs for downtown businesses.
- Organize events such as a farmers' market and evening concerts coordinated with sidewalk sales or extended store hours to increase sales of downtown businesses.
- Improve retail displays and merchandising for shops.
- Market to capture commuter traffic by: adjusting hours of business for downtown retail, posting a map and directory of downtown businesses including hours in the Metra station, installing a display case at the train station to advertise local businesses, and offering discount coupons available at the ticket window or by showing Metra pass or ticket.
- Strategically market to attract grocery, apparel, home decorating, etc. shops either to occupy existing rental space or infill development.

## **Parking**

### *General—Parking management*

- Investigate shared parking between retailers and Metra.
- Implement and enforce time limits for commercial parking.

### *Commuter parking*

- Consider expanding parking along BNSF railroad right-of-way west of Cass Avenue and providing new r-o-w parking east of Cass Avenue (subject to BNSF approval).
- Re-stripe existing commuter lots to maximize number of spaces.
- Create new off-street parking, south of the tracks.

### *Commercial Parking*

- Redesign the rear yards of commercial buildings along Cass Avenue to increase the number of parking spaces for employees and shoppers if spaces are left over.
- Create safe, open-air or covered mid-block arcades to alleys along Cass Avenue between Burlington Avenue and Irving Street.
- Advertise and improve signage for existing municipal lots.
- Should parking demand exceed supply, construct parking decks with retail on the ground floor on sites identified on the Consensus Plan and/or Alternatives and allow joint Metra commuter use as appropriate.
- Restore on-street parking during rush hour on Cass Avenue south of the tracks.
- Educate business owners and employees on the adverse impacts of occupying on-street parking meant for shoppers.

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## **Circulation**

### *Auto*

- Make Quincy Street two-way between Cass Avenue and Lincoln Street.
- Discourage through traffic (using calming tools) and all-day on-street parking.
- Improve signal coordination to reduce unnecessary wait time for motorists at Cass Avenue crossing (note: this is currently in process).
- Construct vehicle overpass to create connections across railroad tracks either a few blocks east and/or west of Cass Avenue.

### *Pace*

- Evaluate transit usage for potential increase in bus service.
- Move Pace boarding area to the west to relieve congestion.
- Pace should review their routes south of the tracks to account for the increase of housing occurring in that area.
- Provide bus stop signage along Cass Avenue at Quincy Street, Burlington Avenue, Irving Street and Richmond Street to encourage commuter shopping (trip bundling). Buses currently stop for passengers at any intersection if it is safe. However, for those that don't ride frequently, signs indicating a stop and the schedule will provide confidence that service is available.

### *Pedestrian*

- Add mid-block crossings on Cass Avenue between Burlington Avenue and Irving Street to improve pedestrian access to both sides of the street.
- Improve pedestrian experience at rail crossing with better signage, landscape, walkways, lighting, and other elements.

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## ***APPENDIX 2: DEMOGRAPHIC OVERVIEW***

### *Introduction*

The Village of Westmont, Illinois has undergone a period of significant growth in its residential population. The Village's affordable housing stock, quality schools, and friendly small town atmosphere continue to attract new households; the total population has increased from a 1990 population of 21,402 to a 1999 population of 23,029. Local government leaders and an active civic community are committed to improving the already strong business and residential market. One aspect of their commitment is Westmont's participation in the Illinois Main Street Program (represented locally by Westmont Main Street), a program focused on revitalizing downtown business districts while preserving their historical and unique qualities.

This demographic overview will begin by comparing the one-mile radius around downtown Westmont (centered at Cass Avenue and the train station and referred to as the "Primary Trade Area") to the three- and five-mile radius areas surrounding the downtown. Due to the similarities between the three- and five-mile radius areas, they will collectively be referred to as the "Secondary Trade Area." Comparisons will also be made with DuPage County data. Demographic data was obtained from the 1990 U.S. Census, Claritas, Inc., and other primary and secondary sources. All information not otherwise specified is 1990 U.S. Census Data.

### *Overview of Downtown Westmont*

The commuter rail station west of Cass Avenue forms the center of downtown Westmont and creates a village green which is lined on the north and the south sides with small retail shops and businesses. Located in one to three story structures, many businesses have been converted from residential uses. The east side of this "green" is anchored by the new Village Hall. The area includes over 120 businesses including professional services, small restaurants, a number of barber/ beauty shops and home decorating. Surrounding the business uses are older single-family homes—including those first built in Westmont—and a small number of rental properties. New residential development in Westmont has occurred in its southern and northern borders in the form of subdivisions and high density rental communities, while the housing stock downtown is characterized by small bungalows built in the 1950's and earlier.

The Westmont Metra station, located at the core of the downtown district, serves as a defining characteristic of downtown activity. The Metra station serves commuters traveling to downtown Chicago and nearby communities. The BNSF railroad also has a number of freight trains passing through at all hours of the day and night. A small park next to the station with a fountain and benches provides a pleasant space for residents to gather.

While the heavy commuter traffic on Cass Avenue can be daunting to pedestrians it also represents a great opportunity to bring commuters to local retailers. However,

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current conditions including lack of available parking and the real and perceived barrier of the railroad crossing has left the downtown fairly isolated. Downtown Westmont has no focal point or destination spot for Westmont residents besides the Metra station, which is primarily used during weekday rush hours.

### *Population and Household Characteristics*

The Primary Trade Area is currently home to almost 6,500 households.<sup>1</sup> Between 1990 and 1999 the population grew from 15,441 to 16,229, representing a 5 percent increase. Population growth in the Primary Trade Area, while positive, was slightly lower than the Secondary Trade Area. The slower growth in the Primary Trade Area is most likely attributed to a lack of land available for new housing development. In addition, twenty percent of households in the Primary Trade Area moved into their home prior to 1969, compared to 14-15 percent in the Secondary Trade Area.<sup>2</sup> This indicates a slightly higher concentration of long-term residents found in the Primary Trade Area. At the same time, a significant number of new residents are moving into the Village of Westmont, giving the Village a good mix of old and new residents.

### *Household Composition Profile*

- Sixty percent of households in the Trade Area are married families with children. Fourteen percent of persons in the Trade Area over the age of 65.
- Single person households make up seven percent of Trade Area households compared to five percent for the Secondary Trade Area.
- Twenty-eight percent of households are non-family (households with two or more non-related persons), similar to the Secondary Trade Area.
- The average household size is 2.55 persons, compared to 2.6 persons for the Secondary Trade Area and 2.85 persons for the County of DuPage as a whole.
- Slightly fewer minorities live in the Primary Trade Area than in the Secondary Trade Area. In 1990, the Trade Area population was 90.5 percent White non-Hispanic, 1.3 percent Black, 5 percent Asian and 3.1 percent of Hispanic Origin. The 1990 Secondary Trade Area population was 87.5 percent White non-Hispanic, 1.5 percent Black, 8 percent Asian and 3-3.7 percent of the population was of Hispanic origin.<sup>3</sup>

### *Income and Buying Power*

Westmont characteristically has a wider range of households in the middle and upper income categories than neighboring municipalities. While households in the Trade Area are predominantly middle and upper income, the percent of households earning \$150,000 or more is almost half that of the Secondary Trade Area. The median household income increased dramatically between 1990 and 1999 for the Primary Trade Area, from \$43,845 to \$65,337 for households and from \$50,967 in 1990 to \$74,836 in 1999 for families. In the Secondary Trade Area, the median household income grew from \$49,434 to \$72,500 in 1999. Families in the Secondary Trade Area have a 1999 median income of \$86,300.<sup>4</sup>



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Households in the Primary Trade Area and Secondary Trade Area have higher than average spending power and annually spend more per household on several consumer expenditure items compared to the national index.

### *Age Characteristics and Trends*

The Primary Trade Area and Secondary Trade Area have similar age characteristics. However, the Primary Trade Area has a slightly higher percentage of infants and school-age children. The 1999 median age for the Primary Trade Area is 38 years old. The housing stock in the Primary Trade Area has a greater number of “starter homes” affordable to young families with children.

Moderate change is projected in the percentage of persons in each age group compared to the total population. However, the number of persons in certain age groups will undergo some significant shifts. For instance, a 102 percent increase in persons over the age of 85 (from 242 to 489 persons) is projected for the Primary Trade Area between 1990 and 2004, compared to a 45.5% increase for the Secondary Trade Area. This may indicate a need for more goods and services geared toward an elderly, less mobile population.

The number of children under the age of five will drop in both the Primary Trade Area and Secondary Trade Area, as will the number of persons between 25 and 34. The main similarity is that the number of persons in the age groups 45-64 will increase in both trade areas. These trends show an increase in families reaching the empty-nester stage and planning for retirement. It may also indicate a need to attract more young families to the area to provide sufficient market demand for single-family houses as the elderly seek other housing options.

### *Housing characteristics*

The Primary Trade Area has a strong base of owner occupied homes. In the most immediate station area (1/2 mile radius) owner-occupied housing units make up 76 percent of the total number of units (2,129), 22 percent of units in 1990 were renter-occupied, with the remaining 2 percent classified as vacant.<sup>5</sup> Of the 6,180 housing units in the Primary Trade Area, 69 percent are owner occupied units, and 29 percent are renter-occupied.<sup>6</sup> Vacant units accounted for fewer than four percent of the housing stock. The Secondary Trade Area has slightly higher rates of owner-occupancy (73%), fewer rentals (23%) and a four percent housing vacancy rate.

Housing in the Primary Trade Area has a greater median age and slightly lower median value than the Secondary Trade Area, characteristic of the diversity of price ranges and sizes of single-family homes available in Westmont. Over half of all housing units were built prior to 1960, with the majority built between 1950 and 1959. In the Secondary Trade Area, the majority of homes were built between 1970 and 1979. The median home value in the Primary Trade Area in 1990 was \$131,800 compared to \$156,480 and \$154,642 for the Secondary Trade Area. Current sales prices for single-family attached homes range from \$98,900-

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\$160,000 for two bedroom homes, \$106,000-\$325,000 for three bedroom homes, and \$160,000 to \$525,000 for four bedroom homes.

The most common type of housing unit in the Primary Trade Area is the single-family detached unit, followed by structures with between 10-19 units. The Secondary Trade Area has a higher percent of attached units—including townhomes and condominiums. Thus, housing options by type (i.e. rental or owner units) in the Primary Trade Area are slightly more limited than in nearby municipalities. However, since 1998 over 200 new homes have been developed, mainly in subdivisions, on the north and southern borders of Westmont. Condominium developments and two assisted living facilities are in the planning stages for the Primary Trade Area, adding to the diversity in housing types available in Westmont.<sup>7</sup> These trends will provide a greater number of options for the aging population in Westmont, and may attract new residents to Westmont's more moderately priced market.

### *Occupations and Employment*

The Village of Westmont has a mix of old and new employers; a third of the 51 industrial firms have been in Westmont over forty years. Major employers include Goss Graphics, Ty Inc., Oak Brook Hills Hotel and Conference Center, and Maynet-Schultz Electronics. The number of new commercial businesses has been steadily rising, most recently with the completion of Ty Inc. Unemployment in DuPage County is the lowest in the six county metropolitan area, reported at 2.7 percent in 1998<sup>8</sup>.

The 1990 Census reported that persons in the Primary Trade Area are most likely to be employed in Technical/Sales/ Administrative Support occupations (37.1 percent) followed by Managerial/ Professional Specialties (34.8 %), Precision/Craft/ Repair (10%) and Service Occupations (9.4%). In the Secondary Trade Area, a higher percentage is employed in Managerial/ Professional Specialties (40.4%), followed by Technical/Sales and Administrative Support (37%), Service Occupations (7%) and Precision/Craft and Repair (7%). Eleven percent of workers in the Primary Trade Area take public transportation to work compared to 10.5 percent and 8.9 percent in the Secondary Trade Area. The largest group of commuters in the Primary Trade Area and Secondary Trade Area drive alone to work (74-77 percent); the second largest group takes some form of public transportation (11 percent). Most persons faced a commute time of between 20 and 40 minutes with only ten percent commuting 60 minutes or more.

### *Summary*

Westmont is a growing community, with over 200 new homes built in the last three years.

The population of the Primary Trade Area and the Secondary Trade Area is aging, creating opportunities for addressing changing lifestyle needs with new housing

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development.

The household and family income in the Primary Trade Area and the Secondary Trade Area is solidly middle income and increasingly affluent.

Westmont has a mix of affordable entry-level single-family and high-end residences, making the area attractive to households at various income levels.

1. *Claritas Inc.*
2. *1990 U.S. Census*
3. *Ibid.*
4. *Claritas, Inc.*
5. *Ibid.*
6. *1990 U.S. Census*
7. *Westmont Building Department*
8. *Northeastern Illinois Planning Commission*



**SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats) Report**

**Strengths**

- Located at three highways and near Chicago
- Walkable downtown
- Affordable housing / cost of living
- Diverse population in age and socio-economic status
- People are friendly
- Population is growing
- Residents stay entire life
- Downtown taverns provide a measure of night life

**Weaknesses**

- “Looks sterile” not inviting
- No “boutique look” in downtown shops
- Architecture not at all uniform; (and no one around to monitor it as zoning allows it)
- Lack of willingness to invest in building improvements
- “Uninviting” appearance of some downtown businesses
- No night life (for example there was a movie theater but it has since closed)
- No concentration of ground-floor retail in any particular area; too much service in downtown businesses; Insufficient overall retail
- Marketing deficiency (focus is not on downtown); No institution to promote downtown business
- Downtown businesses do not attract potentially loyal Village customers
- “Where to put new downtown business?” (lack of vacancies)
- Chamber of Commerce is too expensive
- Nearby shopping malls attract most interesting business
- Poor variety of businesses (restaurants, for example)
- Lack of parking for business
- Some businesses leave for Downers Grove
- Difficult to cross tracks (particularly going north)
- Downtown retail not part of a “shopping circuit”
- No downtown ‘signature events’
- Low density - “Lack of draw”
- Lack of downtown bounds

**Opportunities**

- More downtown retail, dining
- Downtown housing of greater density
- Define boundaries of downtown
- Westmont residents as stronger / more loyal patrons
- Organized promotion of downtown, possibly by chamber
- Establish a personal link to downtown business
- Vacant spaces between buildings are potential sites
- Automobile traffic - good for business
- Mid-block pedestrian crossings
- Surrounding communities to draw from
- Big attraction (e.g., theater/festivals)
- Expand scope of study (to 63rd St.)
- Above-grade RR crossing
- Capacity to do downtown promotion
- New Town Hall
- Development possibilities south of tracks
- Tourism center
- Promote downtown

**Threats**

- Grade crossing RR tracks
- Pedestrian crossings and rush hour
- Traffic using downtown as a through-route
- Major downtown construction (discourages / interrupts business)
- No reason to spend all day downtown
- Competing regional shopping; current construction in Downers Grove could induce businesses to move
- Pedestrians unwilling to cross tracks (“South of Tracks” mentality)
- Appeal of other downtowns
- Some poorly maintained businesses

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## APPENDIX 4: IMAGE PREFERENCE SURVEY

**First Impressions:** The character of a city, town or village upon arriving at its center.

### 3 Lowest-Rated Images:

1.



**Adjectives:** barren; ugly; like a wasteland  
**Characteristics:** no pedestrians; little automobile traffic; nearly-empty parking lot; no trees; blank wall

2.



**Adjectives:** unattractive; barren; no character; unwelcoming  
**Characteristics:** parking lot; electrical wires; no pedestrians

3.



**Adjectives:** ugly; sterile; barren  
**Characteristics:** asphalt in the foreground; buildings not visible; featureless water tanks

### 3 Highest-Rated Images:

1.



**Adjectives:** friendly; quaint; human  
**Characteristics:** ground floor retail with service or apartments above; multistory buildings; well-maintained facades; on-street parking

2.



**Adjectives:** friendly; "get rid of tanks!"  
**Characteristics:** public space; benches; bike racks; planting; civic building

3.



**Adjectives:** warm; historic; quaint; has atmosphere  
**Characteristics:** traditional downtown train station; painted signage; masonry water tower;

**Civic / Feature Buildings:** The character of important buildings.

**3 Lowest-Rated Images:**

1.



**Adjectives:** tacky; ugly; "boo!"  
**Characteristics:** facade of garage doors set back from the street; adjacent parking lot; no barrier between street and sidewalk

2.



**Adjectives:** ugly; boring  
**Characteristics:** building set back from the street; adjacent garages; no on-street parking or other signs of activity

3.



**Adjectives:** cold; sterile; awful  
**Characteristics:** building set back from street; few windows; unadorned building facade

**3 Highest-Rated Images:**

1.



**Adjectives:** inviting; charming; historical; modern  
**Characteristics:** masonry building; comfortable amount of windows; neo-traditional character

2.



**Adjectives:** wonderful; historic  
**Characteristics:** 4-stories; limestone; set back from street; well-kept landscaping

3.



**Adjectives:** charming; modern  
**Characteristics:** large arched entrance; pitched roofs; differently scaled aspects

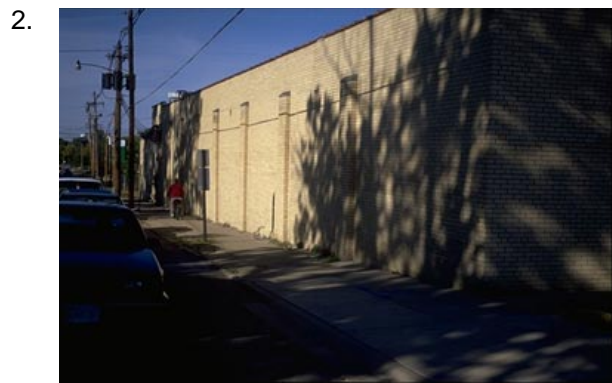


**Pedestrian Realm:** The pedestrian amenities of downtown streets.

**3 Lowest-Rated Images:**



**Adjectives:** uninviting; seedy; rundown; scary  
**Characteristics:** poorly-maintained sidewalk; no pedestrian activity; adjacent vacant lot; uninteresting storefronts; plastic and neon signage



**Adjectives:** scary; uninviting; dangerous  
**Characteristics:** blank wall; few signs of life



**Adjectives:** terrible; lousy; strip mall  
**Characteristics:** building set behind parking lot; no sidewalk or on-street parking; single-story buildings

**3 Highest-Rated Images:**



**Adjectives:** inviting; wonderful; appealing; charming  
**Characteristics:** well-maintained storefronts; awnings; wide sidewalk; trees; on-street parking



**Adjectives:** inviting; beautiful; warm; shop and spend the day  
**Characteristics:** ground-floor retail; sidewalk trees; parallel parking; calm automobile traffic



**Adjectives:** fun; welcoming; inviting  
**Characteristics:** lively walk-in retail; attractive awning

**Storefronts:** Downtown commercial buildings.

**3 Lowest-Rated Images:**

1.



**Adjectives:** sterile; boring; tacky; no windows  
**Characteristics:** poorly-maintained facade; no windows on second floor

2.



**Adjectives:** poor; ugly; fixer-upper  
**Characteristics:** no inviting signs, awning or window display; poorly renovated

3.



**Adjectives:** ugly; "needs a window!"; "tear it down!"  
**Characteristics:** no windows or signs; small for a downtown storefront

**3 Highest-Rated Images:**

1.



**Adjectives:** pedestrian-friendly; attractive; clean  
**Characteristics:** large windows; contemporary signage; well-kept; name-brand appeal of national franchise

2.



**Adjectives:** pedestrian-friendly; clean; quaint  
**Characteristics:** trees and street lamps on brick sidewalk; two-story building

3.



**Adjectives:** appealing; inviting; clean; historic  
**Characteristics:** two-story historic building; ample windows; tree on sidewalk



**Housing:** The scale and character of various single-family and multi-family houses and apartments.

**3 Lowest-Rated Images:**

1.



**Adjectives:** sterile; tomb; “looks like air-conditioner”  
**Characteristics:** no windows on street; little landscaping

2.



**Adjectives:** too big; dormitory  
**Characteristics:** high-rise; “cookie-cutter” appearance; no sense of scale; completely unadorned

3.



**Adjectives:** factory-like; dated but has potential  
**Characteristics:** car in the foreground; storefronts have no awnings or signs

**3 Highest-Rated Images:**

1.



**Adjectives:** attractive; modern  
**Characteristics:** 3-story dense apartment; well-landscaped; large windows; overhanging roof

2.



**Adjectives:** unique; has character; “Wrigleyville”  
**Characteristics:** 3-story masonry apartments; bay windows; slight setback from sidewalk; abundant facade details

3.



**Adjectives:** mixed-use; friendly; pretty  
**Characteristics:** 3-story downtown apartments over retail; proximity to shopping; historicist facade

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## **APPENDIX 5: ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE**

As with most older communities, Westmont’s downtown is a vintage resource that is mostly unappreciated. While many of the buildings may appear outdated, this is often due to long-time accretions and modifications that masks a high level of character and detail that is very hard to build today.

These buildings are a valuable resource for downtown redevelopment. Their most important strength lies in how they work together to help create a sense of community through their physical qualities: a continuous street wall; similar materials and detailing; repetitive elements such as storefronts and doorways; etc.

### ***Strengths***

As a collection of buildings they compose a pedestrian realm that has good strengths and surmountable weaknesses. Key among the strengths is the level of simple and yet lively architectural detail. Many are of brick with stone detailing. Storefronts often include large panes of plate glass combined with textured glass transoms. Building setbacks are relatively uniform contributing to a walkable street. Buildings nearest the center of the downtown (Cass and the tracks) tend to be older and have a charm that newer structures and those that have been extensively remodeled usually cannot match.

### ***Weaknesses***

The weaknesses in this collection tend to be superficial – literally. Elements added over the years to “modernize” or repair facades often degrade the character of individual buildings and bring down the overall architectural character of the street. Fortunately, these changes are often relatively inexpensive to undo. Other buildings present greater challenges. Many of the newer (post 1960) developments offer few rewards to the pedestrian. They have blank walls and/or high windows, large parking lots in front, and seem designed to avoid contact with the street. Because most of these developments are newer and larger, we can expect that substantial change will not occur for many years. In the meantime, they could be improved through careful landscape and other treatments, and modifications should be made in the zoning code to ensure that their replacement will conform to a higher standard when the



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time eventually arrives.

### **Photo Log**

The following photo log documents the streets in the central downtown area. Buildings of exceptional character – those that might have priority for facade rehabilitation – are marked with an asterisk (\*). Note that this is a preliminary assessment of architecturally valuable character. A full assessment should be commissioned in conjunction with development of a facade improvement program.



West side of Cass Ave., north of Burlington Ave.

(1 of 2)



West side of Cass Ave., north of Burlington Ave.

(2 of 2)



East side of Cass Ave., north of Burlington Ave.



West side of Cass Ave., south of Burlington Ave.

(1 of 2)



West side of Cass Ave., south of Burlington Ave.

(2 of 2)



East side of Cass Ave., south of Burlington Ave.





North side of Burlington Ave., West of Cass Ave.



South side of Quincy Ave., west of Cass Ave.

## APPENDIX 6: MOST DESIRED USES

<b>Most Desired Commercial Uses Around Westmont Station*</b> (ranked in order)		
<i>Type of Store</i>	<i>Number of each store type on "Main Street"</i>	<i>Number convenient to Metra (w/ in 1 block)</i>
1. Coffee Stand	2	2
2. ATM	1	0**
3. News Stand	1	1
4. Fast-food Restaurant	8	2
5. Convenience Store	3	0
6. Drug Store	1	1
7. Dry Cleaner	4	1
8. Cards/Gifts Shop	1	2
9. Grocery	0	0
10. Bank	2	0
11. Restaurant	5	0
12. Auto Repair Shop	2	2
13. Video Rental	0	0
14. Gas Station	2	0
15. Hardware Store	2	1
Source: July 13, 1999 RTA Survey at the Westmont Station		
According to Local Economic Impacts in Commuter Rail Station Areas, December 1994, camiros, ltd. and Metra, the other five popular commuter business choices are Beauty/Barber, Bakery/Donut Shop, Day-care Center, Florist, and Bookstore.		

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Many of the recommendations made in this report will require large funding commitments and technical assistance. The following list of tools and funding sources can be explored to aid in the implementation of this TOD plan:

### **City of Chicago Landscape Ordinance, and Strip Mall Ordinance**

*City of Chicago, Department of Planning and Development, (312) 744-4190*

### **City of Austin, TX Urban Design Guidelines and TOD ordinance**

*Contact: Greg Gernsey, Zoning Officer, City of Austin (512) 499-2387 web: [www.ci.austin.tx.us/development](http://www.ci.austin.tx.us/development)*

### **Experience Illinois (Pilot Project) Illinois State Treasurer's Office**

Loan Program for tourism development, historic preservation, or community enhancement

*Contact: Illinois Treasurer's Office (217) 557-2673*

### **Historic Tax Credits**

Incentives are given to taxpayers that contribute to the preservation of historic buildings by rehabilitating them. The credits are available for the rehabilitation of both income-producing historic properties and owner-occupied historic residences. State and federal tax credits may be used to reduce income taxes. An owner of a potentially "certified historic structure" or a lessee with a lease term of 27.5 years for residential property and 39 years for a nonresidential property may qualify for tax credits. Buildings must be either 1) Listed individually or potentially eligible to be listed as "certified historic structures" on the National Register of Historic Places, 2) Located within and contributing to a National Register Historic District, and/or 3) Located within and contributing to a local historic district certified by the National Park Service.

*Contact: Illinois Historic Preservation Agency, Springfield, IL*

### **DuPage County/ HUD -Community Development Block Grant program**

Neighborhood infrastructure and other public works projects; Types of infrastructure funded include sanitary sewers, water mains, street improvements, play ground improvements and sidewalks. Qualifying neighborhoods are those that meet HUD standards for a low income neighborhood (using income limits from the last census). Applicant cycle for Fiscal Year 2001 starts in the Fall.

*Contact: Mary Keating, DuPage County Community Development Department (630) 682-7543*

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## **Federal Home Loan Bank Community Investment Program (CIP)**

The Community Investment Program (CIP) is a tool for community oriented portfolio lenders. Funds are made available to member banks at below market rate to be invested in community development projects at favorable financing rates. For-profit and non-profit developers can apply for CIP funds through a Federal Home Loan Bank member bank. Project must be located in a geographic area with at least 51% of residents @ or below 80% AMI; or at least 51% of new full or part-time employees will have incomes @ or below 80% AMI.

**Contact: Federal Home Loan Bank of Chicago 312-565-5824**

## **Illinois Department of Transportation**

The Illinois Department of Transportation identifies and outlines improvement projects, funding and scheduling for implementation through the State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) every three years. The STIP is a culmination of the entire state's local Transportation Improvement Plans.

**Contact: District 1 IDOT Office (McHenry, Lake, Cook, DuPage, Will and Kane) (847) 705-4000**

## **Illinois Department of Transportation--HIGHWAYS/GRADE CROSSING PROTECTION**

Funds are available for two types of improvements: (1) railroad safety to reduce deaths and accidents at grade crossings; and (2) high hazard safety to reduce the severity and number of accidents being experienced at spot locations. These funds may also be used with or without federal aid systems. Grants are made based on merit and need. Local governments are required to provide a 10% match. Counties and Municipalities are eligible.

**District 1 IDOT Office (McHenry, Lake, Cook, DuPage, Will and Kane) (847) 705-4000**

## **Illinois Department of Transportation--HIGHWAYS/HIGH-GROWTH CITIES ASSISTANCE**

Financial assistance provided to cities over 5,000 in population which have experienced above normal population growth (> 5 % from 1980 to 1989). Municipalities are eligible.

**Contact: IDOT Division of Highways, (217) 785-5011**

## **Illinois Department of Transportation--HIGHWAYS/TOWNSHIP BRIDGES**

Funds are used to construct bridges 20 feet or more in length for the safe transportation of school children, the movement of agricultural equipment and products, rural mail routes, and the traffic needs of the general public. Funds are allocated to each eligible road district based on the total township mileage. Towns must levy a .08 percent road and bridge tax to qualify for allocation.

**Contact: District 1 IDOT Office (McHenry, Lake, Cook, DuPage, Will and Kane counties) (847) 705-4000**



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## **Illinois Department of Transportation--Illinois Transportation Enhancement Program**

Illinois Transportation Enhancement Program (ITEP) is to allocate resources to well-planned projects that provide and support alternate modes of transportation, enhance the transportation system through preservation of visual and cultural resources and improve the quality of life for members of the communities. ITEP requires communities to coordinate efforts to develop and build worthwhile projects in a timely manner. Project areas include landscaping and scenic beautification.

**Contact: Traci Sisk or Steve Ponder at (800) 493-3434**

## **Illinois Department of Transportation--RAIL/RAIL PASSENGER**

Railroad station improvement assistance is provided to local governments (counties or municipalities) for rehabilitating or constructing new rail passenger stations. The Department works with local governments to extend existing Amtrak service and to provide rail passenger services in areas that do not receive Amtrak basic service. State assistance is paid directly to Amtrak for operations subsidies.

**Contact: Dep't of Transportation Bureau of Railroads (217) 782-2835**

## **Surface Transportation Program (STP) and Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement (CMAQ)**

This program is federally funded, authorized by the Intermodal Surface Transportation projects that reduce automobile emissions.

**Contact: Tom Murtha, Chief of the CMAQ program at (312) 793-3474**

## **The Transportation Improvement Program**

The Transportation Improvement Program is the mechanism by which transportation infrastructure projects are prioritized to receive funds from federal and state sources. Northeastern Illinois' long-range transportation plan, the 2020 Regional Transportation Plan (2020 RTP), is implemented through the TIP. Funds assessed for projects in the TIP include CMAQ, STP, Demonstration Projects, Congestion Relief, Urban Access and Mobility Projects, Transportation and Community System Preservation (a pilot program to "develop strategies that use transportation investments to build livable communities," ) and Interstate Discretionary funds. Any transportation projects wanting access to these funds must go through the process of being included in the TIP. The process begins with presenting potential projects to the Council of Mayors.

**Contact: Michelle Dick, DuPage County Planning Liaison for the Council of Mayors**

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## **Illinois Development Finance Authority--DEBT FINANCING ASSISTANCE**

The Local Government Financing Assistance Program assists units of local government with financing capital improvement projects. Any unit of local government that is entitled to issue municipal debt under Illinois law is permitted to issue its debt through the Authority. The program provides local government units with an opportunity to achieve interest costs savings and to structure flexible loan repayment terms. Counties, Municipalities, Townships, Special Districts are eligible for this assistance which includes technical services only.

**Contact: IDFA, Suite 5310, Sears Tower, Chicago, Illinois 60606 (312) 793-5586**

## **Illinois Development Finance Authority--LOCAL GOVERNMENT LEASE PROGRAM**

This program represents an alternative method of selling tax-exempt bonds by entering into a lease purchase agreement through this state agency. Tax-exempt rates are available while avoiding the high cost of issuing a bond. The program is available to any community for any type of capital improvement or acquisition project.

**Contact: IDFA, Suite 5310, Sears Tower, Chicago, Illinois 60606 (312) 793-5586**

## **Illinois Development Finance Authority MicroLoan Program**

**Contact: Illinois Development Finance Authority (312) 627-1434**

## **Open Space Lands Acquisition and Development (OSLAD), Illinois Department of Natural Resources.**

Creates new local parks, further develops and improves park lands and preserves natural areas

**Contact: IDNR Division of Grant Administration, 524 S. Second Street, Rm. 315, Springfield, IL 62701 or call (217) 782-7461**

## **Tax Incremental Financing (TIF)**

TIF is a program that assigns future increases in property taxes from a designated area to pay for improvements specifically within that area. The program lasts for 23 years from the creation of the TIF district. A comprehensive analysis of the potential area is required. An improved area can be qualified and designated as either a "blighted area" or a "conservation area".

## **Women's Self Employment Project (WSEP)**

Micro Business loans for existing and start-up businesses. Start-ups must complete WSEP's 14 week Entrepreneurial Training Program. Existing businesses must be in business at least 2 1/2 years. Also have a Revolving Loan Fund program.

**Contact: WSEP Loan Department (312) 606-8255**

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## ***APPENDIX 8: WESTMONT STATION AREA SURVEY***

The Village of Westmont, Metra, and the Regional Transportation Authority (RTA) conducted a survey of Metra passengers boarding at the Westmont station on the morning of Tuesday, July 13, 1999. The purpose of the survey was to examine ways of improving pedestrian and parking access, and focus on strategies that address residential and commercial issues in the vicinity of the Westmont Metra station.

The survey focused on the morning rush-hour period and was intended to survey passengers boarding the eight (8) trains between 6:46 a.m. and 8:05 a.m. Approximately six (6) volunteers were strategically located around the station and administered the surveys to boarding passengers. After completing the surveys, passengers were asked to return the survey upon arrival in Union Station in Chicago.

Of the 825 surveys handed out, 340 were returned for 41.2% response rate. All of the survey responses were entered and evaluated using SPSS software. The following pages represent the question by question results from the survey along with any special notes pertaining to individual questions. A copy of the survey instrument is also attached.

If you have any questions regarding the results, please call Jay Ciavarella, RTA, at (312) 917-1429.

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