



# Village of Westchester Comprehensive Plan

Village of  
Westchester

Founded 1925



Adopted June 24, 2014

# Acknowledgements

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**Divine Providence Over 50 Club**

**St. Joseph High School**

**School District 92 1/2**

**Westchester Community Church**

## Partner Organizations

**AgeOptions**

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The Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP) is the region's official comprehensive planning organization. Its GO TO 2040 plan is helping the seven counties and 284 communities of northeastern Illinois to implement strategies that address transportation, housing, economic development, open space, the environment, and other quality-of-life issues.

See [www.cmap.illinois.gov](http://www.cmap.illinois.gov) for more information.

# Table of Contents

Acknowledgements	2
Chapter 1: Introduction	5
Chapter 2: A Vision for Westchester	11
Chapter 3: Future Land Use	15
Chapter 4: Improving Housing Diversity and Quality	23
Chapter 5: Revitalizing Commercial Areas	33
Chapter 6: Improving Transportation Options and Access	45
Chapter 7: Enhancing the Natural Environment	57
List of Figures	65

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# Chapter 1

## Introduction

In January 2011, the Village of Westchester applied to the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP) Local Technical Assistance (LTA) program for help with updating the Village's Comprehensive Plan, which was originally created in 1955. The Village saw an updated Comprehensive Plan as an opportunity to outline a vision for Westchester's future. Beginning in the fall 2011, CMAP staff began working with community stakeholders to develop the new Village of Westchester Comprehensive Plan outlined in this document.

The Village of Westchester is located approximately 13 miles directly west of downtown Chicago (Figure 1. Subregional location). Westchester's location provides easy access to interstate highways with Interstate 290 and Interstate 88 accessible via the Mannheim Road interchange and Interstate 294 accessible via the Cermak Road interchange. Figure 1 highlights the Village's neighboring communities — Hillside and Bellwood to the north, Broadview to the east, La Grange Park to the east and south, and Oak Brook to the west. The excellent roadway network provides residents and businesses with quick access to the region's airports, employment centers of Broadview, Chicago, Elmhurst, Maywood, and Oak Brook, and major regional destinations like Brookfield Zoo, the Salt Creek Greenway Trail, and the Illinois Prairie Path.

Westchester residents have chosen to make the Village home because of its prime location, solid housing stock, excellent elementary school system, and quality services. Westchester is also a community that is rapidly aging and has one of the highest proportions of older residents in the entire Chicago region. Over the next 10 to 15 years, the typical lifespan of a Comprehensive Plan, Westchester will need to address the unique challenges of making its community livable for its older residents, while also attracting new residents with different desires and needs.

The Village's housing stock overwhelmingly consists of single-family homes. Given broader national and regional shifts in housing demand and local factors such as the Village's growing senior population, a more diverse spectrum of housing choices for places like Westchester is necessary. Expanding the Village's housing options will also attract younger individuals and families to the area.

Westchester is surrounded by Hillside and Oak Brook to the north and west, respectively. These areas are home to popular shopping centers that attract residents throughout the region. Just south of Westchester lies LaGrange, whose downtown area widely attracts people seeking entertainment opportunities. Westchester, by contrast, has neighborhood retail areas that are frequented by Village residents. These areas are viewed as dated and in need of revitalization. In some cases, commercial areas struggle because existing spaces often do not meet the space and parking requirements for contemporary retail development. The commercial areas also lack streetscaping that make them appealing to potential shoppers. Westchester also does not have a downtown or Village center of its own, which was a concern frequently raised during the public engagement process by residents and Village leaders.



Westchester Boulevard.

Source: Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning.

The Village enjoys a prime location for drivers, in particular, with its arterial road system and proximity to major expressways that provide easy access to Chicago and the metropolitan area. The same system that allows easy vehicular access also creates challenges for pedestrians.

While Westchester has a strong sidewalk network that allows travel within its neighborhoods, it lacks a safe network that enables residents to traverse between neighborhoods. The incomplete pedestrian facilities also limit the ability of residents to access the several Pace bus routes that serve Westchester. Residents, both young and old, expressed the need for a more pedestrian-friendly Village.

Westchester residents enjoy a number of open space opportunities located within or directly outside the Village. The Westchester Park District maintains numerous active recreational sites. The Forest Preserve District of Cook County (FPDCC) lands border

the southern and eastern boundaries of the community. However, there are very few pedestrian and bike connections between the residential and its open areas.

In this Comprehensive Plan, Westchester residents, leaders, and stakeholders have created a vision for the future of Westchester. The Plan outlines that vision and serves as the framework by which Village officials will make deliberate decisions to plan for aging in place, attracting younger generations, and providing better health and vibrancy, particularly in the areas of land use, housing, commercial development, transportation, open space, and the natural environment. It should be used as a tool to help support residential neighborhoods and expand housing options, revitalize commercial areas, further economic development, encourage the development of a “Village Center,” and increase pedestrian-friendly opportunities in an effort to promote physical activity and improve the health of residents.



Neighborhood residential area in Westchester.

Source: Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning.

## What is a Comprehensive Plan?

A comprehensive plan outlines the vision of what a community desires to become as well as the necessary steps it will take to make that vision a reality. In addition to providing a well-defined framework for the preservation and enhancement of community assets, the plan guides development and investment decisions in the best interest of community residents. According to the Illinois Local Planning Technical Assistance Act (Public Act 92-0768), a comprehensive plan can have several components. The Village of Westchester's Comprehensive Plan will focus on land use, housing, economic development, transportation, natural resources, and public participation.

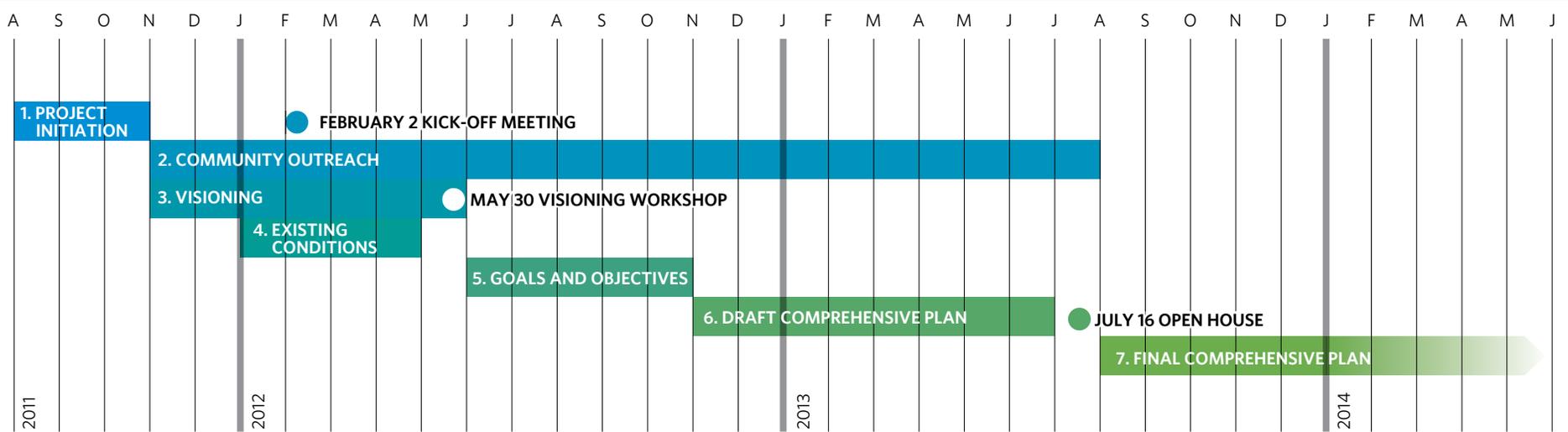
The basic purpose of a comprehensive plan is to improve the quality of life of a municipality. Typically, a comprehensive plan is written to provide guidance for a community to work towards its vision over a 10 to 20 year time period. Although the plan should be viewed as a long-term visioning document, it should also be thought of as a plan to be used daily by the community to assist in land use and development decisions. A comprehensive plan should also be flexible and adaptable to changing conditions. At any time the Village can update its Comprehensive Plan to match local needs, interests, or opportunities. It is recommended that the Village update its Comprehensive Plan every

five to ten years to keep it as accurate as possible. The Comprehensive Plan, representing the accumulation of 15 months of research, analysis, and public outreach activities, is organized in the following chapters:

- Chapter 1: Introduction
- Chapter 2: A Vision for Westchester
- Chapter 3: Future Land Use
- Chapter 4: Improving Housing Diversity and Quality
- Chapter 5: Revitalizing Commercial Areas
- Chapter 6: Improving Transportation Options and Access
- Chapter 7: Enhancing the Natural Environment

# Planning Process and Public Participation

Figure 2. Village of Westchester comprehensive plan timeline



The comprehensive planning process began in November 2011 and has included multiple steps. One of the most crucial components of this process has been public participation. The planning process was crafted with assistance from Village officials and was designed to include the input of Village residents (including seniors and youth), local leaders, business owners, and other stakeholders. The stages of the planning process can be found below (see Figure 2. Village of Westchester Comprehensive Plan Timeline).



Comprehensive Plan Community Workshop.

Source: Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning.

## Building Upon Previous Plans

Over the past decade, Village officials have led and participated in several planning initiatives. The topics in these studies range from flood mitigation to infrastructure planning to commercial revitalization. These initiatives include:

- Strategic Economic Development Plan for Commercial Corridors (Camiros, 2006)
- Strategic Planning Workshop for the Village of Westchester, Illinois (2006)
- Buxton Community ID Report (Buxton, 2008)
- Road Conditions Survey, 2011
- Sanitary Sewer Mitigation and Corrective Action Plan (V3 Companies, 2011)
- Strategic Plan Research Report (University of Illinois at Chicago College of Urban Planning and Public Affairs, 2011)
- Cermak-Mannheim Commercial Corridor Revitalization Plan (University of Illinois at Chicago College of Urban Planning and Public Affairs, 2012)
- Economic Development Committee Resident Survey (2012)
- Multi-Hazard Mitigation Plan (2012)
- Roosevelt Road Redevelopment Plan (University of Illinois at Chicago College of Urban Planning and Public Affairs, 2012)
- West Central Municipal Conference (WCMC) Bicycle Plan (2012)

The Comprehensive Plan builds upon these planning studies and highlights, where appropriate, recommendations and implementation strategies included in these plans.



Wolf Road Prairie Nature Preserve.

Source: Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning.

# Chapter 2

## A Vision for Westchester

Westchester residents, leaders, business owners, and institutional stakeholders articulated their vision for the community's future throughout the public participation process. This vision serves as the framework for the Comprehensive Plan and is outlined in subsequent chapters that will focus on future land use, housing, economic development, transportation, and natural environment.

Over the next two decades, the Village of Westchester will provide housing options for every segment of the population, including seniors and young professionals. Westchester's commercial districts will be revived and feature attractive architecture, as well as businesses and services that meet the needs of residents. Visitors and travelers through the community will immediately recognize that they are in the Village of Westchester because of the sense of place the community embodies. Residents including children, youth, adults, and seniors will have the ability to walk and bike from their homes to community and regional destinations in a safe and convenient manner. Trails will connect all open space opportunities within the Village, as well as those directly outside the Village, and will encourage more physical activity to improve the overall health of residents.

### **The Village of Westchester will be:**

- Livable, with a variety of housing options that meet the needs of the community's diverse population, ranging from young professionals to senior citizens.
- Economically competitive and vibrant, with revitalized and attractive commercial corridors consisting of businesses that enhance community character, meet residents' needs and desires, and attract visitors from around the region.
- Accessible, with safe and affordable transportation choices that conveniently move residents within the Village, as well as connect them to regional destinations.
- Healthy, with open space opportunities available to residents for physical activity, environmentally-friendly development and business practices, and services that meet the needs of the entire community.



Neighborhood Park.

Source: Jim Watkins.

## Organization of Recommendations

Chapter 3: Future Land Use presents recommended strategies for achieving the vision established by Westchester residents and stakeholders. The recommendations are categorized into four chapters, each of which represents a goal for the Village's future:

- Chapter 4: Improving Housing Diversity and Quality
- Chapter 5: Revitalizing Commercial Areas
- Chapter 6: Improving Transportation Options and Access
- Chapter 7: Enhancing the Natural Environment

Each chapter includes the following information:

- Vision statement defining the community's desires for that subject.
- A summary of the existing conditions and characteristics of the Village with respect to that particular sub-section.
- Recommended policies and programs to address identified issues and achieve the vision outlined earlier.
- Prioritization of strategies for implementation in the first two years. The prioritization of strategies is meant for the use of Village officials to clearly identify roles, assign responsibilities, designate resources, and monitor progress in completing tasks.



Comprehensive Plan Community Visioning Workshop.  
Source: Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning.



Neighborhood retail along Roosevelt Road in Westchester.

Source: Jim Watkins.

# Chapter 3

## Future Land Use

Westchester is built-out and predominantly residential in character. Given that the Village shares its boundaries with the FPDCC lands, cemeteries, and two golf courses, there are limited opportunities for annexation and new developments. Therefore, the Village should focus its efforts on reinvestment, primarily through redevelopment of vacant and underutilized parcels.

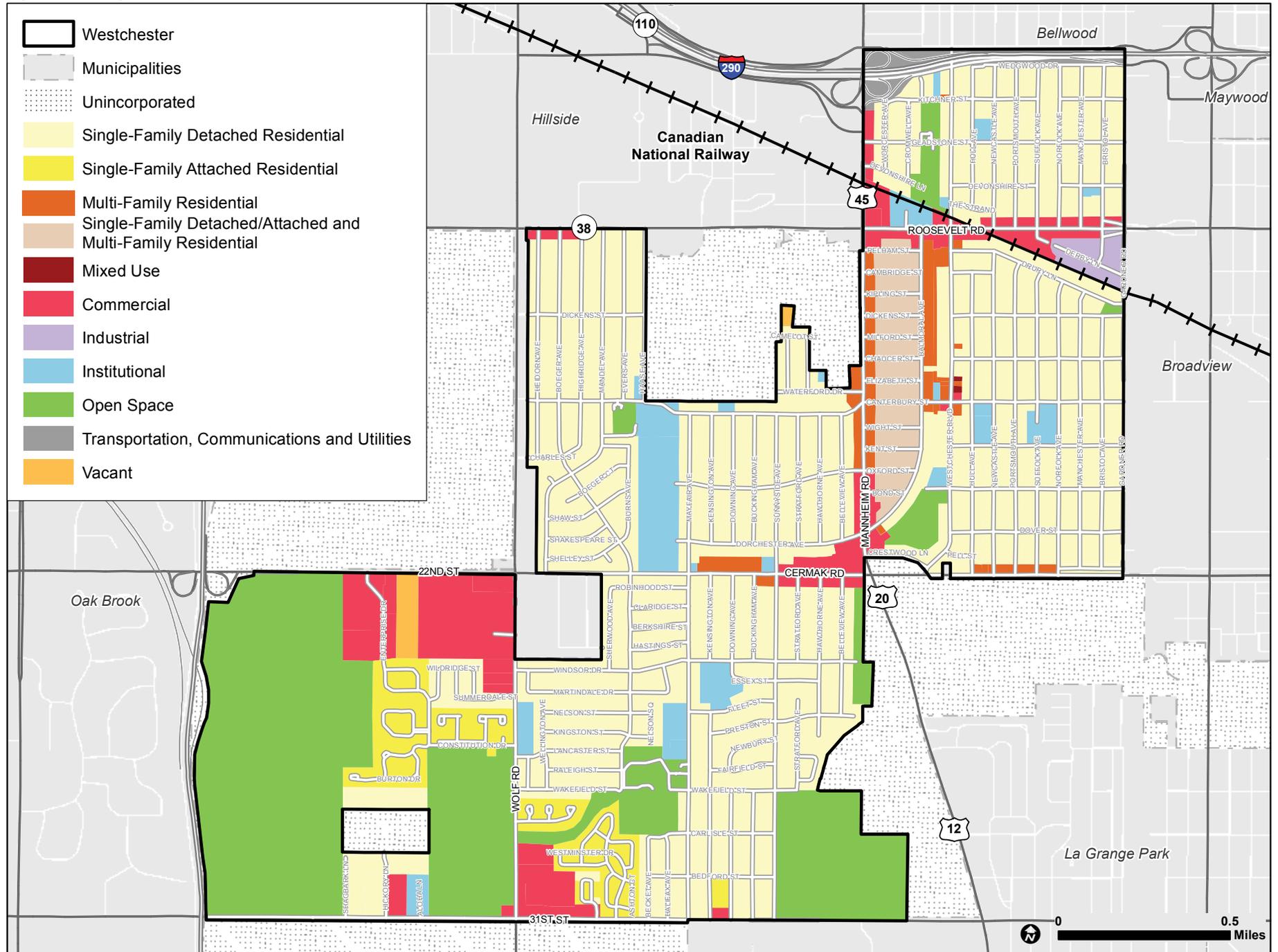
### Overview

It is worth noting that approximately two percent of land cover within the Village is comprised of multi-family development, concentrated along Balmoral Avenue, Mannheim Road, and Cermak Road (see Figure 3. Existing land use plan). There are also some multi-family buildings located along Westchester Boulevard. Additionally, there are different types of residential development just south of Roosevelt Road, east of Mannheim Road, and west side of Balmoral Avenue. This area makes up two percent of the Village's land area and consists of single-family detached, single-family attached and multi-family housing units.

In order to provide a greater variety of housing options that help retain existing residents and attract new ones, mixed-use developments should be encouraged. These developments should be well designed and attractive to a wide range of users including young professionals, first-time homebuyers, and senior residents who would like to remain in the community after retirement, also known as “aging in place.”

In addition to the small number of multi-family units in Westchester, there is very little land designated for mixed-use development. Mixed-use developments typically consist of buildings laid out in a compact, walkable, and aesthetic manner with a mix of uses either within the same parcel or within one building (e.g. retail uses on the first level and residential uses located above). Accommodating mixed-use developments within the community will help not only increase housing alternatives for residents, but also enhance overall quality of life by creating safe, walkable, and attractive developments such as the future Village Center. During the planning process, residents expressed their desire for a Village Center that could provide access to a variety of uses in one location.

Figure 3. Existing land use plan



Source: Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning, 2013.

Over the next two decades, the Village of Westchester should provide housing options for every segment of the population, including seniors and young professionals. Below is a table that summarizes the existing land use distribution in the Village (see Figure 4. Existing Land Use).

**Figure 4. Existing land use, acres, and area**

LAND USE	ACRES	AREA (PERCENTAGE)
Single-family detached residential	1596.0	48.5%
Open space *	527.6	16.0%
Single-family attached residential	420.0	12.8%
Institutional	298.0	9.1%
Commercial	256.1	7.8%
Multi-family residential	67.3	2.0%
Single-family attached/ detached and multi-family residential	64.4	2.0%
Transportation	33.3	1.0%
Industrial	16.3	0.5%
Vacant	11.3	0.3%
Mixed Use	0.6	0.0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>3290.9*</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

\*This calculation does not account for school parks and other open space areas that are classified as "residential" by Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning data.

Source: Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning Land Use, 2005.

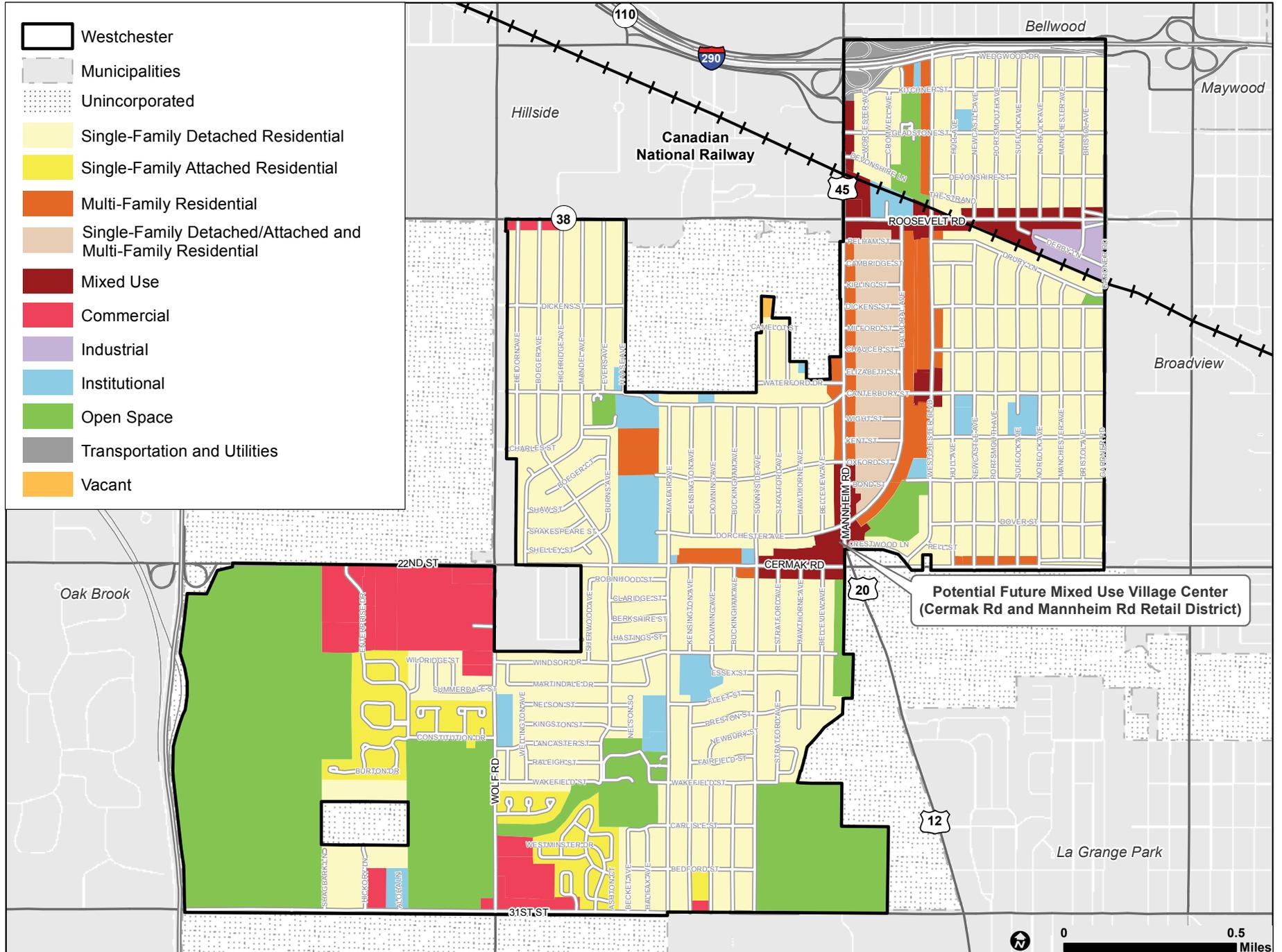
## Land Use Classifications

The Future Land Use Plan serves as the foundation of the Comprehensive Plan upon which all other elements are based. The purpose of the recommendations in this chapter is to translate the community's vision into physical terms by providing a general pattern for the location, distribution, and characteristics of future land uses in Westchester (see Figure 5. Future land use plan).

The future land use map will help the Village achieve the following land use and development goals:

- Preserve the character of established and historic residential neighborhoods.
- Explore pedestrian-friendly, mixed-use redevelopment along major arterials and in the proposed Village Center.
- Preserve open space and continue to provide community residents with recreational amenities that improve community health.

Figure 5. Future land use plan



Source: Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning, 2013.

The future land use map builds on existing development patterns of Westchester, which consist primarily of residential neighborhoods with supporting commercial and open space areas. The future land use map recommends infill development along Roosevelt Road and Cermak/Mannheim Road area. The mixed-use districts proposed at these locations will help create an attractive gateway along Roosevelt Road and a cultural and economic hub in the form of a future Village Center at Mannheim Road and Cermak Road (see Figure 6. Land use changes).

**Commercial (C):** Commercial uses include retail, office (including medical), personal service, and business service establishments. The following areas should serve the community's commercial demands:

- Roosevelt Road, between High Ridge Parkway and Wolf Road
- Westbrook Shopping Center Area at 31st Street and Wolf Road
- Kensington Avenue/Downing Avenue commercial area along 31st Street
- Westbrook Corporate Center area, including the strip mall at the corner of 22nd Street and Wolf Road as well as the conference center and hotel to the west

The Plan recommends that the strip of vacant land west of Westbrook Corporate Center be developed for commercial purposes to remain consistent with neighboring development.

**Institutional (IN):** The institutional land use includes educational, government, and religious uses. The Plan does not recommend any changes to the existing institutional uses in the Village as they seem to be functioning efficiently and serving the needs of the community adequately.

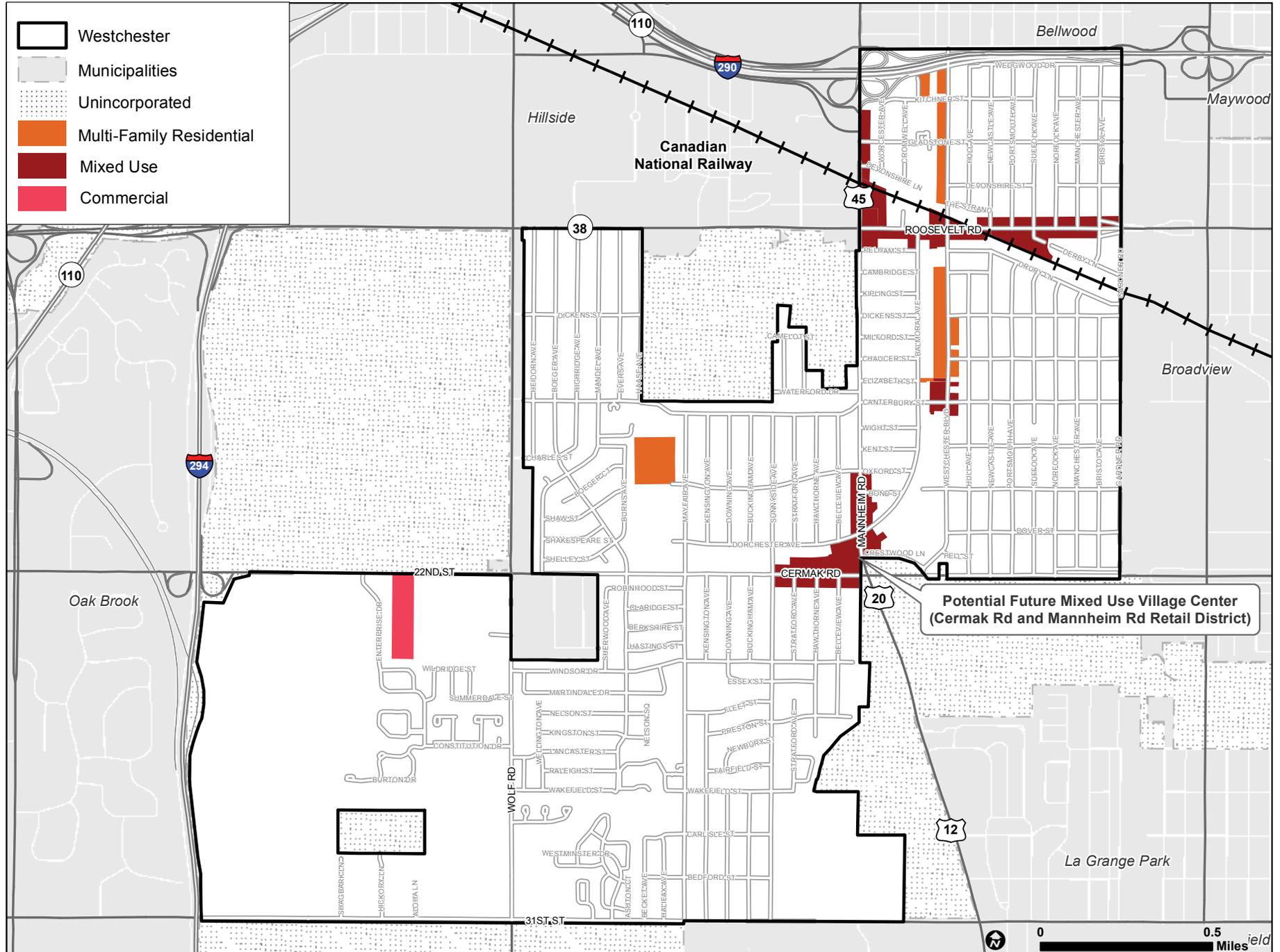
**Industrial (I):** Westchester has limited industrial parcels, roughly 31 acres that take up less than one percent of the Village's total land coverage. Given the Village's regional location and workforce characteristics, the Plan does not envision a growth in the Village's industrial sector in the future and recommends retaining the industrial area situated in the northeastern section of the Village. The industrial area is bordered by Roosevelt Road on the north and Gardner Road to the east, and the Illinois Central (IC) railroad to the south.



Industrial area in Westchester.

Source: Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning.

Figure 6. Proposed land use changes



Source: Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning, 2013.

**Mixed-Use (MU):** The Future Land Use Plan proposes the creation of a new mixed-use district at some locations. Mixed-use development will allow for various housing types and densities; reduce distances between housing, workplaces, retail businesses, and other destinations; encourage more compact development; strengthen neighborhood character; and promote pedestrian and bicycle friendly environments. The intent of the new classification is to provide current property owners and future developers with greater flexibility in establishing future use types. The mixed-use locations include:

- **Future Village Center:** The Mixed-Use Village Center is proposed for the area at Cermak and Mannheim Roads. This future development would accommodate retail, office, multi-family, public amenities, and community facilities as proposed for the site.
- **Roosevelt Road Corridor:** This classification would allow for a mix of uses along Roosevelt Road, between Mannheim Road on the west and Gardner Avenue on the east.
- **Westchester Boulevard corridor:** This area is a part of the historic fabric of the Nixon residential neighborhood and features two-story buildings with commercial uses on the first level and residential on the second floor.

**Multi-Family Residential (MFR):** The existing multi-family areas should remain along Mannheim Road, Balmoral Avenue, Westchester Boulevard, and Cermak Road. Multi-family residential units are proposed in the mixed-use districts including the future Village Center site, Roosevelt Road corridor, and Westchester Boulevard area. The plan also proposes multi-family development on the vacant site owned by St. Joseph High School west on Cermak Road.

**Single-Family Attached Residential (SFAR):** Single-family attached residential consists mainly of townhome developments and two-unit properties. A smaller, older single-family attached area is located north of 31st Street between Dickens Street and Elizabeth. Newer single-family attached residential areas, predominantly townhomes, are located in the southern sections of the Village.

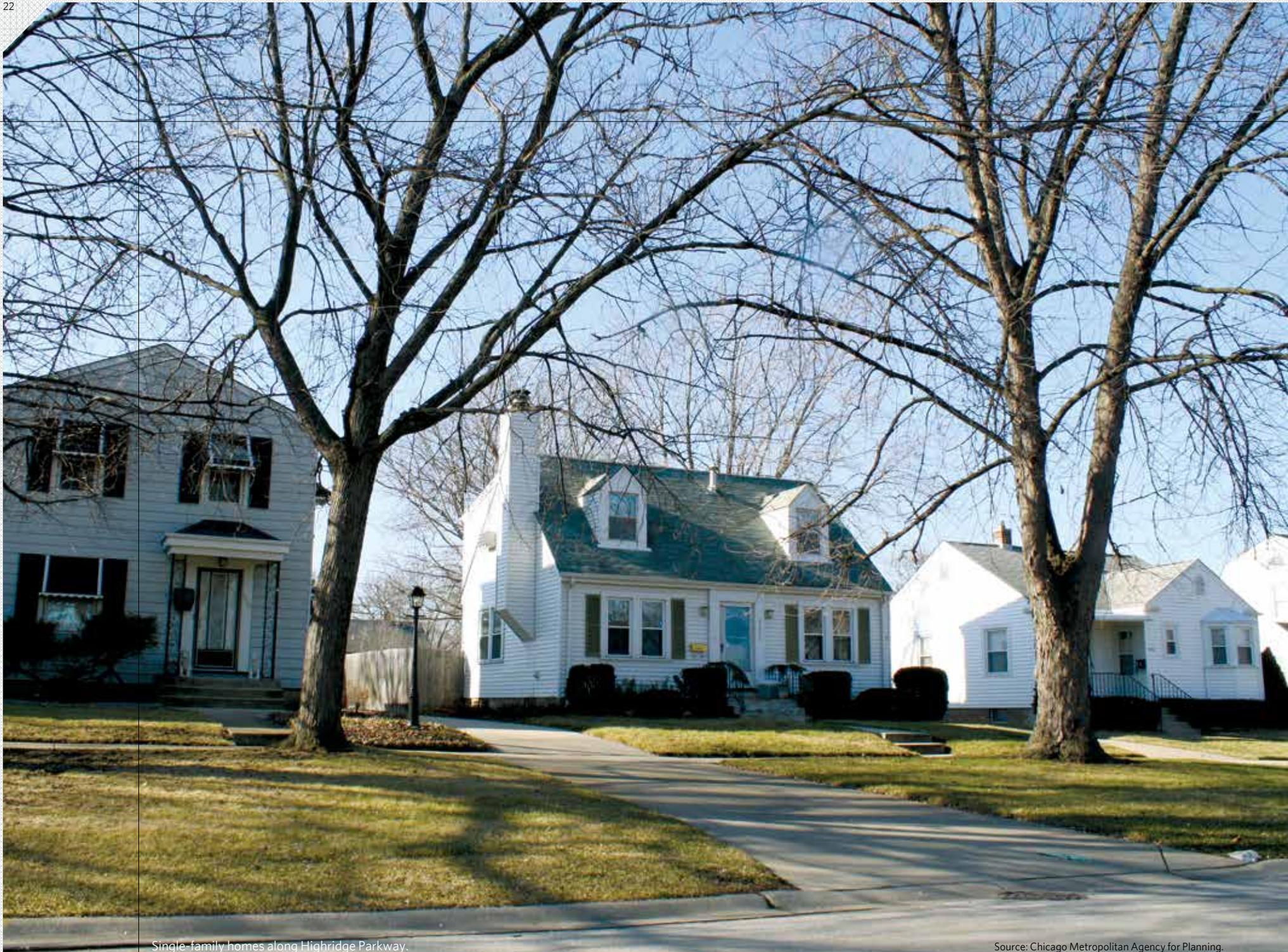
**Single-Family Detached Residential (SFDR):** Single-family detached residential is the primary land use that makes up the community's residential neighborhoods. This land use should remain in these areas while no new single-family detached residential areas are proposed.



Neighborhood mixed-use development along Westchester Boulevard.  
Source: Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning.

**Single-Family Attached/Detached and Multi-Family Residential (SFADMFR):** In the area just south of Roosevelt between Balmoral Avenue and Mannheim Road, there are single-family detached homes, single-family attached homes and multi-family units located either side-by-side or across the street from one another. In the future, this area should continue to allow this mix of development. The SFADMFR designation will be most suitable for this section of the Village, which is projected to be bordered by multi-family development.

**Open Space (OS):** Westchester has approximately 530 acres of open space, which makes up more than one-fifth of the community's total land area. The largest contributor to this number is the Chicago Highlands Golf Course. The Highland's property covers roughly 270 acres in the southwestern section of Westchester, spanning between Cermak Road and 31st Street. An additional 80 acres are dedicated to the Wolf Road Prairie Nature Preserve located at Wolf Road and Cermak Road. Other open spaces are dedicated to school playgrounds, community parks, and the FPDCC lands, which are located in the southeastern section of Westchester. All of this land should be preserved as open space.



Single-family homes along Highridge Parkway.

# Chapter 4

## Improving Housing Diversity and Quality

Westchester will be a livable community that offers a variety of housing options that meet the needs of the community's diverse population, ranging from young professionals to senior citizens.

### Key Issues and Challenges

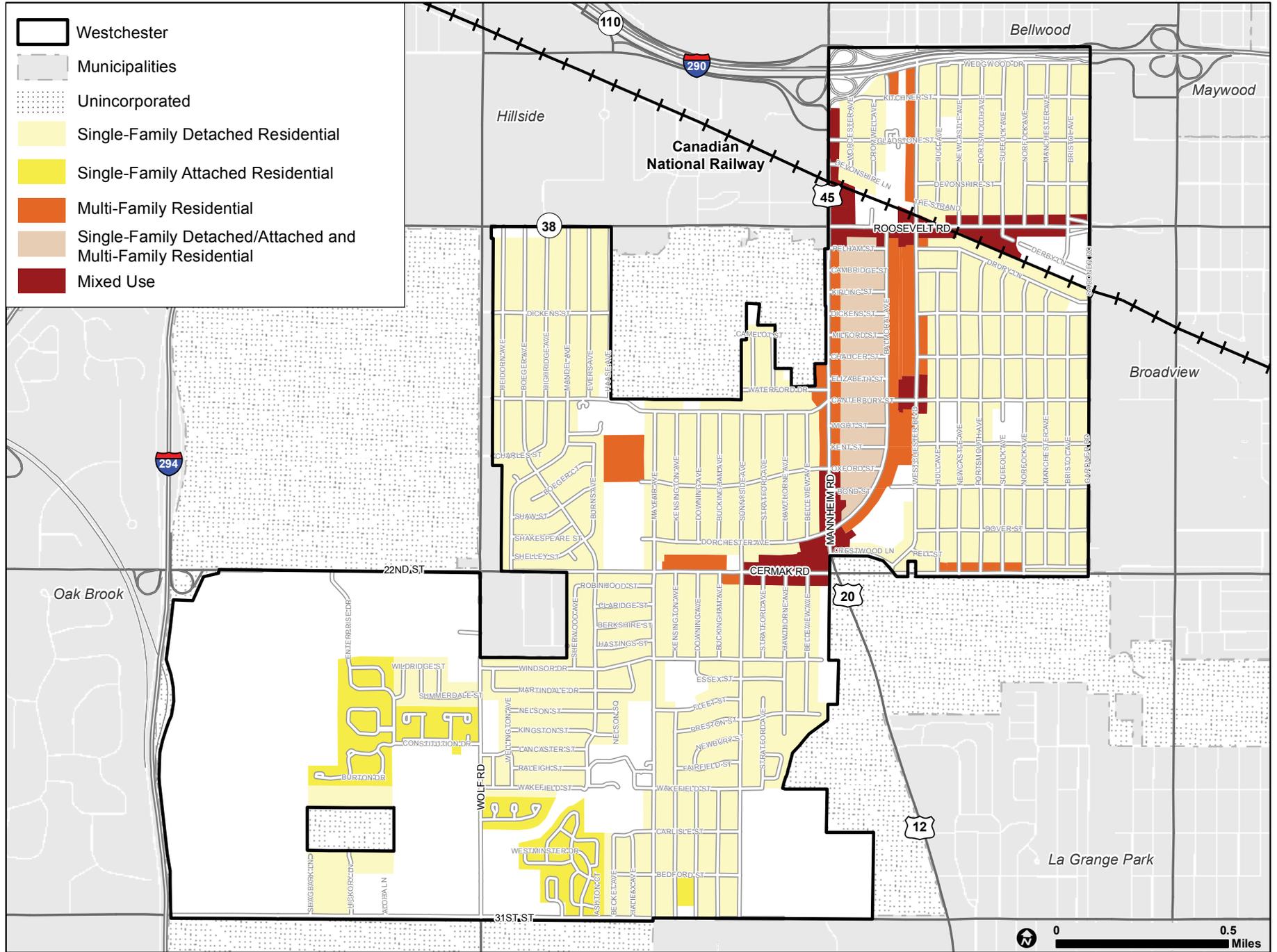
Westchester is primarily a residential community with more than half of its land dedicated to single-family homes (48.5 percent detached, 12.8 percent attached) and multi-family properties (2.0 percent). Given this characteristic, the Village will have to ensure that the housing needs of residents are met and housing conditions are maintained moving forward. A healthy housing stock will have direct and indirect impacts on all facets of the community's progress toward economic, environmental, or quality-of-life goals.

Westchester has a significant senior population. More than one-fifth of Westchester's population is 65 or older, which is nearly double that of the County (11.9 percent) and region (11.3 percent). The Village is home to approximately 3,700 residents aged 65 and older and an additional 2,500 residents aged 55-64. The median age of Westchester residents is over 46 years, significantly higher than the County's average of 35.3 years.

This growing demographic, which makes Westchester one of the oldest communities in the Chicago region, is currently underserved in terms of housing options. There are currently no senior housing developments in the community, although one such project has been proposed recently. The proposal includes 34 garden homes and 152 apartments on the northern 10-acre portion of the St. Joseph High School site. Currently, residents that are unable or unwilling to relocate out of the community are forced to remain in their single-family homes. During the public outreach process, senior citizens expressed the need for greater housing options to enable them to move within the community.

In addition to a lack of senior housing, there is a general lack of housing diversity to attract new residents. Westchester has a small number of rental units (only 8.4 percent as of 2010) compared to neighboring communities, and most rentals are old and without modern amenities. The average age of apartment complexes in Westchester is 43 years. The more updated and recently built homes are single-family units south of Cermak Road and townhomes on the west side of the Village. For the most part these units are large and expensive, making them unsuitable and unaffordable for young professionals and families looking to relocate to Westchester.

Figure 7. Residential areas plan



Source: Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning, 2013.

## Recommendations

A comprehensive set of housing policies and programs will allow Westchester to accommodate the needs of its residents across the demographic spectrum. The following strategies outlined in this section will help Westchester address two main challenges identified through the existing conditions analysis — creating a diverse housing stock and improving the appearance and condition of existing housing.

### Diversify housing stock

#### Mid-Term Strategy (3-5 years)

##### *Coordinate with neighbors to undertake a Homes for a Changing Region study*

Homes for a Changing Region is a planning initiative led by the [Metropolitan Planning Council \(MPC\)](#), [Metropolitan Mayors Caucus \(MMC\)](#), and CMAP that identifies specific local, regional, and state strategies to address imbalances in northeastern Illinois housing stock. These organizations are supporting the evolution of Homes for a Changing Region by encouraging neighboring communities to work together to develop interjurisdictional solutions to housing challenges and by using transparent community engagement strategies to develop these solutions. Communities near Westchester, including Bellwood, Berwyn, Forest Park, Maywood and Oak Park have participated in a Homes for a Changing Region study. These projects are typically multijurisdictional, crossing municipal boundaries, so the Village should identify other similar communities nearby that might be partners in a future Homes for a Changing Region study. The Village should reach out to CMAP, MPC, and MMC to discuss the possibility of a future Homes for a Changing Region analysis in collaboration with its neighbors.

#### Long-Term Strategy (5+ years)

##### *Continue to pursue Village Center redevelopment*

The Village should implement strategies outlined in Chapter 5: Revitalizing Commercial Areas to support development of the Village Center at Mannheim Road and Cermak Road. Multi-family units developed within the Village Center will further help diversify the housing stock and support economic activity in the Village Center.



Single-family homes in Westchester.  
Source: Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning.

#### Ongoing Strategy

##### *Collaborate with non-profits*

The Village should work closely with non-profit organizations such as the [Preservation Compact](#), [North West Housing Partnership](#), and West Cook County Housing Collaborative to support increasing owner-occupied and renter-occupied housing expansion in the region.



Single-family attached homes in the Westchester Club subdivision.

Source: Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning.

## Maintain/rehabilitate existing units

### Short-Term Strategy (1-3 years)

#### ***Coordinate with organizations to promote housing counseling services***

Westchester has been impacted by the economic downturn and housing crisis. To assist residents who are facing hardship with staying in their homes, the Village should coordinate with [Community and Economic Development Association \(CEDA\) of Cook County](#) and the [Mortgage Education Foundation](#) to promote the housing counseling services offered by these agencies. These services might require that residents meet certain income restrictions.

#### ***Support and promote energy efficient retrofits***

Retrofit programs make homes more energy efficient. In some cases, financing options spread costs over several years to allow the improvements to pay for themselves. Many programs provide free energy audits before making improvements, so that residents have a full understanding of the benefits of pursuing the program. The Village should consistently provide information on programs like [Energy Impact Illinois \(EI2\)](#) through Nicor Gas Rebates and the [Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program \(LIHEAP\)](#) administered by Proviso Township.

EI2 is a collaborative program, led by CMAP in partnership with Nicor Gas and ComEd aimed at helping residents, businesses, and non-profits reduce energy use in their buildings. The program would allow Westchester residents to be eligible for rebates up to 70 percent cost savings, capped at \$1,750, on air sealing and attic insulation, as well as have access to low-interest loans from various partners to renovate their homes and make them more energy efficient in the process. Examples include low-interest loans from GreenChoice Bank for energy efficient retrofits and discounts on home improvements recommended by a certified energy auditor.

Information about these retrofit programs should be displayed on the Village's newly redesigned website as well as in printed format at Village Hall, Park District facilities, and the public library. As a first step, Community Development Department officials should reach out to CMAP and set up presentations with the Plan Commission, Citizens Advisory Board, Economic Development Committee, and Village Board to learn more about the EI2 program.

#### ***Incorporate universal design principles in building codes***

As defined by the American Planning Association, universal design is a building code standard that promotes accessibility, safety, flexibility, functionality, simplicity, and comfort without compromising aesthetics of space. One of the key elements of universal design is visitability. As the term suggests, visitability specifically refers to the most basic features of a home that would allow a person with a physical impairment access, such as through a door way, along hallways, and in/out of the bathroom. The Village's Community Development Department should work with residents who wish to make physical improvements to their homes, such as the installation of grab bars in bathrooms, widening of doors to allow wheelchairs to fit through, and other options to increase their accessibility. These improvements could be done through a matching grant program or through the provision of information to residents through home owners associations and property managers. The Village should refer to the [Village of Bolingbrook's Visitability Ordinance](#) and the [City of Naperville's Visitability Standards](#) for new homes as models for such initiatives.

### Mid-Term Strategy (3-5 years)

#### ***Provide landlord education and training***

Approximately eight percent of Westchester's housing stock is renter-occupied. Additionally, the economic downturn's impact on the housing market has resulted in a growing number of owner-occupied housing units being converted to rental units. The Village of Westchester should offer workshops for these landlords about property maintenance and code compliance. These education and training sessions would give the Village an opportunity to set expectations with landlords. The workshops would also benefit landlords who do not have much experience in this role. Non-profit organizations such as MMC and Preservation Compact could serve as a resource for landlord education and training. The Village should reach out to MMC and the Preservation Compact to set up informational and educational sessions with property managers and landlords in the community.

### **Long-Term Strategy (5+ years)**

#### ***Explore creation of voluntary Crime-Free Housing Program to educate landlords***

In order to maintain the quality of rental housing in the Village and discourage illegal activity that negatively impacts residents, owners, and managers of rental units, the Village's Police and Fire Departments should explore the creation of a Crime-Free Housing Program. Due to the fact that Westchester is a non-home rule community, the program will be strictly voluntary for landlord participation.

To initiate the program, the Village will designate a law enforcement official to participate in a 24-hour training program to be certified as an instructor of the program. The officials in turn will begin to administer a voluntary three-part course to interested landlords and property managers in the community. The course would educate these individuals on the cost of crime in rental properties and benefits of being an active manager. Additionally, it would also inform property owners on the various programs in place to help them tackle problem tenants in cooperation with law enforcements officials.

At present, the Illinois General Assembly is debating a bill (SB1155) that would allow non-home rule communities to adopt a crime-free rental housing ordinance. The bill, if passed, would allow non-home rule communities to adopt an ordinance requiring property owners to obtain a valid residential rental license, submit to a public safety and crime prevention inspection, attend a crime safety and prevention training program, and submit to periodic inspections of rental property. The Village should continue to monitor the progress of this bill and consider creating a crime-free rental housing ordinance after its passage.

### **Support "Aging in Place"**

"Aging in place" is a concept that communities nationwide are embracing. It emphasizes the need for a community to be able to retain residents as they move through different stages of life and provide them with safe, affordable, and convenient services for each stage. Housing is a very important component of "aging in place." Providing residents with housing choices in terms of type, accessibility, and affordability are key for supporting the "aging in place" concept.

#### **Short-Term Strategy (1-3 years)**

##### ***Partner with existing senior groups***

The strategies outlined in this section will require focused and sustained leadership in order to be successfully implemented. Existing senior-oriented groups like AgeOptions (through the Westchester Park District), Aging Care Connections, and Divine Providence Over 50 Club (through the Divine Providence Parish) can play this role and ensure that the community's largest demographic is being heard and their concerns addressed.

**Age Options** is a non-profit organization offering a variety of services that meet the needs of the senior population in suburban Cook County. Westchester is currently served through the organization's West Suburban Senior Services division, which serves Proviso Township communities and partners with the Westchester Park District. Services provided range from adult day care to transportation services for participants of certain programs. There are four locations that offer various programs to Westchester seniors. These locations include the senior center in Bellwood, adult day care centers in Forest Park and La Grange, and congregate meals program in Hodgkins. The Village President and Community Development staff should continue to reach out to AgeOptions and explore ways to better disseminate information about the various services and programs offered by the organization. Information regarding West Suburban Senior Services should be distributed through various outlets including the Village website, newsletter, local cable channel, announcements at religious institutions, water bills, and other available media resources.

Similarly, the Village should continue to maintain its relationship with **Aging Well**, a program affiliated with **Aging Care Connections**. Through this program, the Village can access resources to assist older residents with aging in place. Aging Well also provides opportunities for seniors to advocate for policies affecting this demographic in local communities.

The Village should also continue to partner with the Divine Providence Over 50 Club and keep older residents informed about Village happenings. Spearheaded by the Divine Providence Parish in Westchester, the club consists of members who are over the age of 50 and live in or around Westchester. The club meets monthly and organizes social activities for its membership.

At the municipal level, the Village's Police Department and Citizens Advisory Board should play an active role in ensuring that the senior citizens of the community are well served. Currently the Police Department operates the S.A.F.E. (Safety, Abuse, and Fraud Education) Program. Through this program, the Police Department provides information on safety, abuse, fraudulent activities to seniors. Additionally, the Citizens Advisory Board and the community's senior groups should undertake a survey of community residents to understand the needs of seniors, identify existing service gaps, and outline services that would be helpful.

The Citizens Advisory Board could perform functions that include, but are not limited to:

- Making recommendations to the Village Board regarding ordinance amendments impacting senior citizens based upon their needs and concerns.
- Assist senior citizens in obtaining assistance from local and regional agencies.
- Monitor and assist in implementation of Plan recommendations that impact senior citizens.
- Educate the community on senior citizens services and ways to help.

#### ***Permit and incentivize senior housing development***

The Village is currently discussing the development of a senior housing complex along Cermak Road. The Comprehensive Plan has designated this area as MFR. Additionally, the Comprehensive Plan recommends the Roosevelt Road corridor for higher-density mixed-use development that can accommodate multi-family housing in the future, including senior housing (Figure 7. Residential Areas Plan.) The market feasibility study identified the creation of a Tax Increment Financing (TIF) District along Cermak Road along with rezoning as necessary first steps for redevelopment of the site for senior housing. The Village conducted a feasibility study of a TIF in that area. The Plan recommends the Village designate TIF districts along Roosevelt Road and the future Village Center site. Additionally, the zoning ordinance should be modified to permit the development as of right. Proposed senior housing development should be carefully assessed to determine its impact on community facilities and resources.

#### ***Mid-Term Strategy (3-5 years)***

##### ***Coordinate with Pace to improve senior mobility options***

The Village should coordinate with Pace to improve transportation options for seniors. Throughout the planning process, older residents expressed the desire to access public transportation more frequently to get around the Village and the region for their day-to-day tasks, e.g. grocery shopping. Although the Village is pedestrian-friendly throughout the residential areas, there are barriers to pedestrian travel between residential and commercial areas. Providing a more frequent transit service would allow seniors and other residents to connect to the retail areas at times that are more convenient for them. See Section 4.3 Accessible Transportation for more information about related policies and actions.

To further improve senior mobility options, the Village is encouraged to ensure any new or proposed senior developments are accessible to public transportation. Senior complexes that are set back far from the street or in a campus-like setting limit access to transit. It is Pace's intention to keep main line service on arterials at all times and deviations into properties are to be avoided. Residents should be able to access developments by way of pedestrian crosswalks and walkways.

#### ***Long-Term Strategy (5+ years)***

##### ***Explore the creation of a home-sharing program***

A home-sharing program pairs aging homeowners who have room to spare in their homes with people who are looking for affordable rental options. Renters could include students, part-time workers, or fixed-income retirees. The program is mutually beneficial; in exchange for affordable housing, renters assist seniors with household activities. The [Center of Concern](#) a service organization in Park Ridge, Illinois, operates a home-sharing program for elderly and the home-bound in the northwest Chicago area. The program matches homeowners who have space in their homes with other residents in their community who need affordable housing. The Center for Concern could provide a range of services including assistance with interviewing, screening, arranging introductory visits, and providing ongoing support for the program. Members of the Village's Citizens Advisory Board should contact the Center for Concern to seek assistance in facilitating home-sharing arrangements for Westchester residents.



Attached single-family homes in the Westchester Club subdivision.  
Source: Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning.

### ***Explore the creation of an Elder Village model***

The Elder Village model is a membership-driven, grassroots community-based organization that coordinates supportive services to help seniors “age in place.” There are several Elder Villages nationwide, and each is structured to meet the needs of its individual membership. The [North Shore Village](#), a local Elder Village example, serves older adults in Evanston, Skokie, and Wilmette and strives to connect its members to affordable services as well as volunteers who can assist with home repairs, grocery shopping, transportation to medical appointments, and other basic requests. With its growing senior population Westchester senior groups may want to explore the creation of an Elder Village organization to help seniors remain in the community safely for as long as possible with the support of fellow seniors and the greater community. This model would help promote health, well-being and social integration. More information about the Elder Village concept can be accessed via The [Village Network](#), a national peer-to-peer network of Elder Village organizations that assists communities with implementing the Village concept.

### **Ongoing Strategy**

#### ***Promote Proviso Township Handyman services***

Proviso Township offers free home maintenance services to senior and disabled residents through its Handyman Program. For a nominal fee that covers fuel costs, the township Handyman provides advice and referrals on various home maintenance issues. The Handyman also makes some repairs, provided that the resident pays for necessary parts. The Village should share information about the township Handyman Program with senior and disabled residents via the local cable channel, its website, and monthly newsletter.

#### ***Foster a spirit of volunteerism in the community***

This strategy is not confined to assisting only the senior population of Westchester. While volunteering relies more on the initiative of private citizens as opposed to government oversight, the Village’s leadership should stress the need and importance of volunteerism using all platforms available, including media, community events, and personal commitments. Residents of all ages should be encouraged to volunteer. Volunteering fosters community spirit, promotes intergenerational activities where seniors and youth can learn from one another, and cultivates relationships among residents.



Seniors of the Divine Providence Over 50 Club participating in Comprehensive Plan survey.  
Source: Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning.

The Village’s leadership, the Citizens Advisory Board, and the community’s senior groups (AgeOptions and Divine Providence Over 50 Club) should play a leadership role in encouraging volunteer efforts to especially assist senior citizens. Through volunteering efforts, seniors and younger people could help each other. Seniors could provide daycare, tutoring, and general stability when they are involved in the daily routines of young families. Young people, on the other hand, can keep older adults engaged and active.

## Moving Forward

The recommendations outlined in this section should be implemented in a phased and streamlined manner to avoid straining existing staff and financial resources. In the two years following plan adoption, the Village should focus on the following tasks to help move the Plan recommendations forward.

### Year One Actions

The first action the Community Development Department should take following the adoption of the Plan is to revise its zoning ordinance. The Department is currently assessing the ordinance and looking forward to Plan recommendations in order to inform and complete revisions. The Village has submitted a successful application to CMAP through its [LTA program](#) for assistance in revising the zoning ordinance. CMAP will begin working with the Village in 2014 to update the zoning ordinance.

The Village should continue to connect with local senior groups (AgeOptions, the Divine Providence Over 50 Club, and Aging Well) to make sure that the community's largest demographic is represented when making decisions pertaining to the Village. These groups may want to gather information about services available to seniors and work with Village staff to promote these services on the local cable channel, website, and monthly newsletter.

### Year Two Actions

The Community Development Department should reach out to local and regional non-profits such as the MPC, MMC, and the Preservation Compact to determine how Westchester can support regional housing efforts. The department should request a meeting with representatives from these organizations to discuss Westchester's current housing conditions. The nonprofits should be able to provide the Village with some direction about how Westchester's housing conditions can be improved and how the Village can participate with regional housing strategies.

The Community Development Department staff should continue to spread the word about retrofit programs as well as housing counseling services offered by CEDA and the Mortgage Education Foundation. For the retrofit program, the department staff should contact CMAP to present on the EI2 program to the Environmental Sustainability Commission, Plan Commission, Citizens Advisory Board, Economic Development Committee, and Village Board. The Department should also work with the Village Administration to include information about EI2 and other retrofit programs (i.e., LIHEAP) as well as CEDA services on the Village website, local cable channel, and in the Village's monthly newsletter on an ongoing basis. The Department should also reach out to the Chamber of Commerce, Park District, and public library to post information about these programs.

The Citizen Advisory Board, with the support of the Village President, should begin to publicize volunteer efforts throughout the Village and encourage individuals and families to participate. The Citizen Advisory Board could promote these activities on the local cable channel, website, and monthly newsletter.



Neighborhood retail area along Cermak Road in Westchester.

Source: Jim Watkins.

# Chapter 5

## Revitalizing Commercial Areas

The Village of Westchester will be economically competitive and vibrant, with revitalized and attractive commercial corridors consisting of businesses that enhance community character, meet residents' needs and desires, and attract visitors from around the region.

### Key Issues and Challenges

As a built out community, Westchester should focus its redevelopment efforts on existing underutilized and vacant parcels. The GO TO 2040 comprehensive regional plan supports reinvestment within existing municipalities in order to allow for compact and walkable developments. Infill sites, like those in Westchester, require minimal infrastructure investments, do not strain municipal services, and have much lower environmental footprint compared to greenfield sites, making their redevelopment economically and environmentally beneficial for municipalities.

Redevelopment and parcel consolidation are applicable primarily to commercial and mixed-use redevelopment. Limited administrative and funding resources make it critical for the Village to prioritize near-term redevelopment in certain areas. Dedicated efforts in these focus areas will ensure success in the short-term while setting the platform for longer-term redevelopment initiatives in other parts of the community.

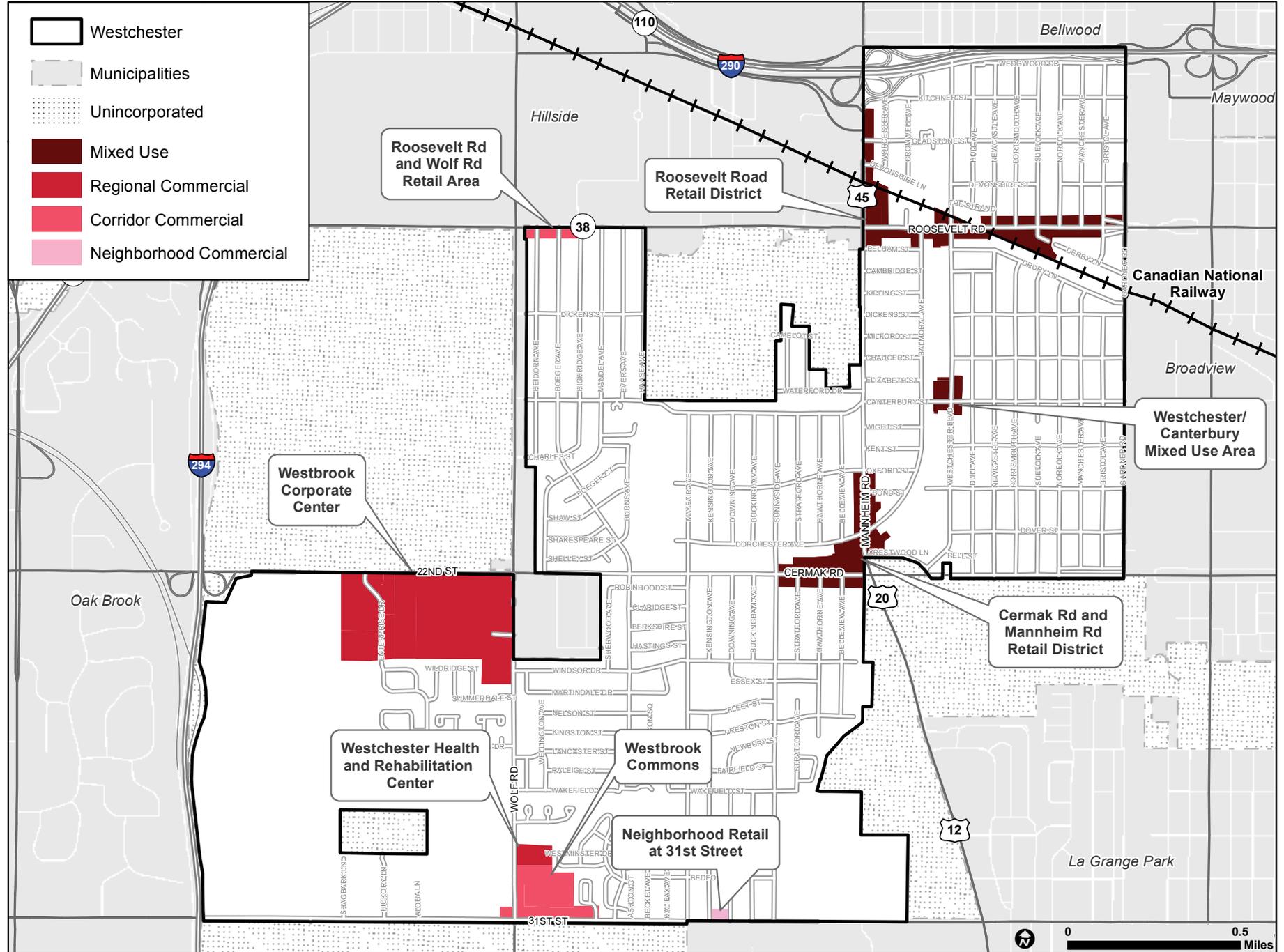
Commercial revitalization should be focused in the following areas:

- Future Village Center District at Cermak Road and Mannheim Road
- Roosevelt Road Retail District
- Roosevelt Road and Wolf Road Retail Area
- 31st Street Neighborhood Retail (between Kensington Avenue and Downing Avenue)

Parcel consolidation in specific areas should be encouraged to allow for a variety of parcel sizes, creating more development options. Commercial parcel consolidation will allow for construction of larger stores, improved vehicular and pedestrian access, and increased visibility.

Westchester has limited commercial uses within its municipal boundaries. In terms of land use distribution, less than seven percent of the community's acreage is dedicated to commercial uses. In addition to challenging economic conditions that have negatively impacted communities nationwide, Westchester faces unique physical and economic characteristics that have prevented the Village from realizing its true retail potential.

Figure 8. Commercial areas plan



Source: Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning, 2013.

From a physical standpoint, there are three obstacles. Westchester is a Cook County community located in proximity to DuPage County. Given the significantly higher tax burden on businesses in Cook County, new businesses have been reluctant to locate in the community, choosing neighboring Oak Brook instead. Secondly, there are several parcels along major commercial corridors such as Roosevelt Road and Cermak Road that are too narrow to redevelop. This has contributed to an increase in vacancy rates as well as a high turn-over rate among businesses. Lastly, the condition and appearance of existing retail areas vary from fair to poor. Building facades, signage, and streetscape conditions are in need of much improvement in order to attract locals to shop within the community.

From an economic standpoint, Westchester is surrounded by communities that have strong and diverse retail sectors. To the east in North Riverside are North Riverside Mall, Forest Park Plaza, and Cermak Plaza. To the north in Hillside is the Hillside Town Center, with a Super Target, Staples, Home Goods, Petco, Michael's, and a nearby free-standing Wal-Mart. To the south is LaGrange with its smaller specialty shops and restaurants. To the west is Oakbrook Center, anchored by Macy's, Sears, Lord & Taylor, Nordstrom, and Neiman-Marcus. Numerous big box retailers are also located nearby. As such, most of the major retailers active in the Chicago metro market already have locations near Westchester. According to Demographics Now, a demographic data vendor, the presence of such a vast retail sector in proximity to the Village resulted in a \$169 million retail "leakage" in 2012, i.e. loss of revenue due to Westchester residents shopping in neighboring communities as opposed to locally.



Westbrook Corporate Center towers and nearby commercial development.  
Source: Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning.



Strip mall along Mannheim Road, north of Roosevelt Road.  
Source: Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning.

## Recommendations

As mentioned earlier in this section, the following strategies are recommended for implementation within four commercial districts. Recommendations are distributed into overall strategies and site-specific strategies. Overall strategies are applicable to all commercial areas within the community. Site-specific strategies detail unique strategies that apply only to certain focus areas (see Figure 8. Commercial areas plan).



An example of a mixed-use development.

Source: [http://www.montgomeryplanning.org/development/com\\_res\\_zones.shtml](http://www.montgomeryplanning.org/development/com_res_zones.shtml).

### Overall Strategies

#### Short-Term Strategy (1-3 years)

##### **Revise zoning ordinance to allow for attractive mixed-use developments**

The Village's existing zoning ordinance is outdated. In order to achieve the compact, walkable, and attractive development envisioned for Westchester's retail districts, the Community Development Department should undertake a comprehensive revision of the zoning ordinance.

The revised zoning ordinance should contain regulations for physical elements ranging from the blockface design to building signage. Key elements to be included in the ordinance are:

- **Blockface Design:** The placement and appearance of buildings contribute to the character of the entire block and also the character of the right-of-way. Closely spaced or contiguous buildings are encouraged in all districts.
- **Site Design:** This refers to the placement of buildings, parking lots, sidewalks, and landscaping on a parcel. Buildings placed closer to the street should be encouraged with shared parking situated at the rear. Landscaping of parking areas should be required to minimize surface water run-off and prevent heat islands.
- **Building Design:** This should address both new construction as well as renovation of existing facades. Facades should preferably be designed to provide a strong sense of place with scale, proportion, and details. Also, public plazas should be constructed, where appropriate, to serve as community gathering spaces.
- **Building Height:** The regulations should allow flexibility to build taller buildings in the retail districts while complementing the existing character of the adjacent neighborhoods.
- **Signage:** Building signage should fit with and enhance the character of the building and overall character of the right-of-way. Guidelines should outline the location, size, and type of signage with illustrative examples.

### ***Educate business owners and elected officials***

The Chamber of Commerce organizes monthly networking events for its members. The Chamber should work with business owners to institute an education and awareness component to these events. Potential program topics could include:

- Case studies of revitalization efforts in other communities
- Property and façade maintenance tips and benefits
- Regulatory aspects of property redevelopment or façade improvements
- Resources to help fund property improvements

Guest speakers could include representatives from neighboring communities, non-profits, regional agencies, architects, economic development professionals, and local business owners. The Chamber of Commerce should create an annual schedule of events and lead the organization of these educational sessions with assistance from Village officials.

To help elected officials, the Village should coordinate with CMAP to organize training programs to better educate the community and its elected officials. Examples of programs that would be beneficial include:

- **Plan Commission and Economic Development Committee training:** Offered through the Illinois Chapter of the American Planning Association (ILAPA) and CMAP, this program is conducted by planning professionals to help educate planning and zoning commissioners. The training is currently provided at no cost to the municipality and has been conducted at several locations throughout the state. The workshop would be designed to educate and inform the Westchester Planning Commissioners and Economic Development Committee members about the importance of their work and the breadth of their responsibilities.

### ***Maintain inventory of vacant properties***

In order to effectively market available sites, as well as identify sites that could be consolidated for redevelopment, the Village should continue to maintain its inventory of vacant parcels. This process involves the Village obtaining records of vacant parcels through the Cook County Assessor's office. This information should be field verified and mapped by the Village.

Parcels could be classified into categories based on location (e.g. Cermak Road properties, Roosevelt Road properties, etc.), size (less or greater than one acre), or other parameters that the Village may deem appropriate. The resulting database of parcel records will help the Village identify potential sites for redevelopment, as well as market them effectively to potential developers and existing businesses looking to expand their facilities. The database should be updated regularly.



Under-utilized property along Cermak Road east of Enterprise Drive. Source: Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning.

### Mid-Term Strategy (3-5 years)

#### ***Create incentives to encourage rehabilitation of older properties/sites***

To help property owners rehabilitate older and aging properties, the Village should identify funding sources available at the state and federal level. For the purpose of undertaking small-scale site improvements that could include building façade, signage, landscape, and stormwater management improvements (bio-swales, permeable pavers etc.), the Village should consider creating a Facade Improvement Grant Program. This program would focus on improvements to the facades of older commercial and industrial properties with the goal of improving building appearance and bringing older sign, parking, and landscaping into conformance with new standards as per the revised zoning ordinance. The program would provide a 50/50 matching grant up to a certain amount. The [Village of Skokie](#) created a similar program and approximately 18 facades have been completed thus far.



Industrial area in Westchester.  
Source: Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning.

### Long-Term Strategy (5+ years)

#### ***Create a strategic marketing and branding plan***

To understand and market its strengths so as to attract new commercial investment, the Village should partner with the Chamber of Commerce to undertake a marketing and branding initiative. This strategy should be broadened beyond business development to promote the Village's cultural, natural, and quality-of-life aspects. The strategic marketing and branding plan should include the following key components:

- **Village Attributes:** This section would identify the various assets of the community that need to be highlighted and marketed. A two-pronged strategy should be adopted, one looking to identify assets that should be promoted locally and another to be promoted regionally.
- **Marketing Tools:** This section would discuss the various ways for the Village and Chamber of Commerce to advertise businesses and business events, (e.g. monthly newsletters, tradeshow booths, business incentives packet, new resident information packet, web and multi-media advertising, etc.).
- **Roles and Responsibilities:** This section would assign leadership roles to Village departments and community service organizations in order to create accountability and clarity as the plan is implemented. These organizations might include the Economic Development Committee, Chamber of Commerce, Community Development Department, and Plan Commission.
- **Alliances and Coordination:** This section would identify business organizations, civic institutions, non-profits, educational institutions, and other organizations that could be potential partners for business development. The Village, along with the Chamber of Commerce, may consider working with a marketing and branding consultant to carry out this initiative.

### **Ongoing Strategy**

#### ***Continue to encourage arts and culture***

Arts and culture has been known to revitalize communities, create positive economic development, retain the local population and attract residents. In addition to the farmers' market that operates between mid-July and October 31st at 31st and Kensington, as well as the various events that the Park District runs, the Village should continue to encourage arts and culture activities specifically in commercial areas. Arts and culture activities in the form of art fairs, mobile food trucks, or pop-up storefront galleries in commercial areas could attract more foot traffic and help set the stage for future redevelopment. During the Zoning Code Update, the Village may want to consider adding a definition for arts and culture, updating the use structure and outlining standards for uses (including temporary uses). Village staff should use [CMAP's Arts and Culture Planning: A Toolkit for Communities](#) as a reference while exploring the furthering of arts and culture activities in Westchester.

#### ***Continue to create Wayfinding Signage Plan***

As a longer-term strategy to support commercial revitalization efforts, the Economic Development Committee should continue to work on creating a Wayfinding Signage Plan. This type of signage plan would help motorists, as well as bicyclists, conveniently find their destinations within the Village and connect to regional destinations. In addition to identifying the Village campus and commercial districts, the Committee has identified the Village campus, the Wolf Road Prairie Nature Preserve, Salt Creek Greenway Trail, and the Illinois Prairie Path as attractions that could benefit directional signage.

The Wayfinding Signage Plan should also consider the design and placement of gateway signs to create an attractive entranceway into Westchester. Potential locations for installing gateway signage should be identified within the Plan, along with the physical design of the sign itself. Locations should include major roadways as well as non-motorized (e.g. Salt Creek trail) entry points into the community.

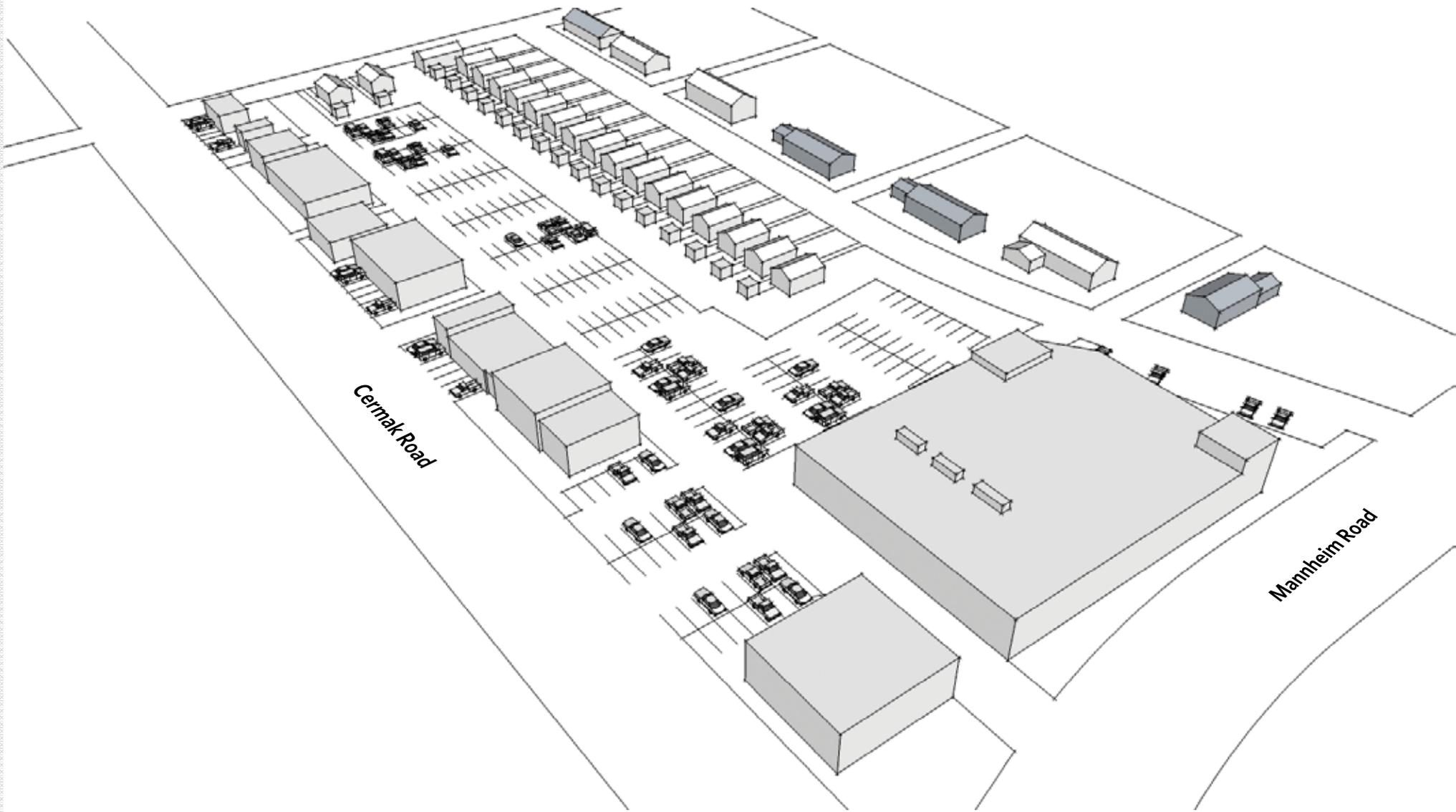
#### ***Identify priority parcels for consolidation and redevelopment***

The Village should evaluate the redevelopment and consolidation potential within the four commercial areas based on a variety of parameters including, but not limited to:

- Size of parcel
- Location of parcel
- Land use and condition of adjacent parcels
- Site remediation costs
- Parcels under single or multiple ownership

This analysis will allow the Village to prioritize specific sites within each area for consolidation and redevelopment. Initial efforts should focus on completing this analysis for the proposed Village Center District. Once a prioritized list of parcels is developed, the Village should engage property owners in discussions regarding their development goals and opportunities. From a parcel consolidation standpoint, the Village's role could range from acquiring selected parcels to brokering or facilitation of potential deals between developers and property owners.

Figure 9. Existing site layout at Cermak and Mannheim Roads Retail District



## Site Specific Revitalization Strategies

### Mid-Term Strategy (3-5 years)

#### *31st Street and Wolf Road: Westbrook Commons*

- **Consolidate in-line tenant spaces:** Given that this intersection contains FPDC lands and the Wolf Road Prairie on three sides, there are limited opportunities for retail expansion. According to findings from the market analysis, the center's tenant spaces are difficult to lease given their small sizes and limited visibility. Westbrook Commons can alleviate this problem by combining smaller tenant spaces to create larger units that would be attractive to business owners.
- **Implement landscaping and facade improvements:** The Village should encourage the owners of Westbrook Commons to undertake facade upgrades and landscaping improvements to help improve its visual appeal. These include landscaping in parking areas, construction of a gateway entrance feature at both entrances, and placement of trees throughout the complex. The Village's proposed facade improvement program could be utilized to incentivize the property improvements.
- **Enhance connectivity:** To capitalize on its proximity to natural areas such as Bemis Woods and Wolf Road Prairie, the Village should encourage the installation of bicycle amenities such as bike racks and signage.

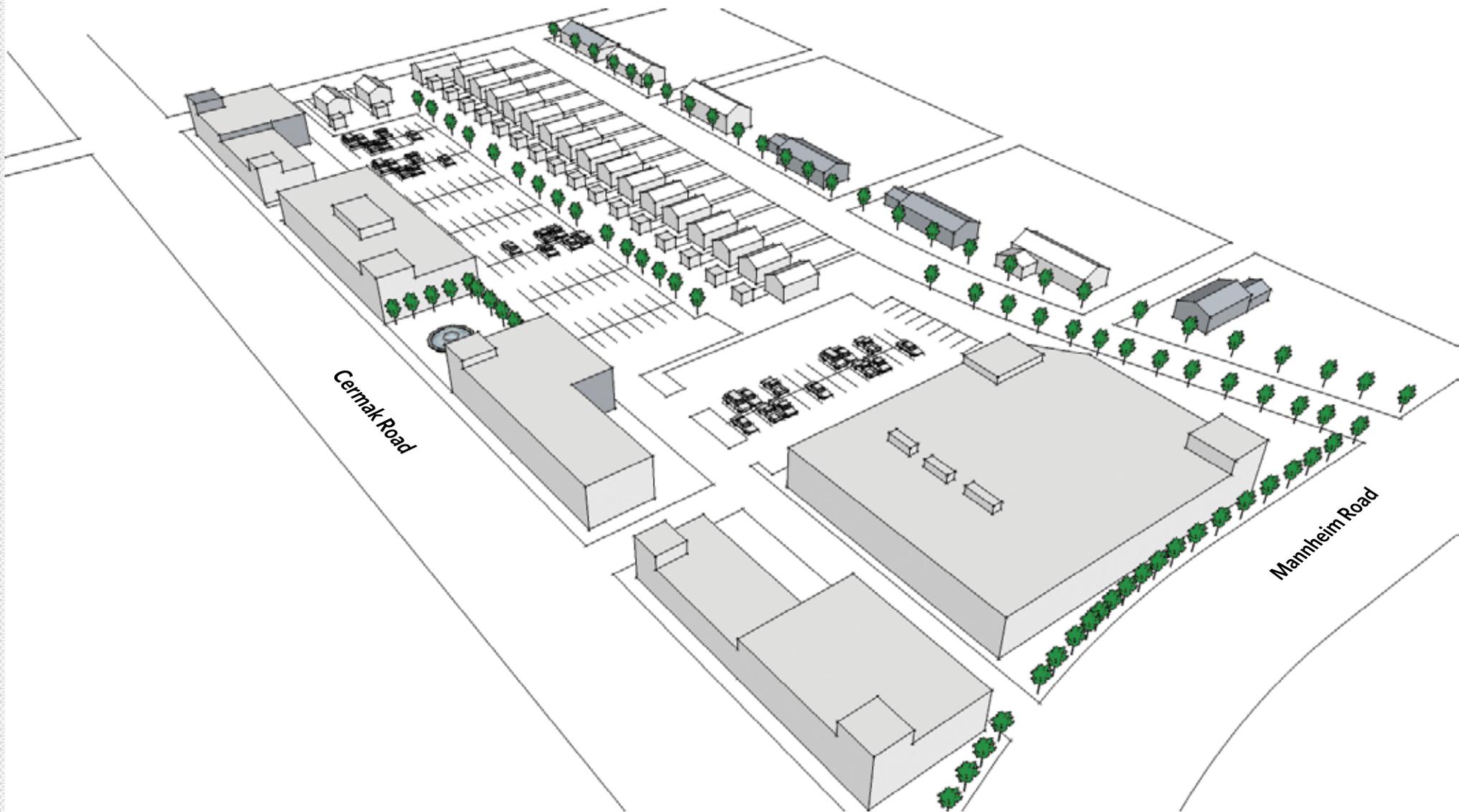
#### *Roosevelt Road Corridor*

- **Establish a TIF district:** The Village should hire a consultant to undertake a TIF feasibility analysis. The analysis would help determine eligibility, benefits, and potential boundaries of the Roosevelt Road TIF district.
- **Undertake site-level improvements:** As recommended in the 2006 Strategic Plan, the Village should undertake repaving, landscaping, and parking lot reconfiguration at Village Hall, Post Office, and Fire Department. The Public Works Department should budget for these improvements within the Village's annual budget.
- **Undertake pedestrian and transit-supportive improvements:** The Village should work closely with the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT), West Central Municipal Conference (WCMC), and Pace to make the corridor more pedestrian and transit-friendly. Improvements could include installation of bus shelters, improved street lighting, seating, and signage.

#### *Cermak Road and Mannheim Road: Village Center*

- **Create a Village Center Redevelopment Plan:** The first step in creating a future Village Center at this location is to undertake a Village Center Redevelopment Plan that details the vision for the area and implementation actions to move forward. The Plan will include actions to be undertaken by various Village departments, phasing of redevelopment, and funding mechanisms to support redevelopment efforts. See Figures 9 and 10 for the existing site layout of the Cermak and Mannheim Roads retail district and the concept plan for the proposed Village Center area in the same location. The concept plan is an example of a possible site layout for the future Village Center area; the redevelopment plan will provide a more accurate depiction of the site.
- **Establish a TIF district:** The Village should hire a consultant to conduct a TIF feasibility analysis. The analysis would help determine eligibility, benefits, and potential boundaries of Village Center TIF district.
- **Create a Village Center Zoning District:** As part of the zoning ordinance revision, the Village should create a Village Center Zoning District that allows for a higher density, compact, and attractive mix of uses. The creation of a separate zoning district will clearly outline development expectations for the development community in terms of site design, building design, scale, and architectural quality.
- **Prioritize redevelopment of parcels along Mannheim and Cermak Road:** In the near term, the Village should work closely with the property owners of marginal and underutilized parcels along Mannheim and Cermak roads to redevelop the properties as commercial and mixed-use developments. This should be undertaken after establishment of the TIF district, incentivizing the redevelopment for property owners.

Figure 10. Concept plan for proposed Village Center area at Cermak and Mannheim Roads



## Moving Forward

The recommendations outlined in this section should be implemented in a phased and streamlined manner to avoid straining existing staff and financial resources. In the two years following plan adoption, the Village should focus on the following tasks to help move the Plan recommendations forward.

### Year One Actions

The Community Development Department should initiate the revision of the zoning ordinance so that mixed-used developments would be permitted. This action is further discussed in Chapter 4: Improving Housing Quality and Diversity previously. The Village's Community Development Department should continue to work closely with the Cook County Assessor's Office to collect data on vacant and underutilized properties. The data collected should continue to be entered into a GIS database, mapped, and shared on the Village's website.

The Economic Development Committee should complete the Wayfinding Signage Plan that is ongoing in the next year. The Plan should be distributed to regional agencies such as the FPDCC and WCMC in order to gain support for implementation.

### Year Two Actions

The Community Development Department should work closely with the Public Works Department to formulate the Street Improvement Plan (SIP) for 2014. Both departments should create a list of site specific improvements identified in this chapter and formulate a strategy to accomplish those improvements within the SIP. Additionally, the Community Development Department and Chamber of Commerce should work together with current owners in the focus areas to encourage private property landscape and façade improvements.

For streetscape and pedestrian improvements along State-owned routes such as Roosevelt Road and Mannheim Road, the Community Development Department should work with CMAP and WCMC in reaching out to IDOT and Regional Transportation Authority (RTA) and communicating their needs and potential benefits. Additionally, the Village President and elected officials of Westchester should reach out to their neighbors and form a coalition. This coalition should reach out to the WCMC and eventually IDOT to make the case for improvements to major arterials owned by the State. Similar efforts have successfully initiated improvements to Roosevelt Road, Harlem Avenue, and Cicero Avenue in other parts of the region.



Truck exiting parking lot in industrial area.

Source: Jim Watkins.

# Chapter 6

## Improving Transportation Options and Access

The Village of Westchester will provide safe and affordable transportation choices that conveniently move residents within the Village as well as connect them to regional destinations.

### Key Issues and Challenges

Westchester is crossed by several major arterial roads including Roosevelt Road, Cermak Road/22nd Street, 31st Street, Mannheim Road, and Wolf Road. According to IDOT, these roadways accommodate vehicular traffic ranging from 15,800 to 42,400 vehicles on a daily basis. When combined with high travel speeds, these arterials become barriers to safe movement within the community. In most cases, street intersections are difficult to cross due to the wide rights-of-way (ROWs) and poorly timed pedestrian lights that do not allow sufficient time for pedestrians to cross safely.

The ROWs also impact sidewalk conditions including their widths and physical condition. The width of sidewalks along major streets are generally narrow and, in some cases, nonexistent making pedestrian travel difficult. A number of governmental entities control ROWs within and adjacent to the Village, and the Village maintains constant contact with these entities to ensure that acceptable street conditions are maintained. There are, however, local pavements and sidewalks in need of maintenance in certain areas.

Public transit is another area the community needs to address with both near- and long-term strategies. Currently, Pace operates four bus routes within the Village. Pace bus routes make connections with services operated by both the Chicago Transit Authority (CTA) and Metra. There are no Metra stations in Westchester. The closest Metra stations are located in the communities of Bellwood and La Grange. Currently, 87 percent of Westchester residents commute to work via automobile, compared to 78 percent for the County and 73 percent for the region. The Village should continue to work with the RTA, Pace, and Metra in order to seek ways to improve public transportation and to make sure that residents continue to have access to quality service.

Proviso Township provides paratransit options for riders who are elderly and disabled. The free transportation service, offered as part of the Senior Service program, requires applicants to be 60 years or older, able to walk to and from the vehicle without assistance, meet the vehicle at the curb, and be a registered client. The township also offers free rides on Mondays and Tuesdays to medical appointments (reservations must be made 48 hours in advance), Target, beauty/barber shops, senior clubs, Post Office, banks, grocery stores, and North Riverside, Oak Brook, and Yorktown malls only. While these services are helpful, they may not adequately address the needs of senior citizens in Westchester.

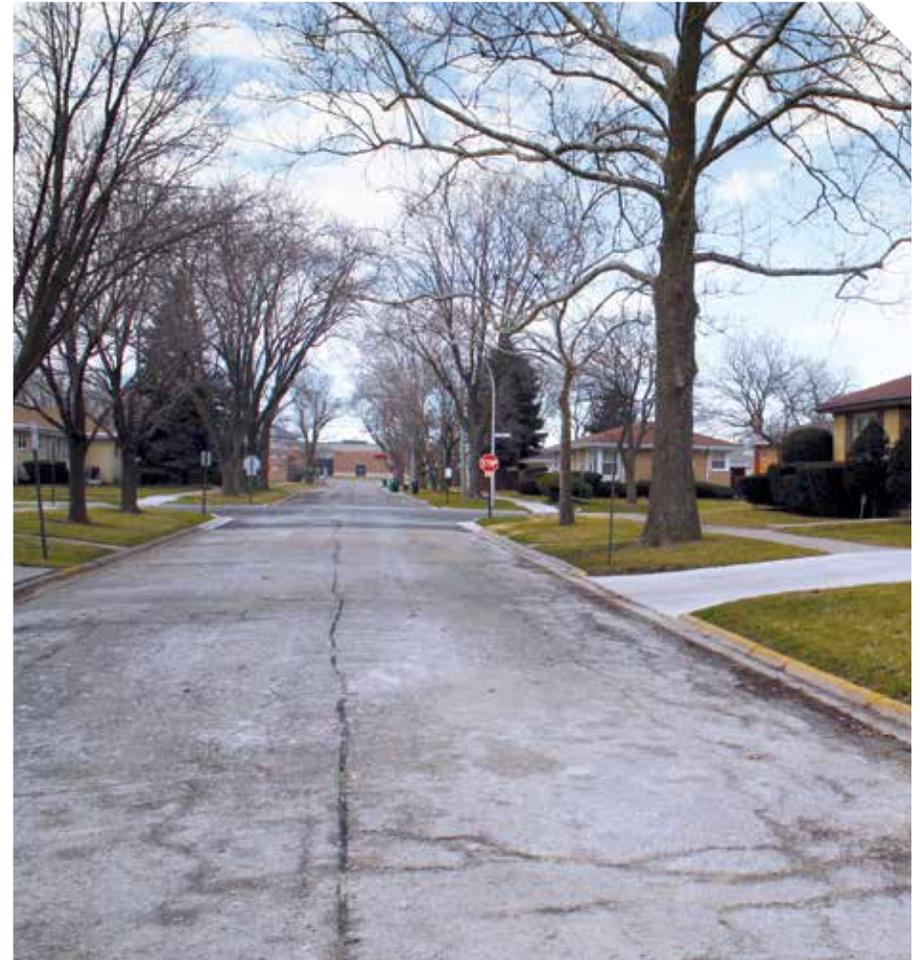
Westchester's bike and pedestrian trails are linked to Mayfair Park on the west side of the Village and Westchester Community Park on the east. Although the Westchester Community Park portion of the trail connects to the Salt Creek Trail via Cermak Road/22nd Street, there is a lack of connectivity between the Village's park facilities and residential neighborhoods. There is also a lack of signage marking bicycle routes or direct connections to nearby regional trails like the Salt Creek Greenway and Illinois Prairie Path.



## Recommendations

As with housing, transportation is a crucial element to address when establishing an “aging in place” concept. According to a 2011 report published by the National Association of Area Agencies on Aging (n4a), lack of transportation ranked as one of the top concerns for communities across the nation between 2005-10. Making changes to Westchester’s transportation system to promote walkability and link housing with essential services will therefore be critical.

To support all age groups and abilities in Westchester, a diversified transportation strategy should be pursued. In addition to public transit, streets should be pedestrian-friendly, bus stops should be comfortable and safe, and residents should be able to travel between neighborhoods easily. The Plan seeks to create a multi-modal transportation system in Westchester that enables the use of transit, bicycling, and walking for daily trips. The recommendations contained in this section are meant to address roadway needs, expand transit and paratransit options, and overcome barriers to pedestrian and bicycle travel.



Local road in Westchester.  
Source: Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning.

## Vehicular

### Short-Term Strategy (1-3 years)

#### **Implement Street Rehabilitation Program and renew Street Improvement Program**

As mentioned previously, the Village hired an engineering consultant in 2006 to evaluate the condition of street pavements and estimated costs for improving the residential streets under Village jurisdiction. The report divided the Village into six geographical areas, and provided estimate costs for repaving, sewer repairs, and curb and gutter replacements. The survey resulted in the creation of a five-year SIP to show the systematic approach being taken by the Village in evaluating and rehabilitating pavements. The Village launched the multi-million dollar Street Rehabilitation Program in 2012 to restore identified roads to good condition. Pavement preservation techniques will continue on remaining Village streets.

The updated SIP should take into account improvements made and planned future improvements for the next five-year period. A combination of motor fuel tax (MFT) revenue and municipal bonds should be used to fund the program. The Village is currently using \$3.5 million of Taxable General Obligation Bonds, Series 2010A and \$5.8 million of General Obligation (Alternative Revenue Source) Bonds, and Series 2013 to fund street reconstruction and repair. The renewal of this program is important not only from the perspective of maintaining convenient and safe circulation, but also reinforcing the Village’s commitment to maintaining residents’ quality of life and providing a supportive business environment.

### Mid-Term Strategy (3-5 years)

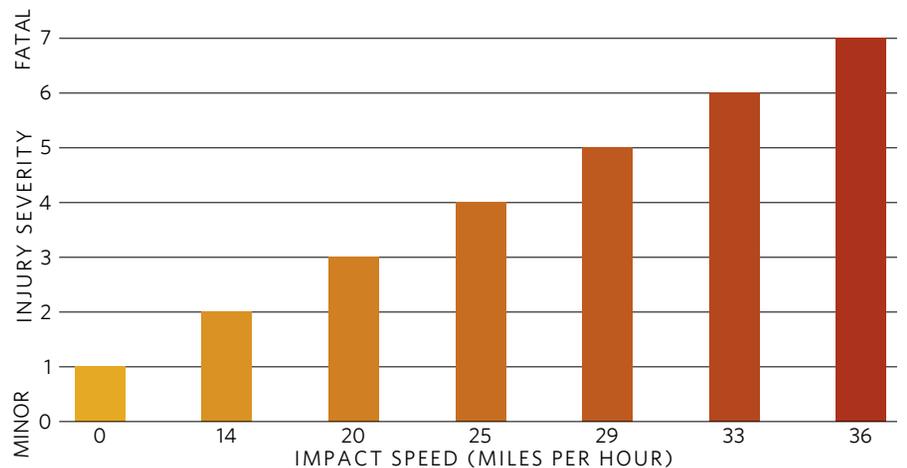
#### **Install traffic-calming features on local streets**

Traffic calming infrastructure is an effective way to increase safety on local roads. It is a common misconception that streets with a high volume of traffic are less safe for pedestrian activity. While the volume of traffic may be a contributing factor, vehicular speeds and width of streets are the primary factors in pedestrian fatalities nationwide (see Figure 12. Impact speed vs. pedestrian injury).

Village officials should undertake a public engagement process whereby residents and businesses help the Village identify “hotspots” of pedestrian-vehicle conflict. The Chamber of Commerce and Park District should engage their members by distributing surveys to gather similar information. The database will allow the Village to prioritize installation of traffic-calming features on local streets. For improvements along non-Westchester jurisdiction roads, the Village will need to coordinate with IDOT prior to installation. Potential traffic calming measures include:

- Speed humps
- Reduced vehicular speeds
- Increased policing/fines/penalties
- Visible pedestrian crosswalks
- Street trees/landscape

**Figure 12. Impact speed vs. pedestrian injury**



Source: Institute of Transportation Engineers, “Designing Walkable Urban Thoroughfares: A Context Sensitive Approach,” 2010.

### Ongoing Strategy

#### ***Undertake low-cost improvements***

Small-scale infrastructure improvements are low-cost investments that will go a long way in reinforcing the Village's commitment to maintaining residents' quality of life and providing a supportive business environment.

Within the focus areas identified for commercial revitalization, recommended physical improvements are a combination of transportation and streetscape maintenance and enhancement initiatives that will require close coordination between Village departments, elected officials, IDOT, and Pace. The Public Works Department currently creates an annual SIP that helps maintain local rights-of-way. The annual SIP is based on a 2006 street survey undertaken by a private engineering firm that looked at pavement conditions community-wide. The Village should undertake a new community-wide evaluation, including streets that are within the proposed focus areas. Some of the key infrastructure issues to be addressed include, but are not limited to:

- Repair and maintenance of sidewalks in poor condition
- Completion of sidewalk network wherever links are missing
- Improvement of broken curbs, especially at intersections to allow safe handicap access
- Restriping of crosswalks

At intersections where Pace has multiple bus routes such as Roosevelt/Mannheim, Roosevelt/Balmoral/Westchester, and Cermak/Mannheim, the Village should consider prioritizing transit improvements at these locations in order to improve transfers between routes. Improvements could include new or improved sidewalks, crosswalks, pedestrian signals, and bus pads or shelters.

The design of paths, sidewalks, and transit stops contribute to the passenger's transit experience and perception of safety on the bus. Well-connected sidewalks should be installed so that transit patrons will not be forced to walk in the street while traveling to or from the stop or station. Roadway crossings should be made safer with an appropriate combination of facilities, such as marked crosswalks, crosswalk bump outs, median crossing islands, warning signs, and pedestrian signals.

#### ***Promote Sidewalk Replacement Program***

The Village currently runs a Sidewalk Replacement Program. Also known as the 50/50 Sidewalk Program, the Village offers to share the cost of sidewalk repair or replacement in residential areas with homeowners. The homeowner needs to fill out a form and contact the Public Works Department to initiate the process and the Village works with a contractor to undertake the improvement. The Village should promote this program through its various media resources and encourage residents to participate. Within the proposed mixed-use districts identified in the Future Land Use Plan (Chapter 3), the Village should utilize TIF funds for this purpose.



Westchester Police Department vehicle on Roosevelt Road.  
Source: Jim Watkins.

**Figure 13. Existing conditions of intersection at Roosevelt Road and Westchester Boulevard**



Source: Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning.

**Figure 14. Proposed intersection improvement at Roosevelt Road and Westchester Boulevard**



Source: Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning.

## Transit

### Ongoing Strategy

#### ***Coordinate with IDOT and WCMC for improvements along major ROWs***

(See Figures 13. and 14. Existing conditions and proposed intersection Improvements at Roosevelt Road and Westchester Boulevard)

WCMC has been leading the Cook-DuPage Smart Corridor Plan and Design project. This regional corridor study, which covers the western suburbs of Cook County and all of DuPage County, has identified 46 potential Smart Corridors — major roads to receive improvements that would positively impact all modes of travel (passenger traffic, freight, and transit). In 2012, WCMC came up with four Smart Corridors that would serve as pilot corridors, including Cermak Road/22nd Street and Mannheim Road, both of which are major ROWs that run through the Village of Westchester. The pilot corridors will be redesigned and monitored for progress based on improvements such as time-of-day parking, real-time transit information, Transit Signal Priority (TSP), intersection improvements, safety improvements, transit service, and upgrades including route and stop locations. The pilot corridors, which cross several jurisdictions, will encourage multi-jurisdictional coordination around transportation policy. WCMC is entering the second phase of the Smart Corridor Plan and Design project, which entails concept design plans for each pilot corridor. In the future, potential Smart Corridors, identified during the initial stage of the study, may receive improvements including Mannheim Road.

Given that improvements are needed along State-managed roads that traverse Westchester, Village leadership should work closely with WCMC on the Cook-DuPage Smart Corridor Plan and Design project. The Village may have an opportunity to weigh in on concepts to reduce congestion, improve mobility, and encourage transit-friendly land uses along the corridor. Other short-term and low-cost solutions that could enhance travel along the Smart Corridors throughout Westchester might include repainting median strips so that they are brighter, installing larger and brighter stoplights, upgrading walk lights to a larger size, and replacing non-functioning street lights.

#### ***Consider coordinating with Township and Pace to enhance existing services***

As outlined in the summary of existing conditions, Proviso Township and Pace both offer transit services to Westchester residents. The Village is currently served by Pace bus routes on its major arterials, and through these connections, residents can access train stations in adjacent communities. Similarly, seniors can take advantage of the township's paratransit service for their travel needs. Combined together, these services still leave gaps in service.

One potential service to fill the gap is Pace's Community Vehicle Program. The Village is considering this program, which will provide Westchester residents and seniors with a flexible, cost-effective transit option to connect from their home to Metra stations, major retail destinations, and healthcare providers in LaGrange, Western Springs, and Bellwood. Pace's Community Vehicle Program would allow Westchester to determine the specifics of the service while leasing a vehicle from Pace on a monthly basis. The program also allows municipalities to determine fares, select service contractors, and determine who operates the preferred transportation service. Village officials should work closely with the community's senior groups, Economic Development Committee, and Chamber of Commerce to undertake a survey of residents and/or businesses that would be interested in using such a service. Based on the results of the survey, Village officials should work with Pace to create the appropriate program.

Additionally, all of the Pace routes that serve Westchester operate on a flag stop policy, which means that the bus will stop at any intersection along the route where it is safe to do so. In order to improve the visibility of transit and to have a clearer stop policy, the Village should consider supporting Pace's plan to implement its posted stops only program. This program requires that buses stop only at posted bus stop signs. In Westchester, a bus stop would be located approximately every 660 feet along a route.

### ***Support regional Arterial Bus Rapid Transit initiatives***

Pace has identified Roosevelt, Cermak and Mannheim Corridors as future Arterial Rapid Transit (ART) bus routes. The project is part of an expansive network of transit signal priority TSP routes throughout the suburban area of northeastern Illinois on arterial streets. In addition to TSP, the projects call for dedicated vehicle “queue jump” lanes (roadway geometry used to provide preference to buses at intersections), stations, and improvements in pedestrian and bicycle access (see Figure 11. Transit improvements). TSP allows transit vehicles to move through traffic-signal controlled intersections, giving priority to buses by extending green lights.

TSP is already in place along Cermak Road (from 54th/Cermak CTA Pink Line station to Harlem Avenue, which has seen a seven percent to twenty percent reduction in transit travel times. Westchester stands to benefit greatly from this enhanced transit service, and due to the community’s changing demographics may become one of the larger consumers of this improved service. The Village should support these projects as they will have a positive impact on the Village’s commercial revitalization efforts along Cermak Road, Roosevelt Road, and Mannheim Road. By clustering higher-density development in mixed-use districts that include Pace ART stations and by providing a walkable environment nearby, the Village can create a land use pattern that supports the use of transit.

Pace is completing TSP design/engineering on Cermak Road corridor between Harlem Avenue and Lombard. Beginning in 2014, implementation of TSP is planned for Cermak along with design and implementation for the Roosevelt Road and Mannheim Road corridors. Planning and design for the Cermak ART corridor is expected in 2015.



Pace bus stop along Cermak Road.  
Source: Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning.

## Non-motorized transportation

### Mid-Term Strategy (3-5 years)

#### **Support West Central Municipal Conference Bicycle Plan**

(see Figure 15. Open space and trails network)

Westchester's planned bicycle paths should tie into existing and future regional trails featured in the WCMC Bicycle Plan. The WCMC Bicycle Plan notes the following priorities for trail connections:

- 31st Street, providing access to Brookfield Zoo, a regional destination that would improve access to Salt Creek Trail and connect to Mannheim Road and Wolf Road
- Cermak Road, providing access to Westbrook Corporate Center
- Mannheim Road, providing access to Cermak Road and Salt Creek Trail at 31st Street
- Wolf Road: Connecting to Westbrook Corporate Center, Wolf Road Prairie, and Salt Creek Trail

These proposed routes will link Westchester to regional destinations, as well as other trail systems such as the Salt Creek Trail that runs south of the Village and the Illinois Prairie Path that runs just north of the Village. The Village should monitor the progress of the WCMC Bicycle Plan and support implementation efforts in the future.

### **Undertake an Active Transportation Plan**

One of the unique qualities of Westchester is the abundance of open space just beyond its borders. Access to Westchester Park District and FPDCC facilities results in a significantly higher open space acreage per capita figure. However, there are currently not many bike connections to these destinations. An extensive bike-pedestrian trail network will provide access between existing parks and the historic neighborhoods of Westchester (see Figure 15. Open space and trails network).

The Village should partner with the Park District to create an Active Transportation Plan that will help identify improvements to the physical infrastructure, policies, and programs that make it safer and more convenient for people to walk, bike, and use transit in Westchester. The Active Transportation Plan should include the following key components:

- **Active Transportation Network:** Pedestrian improvements, bicycle routes and crossings, wayfinding signage, and infrastructure improvements.
- **Potential Policies:** Ordinances and/or programs that the Village should consider adopting. Examples include a Complete Streets Policy, Safe Park Zones Ordinance, Distracted Driver Ordinance, and Traffic Calming Policy.
- **Programming Ideas:** Programs for education, encouragement, enforcement, and evaluation.
- **Implementation:** Comprehensive timeline for implementation of each of the recommendations.

As a first step, the Community Development Department, with the help of the Park District, should review similar plans undertaken by west central communities including Berwyn and Forest Park. Officials should also reach out to [Active Transportation Alliance](#), a non-profit bicycle advocacy group that has worked with several communities in the Chicago region to create similar ordinances and plans. There may be grant opportunities the Village and Park District could apply for with assistance from Active Transportation Alliance to fund the Active Transportation Plan.

### Long-Term Strategy (5+ years)

#### Create Safe Routes

The Village should explore programs that would encourage walking and biking throughout Westchester. There are two programs that the Village should consider:

- **Safe Routes to School (SRTS):** This program promotes walking and biking to and from schools that serve students in kindergarten through 8th grade. Funding is available for SRTS. The Village should pursue SRTS funding, and collaborate with the School District, Library District, and Park District to create safe routes for students walking and biking to schools in Westchester.
- **Safe Routes for Seniors program:** This campaign was created to improve the pedestrian environment in New York City and encourage senior citizens to walk more. This program was the first of its kind to address the unique needs of older pedestrians and consider the role of street design in maintaining good cardiovascular health in old age. Safe Routes for Seniors takes the regulations of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) one step further to accommodate sensory changes that occur as people age. The program looks at a number of elements ranging from the physical design of streets to regulations that influence driver behavior. As a first step, the Village should educate its officials on the Safe Routes for Seniors Program. Online courses are offered through Planetizen (<http://courses.planetizen.com/course/safe-routes-seniors>) and will help Village officials, such as the Plan Commission, understand the program and its applicability to Westchester.

#### Enact ordinances and educate law enforcement officials to protect bicyclists and pedestrians

The Village could consider adopting regulations that would protect bicyclists and pedestrians from vehicular traffic. Examples of ordinances that have been adopted by Illinois communities include:

- **Distracted Driver Ordinance:** The Village should consider adopting and publicizing a distracted driver ordinance restricting the use of mobile communication devices while driving on local roadways. Safety goals could be further bolstered by a partnership with neighboring communities, as well as the WCMC, to pass similar policies throughout the region.



Local road in industrial area.  
Source: Jim Watkins.

- **Safe Park Zone Ordinance:** To ensure safe access to neighborhood parks, school playgrounds, and recreational facilities, the Village should adopt a Safe Park Zone Ordinance. Per Active Transportation Alliance, this strategy entails setting 20 mph speed limits and enforcing higher penalties for traffic violations when children are present on streets adjacent to parks. The Illinois Vehicle Code section 5/11-605.3, allows municipalities to use revenue generated from the higher fines to establish and maintain safety infrastructure within the zone and to fund safety programming.
- **Bicycle Parking Ordinance:** In order to encourage residents to ride their bikes, a key component is to place adequate supportive infrastructure. Bicycle parking is one such component. The Village should therefore revise the zoning ordinance to require bike parking at key commercial and residential sites.

## Moving Forward

The recommendations outlined in this section should be implemented in a phased and streamlined manner to avoid straining existing staff and financial resources. In the two years following plan adoption, the Village should focus on the following tasks to help move the Plan recommendations forward and lay the foundation for infrastructure improvements.

### Year One Actions

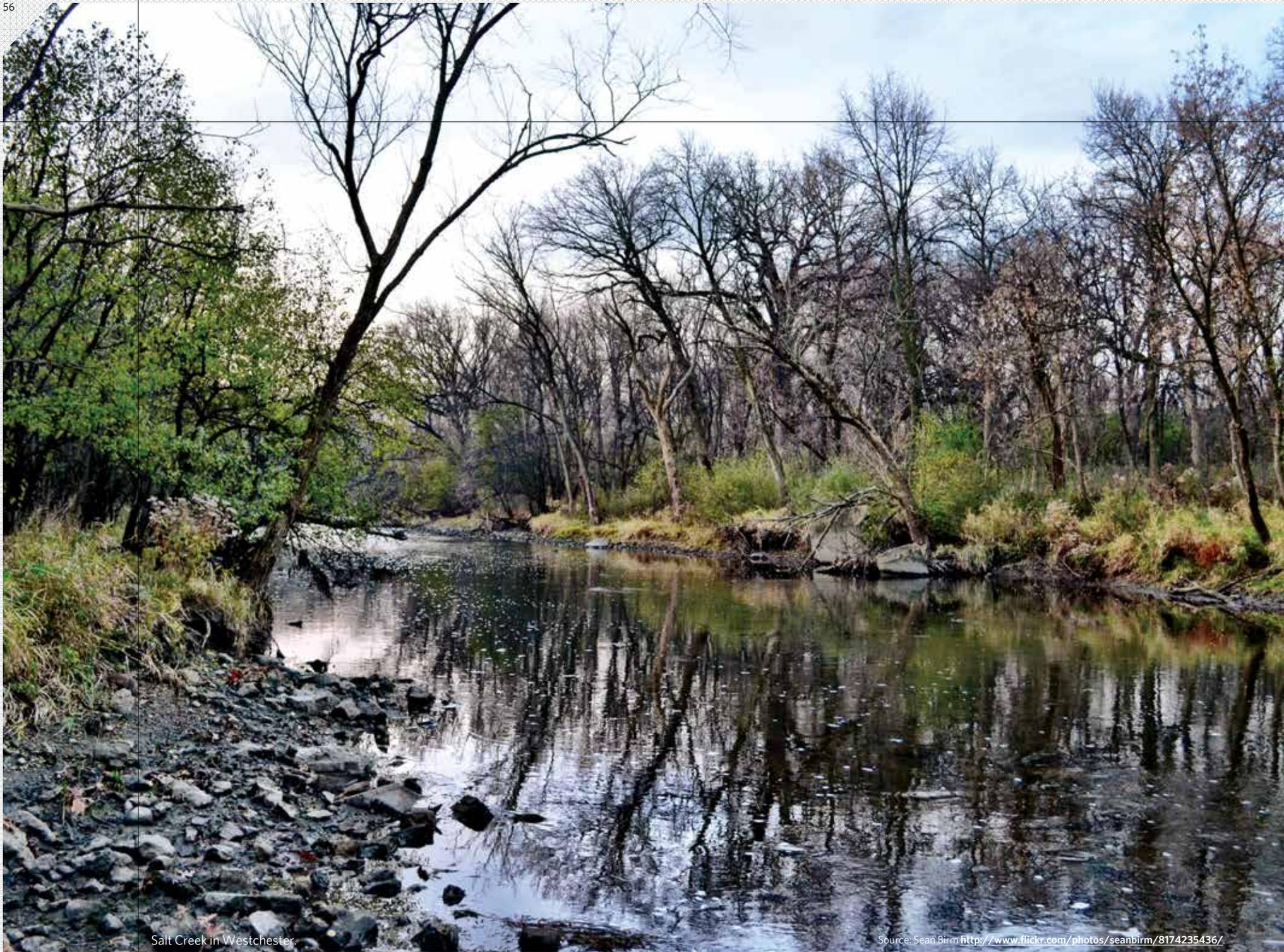
The first action to be undertaken by the Public Works Department after Plan adoption is the creation of a new SIP. Similar to the process followed in 2006, the Village could hire an engineering firm to re-evaluate the condition of pavements and create a roadway reconstruction plan for the next five years. In addition to creating the new program, Village officials should continue to promote existing programs and initiatives that help maintain local ROWs. The Public Works Department should advertise the Sidewalk Replacement Program (50/50 Program) through various media outlets, including the Village's website, monthly newsletter, and local cable channel. The program should also be promoted through the Chamber of Commerce, Park District, and public library website.

From a transit standpoint, the Community Development Department should undertake a survey of residents to understand ridership and commuter characteristics. Among other topics, the survey should identify effectiveness of township and Pace services, gaps in service, desired types of service, and destinations that residents would like to connect to using transit. The results of this survey should provide the Village with a starting point to continue discussions with Pace and begin discussions with Proviso Township on introducing new services or refining existing services.

### Year Two Actions

The second year should see the implementation of the newly created SIP. Additionally, the Village should reach out to IDOT to identify improvements to state owned routes running through the community. The Public Works Department should begin by undertaking a survey of roadway issues along state routes along with a prioritization of issues that are major. The results should be presented to IDOT officials followed by a discussion of next steps.

The Village should begin the creation of an Active Transportation Plan. To explore funding options, officials should set up a meeting with non-profit bicycle advocacy group Active Transportation Alliance, an organization that has undertaken several such studies in the Chicago region. Based on discussions, the Village should apply for grants in partnership with Active Trans.



Salt Creek in Westchester.

Source: Sean Birm <http://www.flickr.com/photos/seanbirm/8174235436/>

# Chapter 7

## Enhancing the Natural Environment

Westchester will be a healthy community with open space opportunities available to residents for physical activity, environmentally-friendly development and business practices, and services that meet the needs of the entire community.

### Key Issues and Challenges

When it comes to natural resources, Westchester faces challenges similar to many Cook County communities that are mature and developed — flooding caused by an aging infrastructure and decreasing permeable surfaces, as well as limited opportunities for recreation within the community.

There are two areas in Westchester within the 100-year floodplain (see Figure 16. Floodplains). Residential areas on the north side along Addison Creek are prone to flooding while a tributary of Salt Creek runs roughly west to east a few blocks north of 31st Street, impacting that part of the community. Both areas have experienced flooding in 2006, 2008, 2010, and 2013, causing damage to property. According to the Village's 2012 Multi-Hazard Mitigation Plan, damage of property and property loss due to flooding has cost the Village over \$30 million. As with typical subdivision design, storm sewers were designed to handle the ten-year storm event (which equates to about 2.5 inches of rain in a 24-hour period), which is being exceeded more frequently lately, thus overland flows and street flooding are more prevalent. Storm sewers within the Village are tributary to Addison Creek or Salt Creek. As creek levels rise during storm events, the ability for storm sewers to discharge becomes limited. During extreme storm events, storm sewers reach their capacity and cannot drain which causes localized flooding. In terms of existing regulations to mitigate flooding, the Village's Community Development Department requires all development within the 100-year floodplain to meet requirements within the Village's floodplain ordinance prior to beginning any work.

The Village of Westchester is a member of the National Flood Insurance Program's (NFIP) Community Rating System (CRS). This voluntary incentive program recognizes and encourages community floodplain management activities that exceed the minimum NFIP requirements. As a result, flood insurance premium rates are discounted to reflect the reduced flood risk.

There is a direct correlation between the quantity and quality of open space and residents' quality of life. Providing Westchester residents with greater recreational amenities and easier access to those amenities is therefore a key component of improving community health. In terms of parks and open areas, the Village possesses some unique attributes that present new opportunities as well as challenges. Despite nearly a quarter of the community being dedicated to open areas, large swaths of land are unavailable to community residents for daily recreation. This includes the 270 acre Chicago Highlands Golf Course, a private development, used mostly by visitors from outside the community. Wolf Road Prairie is an 80 acre nature preserve co-owned by the FPDCC and the Illinois Department of Natural Resources. The local nonprofit group Save the Prairie Society is the advocate for the Wolf Road Prairie and serves as the managing stewardship group, coordinates volunteer efforts, and provides educational opportunities. According to the Save the Prairie Society, the Prairie is home to more than 360 native plant species and unique habitat. The Westchester Park District and the School District 92 1/2 account for the remaining 180 acres of park space in the Village.



## Recommendations

Recommended strategies in this section will help the Village successfully mitigate flooding in residential areas and improve recreational amenities and facilities for the entire community.

### Flood Mitigation

#### Mid-Term Strategy (3-5 years)

##### *Incorporate best management practices to reduce stormwater run-off*

In terms of policies, adopting best management practices would allow Village officials to keep Addison Creek and Salt Creek clean and prevent flooding at the local level. As both creeks are accommodating surface water and stormwater run-off, the Village should implement and also encourage businesses and residents to implement measures that reduce runoff including construction of bio-swales, dry wells, pervious pavements, rain barrels, and others.

The Village's Public Works Department should explore the creation of a stormwater ordinance that outlines a series of techniques to control stormwater run-off for new developments and existing developments looking to expand. Alternatively, the Village could adopt the Cook County Watershed Management Ordinance into the Village's Municipal Code. Cook County adopted this ordinance in October, 2013, which will take effect on May 1, 2014. The Watershed Management Ordinance outlines uniform stormwater management regulations and best management practices (including green infrastructure) for Cook County. The ordinance will benefit a village like Westchester by reducing stormwater runoff and minimizing the impact of new development on adjacent properties.



Wolf Road Prairie Nature Preserve.  
Source: Jim Watkins.



### Ongoing Strategy

#### ***Implement actions identified in 2012 Multi-Hazard Mitigation Plan***

In 2013, the Village adopted the Multi-Hazard Mitigation Plan (MHMP). The Plan provides a long-term strategy to reduce disaster losses experienced by the Village. Specifically regarding flood mitigation, the Plan provides a number of mitigation goals and actions to help achieve those goals. The goals include:

- Improve capacity of Village draining system
- Implement, maintain, and update programs for drainage systems
- Develop education and outreach programs to reach all citizens regarding potential mitigation hazards
- Continue participation in the National Flood Insurance Program
- Incorporate Hazard Mitigation Plan into other municipal plans (e.g. zoning ordinance, building code, land use plans, capital improvement plan, etc.)

The Plan is an excellent guide for the Village to reduce flooding and improve the water quality of Addison Creek and Salt Creek. The Plan should be revisited on an annual basis to review accomplishments and shortfalls, and adjustments in resource allocation made accordingly.

#### ***Implement actions identified in Sanitary Sewer Mitigation and Corrective Action Plan***

Since the 1990s, no major rehabilitation work has been performed on the sanitary sewer system within the Village, resulting in increased flooding. The 2010 rain events that caused widespread damage to properties in the Village necessitated the creation of a comprehensive mitigation plan. The Village retained the services of a private engineering firm to prepare a Sanitary Sewer Mitigation and Corrective Action Plan to reduce the amount of inflow and infiltration in the sanitary sewer system. The report presents a list of future projects to be considered by the Village to improve its storm sewer system and prevent flooding in residential areas. The report also contains cost of improvements and assigns medium and high priority ratings to recommended actions. The Plan is phased over a number of years keeping in mind the restricted municipal budget. The Village should continue to implement the recommendations as per the phasing identified in the Sanitary Sewer Mitigation and Corrective Action Plan.



Sweetbriar Park.

Source: Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning.

#### ***Encourage residents to participate in Village's Rain Barrel Program***

The Village has partnered with the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District (MWRD) to offer a rain barrel program for Westchester residents. Under this program, residents can purchase rain barrels at the cost of \$58 per barrel from the Village. The cost includes an installation kit as well as transportation of the barrel to the resident's home. The Village should continue to advertise this program through its newsletter, local cable channel, and website, as well as at Village events held throughout the year. The Village should also partner with the Park and School districts to disseminate information about the program to residents.

#### ***Actively participate in MWRD's Addison Creek flood control project***

MWRD has identified stormwater management capital improvements along Salt Creek and Addison Creek. The Addison Creek Flood Control project will address flooding throughout Northlake, Stone Park, Melrose Park, Bellwood, and Westchester. The project involves the construction of channel improvements and a reservoir in two phases. The Village's leadership, including the Village President, should continue to coordinate closely with MWRD and partner communities as this project progresses.

## Enhance and Expand Existing Resources

### Mid-Term Strategy (3-5 years)

#### ***Create a Parks and Open Space Master Plan***

The Community Development Department and Westchester Park District should work together to create a Village-wide Parks and Open Space Master Plan. The intent of this exercise would be to identify open space and recreation issues and potential partnerships to create solutions. The Plan will evaluate all existing facilities and natural resources, assess public needs via surveys and workshops, and develop recommendations related to pedestrian and vehicular access and circulation to parks, parking, recreational activities, and options for facilities.

One of the key issues that should be addressed within the Master Plan is access to open space and the distribution of open space throughout the community. There are significant differences in the amount of open space, with a majority of open space located south of Cermak Road. One way to address this spatial inequity is by ensuring sufficient pedestrian, bike, and transit access to regional open space areas in proximity to the Village. The Master Plan should build upon recommendations contained within the 2012 WCMC Bicycle Plan.

The Master Plan should identify opportunities for creating additional open space. The Comprehensive Plan recommends creating a central open space within the proposed Village Center to facilitate community activities and attract residents to the Center. The Village and Park District should continue to apply for grants in collaboration with non-profit organization KaBOOM! to build additional open spaces as well as new facilities within existing parks. KaBOOM! is a national non-profit dedicated to developing the nation's recreational infrastructure for children. There are a number of grants offered through the agency ranging from new construction grants to enhancement and maintenance grants.



Fransozenbusch Prairie House and Wolf Road Prairie Nature Preserve.  
Source: Jim Watkins.

### Ongoing Strategy

#### ***Continue to support the Park District's Community Gardening Program***

There are many benefits to developing community gardens in Westchester, including enhanced neighborhood character and sense of community, increased access to locally grown produce, and decreased Village costs associated with maintenance. The Park District currently operates a community gardening program. The Village should continue to support the Park District with planting gardens in appropriate locations, such as within open space areas and available portions of schoolyards.

#### ***Support preservation of Wolf Road Prairie***

Wolf Road Prairie Nature Preserve is a unique asset for the Village from not only an environmental standpoint, but also branding and economic development. The Village's leadership should support the efforts of the FPDCC, Illinois Department of Natural Resources, and the Illinois Nature Preserves Commission to protect the native communities and wetlands that are present on the site. Highlighting the Prairie's unique ecosystem could be an effective marketing tool for the Village to attract visitors from all over the region, supporting local economic activity in the process or even attracting new residents. The Prairie could also help the Village create a unique brand for itself as a leader in environmental preservation and sustainability, something that is truly unique to Westchester.

## Moving Forward

The recommendations outlined in this section should be implemented in a phased and streamlined manner to avoid straining existing staff and financial resources. Three Village agencies will play leadership roles in implementing the recommendations discussed in this chapter: Public Works Department, Community Development Department, and Westchester Park District. In the two years following plan adoption, the Village and Park District should focus on the following tasks to help move the Plan recommendations forward.

### Year One Actions

The Hazard Mitigation Plan contains several short-term flood mitigation actions that should be implemented immediately after Plan adoption. This effort should be led by the Community Development Department. Department officials should begin by creating a phasing schedule for actions identified within the Plan and initiate discussions with individual departments and organizations for implementation, e.g. the Community Development Department could provide assistance in the production of education and outreach materials related to flood mitigation methods. The Public Works Department should also reach out to property owners and landlords through home owner associations and notifications in the monthly Village newsletter to encourage participation in the rain barrel program.

### Year Two Actions

The Westchester Park District should kick-start the creation of a Parks and Open Space Master Plan in coordination with the Village's Community Development Department. The Master Plan could be undertaken by existing staff within the Park District or by a private consultant with experience in creating Parks and Recreation Master Plans.

The Park District should continue to lead the development of a community gardening program. Officials should research and reach out to communities that have implemented and are successfully running similar programs, e.g. City of Berwyn, Village of Forest Park. Based on the information collected, an action plan for installation of community gardens should be formulated. Additional partners for this initiative include the Village and School District 92 1/2. If needed, the three organizations should jointly apply for grants to fund the construction of community gardens.



Village of Westchester neighborhood park.  
Source: Jim Watkins.



Retail area along Cermak Road.

# List of Figures

Figure 1. Study area and regional location

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Figure 2. Village of Westchester Comprehensive Plan Timeline

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Figure 3. Existing land use

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Figure 4. Existing land use, acres and area

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Figure 5. Future land use plan

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Figure 6. Land use changes

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Figure 7. Residential areas plan

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Figure 8. Commercial areas plan

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Figure 9. Existing site layout for Cermak and Mannheim roads retail district

---

Figure 10. Concept plan for proposed Village Center area at Cermak and Mannheim roads

---

Figure 11. Transportation plan

---

Figure 12. Impact Speed vs. Pedestrian Injury

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Figure 13. Existing conditions of intersection at Roosevelt Road and Westchester Boulevard

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Figure 14. Proposed intersection improvements at Roosevelt Road and Westchester Boulevard

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Figure 15. Open space and trails network

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Figure 16. Floodplains

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# Acronyms

<b>ADA</b>	Americans with Disabilities Act	<b>MMC</b>	Metropolitan Mayors Caucus
<b>ART</b>	Arterial Rapid Transit	<b>MPC</b>	Metropolitan Planning Council
<b>C</b>	Commercial	<b>MU</b>	Mixed-Use
<b>CEDA</b>	Community and Economic Development Association of Cook County	<b>MWRD</b>	Metropolitan Water Reclamation District
<b>CMAP</b>	Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning	<b>n4a</b>	National Association of Area Agencies on Aging
<b>CRS</b>	Community Rating System	<b>NFIP</b>	National Flood Insurance Program
<b>CTA</b>	Chicago Transit Authority	<b>OS</b>	Open Space
<b>EI2</b>	Energy Impact Illinois	<b>ROW</b>	Right-of-Way
<b>FPDCC</b>	Forest Preserve District of Cook County	<b>RTA</b>	Regional Transportation Authority
<b>I</b>	Industrial	<b>SFAR</b>	Single-Family Attached Residential
<b>IC</b>	Illinois Central	<b>SFDR</b>	Single-Family Detached Residential
<b>IDOT</b>	Illinois Department of Transportation	<b>SFDAMFR</b>	Single-Family Detached/Attached and Multi-Family Residential
<b>ILAPA</b>	Illinois Chapter of the American Planning Association	<b>SFR</b>	Single-Family Residential
<b>IN</b>	Institutional	<b>SIP</b>	Street Improvement Plan
<b>LIHEAP</b>	Low Income Housing Energy Assistance Program	<b>SRTS</b>	Safe Routes to School
<b>LTA</b>	Local Technical Assistance	<b>TIF</b>	Tax Increment Financing
<b>MFR</b>	Multi-Family Residential	<b>TSP</b>	Transit Signal Priority
<b>MFT</b>	Motor Fuel Tax	<b>WCMC</b>	West Central Municipal Conference
<b>MHMP</b>	Multi-Hazard Mitigation Plan		

Back cover, lower left: Comprehensive Plan Community Workshop.  
Source: Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning.

Back cover, lower right: Bungalows located in Westchester neighborhood.  
Source: Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning.





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