

Village of La Grange Park

# 31<sup>st</sup> Street Corridor Redevelopment Study

Prepared by  
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in Association with  
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May 2008



## Acknowledgements

The Village of La Grange Park thanks the residents, property owners, business owners, and other stakeholders who participated in the 31st Street Corridor Redevelopment Study planning process.

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# Executive Summary

The publication of the 31<sup>st</sup> Street Corridor Redevelopment Study (the “Study”) culminates a deliberate and transparent planning process that began in October 2007. It was a true team effort to which Village elected officials, Economic Development Commission (EDC) members, Village staff, property owners, business owners, residents, and other stakeholders contributed considerable time and energy. The Study was energized by a strong consensus among project stakeholders regarding the need to improve the safety, appearance, and economic performance of the 31<sup>st</sup> Street Corridor.

Each of the three commercial districts within the Corridor faces unique challenges. However, there are important redevelopment opportunities that can be pursued immediately. Based on analysis of the marketplace and existing conditions, we recommend a strategy that focuses on redevelopment at two key locations.

The first is the commercial district at the 31<sup>st</sup> Street / La Grange Road intersection. This location has the highest traffic volumes of three commercial district within the Corridor, and stakeholders interviewed for the Study indicated national retailers have already expressed interest in this intersection. The challenge here will be the assembly of contiguous parcels that create a site large enough to make redevelopment economically viable. The Village should do everything it can to promote market-supported redevelopment at this location.

The second key location is the area around the 31<sup>st</sup> Street / Kemman Avenue intersection in the eastern portion of the Central Commercial District between Homestead Road and Blanchan Avenue.

Analysis indicates that the primary and secondary markets can support neighborhood-oriented redevelopment in this commercial district. However, there are two significant challenges.

The first derives from the Chicago Regional Environmental and Transportation Efficiency (CREATE) program’s targeted grade separation of 31<sup>st</sup> Street at the Indiana Harbor Belt (IHB) Railroad. This potential improvement, which has neither been scheduled or funded at the time that this Study was published, will likely have impacts on the properties along 31<sup>st</sup> Street that are located within 300 feet to 400 feet of the railroad (the first 1½-2 blocks east and west of the railroad). The Village should engage IDOT to help ensure that uncertainties about the timing of the grade separation are resolved in a timely and beneficial manner.

The second challenge is the size of existing parcels. Lower traffic volumes means that successful shops and restaurants will have to attract visitors from a wider market who commute to the District by automobile. The small sizes of individual parcels do not provide the space for on-site parking that meets contemporary market requirements and also the space for structures of sufficient size to be economically viable

The blocks around the 31<sup>st</sup> Street / Kemman Avenue intersection are outside the area that will be most intensely affected by the construction of a grade separated railroad crossing, and thus provide potentially attractive sites for redevelopment. However, analysis suggests that the only way that development will be economically feasible is if one or more off-street public parking facilities are created that can be shared by all businesses on these and other blocks in the Central Commercial District. Shared parking facilities will allow parcels to be assembled or redeveloped without having to provide space for on-site parking. To expedite redevelopment and help ensure that an adequate parking supply is maintained over time, the Village will likely have to create and manage the parking facilities or form a public / private partnership to do so. These parking facilities can be located north and / or south of 31<sup>st</sup> Street.

There are also potential redevelopment opportunities in the Central Commercial District west of the IHB Railroad. However, significant redevelopment of these blocks and the blocks immediately east of the railroad tracks will likely not take place until investor confidence is restored by the successful resolution of the issues related to the grade separation.

In the interim, the Village should take the steps necessary to retain the most successful businesses along the Corridor, promote market supported restoration / adaptive reuse, and enforce building codes. In addition, the Village should encourage property owners to improve commercial signage, screen parking lots from view, and make other landscaping enhancements. The Village should also restripe Street between the IHB Railroad and Meadowcrest Road to create a continuous center turn lane, reinstate grants for façade improvements, improve pedestrian crosswalks, and make additional landscaping enhancements within the 31<sup>st</sup> Street right-of-way to improve safety and appearances.

Regardless of the role that the Village chooses to play, La Grange Park residents enjoy the special advantage of having choices. Its excellent west suburban location, quality schools, and attractive residential neighborhoods mean that the community is likely to remain a desirable place to live and raise families for years to come. These conditions, along with the strength of the surrounding market, provide plenty of reasons to be optimistic about the Village’s long-term prospects.

It is important to understand that despite the exceptional efforts made by Corridor stakeholders to identify and reach consensus on opportunities for improvements along the 31<sup>st</sup> Street Corridor, redevelopment cannot and should not happen all at once. The Village of La Grange Park does not have a legacy of aggressively supporting private market redevelopment. Patience, perseverance, and good communications are needed to create and sustain a program of continuous and incremental improvement. Extraordinary efforts will be required to engage stakeholders and reach consensus on the strategies that best meet the needs of the community. The spirit of respect and cooperation that such an endeavor requires can endure and serve a vital community resource for generations to come.

Respectfully submitted,

Hitchcock Design Group  
Business Districts, Inc.  
Kenig, Lindgren, O’Hara, Aboona, Inc.  
Topographis

# Introduction

## About the 31<sup>st</sup> Street Corridor Redevelopment Study

The Village of La Grange Park initiated the Redevelopment Study in order to improve the safety of motorists, pedestrians, and cyclists, to maximize the economic benefits the Corridor can offer to the community, and to improve the overall image and identity of the Village. The Redevelopment Study was funded in part by an \$31,500 Illinois Tomorrow Corridor Improvement grant, with \$3,500 coming from Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) and \$28,000 coming from the federal government. The goals of these grants are to promote land use and transportation solutions to reduce the growth of traffic congestion, create mixed use development plans, and to improve community walkability.

In October 2007, the Village of La Grange Park engaged the Hitchcock Design Group Team to undertake the Redevelopment Study. The process was guided by input from the Village’s Ad Hoc Economic Development Commission comprised of residents, property owners, business owners, and merchants, and managed on a daily basis by Village staff. In addition, input was solicited from a number of corridor stakeholders, including nearby residents, public officials, the Park District, school officials, IDOT, business owners, property owners, and merchants. The planning process included public presentations to solicit community feedback, and a project website to provide regular progress updates and an easily accessible source for project documents.

Hitchcock Design Group’s team, which included Business Districts, Inc. (marketplace and real estate development analysis), Kenig, Lindgren, O’Hara, and Aboona, Inc. (transportation), and Topografis (architecture), worked closely with public officials, the EDC, IDOT, and others within the community to produce recommendations that aligned with the Village’s long term economic development goals and the desired improvements sought by project stakeholders.

## Study Area

The 31<sup>st</sup> Corridor Redevelopment Study includes the entire portion of 31<sup>st</sup> Street that is located within La Grange Park’s municipal boundaries (from Maple Avenue on the east to La Grange Road on the west), as shown in the map on the following page. The Corridor is approximately 1.2 miles in length.

The corridor is bisected by the IHB Railroad. There are variety of retail, commercial, industrial, recreational, and residential uses along the corridor.

The corridor includes three existing commercial districts. The West Commercial District is between La Grange Road and Meadowcrest Road. The Central Commercial District is located between Homestead Avenue and Kemman Avenue and is bisected by the IHB Railroad. The East Commercial District includes the block north of 31<sup>st</sup> Street between Terrace and Maple Avenue.

## General Scope of Work

The 31<sup>st</sup> Street Corridor Redevelopment Study included three distinct phases:

- 1) The **Opportunity Analysis** examined resources, marketplace conditions, and stakeholder interests. The Opportunity Analysis included a review of jurisdictional interests, an examination of real estate investment dynamics, physical conditions, stakeholder interviews, and a public workshop. At the conclusion of the first phase, a Preliminary Opportunity Analysis report was prepared and submitted to the EDC and the Village Board.
- 2) Based on a conceptual framework created from the findings of the Opportunity Analysis phase, a number of **Alternative Strategies** were developed and analyzed. These strategies were presented to the EDC and the Village Board in a public meeting. Based on feedback received, a preferred strategy was selected to advance and refine.
- 3) Under the direction of the EDC and the Village Board, the preferred strategy was refined and the final recommendations were presented to the public. The entire planning process was then documented in this **31<sup>st</sup> Street Corridor Redevelopment Study report** that is to be used as a reference to guide future redevelopment initiatives and 31<sup>st</sup> Street improvements.



# Study Area



# Opportunity Analysis Summary

A number of preliminary conclusions were drawn from the information that was gathered, analyzed, and presented to Village staff and the Economic Development Commission during the Opportunity Analysis phase of the project. These conclusions are summarized at right. The complete Opportunity Analysis report is included in the Appendix on page 34.



**Marketplace**

- Demographics
- Trade areas
- Trends
- Similar communities
- Investment conditions

**Resources**

- Land
- Finances
- Infrastructure
- Organizations
- Culture

**Stakeholder Interests**

- Jurisdictional interests and regulations
- Land use / zoning
- Land ownership
- Public opinion

**Marketplace Summary**

- *Challenging Marketplace*  
The primary market is sufficient to support a neighborhood-serving cluster of business, and the Corridor can attract significant spending from non-resident markets like Brookfield Zoo patrons and commuters. However, current businesses and prospects are impeded by poor co-tenancies, obsolete buildings / sizes, and relatively low traffic counts along 31<sup>st</sup> Street east of La Grange Road.
- *Challenging Development Economics*  
Because the existing 31<sup>st</sup> Street properties offer reasonable returns, it will be difficult to convince owners to undertake risky, expensive redevelopment. Marketplace parking requirements will also be difficult to accommodate on site even if multiple parcels are assembled for redevelopment.
- *Declining Village Sales Tax Revenues*  
One of the primary reasons the Village initiated this study was to understand the Corridor’s potential to increase sales tax revenues that have been declining throughout the decade. While, preliminary analysis suggests there are opportunities, investor confidence will play a key role in the timing and form of the improvements.



The central commercial area between the IHB Railroad tracks and Kemman Avenue.

Opportunity Analysis | Marketplace  
Who Should Shop/Dine Along 31<sup>st</sup>?

**Primary Market**  
Neighborhood residents  
- Pedestrians within ½ mile  
- Drivers within 5 minutes

**Bonus Market**  
Commuters  
- Kemman connects to Ike  
- 31<sup>st</sup> connects Oak Brook/Riverside  
Brookfield Zoo patrons  
Over 15,000 employees within 5-minute drive

Opportunity Analysis | Marketplace  
Business That Best Serve Traditional Neighborhoods

<p><b>High Activity Businesses (Anchors)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Convenience markets                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Ace</li> <li>- 7-11</li> </ul> </li> <li>Drug stores</li> <li>Exercise facilities                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- YMCA</li> </ul> </li> <li>Banks                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Mid America/National City</li> </ul> </li> <li>Restaurants</li> </ul>	<p><b>Co-tenants</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Gift stores</li> <li>- Floral shops</li> <li>- Hair care</li> <li>- Nail care</li> <li>- Auto service</li> <li>- Carryout restaurants</li> <li>- Pet grooming</li> <li>- Medical/dental offices</li> <li>- Unique boutique</li> <li>- Children’s activities</li> </ul>
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## Resources

### Transportation and Parking

- *Unpredictable and Inconvenient Railroad Operations*  
The inconveniences caused by the at-grade railroad crossing in the Central Commercial District are universally acknowledged by Corridor stakeholders. However, a bigger challenge is the Chicago Regional Environmental and Transportation Efficiency (CREATE) program's targeting of the rail crossing for eventual grade separation. Uncertainties about the timing of the project discourage investment in properties that may be affected by the grade separation.
- *Inadequate Parking Supply and Distribution*  
There are not enough parking spaces in Central Commercial District to support the marketplace demand that destination oriented businesses, such as restaurants, require for customers. The parking currently available in the Central Business District is unevenly distributed.

### Existing Site Conditions

- *Small Parcel Sizes and Depths*  
The small sizes and depths of individual parcels challenge investors' ability to redevelop profitably. Successful development sites will likely require parcel assembly.
- *Multiple Properties Ownerships*  
Small parcels with many owners increase the complexity of assembling parcels into development sites of sufficient size.
- *Run Down Appearances*  
There was a strong consensus among project stakeholders that the run down appearances of some properties in the commercial districts do not align with the Village's desired image.



View east from Barnsdale Road towards the IHB Railroad crossing.

## Stakeholders

- *Differing Generational Perspective*  
Many Corridor stakeholders believe that redevelopment will be challenged by the lack of community consensus—as evidenced by the recent comprehensive planning process—about potential negative impacts (increased traffic volumes, parking) and other related issues (building heights, density, architectural design).
- *Uncertainty about the Village's Role in Redevelopment*  
The role that the Village plays in facilitating Corridor redevelopment has the potential to affect both the development timeframe and investor confidence.
- *Lack of Consensus on the Village's "Centerplace"*  
There is no strong consensus as to whether the Corridor's Central Commercial District or the Village Market district should be the Village's centerpiece.



November 2007 public workshop at the Recreation Center.

A graphic titled "Village of La Grange Park | 31st Corridor Redevelopment Study Stakeholder Input". It features a collage of images and text related to the stakeholder input process. The text states: "Stakeholder input was solicited early in the planning process. One-on-one interviews were conducted with a variety of Corridor stakeholders. Participants in a November public workshop generated and prioritized a number of concepts covering a variety of topics." The collage includes a "Public Workshop" poster, a "Public Workshop Summary" poster, and a "Stakeholder Interviews / Strengths" poster. The "Stakeholder Interviews / Strengths" poster lists several points: "Village scale and character", "Traffic volumes on La Grange Rd", "Zoo, parks, schools draw visitors", "Retail legacy of core district", "Good demographics, more families in last 10 years", "Good location (WMA, Ace, Target, meat market, banks)", "Consensus to do something positive", "Strong desire for quality restaurant/family gathering places", and "Recent streetscape investment". The "Public Workshop Summary" poster lists: "Family casual restaurants", "More convenient parking", and "Additional streetscape".

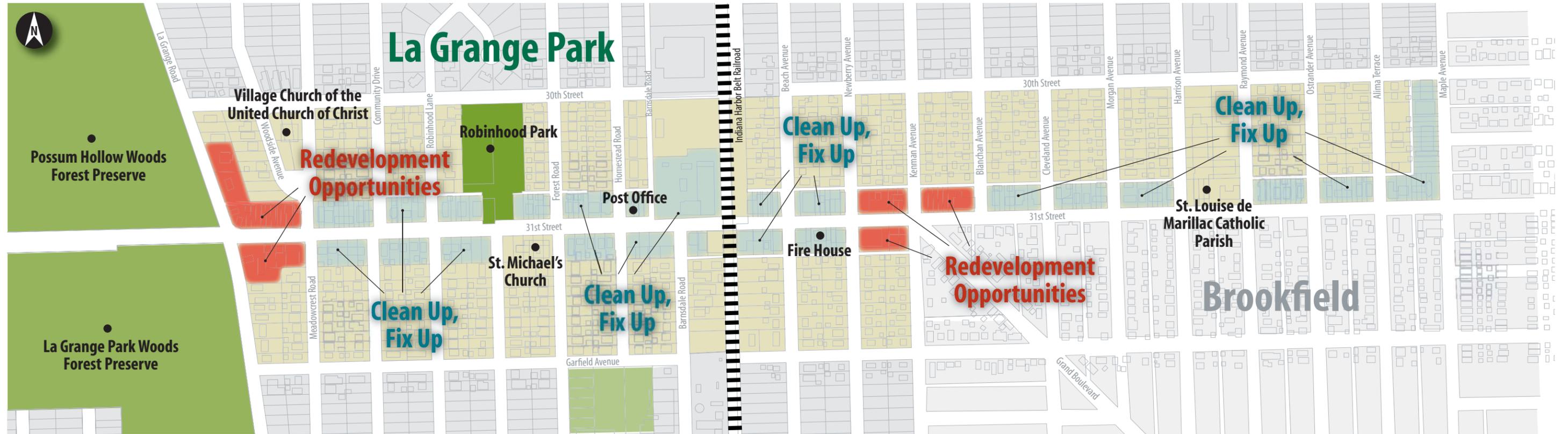
## Project Goal

Create high-quality neighborhood commercial and social centers that reflect La Grange Park's unique image and identity.

## Project Objectives

- Strengthen the existing desirable uses.
- Identify sites for new commercial uses.
- Strengthen marketability and identity.
- Improve visitor convenience, comfort, and safety.
- Improve sales tax revenues.
- Consider complementary residential options.
- Clarify uncertainties that discourage investment.

## Short-term Opportunities (1-10 Years)



Based on the findings of the Opportunity Analysis, the project goal and objectives were refined and finalized, and a comprehensive strategy was established to guide the alternative strategies generated in the second phase of the project. The comprehensive strategy includes short-term opportunities summarized at right and a long-term vision summarized on the facing page.

### Restoration / Adaptive Reuse / Public Improvements

The Village should support a public / private program of continuous and incremental improvements to commercial, residential, and institutional properties along the Corridor.

The Village should take the steps necessary to retain the most successful businesses along the Corridor, promote market supported restoration / adaptive reuse, and enforce building codes. In addition, the Village should encourage property owners to improve commercial signage, screen parking lots from view, and make other landscaping enhancements.

The Village should also restripe 31<sup>st</sup> Street between the IHB Railroad and Meadowcrest Road to create a continuous center turn lane, reinstate grants for façade improvements, improve pedestrian crosswalks, and make additional landscaping enhancements within the 31<sup>st</sup> Street right-of-way to improve safety and appearances.

### Redevelopment Opportunities

There are two short-term redevelopment opportunities.

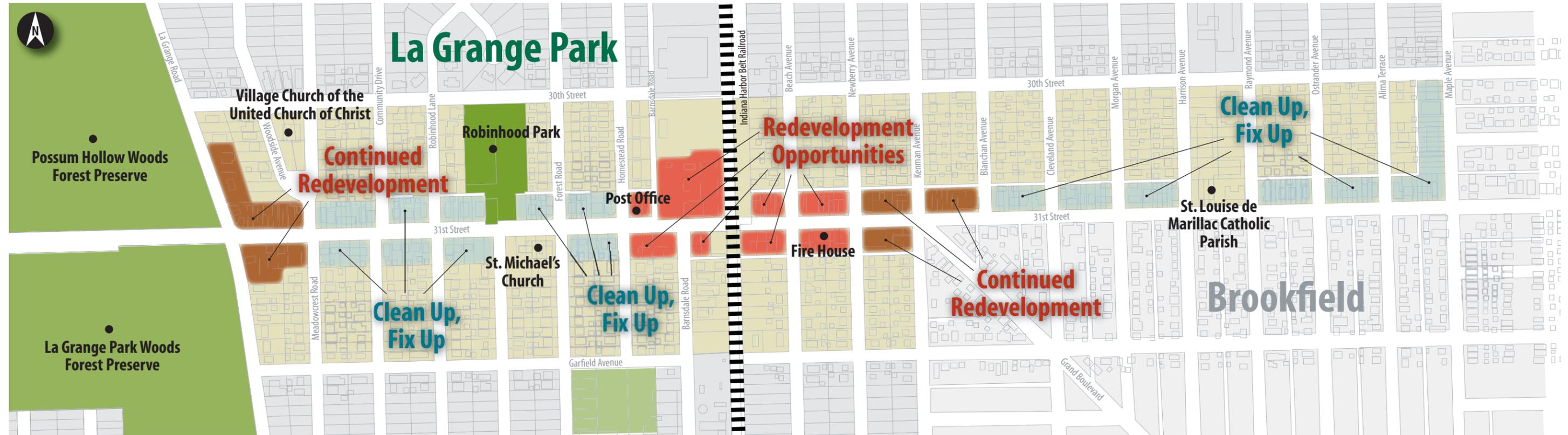
The first priority should be the commercial district at the 31<sup>st</sup> Street / La Grange Road intersection. This location has the highest traffic volumes of three commercial district within the Corridor, and stakeholders interviewed for the Study indicated national retailers have already expressed interest in this intersection. The challenge here will be the assembly of contiguous parcels that create a site large enough to make redevelopment economically viable. The Village should do everything it can to promote market-supported redevelopment at this location.

The second key location is the area around the 31<sup>st</sup> Street / Kemman Avenue intersection in the eastern portion of the Central Commercial District between Homestead Road and Blanchan Avenue.

The blocks around the 31<sup>st</sup> Street / Kemman Avenue intersection are outside the area that will be most intensely affected by the construction of a grade separated railroad crossing identified by the CREATE program.

However, analysis suggests that the only way that development will be economically feasible is if one or more off-street public parking facilities are created that can be shared by all businesses on these and other blocks in the Central Commercial District. Shared parking facilities will allow parcels to be assembled or redeveloped without having to provide space for on-site parking. These parking facilities can be located north and / or south of 31<sup>st</sup> Street. To facilitate redevelopment, the Village will likely have to partner with private investors and / or take a leading role in creating the public parking facilities.

Long-term Vision (10-plus Years)



The long-term vision for the 31<sup>st</sup> Street Corridor anticipates a continuation of the principle strategies identified in the short-term opportunities scenario.

**Restoration / Adaptive Reuse / Public Improvements**

Commercial properties in the East Commercial District and the residential / institutional properties outside of the commercial districts (shown in blue above) should continue a program of continuous, incremental improvements focused on restoration / adaptive reuse, improved commercial signage, screened parking, and landscape enhancements.

**Redevelopment Opportunities**

The properties identified in the short-term opportunities (shown in dark red above) continue with market driven infill redevelopment activities. Completing the grade separation of 31<sup>st</sup> Street / IHB Railroad removes uncertainties and makes the properties between the railroad tracks and Newberry Avenue attractive for redevelopment (shown in red). The same is also true of commercial properties west of the IHB Railroad (also shown in red). The combined parcels north of 31<sup>st</sup> Street between the railroad tracks and Barnsdale Road make an especially attractive location for a neighborhood-focused fresh market and other convenience retail.



# Recommendations

# Recommendations: West Commercial District

The West Commercial District has the highest traffic volumes of any location within the Corridor study area. The average daily traffic counts of approximately 27,000 vehicles on La Grange Road north and south of 31<sup>st</sup> Street, and 24,000 vehicles on 31<sup>st</sup> Street west of La Grange Road provide the levels of exposure that are attractive to retailers and restaurants.

As discussed in the Opportunity Analysis, off-street parking that meets the market requirements of contemporary retail and restaurants must be provided for successful, destination-oriented redevelopment along the Corridor. The northeast and southeast corners each have sufficient space for buildings and off-street parking that meet the needs of contemporary commercial developments. The key challenge will be investors' ability to assemble enough contiguous parcels to make redevelopment economically feasible.

The West Commercial District is one of the Village's most highly visible gateways. The appearance and quality of new development within the District will have significant impacts on visitors' perceptions of La Grange Park. It is imperative that new development within the district maintain the highest design and construction standards.

The perspective on the facing page illustrates key principles to guide redevelopment. Even though the uses and architectural design of future proposals may vary from this concept, the principles provide a framework that will help to ensure that new development meets the goal and objectives of the 31<sup>st</sup> Street Corridor Redevelopment Study.

- 1** Create convenient off-street parking located behind or to the sides of buildings
- 2** Build to the sidewalk line on La Grange Road and 31<sup>st</sup> Street
- 3** Make the street sides of buildings highly permeable (place store entrances and large windows on La Grange Road and 31<sup>st</sup> Street)
- 4** Promote mixed use retail / office development, with retail at ground level and offices on the floors above
- 5** Promote signature architectural design at 31<sup>st</sup> Street / La Grange Road intersection
- 6** Include design features that highlight corner locations
- 7** Add premium landscaping and streetscaping elements
- 8** Screen off-street parking from streets and adjacent residential
- 9** Widen sidewalks along La Grange Road to help ensure pedestrian comfort
- 10** Clearly identify parking facilities with attractive signage
- 11** Break up large expanses of parking surface with planted islands
- 12** Make parking lots pedestrian friendly by adding features such as well marked sidewalks and crosswalks
- 13** Encourage development that meets Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) standards
- 14** Subdivide large facades vertically with windows, columns, and other architectural features
- 15** Buildings should be well designed on all four sides
- 16** Encourage exterior wall construction that utilizes masonry, architectural precast, natural stone, cast stone, glass, or a combination of these materials
- 17** Auto oriented uses at the corner of 31<sup>st</sup> Street / La Grange Road should include high quality architectural design and materials, premium landscaping, monument signage, and nighttime lighting
- 18** Place gateway signage at the corners of 31<sup>st</sup> Street and La Grange Road
- 19** Use high quality fences and premium landscaping features to screen auto-oriented uses



Recommendations:  
West Commercial District

The West Commercial District's location is highly visible to vehicular traffic and serves as an important gateway to La Grange Park.

Redevelopment on the northeast and southeast corners of the La Grange Road / 31<sup>st</sup> Street intersection that features signature architectural design and a pedestrian friendly environment will strengthen the Village's overall image and identity.



Northeast corner of the 31<sup>st</sup> Street / La Grange Road intersection.

# Recommendations:

## Central Commercial District (East of the IHB Railroad)

Analysis indicates that the primary and secondary markets can support neighborhood-oriented redevelopment in the Central Commercial District. However, there are two significant challenges.

The first derives from the Chicago Regional Environmental and Transportation Efficiency (CREATE) program's targeted grade separation of 31<sup>st</sup> Street at the Indiana Harbor Belt (IHB) Railroad. This potential improvement will likely have impacts on the properties along 31<sup>st</sup> Street that are located within 300 feet to 400 feet of the railroad (the first 1½-2 blocks east and west of the railroad). The Village should engage IDOT to help ensure that uncertainties about the timing of the grade separation are resolved in a timely and beneficial manner.

The second challenge is the size of existing parcels. Lower traffic volumes means that successful shops and restaurants will have to attract visitors from a wider market who commute to the District by automobile. The small sizes of individual parcels do not provide the space for on-site parking that meets contemporary market requirements and also the space for structures of sufficient size to be economically viable

The blocks around the 31<sup>st</sup> Street / Kemman Avenue intersection are outside the area that will be most intensely affected by the construction of a grade separated railroad crossing, and thus provide potentially attractive sites for redevelopment. However, analysis suggests that the only way that development will be economically feasible is if one or more off-street public parking facilities are created that can be shared by all businesses on these and other blocks in the Central Commercial District. To expedite redevelopment and help ensure that an adequate parking supply is maintained over time, the Village will likely have to create and manage the parking facilities or form a public / private partnership to do so. These parking facilities can be located north and / or south of 31<sup>st</sup> Street.

Illustrated at right is the long term vision for the Central Commercial District east of the IHB Railroad. Included are key principles to guide development. It should be noted that the northwest corner of 31<sup>st</sup> Street / Kemman Avenue is an especially significant location. The site is highly visible to commuters heading to and from the Eisenhower Expressway on Kemman Avenue, forms a terminating vista for northbound traffic on Grand Boulevard, and serves as a gateway to the Village. The quality of new development at this site will set the standards for redevelopment at other locations within the District and will also have a significant impact on the Village's overall image and identity.

- 1 Create convenient off-street public parking located behind or to the sides of buildings**
- 2 Create new on-street "teaser" parking spaces and corner bump outs**
- 3 Build to the sidewalk line on 31<sup>st</sup> Street and Kemman, Newberry, and Beach Avenues**
- 4 Make the 31<sup>st</sup> Street sides of buildings highly permeable (place store entrances and large windows on 31<sup>st</sup> Street )**
- 5 Promote mixed use retail / office / residential development, with retail at ground level and office / residential on the floors above**
- 6 Promote signature architectural design at the northwest corner of 31<sup>st</sup> Street and Kemman Avenue**
- 7 Include design features that highlight corner locations**
- 8 Add premium landscaping and streetscaping elements**
- 9 Screen off-street parking from streets and adjacent residential**
- 10 Widen sidewalks along 31<sup>st</sup> Street to help ensure pedestrian comfort and provide sufficient seating space for outdoor dining**
- 11 Clearly identify parking facilities with attractive signage**
- 12 Break up large expanses of parking surface with planted islands**
- 13 Make parking lots pedestrian friendly by adding features such as well marked sidewalks and crosswalks**
- 14 Encourage development that meets Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) standards**
- 15 Subdivide large facades vertically with windows, columns, and other architectural features**
- 16 Buildings should be well designed on all four sides**
- 17 Encourage exterior wall construction that utilizes masonry, architectural precast, natural stone, cast stone, glass, or a combination of these materials**



## Recommendations:

### Central Commercial District (East of the IHB Railroad)

The challenges of redeveloping the eastern portion of the Central Commercial District between Kemman Avenue and the IHB Railroad revolve around off-street parking capacity and the timing of the CREATE program's planned grade separation of 31<sup>st</sup> Street and the IHB Railroad.

Long-term redevelopment (facing page) features mixed use with commercial at the ground level and offices or residential above, convenient, off-street public parking, and a pedestrian friendly environment with premium streetscaping features.



View east along 31<sup>st</sup> Street from the IHB Railroad tracks.



10+ Years



Additional off-street public parking is created north of 31<sup>st</sup> Street between Beach and Newberry Avenues to help enable the redevelopment of additional blocks in the Central Commercial District.

This allows additional blocks around the intersection of 31<sup>st</sup> Street, Kemman Avenue, and Grand Boulevard to redevelop and meet contemporary retailing and restaurant parking requirements.

Depending on the quantity of new commercial space created by redevelopment, ground level retail may be returned to the northwest intersection of 31<sup>st</sup> Street / Newberry Avenue, recreating a 100% corner in the heart of the Central Commercial District's eastern half.

Completing the IHB Railroad grade separation enables the final parcels on the blocks that are closest to the tracks to be redeveloped.



Uncertainties about the status of the grade separated railroad crossing may affect the timing of redevelopment in the blocks immediately north and south of 31<sup>st</sup> Street between the IHB Railroad and Newberry Avenue.

# Recommendations:

## Central Commercial District (West of the IHB Railroad)

Uncertainties about the timing of the planned grade separation of 31<sup>st</sup> Street and the IHB Railroad will likely limit significant near-term redevelopment of the parcels west of the IHB Railroad in the Central Commercial District. However, the parcels north and south of 31<sup>st</sup> Street offer sites with attractive long-term redevelopment potential. The perspective rendering on the following page illustrates one possible vision for the Central Commercial District between the IHB Railroad and Homestead Road.

On the north side of 31<sup>st</sup> Street is a fresh market / convenience store with approximately 10,000 square feet that includes adequate on-site, off-street parking. To the west are additional retailers and / or restaurants that provide supporting co-tenancies for the fresh market. An attractively landscaped plaza along 31<sup>st</sup> Street provides the surrounding neighborhood with an appealing public gathering place that strengthens the Central Commercial District's image and identity. To create more space for redevelopment, the south leg of Barnsdale Road north of 31<sup>st</sup> Street has been vacated, with primary access to the fresh market via Homestead Road. Additional space for commercial development can be provided if the existing post office at the northeast corner of 31<sup>st</sup> Street and Homestead Road is relocated.

The redevelopment illustrated on the south side of 31<sup>st</sup> Street includes a mixed use structure between Barnsdale and Homestead Roads that features retail on the ground level and office / residential above. New, high quality residential within walking distance of stores and restaurants will be especially appealing for La Grange Park empty-nesters who want to move to smaller quarters but remain in close proximity to nearby families and friends.

In addition, traffic movements studied for the Opportunity Analysis suggest that multiple drives and intersections along 31<sup>st</sup> Street cause the existing four lane roadway west of the IHB Railroad to effectively operate as a three lane cross section. Motorist and pedestrian safety and comfort could be improved by restriping 31<sup>st</sup> Street as a single lane in each direction with a two-way center turn lane between the IHB Railroad and Woodlawn Avenue. The extra space created by the restriping could be redefined for on-street parking or other uses.

- 1 Create convenient off-street public parking located behind or to the sides of buildings**
- 2 Build to the sidewalk line on 31<sup>st</sup> Street**
- 3 Make the 31<sup>st</sup> Street sides of buildings highly permeable (place store entrances and large windows on 31<sup>st</sup> Street )**
- 4 Promote mixed use retail / office / residential development, with retail at ground level and office / residential on the floors above**
- 5 Include design features that highlight corner locations**
- 6 Create a pedestrian friendly public gathering place along 31<sup>st</sup> Street**
- 7 Add premium landscaping and streetscaping elements**
- 8 Screen off-street parking from streets and adjacent residential**
- 9 Widen sidewalks along 31<sup>st</sup> Street to help ensure pedestrian comfort and provide sufficient seating space for outdoor dining**
- 10 Support uses that create sidewalk dining in highly visible locations**
- 11 Clearly identify parking facilities with attractive signage**
- 12 Break up large expanses of parking surface with planted islands**
- 13 Make parking lots pedestrian friendly by adding features such as well marked sidewalks and crosswalks**
- 14 Encourage development that meets Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) standards**
- 15 Subdivide large facades vertically with windows, columns, and other architectural features**
- 16 Buildings should be well designed on all four sides**
- 17 Encourage exterior wall construction that utilizes masonry, architectural precast, natural stone, cast stone, glass, or a combination of these materials**



Recommendations:

Central Commercial District (West of the IHB Railroad)

The sites north of 31<sup>st</sup> Street between Barnsdale Road and the IHB Railroad (facing page) provide sufficient room for redevelopment with on-site, off-street parking. Potential long term redevelopment opportunities include a fresh market and other convenience retailers.

An attractively landscaped plaza along 31<sup>st</sup> Street provides the surrounding neighborhood with an appealing public gathering place that also strengthens the Central Commercial District's image and identity.



View east towards the IHB Railroad from the southwest corner of 31<sup>st</sup> Street and Barnsdale Road.

Recommendations:

Central Commercial District (West of the IHB Railroad)

Uncertainties about the timing of the planned grade separation of 31<sup>st</sup> Street and the IHB Railroad will likely limit significant near-term redevelopment of the parcels west of the IHB Railroad in the Central Commercial District.

Until those uncertainties are resolved, every effort should be made to enhance the overall appearance of the 31<sup>st</sup> Street Corridor by encouraging businesses to screen parking lots with high quality landscaping elements, upgrade building façades, and improve commercial signage and lighting, as shown in the perspective rendering on the facing page.



View southwest from the north side of 31<sup>st</sup> Street at the IHB Railroad crossing.

## Recommendations: East Commercial District

Short- and long-term strategies for the East Commercial District focus on improving the overall appearances of the District over time. The Village should support premium streetscaping enhancements along Maple Avenue north of 31<sup>st</sup> Street, upgraded building façades, and improved commercial signage and lighting.

The parcels along 31<sup>st</sup> Street west of Maple Avenue collectively form an important Village gateway. High quality infill redevelopment that provides the surrounding residential neighborhoods with high quality shopping, dining, and / or professional services should be encouraged.

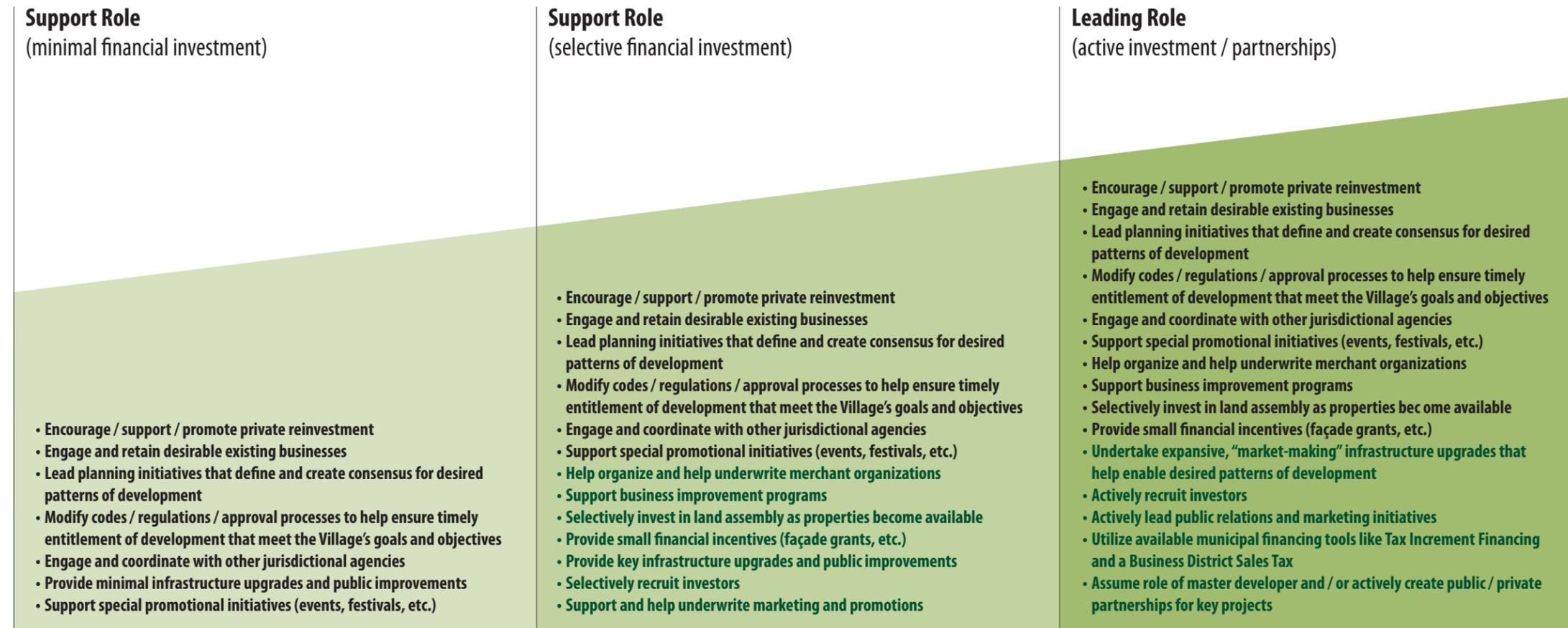


View north on Maple Avenue from the 31<sup>st</sup> Street intersection.

# Implementation Strategies

Location	Public Policy / Public Improvement Strategies	New Development Strategies	Reuse and Redevelopment Strategies
<b>Entire Corridor</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adopt the 31<sup>st</sup> Street Corridor Redevelopment Plan by June 2008.</li> <li>• Explore alternative strategies for developer participation in designing, financing, and constructing public improvements.</li> <li>• Identify funding sources for public improvements and maintenance projects that only the Village can initiate and support. Consider creating Tax Increment Finance (TIF) districts.</li> <li>• Confirm the entitlement and development procedures for priority opportunities in order to promote confidence in the Village’s commitment and timing.</li> <li>• Explore other incentives to attract private market investors such as reducing or eliminating connection, permit, and review fees for projects that meet the objectives of the Redevelopment Study. Consider tax and other incentives that target smaller retailers who do not have the financial resources of national chain franchises. Promote State and local programs that provide grants and loans for eligible businesses.</li> <li>• Modify codes and regulations as necessary to align with the recommendations of the Redevelopment Study. Create development guidelines and / or adopt design standards that are consistent with the Redevelopment Study.</li> <li>• Encourage private property owners to improve façades, commercial signage, screen parking lots, and make other landscaping enhancements.</li> <li>• Reinstate the Village’s façade improvement grant program.</li> <li>• Actively and appropriately communicate the Redevelopment Study and related strategies to public officials, property owners, real estate developers and brokers, and the public.</li> <li>• Engage IDOT about restriping 31<sup>st</sup> Street between the IHB Railroad and Meadowcrest Road to create a continuous center turn lane.</li> <li>• Continue making premium streetscape enhancements within the right-of-way.</li> <li>• Create well-marked pedestrian cross-walks.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support private market initiatives to assemble parcels and redevelop sites that meet with the goals, objectives, and recommendations of the Redevelopment Study.</li> <li>• Identify existing property owner interests in undertaking revitalization identified in the Redevelopment Study.</li> <li>• Prepare worksheets for each potential redevelopment parcel along the corridor. Identify the current property owner and contact information, site conditions, entitlement process, and Redevelopment Study recommendations.</li> <li>• Identify prospective tenants, requirements for locating to the 31<sup>st</sup> Street Corridor.</li> <li>• Where a match between a property owner and a tenant interest exists, develop public / private partnerships that maximize project speed-to-market and private investment in revitalization projects.</li> <li>• The Village might also sponsor a review of development options for the Corridor with real estate brokers from outside the area and then conduct follow up meetings as necessary.</li> <li>• Maintain an ongoing, informal referral network between local merchants, property owners, and local retail brokers who can identify tenants suitable for 31<sup>st</sup> Street.</li> <li>• Gain visibility for potential redevelopment sites by participating in regional International Council of Shopping Center (ICSC) events.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meet with property owners to determine:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- future plans for their property.</li> <li>- financial capacity.</li> <li>- tenanting options (can restaurants with ventilation be accommodated, etc.).</li> <li>- matches between building improvement needs and existing programs.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Identify trends, most important amenities, employee availability, marketing channels, and other tenant resources important to employers.</li> <li>• Identify property owners who could benefit from an architectural improvement program and other incentives.</li> <li>• Identify a business prospects list and:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- use a “Business Prospects Tracking Form” to document desired prospects.</li> <li>- contact recommended retailers and restaurateurs.</li> <li>- notify property owners about interested businesses.</li> <li>- repeat every six months.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Interview and develop relationships with regional commercial brokers.</li> <li>• Contact / recruit quality buyers or developers.</li> </ul>
<b>West Commercial District</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Place Village gateway signage at the northwest and southwest corners of the 31<sup>st</sup> Street / La Grange Road intersection.</li> </ul>		
<b>Central Commercial District</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Engage IDOT regarding the grade separation.</li> <li>• Assemble properties to create centralized, off-street public parking north and / or south of 31<sup>st</sup> Street.</li> </ul>		
<b>East Commercial District</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• See recommendations for public improvements to the entire Corridor listed above.</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Research and identify quality revitalization projects completed in the Chicago metropolitan region. Contact / recruit quality buyers or developers with experience in revitalization.</li> </ul>

## Defining the Village's Role in Redevelopment



The role that the Village plays in redevelopment can be thought to exist on a continuum. On one end of the continuum the Village supports market based redevelopment but provides minimal financial investment. On the other end of the continuum, the Village actively pursues redevelopment opportunities, helps initiate and become an investor in public / private partnerships, and / or provides other financial incentives to help create the desired patterns of development. In between, the Village might choose to selectively invest in catalyst projects, infrastructure improvements, and / or other public improvements that help to stimulate private market investment.

The diagram above illustrates this concept and lists some of the actions that a municipality might choose to take as their role in redevelopment increases (*please note the roles described and the items listed are not intended to be exhaustive*).



# Appendix

# Appendix: Opportunity Analysis

Village of La Grange Park  
31<sup>st</sup> Street Corridor Redevelopment Study



# Opportunity Analysis

Prepared by Hitchcock Design Group  
in Association with  
Business Districts, Inc.,  
Kenig, Lindgren, O'Hara, Aboona, Inc. and  
Topografis

January 2008

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## Introduction

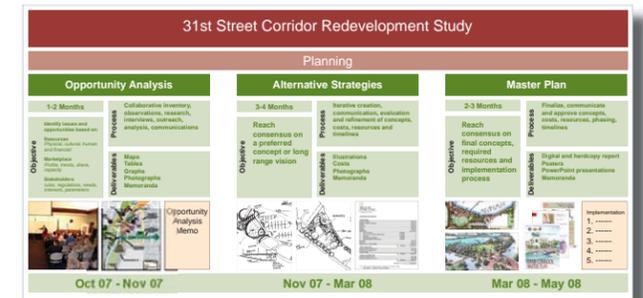
This report summarizes the background research conducted for the first phase of Village of La Grange Park's 31<sup>st</sup> Street Corridor Redevelopment Study. The information collected and analyzed forms the basis for the alternative redevelopment strategies generated in the second phase of the project, and, ultimately, the recommendations included in the final report.

### Approach

The Village of La Grange Park initiated the Redevelopment Study in order to improve the safety of motorists, pedestrians, and cyclists, to maximize the commercial benefits the Corridor can offer to the community, and to improve the overall image and identity of the Village.

In October 2007, the Village of La Grange Park engaged Hitchcock Design Group to undertake the Redevelopment Study. The process was guided by input from the Village's Economic Development Committee (EDC) comprised of residents, property owners, business owners, and merchants, and managed on a daily basis by Village staff. In addition, input was solicited from a number of corridor stakeholders, including nearby residents, public officials, the Park District, school officials, Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT), business owners, property owners, and merchants. The planning process included public presentations to solicit community feedback, and a project website to provide regular progress updates and an easily accessible source for project documents.

Hitchcock Design Group's team, which included Business Districts, Inc. (marketplace analysis), Kenig, Lindgren, O'Hara, and Aboona, Inc. (transportation analysis), and Topografis (architecture, urban design, and urban planning analysis), worked closely with public officials, the EDC, IDOT, and others within the community to produce recommendations that aligned with the Village's long term economic development goals and the desired improvements sought by project stakeholders.



## Goals and Objectives

### Goal

Create high quality neighborhood commercial and social centers that reflect La Grange Park's unique image and identity.

### Objectives

- Strengthen the Corridor's marketability, identity, and hospitality.
- Improve sales tax revenues.
- Clarify uncertainties that discourage investment.
- Strengthen existing uses that generate activities
- Identify sites for new activities and uses
- Improve motorist and pedestrian comfort and safety.
- Improve access, circulation, and parking.
- Consider complementary residential options
- Create new targeted commercial opportunities.

# Appendix: Opportunity Analysis, *continued*

**Study Area**

The 31<sup>st</sup> Corridor Redevelopment Study includes the entire portion of 31<sup>st</sup> Street that is located within La Grange Park's municipal boundaries (from Maple Avenue on the east to La Grange Road on the west), as shown in the map on the following page.

The corridor is bisected by the Indian Harbor Belt Railroad. There are variety of retail, commercial, industrial, recreational, and residential uses along the corridor.

The corridor includes four retail / commercial clusters—one at the intersection of 31<sup>st</sup> Street / La Grange Road, one that is located between Homestead Avenue and the Indiana Harbor Belt Railroad (IHBR) tracks, one between the IHBR tracks and Kemman Avenue, and the portion of a small commercial district that is within the Village's boundaries between Alima Terrace and Maple Avenue.

Study Area



## Marketplace Conditions

### Introduction

La Grange Park's 31<sup>st</sup> Street Corridor serves traditional neighborhoods where residents value their family oriented lifestyles. The Corridor's commercial clusters once offered residents the convenience shopping within easy walking distance of their residences, a feature that once again is considered a best practice in new developments. Although quality businesses remain, many buildings are now underutilized and deteriorating because they no longer fit the contemporary needs of the neighborhoods they serve. The challenge posed to this market review is strengthening the connections between the neighborhoods and the Corridor's commercial clusters as buildings age, family businesses transition to new generations, and consumer shopping preferences evolve.

### Market Conditions

#### Project Area Description

The Corridor study area includes three separate commercial clusters. At the western boundary, La Grange Road and 31<sup>st</sup> Street, there are two gas stations, D's Little Italy Restaurant, a quick lube, a dry cleaner, an antiques and collectibles store, and offices. A bank and three restaurants comprise the cluster located within La Grange Park's municipal boundaries at the study area's eastern edge at Maple and 31<sup>st</sup> Street. Centered between these clusters and surrounded by residential development is a six-block shopping district that offers two additional antiques and collectibles stores, a variety of independent businesses, an Ace Hardware store, a 7-11 convenience store, a bank, and a YMCA Fitness Center. A very active rail line subdivides this cluster's western two blocks from the eastern four blocks.

Although, as noted above, there are retail businesses, services currently dominate the Corridor. Dry cleaners, hair care purveyors, investment advisors, and medical practitioners increase the district's connection to the community by offering convenience to neighborhood residents in the same manner that convenience grocers and hardware businesses traditionally have done. Consequently, these services strengthen the relationship that the Corridor has with its surrounding neighborhoods. As the public

comment sessions associated with this project confirmed, adding more food and beverage businesses would provide more variety and strengthen the clusters draw to the neighborhood and its visitors.

Traffic volumes on 31<sup>st</sup> Street are relatively moderate in comparison to the volumes that attract the attention of convenience retailers, and are impacted by the rail line. This Illinois Department of Transportation average daily traffic map below documents the Average Daily Traffic (ADT) volumes along the Corridor, La Grange Road and Kemman Avenue.



Since, except for the western cluster, these counts are below the 20,000 average daily traffic that convenience retailers expect, the most successful uses along 31<sup>st</sup> Street will be destination businesses. The YMCA fitness center is an example of a destination business that can flourish in this area. The Ace Hardware is another example of a successful destination business. If enough destination businesses choose locations along 31<sup>st</sup> Street, traffic will increase to the levels that support convenience retail.

### Market Characteristics

Table 1 below captures demographic characteristics of the population living within a 5-minute drive time market of the study area.

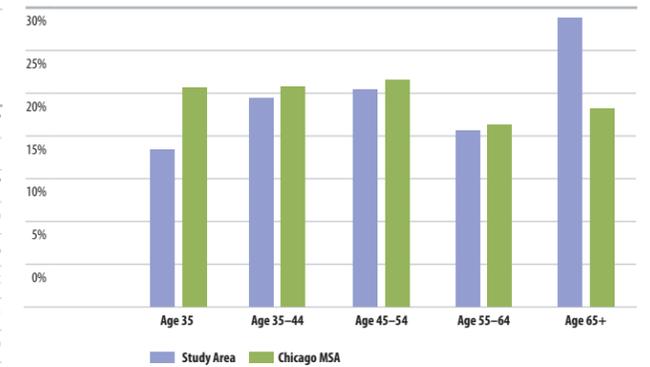
**Table 1**  
5-minute Drive Time Demographic Profile

	5-minutes
Population	31,117
Population density per mile	4,401
Percent in current resident 5-plus years	48.7
Total population median age	41.9
Percent college educated	64.9%
Household average income	\$70,475
Median household income	\$66,740
Total employees	18,319

Demographic data © 2007 by Experian / Applied Geographic Solutions

It is significant that the five-minute drive time population exceeds 25,000 residents, the minimum population necessary to support a cluster of neighborhood retailing anchored by a drug store or small supermarket. The relatively small variation between average and median household incomes indicates a very homogeneous population, and the high percentage of residents who have lived in their homes five or more years suggest stability. Figure 1 at right compares the head of household age in the drive time area to the head of household age in the Chicago metro area.

**Figure 1**  
Head of Household Age



# Appendix: Opportunity Analysis, *continued*

With significantly more study area households at or near retirement age than metro averages, it is likely that there will be turnover of homes over the next 10 years as young families replace longtime residents. That change will bring additional population and higher spending.

Although 1.5 jobs per household is slightly higher than the metropolitan area average of 1.4 jobs per household, few of those jobs are within ½ mile of 31<sup>st</sup> Street where there is less than ½ job per household. This condition limits daytime population and makes the study area a less desirable restaurant location.

Figure 2 illustrates the area that comprises this market.

**Figure 2**  
5-minute Drive Time Market Area



6 Village of La Grange Park

Table 2 documents, this population’s spending power to support various businesses.

**Table 2**  
5-minute Drive Time Population Spending Power

	5-minutes
Total retail expenditure	\$292,417,376
Food and beverage	\$35,620,976
Grocery stores	\$51,707,000
Pharmacy and drug stores	\$7,970,982

Demographic data © 2007 by Experian / Applied Geographic Solutions

To understand the quality of this market, it helpful to consider that successful family style restaurants have sales between \$800,000 and \$2 million depending on their menu, amenities, and service level. At a sales volume of \$800,000, the 31<sup>st</sup> Street business clusters’ 5-minute drive time spending power, \$36 million, could support as many as 45 restaurants. Although those restaurants would be spread throughout the drive time area, it would be realistic to expect a total of 8 to 10 restaurants in the three clusters along 31<sup>st</sup> Street. A neighborhood focused fresh market or convenience store would be very successful if it were 10,000 square feet and had sales of \$5 million, approximately 10% of the area’s spending power.

The Brookfield Zoo, an important regional attraction that draws over 2 million visitors a year, is just within the study area’s 5-minute drive time. This bonus market is especially important for area restaurants and supports other convenience businesses like grocers and auto service stations.

In addition to the larger, auto oriented market is a subset of residents who live within a ½ mile walking distance of the Corridors’ commercial clusters. Although residential density is low due to the proximity of the Cook county Forest Preserves east of La Grange Road, the other two clusters have a density of approximately 6,000 residents per square mile. These nearby residents should be the heaviest users of each commercial cluster.

### Market Conditions Summary

The existing 31<sup>st</sup> Street Corridor businesses vary in vibrancy and their connections to the surrounding residential neighborhoods. A market exists that could support more businesses providing special conveniences and services to local residents.

### Investment Conditions

#### Current Buildings

Because the typical commercial building along 31<sup>st</sup> Street was built 40 to 60 years ago, lacks dedicated parking, and is a single story, property values and rents per square foot are relatively low. Cook County reports only one commercial property sale in the study area between January of 2005 and November 2007. That property, 1100 31<sup>st</sup> Street, sold for \$95 per building square foot. If the new owner expects to make a 7.5% return on that building, annual rent net of all expenses must be \$7.12. (\$95 x .075). With Cook County’s higher commercial property taxes, relatively low maintenance, and insurance costs, the gross rent would be approximately \$14. That rent is below the West Suburban average net rents of \$15 to \$19 reported by CBRE in its Chicago Retail MarketView 3Q 2007. Because of the attractive nearby population and the affordable conditions, there are few vacancies in the study area.

#### Redevelopment Potential

31<sup>st</sup> Street presents a challenge for market rate redevelopment. New development in this auto-oriented market will require sufficient convenient parking to attract retail businesses. Providing that parking reduces the building footprint to a land-area ratio of approximately 25%. With buildings currently occupying 75% to 80% of each commercial lot, it is apparent that net rents three times the existing rent are necessary to make redevelopment (that includes on site parking) produce the same annual income to a property owner as the existing conditions now provide. Additional costs associated with construction on a small site, financing, development fees, and the loss of income during construction would add to redevelopment costs and further increase the rent necessary to justify redevelopment.

A rough calculation suggests that rent would need to exceed \$30 per square foot for an investor to redevelop a 31<sup>st</sup> Street site with its own parking. With CBRE reporting that the typical retail rent in this

submarket is \$19, stores are unlikely to pay that premium. Consequently, redevelopment is not occurring in the study area.

Market support for redevelopment increases when there is an opportunity to add upper stories. In the absence of land speculation, upper stories add income without adding land costs. Table 3 uses the land costs in 31<sup>st</sup> Street’s recent commercial property sale to calculate the impact of upper stories on rents and property prices at various redevelopment heights. This table assumes all parking is accommodated on the site with surface spaces for the commercial and covered or underground spaces for residential. (Appendix 1 details the assumption and provides the full calculation)

**Table 3**

	1-story	2-story	3-story	4-story
<b>Commercial</b>				
Project costs	\$2,214,706	\$2,130,882	\$2,102,941	\$2,088,971
Land costs	\$950,000	\$475,000	\$316,667	\$237,500
Total costs	\$3,164,706	\$2,605,882	\$2,419,608	\$2,326,471
Costs / square foot	\$421.96	\$347.45	\$322.61	\$310.20
Investment return	7.5%	7.5%	7.5%	7.5%
Net rent	\$31.65	\$26.06	\$24.20	\$23.26
<b>Residential</b>				
Project costs		\$1,948,059	\$3,869,029	\$5,803,147
Land		\$475,000	\$636,500	\$712,500
Covered parking		\$160,000	\$160,000	\$160,000
Underground parking		\$0	\$400,000	\$800,000
Total		\$2,583,059	\$5,079,647	\$7,475,647
Residential units		8	16	24
Cost per unit		\$322,882	\$317,478	\$311,485

31<sup>st</sup> Street Corridor Redevelopment Study 7

With new condominiums in Brookfield near its train station selling for approximately \$285,000, these residential and commercial rental prices exceed the market rates. Again, providing surface parking for ground floor commercial uses limits the size of the project. When commercial parking is accommodated off site, the project doubles in size on the same land and has these investment returns at various heights:

**Table 4**

	1-story	2-story	3-story	4-story
<b>Commercial</b>				
Project costs	\$3,079,412	\$3,005,267	\$2,931,123	\$2,857,035
Land costs	\$950,000	\$529,849	\$109,698	-\$310,137
Total costs	\$4,029,412	\$3,535,116	\$3,040,821	\$2,546,898
Costs / square foot	\$358.17	\$314.23	\$270.30	\$226.35
Investment return	7.5%	7.5%	7.5%	7.5%
Net rent	\$26.86	\$23.57	\$20.27	\$16.98
<b>Residential</b>				
Project costs		\$3,819,556	\$7,639,112	\$11,455,789
Land		\$420,151	\$840,302	\$1,260,137
Covered parking		\$416,000	\$832,000	\$1,232,000
Total		\$4,655,707	\$9,311,415	\$13,947,926
Residential units		16	32	48
Cost per unit		\$290,982	\$290,982	\$290,582

Although commercial rents remain high under this example, at 3 stories or above, the residential units bear land costs that reduce the ground floor commercial rents. When the Village provides the parking to support commercial uses and a 4-story density is allowed, it appears that no additional subsidy would be required to support redevelopment.

*Investment Conditions Summary*

The affordability of 31<sup>st</sup> Street commercial property currently serves owner / operators, offices, and lower volume businesses well. Because 31<sup>st</sup> Street properties offer reasonable returns, it will be difficult to convince owners to undertake risky, expensive redevelopment. Many properties that are owner occupied have been remodeled to suit the needs of specific businesses and consequently are unlikely to be redeveloped to achieve higher property returns. Those real estate returns are lower than the cost of finding another ideal space to generate core business profits. Parking requirements add an additional financial burden. Tenants paying the higher rents associated with new construction need convenient parking. As table 3 documents, this market cannot support parking located on-site. Only the banks, D's Little Italy, and the 7-11 anchored shopping center currently provide customer parking meeting today's standards of at least four spaces per thousand square feet. If the village can create central parking and thus free new development from the costs of providing on-site parking, four-story redevelopment is possible.

## Stakeholders

### Overview

The 31st Street Corridor Redevelopment study was guided by input from the Village's Economic Development Committee (EDC) comprised of residents, property owners, business owners, and merchants, and managed on a daily basis by Village staff.

A number of individual Corridor stakeholders have been included in the planning process to date and will continue to be involved. Input was solicited from these individuals in personal interviews that are summarized below. In addition, feedback was gathered from participants in a public workshop that was facilitated by the consultant team on November 28, 2007 and other public presentations. The Village also maintained a project website to provide a venue for information regarding project progress, a source for presentation document downloads, and an email connection for additional public feedback.

### Stakeholder Interview Summary

More than 30 stakeholder interviews were conducted on November 7-8, 2007. Those interviewed represented a broad cross section of Corridor interests, including business owners, property owners, public officials, Community Park District of La Grange Park, Brook Park Elementary School, St. Louise de Marillac Catholic Parish, residents, and the Village of Brookfield. Several common themes that resonated throughout the interviews can be summarized as follows:

#### Marketplace

- 31<sup>st</sup> Street Corridor and Village have good demographics... market in La Grange Park is sophisticated... La Grange Park has changed in past 10 years, more families/children have moved in, many from high quality Chicago neighborhoods that have neighborhood conveniences... schools are packed
- Need anchors (not big boxes), convenient parking, and other destinations that draw repeat business and create foot traffic... new development should be high quality, mixed use... need high quality destination restaurants (like Palmers in La Grange and Irish Times in Brookfield) that serve as community gathering places, a coffee shop, a bakery, and/

or other high quality retail... need more retail, not services on ground floors... a drug store would be a positive addition to Corridor... need neighborhood grocer/fresh market

- Medium density condos/townhomes would help expand customer base and add foot traffic (density in downtown La Grange is appealing)
- Leverage location of and traffic created by elementary schools/recreational facilities/zoo
- YMCA has been a positive addition... businesses have benefited from increased foot traffic
- Need destinations for teens along the Corridor
- Retail environment west of tracks is weak overall
- More medical offices/professional offices would be good (but not on ground level)
- Antique businesses not doing well
- Need to have plan/goals for business development so Village can help pro-actively recruit desired tenants

#### Stakeholders

- Maintain small town feel
- Maintain quaintness of business district, neighborhoods
- Lack of consensus on Corridor's future... difference in generations
- Residents understand need to expand sales tax base
- Convert some residential on south side of street to parking if owners are willing
- Residents will probably not support highly active Village role in redevelopment initiatives (using financial incentives or a tax increment financing district), but will support some Village role in creating positive change.
- The Village does not have legacy of providing redevelopment incentives, nor does current staff have the expertise to be in real estate business (parcel acquisition/assembly)... Village should be pro-active in creating support for redevelopment... no more band-aid solutions
- Younger generation with families will probably support redevelopment... not sure about seniors

# Appendix: Opportunity Analysis, *continued*

- Residents dislike traffic on side streets... explore creating cul de sacs along 31st to prevent increased traffic in residential neighborhoods... cul de sacs will increase congestion on 31<sup>st</sup>, Kemman, Maple
- Creating the Village's comprehensive plan was a struggle and generated a lot of controversy
- Buildings higher than 3 stories will probably not have community support... buildings on south side of 31st can be taller (shadows will have less impact of residential neighborhoods)
- Change zoning behind business district to allow additional retail or new parking if residents will support the change
- YMCA parking problems made neighbors on nearby side streets angry; issue was not originally addressed well
- Need slower traffic to enhance safety, pedestrian comfort... a grade separation at the railroad tracks would be welcomed by residents... (there are fears that) a grade separation will wipe out existing businesses

## Resources

- The top four problems are trains, parking, appearance of shops, lack of destinations
- The existing business districts around the railroad tracks lack a distinctive identity... the overall appearance of the district looks run down, blighted, very dated... the core business district needs attractions and should be an experience for visitors... 31<sup>st</sup> is currently a pass through roadway and needs to become a destination... would like to see more families using businesses along the Corridor... likes antique businesses—they should be encouraged to stay, add more... worried about brownfield issues
- There are good traffic volumes on La Grange Road, but 31st Street doesn't have the volume to attract national retailers... add left turn lanes
- The Corridor has a retail legacy and the locals know and use the core retail area

- Robinhood Park draws visitors... tons of kids playing sports... tennis court use is so-so
- The new park district facility several blocks north has been very successful and has increased traffic in area
- Trains at grade rail crossing back up traffic... trains are too slow... people avoid 31<sup>st</sup> because of the grade crossing
- Shallow depth of commercial lots, small parcel, and the number property owners creates major redevelopment challenges... commercial condos increases the number of property owners
- Not enough public or private parking, especially near the YMCA and Ace Hardware... the whole area needs parking in right places, especially on the north side of 31<sup>st</sup> (east of the railroad tracks)... people get frustrated looking for parking... consider building multi-level public parking decks on both sides of the railroad tracks... convert post office and firehouse sites to commercial uses and/or public parking
- Explore alternative ways for pedestrians to cross tracks (escalators were mentioned)
- Redevelopment at 31st/La Grange Road intersection should serve as gateway to retail district further east
- Village should allow nearby homes to expand to increase their value
- La Grange has no interest loans for façade improvements (the Village should do something similar)
- Streetscape improvements were a good start, but need more/better landscaping, especially in front of strip mall west of the railroad tracks
- Trucks on 31st come from Kemman and industrial buildings south of Village
- Need to have quality sign graphics
- Lots of bikers in area, and the number is growing
- Code violations by run down apartments should be enforced; other buildings need code enforcement, too

## Public Workshop Summary

On November 28, 2007, the consultant team facilitated a public workshop at the Recreational Center on Barnsdale Road that was attended by approximately 40 residents and Corridor stakeholders. Participants were divided into subgroups of 4-5 individuals and asked to identify what they believed were the key issues regarding Corridor redevelopment. The lists were clustered into broad groups based on common themes, and then participants were asked to prioritize the issues that were identified.

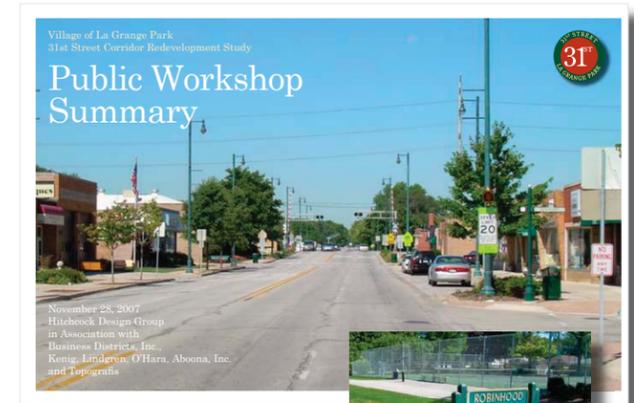
The desire to have family oriented dining and additional streetscape improvements received the largest number of specific comments among the topics that were identified as having the highest priority. The following is a summary of the key issues (by cluster) the specific comments that were provided.

### Family Dining Establishments

- Restaurant with varied menu and balanced meals
- Family restaurant like Palmers with inside / outside dining areas
- Pancake restaurant / breakfast place
- A place like Burhops—seafood market or restaurant
- A family restaurant with a bar
- A Starbucks with inside seating and drive-thru
- Coffee shop (Nick's in Brookfield)
- A takeout bakery with morning coffee
- Bakery with good old fashioned doughnuts
- Casual dining / cafe
- Mid tier restaurants, casual, for families

### Street / Streetscaping Improvements

- Bike path on one side of the highway
- Pedestrian / bike overpass over IHB railroad tracks
- Turn lanes at key intersections (Kemman, Newberry)
- Wider sidewalks
- Widen sidewalks along 31<sup>st</sup>
- Village needs to maintain landscaping
- Theme banners on lamp posts
- Eye catching streetscaping
- Pretty sidewalks



### Other Desirable Retailing

- Invite chain stores to town
- CVS Pharmacy
- More small and locally owned retailers
- Independent grocery store (at Chem Grout site)
- Redevelop strip mall
- Low public investment

### Character / Regulations

- Keep the bedroom community (character); control noise
- Restrict starting and closing times
- Traditional small town downtown look and feel
- Community center
- Modernize the Corridor (enhance private properties, too)

### More Parking

- More parking (close enough if there is difficulty walking)
- (Need) convenient parking (multi-deck at Chem Grout site or spread out)
- Better parking solutions

## Ownership and Jurisdiction

### Roadways

Development within the study area is regulated by the Village of La Grange Park. IDOT has jurisdiction over improvements and access to and from 31<sup>st</sup> Street, La Grange Road, Maple Avenue, and Kemman Avenue south of 31<sup>st</sup> Street. The Village maintains Kemman Avenue north of 31<sup>st</sup> Street.

### Parking

The Village owns and maintains the angled parking on the streets perpendicular to 31<sup>st</sup> Street in the central commercial district. The Village also owns the off-street parking facility immediately east of the United States Post Office north of 31<sup>st</sup> Street and has a long-term lease agreement with the Post Office that allows employees to park there. Cook County owns land located north of 31<sup>st</sup> Street between the IBH Railroad right-of-way and the alley immediately east that was mentioned by several project stakeholders as a potential site for a future public parking facility.

### Recreational Areas

Robinhood Park, is owned by the Community Park District of La Grange Park. The Community Park District also owns the Recreation Center at 1501 Barnsdale Road is located in Hanesworth Park, which is approximately three blocks north of 31<sup>st</sup> Street.

La Grange Park Woods on the southwest corners of 31st Street and La Grange Road and Possum Hollow Woods on the northwest corner are owned by Cook County Forest Preserve.



The tennis courts at Robinhood Park front onto 31<sup>st</sup> Street.



St. Louise de Marillac Catholic Parish.

### Schools

St. Louise de Marillac Catholic Parish school is located north of 31st Street between Harrison and Raymond Avenues.

Illinois School District 102's Forest Road School, an elementary school located at 901 North Forest Road, is approximately one blocks south of 31st Street.

District 95's Brook Park Elementary School is located at 1214 Raymond Avenue one block north of 31<sup>st</sup> Street.

### Churches

Saint Michael's Lutheran Church is located between Sherwood and Forest Roads on the south side of 31<sup>st</sup> Street.

Village Church of the United Church of Christ is located between Woodside Avenue and Meadowcrest Road approximately 1/2 block north of 31<sup>st</sup> Street.

## Resources

### Past Plans and Studies

#### Comprehensive Plan

The Village's 2006 *Comprehensive Plan* addressed a number of issues that had an impact on potential redevelopment strategies for the 31st Street Corridor, including:

- The need to align public policy with a community wide consensus on the character and quality of new development:

*"Facing a new set of challenges, including limited growth potential and outmoded commercial and industrial uses, the Village of La Grange Park has recognized the need to actively redefine its policies and guidelines for future development and redevelopment throughout the Village. This Comprehensive Plan represents the manifestation of the community's collective vision and provides the framework for land related policy for the decades to come."*

- The "Public Finance" section of the Plan's Community Profile addressed the Village's legacy regarding the use of public funds to support capital improvements:

*"The Village has never used Tax Increment Financing Districts (TIFs) or Special Service Area (SSAs) to finance capital improvements. However, alternative revenue bonds were issued in 2004 to fund a two-year accelerated road program. In 2006, the Village issued alternate revenue bonds to fund various improvements to the sewer system. Issuing these bonds has allowed the Village to finance needed large infrastructure improvements."*

#### Vision Section

"The Vision" section of the Comprehensive Plan identifies several goals and objectives that address the desired content and character of redevelopment along the 31st Street Corridor:

- **Vision Statement**

*"...31<sup>st</sup> Street, with its attractive and well-maintained streetscape improvements, will foster a pedestrian-friendly environment that serves as a retail, professional, and personal services center... (31<sup>st</sup> Street) will be redeveloped in accordance with the existing character of the Village..."*

- **Community Character**

#### Goal:

*A distinct civic identity and a sense of community pride built on the community's unique qualities, including orderly development, safety, sense of place, and its predominant single-family character.*

#### Objectives:

*–Maintain the predominant single-family character of the Village and ensure that new infill development in single-family areas is complementary with the surrounding environment.*

*–Promote the use of building designs, landscaping, and signage that enhance the attractiveness of commercial areas, provide a buffer between incompatible uses, soften the appearance of parking lots, and enhance sense of place.*

*–Identify and encourage the preservation of historic buildings."*

- **Residential Neighborhoods**

#### Goal:

*Attractive neighborhoods that are predominantly developed with single-family residential structures, and also include additional housing options intended to serve the unique needs of seniors and small households.*

#### Objectives:

*–Maintain and protect existing single-family residential uses.*

*–Prohibit creation of multi-family or commercial development that results from rezoning areas currently designated for single-family uses, except for the area at the southeast corner of Oak Avenue and Forest Road.*

*–Ensure that new multi-family developments maintain a good relationship with nearby single-family uses. Where feasible, encourage buffering of single-family uses from more intensive or incompatible uses.*

# Appendix: Opportunity Analysis, *continued*

● **Commercial Development**

*“Goal:  
Attractive and viable commercial areas and land uses.*

*Objectives:  
–Prohibit expansion of the commercial areas boundaries.*

*–Encourage and attract retail businesses that will enhance the Village’s tax base.*

*–Consider providing appropriate economic development tools to support existing and new businesses.*

*–Insure that proposed redevelopment does not result in measurable increases in neighborhood traffic flows.*

*–Insure fiscal analyses document the impact of proposed redevelopment on the net income to the Village.”*

● **Transportation**

*“Goal:  
An efficient, safe, and attractive multi-modal transportation system that allows for the movement of motor vehicles, pedestrians, bicyclists, and transit throughout the Village.*

*Objectives:  
–Monitor the need for improved signalization along La Grange Road and 31st Street.*

*–Improve facilities for bicycle circulation and parking throughout the Village”*

*–Consider traffic calming/diverting devices to minimize through traffic within neighborhoods.*

*–Anticipate and monitor traffic pattern and volume changes resulting from new development, and prevent these changes from significantly impeding traffic flow and increasing traffic throughout the Village.*

*Goal:  
Increased connectivity between the eastern and western portions of the Village.*

*Objectives:  
–Consider appropriate locations for pedestrian and bicycle connections over/under the railroad tracks.”*

● **Infrastructure**

*“Goal:  
Provision of adequate facilities and services that respond to the needs of citizens and the business community..*

*Objectives:  
Identify ways to finance improvements to public infrastructure, including a possible public referendum.*

*–Develop and implement an action plan to finance public infrastructure improvements.”*

● **Land Use Plan**

The “Land Use Plan” included several provisions to guide redevelopment:

*“Urban development is a dynamic phenomenon, involving shifts in consumer preferences and changes in economic conditions that continually affect the character and form of our physical environments. While the Village of La Grange Park is a mature community, it is not sheltered from potential physical change over the duration of this Comprehensive Plan. Moreover, to remain an attractive and competitive place within the region, the Village must embrace a degree of physical change and actively pursue the redevelopment of key sites.*

*Because development in La Grange Park is synonymous with redevelopment, it is important to emphasize that the goal of the Land Use Plan is not to dramatically redefine the character of the Village. Rather, its intent is to preserve existing character, while laying the foundation for complementary future development opportunities, and to enhance the physical, social, economic vitality of the community.”*

The “Land Use Plan” identifies the 31st Street Corridor as a discreet land use category:

*“This category applies to designated properties along 31st Street. Retail, professional services and offices should be the predominant uses within this category. Residential and office uses would be permitted above ground level business establishments.”*

● **Transportation**

The “Transportation” section identified problems associated with the railroad crossing at the IHB Railroad tracks and the challenges of making improvements:

*–“The lack of sufficient crossings over or under the Indiana Harbor Beltway Railroad alignment is a key deterrent to efficient mobility. Delays on 31st Street affect residents, business owners, and emergency service providers. However, the costs of land acquisition and construction, encroachment on adjacent businesses and neighborhoods, and visual impacts associated with the development of an overpass or underpass render them unviable or otherwise undesirable alternatives.”*

The “Summary of Transportation Action Items” identified the recommended strategy for a potential commuter rail facility north of 31<sup>st</sup> Street:

*–“Continue to work with Metra to encourage and facilitate the development of a commuter transit station north of 31st Street, as part of the proposed Inner Circumferential Rail project.”*

Two other recommendations specifically focused on the steps that should be taken to minimize the impacts of traffic on local streets:

*–“Study traffic management improvements to reduce the average daily traffic on local streets (e.g. Edgewood Avenue) in an effort to prevent those streets from carrying traffic more suitable for a collector street.*

*–Monitor the impacts of traffic generated by new developments.”*

*Comprehensive Plan Impacts Summary*

Creating the Comprehensive Plan was a sometimes contentious process, as acknowledged by a many of the Corridor stakeholders we interviewed for this project.

The provisions included in the Comprehensive Plan to control the content and quality of commercial redevelopment indicate how concerned members of the community were about redevelopment having potentially negative impacts to the adjacent residential neighborhoods.

However, the restrictive nature of some Comprehensive Plan objectives—such as not allowing commercial to expand to include properties currently zoned residential—may limit redevelopment opportunities along the Corridor. This is especially true in the core retail district on either side of the IHB Railroad tracks where relatively small property sizes and shallow lot depths may limit a development’s ability to provide sufficient parking.

Another potential source of conflict is the objective of ensuring “that proposed redevelopment does not result in measurable increases in neighborhood traffic flows.” Successful redevelopment which meets or exceeds industry standards for quality will almost always make a given commercial district a more attractive place to live, work, play, and shop. While increases in traffic that result from the increase in desirability may not be statistically significant, they will almost invariably be measurably higher.

Once community consensus regarding recommended redevelopment strategies has been achieved, there may be the need to revisit certain goals and objectives of the Comprehensive Plan on a case-by-case basis to ensure that they align with the recommendations of this study.

## Transportation

### Roadway Network Perspective

31<sup>st</sup> Street is an important east-west connector route that experiences considerable amounts of local and regional traffic. While 31<sup>st</sup> Street does not have a direct connection to the I-294 Tollway to the west (like 22<sup>nd</sup> Street to the north and Ogden Avenue to the south), for many it is a preferred alternative for local trips and trips through the community.

Recent IDOT data shows that 31<sup>st</sup> Street experiences significant but manageable traffic volumes, as shown by Average Daily Traffic (ADT) counts identified on the following page (evening peak hour turning movement traffic counts are also indicated). The roadway configuration within the study area has four moving traffic lanes (two in each direction). Traffic signals are located, from east to west, at Maple Avenue (a north-south collector that connects to I-290 to the north), the St. Louise de Marillac school pedestrian crossing, Kemman/25th/Grand (Kemman is another collector that connects to I-290), Forest Road (a local street), and La Grange Road (an arterial that also serves as U.S. Routes 12, 20, and 45). In addition, La Grange Road is designated by IDOT as a Strategic Regional Arterial (SRA) and is consequently subject to special standards for access. Exclusive left turn lanes are provided only at La Grange Road.

31<sup>st</sup> Street's right-of-way varies throughout the study area (74' La Grange Road to Meadowcrest, 64' Meadowcrest Road to Community Drive, 80' Community Drive to Barnsdale Road, and 64' Barnsdale Road to Maple Avenue). West of the IHB railroad tracks, the roadway appears to be offset to the south for several blocks. This right-of-way includes the roadway and continuous sidewalks on both sides of the 31<sup>st</sup> Street. The right-of-way also includes on-street parking on the north side of the street between Newberry and Beach Avenues, which is the only on-street parking within the Corridor study area.

The corridor is intersected by the Illinois Harbor Belt (IHB) Railroad, located slightly west of the midpoint of the corridor study area, which provides a freight line connection and distribution services to the numerous main railroad lines radiating out of Chicago. IHB experiences heavy freight traffic throughout all hours of the day. Consequently it poses a

significant obstacle to traffic and pedestrian flow, and impedes the economic vitality of the businesses within the study area.

A state sponsored program entitled Chicago Region Environmental and Transportation Efficiency Program (CREATE) has targeted this crossing as one of 25 locations in the Chicago region for future grade separation.

The CREATE program is a partnership between the railroads, IDOT, and the Federal Government. Its purpose is to move rail freight traffic through Chicago area bottlenecks more efficiently, while at the same time improve operations and safety along major thoroughfares such as 31<sup>st</sup> Street. The program has targeted 25 sites throughout the region. Although some have been constructed, such as the Grand Avenue underpass in Franklin Park (July 2007), discussions with IDOT representatives indicate that there is no current funding bill in Springfield or elsewhere to provide further construction. That is not to say that the program is languishing. Both IDOT and railroad officials interviewed for the redevelopment study favor continuing the CREATE program improvements.

### Pedestrian Environment

Pedestrians can traverse the corridor by means of continuous sidewalks on both sides of 31<sup>st</sup> Street. However, mobility is diminished because of freight trains and vehicular stacking. Also, at certain points the proximity of the street to the sidewalk is less than desirable because of the alignment of the roadway within the right-of-way is offset in certain areas. In the future, new or redeveloped properties may be able to improve this situation by placing sidewalks further away from the street.

### Roadway Improvement Opportunities

As various redevelopment opportunities occur, adjustments will need to be made to the roadway system and access locations. Generally, the constraints of the right-of-way will not allow for major redesign of 31<sup>st</sup> Street, nor is this desirable. Rather, smaller yet significant operational and access adjustments can be made that change the "personality" of the Corridor into a more vibrant retail and pedestrian friendly district. The one exception is the potential impact of a future grade separation at the IHB crossing as part of the CREATE program previously mentioned.

## Transportation and Parking



# Appendix: Opportunity Analysis, *continued*

### Existing Site Conditions

**Land Use**  
Land uses within the Corridor study area (the blocks immediately north and south of 31<sup>st</sup> Street between La Grange Road and Maple Avenue) consist of three commercial clusters (one north of the intersection of 31<sup>st</sup> Street and Maple Avenue on the east, one at the intersection of 31<sup>st</sup> Street and La Grange Road on the west, and, in between, there is a central business district that includes the four blocks immediately east of the IHB Railroad tracks and two block immediately east of the tracks.

The commercial clusters are separated by residential uses (single family and multifamily), Robinhood Park (located between Forest Road and Robinhood Lane), two churches (Saint Michael's Lutheran Church between Sherwood and Forest Roads and St. Louise de Marillac Catholic Parish is located north of 31<sup>st</sup> Street between Harrison and Raymond Avenues). St. Louise de Marillac also has a private elementary school.

The commercial cluster at 31<sup>st</sup> Street and Maple Avenue includes restaurants, a bank, and auto service businesses.

The central commercial cluster features one of the Corridor's most popular destination retailers (Ace Hardware), a YMCA, a U.S. Post Office, and a firehouse. Chem Grout, a manufacturing company is located on the north side of 31<sup>st</sup> Street in the first block immediately west of the railroad tracks. Two utility substations are also located on the west side of the railroad tracks, one of which fronts directly onto the south side 31<sup>st</sup> Street.

Several antique shops that in recent times helped to define the central commercial cluster's image and identity are still open, but others have closed. The continuing transformation in the way antiques are marketed suggest that shop sales will continue to decline.

Land uses at the intersection of 31<sup>st</sup> Street and La Grange Road include auto oriented services, a restaurant / banquet hall, and offices.

### Land Use and Ownership



**Zoning**

Every existing Village zoning classification is represented within the Corridor's study area. The properties in the three commercial districts that front directly onto 31<sup>st</sup> Street are zoned Retail Business & Commercial District. The residential properties in between the commercial districts fall within three of Village's six residential zoning districts classifications.

At present, only the properties now zoned Light Industrial District that are located north of 31<sup>st</sup> Street and immediately west of the IHB Railroad tracks may present conflicts with long term redevelopment opportunities in the central commercial district.

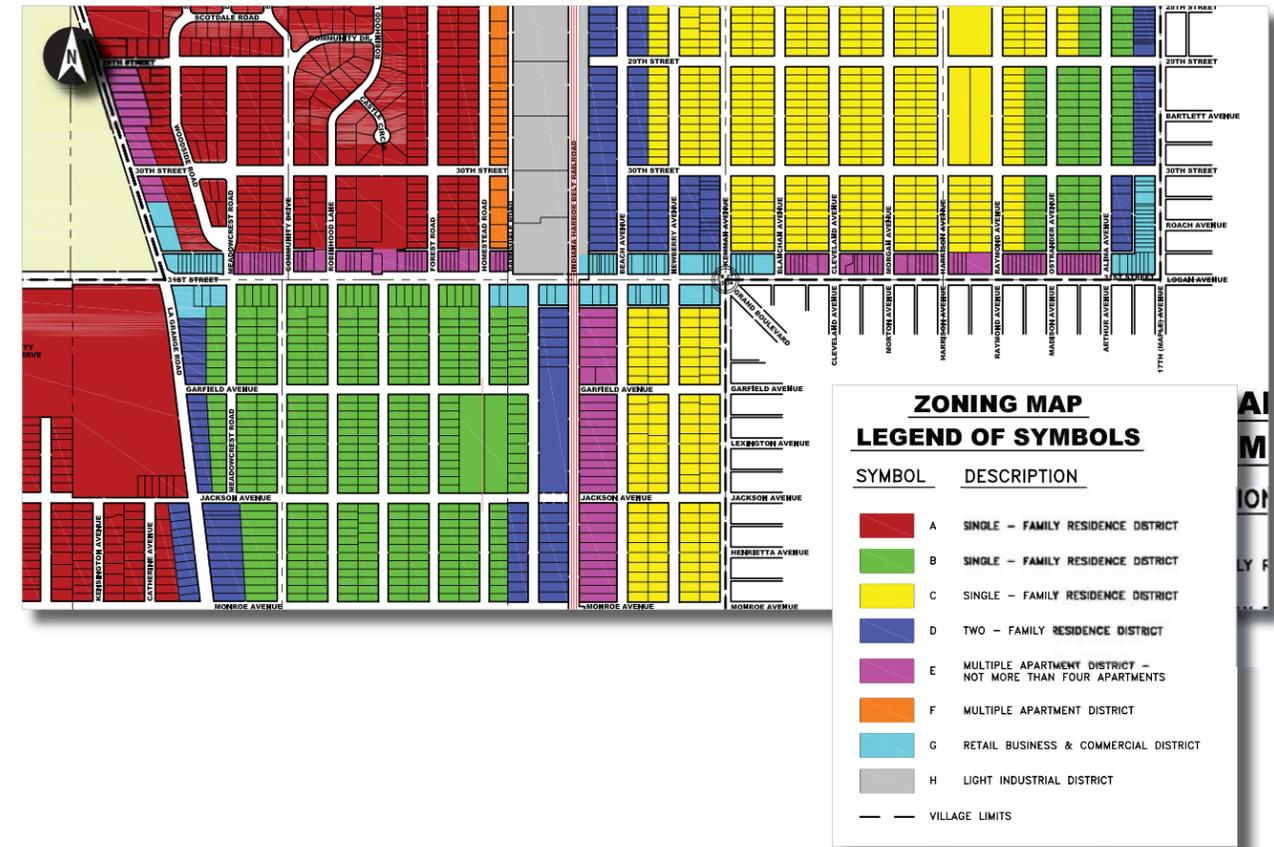
The Village has recently retained the services of a consulting firm to evaluate and update the existing zoning.



(Above) The properties in the three commercial districts that front directly onto 31<sup>st</sup> Street are zoned Retail Business & Commercial District.



(Right) Only the properties now zoned Light Industrial District might present conflicts with long term redevelopment opportunities in the central commercial district.



# Appendix: Opportunity Analysis, *continued*

### Parks and Open Space

La Grange Park Woods on the southwest corners of 31<sup>st</sup> Street and La Grange Road and Possum Hollow Woods on the northwest corner are part the Cook County Forest Preserves that form a green belt around La Grange Park's northern and western borders. There are picnic facilities near the 31<sup>st</sup> Street / La Grange Road intersection in La Grange Park Woods.

The Chicagoland Bicycle Federation's West Central Bicycle Plan has identified Forest Road as the location for a purposed bike route that would connect the 31<sup>st</sup> Street Corridor to the Salt Creek Trail, one of the area's most heavily used bike trails, to the north and Harding Avenue to the south. This bike route system would also connect the Corridor to downtown La Grange Park and the Metra station located there. In addition, the IHB Railroad tracks right-of-way is identified as the location for a future Greenways Trail.

Robinhood Park, located approximately 1½ blocks west of the central retail district, is the only municipal park that fronts directly onto the 31<sup>st</sup> Street. The facility includes tennis courts, two ball fields, playground and picnic shelter. The Recreation Center in Hanesworth Park, which is approximately three blocks north of 31<sup>st</sup> Street, is another destination that generates thru traffic in the Corridor. William Yena Park, located between Harrison and Raymond Avenues, is 2 blocks north of 31<sup>st</sup> Street. The park has two ball fields and a tennis court.

Brook Park School and Forest Road School are located one block from 31<sup>st</sup> Street. Both schools have play areas that include ball fields and soccer fields. The three churches located along the corridor also have varying degrees of open space, though none of it includes recreational facilities or equipment.

### Streetscapes, Parkway, and Tree Cover

Recent streetscaping enhancements from Blanchan Avenue to La Grange Road included decorative lighting, gateway pylons, benches, trash receptacles, bicycle racks, sidewalk pavers, trees and planters (new decorative street signs were installed along the entire length of the Corridor).



New street signs between Kemman and Maple are attractive, but the parkways are sparsely planted.



The central commercial area between the IHB Railroad tracks and Kemman Avenue.



Recent streetscape upgrades include attractive gateway signage.



The widest parkways and densest tree cover along the Corridor is between Homestead and Meadowcrest Avenues.

The locations and widths of parkways varies along the Corridor. For example, there are no parkways on the south side of 31<sup>st</sup> between La Grange Road and the IHB Railroad tracks, and what tree cover that does exist is provided by private property owners. However, the parkways on the north side of 31<sup>st</sup> between Homestead and Meadowcrest Avenues are the widest of any along the Corridor. The tree cover on these parkways matches that of the adjacent residential neighborhood streets. There are no parkways in the blocks immediately west of the IHB Railroad tracks, and very few street trees in the central commercial district east between the tracks and Kemman Avenue. The parkway between Kemman Avenue and Alima Terrace is sparsely planted. There are no trees along Maple Street north of the alley between 30<sup>th</sup> and 31<sup>st</sup> Streets.

### Parks and Open Space



### View Corridors and Signage

View corridors are important because of their potential to influence public perceptions of city's collective image and identity. While all roadway corridors are technically also view corridors, some view corridors—because of the breadth / depth of their vistas and the high volumes of vehicular traffic—are have greater cumulative impacts on people's perceptions than others. The views towards and from the 31<sup>st</sup> Street / La Grange Park intersection are especially important in this regard.

With an ADT of nearly 27,000, La Grange Road has the highest volumes of traffic of any roadway within or adjacent to the Village. 31<sup>st</sup> Street west of the La Grange Road intersection also has an ADT of over 20,000. The breadth and depth of the vistas near the intersection are expansive. Altogether, the intersection is in many ways the Village's signature intersection.

However, there are few visual cues to motorists that they are in La Grange Park. The automobile oriented uses, aging structures, and mediocre quality of commercial signs do not reflect the high quality image projected by the Village's well kept residential neighborhoods around the intersection. High quality redevelopment and / or improvements to the appearances of the commercial buildings and signage at this intersection would greatly enhance La Grange Park's image.

In addition, the view east from the 31<sup>st</sup> Street / La Grange Road intersection provides few visual cues that there is another important commercial district just a few blocks away. The Village's existing gateway signage, located on 31<sup>st</sup> Street one block east of the intersection at Meadowcrest Road, is not clearly visible from the intersection, and there are no directional signs along La Grange Road identifying the location of Corridor's central commercial district.



The view corridors towards and from the 31<sup>st</sup> / La Grange Road intersection provide few visual cues to commuters that they are in La Grange Park. In addition, there are no directional signs identifying the location of the 31<sup>st</sup> Street Corridor's central commercial district a few blocks to the east.

### Infrastructure

The study area is adequately served by sewer, water, power, and communications utilities.

The water main on 31<sup>st</sup> Street was recently enlarged to expand capacity, separated from the sanitary sewer main, and relocated so that it could be serviced without impeding traffic flow.

One of the study area's strengths is the absence of overhead utility lines along 31<sup>st</sup> Street throughout the corridor and also on La Grange Road within the study area. There are overhead utilities that parallel the IHB Railroad tracks that bisect the Corridor's central commercial district.

### Finances

La Grange Park does not have a legacy of using public funds to incentivize or help subsidize development activities. As noted in the Comprehensive Plan:

*"The Village has never used Tax Increment Financing Districts (TIFs) or Special Service Area (SSAs) to finance capital improvements. However, alternative revenue bonds were issued in 2004 to fund a two-year accelerated road program. In 2006, the Village issued alternate revenue bonds to fund various improvements to the sewer system. Issuing these bonds has allowed the Village to finance needed large infrastructure improvements."*

However, the Village has made important infrastructure investments within the Corridor to help stimulate private market investment. Over the past seven years, the Village has spent over \$2 million on street and streetscape enhancements that have made 31<sup>st</sup> Street, and especially the central commercial district, a more attractive and comfortable pedestrian environment.



The sparsity of overhead utilities along 31<sup>st</sup> Street greatly enhances the overall appearance of the Corridor.



Recent street and streetscape improvements along 31<sup>st</sup> Street have the Corridor a more attractive and pedestrian friendly environment.

# Appendix:

## Opportunity Analysis, *continued*

### Opportunity Analysis Summary

A number of preliminary conclusions were drawn from the information that was gathered, analyzed, and presented to Village staff and the Economic Development Committee during the Opportunity Analysis phase of the project. These conclusions have been organized into five clusters, as follows:

#### Marketplace

##### Challenging Marketplace

The primary market is sufficient to support a neighborhood-serving cluster of business, and the Corridor has significant bonus markets. However, current businesses and prospects are impeded by poor co-tenancies and obsolete buildings / sizes.

##### Challenging Development Economics

Because the existing 31<sup>st</sup> Street properties offer reasonable returns, it will be difficult to convince owners to undertake risky, expensive redevelopment. Marketplace parking requirements will also be difficult to accommodate on site even if multiple parcels are assembled for redevelopment.

##### Declining Village Sales Tax Revenues

One of the primary reasons the Village initiated this study was to understand the Corridor's potential to increase sales tax revenues that have been declining throughout the decade. While preliminary analysis suggests there are opportunities to do this, investor confidence will play a key role in the timing and form of the improvements.

#### Transportation and Parking

##### Unpredictable and Inconvenient Railroad Operations

The inconveniences caused by the at-grade railroad crossing in the central commercial district are universally acknowledged by Corridor stakeholders. However, a bigger challenge is the State CREATE program's targeting the rail crossing for eventual grade separation. Uncertainties about the timing of the project discourage investment in properties that may be affected by the grade separation.

##### Inadequate Parking Supply and Distribution

There are not sufficient facilities in the central commercial district to support the parking that destination oriented businesses such as restaurants require for customers. What facilities that do exist are unevenly distributed.

#### Stakeholders

##### Lack of Community Consensus

Many Corridor stakeholders believe that redevelopment will be challenged by the lack of community consensus—as evidenced by the recent comprehensive planning process—about potential negative impacts (increased traffic volumes, parking) and other related issues (building heights, density, architectural design).

##### Defining the Village's Role

The role that the Village plays in facilitating Corridor redevelopment has the potential to affect both the development timeframe and investor confidence.

#### Land Resources

##### Small Parcel Sizes and Depths

The small sizes and depths of individual parcels challenge investors' ability to redevelop profitably. Successful developments sites will likely require parcel assembly.

##### Multiple Properties Ownerships

Small parcels with many owners increase the complexity of assembling parcels into development sites of sufficient size.

##### Run Down Appearances

There was a strong consensus among project stakeholders that the run down appearances of the commercial districts do not align with the Village's image and identity.

#### Image and Identity

##### Lack of a Clear Cut Village Centerpiece

This is no strong consensus as to whether Corridor's central commercial district or the Village Market district should be the Village's centerpiece.





