

Grand Avenue Village Center Plan



A document of the
Village of River Grove
Comprehensive Plan

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Prepared by

CAMIROS



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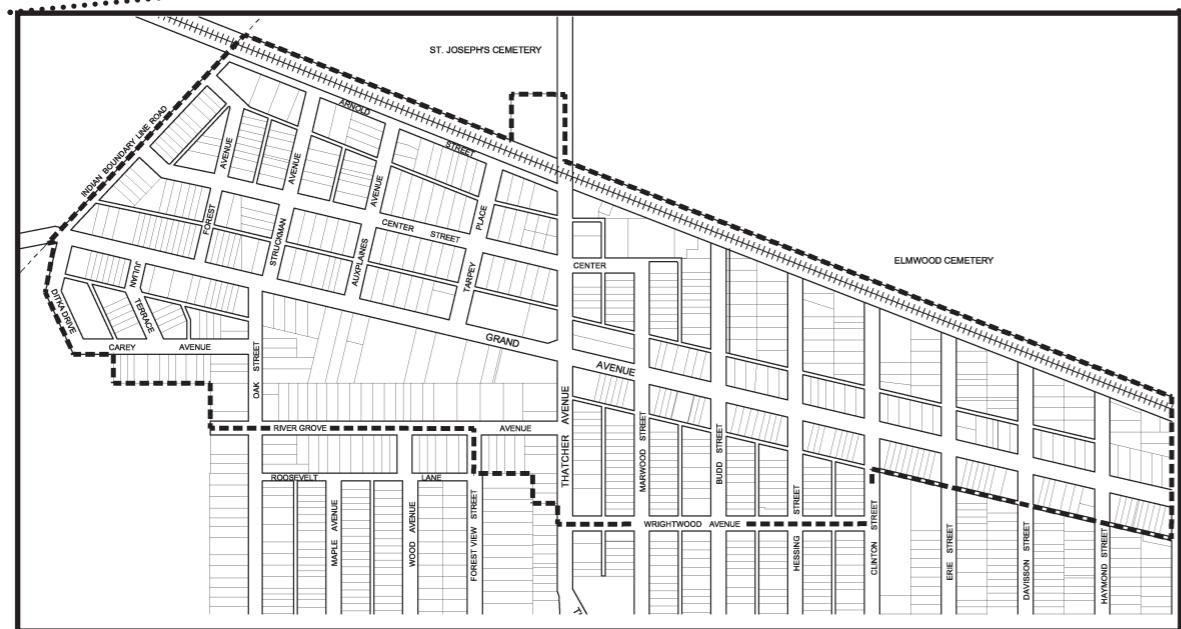


Figure 1: Grand Avenue Village Center Plan study area

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Introduction

The Chicago-Galena route . . . the road to Cazenovia . . . Whiskey Point Road . . . and Grand Avenue are all names associated with River Grove's main street over its history, dating back at least 170 years. Much of the story of the village is the story of Grand Avenue.

Starting in 1834 as a frontier settlement where a dirt trail met one of the first bridges across the Des Plaines River, River Grove grew into a rural crossroads, with improvements to Grand Avenue, such as installation of wooden sidewalks in 1889, marking important milestones. Today Grand Avenue is a four-lane highway carrying over 26,000 cars per day. The evolution of Grand Avenue can be summarized as one of gradual change as the village grew from rural roots into a residential suburb up to and following World War II, followed by a period of rapid development and infill in the 1950s and 1960s, to the current period of the last three decades during which Grand Avenue has struggled to respond to new forms of retailing and secure a central role in the economic and civic life of the community.

The purpose of this Village of River Grove planning document is to analyze the current state of the Grand Avenue corridor east of the river and to envision and guide the next step in its evolution.

The Village of River Grove considers the revitalization of Grand Avenue of primary importance to the future of the whole village. Creation of this plan is the first step in a process to adopt a comprehensive plan for the Village of River Grove and update its zoning ordinance. In the spring and summer of 2004 the Village, assisted by its planning consultant, Camiros, Ltd., engaged citizens and business and property owners in a public planning process that identified issues affecting Grand Avenue, goals for future revitalization, and scenarios for new development

and public infrastructure improvements. The resulting plan promotes a vision of Grand Avenue as River Grove's Village Center.

The Grand Avenue Village Center Plan considers the current state and potential future development of the Grand Avenue corridor from the Des Plaines River to the eastern village limit. Canadian Pacific Railway tracks set the northern boundary of the plan's study area, with the exception of the Metra commuter rail station north of the tracks at Thatcher Avenue, which is included as one of the most important destinations in the Village Center. The study area extends to land immediately south of Grand Avenue bounded by Carey Avenue, River Grove Avenue, Wrightwood Avenue, and the alley serving the south side of Grand (see Fig. 1). This study area comprises the heart of the River Grove community, bisected by the historic crossroads intersection of Grand Avenue and Thatcher Avenue. However, this portion of Grand Avenue was selected for detailed study not only because of its central position within the village, but also because of the growing potential for change and redevelopment in the corridor.

Existing Conditions Analysis

- Challenges for Grand Avenue
- Existing land use
- Existing zoning
- Business inventory
- Pedestrian environment
- Circulation and transportation
- Development in the transit service area
- Development in surrounding communities
- Challenges to renewal in River Grove

Challenges for Grand Avenue

River Grove is a small village, both in geographic size, roughly 1538 acres, and population with just over 10,500 residents. The village is surrounded by larger first ring suburbs west of Chicago. Approximately 51 percent of the land in the village is used for tax-exempt purposes, including forest preserve along the Des Plaines River, two large cemeteries, public and parochial schools, and Triton College. The remaining portion of the village where residents of River Grove live and shop is a compact area of residential blocks to the north and south of the Grand Avenue, which is divided in two by the Des Plaines River. The village has few large manufacturing plants or other institutions, with Triton College being the largest employer with 413 full-time and 897 part-time employees. This overall pattern of land use has important implications for the Grand Avenue corridor, both in terms of the current market for commercial uses and the resources at the Village's disposal to foster new development.

Although Grand Avenue began to develop like many other small rural main streets, a look at old photographs of the street shows that historically the street had only a small number of storefronts, inns, and other businesses. Even with the introduction of a train depot, first at Elm Street then later at its current location at Thatcher Avenue, a busy village center did not develop. Rather the commercial area was limited to the blocks immediate to the Grand and Thatcher crossroads. Large manufacturing plants with thousands of employees were built to the west in Franklin Park. However, in the Grand Avenue corridor only a handful of small manufacturing plants were built near the eastern village limits.

An aerial photograph of Grand Avenue taken in 1949 (Fig. 2) is telling in regard to how the street developed. Half a dozen blocks are vacant or nearly vacant, with only a single structure. Also of note are the single-

family homes scattered along Grand Avenue frontage and the absence of any apartment buildings or office buildings in the village. The lack of large employers or other concentrations of people in apartment blocks limited the market for storefronts along Grand Avenue to those needed to serve the local population, and that local population was small and dispersed across residential blocks that were exclusively single-family houses.

This history has left Grand Avenue without a core group of historic commercial buildings; in fact the one landmark that Grand Avenue had—Senf's Hall on the northwest corner of Grand and Thatcher—was a wood structure that burned down in 1963. Fire and redevelopment also took a group of small brick buildings on the northeast corner of the crossroads, thereby leaving only the group of brick buildings on the southeast corner as a remainder of the village's historic storefront fabric. However, history also shows a response to the limited market for commercial space in the rapid development of new multi-family units along Grand Avenue in the 1960s.

The second new land use introduced during this post World War II period was that of automobile service businesses. The 1949 aerial photograph shows a new car sales showroom under construction on the southwest corner of Grand and Thatcher and a service station across Thatcher on the southeast corner. During the following years automobile service businesses, such as body shops, used car lots, and automobile repair, began to play a more prominent role on the avenue. While the automobile brought new businesses to Grand Avenue it also challenged the avenue in new ways: people visiting businesses required parking for their cars, while growth in the overall Chicago metropolitan area brought a flood of vehicles passing through River Grove on Grand and Thatcher avenues. At first Grand Avenue had room for on-street parking parallel to businesses, but as traffic grew the State of Illinois Department of Transportation deemed it necessary to expand the capacity of Grand Avenue. Like so many other small towns with arterial highways,

Grand Avenue was forced to give up most of its parking without any solution offered to businesses dependant on on-street parking.

Given this lack of a historic shopping district, and the severe traffic and parking problems for businesses along Grand Avenue, it is not surprising that a shopping center was developed in the early 1960s removed from Grand Avenue. The Thatcher Woods Shopping Center, renovated with the assistance of a tax increment financing (TIF) district created by the Village in the late 1990s, now serves as the commercial center of the village. Roughly a half mile north of Grand Avenue at Thatcher and Belmont Avenue, Thatcher Woods is a typical shopping center designed around a large surface parking lot. The shopping center serves the needs of village residents with a full-service grocery store, hardware store, drug store, bank, and three restaurants. Due to the sales taxes generated, the grocery store is the largest single source of revenue for the Village of River Grove. While the renovation of Thatcher Woods Shopping Center has been a success for the village as a whole, it also challenges Grand Avenue to define its role, and makes some businesses on Grand redundant. A careful examination of Grand Avenue in terms of land use, business inventory, circulation and parking, and pedestrian environment will help to define the avenue's current strengths and weaknesses and provide a basis for planning for its future.



Figure 2: Aerial photograph from 1949 shows a number of vacant blocks along Grand Ave.

(Courtesy Chicago Aerial Photo Services)



Grand Avenue's current configuration lacks parallel parking for businesses, putting older storefronts at a disadvantage to strip malls and shopping centers.



Thatcher Woods Shopping Center, renovated with the support of a tax increment financing district created by the Village of River Grove, has ample parking and popular chain stores.

Existing Land Use

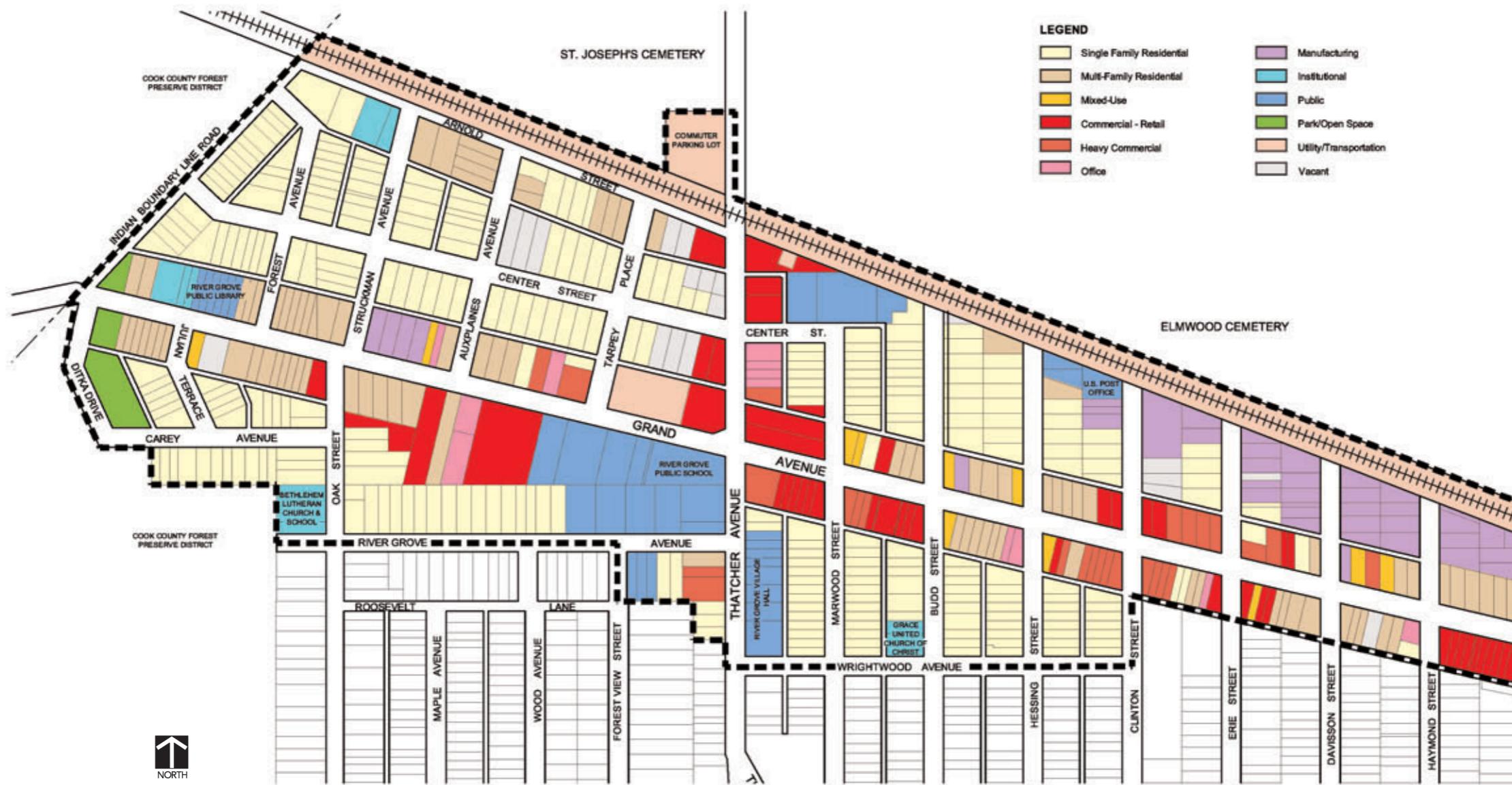


Figure 3: Existing land use for each parcel from a survey taken in the spring of 2004.

Existing Land Use

Residential

The first thing that is apparent in regard to land use along Grand Avenue in River Grove is that it is a residential street as well as a place of business. Apartment buildings built during the 1960s are actually more prominent along the avenue than are storefronts. If the street is divided into 26 blocks (counting both sides and the south side between Thatcher Avenue and Oak Street as 3 blocks), there are residential uses on 18 of those blocks.

In fact, an analysis of actual frontage shows that residential uses make up more than a third of the land use, with percentages as follows:

37% Residential, 3026 feet of frontage
30% Retail or Office, 2459 feet of frontage
16% Heavy Commercial, 1307 feet of frontage
17% Public School, Utility (Telephone Company)

This pattern of land use seems to have come about due to the limited market for storefronts and other retail or hospitality uses along the full extent of Grand Avenue. The 1949 aerial photograph shows whole blocks vacant, with some of these blocks developed later with three- and six-flat apartment buildings.

At the broad scale of the corridor, single-family residential uses are located from the alley behind Grand Avenue to the alley south of Arnold Street. Multi-family residential units line a portion of three blocks fronting on Arnold Street. The multi-family residential on Grand Avenue and Arnold Street relate to a less desirable position along the high traffic Grand Avenue and the railroad tracks, and frame the interior area of single-family houses along Center Avenue. A concentration of multi-family units is found near the bridge, with single-family dwellings from the alley south of Grand to Carey Avenue, and at the

corner of Oak Street and River Grove Avenue. Single-family houses line both sides of Marwood Street behind the alleys at the busy northeast corner of Grand and Thatcher. This area of single-family uses stretches from Marwood Street to Erie Street, tapering in depth to one house at Erie Street, as the area between Grand Avenue and the railroad tracks narrows and manufacturing uses are prevalent. Single-family residential uses are also found from the alley south of Grand to Wrightwood Avenue, from Marwood to Clinton Street.

Commercial

Commercial land uses are categorized as "retail" for those businesses serving routine shopping or service needs, such as a convenience store, restaurant, or barber shop, and "heavy commercial" for uses such as automobile service and sales, building contractors, and plumbers. Retail frontage is nearly a third of the total frontage along Grand Avenue, yet it is scattered along the avenue and mixed with heavy commercial and residential uses. While the intersection of Grand Avenue and Thatcher Avenue has enough retail space to be considered a retail node (or concentrated area of retail) it is currently too small to be considered a village shopping district. Retail uses extend for a block to the east of Thatcher on the north side of Grand, and two blocks on the south side, although mixed with a gas station, car rental and vacant buildings. The northwest corner has a short strip mall fronting on Thatcher Avenue, backed by a telephone exchange building extending along Grand to Tarpey Place.

An interesting, and perhaps telling, change came at the southwest corner of Grand and Thatcher where an automobile showroom, shown under construction in a 1949 aerial photograph (see Fig. 2), was torn down in the early 1970s and the land added to the River Grove School facility. While this action was partly determined by the historical location of the school, it amounts to the permanent removal of commercial uses at the village's busiest corner.



Multi-family residential is a predominant land use along Grand Ave.



Heavy commercial uses, such as automobile service shops, are less prevalent along Grand Ave. west of Thatcher Ave.



Retail commercial located at the northwest corner of Grand Ave. and Thatcher Ave.

Retail uses extend up the east side of Thatcher Avenue from Grand to the railroad tracks, specifically on the ground floor of Triton Towers office building and a flower shop at the corner of Thatcher and Center Street. The west side of Thatcher has a security company, vacant land and parking lots, and a sit-down restaurant.

Other than the intersection with Thatcher, there is no concentration of retail uses on Grand Avenue. A small retail node exists on the south side of Grand at Erie Street, with a hot dog stand, tavern, café, and print shop; yet this quickly transitions to multi-family housing, and heavy commercial uses are located on the north side of Grand across from this retail area. A handful of mixed-use buildings are also located on blocks along Grand, with retail or hospitality uses on the ground floor and apartments on upper floors.

A concentration of heavy commercial uses are located on the blocks between Hessing Street and Davisson Street. Uses include a used car lot, automobile repair shops, a commercial bakery, plumbers, and mason. Heavy commercial uses are more common toward the east end of Grand Avenue, but they are also found at the Grand and Thatcher intersection where one corner is a gas station and a plumbing contractor is tucked between the Grand Thatcher Mall and Triton Towers. West of Thatcher heavy commercial uses are less prevalent, with only a heating contractor on the south side of Grand, and a roofing contractor and two automobile service operations on the north side.

Office

Triton Towers is the only multi-story, multi-tenant office building in the Grand Avenue corridor. This building located at the corner of Thatcher and Center Avenue has roughly 36,000 square feet of space in a 5-story concrete and steel frame building. The building has a 90 percent occupancy rate. Other office uses are located in single-

story buildings and mixed-use buildings with apartments on the second floor. These small buildings with offices are widely scattered along Grand Avenue, leaving the village without a core group of office buildings.

Manufacturing

Manufacturing is the main land use in the area between Clinton Street and the eastern village limits along the railroad tracks. Because of the angle of Grand Avenue in relation to the north-south aligned blocks, the area between the railroad tracks and Grand Avenue tapers from west to east leaving the last block east of Haymond Street roughly half as long as Budd Street. The existing land-use pattern suggests that manufacturing was deemed appropriate for these short blocks next to the railroad tracks, and that single-family residential uses were less desirable where the blocks are shallow. However, the last blocks in this area also have multi-family units fronting on Grand Avenue with manufacturing immediately to the north.

Of the nine half blocks with manufacturing uses, three also have single-family residential uses on part of the half block. Erie Street has six single-family houses mixed in with manufacturing uses. The close proximity of manufacturing plants and houses has caused some recent conflicts, including complaints from at least one home owner and a decision to relocate on the part of one manufacturer. The total area of manufacturing land use in this area is 264,000 square feet. Given the small size of this manufacturing area, poor circulation on streets that dead end at the railroad tracks, conflicts with other uses, and recent decisions to relocate or close plants, the future viability of manufacturing as a land use in the Grand Avenue corridor is in doubt. Another example of the decline in this land use in the corridor is at the corner of Grand and Struckman Avenue, where a metal fabrication plant closed during this planning process. New uses proposed for that site will not include manufacturing.



Small retail node at Grand Ave. and Erie St.



Triton Towers Office Building



Semi-tractor trailer making a difficult turn off Grand Ave. onto Erie St. shows poor circulation in the manufacturing area.



Recently vacated manufacturing plant on Grand Avenue at Oak Street.



River Grove Public Library



Railroad tracks, eastbound commuter rail platform, and multi-family housing on Arnold Street.

Public facilities, park and open space

The River Grove School on the southwest corner takes 540 feet of frontage along Grand Avenue as it approaches the Thatcher Avenue intersection. The River Grove School has always been located near this intersection; in fact Thatcher Avenue was originally called School Street. Over the decades the school increased in size, with a new school built in 1929 and additions added in 1953 and 1974. The 1974 expansion took land along Grand that had been used for a car dealership and later a home supply store. The school property includes outdoor recreation areas, and a parking lot across River Grove Avenue. This public use of land at the village's busiest corner precludes its use for commercial purposes.

River Grove Village Hall is located across Thatcher Avenue from the school, extending from River Grove Avenue to Wrightwood Avenue. Village Public Works is located on a 57,869 square foot site at Center Street and Marwood Street south of the railroad tracks. The United States Post Office relocated from Grand Avenue to a site next to the railroad tracks that spans the block between Hessing Street and Clinton Street. The River Grove Library is currently located on the north side of Grand Avenue between Indian Boundary Line Road and Forest Avenue. The Library Board has pursued the construction of a new library on a site on Center Avenue, however, the project has not moved forward due to financial and zoning issues.

Open space surrounds the Grand Avenue corridor study area in the form of cemeteries to the north and a Cook County Forest Preserve along the Des Plaines River to the west. The Forest Preserve also owns the last two parcels fronting Grand Avenue before the river bridge and another parcel along Ditka Drive. One park facility exists within the study area, a gazebo at the west end of Carey Avenue, on vacated right of way adjacent to the forest preserve. A baseball diamond is located immediately south of the study area, also in the forest preserve. The

Grand Avenue corridor is therefore lacking in public recreation space to serve village residents.

Institutional

Two churches are located within the study area, one at the corner of Oak Street and River Grove Avenue and the other at the corner of Budd Street and Wrightwood Avenue. A job training center for handicapped persons is located at the corner of Arnold Street and Struckman Avenue. No other institutions are located in the Grand Avenue corridor.

Utility/Transportation

A telephone exchange building is located at the corner of Grand Avenue and Tarpey Place. The telephone company has been a fixture in River Grove since the advent of the telephone, but the exchange is now mostly automated. The Canadian Pacific Railway now owns the railroad tracks passing through River Grove. These tracks run in a diagonal alignment, similar to the diagonal Grand Avenue alignment, but converging with and crossing Grand Avenue to the east of River Grove. There are three sets of tracks in the River Grove section. A commuter rail parking lot owned by the Village is located adjacent to the north tracks, west of Thatcher Avenue. Metra owns a bay of diagonal parking spaces reserved for rail patrons along the north side of Arnold Street.

Existing Zoning Districts



Figure 4: Zoning districts in the Grand Avenue corridor. Note that all of Grand Avenue is zoned for commercial use. Compare with the existing land use detailed in Fig. 3 on Page 4.

Existing Zoning

Zoning Districts

The Village of River Grove zoning ordinance dates from the 1930s. It is a simple ordinance with five zoning districts, which are:

- A Residence District-Single Family Dwelling
- A-2 Multiple Family Dwelling District
- B Commercial District
- B-2 Commercial Shopping District
- C Industrial

The Village of River Grove is in the process of revising its zoning code. This revision is in response to problems with the code due to its age, problems in administering the code, and problems with the code in meeting the site development standards of current development projects. In addition, the analysis done for the Grand Avenue Village Center Plan shows that existing land use along Grand Avenue does not closely conform to the existing zoning. All frontage along Grand Avenue in the study area is in the B Commercial District. This district encourages commercial land uses; however, as noted in the Existing Land Use section, over one third of land fronting on Grand Avenue is actually residential. The code has always allowed single-family dwellings in the B Commercial District, but multiple-family units are much more numerous, even though they are not permitted by right in the district.

Nearly all the frontage along Thatcher Avenue is also in the B Commercial District, the exception being a single parcel immediately south of the railroad tracks on the east side of Thatcher, which is zoned C Industrial. The adjacent Public Works site is also zoned for industrial use. An area from the east side of Hessing Street to the eastern village limits, from the alley north of Grand to the railroad tracks is zoned for industry. While most of this area

is used for industrial purposes some of the blocks have non-conforming residential uses.

Although a substantial portion of Grand Avenue is multi-family residential, only two blocks in the whole corridor have any parcels zoned A-2 Residential for multi-family residential use, those being the blocks along Arnold Street between Struckman Avenue and Tarpey Place. In fact, the A-2 Multiple Family Dwelling District was not added to the zoning ordinance until 1964, at the same time the B-2 Commercial Shopping District was created specifically for the Thatcher Woods Shopping Center. The A-2 zoning was applied to land around the shopping center which was developed with multi-family dwellings. Excluding multi-family residential along Grand Avenue, there are only two apartment buildings east of Thatcher Avenue in the study area, both located on the north end of Hessing Street. Of these one is zoned B Commercial and the other C Industrial.

The remainder of land in the study area, that which is not in the A-2, B, or C districts, is all in the A Residence District. This A District provides for single-family dwellings.

Development Standards

The uniform height of apartment buildings along Grand Avenue is an indication of developers building to the allowed maximum. The River Grove standard is a two-and-a-half-story apartment building with ground-level garden apartments, two levels of flats, and surface parking to the rear of the building. These buildings are typically 28 feet in height from the ground to the gutter line. Recent proposals for construction of new housing in the Grand Avenue corridor, and along River Road, revealed issues regarding the zoning ordinance's site development standards. The B District formerly referenced standards for the A single-family district if the use was to be residential. The A district limits building heights to two-and-a-half stories. The A-2 district also limits heights to less

than 35 feet and lot coverage of no more than 50 percent. In late 2003, the Village Board amended the zoning ordinance to allow multi-family residential units in the B District as a special use, regulated by the same site standards as commercial uses. Therefore the code now allows buildings up to 45 feet in height and up to 85 percent lot coverage. New four-story structures have been proposed under this revised ordinance.

The other main constraint to future development is that of parking for residential units. New condominium buildings will invariably propose a garage, or garages, to provide space for each dwelling unit. The zoning ordinance currently requires 1.5 parking spaces per residential unit, which effectively limits building heights on most sites to four stories, with at least half of the ground level used for indoor parking. The real estate market also prefers to offer buyers at least one space per unit, with an option to buy another space.

Currently, there is no requirement in the zoning code to build storefront space along any part of Grand Avenue. Developers can request approval for multi-family dwellings as a special use without creating any new commercial space. This is problematic from the stand point of keeping a commercial presence on Grand Avenue, and in the village; and also a problem from an design point of view, since the blank wall of ground level garages could come to dominate along the avenue. Many municipalities require in their zoning code that a percentage of ground level space be built as commercial space with storefronts, especially on main commercial streets.

Business Inventory

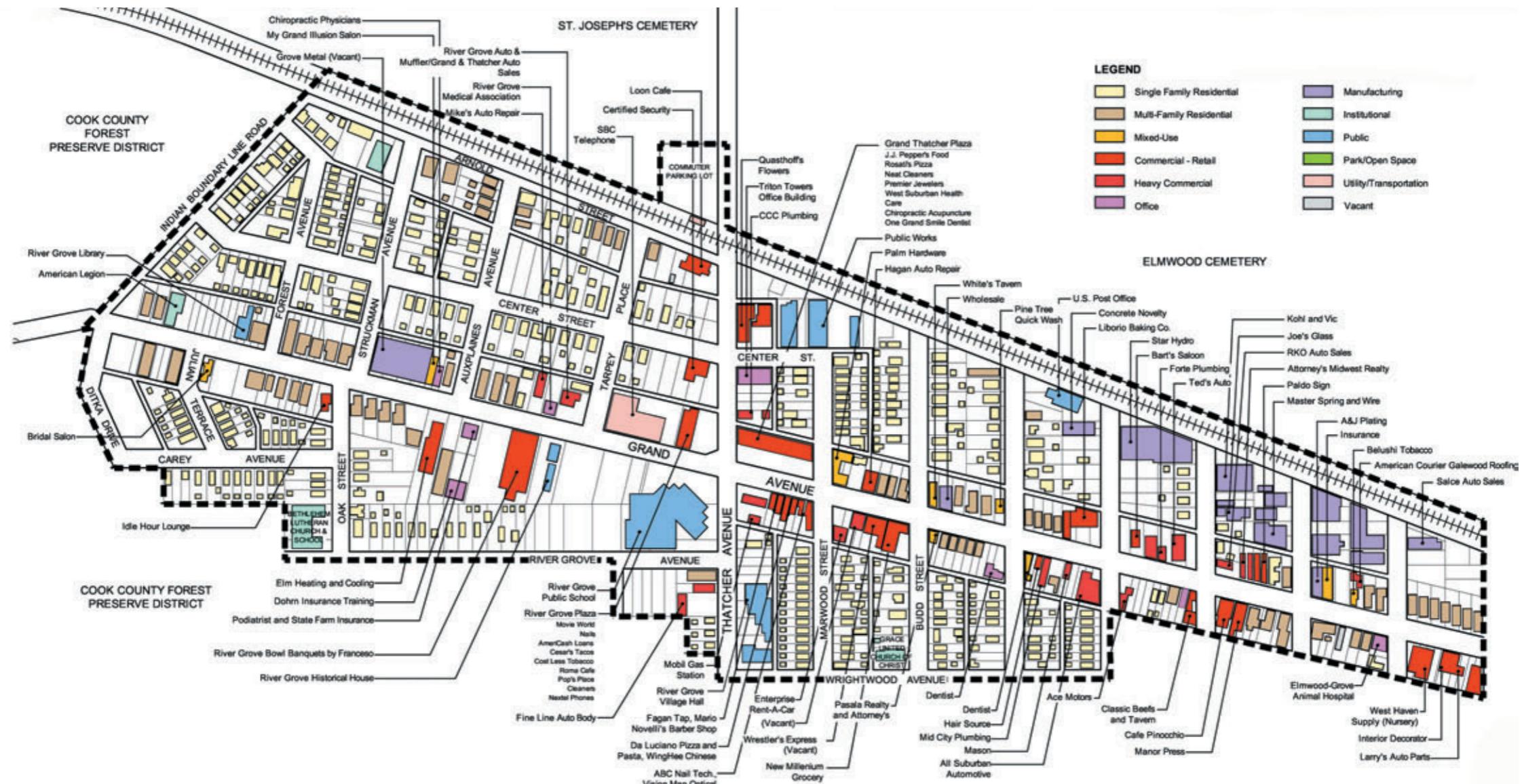


Figure 5: Businesses in the Grand Avenue corridor from a survey taken in the spring of 2004.

Business Inventory

Businesses and institutions make up the heart of the River Grove community. Businesses within the Grand Avenue corridor are especially important to the character and function of the community. Grand Avenue is the main area in the village offering professional services and the shops and services are, for the most part, locally owned and operated. Few of the businesses are franchise operations. A detailed inventory of businesses in the Grand Avenue corridor taken during the spring of 2004 is shown on Fig. 5. (Note that the inventory shows the presence and location of businesses in the corridor, but does not contain an inventory of businesses in the Triton Towers office building.)

An organized summary of this inventory is as follows:

Food stores

1 convenience food store
1 deli and Polish grocery

Hospitality

3 sit-down restaurants
5 fast food restaurants (pizza, hot dogs, tacos), but no franchise or drive-through
1 coffee shop
6 taverns
1 bowling alley
3 banquet halls, as parts of other businesses

Beauty and personal care

1 bridal salon
5 hair and nail salons
1 barber shop

Insurance, law, and real estate

3 insurance agencies
2 real estate agencies
2 law offices

Health services

2 chiropractors
1 podiatrist
2 general physicians
3 dentists
1 optical service
1 animal hospital

Building contractors

1 heating contractor
3 plumbers
2 roofing contractors
1 mason

Automotive service

1 gas station
7 automobile repair and parts
3 used car sales
1 rental car

Other home and business services

1 hardware store
2 cleaners
1 movie rental
2 tobacco shops
1 interior decorator
1 plant nursery
1 flower shop
1 jewelry shop
1 travel agency
1 check loan
1 phone sales shop
1 home security service
1 sign shop
1 print shop

Industrial, wholesale, and utility businesses

1 commercial bakery
1 concrete novelty manufacturer
1 wire and spring manufacturer
1 hydraulic pump manufacturer
1 tool and die manufacturer
1 plating
1 trucking contractor
1 telephone exchange

Grand Avenue study area does not have the following businesses:

No bank
No movie theater or auditorium
No drug store
No clothing stores (women's, men's, new or used)
No shoe stores
No diner or lunch counter
No hotel, motel, or bed and breakfast

Major Transportation Infrastructure

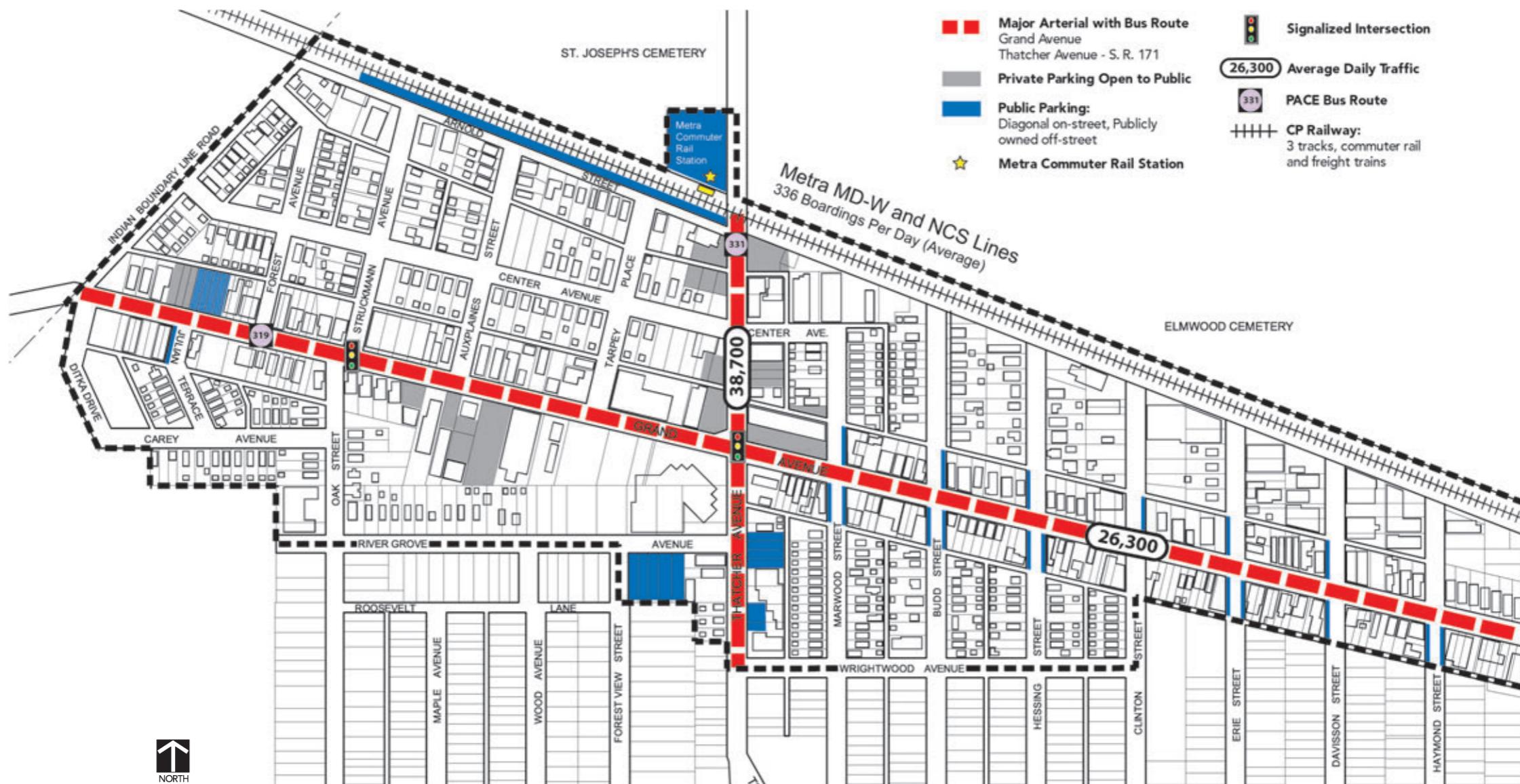


Figure 6: The study area is defined and served by transportation infrastructure including two highways, freight and passenger railroads, and parking lots.

Transportation and Circulation

Major Transportation Infrastructure

Grand Avenue and Thatcher Avenue are both State of Illinois roadways. Thatcher Avenue (continuing as First Avenue), or State Route 171, is designated as a State Regional Arterial, which means that it connects communities and destinations at the regional scale, and carries the burden of very heavy traffic. Projections made in 2000 estimated that Thatcher Avenue has roughly 38,700 vehicles on it on an average day. The average daily traffic (ADT) for Grand Avenue is roughly 26,300 cars per day. Obviously this makes the old crossroads of Grand and Thatcher avenues a very busy intersection, and one that can be difficult to traverse. In fact the intersection has a level of service rating of D, which means that during peak periods some vehicles can not make it through the intersection in one cycle of the lights. When a train blocks traffic the level of service is further reduced.

Transit

Perhaps the greatest single asset in the Grand Avenue corridor is the Metra commuter rail station located to the west of Thatcher Avenue, two blocks north of Grand Avenue. Two Metra lines service River Grove: the Milwaukee District West line and the North Central Service. The Milwaukee District West line offers a train to downtown Chicago on an hourly basis throughout most of the day, with extra trains at the morning and evening rush hours. The trip time from River Grove to Union Station in Chicago is approximately 30 to 35 minutes, with up to eight intermediary stops. The North Central Service, by contrast, offers an express service from River Grove to downtown with a 22 to 25 minute travel time, and only one stop.

According to a Metra ridership survey conducted in the fall of 2002, the number of boardings at the River Grove station was 336 riders. The ridership was nearly split between the two lines, with the North Central Service's express trains attracting slightly more than half of the boardings. Of those riders, 57 percent drove to the station and parked at the municipal lot north of the tracks or along the south side of the tracks on Arnold Street. Riders dropped off by others accounted for 13 percent of the mode of access, while 2 percent rode a Pace bus to the station. The remaining 28 percent of riders accessed the station by walking and bicycling. Of the 336 riders then, roughly 94 walked or biked to the station, which gives an indication of how many people are walking past storefront businesses in the area of Grand and Thatcher.

Other transit in River Grove is provided by the Pace bus system. Pace buses operate on Grand and Thatcher avenues, designated as routes 319 and 331. Route 307 operates on Grand Avenue on a part-time schedule. Bus stops are indicated with signs, but there are no bus shelters located at stops.

Traffic control

There are only two signalized intersections in the corridor: one at Grand and Thatcher, and the other at the intersection of Grand and Struckman Avenue/Oak Street. The lack of other signalized intersections allows traffic on Grand Avenue to speed through River Grove, and makes pedestrian or vehicular crossings difficult. Some drivers use Center Street or alleyways to get to the Struckman Avenue signal, as a means of avoiding the difficult turn across traffic on Grand Avenue.



Traffic congestion on Grand Ave. just east of the intersection with Thatcher Ave.

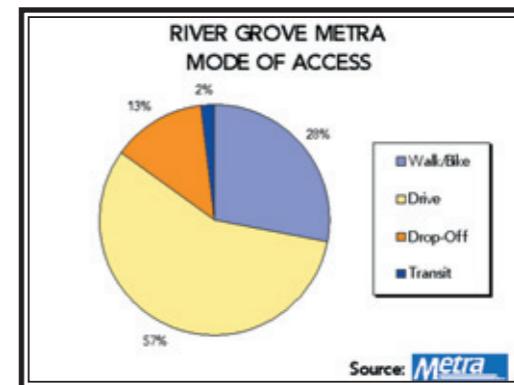


Chart showing how Metra commuter rail riders get to and from the station.



River Grove Metra Commuter Rail Station

Circulation and Street Network



Figure 7: River Grove's local street network shows a number of constraints to circulation in the Grand Avenue corridor.

Parking

Parallel parking along Grand Avenue is allowed on blocks away from the main intersection during off-peak hours; however the street functions as a four-lane road and parking along the street in unmarked spaces can cause traffic flow problems and even collisions. Therefore, the main reserve of on-street parking in the corridor is located on side streets in the form of diagonal parking from Grand Avenue south or north to the alleyways. Almost all of these areas of diagonal parking are located to the east of Thatcher Avenue. The system of one-way streets intersecting with Grand Avenue constrains access to this diagonal parking, and the parking lots of some businesses.

Circulation and Street System

Circulation is a problem in the Grand Avenue corridor. The roadway system is constrained by the cemeteries and railroad tracks to the north and the river to the west. These constraints create a situation where Thatcher Avenue (continuing due south as First Avenue) is the only north/south road that extends through the corridor. River Road on the west side of the Des Plaines River is an alternative route for north/south traffic through River Grove, but it is not as wide or straight as Thatcher. East of the river, all traffic coming to the corridor from the north is on Thatcher Avenue. Once vehicles cross over the railroad tracks they can turn west on Center Street, but this is the only option for getting off Thatcher before reaching the Grand Avenue intersection.

Because the distance between Grand Avenue and the railroad tracks becomes progressively shorter east of Thatcher, Center Street does not extend beyond Marwood Street, and Marwood Street has been blocked to stop traffic from connecting to Grand. Also there is no road along the south side of the tracks east of Thatcher, in the alignment of Arnold Street west of Thatcher, and therefore all of the side streets running north are dead ends east of

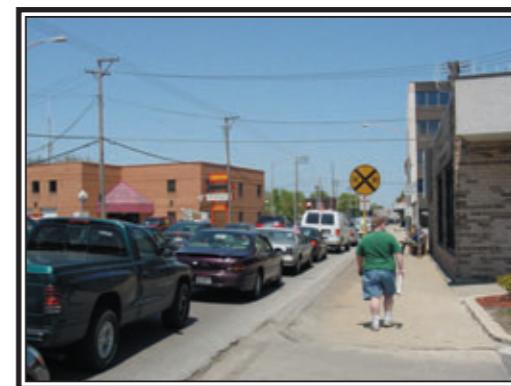
Thatcher Avenue. To the south of Grand, all of the side streets have been made one-way pairs. Village policy has been to limit movement on and off of Grand Avenue from the south with these one-way streets.

A modest grid of streets provides better circulation west of Thatcher and north of Grand for vehicles, pedestrians, and bicyclists. Center Street acts as a local collector and there are five regularly spaced local streets allowing movement in a north/south direction. To the south of Grand west of Thatcher, the road system is again constrained, with the only through street between the river and Thatcher being Oak Street. Similarly, the only local east/west street west of Thatcher is River Grove Avenue, and its eastern end is only 260 feet from the Grand and Thatcher intersection, which makes left turns across traffic difficult.

The final and most important impediment to circulation in River Grove is railroad traffic. Both freight and commuter rail trains move through River Grove throughout the day and night on the three sets of tracks. The southern most tracks are used by freight traffic and the other two tracks carry commuter trains. When trains block Thatcher Avenue the regular flow of traffic is stopped, creating long queues of cars that can back up south of the intersection of Thatcher and First Avenue, as well as down Grand in both directions. When the gates are raised traffic snarls at the Grand and Thatcher intersection. Even pedestrian access to the Metra station can be blocked from the south when long freight trains are passing through, making it impossible to get to the station platforms. IDOT has made preliminary recommendations to study the feasibility of a Thatcher Avenue underpass, but any action on this issue remains many years in the future.



Diagonal parking on Budd Street, south of Grand Ave.



Traffic congestion on Thatcher Ave. just north of Grand Ave., which is blocking access to the strip mall.



Metra train causing traffic to back up on Thatcher Ave.

Development in the Transit Service Area

Residential Density

In order to understand the potential of the River Grove commuter rail station as an economic development catalyst for the Village Center, it is important to consider how the pattern of residential development relates to the transit station. A description of basic land-use patterns was given in the Existing Land Use section of this report, showing where single-family residential and multi-family residential units are located. However, these classifications do not provide information as to the number and density of residential units within in the vicinity of the station. An additional survey was completed to understand the pattern of residential density located within an easy walk of the transit station.

Transit utilization studies have shown that most transit riders are willing to walk up to a half-mile to access a station, roughly a ten-minute walk.

Those making a twice daily trip to a station from distances greater than a half mile from their place of residence are more likely to use another mode, such as bicycle, drop off, or park and ride. This half-mile circle can be thought of as a station's primary service area. Figure 8 shows this service area centered on the River Grove station as a half-mile walk circle. In fact this walk circle encompasses all but the eastern most portion of the Grand Avenue corridor study area, and a majority of the community area east of the river.

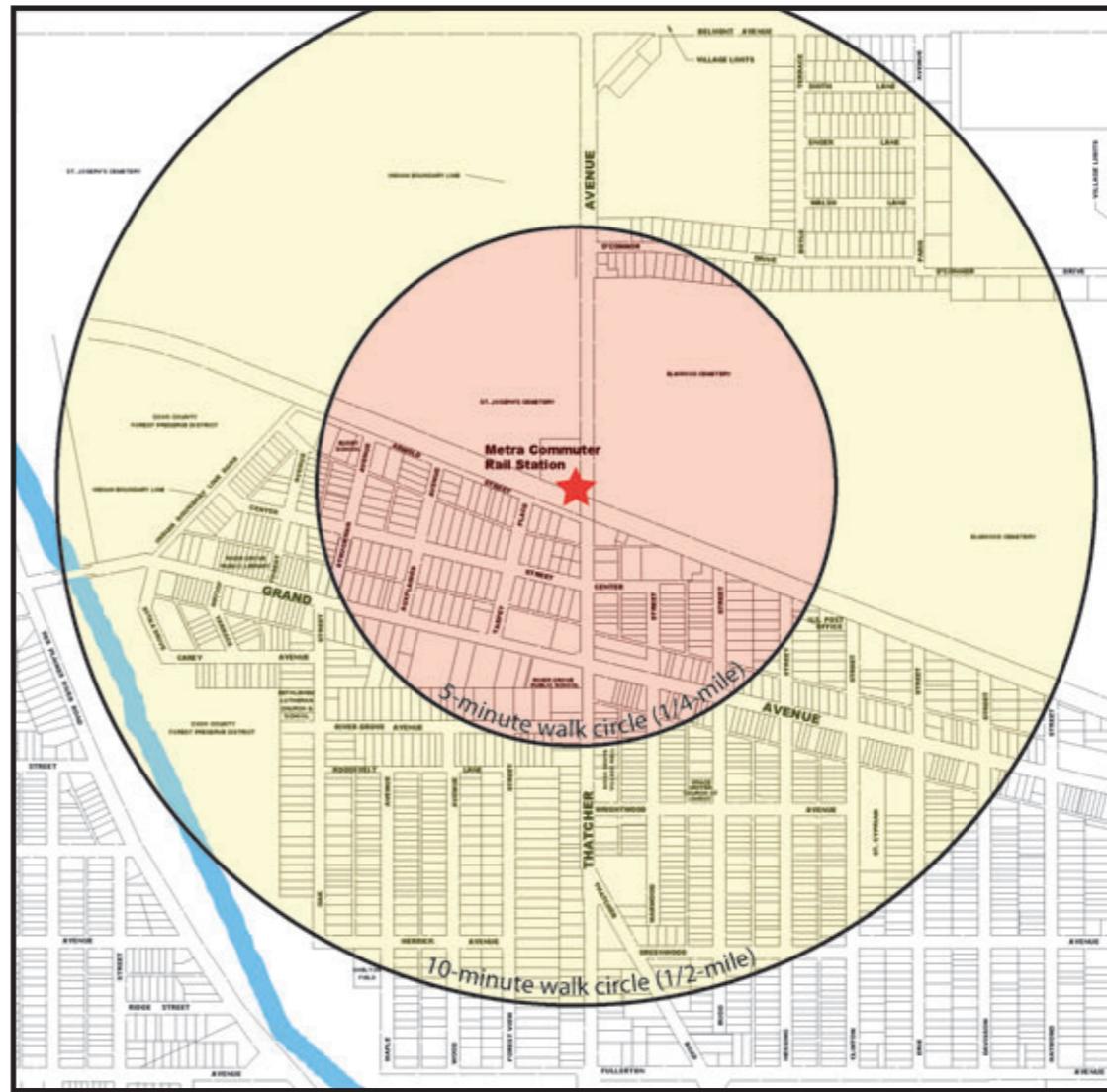


Figure 8: Walk circles centered on the River Grove commuter rail station show approximate walk times for transit riders. Most transit patrons will walk up to a half-mile, or ten minutes, to get to and from a station; further than a half mile, most will bike or drive to the station. Pedestrians are concentrated in the quarter-mile area closest to the station, creating opportunities for commercial development.

Residential Density Analysis

One of the first things to notice about the residential density pattern in River Grove is that a large portion of the service area has no density at all because of the two cemeteries immediately north of the station.

The service area does include the relatively high density residential area east and south of the Thatcher Woods Shopping Center, but it should be taken into consideration that more than a third of the land next to the station will not contribute to transit ridership or economic development in the Village Center.

Figure 9 shows the pattern of single-family and multi-family residential units in the study area. Residential density in the single-family unit areas is determined by the size of the lots. In the area closest to the station—those blocks around Center Street—lots average 50 feet in width with varying depths. A calculation dividing the area of all the single-family lots by the number of houses yields a density of 6.9 dwelling units per acre. Smaller lots, 30 feet in width, in the quadrant south and east of the Grand and Thatcher intersection yields 10.2 dwelling units per acre. In general, a residential density of 8 dwelling units per acre is desirable for a transit station area, less dense areas do not generate enough riders to justify rail transit service. Fortunately, the Village Center area also has multi-family residential units that significantly boost the overall density in the station area. Two of the quadrants in the corridor have overall densities averaging 17.5 dwelling units per acre; these are urban densities that provide a base of riders for the transit service.

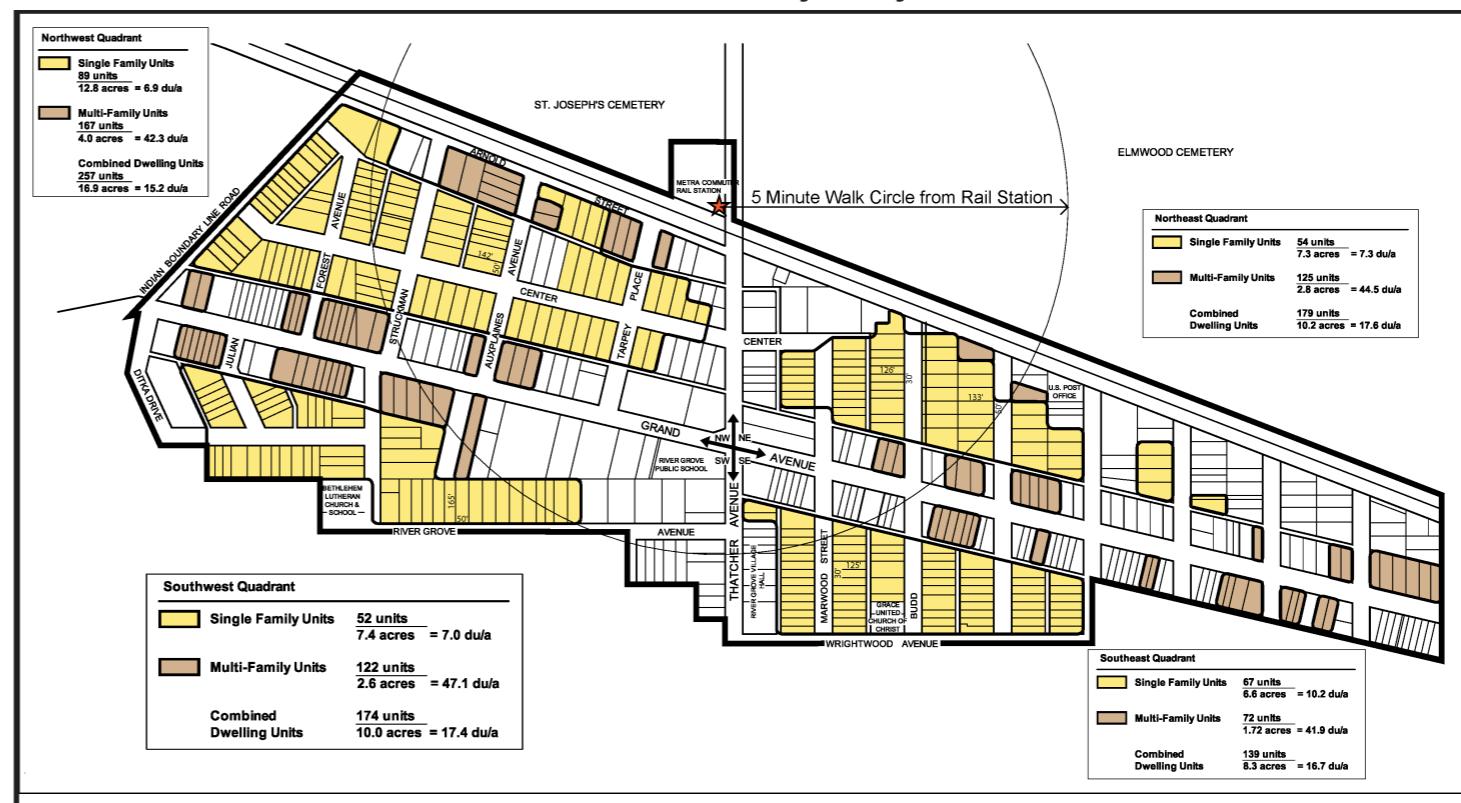


Figure 9: Analysis shows the dwelling units per acre for single-family and multi-family dwellings.



Typical multi-family dwelling on Grand Ave. raises the overall density in the corridor, thereby supporting transit service.



Single-family dwellings on 50' wide lots yields a density of 7 dwelling units per acre.

Convenience Retail

The area within a quarter mile of the transit station, or a five-minute walk, presents unique opportunities. Within this smaller walk circle, pedestrian activity is increased in the immediate vicinity of the station, with access routes and path vectors leading to and from the station. This is the prime area for commercial development related to the transit station, where storefront shops and services can benefit from their visibility and accessibility to commuters, regardless of access mode.

A recent Metra study of commuter habits relating to shopping notes that: "Visits to local stores consist largely of convenience-shopping trips that are conducted in the evening near the station."

The Metra study lists the following types of businesses as most frequented by Metra riders, listed below in ranked order and indicating if River Grove has the business within the quarter-mile walk circle:

Commuter patronage	River Grove
1. Dry cleaners	Yes
2. Restaurant	Yes
3. ATM	Yes
4. Grocery	Yes (small grocery/deli)
5. Coffee stand	No
6. Newsstand	No
7. Bank	No
8. Gas station	Yes
9. Fast-food restaurant	Yes
10. Drug store	No
11. Convenience store	Yes
12. Video rental	Yes
13. Card/gifts shop	No
14. Auto-repair shop	Yes
15. Hardware store	Yes
16. Beauty/barber shop	Yes

17. Bakery/donut shop	No
18. Daycare center	No
19. Florist	Yes
20. Bookstore	No

This list shows that River Grove does have 12 of the 20 businesses most used by transit commuters. However, the visibility and accessibility of these businesses to rail commuters needs to be considered. Five of the twelve are located in the two strip malls at the Grand and Thatcher intersection. These malls are set up to serve passing motorists rather than walking commuters. The mere presence of businesses does not ensure any relationship to the transit station, and opportunities to capture the buying power of commuters and develop a vibrant Village Center may be going unrealized.

Components of a Village Center

Ideally a Village Center has a mix of civic, retail, hospitality, office, and residential uses arranged on a small number of blocks so that walking between multiple destinations is possible. The current pattern of development in the Grand Avenue corridor exhibits some components of a Village Center. Components currently present include:

- Village Hall and Court
- River Grove School
- Train station
- Post office
- Library
- Shops and restaurants in storefronts
- Professional offices
- Mix of residential unit types

Of these, the village hall, train station, and school are in locations and buildings that function well in the Village Center and reflect well on the community. The new post office is hidden on a dead end street next to the railroad tracks and adds little to creating a Village Center, while the library is located in a building constructed for a heating contracting business and is inadequate to meet current and future needs.

Perhaps most important for a vibrant Village Center is to have enough shops and restaurants in storefronts to create activity on sidewalks, bring employees to the area, and form a community of business owners who are actively involved in improving and promoting Grand Avenue as a place to shop, work, and live.

At this time there is a lack of quality storefront space along Grand and Thatcher avenues. Additional office space would also help to bring more employees to the area during the day and more visitors seeking services. The current choice of residential types is somewhat limited, with units either being single-family detached, or 3-, 6- or 12-flat apartment buildings dating from the same period of construction in the mid-twentieth century.

Pedestrian Environment

An important aspect of planning for a vibrant Village Center is to consider the role of the pedestrian in creating a place. The essence of the type of environment that the phrase "Village Center" seeks to capture is intertwined with the quality of the pedestrian experience. One hallmark of a Village Center is that people are out of their cars, walking down sidewalks and in shared civic spaces, making a variety of planned and spontaneous trips between buildings in an area of a few blocks.

Existing conditions in the Grand Avenue corridor are often hostile to pedestrians, especially along Grand Avenue and Thatcher Avenue. Three main problems exist that degrade the environment for pedestrians:

1. **High traffic levels on Grand and Thatcher avenues.**
2. **Minimal attention to streetscape design.**
3. **Lack of storefronts.**

With a traffic count that is approaching 40,000 cars a day, pedestrians walking along the sidewalks of Thatcher Avenue are constantly confronted by fast moving cars. There is no buffer between the moving drive lanes and the sidewalk, in the form of a parkway providing space between the curb and sidewalk, nor is there a lane of parked cars that would shield pedestrians from traffic. The problem is compounded by curb cuts across the five foot wide sidewalk on the west side of Thatcher leading to the rail station.

The environment on Grand Avenue is slightly better than along Thatcher, given lower traffic volumes, and the presence of a parkway next to sidewalk on most blocks. Some blocks of Grand have streetscape elements, such as a parkway, benches, and street trees, however these blocks are few in number and there is no consistent streetscape design. The parkways along Grand Avenue west of Thatcher are paved with asphalt as an inexpensive means

of maintenance and a small number of trees are placed along the parkway in wooden containers.

Storefronts that meet the sidewalk help to create an environment that is interesting to pedestrians. A Village Center should provide opportunities for window shopping and chance encounters and exchanges between those on the sidewalk and people frequenting shops, cafes, and offices. Site plans that place an emphasis on access via automobile typically put a parking lot between the sidewalk (if there is one) and the front of the shops. This reduces the pedestrian to a secondary position. Storefronts that met the sidewalk help to frame and enclose the street scene; conversely, parking lots create undefined space that spills from the roadway into the private property.

Examples of both pedestrian-oriented storefronts and automobile-oriented strip malls can be found in the study area. At the Grand and Thatcher intersection there are small strip malls on the northwest and northeast corners, and both have a double bay of parking spaces in front of the building. In order for pedestrians to access the storefronts it is necessary to leave the public sidewalk and cross parking lots. In contrast, the block on the southeast corner of the intersection has older structures with storefronts that meet the sidewalk—although there is a gas station on the corner itself. This block is the best block in the whole corridor in terms of pedestrian interest, with a barber shop, Italian and Chinese restaurants, nail salon, eyeglass shop, and pub; all of which offer the passerby an opportunity to look in windows or doors and the potential for interaction.

Other examples of good storefronts include the Quasthoff's Flower Shop at Thatcher and Center Street, which has large windows allowing a view of merchandise inside, making it the best building for window shopping. The ground level of Triton Towers also has two storefronts with large windows making the east side of Thatcher much more inviting for pedestrians walking to the train station than the west side where there are no

storefronts meeting the sidewalk. The block immediately west of the Grand and Thatcher intersection is doubly problematic, with the solid blank wall of the telephone exchange addition narrowing the sidewalk on the north side, opposed by open space surrounding the River Grove School on the south side. This approach to the village's most important intersection is a dead zone for pedestrians. Taken together, the design of the blocks closest to the train station show little attention paid to the daily foot traffic that is going to and from the station, from the stand point of the quality of the pedestrian experience and the potential to serve the transit patron market



Facade improvements made in 2004 along the south side of Grand Ave., just east of Thatcher Ave. New signage, awning, window treatment, and brick exterior creates a better overall image for the best block of storefronts in the corridor.

Pedestrian Environment



Figure 10: Pedestrian environment in the Grand Avenue corridor is analyzed with symbols, notes, and corresponding photographs shown on the facing page. Photographs are keyed to the aerial photograph above with letters that show where the image was taken.



A
Trees in container boxes, asphalt parkway between the curb and sidewalk are temporary solutions to streetscape needs.



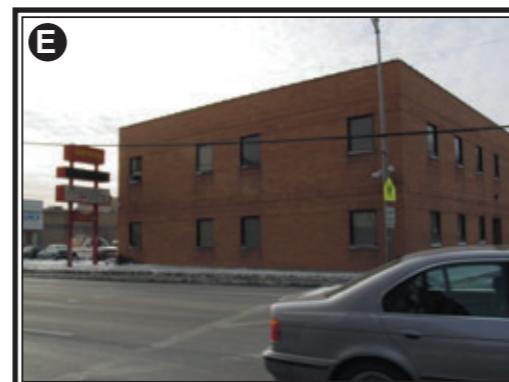
D
Sidewalk on west side of Thatcher Ave. leading to the rail station.



G
Cars intrude into the sidewalk zone along Grand Ave. just east of Thatcher Ave.



B
Large signs are designed for passing motorists rather than pedestrians.



E
Opportunity for new storefront in building one block from the rail station.



H
Pedestrians crossing Grand Ave. one and a half blocks from the Thatcher Ave. signal and crosswalk.



C
Blank wall of telephone building is opposite chain-link fence and open field of the school offering no interest to pedestrians



F
Flower shop building holds the corner, encloses the street, and provides good sidewalk contact for windowshopping.



I
Streetscape elements on a single block, including trees, bench, and trash receptacle.

Development in Surrounding Communities

One the most exciting aspects of planning for revitalization of the Grand Avenue corridor in River Grove comes from looking at what is currently happening in surrounding communities. A tour of the inner ring of western suburbs conducted in 2004 showed a surge of new construction, particularly in areas adjacent to Metra commuter rail stations. Of special interest are projects in Chicago, Elmwood Park, and Franklin Park all served by the Milwaukee District West line that also serves River Grove.

Townhouse projects are currently under construction at the Monte Claire station in Chicago and across from the depot in Elmwood Park. The Elmwood Park Townhouses are being constructed on the site of a former factory and is one of the largest residential projects to be undertaken in the village in recent decades. In Franklin Park, a large mixed-use project called The Crossings at Franklin Station is transforming Main Street. Two blocks of single-story shops have been removed and two new six-story buildings with underground parking, ground level shops, and condominiums are being built. Marketing for the project is highlighting the proximity to two Metra stations, directly across the tracks, on the same lines as River Grove.

Other large redevelopment projects without direct transit access are located on North Avenue in Melrose Park and Harlem Avenue in Elmwood Park. The North Avenue project is on the south side of the boundary between River Grove and Melrose Park, west of the Des Plaines River and Thatcher Avenue. It includes a large condominium development and two senior housing buildings with varying levels of assistance. The Harlem Avenue project is a seven-story condominium building, in an area that is predominately single-story commercial buildings backed by single-family houses.

Projects in River Forest, Forest Park, and Oak Park also show the potential for redevelopment in areas adjacent to railroad tracks and on busy commercial streets. Locating these projects on a map shows that new development is happening in communities around River Grove, but as of yet no new projects have moved forward in River Grove.



New townhouses at the Mont Clare Metra station in Chicago



New townhouses planned for a site directly across from Elmwood Park's rail depot.



Model of a six-story mixed-use project under construction in Franklin Park



A seven-story condominium building recently constructed on Harlem Avenue in Elmwood Park.



A large residential building recently constructed just south of River Grove, off North Avenue in Melrose Park.



Condominiums replaced factories along railroad tracks in Forest Park.

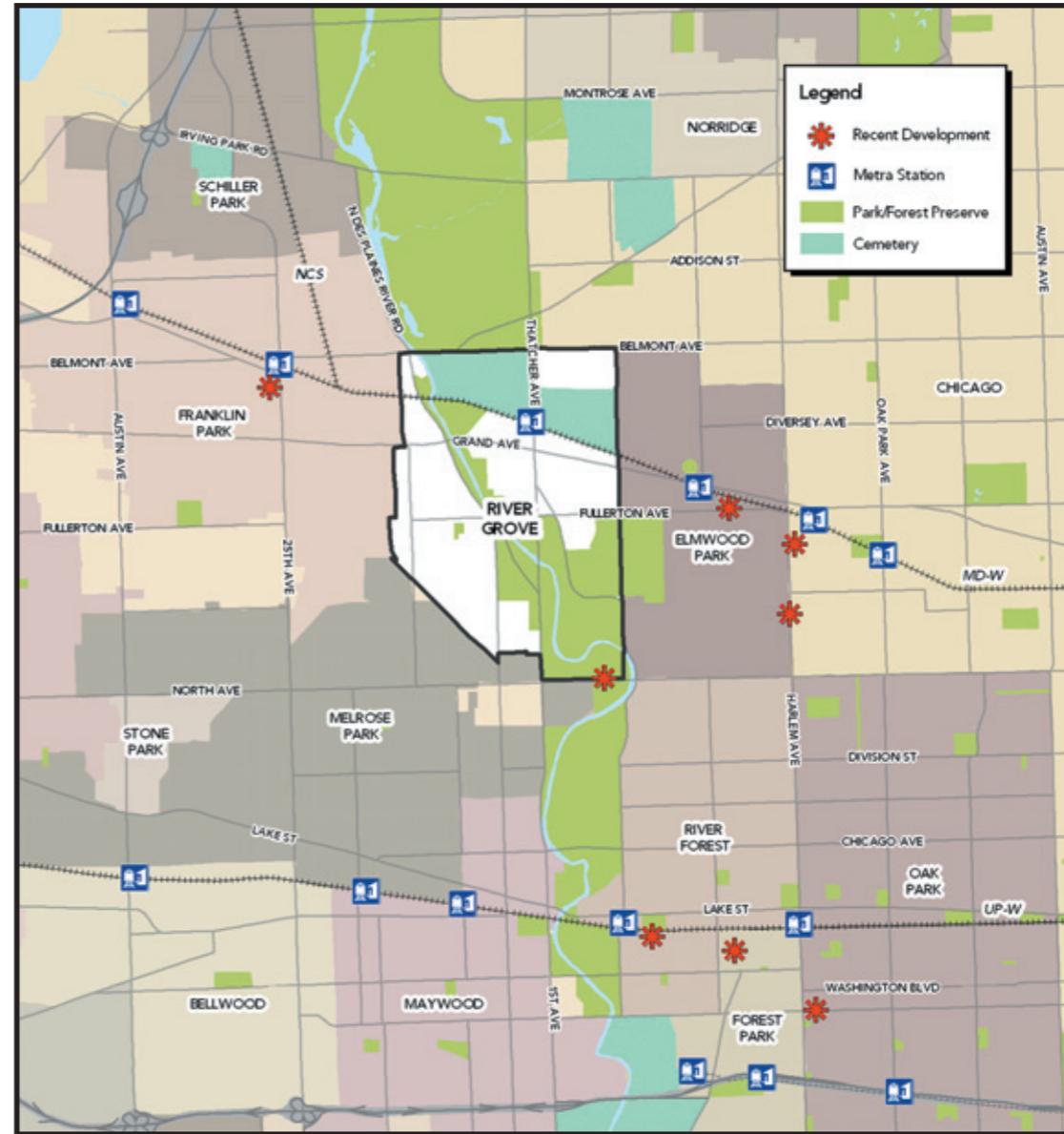


Figure 11: Map of the west suburban area along the Des Plaines River shows River Grove's location relative to other communities and sites where recent development projects have progressed.

Challenges to renewal in River Grove

The strong housing market that developed around the turn of the last century, encouraged by historically low mortgage interest rates, spurred development in communities adjacent to River Grove. Some of these communities had not experienced a demand for redevelopment prior to this growth period, but projects were financed, approvals given, and construction started. During this period of the last five years, a number of redevelopment proposals were made in the Grand Avenue corridor in River Grove, yet at the start of this planning process none had come to fruition.

While the reasons individual projects were not carried forward may vary, some insights were gained by Village officials and staff regarding challenges to renewal in the corridor.

Challenges include:

- Lack of a plan for the Grand Avenue corridor.
- An outdated zoning code and site development standards.
- Lack of redevelopment tools and assistance.
- Unclear administrative procedures for Village approval.
- Resistance to change.

Recognizing these challenges to new investment in River Grove, Village officials and staff took steps to initiate this current planning process. Approval of the Grand Avenue Village Center Plan is a first step toward giving developers and investors confidence in the direction that the Village of River Grove is taking in regard to revitalizing the corridor.

In addition to this plan, the Village has begun a full revision of its zoning code in order to allow the types of development the market is now constructing, as well as to clarify administrative procedures for development approval. Further steps may also be needed to put the Village of River Grove in a position to assist developers with site assembly, and new infrastructure such as streetscape improvements. Having an approved plan and new zoning code will also clarify what can be built in the corridor and thereby provide both current property owners and developers with a clearer picture of the potential of redevelopment sites.

The process of planning for revitalization and implementing redevelopment projects requires both general support from village residents of the overall goals and a willingness of individual property owners to participate in renewal. In some cases, property owners are eager to work with public entities to redevelop their property; in other cases, opposition to change can slow the process. During this planning process a number of property owners expressed an interest in furthering the planned redevelopment, while others expressed strong opposition. With so many redevelopment opportunities, the Village of River Grove, and private real estate developers, can be strategic in project selection, and work first and foremost with willing participants in improving the Village Center.

3

Village Center Plan Recommendations

- Overall Revitalization Goals
- Future Land Use Plan
- Redevelopment Concept Plans
- Site Design and Development
- Streetscape Improvements

Overall Revitalization Goals

The Village of River Grove is dedicated to reinvigorating the Grand Avenue corridor as its most important thoroughfare. In order to encourage new private and public investment, and guide the shape of that new development, the Village Center Plan recommends the following planning and revitalization goals.

1. Plan for and encourage new development and investment.
2. Market and develop new residential units within easy walking distance of the Metra station.
3. Develop new storefront space to create a pedestrian shopping district.
4. Increase Village property tax and sales tax base.
5. Upgrade Village infrastructure, including sidewalks, crosswalks, and streetscape.
6. Create new urban design features and civic spaces that become signature places for River Grove.

The Village Center Plan explores opportunities for meeting these goals within the existing context of the Grand Avenue corridor. The overall strategies are encouraged by the process of planning, approval of the plan by the Village, and new Village efforts to market the Grand Avenue corridor and work with real estate developers. However, the actual implementation of the plan will be accomplished through a series of individual projects. Therefore a series of smaller scale objectives and standards were followed during the process of creating the Village Center Plan in order to test how and where the overall goals could be applied.

Future Land Use Plan



Figure 12: Concept plan for future land use envisions a storefront district near the commuter rail station and a consolidated service commercial area in the eastern part of the corridor. Existing single-family residential areas are characterized as small "town," while existing and proposed multi-family residential areas are characterized as "urban" or "mixed."

Future Land Use Plan

The future land use plan for the Village Center is based on a set of recommendations that seek to realize the overall planning goals for the corridor.

Land Use recommendations include:

1. Designate a mixed-use storefront district on blocks in close proximity to the Metra commuter rail station.
2. Consolidate service commercial uses on Grand Avenue, such as automobile repair shops, on blocks east of Hessing Street.
3. Retain and protect single-family residential uses in the Center Street district west of Tarpey Place, along Carey Avenue and River Grove Avenue, and north of Wrightwood Avenue from Marwood Street to Clinton Street.
4. Develop an urban mix of single-family, town houses, flats, and small multiple-family buildings in the area between Budd Street and Erie Street north of Grand Avenue.
5. Retain and rehabilitate multiple-family dwellings on Grand Avenue west of Struckman Avenue.
6. Allow a mix of residential, retail, and office space on blocks that are currently predominately multi-family residential east of Thatcher Avenue.
7. Encourage additional office space development along Thatcher Avenue north of Grand Avenue, while discouraging residential units fronting on Thatcher Avenue.
8. Phase out industrial uses in the corridor, first west of Thatcher Avenue and incrementally in the area between Clinton Street and Haymond Street.
9. Retain public facilities in their present locations, including River Grove School and Village Hall; construct a new library and community center on an expanded site including the library's current location on Grand Avenue.

The Future Land Use Plan envisions the corridor in the year 2020. It is anticipated that in most of the corridor the present pattern of development will remain the same, especially in areas of single-family residential and the existing multiple-family residential.

Yet significant change is recommended in the area north of Grand Avenue, between Tarpey Place and the alley between Marwood Street and Budd Street. This area is closest to the commuter rail station and River Grove's main intersection and represents the best opportunity for more intense use of land and the creation of storefront space.

Current uses include small single-family dwellings within a few hundred feet of the heavily trafficked intersection and the train station, which should be phased out in favor of new commercial and mixed-use development that makes the best use of the transportation infrastructure.

In addition, significant redevelopment is recommended on both sides of Grand Avenue in the area between Struckman Avenue and Tarpey Place. Current uses include a vacant factory, automobile repair shops, bowling alley, heating contractor, small office buildings, and apartment buildings. Redevelopment to mixed-use buildings will extend the storefront district past the area of the telephone exchange and school, where such development is not currently feasible, yet within an easy walk of the train depot and main intersection.

Presently, River Grove lacks office space in an office district or park. The tallest building in the village is Triton Towers, a five-story office building located at the corner of Thatcher Avenue and Center Street. To encourage creation of more office space in this area, the future land-use plan recommends development of additional office space fronting on Thatcher Avenue. This space should be in buildings that also have retail or hospitality space on the ground level, adding to the storefront district. Given the high traffic levels on Thatcher and the need for more office space, residential uses should be discouraged in this area, with the possible exception of floors above the second level.

The residential area north of Grand Avenue on Budd, Hessian, and Clinton streets is a mix of small, aging single-family dwellings, two apartment buildings, vacant or double lots, and two industrial uses. The area is a prime location for residential tear-down and replacement with bigger single-family and multiple-family dwellings. The future land-use plan recommends an urban mix of residential types and the expansion of residential uses to both sides of Clinton Street, rather than expansion of industrial on Clinton as the current zoning allows.

While a handful of industrial businesses are likely to continue to operate in the small manufacturing area between Clinton Street and the eastern village limit, for the planning period up to 2020, evidence of weakness in the position of this industrial area was noted during the planning process. Access to the blocks is severely constrained by difficult turning movements for semi-tractor trailers and the lack of a through street at the north end of the blocks. Two of the largest plants actually straddle block ends allowing trucks to pass through, but other operations at mid block do not have that option. A glass fabrication business decided to relocate in 2004 due conflicts with a neighboring (and non-conforming) single-family use. Comments were also made on other manufacturing businesses likely to close in the area in the near future. Therefore, the plan recommends a gradual transition away from manufacturing in this area, and the whole corridor, in favor of higher value and sales tax generating residential and mixed-use development.

The current lack of high quality storefront space leaves service commercial uses predominant along Grand Avenue. The number of automobile repair shops, used car lots, roofing and heating and plumbing contractors gives the avenue the feel of a mechanics row, with many of these businesses in very plain buildings and sites filled with parked cars surrounded by chain-link fences. These businesses are already more prevalent east of Thatcher Avenue and the future land-use plan recommends consolidation of these uses east of Hessing Street, and phasing out of these uses west of Thatcher Avenue.

The plan also recognizes that some blocks along Grand Avenue are solidly residential and will remain that way, and that other blocks to the east of Thatcher Avenue are a mix of multi-family dwellings, mixed-use buildings with offices and apartments, and other uses such as taverns. These blocks are likely to remain mixed, although some redevelopment is also likely.

The recommended pattern of land use will help to consolidate and organize uses in the Grand Avenue corridor while retaining and enhancing some of the eclectic mix. Implementation of the land-use plan will result in a more vibrant village center, with more residents, more shops, and more office space. Village tax revenues will increase from higher assessed values, as well as more sales tax revenue from businesses located in new storefront space.

Redevelopment Concept Plan: Phase One Projects

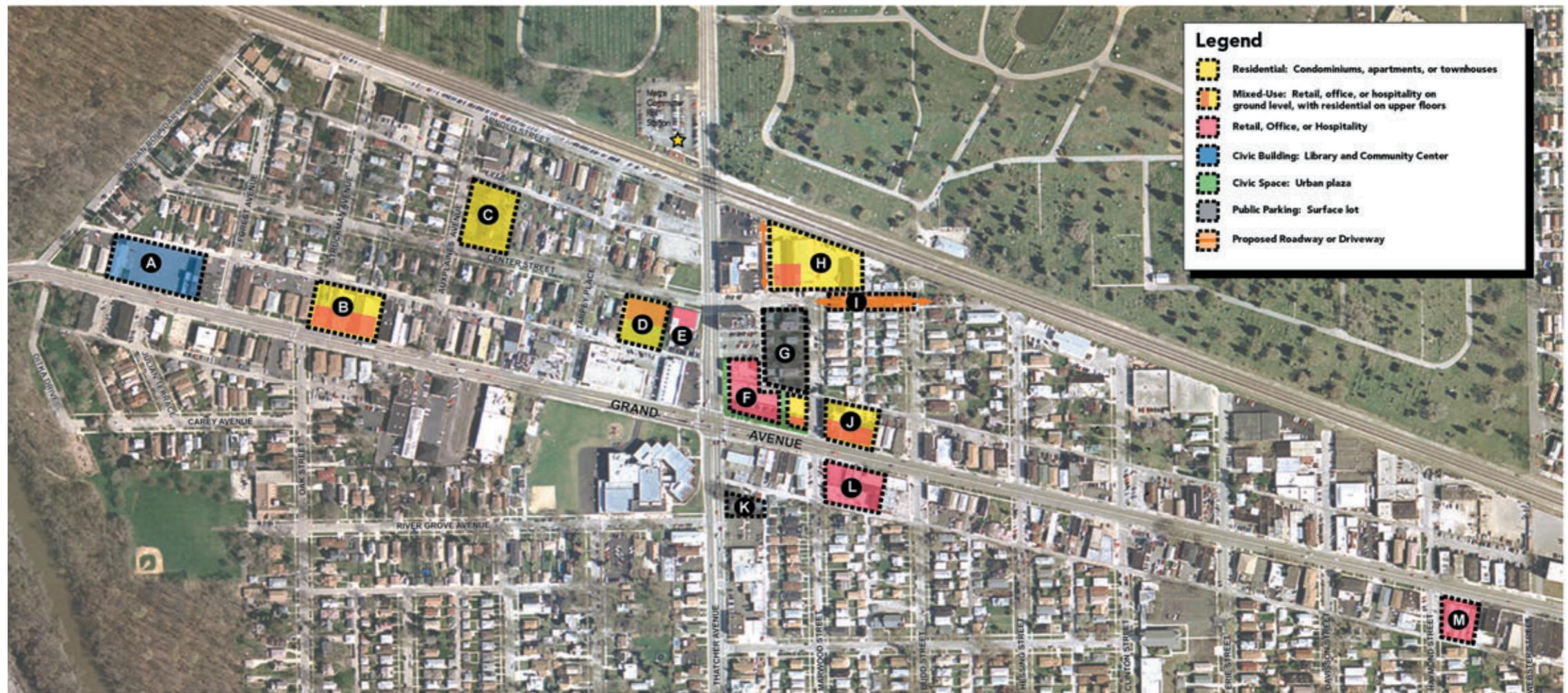


Figure 13: Potential redevelopment sites include: **A.** River Grove Public Library and American Legion Post. **B.** Grove Metal and Viking Roofing. **C.** Center Street and Auxplaines Street (vacant). **D.** SBC site on Center Street (vacant). **E.** Certified Security Building (first floor rehabilitation). **F.** Grand Thatcher Mall. **G.** Five houses on the west side of Marwood Street. **H.** River Grove Public Works. **I.** Two houses between Marwood Street and Budd Street. **J.** Palm Hardware, one house, and Hagen Auto Repair. **K.** Two houses on Thatcher Avenue. **L.** Enterprise Car Rental, two vacant commercial buildings. **M.** Plant nursery.

Redevelopment Concept Plan: Phase One Projects

A number of exciting redevelopment opportunities currently exist within the Village Center. The accompanying graphic shows the location of these potential project sites and identifies each with a letter. **Many of the sites discussed are ready for redevelopment now, including vacant land or vacant buildings, or property owners who are interested in redevelopment.** The readiness of each site for redevelopment, and the development concept envisioned by this plan is described. It is anticipated that many of these projects will be possible to undertake in the next five years, the period up to 2010.



Existing: River Grove Public Library and American Legion Post #335

Concept: New Public Library and Community Center

The River Grove Public Library District seeks to construct a new library facility. The current site owned by the library district provides a prominent location for a new civic building at the western edge of the Village Center, however, in order to create the type of facility desired it may be necessary to create a larger site by relocating the American Legion hall and assembling the two properties. Public comments on the proposed project expressed a desire for a flexible facility that would also include community rooms, and perhaps a gymnasium and studios.

This plan explores the concept of a combined library and community center, most likely in a two-story building which would be immediately visible upon crossing the bridge over the Des Plaines River and entering the Village Center.



Existing: Former Grove Metal Building (vacant) and Viking Roofing Building.

Concept: Mixed use with storefronts and residential units.

Manufacturing and heavy commercial uses are sparse along Grand Avenue west of Thatcher Avenue. The closing of Grove Metal creates an opportunity to phase out these uses. The plan shows a project site that also includes the Viking Roofing building adjacent to Grove Metal's vacant building. The roofing company could be relocated to the eastern portion of the corridor, thereby creating a larger redevelopment site, but the project is not dependent on this action. Given the lack of storefronts west of Thatcher Avenue, the plan seeks a mixed-use building that would include small retail or office space on the ground floor with residential units above.



Existing: Vacant lot at Center Street and Auxplaines Street

Concept: Medium density residential

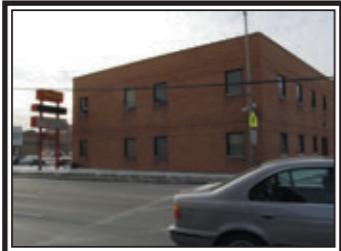
The River Grove Library District purchased property at the corner of Center Street and Auxplaines Street with the intention of siting a new library where a single house had stood on three lots. This plan promotes the value of this site for new housing within a very easy walk of the commuter rail station.



Existing: Vacant lot on Center Street

Concept: Mixed use with storefronts and residential units.

Two houses were cleared from this site for a telephone call center project that was never built. In order to create more storefront space in the immediate vicinity of the rail station, Center Street between Thatcher Avenue and Tarpey Place should be planned for mixed-use development.

E**Existing: Certified Security Building****Concept: Retail space on the ground floor**

Although currently used as space for a home security company's operations, interest in developing retail space was expressed during the planning process. Rehabilitation on the ground floor could create storefronts with high visibility from Thatcher Avenue and easy access for commuters walking to and from the depot.

F**Existing: Grand Thatcher Mall****Concept: Mixed development with retail, office, and residential.**

Although the existing Grand Thatcher Mall was built in the early 1980s and is fully occupied, the site plan with parking in front of the building and a non-descript single-story strip mall presents a poor image of River Grove at its most important intersection. Redevelopment of the corner is dependant on the willingness of the current owner and the ability to assemble a new parking area.

The concept shows one possible reconfiguration with a commercial building holding the corner of Grand and Thatcher, and a residential building with small storefront on the corner of Grand and Marwood Street. In addition the plan will explore the potential to widen the sidewalks on both Grand and Thatcher in order to create civic space at this main intersection.

G**Existing: Five houses on west side of Marwood Street****Concept: Surface parking lot for commercial uses**

In order to redevelop the Grand Thatcher Mall and create a quality site plan that brings the new building up to the corner, a surface parking lot will need to be placed behind the new structures on the west side of Marwood. The Village of River Grove acquired one of the five houses on a double lot in 2004 from a willing seller in order to initiate site assembly for redevelopment in the area.

H**Existing: River Grove Public Works****Concept: Higher density residential with small hospitality space.**

The Village of River Grove recognizes that the property it currently uses to house its Public Works department can be put to a better use, one that takes advantage of its proximity to the rail station and helps to bring more residents and buying power to the Village Center. The concept is for a relatively large condominium building offering views into the cemetery, and with a small café or coffee shop on a portion of the ground floor.

I**Existing: Two houses on east side of Marwood Street****Concept: Center Street extension**

Circulation in the Marwood Street area is constrained to access from Thatcher Avenue at Center Street. It may not be possible to support redevelopment in this critical area of the Village Center without increasing access for new residents and visitors to existing and new businesses. Therefore, the plan recommends extending Center Street from Marwood Street to Budd Street. This will necessitate acquisition of two existing houses for the construction of a new roadway section. This connection would bring more traffic to Budd Street, which is currently a dead-end street, and this impact is likely to be unpopular with current residents. Yet it may prove impossible to develop a vital Village Center without creating such impacts. This project should be considered in the context of future development proposals for the Public Works site and the redevelopment of Marwood Street.



J



Existing: Palm Hardware, single-family house, and Hagen Auto Repair

Concept: Mixed use with storefronts and residential units

Owners of the hardware store and house at the corner of Marwood Street and Grand Avenue have expressed interest in redeveloping their property. The owner of the adjacent automobile repair shop has also indicated that he may consider relocating to a bigger facility. The concept plan shows all three of these properties assembled as one project to allow development of a new mixed-use building.

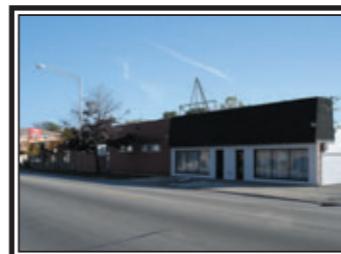


K

Existing: Two houses on Thatcher Avenue

Concept: Public parking

Two small single-family houses are located between the service station at the southeast corner of Grand and Thatcher and the Village Hall parking lot. These houses are isolated and are located near a heavily trafficked intersection. There is a need for more parking open to the public to support the businesses on the first block of Grand Avenue east of Thatcher. The concept is to explore the potential for creating a shared parking lot to support these businesses.



relocate the car rental business and assemble the three properties into one site. The redevelopment concept is for a commercial building with parking in back accessed from Marwood Street.



Existing: Garden Center

Concept: Commercial or residential

The owner of the plant nursery center at the corner of Grand Avenue and Haymond Street is considering redeveloping the property. The eastern portion of Grand has a mix of heavy commercial and multi-family residential uses, so the property could be redeveloped to a number of different uses. It may be considered a good site for heavy commercial businesses that are relocated out of the storefront district.

Existing: Enterprise Car Rental and two vacant commercial buildings

Concept: Commercial with storefronts and office space

Two non-descript commercial buildings are vacant immediately east of the car rental operation at the corner of Grand Avenue and Marwood Street. The concept is to

Redevelopment Concept Plan: Phase Two Projects

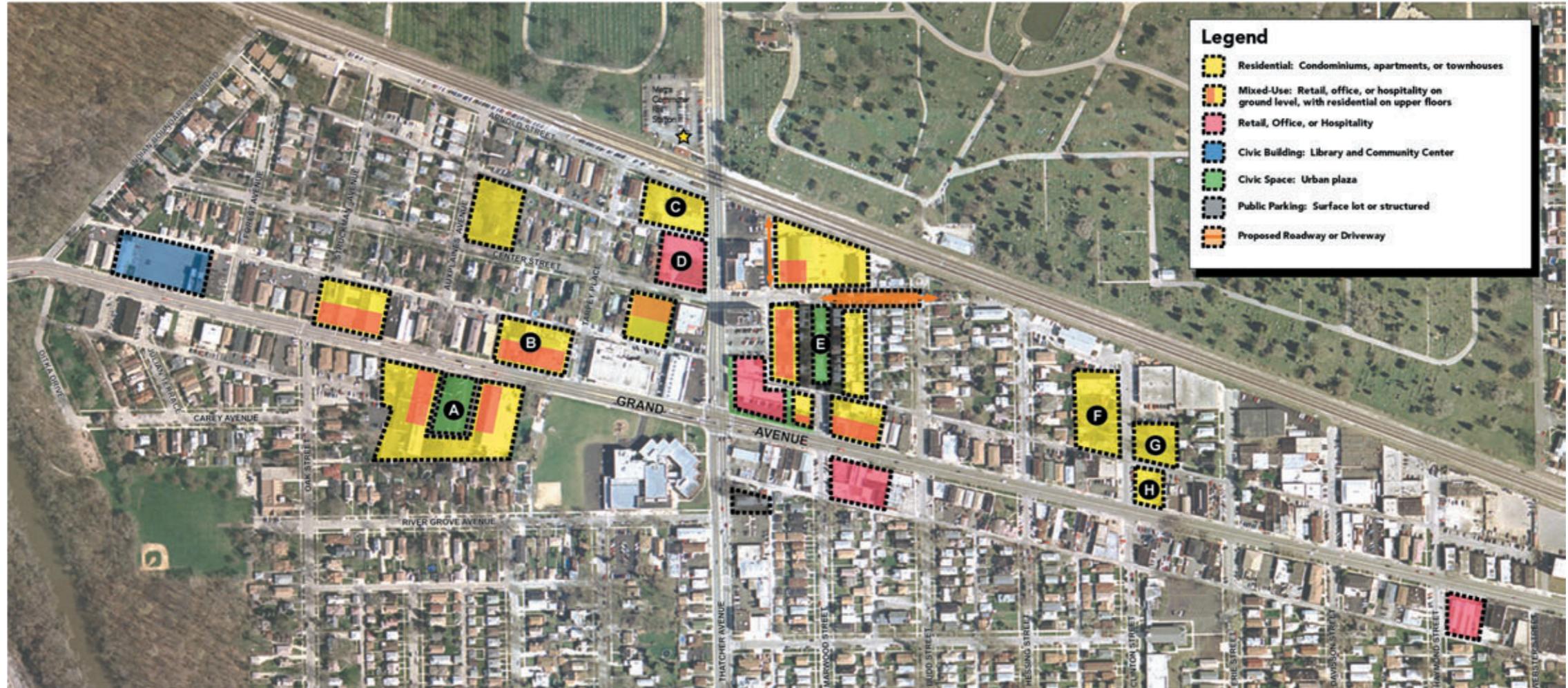


Figure 14: Potential redevelopment sites include: **A.** River Grove Bowl, Dohrn Insurance Training, State Farm Insurance office and podiatrist's office, Elm Heating and Cooling, apartment and mixed-use buildings. **B.** Grand Thatcher Auto Sales and Muffler Shop, River Grove Medical Associates, Mike's Auto Repair, two houses. **C.** Vacant lot and Loon Cafe. **D.** Parking lot and house on Center Street. **E.** Nine single-family houses. **F.** Three single-family houses, Concrete Novelty. **G.** Vacant lot. **H.** Bart's Saloon.

Redevelopment Concept Plan: Phase Two Projects

As redevelopment in the first phase of projects proves the potential of River Grove's Village Center, more difficult and longer-term projects can be undertaken. The plan considers the potential for a second phase of redevelopment projects, which may take up to ten to fifteen years to implement, the period out to 2015 to 2020. Some projects, especially the sites along Clinton Street may happen sooner. This arrangement into a first and second phase is useful for considering priorities and strategies, but is not intended to dissuade or delay the redevelopment of any sites discussed as being in Phase Two. The longer time frame also allows the plan to consider how property values and the market may change in River Grove, allowing and expecting the creation of new urban design features that will create unique places within the Village Center for living, working, and entertaining.



A



Village Center Plan



A



Existing: River Grove Bowl, Dohrn Insurance Training, Podiatrist, State Farm Insurance, Elm Heating and Cooling, a mixed-use building, one apartment building.

Concept: Mixed-use retail and hospitality and medium density residential with urban plaza

Due to the diagonal alignment of Grand Avenue and the lack of a north/south street between Oak Street and Thatcher Avenue, the parcels in this area are relatively deep but can only be accessed from Grand. The existing site layouts are a confused mix of short and deep building setbacks and parking lots. The large apartment building offers views of a parking lot to the east and a brick wall only a few feet away to the west. While piecemeal redevelopment solutions may be attempted, a more comprehensive approach including all of these parcels will provide a better urban design solution. Relocating the heating contractor and bowling alley may prove difficult. Existing mall businesses may find space in new storefronts constructed in the first round of projects. The concept envisions a central plaza as an organizing feature, with shops and cafes opening onto the plaza and residential units above.



B



C

Existing: Vacant and Loon Café

Concept: Higher density residential

A vacant lot lies between a multiple unit building and the building currently occupied by the Loon Café. The Loon Café is a locally owned restaurant and bar that is a popular gathering and dining spot in the village. However, the building it is located in is more than 100 years old and continued upkeep may prove prohibitively expensive. The plan explores how this site might be redeveloped for higher intensity uses directly across from the train station.



E



D

Existing: Parking lot, single-family house

Concept: Commercial development

The current use of this property, which is within 200 feet of the rail station and fronts Thatcher Avenue, is a parking lot supporting Triton Towers, and a vacant parcel attached to the house next door fronting on Center Street. The plan anticipates and promotes the concept of Center Street transitioning to more intense land uses between

Tarpey Place and Thatcher Avenue. Assembling these parcels and removing the house will allow a new commercial building to front on Thatcher and Center Street. This new building could serve as a possible relocation site for the Loon Café, or it could be developed to new retail or office space.

Existing: Grand Thatcher Auto Sales and Muffler Shop, River Grove Medical Associates, Mike's Auto Repair, two houses.

Concept: Mixed use with storefronts and residential

The corner of Tarpey Place and Grand Avenue is a hodge-podge of small automobile service buildings, with parked cars and chain-link fence, a small medical office building, and two houses with historic character. Interest in redevelopment was expressed by one owner during the process; while other comments expressed an interest in keeping the two houses as part of the village's historic fabric. Redevelopment is not dependant on including the two houses in the project, however, redevelopment of the corner property at Tarpey Place will be constrained if the house to the north is not included. The concept is for a mixed-use building with storefronts wrapping around the corner, thereby encouraging pedestrians to use Tarpey Place as a route to the rail station.

Existing: Nine single-family houses on east side of Marwood, (proposed surface parking lot on west side of Marwood Street)

Concept: Higher density residential and mixed use with underground parking and plaza

Successful redevelopment of the Public Works site, the Grand Thatcher Mall, and Palm Hardware in the first phase of projects will help to build the market for additional infill. Acquisition of the nine properties on the east side of Marwood Street could be undertaken as a long-term strategy. If all of the property on Marwood Street is assembled, a project to develop new residential and mixed-use buildings can be undertaken. Underground parking will be necessary to serve residents of the new

housing units, while still providing the necessary surface spaces for the commercial space in the area. The concept calls for a landscaped plaza over an underground parking garage, with this plaza creating a central feature that adds value to all the properties surrounding Marwood Street.



F



Existing: Three single-family houses, Concrete Novelty

Concept: Urban residential mix

Clinton Street offers a number of redevelopment opportunities. The current use of land is very low intensity, with three houses on five lots and a concrete molding business next to the post office. The houses are small, obsolete, and may be targets for "tear down" and reconstruction to much larger single-family units. The plan seeks to increase the residential density within the walk circle of

the transit station, and explores how an urban mix of new single-family and multi-family residential buildings can be developed on Clinton Street.



G

Existing: Vacant

Concept: Medium density residential

This is vacant land. The Village does not anticipate expansion of manufacturing in this area and hopes to see this land developed, preferably to a residential use.



H

Existing: Bart's Saloon

Concept: Higher density residential

A number of proposals have been made to redevelop Bart's Saloon without any coming to fruition. Placing its redevelopment within the context of redeveloping Clinton Street should make the project attractive, with

the possibility of combining this property with site "G" to the north. Given its distance from the train station, the project need not include storefronts along Grand Avenue.

Redevelopment Concept Plan: Study Focus Area

Northeast of the Grand Avenue and Thatcher Avenue intersection, including Marwood Street.

The most critical area for revitalization of River Grove's Village Center is the area to the northeast of the Grand Avenue and Thatcher Avenue intersection, from Thatcher to the alley between Marwood Street and Budd Street, and from Grand to the railroad tracks. The actual corner of Grand and Thatcher is highly visible to passing traffic and its redevelopment offers an opportunity to dramatically improve the image of Grand Avenue. Existing redevelopment opportunities in the area include:

- River Grove Public Works site
- Palm Hardware
- West side of Marwood Street.

The Village of River Grove is actively pursuing the relocation of its Public Works facility in order to allow redevelopment of the property. The owners of Palm Hardware and the adjacent house have expressed interest in redeveloping their properties. The Village of River Grove purchased one of the five houses on the west side of Marwood Street in 2004 from a willing seller. The house sits on a double lot. Acquisition of the remaining properties on the west side of Marwood Street will open opportunities for redevelopment in the area.

A number of constraints to redevelopment also exist, including:

- Poor vehicular circulation
- Available parking
- Acquisition costs
- High water table
- Opposition to change
- ComEd power substation
- Traffic congestion on Thatcher and Grand

None of these constraints should deter the redevelopment process, but site design, public projects, and project phasing will need to address them. One way of addressing the constraints is through careful consideration of land assembly strategies. The accompanying graphic shows how individual sites might be assembled into projects that are feasible.

For instance, development and marketing of a substantial number of dwelling units on the Public Works (A) site will require that circulation in and out of the area be improved. Therefore it is recommended that acquisition of two houses (H) to extend Center Street to Budd Street be part of this project.

Redevelopment of the Grand Thatcher Mall to a better site design, with parking in the rear is most likely dependent on including the west side of Marwood Street in the project. The small plumbing business and the parking south of Triton Towers could also be part of this redevelopment. Likewise, assembly of the Hagen Auto Repair with Palm Hardware and the adjacent house would make a redevelopment project more feasible and substantial. Finally, assembly of the properties on the east side of Marwood Street could be pursued as a long-term goal, with the potential to create new infill possibilities.

Redevelopment area northeast of Grand Ave. and Thatcher Ave. intersection

Existing Opportunities

- Village Public Works site
- Palm Hardware
- West side of Marwood

Constraints

- Poor Circulation
- Parking issues
- High water table
- Acquisition costs
- Opposition to change
- ComEd power substation
- Traffic on Thatcher Ave. (36,000 ADT)

Project Assembly Strategies

- 1a** Public Works site and new Center St. right of way
- 1b** Quastoff's and Public Works, and new Center St. r-o-w
- 2a** West side of Marwood St.
- 2b** Triton parking, CCC Plumbing, and west side of Marwood St.
- 2c** GrandThatcher Mall, Triton parking, plumbing, and Marwood St.
- 3a** Palm Hardware and Palm house
- 3b** Hagen Auto and Palm Hardware and house
- 4** East side of Marwood



Figure 15: Potential redevelopment project assembly strategies are explored. Combining adjacent sites will allow for more viable and creative redevelopment projects, however, acquisitions also need to be strategic and feasible.

Site Design and Development Concepts

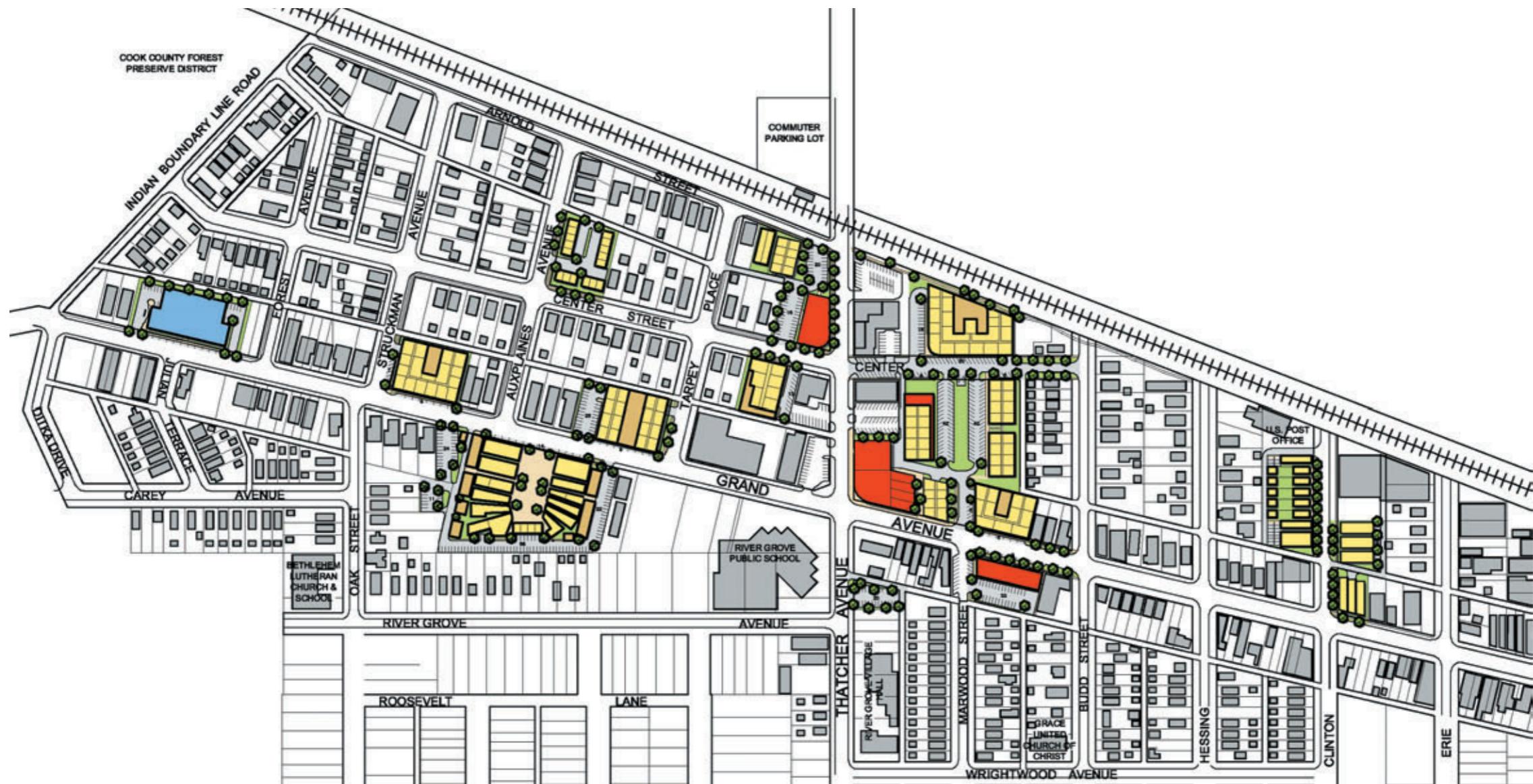


Figure 16: Urban design and site design concepts are tested on sites identified in the Redevelopment Concept Plan. This diagram shows plans for the upper levels of buildings, including concepts for dwelling unit layout.

Site Design and Development Concepts

In order to illustrate and test the potential of redevelopment opportunities in the Village Center, site design and development concepts were created for properties identified in the Redevelopment Concept Plan. Measured drawings test the feasibility of the redevelopment concept and provide a basis for analyzing the capacity of individual sites.

The success of the Village Center Plan will be judged on the actual structures and public infrastructure constructed as sites are redeveloped. Adherence to a set of planning and design standards is crucial to creating the desired relationships between buildings and the public realm.

Recommended design standards include:

1. Design mixed-use buildings with storefronts on the ground level and dwelling units on upper floors along Grand Avenue frontage in the Storefront District.
2. Require site plans to bring front facades up to the sidewalk and parallel to the lot line, and put parking to the rear or side.
3. Reserve space for on-street parallel parking on Grand Avenue, as sites are redeveloped.
4. Discourage blank walls created by ground-level parking garages along Grand Avenue frontage.
5. Provide internal building parking for residential units.
6. Design for some direct sunlight in all new residential units.

The design solutions shown in this plan reflect the stated planning goals and design standards; however, other solutions are possible. Future development proposals will be judged on their overall quality and how well they meet the intent of the design standards.

Graphic Legend and Narrative Descriptions

The Site Design and Development graphic on the facing page shows an image in plan view of new structures, parking spaces, and public spaces within the context of the whole corridor. Closer views of project areas are provided in figures 17 through 22.

Design details are provided on each figure along with narrative descriptions that provide a vignette of the projects as if they had already been constructed.

The color scheme for all site plan drawings is:

Legend for Site Design and Development Concepts	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Existing structures
<input type="checkbox"/>	Existing surface parking spaces
<i>New structures and improvements are shown in color as follows:</i>	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Commercial space
<input type="checkbox"/>	Residential dwellings
<input type="checkbox"/>	Public facility
<input type="checkbox"/>	Landscaped outdoor space, trees, and setbacks
<input type="checkbox"/>	Sidewalks and open plazas
<input type="checkbox"/>	Roofs of parking garages or roofs of ground-level commercial space
<input type="checkbox"/>	Surface parking space and number of spaces

Overall Village Center Development Program

Redevelopment of sites in the Village Center in keeping with these site development concepts would result in:

- **400 new housing units**
- **15 new buildings with ground-floor commercial space**
- **Approximately 110,000 square feet of new commercial space, generating over 200 jobs**
- **57 new parallel parking spaces along Grand Avenue**
- **New streetscape and public space amenities**

Implementation of actual projects will bring different results, yet the development program provided in the Village Center Plan shows what is feasible and provides a goal for construction of new housing units, commercial space, and public amenities.

Village Crossroads

Phase One

Figure 17

Redevelopment at the Grand and Thatcher crossroads is anchored by a new landmark commercial building on the northeast corner of the intersection. This building holds the corner and brings new storefronts up to both sidewalks. The setback allows 15 feet for a generous sidewalk, wide enough for benches, planters, a kiosk, and bollards marking the curb.

Architectural details set a new standard for commercial buildings in River Grove and help to create a new image, that of a Village Center welcoming passing motorists and pedestrians. A surface parking lot, accessed from a reopened Marwood Street and Center Street, provides parking for shops and a signature restaurant on the ground level, as well as new professional office space on the second floor. Boutique shops open directly onto a pedestrian passageway leading from Grand Avenue to the parking lot, as does the adjacent mixed-use building.

Three other projects help to build the market for commercial space in the Village Center by providing over 100 new condominium units. The old Public Works site contains the largest number of units in a configuration that provides a choice of views to the landscaped cemeteries or southern exposure. The ground level includes a parking garage and small corner café serving residents and local patrons. A three-story building on the northeast corner of Grand and Marwood Street provides new storefront space, and dwelling units on two upper floors. A similar mixed-use building extends the Village Center storefront district to Center Street one block west of Thatcher Avenue.

Together, the new construction forms the heart of the Village Center, creating new places and spaces that bring new residents, businesses, and vitality to Grand Avenue.





Figure 18: Sketch shows a concept for redeveloping the northeast corner of the Grand Ave. and Thatcher Ave. intersection. The view is from the southwest corner looking to the northeast, with the lawn of the River Grove School in the foreground. A portion of Triton Towers is shown at the far left of the sketch. The "Landmark Commercial Building" shown on the site plan in Figure 17 extends from Thatcher Ave. at the left of the sketch, around the corner at the center of the view, and down Grand Ave. at the right. The depiction shows the facade divided into three sections, with the curved facade and main entrance at the corner. A separate, small mixed-use building is shown at the right edge of the drawing, where the space between the two buildings creates a plaza leading north to the parking lot behind the building accessed from Center St. and Marwood St.

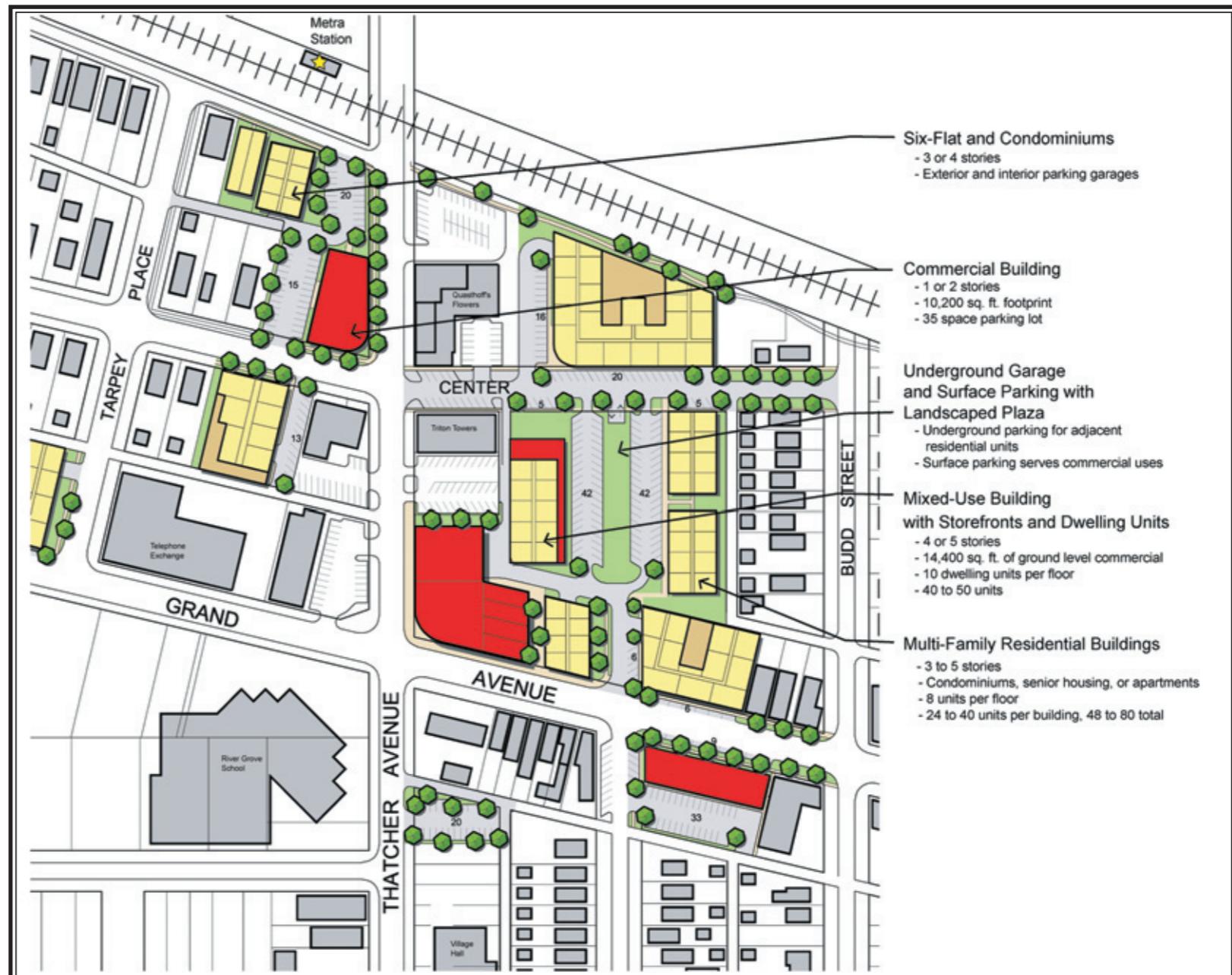
Village Crossroads

Phase Two

Figure 19

The second phase of redevelopment at the Village Crossroads takes another step toward realizing the full potential of the blocks adjacent to River Grove's commuter rail station. Immediately south of the station, two new residential buildings front on Arnold Street where previously there was vacant land. The Loon Café is relocated from its obsolete building to new space at the corner of Center Street and Thatcher Avenue, on a portion of the ground level of a new headquarters office building.

Infill development on both sides of Marwood Street shows the River Grove Village Center coming of age. Three new buildings are organized around a two-level parking garage. An underground level provides resident parking for condominiums and apartments in the new buildings, while surface spaces provide parking for commercial space in the area. The diagonal parking configured on both sides of a landscaped plaza lends a town square atmosphere to the new Marwood Street. The higher density development pays for the expense of the structured parking and maintenance of the plaza.





A new mixed-use building in an retro style featuring a mansard roof. Smaller three story buildings with storefronts should be considered for constrained sites along Grand Ave.



Gateway arch defines a small shopping district. An entrance feature like this would help to define the redeveloped Marwood Street as a unique place.



Entrance to an underground parking garage in Mount Prospect. The garage provides space for resident parking in this mixed-use development, leaving the surface parking for patrons of ground-level businesses.



A new six-story condominium building with ground level parking and five stories of dwelling units. The River Grove Public Works site could accommodate a relatively large building such as this.



An open urban plaza creates a setting for new development and provides a space for social gatherings and events.



Underground parking in the Marwood St. area would allow higher-density infill as the transit station area redevelops.

Potential development models for the Village Crossroads

Village Center

West of Tarpey Place

Figure 20

The western end of the Village Center, from the Des Plaines River to Tarpey Place is a mix of old and new apartments, condominiums, civic uses, shops, and offices. The new investment shines through the tempered urban fabric, renewing the avenue on five key sites where it was needed most, while retaining all of the rest of the area as it was. The essentially residential nature of this part of Grand Avenue is reinforced by the removal of manufacturing and heavy commercial uses, yet new storefronts also activate the street, making a stroll from the river to the crossroads more interesting and enjoyable.

River Grove Public Library and Community Center

First glimpsed crossing the river bridge traveling east on Grand Avenue, the new River Grove Public Library marks the western entrance to the Village Center. The building is a hallmark to village pride, and the combined library and community center acts as a true civic gathering place for a wide variety of activities. The first level contains the Village Center's auditorium, used for events from community theater to book readings, lectures, training sessions, and graduations. A small gymnasium is rented by sport and fitness clubs. Arts and crafts classes are offered in flexible studio space also on the ground floor.

Upstairs, a state-of-the-art library serves the needs of village residents. The library's collection of hardcover and softcover books is fully accessible in the new stacks, but a 21st-century library is about more than just bound volumes—media of all sorts from books on tape to DVDs are available, as is internet access. Quiet areas and study carrels line the windows, with the reading area on the west side favored for its views into the forest preserve. The library extends out over the rear parking area, which is separated

from the alley and houses to the north by a landscaped buffer.

Auxplaines Townhomes

Blending with the older single-family detached houses across the street, and the multi-family apartment buildings immediately to the north, these single-family attached townhomes at the corner of Center Street and Auxplaines Avenue bring a popular housing choice to the Village Center. Well-maintained landscaping and a deep setback fit with the neighborhood. Garages tuck under two full floors of living space and are at the rear of units facing the street. The 16 units offer a quick walk to the rail station and the storefront shopping district.

Mixed-Use Development

Two mixed-use buildings, at Struckman Avenue and Tarpey Place, bring new storefront space to Grand Avenue. The building at Struckman Avenue caters to small shops and professional offices served by on-street parking, while the Tarpey Place building's off-street lot allows for commercial uses that require more parking. Both developments have dwelling units above the shops, bringing dozens of new residents to Grand Avenue. A third mixed-use development located on the south side of Grand Avenue creates a new open space feature in the Village Center, as described on pages 48 and 49.



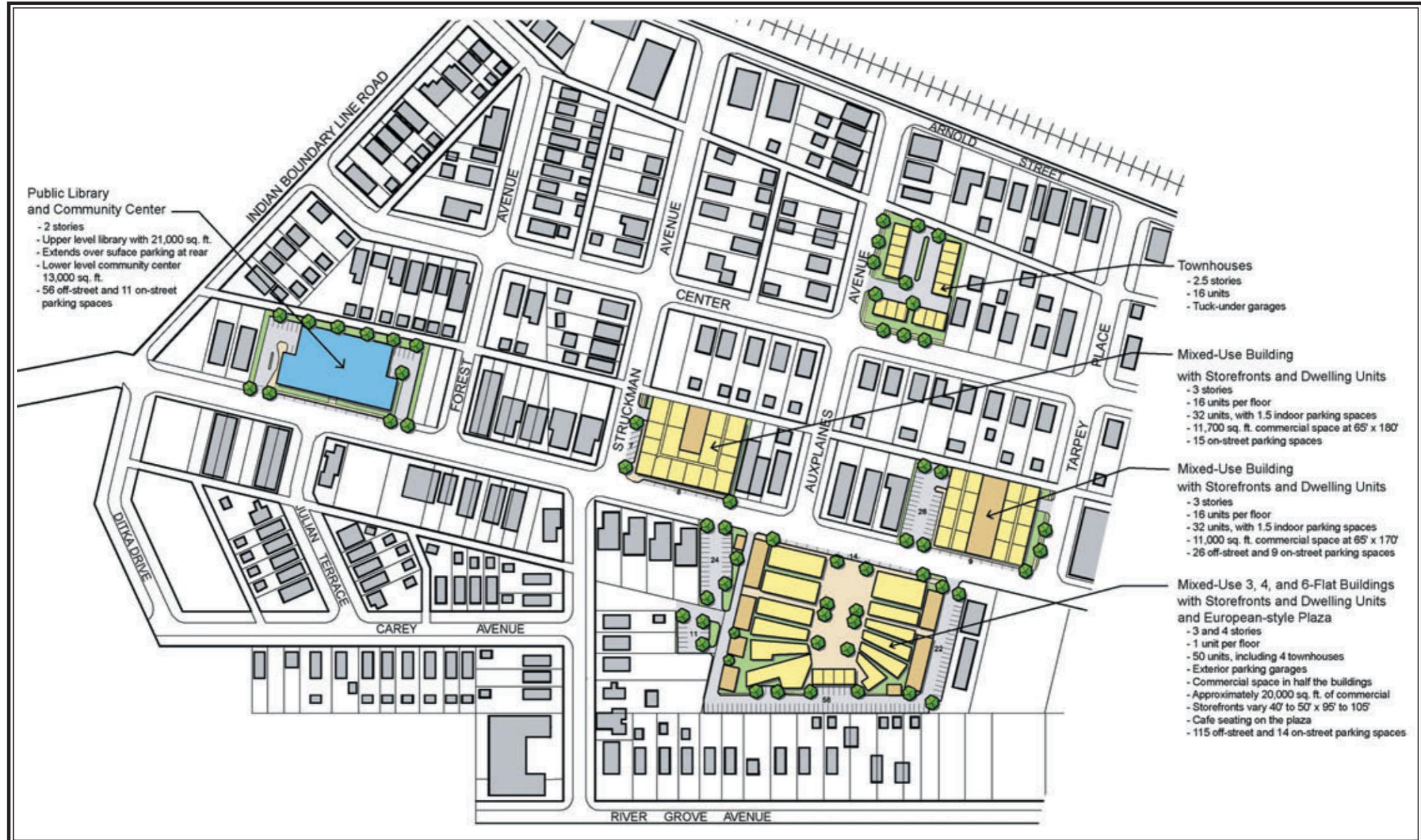
Summit Public Library designed by FGM Architects.
Courtesy FGM Architects and Lambros Photography.



Townhouses immediately south of the Mont Clare Metra station, two stops east of River Grove. Each house has a garage in back and 2.5 floors of living space.



Recent three-story mixed-use development with storefronts and dwelling units in Mount Prospect.

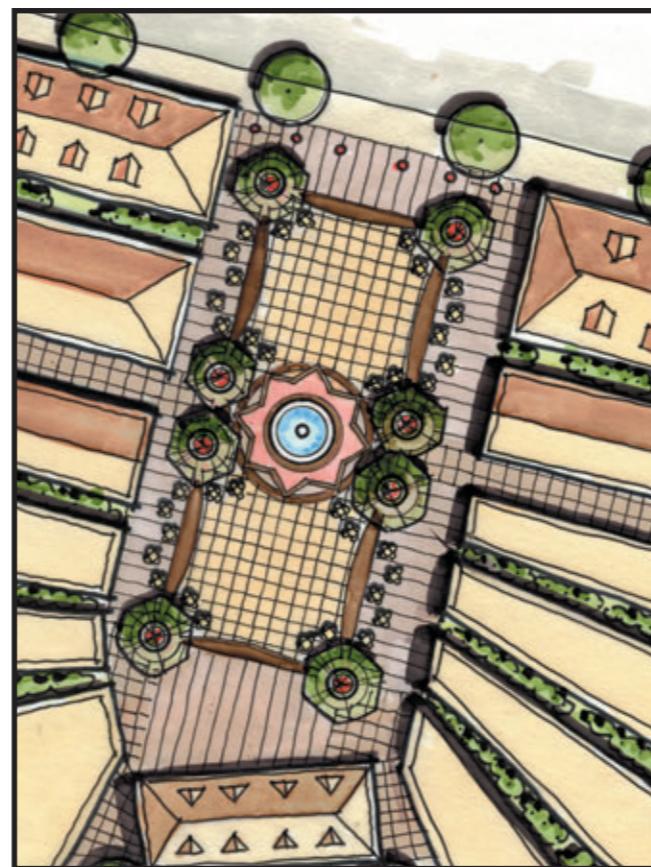
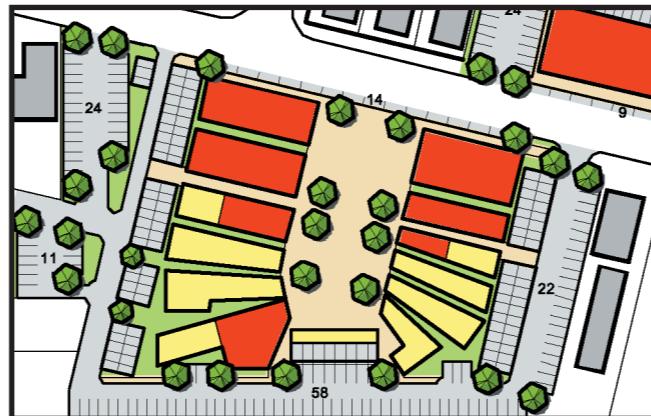


Site design concepts for area west of Tarpey Place

Grand Piazza

Figure 21

A unique development that brings Old World charm and hospitality to River Grove, Grand Piazza is a place to call home and a hot destination spot in the near west suburbs. Narrow walk-up buildings open directly onto a spectacular landscaped plaza that changes throughout the day from a place to enjoy morning coffee and bakery, to a seasonal open air market and event space in the afternoons and weekends. But the nights are when the Piazza becomes a special dining and social experience, where mingling and people watching are as important as sampling each cafe's fare.



Balconies on the upper floors offer a view of all the action from private flats. Condominium properties are available in 3-, 4-, and 6-flat buildings, as well as townhouses at the far end of the plaza. Private garages are to the rear of each building, while visitor parking is arranged to the outside of the development and along Grand Avenue. Access from the off-street lots into the plaza is limited to plaza walks that meet at the circular fountain, and walks on either side of the townhouses.



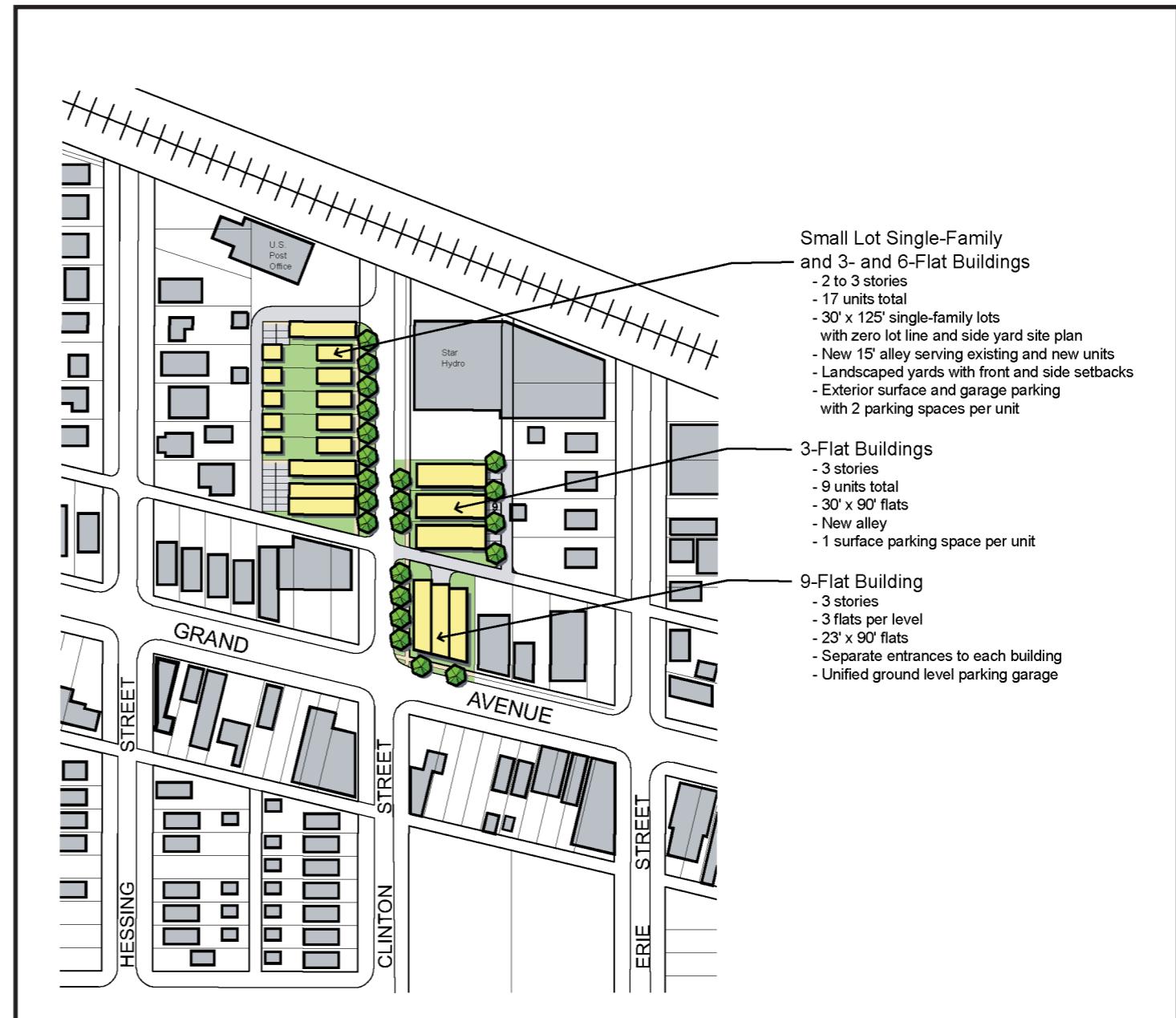
Grand Piazza

Clinton Street Redevelopment

Figure 22

Adding over two dozen new dwelling units to the Village Center, where only three small houses stood before, the redevelopment of Clinton Street exemplifies the goals of the Grand Avenue revitalization project. Zoning changes allowing new residential on Clinton Street created an opportunity for redevelopment, and signal the Village's desire for a gradual transition from manufacturing to residential uses in the area.

Residents of the new Clinton Street have an easy walk to the Metra station and they create increased demand for goods and services in the Village Center. New alley access is provided on the west side of Clinton Street, and also serves older houses on the east side of Hessian Street, allowing driveways to be converted to yard space. Small-lot single-family houses are flanked by 3-flat condominiums; a mix that creates a comfortable urban environment on the street. A 9-flat building faces Grand Avenue on the site of a former saloon.



Ground Level Concept: Commercial Space and Parking

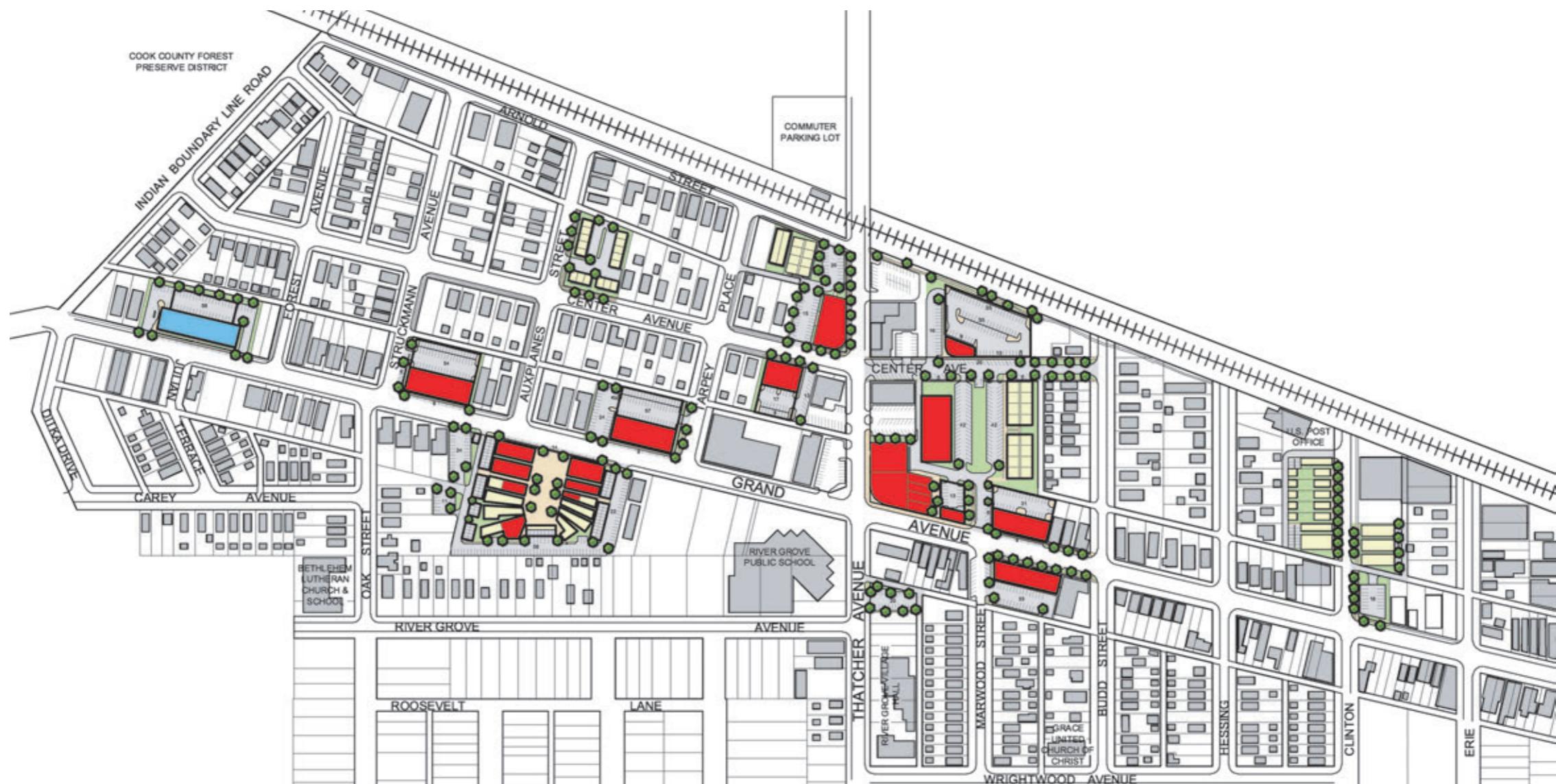


Figure 23: Site plan concept reveals how the ground level of new mixed-use buildings might be designed to accommodate both commercial space and parking for residents. A general approach is to divide the ground level in two, with the front half used for storefront space and the back half for indoor resident parking. Compare this diagram with Fig. 16 on Page 40 showing the upper level of buildings, which in mixed-use buildings are designed for dwelling units. The design for the Public Works site shows a large ground-level parking garage and a small commercial space in one corner, and in Fig. 16 topped by 20 dwelling units. Without structured parking, the number of ground-level parking spaces will control how many dwelling units can be developed. Adequate parking will also need to be provided for commercial space. The diagram shows only a concept for parking space configuration, with counts inside buildings potentially reduced for necessary structural elements.

Grand Avenue Streetscape Design Concept

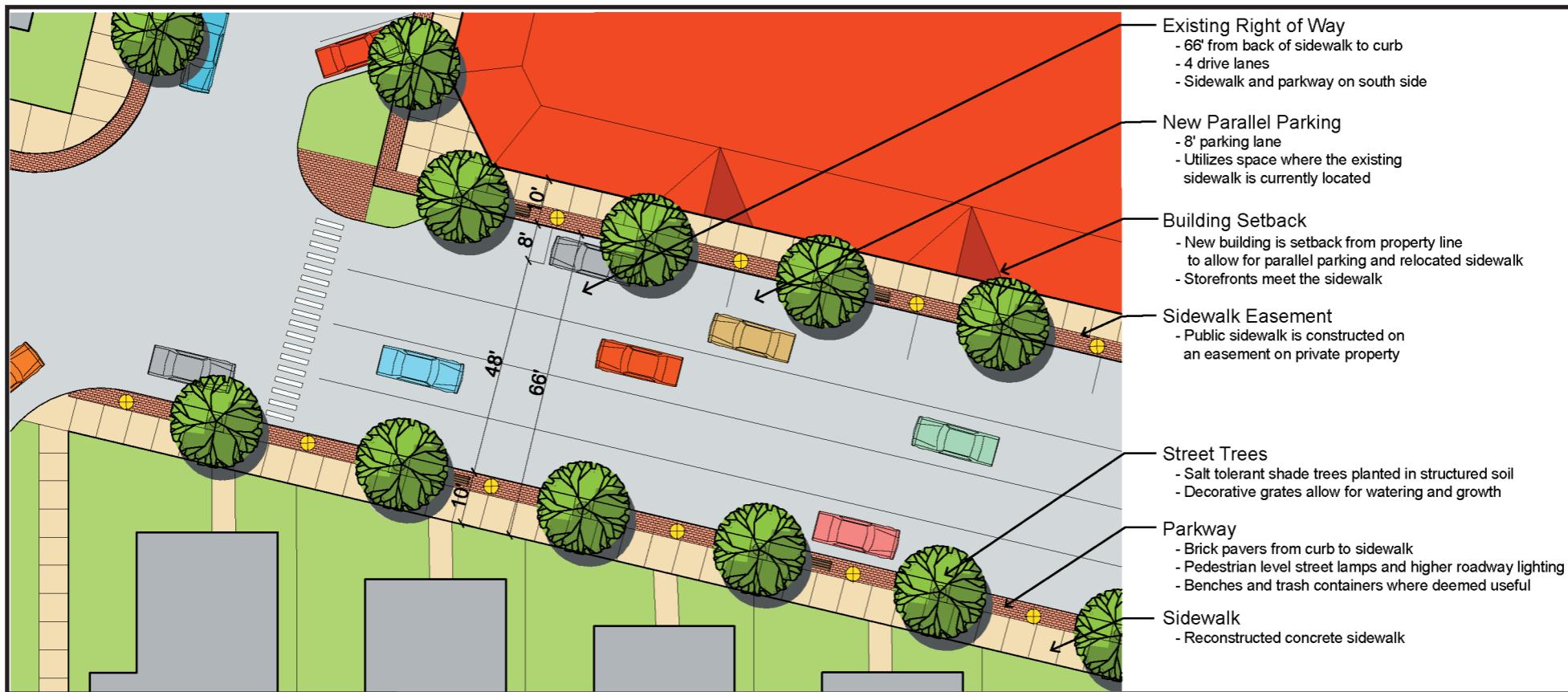


Figure 24: The addition of streetscape elements links together individual redevelopment projects up and down Grand Avenue. The band of red brick pavers in the parkway, the rhythm of street trees spaced evenly apart, and lamps placed at a level to light the walk for pedestrians all combine to soften and unify the avenue as a place. Locating elements in the parkway also creates a buffer between the sidewalk and moving traffic. Implementation of the streetscape construction in conjunction with redevelopment projects allows a space to be reserved for a row of parallel parking spaces. These on-street parking spaces make quick stops and visits to shops, or dwelling units, possible, while also adding an even more substantial buffer protecting the sidewalk zone. Space for the parallel parking is still in the public right of way, created by moving the sidewalk in front of the new building onto private property, but with an easement for public access.



Grand Avenue Streetscape

Figure 25: Sketch of proposed Grand Avenue streetscape and new mixed-use building, looking east at Oak Street.

Conceptual Zoning Districts and Map



Figure 26: Proposed zoning district concept map.

4

Implementation

- **Plan Adoption**
- **Zoning Ordinance Revision**
- **Tax Increment Financing District**
- **Site Acquisition and Assembly**
- **Site Plan Review**
- **Partnerships**

Plan Adoption

The first step toward implementing the Village Center Plan is for the Village of River Grove to adopt the plan. This plan is the first part of a comprehensive plan for the entire village. The Grand Avenue corridor is where change is anticipated and where the Village will encourage redevelopment. Additional plan documents addressing the rest of the village can be informed by this detailed plan for Grand Avenue, especially Grand Avenue west of the river, yet most other areas of the village will maintain their existing character for the long-term future.

Adoption of the Village Center Plan will give it the status and authority of a comprehensive plan and clearly set Village of River Grove policy. Implementation steps will include drafting of Village ordinances and additional planning documents that have the weight of State of Illinois law and give the Village of River Grove needed regulatory and redevelopment tools.

Zoning Ordinance Revision

The main tool available to the Village to implement the Village Center Plan is the zoning ordinance revision currently underway. Creation of the Village Center Plan in conjunction with zoning revisions makes it possible to craft a new zoning code to foster and guide redevelopment as envisioned in the plan. Two main issues to be addressed in the new zoning code include: creating new districts that match with existing and desired land use, and setting new development standards that establish new requirements in specific areas and allow a higher intensity of use as described in the Village Center Plan. The following description of proposed districts outlines the types of zoning districts needed to implement the plan; however, the zoning code revision is in a draft stage of development and therefore the specifics of each district and district mapping are subject to review and change.

Commercial Districts

Figure 26 shows the proposed zoning concept map and district categories for the Village Center. Perhaps most important to implementation of the Village Center Plan is the C1 district, which would require commercial storefronts to be included in any new development. This requirement is common along important shopping streets, where a municipality seeks to encourage pedestrian activity and discourage blank walls or parking lots along sidewalks. Two main areas proposed for the C1 district are on Grand Avenue between Struckman Avenue and Tarpey Place, and between Marwood Street and Budd Street. This C1 district would allow dwelling units above the first floor, and single-story commercial buildings, but with a preference for mixed-use development.

Two areas that are currently zoned for single-family dwellings are included in the C1 district, both located north of Grand Avenue. The first area fronts on Center Street east of Tarpey Place, and the second area fronts on Marwood Street. The rationale behind this proposed change in zoning is that these are the blocks closest to the train station, where storefronts are most desirable and both offer transit commuters an alternative route to the depot, either cutting down Tarpey Place to Center Street or turning up Marwood Street to Center Street, again favoring storefronts in mixed-use buildings.

Along Thatcher Avenue a second commercial district is proposed. The C2 district would encourage the development of office space on upper levels above storefronts, and discourage having dwelling units facing on Thatcher Avenue. Heavy commercial uses would be accommodated in the C3 district; mapped in the areas where there is an existing concentration of uses such as automobile sales and service.

Manufacturing District

The proposed M1 district recognizes the presence of manufacturing in the corridor; however, the current manufacturing zoning along Clinton Street and Erie Street would be changed to residential. This recognizes both existing residential uses on both streets and new residential infill planned for Clinton Street. Therefore, the area zoned for manufacturing would be reduced and, in addition, the proposed M1 district would allow residential as a special use.

Residential Districts

Four residential districts are proposed. The R1 district is applied to three areas where single-family detached units are currently located and no change is planned. A single-family attached district is proposed that would encourage a development type commonly referred to as a “town-house.” This R2 district is proposed for the vacant site at Auxplaines Avenue and Center Street, allowing for a slightly higher density than detached units in an area very close to the train station and just south of existing multi-family dwellings.

The zoning concept proposes two multiple-family districts. The proposed R3 district would allow a mix of single-family detached houses, townhouses, and condominium or apartment units. This district would be useful to reaching the goal of higher density development in the Village Center, while still retaining a neighborhood street atmosphere by restricting the frontage of any multi-family buildings and controlling the types of entrances and hallways that may be constructed. An R3 designation is proposed for the area north of Grand Avenue on Budd, Hessing, and Clinton streets. This area has the potential for tear-down of existing single-family units and replacement with larger houses, but the Village Center Plan promotes a change in zoning to make the development of many more dwelling units possible in this area as it is redeveloped.

The proposed R4 district would allow the highest density development in areas where multi-family units are currently located: along Grand Avenue and along Arnold Street. The allowed height of buildings in this R4 district has not been finalized; however, it is anticipated that the zoning code will allow up to five stories, but with the realization that parking needs and restrictions may actually limit heights to three or four stories. The only way to create more floors of units would be to create structured parking, most likely underground garages. It may take many years for the market to mature before this type of very expensive construction is proposed.

This Village Center Plan envisions an underground garage in the second phase of the Village Crossroads project, in an area that the zoning concept map would designate as C1. The C1 district is essentially a mixed-use district that would include dwelling units above the ground level. The bulk standards for the C1 would be very similar to the R4. In regard to mixing uses, the C1 allows mixing at multiple levels, while the R4 district recognizes the existing mix of uses on blocks along Grand Avenue. Specifically, blocks that have a majority of parcels used for multi-family housing may also include a mixed-use building, or a commercial structure. The R4 district would allow certain types of commercial uses as a special use, but not require commercial space.

Much work remains to be done on the zoning code revision. The concept provided here closely matches existing land use in the corridor and would provide the regulatory framework for the type of new development envisioned in the Village Center Plan.

Tax Increment Financing District

Under State of Illinois statute the Village of River Grove has the authority to study and create tax increment financing (TIF) districts in order to assist with redevelopment efforts. The Village established a TIF district to foster renovation and redevelopment of the Thatcher Woods Shopping Center in 1999. Creation of a TIF district to assist with implementation of the Village Center Plan should be studied. A TIF district would allow the Village to set aside revenue from the change in property value, or increment, from the value prior to redevelopment to the value after redevelopment. The revenue generated by the TIF district can be used for specified public expenditures supporting projects in the district.

A TIF district and designated Redevelopment Plan and Project encompassing the Grand Avenue corridor would provide the Village with a number of implementation tools, including:

- authority to acquire and assemble redevelopment sites;
- funds for the relocation of businesses and demolition of buildings;
- funds to construct roadway and streetscape improvements;
- funds to upgrade other infrastructure such as sewers.

The creation of a TIF district must be coordinated with other taxing jurisdictions that get revenue from property taxes, including the River Grove School District. The size, boundaries, and duration of a Grand Avenue corridor TIF district would be determined by the necessary TIF eligibility study. The establishment of a TIF district will increase the potential for redevelopment in the Grand Avenue corridor and put the Village of River Grove in a stronger position to guide development projects.

Site Acquisition and Assembly

The designation of a TIF Redevelopment Plan and Project will give the Village of River Grove new authority and funds to acquire properties in order to assemble sites for redevelopment. In regard to site assembly the Village should seek to acquire property from willing sellers first, and this type of transaction does not require a designated Redevelopment Project. As noted above, a number of property owners expressed a willingness to sell their buildings and property at this time.

The Village should be strategic in properties it seeks to acquire through a fee simple process, yet also opportunistic when properties come up for sale in areas identified in the Redevelopment Concept Plan. An example is property that the Village acquired on the west side of Marwood Street in 2004 from a willing seller. Continued acquisition of property on the west side of Marwood Street will put the Village in good position to foster redevelopment of other properties in the area. However, the Village may choose not to acquire property in areas that will take longer to redevelop.

As acquisitions continue in a project area, some property owners may seek to delay or halt the process due to personal or speculative reasons. The Village should recognize that some property owners will see the redevelopment process as placing a hardship on their plan to stay in a home or business location. In some areas the Village may be willing to delay in order to negotiate a settlement acceptable to the property owner. However, the Village should also be prepared to use its authority to acquire property from unwilling sellers when necessary, in order to realize the goals of the overall revitalization project.

Site Plan Review

The Village of River Grove has instituted a site plan review process to evaluate development proposals when building permit applications are submitted. This evaluation considers how a site plan meets the development standards of the zoning ordinance, as well as issues of traffic and circulation, environmental impacts, arrangement of structures on the site, parking design, and landscaping.

In addition, the site plan review process considers how the proposed project relates to the overall goals of the Village's comprehensive plan, the Village Center Plan being the initial document of the comprehensive plan. This Village Center Plan and the revised zoning code will provide real estate developers with a clear outline of the Village of River Grove's goals for the Grand Avenue corridor. Likewise, adherence to the basic principals of the plan by the Village when reviewing proposals will create a transparent and consistent process for project approvals.

Partnerships

In many cases the Village of River Grove will not be involved directly in acquiring property during implementation of the Village Center Plan. Rather, transactions will be conducted between the owners of redevelopment sites and real estate developers. These types of projects are easier to accomplish on parcels that are large enough so that additional parcel assembly is not needed. Two such sites in the corridor are in the initial stages of planning for redevelopment without Village acquisition. In some cases, the Village may decide to partner with private developers on more complex projects, such as the proposed Village Crossroads project, where the Village already owns property.

Partnerships can take a variety of forms, and the Village of River Grove should seek partnerships with property

owners, developers, business owners, and residents as projects progress. These partnerships may include improvements to the public right of way or more basic assistance in providing clear direction on the approval process, or opportunities for public input and review. In regard to establishing a TIF district, the Village may consider waiting for specific proposals from developers, and partner with the private sector in funding a study for establishing a TIF district.

In addition, the Village should seek partnerships with other jurisdictions to improve public facilities and infrastructure within the Village Center, including:

- the River Grove Library District on a new library and community center;
- Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) on improvements to Grand Avenue and Thatcher Avenue;
- Metra, PACE, and the Regional Transportation Authority on commuter rail and bus transit service and facilities;
- River Grove Public School on improving its property along Grand Avenue.

Finally, the Village of River Grove's most important partnership is with its citizens, including residents and business and property owners. Substantial support for improving the Village Center was expressed during the planning process, both from property owners interested in redevelopment and from residents of the village. The Village should continue the public process as new development proposals are presented, and celebrate the successful completion of projects, in order to maintain and strengthen support for implementation of the overall Village Center Plan.

Acknowledgements

The Village of River Grove dedicates this plan to Mayor Thomas J. Tarpey, under whose administration the planning process was initiated.

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