

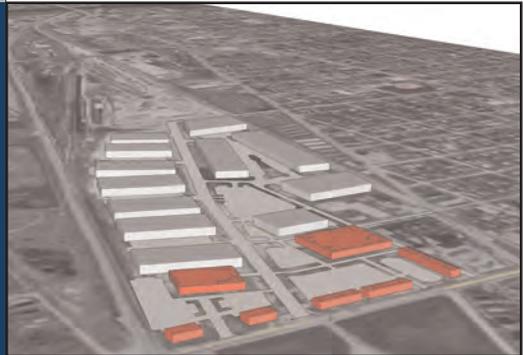


JUNE 20 -23, 2006



BLUE ISLAND REACHES NEXT CROSSROADS

Report of the MPC Blue
Island Task Force



METROPOLITAN PLANNING COUNCIL

**COMMUNITY
BUILDING
INITIATIVE**

Mayor Don Peloquin stands at the end of two long tables in the city hall annex, asking a dozen out-of-towners to help transform this southwest Cook County suburb. "With your expert advice, we will move forward with our plan to redefine our city and make it into something that even lifelong residents can't fathom," the 55-year-old, third-generation native says.

The audience is a task force of real estate professionals from the Metropolitan Planning Council. MPC — a non-profit organization of business and civic leaders who promote sensible growth strategies in the Chicago region — convened this panel for a two-day workshop. Their charge was to identify steps local leaders can take to enact the Blue Island Plan for Economic Development.

Blue Island is in a much better position today than in 1985 when Mayor Peloquin won his first of five terms. That year, he and several other community leaders made numerous trips to downtown Chicago in a futile effort to attract developers. But private capital saw better returns paving over farmland on the ever-widening edge of the metropolitan region. That cool response stuck in the mayor's mind. For two decades, long-time residents came to believe their historic city had little future.



Western Avenue in Blue Island has retained viable restaurants, bakeries and antique stores, but has potential to anchor more economic growth.

Then two years ago, the mayor received a call from representatives of the Center for Neighborhood Technology. CNT — a Chicago non-profit that promotes community planning and urban redevelopment — offered its help. A CNT study found that Blue Island has a unique set of assets starting with its location, diverse population and central business district. Uptown — a classic "main street" with distinctive buildings and shops. While Uptown has lost storefronts in recent decades to nearby shopping centers, it remains a viable center with strong potential for growth. Excellent commuter rail connections, a newly cleaned up Calumet Sag River and a large institutional employer (St. Francis Hospital) are all within easy walking distance. In Blue Island's industrial districts, CNT saw rail and intermodal freight connections as the catalyst to redevelop city-owned vacant land.

Blue Island enlisted CNT to help create an economic development blueprint. A series of meetings drew 120 people into the process. Their plan calls for transit-oriented development policies that will spur residential and commercial growth around the train stations, and cargo-oriented development policies that will encourage industry to locate near an inter-modal freight loading facility.

Plan implementation started with the City Council hiring a full-time planning director. A state grant was secured to assess the cost of cleaning up a former landfill on industrially-zoned land. State monies have been approved to help the city reform its zoning regulations and develop new design guidelines. Applications have been filed for public funds to study the feasibility of turning Western Avenue — a one-way route that shoots traffic through the heart of Blue Island — into a two-way street. Additional grant applications would fund walking paths and sidewalk improvements that link the Metra stations to Uptown and residential developments. Through a Development Commission established by the City Council, dozens of Blue Island residents are contributing to the implementation of the plan through a structure of standing committees.

Yet, the city and CNT recognized a need to solicit advice from people more experienced in the real estate business. They invited MPC to bring together a group of real estate, planning and financial experts to help hone the Uptown redevelopment effort, decide what zoning reform strategies would be most effective, adjust to development initiatives in neighboring municipalities, and execute plans for land use change. The task force reviewed and endorsed the city economic development plan, identified positive market conditions and concluded that the first priority should be to put rules in place to guide the redevelopment process.

"A number of projects are on the cusp of action," Chase Commercial Banking Senior Vice President / Market Manager Paul Carlisle says. "What the city needs from us are laser-like points to focus limited resources — a strategic set of first steps that will lead to bigger steps." With that in mind, the MPC task force crafted a set of recommendations for presentation to the City Council, Plan Commission, and local citizens and residents.

Uptown Redevelopment

This central business district has the potential to become a draw for residents, commuters and consumers from a five-to-10 mile radius — but only if Western is reconfigured, a central proposal of the plan which the task force strongly endorsed. The city's main thoroughfare shouldn't be somewhere motorists speed through; it should be redesigned to help make Uptown a place people want to go. Roaring traffic and narrow sidewalks make Uptown uninviting to pedestrians. So do 11 vacant buildings owned by out-of-town landlords with no apparent incentive to make improvements.

Western is such a long street that care must be taken to prevent retail from becoming scattered. Thus, retail business retention/attraction efforts should be concentrated in a four-block area extending along Western from High to Grove. In addition, the city should take special care to support businesses on Olde Western across the Cal Sag.

"Recognize how demographics shape retail development," says Valerie Kretchmer, president of the real estate/urban planning consultancy Kretchmer Associates. "It's more difficult to support specialty retail businesses in moderate and middle income areas because people will go where they can get things the cheapest and may not be willing to pay more for the higher level of service typically found at smaller businesses."



Properties along Western Avenue can be preserved and upgraded to attract new retail tenants.

"The city needs to deal with building owners first," Kretchmer advises. "Part of the reason for the vacancies is that owners aren't interested in getting their properties in a condition where they are leaseable." The city must enforce code requirements for vacant buildings. This will motivate landlords to either upgrade spaces or sell. Furthermore, the city must keep an inventory of the condition of Uptown commercial buildings. With this inventory the City will be able to respond quickly to investor interests and facilitate new development.

The task force recommended accelerating efforts to enhance appearance and attract people. This starts with more vigilant clean-up, installation of planters, improved parking signage. Parking on Western or in prime parking lots such as next to the post office should be for downtown customers, not downtown employees. Replace one-hour parking in the Vermont Street lot with three-hour parking so as to encourage shopping and dining.

The Task Force also strongly recommends reintroducing R2 and R3 to the uptown area in order to attract residents to patronize the stores.

"With 1,000 commuters a day, Blue Island could make Uptown a dinner entertainment venue," south suburban business owner Mike Lowenthal says. "But right now it's too easy for people to drive right through town. There's no advertising or promotion — nothing to get people to want to walk the one or two blocks from the train station to the business district. Western Avenue is inhospitable. I'd think Blue Island's legislative leaders would be interested in helping make this state road become a two-way street."

Main Street Association and the Chamber of Commerce should work together to see how area communities are undertaking similar initiatives. Organize field trips to downtown Homewood, Olympia Fields, Willow Springs, Oak Lawn, LaGrange, Elmhurst, Oak Park, and the Bridgeport residential development along the river. Attend International Council of Shopping Centers meetings in Chicago where communities showcase their towns for developers and retailers. First observe see how others present themselves. For subsequent meetings, create a retail-attraction package for prospective developers, realtors and new businesses. Include basic city information — government structure, demographics, economic data and historical background — as well as listing of available space, square footage, rental rates, contact information and building conditions. Make the information package available in city departments, Chamber of Commerce and on city's Web site.

Vermont Street Train Stations Area

With two passenger train stations at Vermont Street serving three Metra lines and 80 passenger trains a day, Blue Island boasts one of the metropolitan region's most attractive transit connections. Located a short walk southeast of Uptown, this transit area is a central component in redevelopment plans.



With two Metra train stations at Vermont Street, 3 Metra lines and 80 trains a day, Blue Island has unprecedented opportunities for transit oriented development in the Chicago region.

The area currently consists of an overabundance of surface parking lots as well as three industrial businesses that don't benefit from proximity to commuter traffic. The plan calls for relocation of the businesses to the city's industrial district and consolidation of the parking into a multi-story lot built into a hillside a short walk northwest of the train station. The area can then accommodate hundreds of additional households.

Less than a mile east of the stations, a private developer has broken ground on Fay's Point — a 400-unit market rate housing project. Also the name of the peninsula where the Cal Sag Channel meets the Little Calumet River, Fay's Point will provide the impetus to make water frontage more attractive for public use. The project will also likely attract additional residential development.

"What Blue Island already has here is impressive," says Anthony Smith, senior project manager at S.B. Friedman & Co., a real estate and development consulting firm. "We come into a lot of communities that hope to attract a bakery and a sit-down restaurant to their downtown. Blue Island already has both."

Smith adds, "the Fay's Point project demonstrates the amenity value of water. Residential development will drive the economics. And the river will drive residential prices."

Blue Island needs to verify ownership and use agreements governing the two-acre city-owned parking lot along the river at Fulton and Irving north of the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District's aeration station. This review is a first-step in preparation to sell the site for development. Also, the city should find out if MWRD would consider selling the land on its 3.5 acre parking lot, which would be preferable to a long-term lease arrangement which would likely drive off prospective residential developers.

"Step one of phase one is to review covenant contracts because ownership is paramount," says Tom Smith, senior associate of urban planning firm Duncan & Associates. "East of the Western Avenue frontage, a land swap would be needed as well as to relocate industries to 119th Street." From stakeholder interviews, there appeared interest of some landowners to participate. Steps outlined in the Finance section of this report are proposed to help implement these developments.

St. Francis Hospital Area

Blue Island's largest employer anchors the cityscape, drawing 500,000 patients or patient visitor trips annually. Despite its location on Uptown's northeast side, the hospital complex remains something of an island. Western Avenue restaurateurs say they've been unable to attract many of the hospital's 1,400 employees.

The plan calls for mixed-use development on the east-west streets between Western and Gregory. Retail and commercial should be required on the ground floor as part of an effort to better connect hospital to central business district.

A first step is to relocate the hospital parking lot abutting Western to make way for retail space (with housing on second and/or third floors.) This will help generate tax revenue to finance plan implementation. Randy Petri, a partner at the development/consulting firm Dmyterko & Wright Partners cited the benefits of bringing the hospital parking lot and Metra lots back on to the tax rolls through cooperative actions.

The plan calls for parking to be relocated to land on Irving Street and on the hillside that slopes down between Gregory and Irving, some which will be freed by the relocation of an industrial business to an industrial district. It is now time to lay out a sequence of parking lot relocations from the station area and from Main Street in the hospital district, with specific numbers of spaces to be shifted at each step.

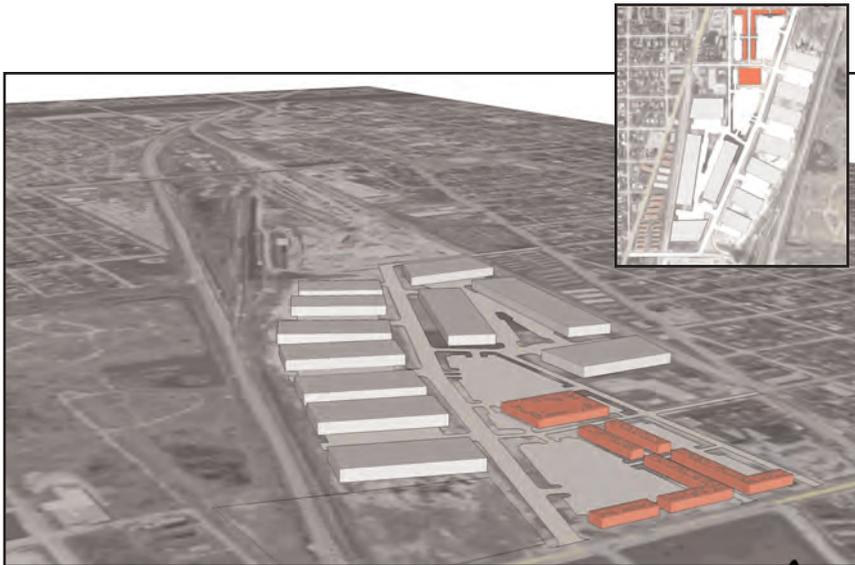


St. Francis is a major regional draw to Blue Island that can anchor redevelopment with potential parking reconfiguration and land assembly.

The role of St. Francis in the general development of Uptown and in the relocation of parking in particular is critical to the implementation of the plan. Michael Gonzalez, executive vice president for Primera Engineers, Ltd. observes: "St. Francis hospital can and must be a powerful force in the rejuvenation effort." Fortunately St. Francis has been a strong participant in the planning process so far. And they have indicated their readiness to work out the parking relocation measures that are required to implement the plan.

Northeast Industrial & Commercial Sites

The plan calls for new industrial and distribution centers that make use of rail and intermodal freight connections and a nearby I-57 interchange on 130 acres of city-owned vacant land south of 119th Street. Blue Island should promote new industrial development space. Yet, rather than try to force a single concept onto a relatively



even with a portion set off for retail at the northern end of the site.

"Don't give it away," Kirschbraun says. Blue Island must initiate efforts to sell its 119th Street frontage with the recognition that "the market is coming to you. They are going to need your cooperation to rezone the property for retail."

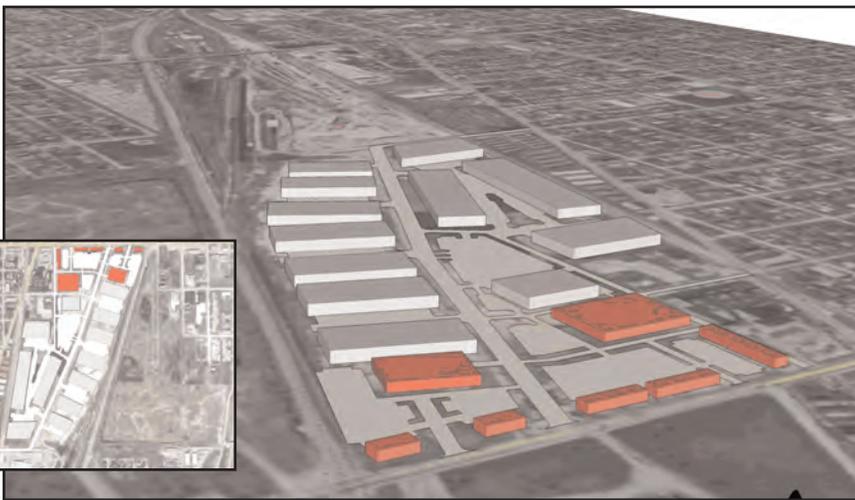
Manage the retail use with a planned unit development (PUD) process. The PUD can be done right away and be consistent with a full blown revision of the zoning code and map. Hire advisors to represent you for the negotiation and purchase/sale negotiation. Make the developer pay for that cost.

The retail activity on the north side of the street will create demand. Let the market dictate the size, but don't think you'll have to provide incentives. Insist on quality building design. Attractive finish materials and landscaping will help entice shoppers to return. Continue with the IRFQ/RFP process for the development of both commercial and industrial uses by a master developer or (possibly being an integrated commercial and industrial development team) on the City's 87 acres of

contiguous land in this critical area. Allow the developer to turn as much of the land to commercial development as the market will dictate, which will allow significant land for industrial development behind the commercial properties fronting on 119th Street. Be open to dividing the area between two master developers that specialize in commercial versus industrial development. Require the retail development site plan to provide requisite access for industrial parcels.

Community Development and Marketing

Position Blue Island to become a "downtown destination" for 1) residents and; 2) visitors from the five-mile area (framing the message to show Blue Island can be



Two possible configurations of locating new retail development along 119th Street that would preserve sufficient acreage for new industrial development at the southern end of the site.

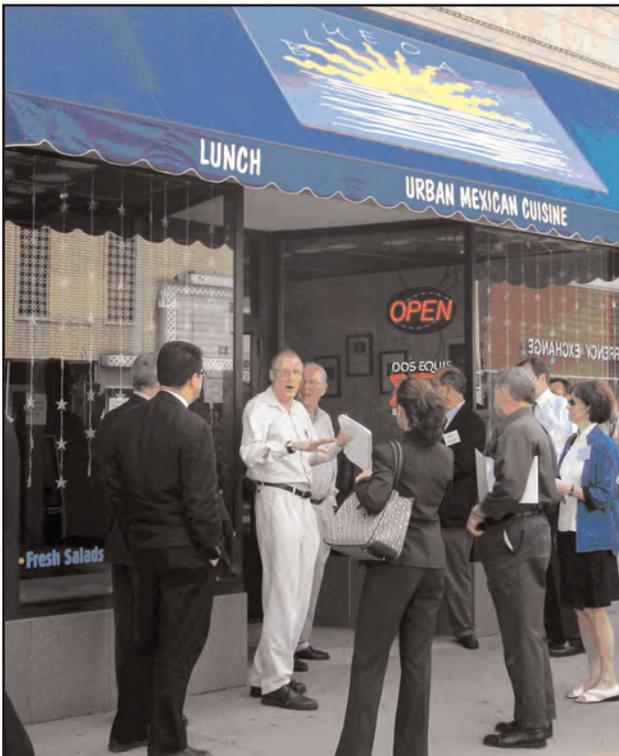
large tract, the city should also capitalize on new opportunities resulting from Chicago's plans to site a Home Depot and Target on the north side of 119th St.

Task force chairman Tom Kirschbraun — a Jones Lang LaSalle managing director specializing in redevelopment — expects Blue Island to quickly attract a "big-box" retailer that will pay full market rates to acquire land on the south side of 119th St. He contends the development will enhance the city plan. "New retail on 119th Street will serve a different market than main street. And it will create the means, via new sales tax revenues, to do other more urgent things. The city can use that revenue stream to hire staff and consultants needed to help make Uptown redevelopment happen." The site is large enough to attract large industrial users

an "entertainment center" and a distinctive asset for the sub-region in which jobs/shopping centers are located elsewhere.) Demographics of neighboring suburbs indicate that population in a 5-mile radius is approximately 45% African-American (non-Hispanic) and 11% Hispanic. (See Southland community profile table.) The city needs to work on cross-ethnic (particularly African-American) engagement to be a credible "destination downtown" for the area.

"Blue Island's retail development aspiration is to attract folks who like the walkable lifestyle and diverse shops and eateries, as well as more commuters," says Bernard Loyd, president of commercial developer Urban Juncture, Inc. "That means they need to attract people who live in a five-to-ten-mile radius. More than half of the people from surrounding communities are non-white. But I don't sense that Blue Island's diverse communities are fully engaged within their own city. Local leaders must start there if they are to be successful."

Valerie Alexander, senior vice president of Edelman Public Relations Worldwide, adds: "Blue Island has to



David Wilson, Executive Director of Main Street Blue Island Association, talks to the MPC Blue Island Task Force in front of a restaurant that serves a cross-section of the community.

market itself to so many target audiences. This community has always been at a crossroads geographically with transportation such a part of its history and future. But now it is also an ethnic crossroads with a population diversity that's unique and something to be proud of to anchor and attract economic development."

Publicize the "BI reaches new crossroads" theme through a series of story pitches. Produce news release about MPC report for distribution to local media; seek local press outlet to chronicle the city's ongoing effort to implement its plan; place a story about zoning code overhaul in regional newspaper real estate section; and place a story in *Crain's Chicago Business* examining redevelopment challenge in regional context — with the hook being, perhaps, 119th St. retail opportunity. Use accumulated press clippings to place additional stories on topical items. Develop message about an inner-ring south suburb's effort to become as a destination downtown.

Engage under-represented groups in city planning effort by building on the planning process initiated by CNT to stimulate dialogue between the city and Hispanic and African-American constituencies. The economic development plan was the first step in an ongoing process. MPC report outlines next steps whose implementation depends on greater community involvement. A town hall meeting could become the avenue for deliberate recruitment of minority groups. Ask aldermen to bring out constituents. Reach out to churches. Involve schools.

Identify opportunities to diversity municipal staff. Organize community events: Regatta; Taste of Blue Island; Concerts in the Park that represent and cater to all groups – African American, Latino; Fiesta del Sol or "Real Men Cook" where families do the cooking since there is not yet a broad base of restaurants. Recognize soccer as an opportunity to create a crossroads. Promote inclusion message through collaboration with Miami Heat superstar Dwayne Wade. The 2006 NBA Finals MVP grew up in adjacent Robbins and recently hosted his 2nd annual youth basketball camp at Eisenhower High School. Develop mutually beneficial strategy for next summer's Dwayne Wade camp.

Marketing the "Destination Downtown" theme will require buy-in from local business networks. Focus city resources and planning on downtown locale by: broadening the base of antique and complimentary stores; tout water access for condo development, rowing team opportunity; river walk plans; and water reclamation as an amenity.

Transportation is a real plus: Both residents and area commuters capitalize on the city being 20 minutes from downtown Chicago via rail/highway. As downtown is revived, consider providing access to various amenities through a trolley system.

Enhance the uniqueness of the city's diversity—a south-west side Oak Park — by tailoring messages for older generation Latino; white ethnic; new immigrant; middle-income African-American; low-income African-American; day-work population, etc.

Financing

The city should begin to identify the top five needs/top five funding sources with input from local businesses, civic leaders, and public officials. Create a template package that includes justification for resource application.

Capital funding source for Uptown improvements (besides state/federal monies for road configurations) may be limited to tax increment financing (TIF). Consider creating a TIF district near river and train station where significant increment could facilitate residential development on land currently producing little or no tax revenue. Parcels on Western Avenue and in the hospital area that now produce negligible tax revenue could be included later as a contiguous TIF so as to ensure the transferability of TIF proceeds. TIF could pay for relocated parking as needed with redevelopment of site by the river at Fulton and Irving

Solicit local resources from Fay's Point, St. Francis Hospital, local businesses, three banks and Metra. Ask local banks to participate in low-interest loan fund program for property/business owners doing façade

and/or interior improvements. This fund could help them comply with the Community Reinvestment Act. Perhaps the city would also contribute (low-interest loan or grant) if more than a certain amount is spent on the improvement, and it gets a favorable review by an architectural review board or some similar entity.

Potential public funds include federal revolving grants through HUD, Homeland Security, and Transportation, and legislative member initiative money. Use state programs: treasurer's matching funds, DCEO grants, membership initiative grants; IDOT enhancement dollars; IEPA to clean-up funds; and New Markets Tax Credits.

Governance

Attracting private investment starts with putting rules in place to guide the development process. The 36-year-old zoning code needs to be modernized. The building permit process is confusing. Plan commission members lack effective guidelines and, as a result, need to better understand their role: work toward funding and implementation of city plan; review all proposals for Planned Unit Developments (PUD); evaluate planner's recommendations and make recommendations to zoning board regarding zoning changes, text amendments, and special uses and PUD. Zoning Board of Appeals review proposals and make recommendations regarding variance petitions and appeals.

Members of the City Council, Zoning Board of Appeals, and Plan Commission need to become better acquainted with each other and their respective roles. The City Council has decision-making authority. Plan Commission and the Zoning Board are advisory panels. Encourage aldermen to join Plan Commission. Refer to Campaign for Sensible Tools workbook for information pertaining to plan commissioners' role in doing a comprehensive plan and on how to hire a firm to enact new zoning ordinance.

Redevelopment suffers because "the rules of engagement for developers aren't clear," says Todd Meyer, vice president for planning at the architectural firm Hellmuth, Obata + Kassabaum Inc. "The city needs to reestablish and formalize its review process. The new

zoning code should be form-based and descriptive — a guideline that is easy to understand and simple to enforce. From an urban-design perspective, it should give planning commission members clear direction and specific ideas about how to ensure that new development projects help realize their vision and goals for what they want the physical environment of Blue Island to be."

The zoning code rewrite could take 18 months. In the interim, the City Council should consider amending the current code to facilitate plan implementation (See sidebar/addendum). Also, developers should be required to submit full blue prints, construction drawings, etc. and make this information available for public review. Create a brochure that provides step-by-step requirements of zoning ordinance. Place brochure in central location at City Hall and on the web. Place zoning map on the web.

Once funds are raised and a firm hired to rewrite the code, the first task will be to assess the current code's shortcomings. Interviews should involve city officials — department heads, City Council, Plan Commission and Zoning Board and a private-sector sampling of builders, mortgage companies, and banks. Ask about specific problems citywide and how they might relate to existing code and proposed zoning changes. Determine if Zoning Board keeps records of issues with non-conforming uses.

This consensus-building process can build awareness for conditions needed to implement the city plan — e.g. R1 only in current zoning. The ban on non-conforming uses such as multi-family housing limits financing and rehab opportunities and should be lifted

"The new zoning code has to allow for more housing units near the Metra stations and in Uptown. Increasing the foot traffic will attract the retail market," says Patrick Moran, a partner at the law firm Sonnenschein Nath & Rosenthal.

A number of recommendations were made to implement the economic development plan for the three target areas:

1) Planned Developments

Require PUD process for mixed-used/MF downtown buildings taller than three stories and developments that are a block or larger.

Revise, rewrite, and update the PUD ordinance, and include Project QA assistance since it could be too time consuming for one planner. Require a public input process. Apply new PUD ordinance only along Western from High to Grove so that "historic" buildings can't be torn down.

2) Downtown Overlay

Create a Downtown Overlay that includes the following provisions: new parking requirements, parking code, landscape code, prohibition of drive-through uses and certain uses; allows mixed-use and higher-density residential uses.

Create the following three sub-districts within the Downtown Overlay:

Uptown: a four-block area extending along Western from High to Grove and Olde Western, and applies only to buildings adjacent to Western. Limit adjacent lots to two stories to maintain consistent character with existing historic buildings. Encourage shared parking. For new development, require 0' to 5' lot-line from sidewalk on frontage; windows facing Western; doors off sidewalk. No parking requirement for renovations, but new construction requires maximum of one space per unit in back. For new commercial development, mandate ground floor retail, services, restaurants. Allow 2nd floor office-commercial use and/or residential.

St. Francis Hospital Area: includes east-west streets between Western and Gregory. Encourage mixed-use, and require retail or commercial ground floor to better connect hospital to central business district.

Train Station Area: Establish a Cal-Sag Channel set-back to ensure public access between certain hours, e.g. 7 a.m. to 11

p.m. Require property owners to maintain set-back. Ensure connectivity for walking, biking, auto, and transit with developments that keep the grid. ("Gated community" developments obstruct the grid/public access to Channel.) Eliminate the proposed road along the Channel east of Chatham and keep this land as open space. Zone the area in anticipation of eventual higher demand for four- or five-story condos, especially along the channel on current MWRD land. Encourage these higher densities adjacent to open spaces and channel. Require conservation design standards for larger residential developments in this area; e.g. handling stormwater on site through rain gardens, etc.

3) Landscape and Design

Adopt Landscape Code ordinance that applies to Metra sub-district and the rest of the town, *especially* north of 127th along Western. (Code excludes existing and rehabbed buildings in Uptown sub-district.) But downtown street trees should be added. Ordinance should specify a setback distance; fencing; x trees per parking space. Require private green space for residential developments. Include a provision for storm water to be handled more on the site for Big Box and large residential developments. Encourage native landscaping with certain species especially on municipal facilities and improvements to existing developments and new construction. (See NIPC's model ordinance on native landscaping.)

Require proposed developments at certain sites to highlight unique topography through, e.g. tiered landscaping, small park/look out, etc.

Allow sidewalk cafés. (This will require wider sidewalks on Western, but could be done now on some side streets.)

Create parking code that involves sharing Metra lots at night and reduces parking requirements for main commercial streets (clarify words in italics)

Insert window banner amendment into revised Sign Ordinance, specifying quality of: lighting, legibility, contrast between lettering and background. Compare with neighboring towns by avoid trying to specify sign content.

Aim to preserve significant buildings in the Uptown area. Create a policy on non-conforming uses, e.g. if a non-conforming use burns down, allow the same density and floor area ratio to be constructed within two years to help mortgage holders get financing and insurance on their buildings that are non-conforming.

4) Planned Development at 119th Street Area

Reserve land along 119th Street for a commercial and industrial PUD.

Expand, specify, and clarify the special and permitted uses allowed in the C2 districts. Apply landscaping ordinance. Add PUDs to the C2 zoning and mandate that big box development goes through a PUD.

5) Residential Zoning Recommendations

Reintroduce R2 and R3 zoning categories in the City in order for households to continue to invest in their properties (which could be discouraged in nonconforming areas due to the recent downzoning). Blue Island needs to continue to attract residential investment which is facilitated by a range of allowable zoning categories.

Institute a townhouse ordinance so that developer doesn't need a variance for every new townhouse. Otherwise, every development would need 10% side yard and the city plan couldn't be implemented.

Institute a property maintenance ordinance for abandoned buildings, vacant lots, and occupied buildings.

Incorporate law about zoning changes in new code. Mandate notice provisions — including Notice of Hearing signs on property with date of hearing, proposed development, proposed zoning change. If City does rezoning, someone at the City needs to post the sign. Need to send letters and follow state law for zoning changes.

Specify that city planner make recommendations to zoning board for zoning changes.

Implementing Recommendations

CNT's Dave Chandler was an active participant in the task force's workshop. Throughout the two days, he provided members with a wealth of knowledge about the particulars of the city plan and local resources. He was pleased with the outcome.

"Forty Blue Island residents are actively involved in the planning process," Chandler explains. "They understand this is a 10-year journey. Completing the plan was phase one. We asked MPC to help us figure out the next best steps. The very fact that we have a plan that this group of experts could react to helped maximize the use of their talent. The MPC task force provided specific guidance that will help us go from where we are today to where we'd like to be in a couple years."

On Tuesday, July 25, Task Force members Tom Kirschbraun, Valerie Kretchmer and Bernard Loyd, along with Scott Goldstein of MPC, presented the findings and recommendations of this report to the Blue Island City Council and approximately 25 members of the public, including the executive directors of Main Street and the Chamber. Mayor Don Peloquin kicked off the discussion by stating that the Task Force took the ideas that have been a part of the Blue Island plan, brought market expertise to the issues, and have provided the city with priorities to consider.

The Task Force members provided an overview of the recommendations and summarized the following next steps: 1) in the Uptown area, the community should pursue neighborhood retail, converting Western Avenue to two way traffic, assemble priority sites for redevelopment, and complete a business inventory; 2) the 119th Street area should be pursued for retail and industrial development by continuing with the RFQ/P process and meeting with prospective development teams, and to consider using the proceeds of retail development to fund Uptown improvements; 3) pursue a two-step zoning reform, starting with immediate priorities and spending the time to eventually rewrite and modernize the ordinance; and finally, 4) to engage in a community outreach and marketing effort.

METROPOLITAN PLANNING COUNCIL

BLUE ISLAND TASK FORCE

Founded in 1934, the Metropolitan Planning Council (MPC) is a nonprofit, nonpartisan group of business and civic leaders committed to serving the public interest through the promotion and implementation of sensible planning and development policies necessary for an economically competitive Chicago region. MPC researches and develops policy recommendations and conducts outreach and advocacy in partnership with public officials and community leaders to enhance equity of opportunity and quality of life throughout metropolitan Chicago.

The Council's work in Blue Island is a part of its Community Building Initiative, which supports communities throughout the Chicago region in determining solutions to local development challenges, testing and refining policies and strategies, providing models for other communities, and creating a network of regional partners and contacts.

THE METROPOLITAN PLANNING
COUNCIL THANKS THE
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