

Core Shopping District: Phase 1
Not to Scale

Blue Island's Core Shopping District is located along Western Avenue, between Grove and Union Streets. Streetscape improvements should focus on enhancing the pedestrian shopping experience and can be phased as shown in the above diagrams.

- 1 Install Street Trees and Permeable Pavement**
Landscaping in the right-of-way improves the aesthetic appearance of a street, provides a buffer for pedestrians on the sidewalk, produces shade, and has several environmental benefits, including helping to counteract the urban heat island effect. The community has identified street trees as a priority for the improvement of Uptown Blue Island.

During Phase 1, street trees should be incorporated throughout the Core Shopping District—along Western Avenue and its side streets. Trees typically require significant root area for proper growth and longevity. It is recommended that street trees be installed in tree pits of at least 5' x 20' (parallel to the street). The top of the tree pit should be paved with permeable pavers to allow rain water to filter through to the roots. A 4' x 6' cast iron tree grate should be installed at the base of each tree.

- 2 Replace Existing Street Lights**
Participants at the Community Charrette consistently ranked new and upgraded lighting as one of the key elements of an improved streetscape.

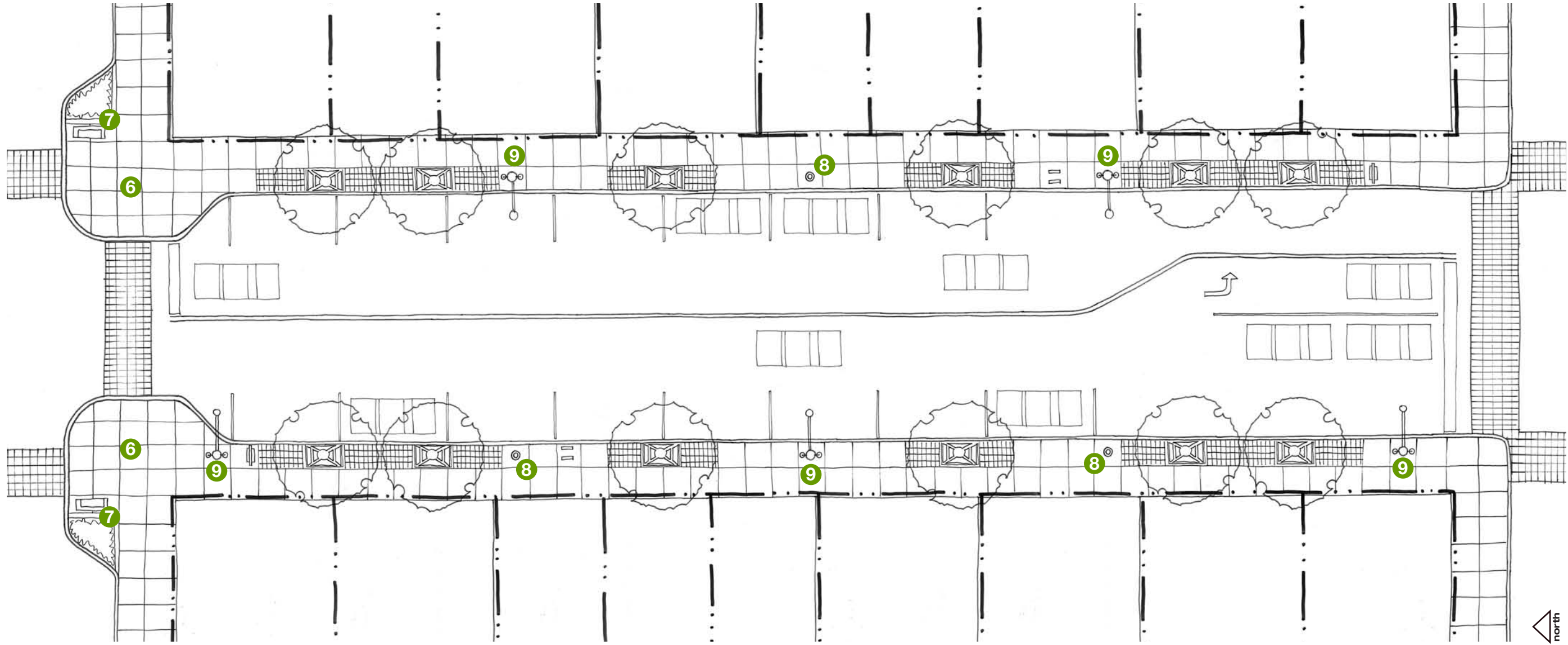
Each block within the Core Shopping District of Western Avenue currently has five Cobra-style street lights, which is a style typical of high-speed thoroughfares. It is recommended that within the Core Shopping District, these lights be replaced by lights that are designed to complement a pedestrian-oriented shopping district. (Refer to the Streetscape: Elements section of this document for recommended designs).

- 3 Install Wayfinding Signage**
Wayfinding signage should be installed to highlight local assets such as City Hall, transit stops, the hospital, bicycle routes, and access points to the waterfront park. Signs should be primarily oriented toward pedestrians and should be located at key pedestrian intersections. (Refer to the Streetscape: Elements section of this document for examples of appropriate wayfinding signage).

- 4 Add Bicycle Racks**
Bicycle racks are important elements within a shopping district such as Western Avenue. It is recommended that a set of bicycle racks be added to each side of each block within the Core Shopping Area.

- 5 Support Facade Rehabilitation**
By providing financial support for the rehabilitation of building facades along Western Avenue, the City can invest in the improvement of the Core Shopping District. The community identified this investment as a key component to the improvement of Uptown Blue Island. It is recommended that the City develop a program to partially fund facade improvement projects located within the Core Shopping District.





Core Shopping District: Phase 2
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6 Install Bump-outs

Installing bump-outs at intersections creates additional space for pedestrians and shortens the crosswalk. A bump-out does not eliminate any potential parking spaces, because it is located between the intersection and the first permitted parking spot. Bump-outs should be installed within the Core Shopping District at any intersection that does not include a bus stop or turn lane.

7 Add Benches and Planters

Benches provide a place of rest for pedestrians and can also serve as drop off and pick up locations for shoppers and employees who carpool or do not drive themselves to work. Benches should be located at key pedestrian intersections and can be incorporated with new bump-outs. (Refer to the Streetscape: Elements section of this document for examples of appropriate bench and planter design).

8 Install New Pedestrian Street Lighting

During Phase 2, lighting should be further improved by adding new pedestrian-scaled lighting to Western Avenue. Unlike the existing street lighting, which is predominately meant to provide light for vehicles on Western Avenue, pedestrian-scaled lighting focuses light on the sidewalk. Three new cut-off pedestrian lights should be installed between existing street lights, or as needed to provide adequate light levels.

9 Add Hanging Baskets to Street Lighting

The community identified hanging baskets as a desirable streetscape element for Uptown Blue Island. Hanging baskets help to improve the aesthetic appearance of a street and reduce the apparent scale of large street lights. Hanging baskets should be added to the replacement street lights from Phase 1.



Vermont Street: Phase 1
Not to Scale

Vermont Street, between the Gregory Street overpass and Chatham Street, is characterized by two Metra Stations and their associated facilities. The Rock Island Metra Station, located on the south side of Vermont Street, and the Metra Electric Station, located on the north side of Vermont Street, provide access to downtown Chicago and other places within the region. Streetscape improvements along Vermont Street should focus on multi-modal access and pedestrian comfort. Improvements can be phased as shown in the above diagrams.

1 Install Street Trees

As discussed on the previous pages, street trees provide many benefits to the community and should be included in any streetscape improvement plan within Blue Island's Uptown District. During Phase 1, street trees should be added within the existing parkway on the south side of Vermont Street and at the Metra Station entrance plazas. During Phase 2, additional street trees should be planted on the north side of Vermont Street. (Refer to Recommendation #11).

Trees that are to be placed within paved areas should be planted in large tree pits. The top of the tree pit should be paved with permeable pavers to allow rain water to filter through to the roots. A 4' x 6' cast iron tree grate should be installed at the base of each tree.

2 Improve Street Lighting

Participants at the Community Charrette identified new and upgraded lighting as a key improvement for Vermont Street. Several Cobra-style street lights exist along Vermont Street. During Phase 1, it is recommended that these lights be replaced by lights that are similar to those recommended for Western Avenue. (Refer to the Streetscape: Elements section of this document for recommended designs). During Phase 2, additional street lighting should be added to Vermont Street to provide adequate light levels.

3 Incorporate On-Street Parking

On-street parking is a vital component of an urban streetscape. It provides additional parking for transit riders and serves as a buffer between the faster moving vehicles and the slower moving pedestrians on the sidewalk. Additionally, on-street parking contributes to traffic calming by making the travel lanes appear narrower, which makes drivers travel at slower speeds and be more cautious for pedestrians or open doors. On-street parking should be incorporated on the south side of Vermont Street during Phase 1.

4 Improve Metra Parking Lot Entrances

The stretch of Vermont Street that is located between the Metra Electric and Rock Island Metra Tracks is 45 feet wide, includes two lanes of traffic, and is flanked on either side by paved parking lots. Two small planting areas mark the entrance of the southern parking lot, but no clear entrance exists for the northern parking lot.

It is recommended that, during Phase 1, new planting areas be installed within the right-of-way on both the north and south sides of the street and that the northern parking lot be improved with planters and striping. The new planting areas will not only help to define entrances to both parking lots, but will improve pedestrian comfort and help to calm traffic by making the travel lanes appear narrower.

5 Install Wayfinding Signage

Wayfinding signage should be installed to direct visitors to and from the Metra Stations, the Core Shopping District, City Hall, the hospital campus, bicycle routes, and access points to the waterfront park. Signs should be primarily oriented toward pedestrians and should be located outside of each Metra Station. (Refer to the Streetscape: Elements section of this document for examples of appropriate wayfinding signage).

6 Add Bicycle Racks

To support alternative modes of transportation, bicycle racks should be added to the Metra Station entrance plazas, where possible.

7 Install Benches and Planters

Benches provide a place of rest for pedestrians and can also serve as drop off and pick up locations for transit riders. A seating area, including a bench, trash can, and planters should be added to the Rock Island Metra Station entrance plaza during Phase 1.

8 Add Public Art to Blank Walls

The blank concrete walls of the Gregory Street overpass are uninviting and discourage pedestrian connections between the Metra Stations and the core of Uptown Blue Island. An additional blank concrete wall runs along the north side of Vermont Street, making the walk even less appealing for pedestrians.

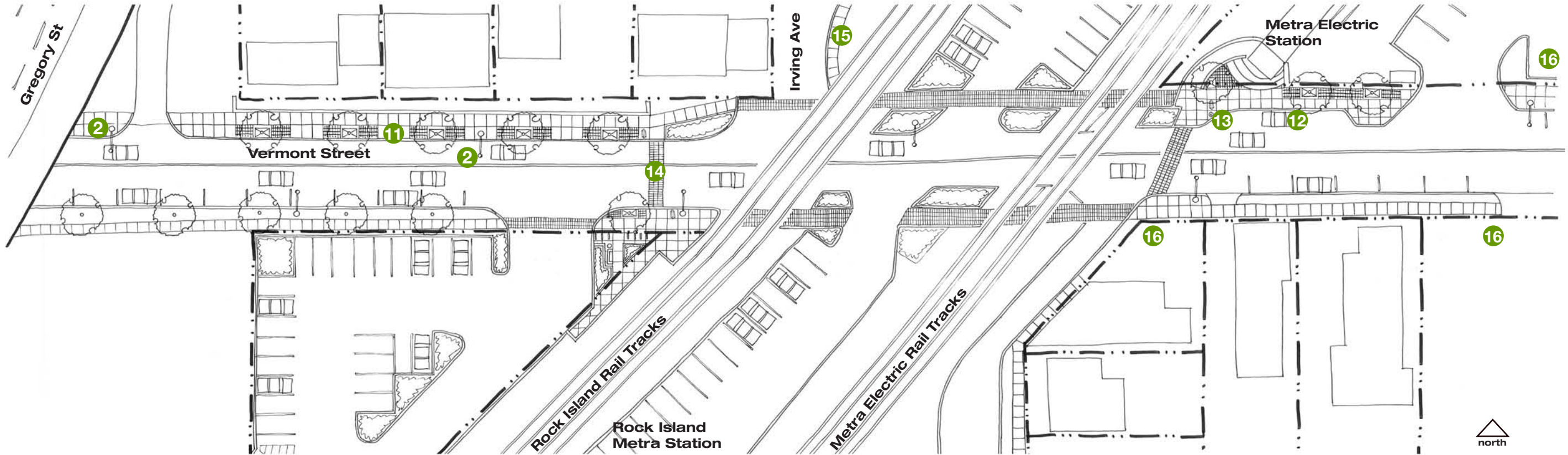
Public art should be added to these walls during Phase 1 to soften their appearance and encourage walking between the Metra Stations and the other amenities of Uptown. (Refer to the Streetscape: Elements section of this document for examples of public art).

9 Support Facade Rehabilitation

Participants at the Community Charrette identified facade rehabilitation as a key improvement for Vermont Street. The City should consider providing financial support for the rehabilitation of building facades along this stretch of Vermont Street.

10 Maintain Pedestrian Crossing Areas

Stamped asphalt paving has previously been added to crosswalks along this corridor; however, over time, the crosswalks have been worn, and the special paving is no longer apparent. Stamped paving should be maintained so as to always be visible to pedestrians and vehicles.



Vermont Street: Phase 1

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11 Widen Sidewalk & Add Trees

Currently, the sidewalk that extends along the north side of Vermont Street, from the Rock Island Metra tracks to the Gregory Street Overpass, is only five-feet wide. Travel lanes in this area are excessively wide. It is recommended that the sidewalk be widened and that street trees be planted in 5' x 20' tree pits, topped with permeable pavers and a 4' x 6' cast iron tree grate.

12 Add Drop-Off Area

A bus and vehicular drop-off should be added in front of the Metra Electric station on the north side of Vermont Street. It is recommended that bump-outs be added to the sidewalk in this area to create additional space for pedestrians and to shorten the pedestrian crossing on Vermont Street.

13 Install New Pedestrian Street Lighting

During Phase 2, lighting should be further improved by adding new pedestrian-scaled lighting outside of the Metra Electric station. Unlike the existing street lighting, which is predominately meant to provide light for vehicles on Western Avenue, pedestrian-scaled lighting focuses light on the sidewalk.

14 Add Pedestrian Crossing Area

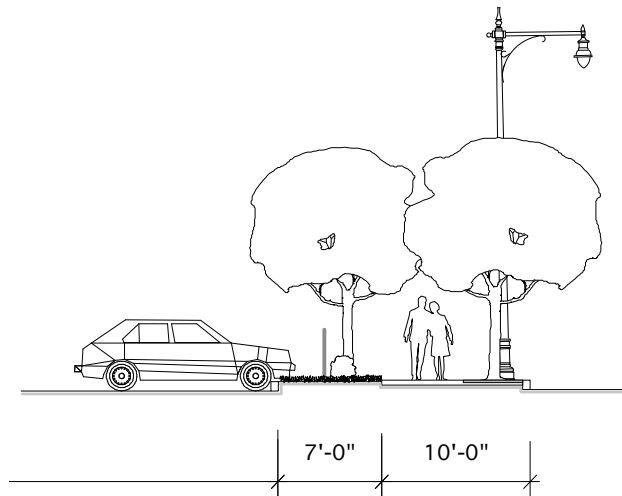
Only one crosswalk crosses Vermont Street between Western Avenue and Chicago Street, which is a distance of 1,500 feet. A second crosswalk should be added in front of the Rock Island Metra station. To maximize its visibility, the crosswalk should be installed with a stamped asphalt brick pattern that is similar to other crosswalks in the area.

15 Install New Sidewalk

The most direct way to reach the hospital campus from the Metra stations is to walk north on Irving Avenue from Vermont Street. However, no sidewalk exists on this portion of Irving Avenue. This pedestrian connection should be encouraged by installing a new sidewalk to connect with the sidewalks at New Street.

16 Include Parking Buffers

Any parking lot that fronts a street should include a vegetated screen at the front property line to provide a buffer for pedestrians. The figure to the right shows the recommended 7-foot wide parking buffer, which includes a fence and vegetation.



Street-fronting parking lots should include a vegetated buffer.

Streetscape: Vermont Street

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Streetscape Elements

Several streetscape elements that are recommended on prior pages are discussed further below.

Street Lighting

Existing street lighting in Uptown is typical of lighting found along high-speed thoroughfares. It has been recommended on the prior pages that these lights be replaced by lights that are designed to complement a pedestrian-oriented downtown district. The lighting styles shown below are recommended as appropriate lighting options for Uptown.

It is also important that all new lighting take into consideration the negative impacts of city lights on the environment. Light trespass from street lighting can result in glare, artificial sky glow, wasted energy, human eye strain, and harm to nocturnal habitat. To prevent these occurrences and concentrate light where it is intended to shine, street lighting should include a shielded luminaire.



Wayfinding Signage

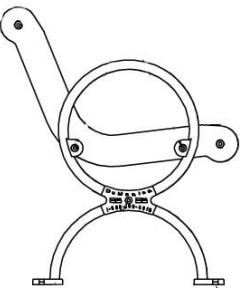
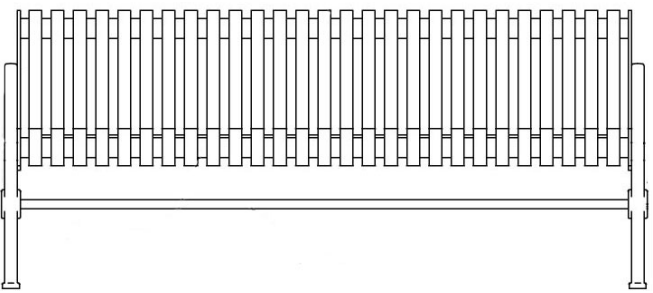
Wayfinding signage should be constructed of quality materials and should be distinct from typical street signage. Examples of appropriate wayfinding signage are shown below.



Benches and Planters

Benches and planters should be constructed of quality materials and designed to complement the style of adjacent buildings and other street elements.

Benches made of iron are durable and appropriate for the context of Uptown Blue Island. Planters can be built low to the ground or as raised structures. Examples of appropriate benches and planters are shown below.



Add Public Art to Blank Walls
Blank walls create uninviting pedestrian environments and lengthen apparent walking distances. Adding art to blank walls can make an area more appealing and encourage pedestrian connections. Several blank walls exist in Uptown, including the walls beneath the Gregory Avenue overpass and the retaining wall along the north side of Vermont Street.

There are many options for wall art, including painted murals, tile mosaics, sculpture, or lighting. The following images show examples of public art beneath overpasses and on large retaining walls.



Photo Credit: www.jammi.info



Photo Credit: Emerging Artist 2007



Photo Credit: Grundlepuck 2007



Photo Credit: Just in Robots 2009



Photo Credit: Painterly Visions



Photo Credit: K Grading 2007



Photo Credit: Spot On 2008



Photo Credit: jfsl3 2008



Photo Credit: When Lost In 2007