

**WESTERN AVENUE COMMERCIAL CORRIDOR REDEVELOPMENT PLAN
CITY OF BLUE ISLAND**

BACKGROUND

In September 2005, the City of Blue Island adopted the Blue Island Plan for Economic Development, which proposed a transit-oriented development (TOD) strategy centered around the Vermont Street Metra Station and a portion of the Western Avenue Commercial Corridor. The Western Avenue Commercial Corridor Redevelopment Plan will build upon the Blue Island Plan and provide the refinement needed to ensure its “big picture” objectives are met.

Work for the Blue Island Plan included:

- Basic Market Analysis, measuring local buying power/leakage analysis
- Community Visioning
- Identification of priority redevelopment areas
- Identification of needed transportation improvements
- Suggestions for potential development opportunities

Specific goals for Western Avenue included:

- Establishing a density of residential & commercial development, an inviting streetscape & public amenities appropriate for the center of a thriving small city.
- Correcting the problems related to the existing one-way traffic pattern on the segment of Western Avenue between 127th & Calumet River Corridor.
- Establishing new intersection of Western & Gregory Avenues that will correct the problems of the existing one-way highway pattern and provide a gateway to the Main Street district.
- Create a safe and attractive working environment for pedestrians
- Improve streetscape conditions
- Capitalize on new commercial and residential development opportunities that will be stimulated by correction of the present Western & Gregory convergence.

The Western Avenue Corridor Redevelopment Plan will:

- Determine feasible alternatives for correcting issues associated with Western & Gregory intersection and the existing one-way traffic pattern.
- Investigate design elements that improve streetscape conditions.
- Improve the pedestrian experience within the corridor.
- Develop an actionable corridor redevelopment program that includes market-based economic development strategies and an implementation plan.

SCOPE OF WORK

WORK ELEMENT 1 - PROJECT SET UP & INITIATION

(Aug – Sept 2008)

Task 1: Establish Advisory Committee & Decision Making Structure

The project Advisory Committee shall include key City staff, residents, business owners, Main Street Blue Island & the Development Commission. The Advisory Committee shall be established and given primary responsibility to guide the activities of the Project Team, ensure that the work is complete & on time and determine the general form and content of the public participation events and work products. The Committee will conduct monthly meetings with the project team where they will receive full project status reports and provide guidance and direction on the conduct of the public participation events and work products.

Task 2: Plan & Initiate Public Involvement Program

During this task, the project team will plan and initiate the public outreach for the Corridor Project. Public outreach methods shall include: Corridor Tour; Public Meetings; Library Kiosk; City Website

WORK ELEMENT 2 - EXISTING & PROJECTED CONDITIONS

(Oct 2008 – March 2009)

Building upon analyses carried out for the Blue Island Plan, the project team will inventory & analyze existing conditions along the Corridor for land use, natural resources, transportation, infrastructure & utilities, and urban design. Analyses for the Blue Island Plan included data collection for the segment of Western Avenue south of 127th Street. The Existing & Project Conditions analysis will extend the work of the Blue Island Plan by including Western Avenue Commercial Corridor north of 127th Street.

Task 3: Existing Data Gathering & Needs Assessment

The project team will collect and summarize all existing studies and plans that relate to the project areas, and gather data and tools needed to complete the project.

Task 4: Existing & Projected Conditions Assessment

The project team will inventory & analyze existing conditions along the Corridor for land use, natural resources, transportation, infrastructure, economic conditions. The inventory will be mapped and quantified. Development trends will also be analyzed for patterns and issues.

Land Use Analysis

Document existing land use and building stock, review the overall land compositions and address constraints for development and environmentally sensitive areas. Determine current and planned land uses and cultural, historical & socio-economic characteristic of corridor.

Transportation System and Pedestrian Analysis

Inventory and review existing conditions of the transportation system.

Infrastructure/Utilities Assessment

Inventory and assess the overall character of the corridor's existing and planned infrastructure and utilities.

Urban Design

Analyze urban design conditions and recommendations made by The Blue Island Plan. The analysis will include streets, alleys, and streetscapes, walking conditions, visual quality, scale, building character, downtown entry points, signage, and other elements to identify opportunities for thematic and individual improvements and renovations.

Based on the findings of the work performed during Task 5 (Traffic Impact Analysis-Engineering Feasibility Study), the conceptual design recommendations proposed in the Blue Island Plan for the redevelopment of the Gregory-Western intersection will be analyzed in terms of feasibility and preferred alternatives . Traffic patterns

Task 3 & 4 Deliverables: *Data Collection & Mapping; Written Summary of Existing Data, Reports & Plans; Written Summary & Maps Detailing Existing Corridor Conditions*

WORK ELEMENT 3 - OPPORTUNITIES & ALTERNATIVE ANALYSIS (April – Aug 2009)

Task 5: Transportation Improvements - Gregory-Western Intersection

TRAFFIC IMPACT ANALYSIS-ENGINEERING FEASIBILITY STUDY

Traffic patterns on Western Avenue south of 127th have created a pedestrian unfriendly environment and contributed significantly to the economic decline of the Blue Island Main Street. To address this issue, the Blue Island Plan proposed several alternatives for changing the current street pattern from one-way back to its original two-way configuration.

To assess the feasibility of the proposed change, the City will hire a transportation engineering consultant to perform a traffic impact analysis which will assess: existing and future traffic conditions based on proposed directionality changes; the ability of trucks to access downtown businesses with the proposed configuration; the availability of on-street parking under both scenarios; and roadway improvements & costs necessary to accommodate proposed reconfiguration.

Task 5 Deliverables: *Data Collection & Analysis; Traffic Impact Analyses Report, including Cost Estimates; Public Presentation*

Task 6: Streetscape Improvements

During visioning for the Blue Island Plan, community participants indicated a preference for historic and traditional character to compliment the existing buildings, and liked the streets and buildings that accommodated pedestrians and bicyclists through attractive windows and facades, greenery along the street, sidewalks with street furniture, and dedicated paths for walking and biking.

During Task 6, the project team will review the recommendations of exiting studies and previous work to develop streetscape standards for the Corridor, which will establish a consistent design and aesthetic theme. As a portion of the Corridor is a designated Main Street, applicable design standards will be incorporated.

The project team will also analyze urban design conditions and recommendations made by the Blue Island Plan to identify specific opportunities for thematic and individual improvements and renovations. The analysis may include streets, alleys, and streetscapes, visual quality, scale, building character, downtown entry points, signage, and other elements.

Task 6 Deliverables: *Written Summary of Previous Streetscape Plans; Data Collection & Analysis; Draft Report*

Task 7: Pedestrian Conditions Audit – Public Walking Workshop

Consultant will conduct a walking workshop, including both a walking audit and an action planning component to maximize both local public involvement and the funding investment. With community input, the workshop will investigate alternatives for traffic calming and creating a pedestrian friendly environment on Western Avenue. Create community vision as part of a comprehensive planning process. Build community consensus for transportation corridor improvements.

Task 7 Deliverables: Community Walking Workshop, Written Summary/Matrix Detailing Proposed Pedestrian Improvements

Task 8: Conduct Public Charette/Workshop #1

The purpose of Public Charette/Workshop #1 is to present land use, transportation, and pedestrian alternatives and accompanying streetscape design concepts for public review and input. Two workshops may be held if determined necessary.

Task 8 Deliverables: Meeting Materials (handouts, display boards, feedback forms, etc.); Public Charette & Written Charette Summary

WORK ELEMENT 4 - ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES (Oct 2008 – Sept 2009)

Project team will work with Advisory Committee to develop a market-based redevelopment program focusing on the development of strategies, policies and programs for recruitment, retention and expansion of business and development along the Western Avenue Commercial Corridor. Create Strategies & Detailed Action Plan to Direct the Public and Private Retail Redevelopment.

Task 9: Market Research/Analysis

This research will expand upon existing data and include analysis of opportunities for specific service, office, restaurant, theater uses. The results of the market research will be used to plan redevelopment strategies that focus on more specific business niches and to assess specific opportunities per sector.

Task 9 Deliverables: Market Demand Analysis; Summary Report

Task 10: Redevelopment Suitability Analysis

The project team and advisory committee will evaluate each major parcel or parcel cluster in terms of its potential for reuse and/or redevelopment and will determine consistencies/inconsistencies of land use/function with the Plan for the area. Parcels that are vacant, underutilized or are planned for redevelopment will be analyzed with respect to the range of potential uses that would be feasible based on characteristics of the site and buildings and market factors. Identification of reuse/redevelopment barriers will be highlighted. (Identify Market Factors – Lease Rates; Land Costs Buying Power; Economic Trends)

Task 10 Deliverables: Data Analysis; Summary Report

Task 11: Commercial District Needs & Opportunities Assessment

- **Develop a vision statement & goals for corridor redevelopment program**

This work will build upon the results of the visioning completed as a part of the Blue Island Plan and focus specifically on defining a preferred vision for the commercial corridor.

- **Define retail and business development strategies that will achieve vision and goals.**
Using the data from the market analysis, study the types of businesses that are currently located in the corridor see how they fit together. Strategies to be explored will include Corridor Identity; Niche Strategies; Business Placement Strategies/Space Utilization; Business Retentions & Expansion Strategies. This assessment will also include the identification of current efforts and programs, gaps or needed improvements and barriers to successful implementation of proposed strategies.
- **Identify steps necessary to implement the plan, identify responsible entity or department.**

Task 11 Deliverables: *Draft Goals; Written Summary Describing Redevelopment Strategies; Action Plan Matrix*

Task 12: Conduct Public Charette/Workshop #2 – Market Strategies

The purpose of Public Charette/Workshop #2 is to present result of expanded market analysis and corridor redevelopment strategy alternatives for public review and input.

Task 12 Deliverables: *Meeting Materials (handouts, display boards, feedback forms, etc.); Public Charette & Charette Summary*

WORK ELEMENT 6 - CORRIDOR REDEVELOPMENT PLAN (Aug 2009 – Feb 2010)

Based on the results of the work performed in Work Elements 1-5, the Corridor Redevelopment Plan will build upon the recommendations of the Blue Island Plan by detailing parcel- and business-specific redevelopment strategies. A draft document will be prepared and presented for public input, which will be incorporated into the final report.

Task 13: Prepare Draft Corridor Plan

Combine the work conducted in Tasks 3 through 12 to develop a draft Western Avenue Corridor Redevelopment Plan, which will consist of text, maps and graphics illustrating alternative land use and transportation plans for the study area, outlining design issues, strategies and the preferred vision to guide redevelopment within the corridor.

Task 13 Deliverables: *Draft Corridor Redevelopment Plan*

Task 14: Presentation of Draft Plan

The purpose of Public Charette/Workshop #1 is to present land use, transportation, and pedestrian alternatives and accompanying streetscape design concepts for public review and input.

Task 14 Deliverables: *Public Meeting; Meeting Materials; Summary Memo*

Task 15: Prepare Final Corridor Plan

Project team will utilize input from public meetings to revise draft plan into final plan.

Task 15 Deliverables: *Final Corridor Redevelopment Plan*