

West Dempster Street Redevelopment Plan

Comprehensive Plan Update

Sector B, Area 1

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Village of Skokie Community Development Department

Peter W. Peyer, AICP Director

Steve Marciani, AICP, Planner

Brian Augustine, Planning Intern

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Introduction

As part of the Comprehensive Plan update, the Community Development Department has started a program to develop neighborhood sector and detailed subarea plans that focus on the land use and redevelopment needs of specific areas of the Village. At its March 19, 2001 meeting, the Board of Trustees reviewed a preliminary study of the existing conditions of the commercial strip along the western portion of Dempster Street and directed the Plan Commission to review a plan that will direct redevelopment efforts. This phase of the comprehensive planning process is designated in the Comprehensive Plan as Sector B, Subarea 1 in the Dempster West planning area and focuses on the commercial strip that runs from the Edens Expressway on the west to Kilpatrick Avenue on the east. This area had historically been a viable business district with numerous stores, offices, and restaurants. Despite a good economy, high traffic volumes, and a broad range of commercial uses allowed in the B-3 Business District, the area is deteriorating and underutilized as a commercial district.

With the upcoming construction of the new Dempster Street Swift Station intermodal transit facility, the relocation and redevelopment of the old Swift station, and a significant shift in suburban residential development patterns toward condominium living, it is Staff's recommendation that the plan focus on mixed-use development. The plan emphasizes:

- Increasing the supply of residential units
- Repositioning the corridor to be an office and employment area within walking distance of the Skokie Swift
- Providing an environment that supports retail and service commercial sales
- Putting in place zoning regulations for the private market to redevelop the area

The plan acknowledges that the area will continue to be a main traffic arterial from the Edens Expressway while balancing the needs of a pedestrian and transit-orientated area.

Existing Conditions

The study area is zoned primarily B-3 Business, with some B-2 Commercial and M-1 Office Assembly. The ComEd and rail rights-of-way are zoned M-2 Light Industrial. All five residential districts, R-1 Single Family, R-2 Single Family, R-3 Two Family, R-4 General, and R-5 Elderly and Disabled Housing are adjacent to the study area. A zoning map of the area is in Appendix A.

This portion of Dempster Street contains retail, commercial service, general office, transportation, research and development, and park uses. A mix of detached, duplex, townhouse, and multifamily residential buildings are adjacent to these uses. A land use map of the area is in Appendix B.

A field survey by the Planning Division of commercial and office buildings in the study area in February 2001 revealed the following information:

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| Building Condition (43 buildings) | 12% Excellent 39% Good 40% Minor Deficiencies 9% Major Deficiencies |
| Building Appearance (43 buildings) | 36% Excellent 35% Good 39% Poor |
| Site Maintenance (46 sites, including accessory parking lots) | 24% Excellent 28% Good 48% Poor |
| Landscaping (48 sites) | 52% Acceptable 40% Inadequate – possible 8% Inadequate – not possible |
| Retail Unit Vacancy (of 81 units) | 20% |
| Office Unit Vacancy (of 35 units) | 3% |

Retail uses in the area are marginal and demand for space is currently low. Some of the retail spaces are used for storage and not included in the 20%

vacancy rate. Office demand seems to be high with retail spaces being converted to office uses.

At least 6 inquiries to develop different portions of the area into multiple story condominiums or mixed-uses have been made in the last year. General observations and market demand lead us to the conclusion that a change in land use is necessary to revitalize the area, yet current zoning regulations do not allow residential densities or the mixed-use option that would make redevelopment financially feasible.

Goals

The purpose of this plan is to encourage and guide the redevelopment of the commercial strip along West Dempster Street. Based on the existing physical and market conditions, the following goals have been developed:

- Develop a framework for private redevelopment to occur, allowing land use options that can sustain long-term economic growth and stability.
- Change the emphasis of the area from a primarily vehicle-oriented commercial corridor to a mixed-use residential/retail/office area that is transit-oriented yet acknowledges the excellent motor vehicle access and proximity to the Edens Expressway.
- Develop a safe and aesthetically pleasing environment for both pedestrians and motorists.
- Achieve the above stated goals without creating a Tax Increment Financing District (TIF) or other economic contributions by the Village.

Transit-Oriented Development

According to *The Transit Oriented-Development* by the Northeastern Illinois Planning Commission (NIPC), the basic principles of Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) are:

- Transit-oriented development (TOD) fosters the use of public transportation and enhances retail and consumer services markets in proximity to transit stations by making walking to these places more convenient.
- Characteristics usually found in a TOD include higher densities near rail stations, mixed-use development, and an attractive and functional design that make for convenient pedestrian access.
- Transit-oriented development is an approach to the design of and development of land around transit stations that encourages and facilitates the accessibility of mass transit within a neighborhood, between neighborhoods, and to the region as a whole.

TODs benefit neighborhoods in many ways by:

- Catalyzing neighborhood revitalization by attracting private investment that benefits from increased foot traffic that comes from siting commercial buildings near viable transit stops.
- Fostering community balance by offering multifamily units at more affordable rates than single family homes.
- Encouraging transit ridership while relieving pressure on overused roadways.
- Creating a more environmentally friendly and sustainable community.

A NIPC study demonstrated that by placing two additional multifamily buildings in a station area, nearly 500,000 auto vehicles miles traveled were shifted annually to transit and walking.

Objectives and Strategies

These redevelopment objectives and strategies were developed through the union of the redevelopment goals for the study area and the standards of good transit-oriented design developed by the Northeast Illinois Planning Commission, Chicago Transit Authority, Urban Land Institute, and American Planning Association.

Land Use

Not unlike the determinants of a successful regional shopping mall, the key to redeveloping failed commercial strips is providing a good balance compatible of land uses. For this subarea, that mix should be shaped by transportation opportunities and supported by service commercial, employment, and residential uses.

A study of other suburban communities has found that strip commercial areas can and are being effectively revitalized through private redevelopment when the zoning regulations allow needed densities. The trend has been to develop mixed commercial/residential buildings with the commercial being both pedestrian and motor vehicle oriented. The West Dempster Street Area is ideal for the construction of multifamily residential because the Swift Station is within walking distance and there is excellent access to the Edens Expressway. Developers have indicated a strong interest in the area provided that economically feasible residential densities can be achieved. The development of mixed-use commercial and residential buildings will be compatible with both the commercial uses in the district and surrounding residential areas. The adjacent residential areas are zoned R-4 where 6 story buildings are allowed under the site plan approval process. The redevelopment to mixed-use residential uses will also decrease traffic congestion by reducing driveways on Dempster Street. The new buildings will all have full stormwater detention and landscaping, which is lacking in the current development pattern that will help control flooding problems.

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| OBJECTIVE B1-1: Provide a mix of land uses that maximizes the transportation and land use opportunities in the study area. |
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To meet this objective, the following should be considered:

- The addition of housing in the study area will encourage connectivity with the residential neighborhoods to the north and south and re-establish a

sense of community. Currently, the strip centers and Dempster Street act as a barrier between the two sides of the neighborhood.

- Commercial uses should be more heavily concentrated near the Skokie Swift station and decrease in intensity farther from the station. Residences should be added to upper floors where marketable.
- Viable commercial uses should be integrated into the redevelopment plan and infill development of complementary uses serving transit riders, as well as residents of the neighborhood who do not regularly use transit, should be encouraged.
- Uses that are not compatible with the goals and objectives in this plan should be eliminated.

Based on these considerations, the following strategies are proposed:

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| STRATEGY B1-1: | <ul style="list-style-type: none">A. Determine appropriate standards for commercial/residential mixed-uses.B. Review current permitted and special uses in the study area in the context of the goals and objectives of this subarea that will strengthen the proposed development pattern.C. Review current zoning districts and recommend appropriate changes as necessary. |
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Design

Good design will give pedestrians convenient, safe, and pleasant access to all the uses in the area including transportation and businesses that serve commuters and local residents. Good design will also provide an environment for both transit riders and non-transit riders to support local-businesses.

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| OBJECTIVE B1-2: | Develop bulk and design standards that are appropriate for sustainable long-term economic growth and stability as well as safe and aesthetically pleasing for both pedestrians and motorists. |
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Appropriate design standards include:

- Siting buildings and other uses to minimize the distance to transit stops and make pedestrian trips safe and convenient

- Using ground floor retail and varied building heights, textures, and facades to enhance the walking experience
- Integrating commercial centers with the transit facility
- Connecting uses by foot and eliminating street patterns that cause pedestrian barriers
- Using amenities such as attractive landscaping, continuous paved sidewalks, street furniture, urban art, screening of parking, weather protection, and safe street crossings
- Locating building entrances such that they provide a clear view of the street and sidewalk from inside the building and emergency refuge to pedestrians
- Providing lighting along the fronts of buildings and yards, especially where parkway trees obscure street lighting.

Incorporating these concepts will be achieved using the following strategies:

- STRATEGY B1-2:**
- A. Develop design standards that address building placement, architecture, landscaping, pedestrians, and vehicles on private property.
 - B. Develop bulk regulations that are both compatible with adjacent development and economically viable.
 - C. Develop a streetscaping plan that will provide a safe and aesthetically pleasing pedestrian and driving environment in public rights-of-way that could be implemented through private redevelopment activity.

Village Participation

Although the Village has had success with its tax increment financing (TIF) programs, changes in the market and economic environment of the Village may allow redevelopment to occur with little or no public subsidy. This may be accomplished if the Village provides the redevelopment tools necessary to allow the private market to redevelop the subarea.

- OBJECTIVE B1-3:** Promote redevelopment by encouraging private development with little or no public subsidy

Emphasis should be placed on examining and enhancing existing zoning regulations, encouraging residential/commercial mixed-use development, and consistent code enforcement. Regulatory changes should support the goals and objectives of this plan.

After the adoption of this plan into the Comprehensive Plan and appropriate public hearings, the Village Board may designate the subarea the West Dempster Street Business Redevelopment District in compliance with the Industrial Project Revenue Bond Act (65 ILCS 5/11-74.3). The creation of the Business Redevelopment District will give the Village Board the authority to implement details of this plan as Staff develops them. This designation could allow the Village to:

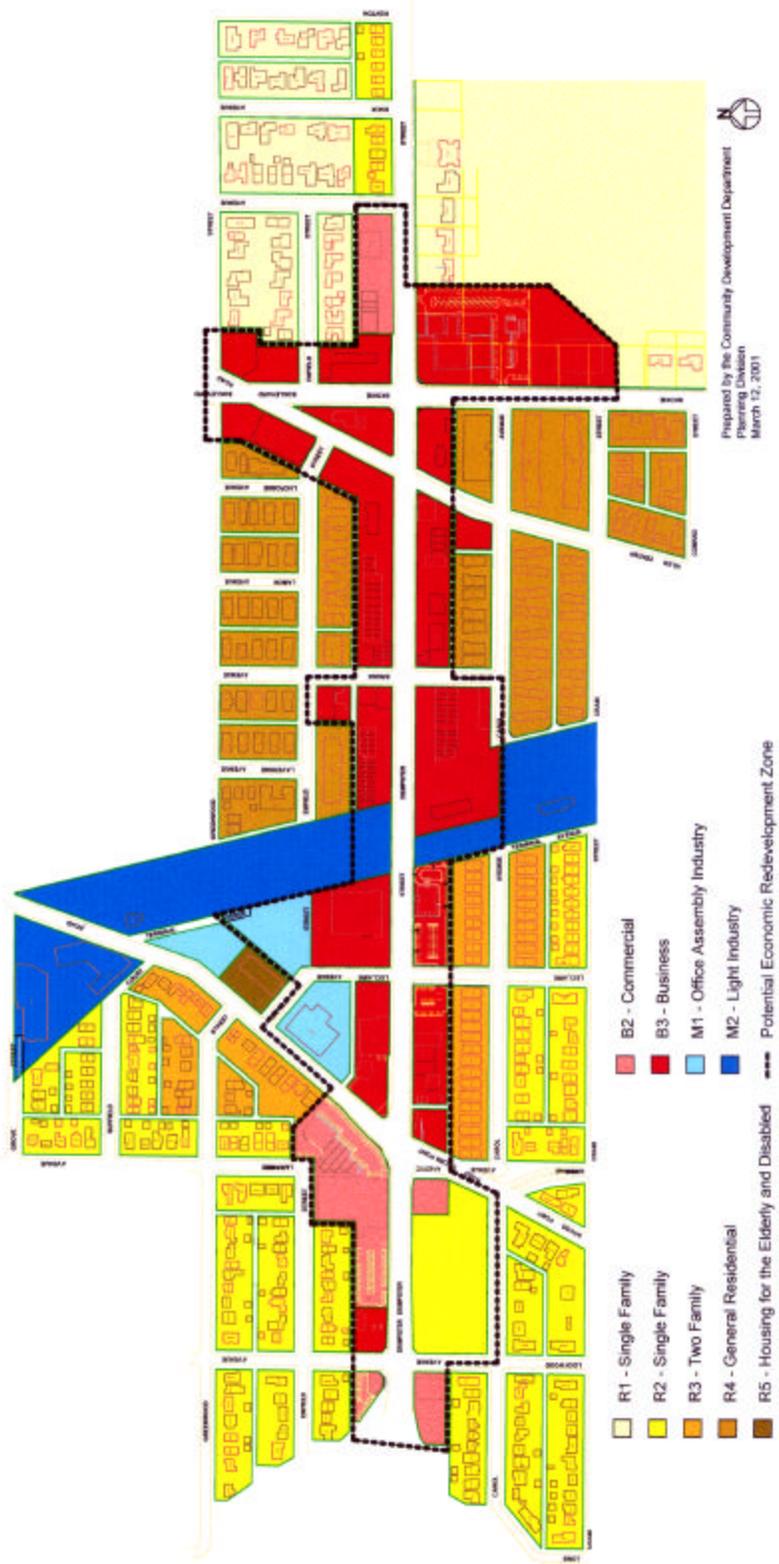
- 1. Approve all development and redevelopment proposals for a business district.**
- 2. Exercise the use of eminent domain for the acquisition of property for the purpose of a development or redevelopment project.**
- 3. Acquire, manage, convey, or otherwise dispose of property according to the provisions of a development or redevelopment plan.**
- 4. Apply for and accept capital grants and loans from the United States and the State of Illinois, or any instrumentality of the United States or the State, for business district development and redevelopment.**
- 5. Borrow funds as it may be deemed necessary for the purpose of business district development and redevelopment, and in this connection issue such obligation or revenue bonds, as it shall be deemed necessary, subject to applicable statutory limitations.**
- 6. Enter into contracts with any public or private agency or person.**
- 7. Sell, lease, trade, or improve real property in connection with business district development and redevelopment plans.**
- 8. Employ all such persons as may be necessary for the planning, administration, and implementation of business district plans.**
- 9. Expend such public funds as may be necessary for the planning, execution, and implementation of the business district plans.**
- 10. Establish by ordinance or resolution procedures for the planning, execution, and implementation of business district plans.**

The following strategies are the procedural steps the Village should adopt as the land use and design elements are developed in the coming months:

- STRATEGY B1-3:**
- A. Designate the study area as the West Dempster Street Business Redevelopment District.**
 - B. Make appropriate changes to permitted and special uses in the subarea to eliminate future development of incompatible uses.**
 - C. Establish a commercial/residential mixed-use category in the study area.**
 - D. Develop an appropriate zoning bonus system to encourage private development of public amenities, including private implementation of the streetscaping program.**
 - E. Implement appropriate zoning changes that address pedestrian oriented commercial development through new building siting, design, and bulk regulations.**
 - F. Change zoning district designations within the subarea as necessary.**
 - G. Strictly enforce zoning regulations to encourage the development of desired land uses.**
 - H. Review parking requirements for residential and commercial uses and assess the applicability of those requirements in the context of public transportation access.**
 - I. Provide technical assistance to developers in guiding projects through the review process.**
 - J. Maintain a high level of municipal services that will support private redevelopment.**

Appendix A – Existing Zoning Map

West Dempster Economic Redevelopment Study Area ZONING



Appendix B – Existing Land Use Map

West Dempster Economic Redevelopment Study Area LAND USE

