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**Plan Commission Meeting – June 14, 2023
Agenda Item 3**

Comprehensive Plan Update – Central Business District Chapter

Staff Report

1998 Comprehensive Plan – Central Business District Chapter

Central Business District Chapter – For Commission Review/Action

Track Changes Version – Reflecting Revisions Since April

Correspondence Received AFTER the April Meeting (New)

Correspondence Received Just Prior to the April Meeting (Previously
Distributed to the Commission)



STAFF REPORT AND RECOMMENDATION

TO:	Chairman Dixon and members of the Plan Commission
DATE:	June 14, 2023
FROM:	Catherine J. Czerniak, Director of Community Development
SUBJECT:	<i>Comprehensive Plan Update – Central Business District Chapter</i>

At the April Plan Commission meeting, the Plan Commission opened the public hearing and began the formal review process for considering an updated chapter of the Comprehensive Plan pertaining to the Central Business District. The draft chapter as revised since the April meeting is included in the Commission's packet. In addition, although a bit hard to follow, a "track changes" version of the chapter is also included in the Commission's packet to reflect the areas of change since the last meeting.

Both a clean version and the track changes version were posted on the project website and are available for public review and comment.

Highlights of Changes Since the April Meeting

Since the April Plan Commission meeting, the draft chapter has been revised in response to Plan Commission comments and public input received at the meeting and after the meeting. Although ultimately, final wordsmithing of the chapter will be done and photos and maps added when it is compiled into a final document along with the other chapters, the substance of the chapter is complete and ready for final Commission comment, direction, and if the Commission is prepared to do so, action to forward the chapter to the City Council.

In summary, since the last meeting:

- The comments offered on the draft chapter presented in April by the Commission and members of the public, both in writing and verbally, were reviewed and incorporated into the revised draft as determined to be appropriate.
- Consideration was given to all suggestions offered by the Commission and the public.
- The section on Subareas in the Central Business District was moved forward in the chapter to provide detailed information on the boundaries of the District and the distinct characteristics of each subarea within the District to set the stage for the Goals and Recommended Actions presented later in the chapter.
- The Goals were refined to align more directly with each of the Recommended Actions.

- The Recommended Actions were consolidated somewhat to clarify and simplify the document.
- Overall, the narrative was edited with a focus on clarity, simplification and reducing redundancies.

Responses to Questions and Comments at the April Plan Commission Meeting

- *What is the Plan Commission's role in the Comprehensive Land Use Plan update process?*

In accordance with the City Code, the Plan Commission is charged with conducting a public hearing on updates to the Comprehensive Plan and forwarding recommendations to the City Council on the proposed updates. The process authorized by the City Council for the current update calls for a phased review, essentially chapter by chapter, or area by area. The intention is that toward the end of the process, all of the updated chapters will be integrated into a single digitally accessible document. The Plan Commission and public will have an opportunity to once more review all of the chapters at that time as part of the larger document.

In its final form, the updated Comprehensive Plan will begin with a reference and review of the previous Comprehensive Plan; what was achieved and in which aspects the City may have followed a different path than was envisioned in the 1998 Comprehensive Plan. The updated Plan will open with an explanation of how the Comprehensive Land Use Plan is intended to be used by the City Council, Boards, Commissions, property owners, developers, and City staff to guide not only development related decisions, but also budgetary, infrastructure, and broader policy decisions.

- *What is a Comprehensive Plan? Why does the Chapter not go into more detail on what can and what cannot be done on specific properties?*

The Comprehensive Plan is the guiding document with respect to land use and development and looks forward 5, 10, 20 years in an effort to establish a framework for important community decisions. The Comprehensive Land Use Plan does not mandate certain uses or establish requirements for individual developments. Instead, the Comprehensive Plan establishes a vision, identifies desired land uses, and identifies opportunities and challenges. In the case of the City of Lake Forest's Comprehensive Land Use Plan, there is a consistent focus throughout the Plan on preserving the community's distinctive character and quality of life through thoughtful development, redevelopment, and adaptive reuse. The Plan is intended to ensure that decisions are based on careful deliberation and focused on the *long term* interest of the *overall* community, rather than on short term trends, pressure from developers, or special agendas.

The current review and update of the Comprehensive Plan continues the City's long tradition of careful long term planning.

- *Why is the Comprehensive Plan being updated now and what is the process?*

At the Council's direction, an update to the City's Comprehensive Land Use Plan is underway. The Plan was last re-adopted in its entirety in 1998. Since that time, several updates have been made to various chapters of the Comprehensive Plan however the Plan, in its entirety has not been updated. In 2019, the chapters relating to the Waukegan Road/Settlers' Square Business District and the Route 60 Corridor were updated and approved by the City Council based on recommendations from the Plan Commission.

The update process was halted in 2020 due to the limitations on public gatherings and resumed in 2022 with a focus on the Central Business District. Once all of the land use chapters of the Comprehensive Plan are updated and approved by the City Council, as noted above, the chapters will be consolidated into a unified document which will be presented to the Plan Commission and the public for a final review before City Council consideration of adoption of the updated Plan in its entirety.

The update process offered numerous opportunities for public input and involvement through polls and a comment map on the project website, workshops, individual interviews, small group discussions, and public forums in addition to formal public hearings before the Plan Commission. At the Council's direction, an adhoc Working Group was formed early in the process to advise City staff and the City's consultants in the development of the draft chapter. The Working Group proved valuable in the development of the draft chapter.

- *How does the Central Business District Chapter, the process to date, and the level of detail, compare to the other chapters?*

The process that produced the draft updated Central Business District chapter now before the Commission for review was more expansive and far reaching than any of the previous processes. The level of detail in the Central Business District chapter as presented is also greater than in previous chapters reflecting the importance of this area to the overall community.

- *What were the goals for the Central Business District that were identified in the 1998 Comprehensive Land Use Plan and have they been achieved?*

The 1998 Comprehensive Plan lists the following goals for the Central Business District.

1. **To preserve and strengthen** the Central Business District as the primary commercial area, a transportation center, a hospitality center and a residential area for the City.
2. **To promote the vitality and convenience** of the Central Business District by encouraging a wide range and healthy mix of quality specialty retail and service businesses.
3. **To preserve the character** of historic Market Square. Market Square serves as a City center that establishes a strong positive identity and a sense of place for the City. All new development in the Central Business District should be compatible with the historic character.

There is consistency between the goals in the 1998 plan and those presented in the updated draft that is before the Plan Commission for consideration. (The chapter from the 1998 Comprehensive Land Use Plan on the Central Business District is included in the Commission's packet for reference.) The current draft chapter delves into the themes of preserving, strengthening and promoting the business district more deeply than the 1998 plan.

The goals stated in the 1998 Plan have substantially been met, but are ongoing, there is always more work to do around the themes of preservation, strengthening and promoting. In staff's opinion, the Central Business District today, is in a much stronger position than it was five, ten, and even 20 years ago. Substantial private investments have been made in the two most significant historic properties in the Central Business District, the Deer Path Inn and Market Square. Today, the District is more alive with restaurants recently opened by experienced restaurateurs with strong reputations. Residential developments near the Central Business District have been completed and are occupied by renters and owners all of whom are within walking distance to retail shops, restaurants, local offices, and service businesses. Although the retail market has changed significantly since 1998, Lake Forest is fortunate to have retained many specialty retail stores in and around Market Square.

Overall, yes, the goals of the 1998 Comprehensive Land Use Plan as it pertains to the Central Business District have been met. The strength of the District today puts the City in an enviable position to pro-actively plan for the future, building on strengths and addressing weaknesses.

Should the Historic District be expanded to include more or all of the Central Business District?

The East Lake Forest Local Historic District was created in 1998 when the City Council amended the Code to include, for the first time, a chapter devoted solely to historic preservation. The boundaries of the Local Historic District were based on the National Register District which existed prior to the City's adoption of Local Districts. The boundaries of the District were configured to protect and preserve the most significant historic properties.

There is a process detailed in the City Code for amending the boundaries of historic districts either by including additional properties or removing properties. The Working Group did not identify a need to expand the boundaries of the Historic District and there is no recommendation to do so in the draft chapter. However, the fact that the recommendation is not offered in the draft chapter does not prevent individuals, property owners, or others from bringing forward a petition for consideration of changes to the boundaries of the Historic District in the future.

The draft chapter does however recommend that design parameters be considered for areas likely to be the subject of future discussions. Design parameters can be put in place for areas or blocks *whether or not* they are located in an Historic District.

➤ *Does the Comprehensive Land Use Plan Circumvent the City's Review Processes?*

No, the Plan does not take the place of or circumvent the regulations and processes set forth in the City Code. The various Boards, Commissions, and the City Council have purview over different aspects of development. The City Council could choose to implement recommended actions in the Comprehensive Land Use Plan by directing special studies, pro-active planning, or the development of design/development parameters. The Council could direct development of conceptual plans or images which would provide information and direction that would be factored into the deliberations and decisions of the various reviewing bodies in the future.

The Comprehensive Land Use Plan is a framework to provide guidance for future decisions.

Staff Recommendation

Approve a motion forwarding the following recommendations to the City Council.

1. Approve an update to the City's Comprehensive Land Use Plan incorporating a new chapter relating to the Central Business District generally in conformance with the draft chapter presented at the June 14, 2023, Plan Commission meeting.
2. Identify the following as priorities for the next five years and direct staff to develop implementation steps and timelines.
 - *Infrastructure*
Place a focus on and invest in maintenance and upgrading of infrastructure in the Central Business District to support continued vitality and to encourage private investment in the District. (streets,

sidewalks, stormsewers, lighting, landscaping, public restrooms, accessibility improvements)

- *Bank Lane*
Establish a process, including the necessary studies and opportunities for public input, for developing a detailed plan for phased enhancements to the Bank Lane right of way from Vine Avenue to Wisconsin Avenue to create a distinctive, welcoming, and flexible walkable corridor.
- *Inner Ring*
Pro-actively plan for future development/redevelopment in this area.

Conduct studies including, but not limited to, traffic circulation and parking studies, document current conditions in the Core and Inner Ring through a model (digital or physical) that reflects building massing, the relationship of buildings to the street, pedestrian connections, green space, and surface parking lots to provide data for future planning.

Engage professionals who have familiarity with the history and character of the City's Central Business District and knowledge of comparable community to assist the community in developing concepts, images, and design/development parameters to guide property owners, developers, Boards, Commissions, and City Council in future decision-making impacting the Inner Ring.

Business District 60**2. CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT**

The primary goals for the Central Business District are:

- i) to preserve and strengthen the CBD as the primary commercial area, a transportation center, a hospitality center and a residential area for the City.
- ii) to promote the vitality and convenience of the CBD by encouraging a wide range and healthy mix of quality specialty retail and service businesses.
- ii) to preserve the character of historic Market Square. Market Square serves as a City center that establishes a strong positive identity and a sense of place for the City. All new development in the CBD should be compatible with its historic character.

The Central Business District (CBD) is the area encompassed by Franklin Street on the north, Vine Avenue on the south, Oakwood Avenue on the west, and the Union Pacific Railway Station on the east. It also includes the small commercial area located generally around Thomas Place and fronting Western Avenue, and the area located east of McKinley Road, between Westminster on the north and Deerpath on the south, which has office zoning and is partly developed as such.

The CBD is surrounded by sound residential neighborhoods, and an expansion of the above stated CBD boundaries is not expected to be necessary or considered desirable in the foreseeable future. Please refer to Figure 7.2 which illustrates the landuse development pattern for CBD.

The Comprehensive Plan makes the following recommendations for the CBD:

- i) The City, Chamber of Commerce, merchants and property owners should continue their partnership efforts to maximize the district's assets and to overcome development constraints. This would include programs to attract and retain desired new businesses to achieve the above stated goals for the CBD.





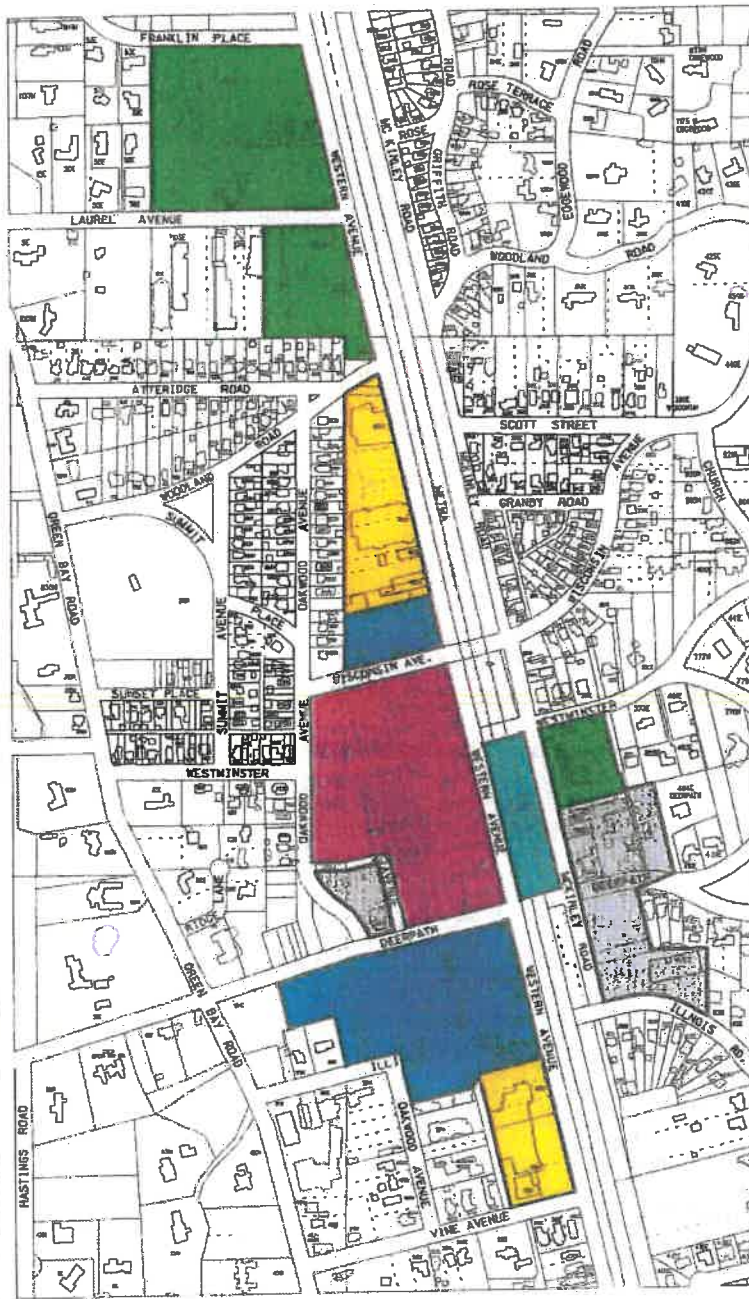
March 1998

- ii) In the event that the existing under developed and vacant parcels are considered for development, the redevelopment intent should be to strengthen the mixed use, pedestrian oriented, and historical character of the CBD. For instance, the redevelopment of the Blanchard, Knausz and the City-owned Municipal Services (if relocated) properties may include a mix for multi-family residential, and business uses. Other uses might be permitted subject to a further study of the area. (Refer to the Residential Component for additional information.)
- iii) Streetscape improvement programs should be initiated to make the area outside of Market Square more pedestrian friendly. A strong streetscape plan should be developed to link the commercial center around Thomas Place with the CBD. In addition, design improvements to the elevations of the commercial buildings near Thomas Place should be encouraged. Bank Lane should be improved with landscaping and pedestrian amenities, especially in the sections south of Deerpath to Vine Avenue, and north of Westminster to Wisconsin Avenue. This would improve the linkage between the north and south sections of the CBD and also encourage redevelopment of adjacent under utilized properties.
- iv) The Plan encourages the expansion of the primary retail area north of Deerpath to Wisconsin Avenue, and ultimately in a westerly direction to Oakwood Avenue, if there is a demand for additional retail. This expansion should address the need for creating alternative parking which could include converting the municipal parking lots into mixed use developments with parking structures. The Plan also encourages additional residential development in the CBD on the second floor above retail/office uses. The Zoning Ordinance and the Construction Code should be amended, if required, to help achieve these objectives.
- v) The U.S. Postal Service should be encouraged to relocate to an appropriate alternative site for its distribution and truck parking activities. However, a customer service facility should remain in the CBD.

- vi) The intersection at Deerpath and Western Avenue should be monitored and improved to insure enhanced traffic mobility and safety. (Refer to the Transportation Component.)
- vii) One or more architecturally compatible parking structure could be provided, if required, in the future. These parking structures may be incorporated into mixed use developments with retail office, residential, or civic uses.

¹ Teska Associates Inc., Making a Good Thing Better: A Strategic Plan for Enhancing the Business District of Lake Forest, Prepared for the Lake Forest Chamber of Commerce and the City of Lake Forest; December 1996

**FIGURE 7.2
CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT
DEVELOPMENT CONCEPT**



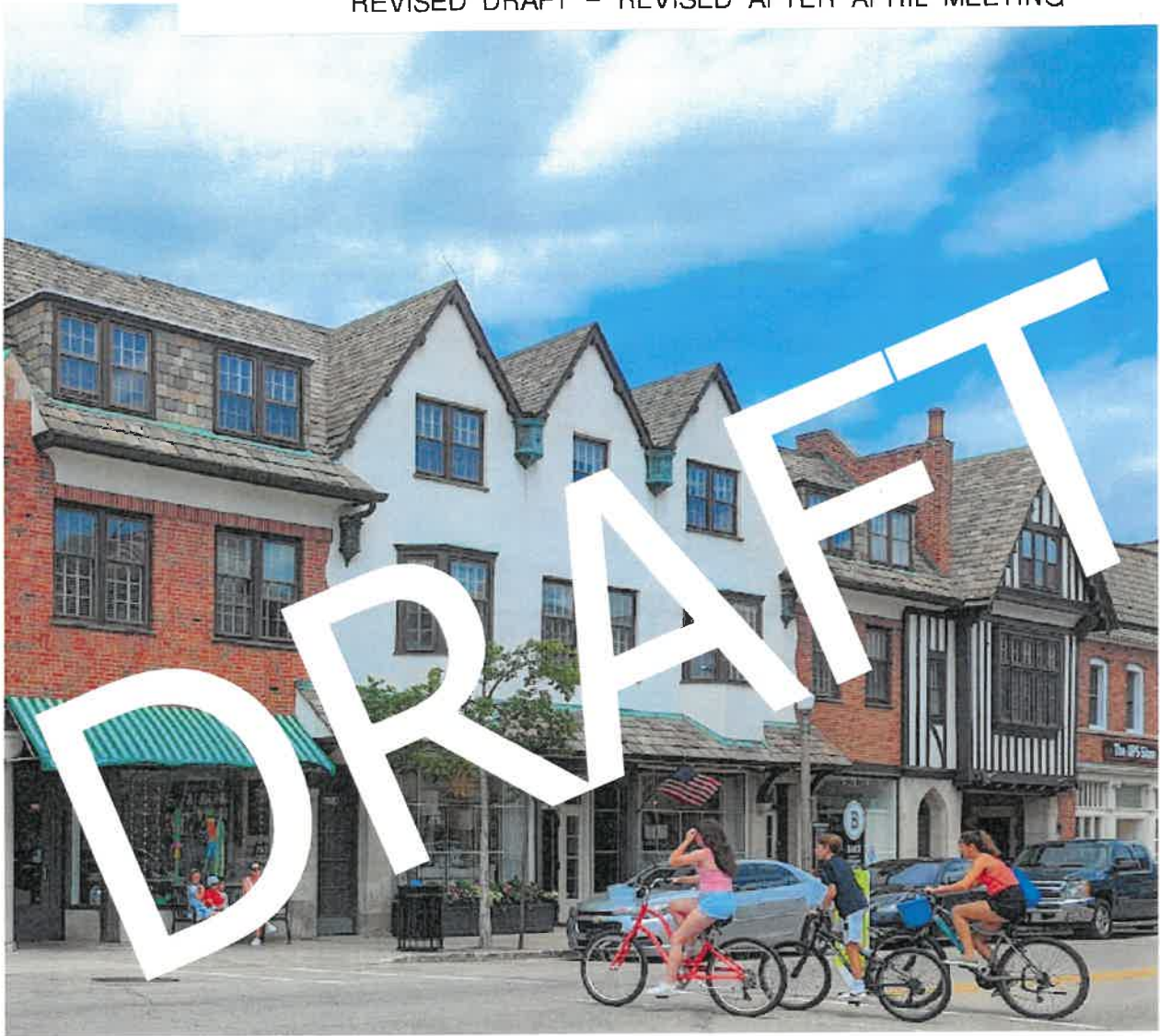
December, 1997

Scale: 1" = 750 "

- MULTI-FAMILY RESIDENTIAL/COMMERCIAL MIX (commercial is restricted to Western Avenue frontage)
- CONVENIENCE BUSINESS
- PRIMARY RETAIL AND PEDESTRIAN AREA
- METRA STATION
- COMMUNITY USES
- SUPPORTING MIXED USES

**Revised Draft – Revised After April Meeting
Presented for Plan Commission Consideration and Action**

REVISED DRAFT – REVISED AFTER APRIL MEETING



DRAFT FOR PLAN COMMISSION & PUBLIC REVIEW • JUNE 2023

THE CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT

• Looking Forward •

FOR INCORPORATION INTO THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

The background of the page is a photograph of a park. On the left, a tall flagpole with an American flag stands in front of a brick building. To the right, there are large, leafy trees. The foreground is a green lawn.

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THE CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT

The City of Lake Forest's Central Business District (CBD) is one of the community's many treasures.

INTRODUCTION

The Central Business District serves the Lake Forest community by providing retail, restaurants, service businesses, office space, public parking, and outdoor gathering spaces for day to day activity as well as community events. Historically, the CBD has also included residential units above first floor retail and service businesses. Over time, most of the original residential units in the CBD have been adapted to office space creating less of a 24/7 environment.

This Chapter of the Comprehensive Plan is being updated at a unique time, as the community and nation are coming out of the Covid pandemic. During the 2020-2022 pandemic, Lake Forest experienced a peak in home sales with many families and individuals accelerating moves from the City of Chicago to the suburbs.

Lake Forest's tree lined streets, welcoming neighborhoods, preserved open spaces, excellent and varied school options, safe environment and distinctive and welcoming Central Business District are just a few of the reasons people chose to make Lake Forest their home during this unprecedented time.

Established restaurants followed their customers to Lake Forest attracting other new businesses and bringing in patrons from surrounding communities. This chapter update occurs at an opportune time to pause, appreciate what the community has in the CBD, assess its strengths and weaknesses, and look forward. Strategies for preserving, protecting, enhancing and supporting the CBD in the future are detailed in this chapter.

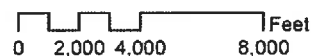
LOCATION MAP

Lake Forest's Central Business District (CBD) is identified within the context of the City's boundaries on the map below. The CBD is linear, extending along the west side of Western Avenue, parallel to the Metra Union Pacific North (UP_N) commuter rail line. This chapter does not recommend any change in the current geographic limits of the Central Business District.



- Lake Forest City Boundary
 Lake Forest Central Business District

The Lake Forest Central Business District extends along Western Avenue to the north and south of Deerpath, and a few blocks west of Western Avenue along key east/west corridors.



Insert Map • Label Key Points of Interest & Pair with Photos

(Market Square, Metra Station, Deerpath Inn, Gorton, Greensward, North and South Alley, etc.)

CBD Subarea #1

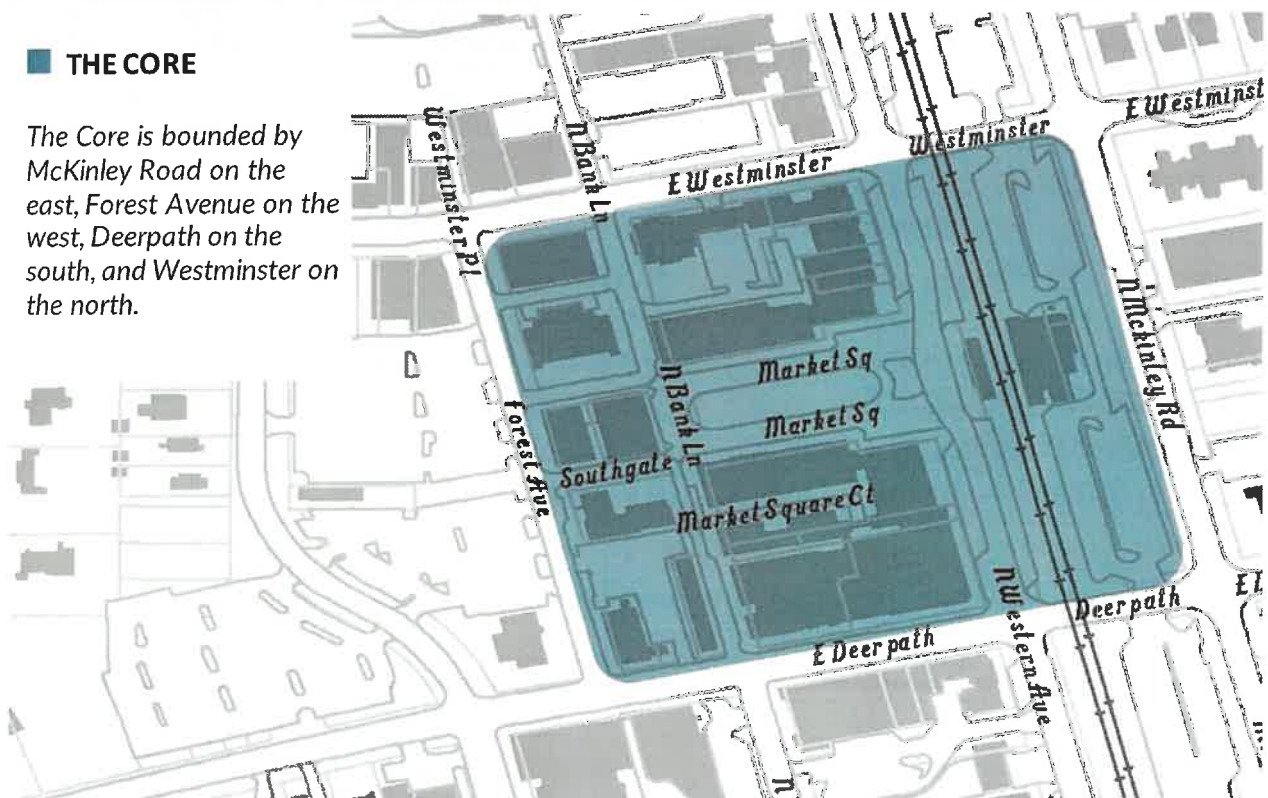
The Core: A Unique Experience

Lake Forest's iconic Market Square, the historically significant buildings, the Greensward, courtyards, and the predominance of ground floor retail businesses make up the heart of Lake Forest's Central Business District. Market Square is known as the first planned shopping center in the United States. The buildings that comprise Market Square are historically and architecturally significant, designed by Howard Van Doren Shaw. Market Square was created as a result of a community vision, community initiative, and community investment.



THE CORE

The Core is bounded by McKinley Road on the east, Forest Avenue on the west, Deerpath on the south, and Westminster on the north.



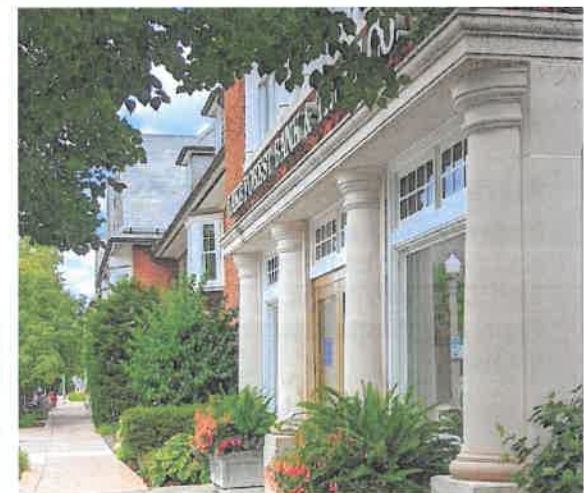
CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT SUBAREAS

In 1913 Lake Forest Improvement Trustees, comprised of prominent local residents, acquired 400 feet of frontage along Western Avenue and charged architect and local historian Howard Van Doren Shaw with developing a plan to transform Lake Forest's core. The result of the visionary plan and the public/ private partnership, was a business district that serves as a model, even today, for communities across the Country. Most other buildings in the Core are also important and contribute to the distinctive character of the Central Business District.

The "Core" subarea has historically been dominated by first floor retail and storefront windows that invite shoppers in and activate the streetscape. Today, more service businesses are interspersed among the retail stores: banks, real estate offices, shipping services, and personal care salons of various types. The second-floor spaces in the subarea support small to medium size office uses. Several distinctive outdoor spaces for passive and active enjoyment are located in the Core. The Greensward in Market Square, the north and south Market Square Courtyards, the dining patio on Southgate, and the Lake Forest Bank and Trust Garden offer outdoor areas to eat, gather, sit, stroll, and enjoy community events.

Preservation, restoration, and maintenance are of the utmost importance in the Core. Opportunities for adaptive reuse of buildings exist, for example the U.S. Post Office building and site if it becomes available in the future.

(Opportunity Areas are addressed later in this chapter.)



CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT SUBAREAS

The Inner Ring Subarea supports a mix of businesses including retail, restaurants, service businesses, medical and dental offices and other professional offices. This area also includes large expanses of City owned surface parking lots which provide customer and employee parking to support businesses and community activities.



The Inner Ring subarea offers the greatest opportunity for development and redevelopment in the CBD including the adaptive reuse of existing important buildings and the potential for redevelopment of sites that are underutilized and do not contribute significantly to the character of the CBD, as well the opportunity to re-think how the City owned surface lots can best serve and support the CBD in a manner consistent with the desired overall character. Parking is critical to support a vibrant CBD and can be provided in a more attractive manner than occurs today, in combination with providing opportunities for other desired uses.



CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT SUBAREAS

CBD Subarea #3

Neighborhood Business: Smaller Scale/Personal & Professional Services

Beyond the Core and Inner Ring, the Central Business District extends in a linear fashion, primarily along Western Avenue. These Neighborhood Business nodes, include a mix of commercial uses, service businesses, and professional offices that are smaller in scale and lower in density than those found in the Core and Inner Ring subareas.

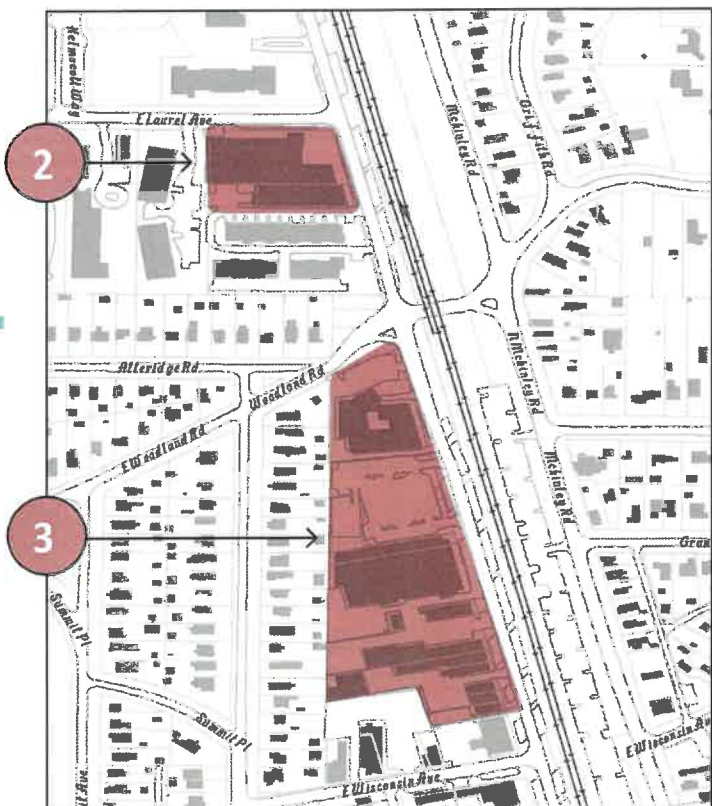
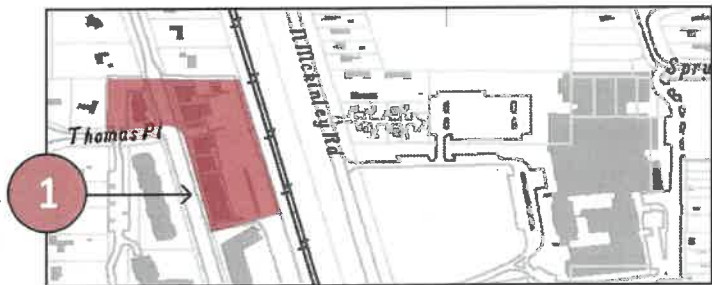
NEIGHBORHOOD BUSINESS

SUBAREA 1: Western Avenue between Franklin Place and Thomas Place

SUBAREA 2: Corner of Western Avenue and Laurel Avenue

SUBAREA 3: Western Avenue north of Wisconsin Avenue to Woodland Road

SUBAREA 4: Western Avenue south of Illinois Road to Vine Avenue, and west to Bank Lane

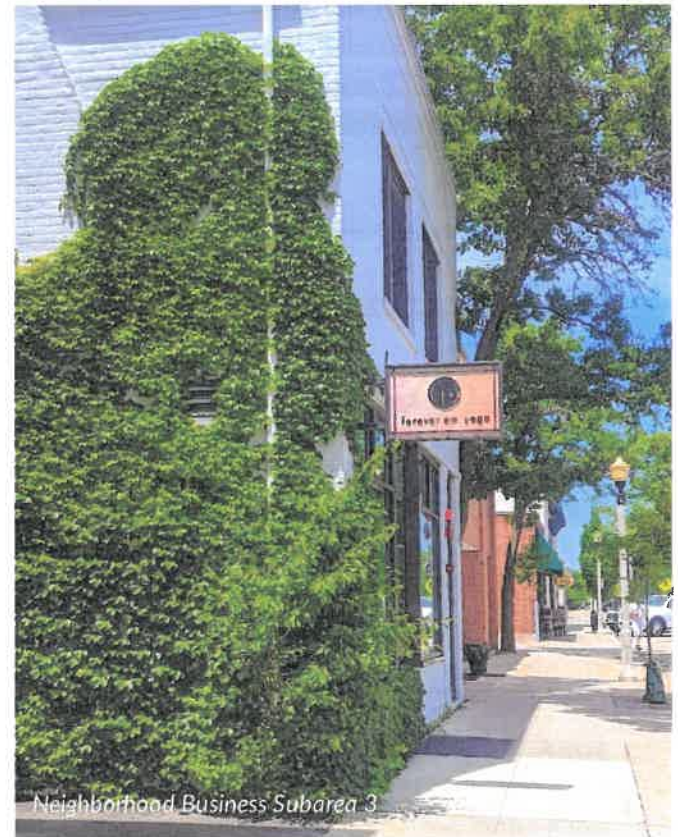


CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT SUBAREAS

The Neighborhood Business subarea, more so than the Inner Ring, offers businesses that meet every day needs including: grocery and drug stores, dry cleaners, restaurants, salons, and professional services. This subarea is adjacent to a variety of residential housing types, single family homes as well as multi-family buildings. Development in the Neighborhood Business area is less intense with many of the buildings being single use.

At the far north and south ends of the subarea, buildings support a mix of uses with office and residential located above ground-floor commercial. A limited number of businesses have on-site parking lots, with the majority relying on street parking. Public parking lots located on the east side of the railroad tracks are available to support off-site parking for employees and valet services. Access to the remote parking lots is available by way of underpasses at Woodland and Illinois Roads and at-grade crossings at Westminster and

Photos: The Neighborhood Business Subarea includes a range of businesses and service types to meet every day needs. Some buildings single-story / single-use structures, whereas others include upper story residential units.





CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT **VISION**

"Looking forward, the vision for Lake Forest's Central Business District is not to change it into something different, something more akin to business districts in other communities, but instead, to enhance and preserve the historic character and architecturally significant buildings and spaces, and to maintain an environment in which businesses thrive and a place residents and visitors are drawn to again and again, for day to day needs, a special night out, to find that one of a kind gift, and to celebrate the community."

In other words, the vision is to build upon strengths, address weaknesses and create long term community benefit from opportunities.

The configuration and size of the overall CBD is well suited to meet the needs of the community. Neither expansion, nor a reduction in the CBD is recommended in this chapter.

The neighborhoods surrounding and adjacent to the District should be preserved and their unique character protected. Located within easy walking distance to the shops, eateries, gathering spaces, and services offered by the CBD, these neighborhoods are an important part of the community fabric.

The proximity of residential neighborhoods to the CBD provides mutual benefits to both residents and businesses; residents enjoy quick access to local shops and restaurants while businesses benefit from a nearby customer base. It is also recognized that these residential neighborhoods experience impacts by virtue of their proximity to the CBD.

This chapter acknowledges these impacts, the importance of synergy and balance between adjacent uses, and offers recommendations on how to create appropriate transitions between the business district and surrounding residential areas.

CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT

GOALS & STRATEGIES

*Goal 1: Foster an active, resilient and vibrant mix of uses by protecting and leveraging the Central Business District's **strengths***

The CBD exemplifies Lake Forest, the quality, the character, the history, the vitality, the distinctiveness, the community. Buildings, streetscapes, and public spaces contribute to the special experience and fond memory of being in Lake Forest. The CBD has something for everyone and is active day, evening, winter and summer. A balance of uses in a pleasing environment is maintained with a focus on attracting not only Lake Forest residents, but also residents of surrounding communities, and visitors from near and far. The mix of uses is not static and reflects changes in markets, technologies, and consumer behaviors. The character, available parking, well maintained infrastructure, development parameters that set clear expectations, and an active customer base all serve to attract continued private investment, encourage adaptive reuse of important buildings, and incent redevelopment of appropriate sites in a manner that aligns with and enhances the character of the CBD.

*Goal 2 · Reinforce a distinct, cohesive and charming sense of place by preserving and strengthening **community character***

The ever-evolving CBD maintains and builds upon the features that make it resilient, timeless, and distinctive; a diversity of building styles, quality building materials, landscaped streetscapes and gathering areas, surprises around every corner, spaces that evoke a sense of place, pedestrian amenities, ease of access, a strong mix of commercial uses, and community events that align with and support businesses. The historic and more contemporary buildings and spaces share common themes and create a unified whole that is welcoming, invites exploration, and contributes to the unique character of the district.

*Goal 3 · Enhance **Bank Lane** as unique and charming pedestrian corridor to create catalyst for future enhancements in the CBD*

Bank Lane is a narrow, north-south inviting pedestrian connecting areas north and south with the Core, a comfortable and memorable experience. Located one block west of Western Avenue, the limited length street extends from Vine Avenue north to Wisconsin Avenue, intersecting with Market Square, spanning six blocks. It's location and orientation provides connectivity and creates synergy between different uses, the various east-west street corridors and public spaces. The pedestrian-scaled streetscape, lighting and amenities provide an inviting setting for strolling, shopping, indoor and outdoor dining and seasonal programming. Temporary street closures along Bank Lane provide one of a kind spaces for dining and festivities.

CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT GOALS

***Goal 4** · Meet the needs of existing and future development by maintaining and enhancing **infrastructure** - parking, streets, sidewalks, stormwater management, lighting, signage, and integrated technologies*

The CBD is safe, accessible, convenient, and inviting in a way that draws users to businesses and public events throughout the day and year. The CBD is neighbor-friendly, reliably serving the needs of Lake Forest residents while attracting visitors from a larger market area and afar. The continued investment in infrastructure maintenance, innovation, upgrades and enhancement by the City contributes to the resilient, sustainable and vibrant nature of the CBD while encouraging ongoing investment by private property and business owners.

Goal 5** · Provide high-quality living, working and business climates by supporting and fostering strong **public/private partnerships

The City's participation in maintaining and enhancing infrastructure and public places under its control demonstrates the need for and importance of an ongoing partnership with private property and business owners. The community has a long tradition of public/private partnerships, there is a shared and vested interest in maintaining and enhancing property values, creating a profitable business climate, and providing high-quality living and working opportunities. Consideration is given on an ongoing basis to opportunities for public/ private partnerships, building on the community's long and successful tradition.



CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT **RECOMMENDED ACTIONS**

Achieving Our Vision & Goals

The Comprehensive Plan is not a regulatory document. Instead, it articulates a vision and sets out goals and recommends actions to proactively shape the future and arrive at that vision. It looks forward while being informed by the past.

- *This plan is intended to be used by Boards, Commissions, and the City Council as a tool and guide in making decisions about development, adaptive reuse, preservation, investment in infrastructure, policies, and regulations.*
- *This plan is intended to set realistic expectations for property owners, investors, developers, and residents and to avoid surprises.*
- *The plan is intended to encourage creative ideas and new concepts and to position the City well to adapt in the future always with an eye toward preserving the distinctive character of the CBD.*
- *The tradition of careful planning has served Lake Forest well, and that tradition should continue.*

1 • Protect & Leverage Strengths

This first set of recommendations is focused on recognizing and re-enforcing past successes, ideas, initiatives and actions that have served the CBD and community well over time. Further, “Building on Strengths” means identifying, preserving, protecting, and as necessary, finding new uses for historically and architecturally significant buildings.

1.1: Support a Mix of Local & National Businesses

Support, encourage and welcome a mix of retail, restaurant entertainment, and service uses, both locally based businesses and national brands, in the Core.

1.2: Focus Specialty Retail in the Core

Recognize changes in the retail market make it unrealistic to expect that retail alone will sustain the CBD. To the extent possible, focus specialty retail in the Core to draw shoppers and create synergy that is mutually beneficial to businesses.

PHOTO PLACEHOLDER

1.3: Promote Year-Round Activity

Support and encourage businesses that promote daytime, evening, and year-round foot-traffic.

1.4: Prioritize Infrastructure Investments

Continually plan for and prioritize public investments in infrastructure including, but not limited to, accessible parking, stormwater management, landscaping, broadband and smart infrastructure, wayfinding signage, electric vehicle charging stations, lighting, and ongoing maintenance and upgrades of City rights-of-way.

PHOTO PLACEHOLDER

1.5: Facilitate Business Attraction & Retention

Review and update the Zoning Code on an ongoing basis to facilitate attraction and retention of desired uses, restaurants, entertainment, retail and service businesses. Consider ways the City can assist in overcoming obstacles by thinking creatively about support services such as shared loading zones, nearby and remote parking facilities, use of rights-of-way for outdoor dining, and recycling/trash areas.

PHOTO PLACEHOLDER

CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

1.6: Address Public Parking & Wayfinding

Re-think public parking locations and management with the goal of making parking more convenient, comfortable, safe, easy to find and intuitive to navigate by car and foot. Minimize enforcement costs and user confusion via available technology.

1.7: Enhance Pedestrian Experience

Enhance the pedestrian experience via wider walkways, walkable alleys, enhanced landscaping, varied/safe hardscapes, improved sightlines at crosswalks, benches, lighting, spaces to gather, and public art recognizing that buildings have historically served as distinctive public art in the Core.

1.8: Support Inner Ring Residential

Encourage residential uses of various types and price points especially in the Inner Ring to support the Core, and beyond, and to increase pedestrian activity and vitality throughout the day and evening hours, seven days a week, all year round.

1.9: Encourage Adaptive Reuse

Encourage business/property owners to restore and maintain historically significant buildings and adaptively reuse/upgrade buildings to accommodate a variety of uses including, but not limited to residential, retail, restaurants, entertainment venues, and offices.

1.10: Support Upper Story Multi-Family Residential

Support multi-family residential as an appropriate adaptive reuse of upper floors in buildings in the CBD, particularly in the Inner Ring.

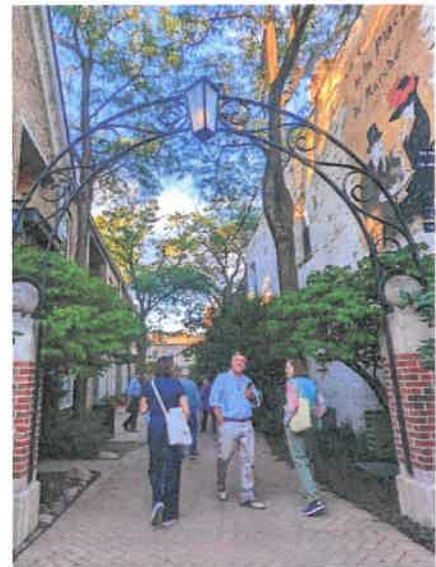
1.11: Recognize Financial Feasibility

Recognize that adaptive reuse projects must be financially feasible in the eyes of developers and lenders; be flexible, collaborative, and open minded.

1.12: Market Trends & Sustainability

Support adaptive reuse of existing buildings as a sustainable approach to responding to changing market trends and demands.

PHOTO PLACEHOLDER



1.13: Identify Development Parameters

Preserve and enhance the unique character of the CBD by identifying elements that define the character of specific areas of the CBD and specific blocks.

1.14: Ensure Design Adaptability

Assure that new buildings are designed consistent with applicable standards and development parameters and built with future adaptability and reuse in mind. Avoid construction of new, single purpose buildings that cannot reasonably accommodate different uses over time.

1.15 Recognize Building Significance

Acknowledge that not every building in the CBD is significant enough to demand adaptive reuse and support appropriate redevelopment, consistent with established parameters, in those cases. Support appropriate redevelopment of properties in cases where existing buildings do not contribute positively to the character of the CBD. The 17 standards should be adhered to for properties within the historic district and any applicable design guidelines should be followed for other sites

1.16: Enhance Predictability

Provide an efficient and predictable review process for development projects that closely adhere to the 17 Standards applicable to properties within the Historic District, achieve the vision and goals established in this document, and align with regulations and parameters established by the City.

2 • Preserve & Strengthen Community Character

Identifying character defining elements and establishing Development Parameters to provide guidance to property owners, developers and stakeholders is important. The following recommendations are intended to provide a starting point for more in-depth study and discussion.

2.1 Undertake Collaborative Process

The process to develop Development Parameters and to articulate defining character elements should involve a variety of stakeholders, invite many perspectives, and utilize creative means, including, but not limited to design charrettes, to provide guidance *prior* to the development of proposals for specific sites. The goal is to set realistic expectations, balance various interests, and preserve and enhance the unique character and long term vitality of the CBD.

Development Parameters should, at a minimum, address the following:

2.1A: Streetscape Activation

Design buildings and outdoor spaces that attract uses that activate and enhance the streetscape and sidewalk.

2.1B: Design Elements

Use setbacks, human-scale design elements, architectural styles and details that relate to significant surrounding buildings and the established streetscape character.

2.1C: Comfortable Spaces

Incorporate natural exterior materials, nooks and crannies for gathering and pausing, high quality landscaping and lighting at appropriate levels to balance safety with low levels of illumination found in the community.

2.1D: Distinguished Buildings

Recognize that buildings themselves, i.e. their architectural styles, materials, massing, height, orientation, etc., have served the community well as distinguishing artful elements and design and carry on that tradition.

2.1E: Development Parameters

Once developed, adopt Development Parameters through a public process to proactively set realistic expectations and assist property owners, developers, architects, contractors, and designers in the renovation or construction of buildings in a manner compatible with the architectural heritage and character of Lake Forest's CBD.

3 • Enhance & Connect Bank Lane

Bank Lane is a narrow, limited-length street that offers unique experiences, interest and opportunity for connectivity between key elements of the CBD. The recommendations that follow offer a path toward strengthening Bank Lane as a Pedestrian Corridor. Further study should be conducted as concepts are explored to assess the impacts of proposed changes including, but not limited to impacts, positive or negative, on adjacent businesses and properties, traffic circulation, and pedestrian comfort and safety.



insert aerial map of Bank Lane



■ 3.1 Bank Lane Far South - Vine Avenue to Illinois Road

As Bank Lane extends from Vine Avenue to Illinois Road, the west side is developed with multi-family residential buildings and the east side is developed with the service side (rear) of commercial buildings that front on Western Avenue. This service oriented portion of Bank Lane is visually connected with the historic Deer Path Inn at Illinois Road.

Existing Photos: Looking South on Bank Lane to Vine Avenue



3.1-A: Consider benefits and challenges to making this block of Bank Lane one-way.

3.1-B: Consider ways to beautify the service corridor.

3.1-C: Require uses to maintain enclosed trash areas, fences, landscaping and buildings at a consistent level recognizing the adjacent residential development.

3.1-D: Ensure commercial lighting is sensitive to adjacent residential, properly shielded, directed downward, and the minimum needed for safety and security.

3.1-E: Recognize this block serves important functions for businesses and the Deer Path Inn.

3.1-F: Encourage property owners and utility companies, as opportunities present, to underground utilities.

3.1-G: Require new development on east side to provide appropriate transitions from commercial uses fronting on Western Avenue to multi-family residential uses on west side.

■ 3.2 Bank Lane South · Illinois Road to Deerpath

Bank Lane provides an important link between Illinois Road and Deerpath and offers opportunities to provide a unique, inviting and memorable pedestrian connection between the Deer Path Inn and Market Square and the larger CBD creating synergy between hospitality, restaurant, retail, and residential uses.

Existing Photo: Looking South to Illinois Road



3.2-A: Encourage and support redevelopment of underutilized properties with a mix of uses including multi-family residential and restaurants.

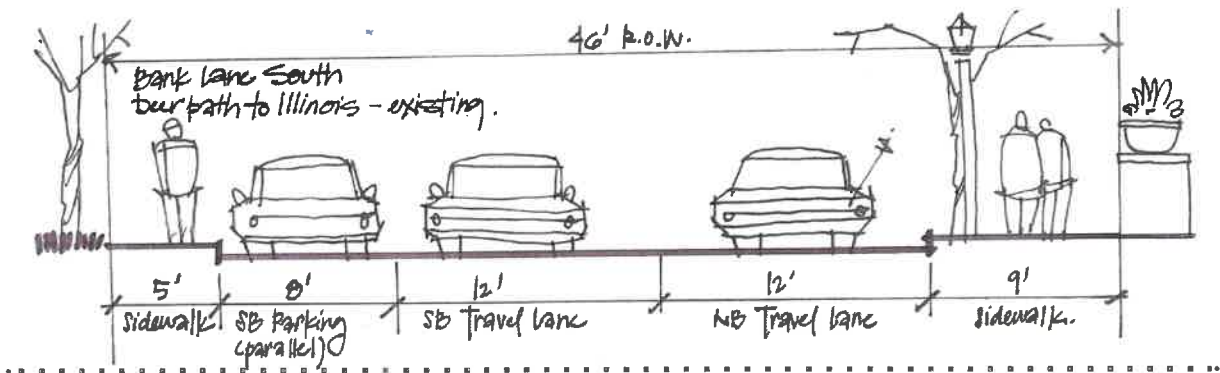
3.2-B: Require new developments to include pedestrian amenities such as wide sidewalks, gathering spaces, benches, outdoor dining areas, green streetscapes, human scaled first floor building facades, well placed and marked cross walks, and pedestrian friendly, subtle but safe, lighting.

3.2-C: Consider making Bank Lane one way south from Deerpath to minimize congestion on Deerpath by avoiding left turn movements and to allow the travel lane on Bank Lane to be narrowed reducing vehicle speeds and providing additional opportunities for on street parking. Undertake the necessary traffic and circulation studies to evaluate feasibility and pros and cons of this concept.

Bank Lane South - Illinois to Deerpath

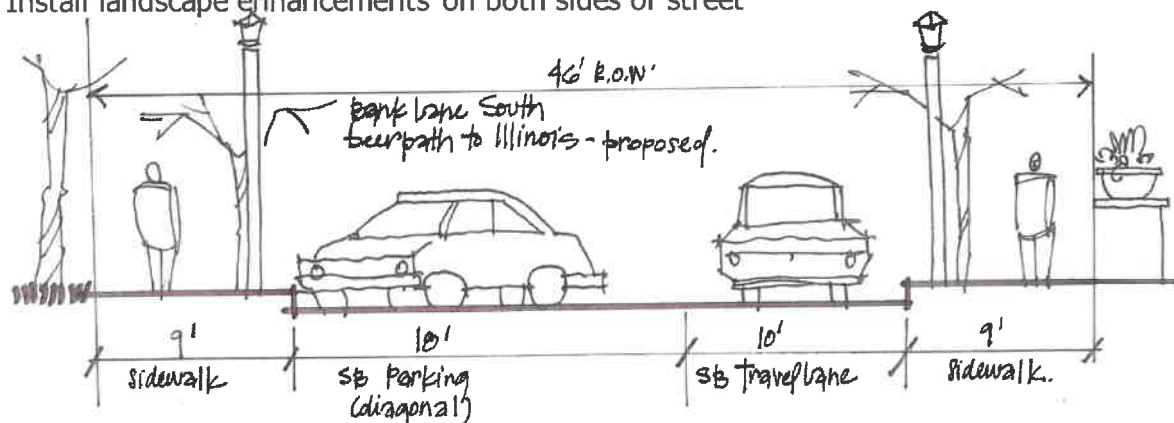
Existing Conditions - OVERVIEW OF CONSTRAINTS

- Two-way traffic / travel lanes limit pedestrian walkway
- Very narrow 5 foot sidewalk on west-side
- No pedestrian scaled lighting on west side
- No tree grate / tree on west side
- West side parallel parking does not provide many stalls



Proposed Concept - OVERVIEW OF IMPROVEMENTS

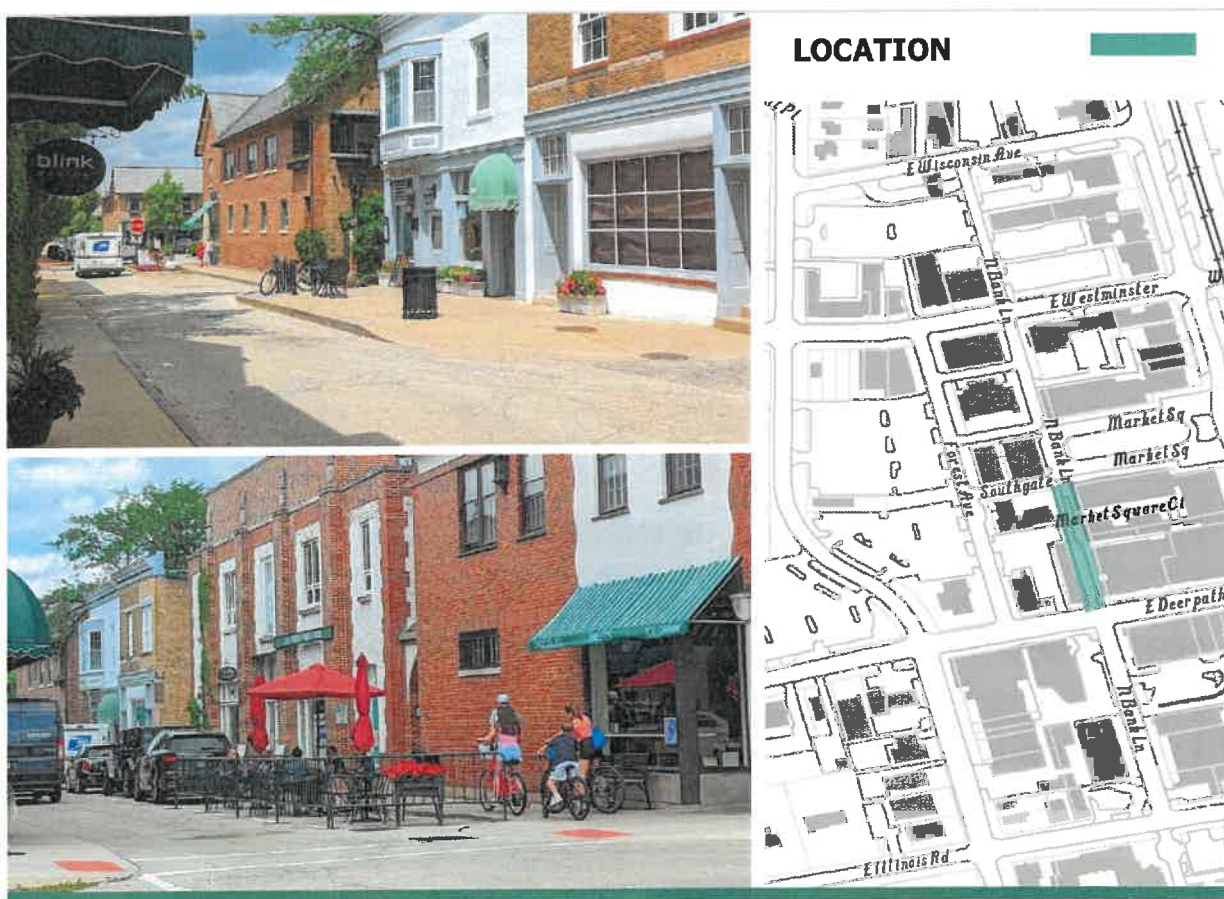
- Support redevelopment of underutilized properties
- Encourage mix of uses and multi-family residential
- Provide the ability to close the entire block for community events
- Convert to one-way southbound from Deerpath to minimize congestion
- Convert west side parallel parking to diagonal parking to increase on street parking
- Require pedestrian amenities as redevelopment occurs
- Widen sidewalks from 5 feet to 9 feet
- Add interest and character defining elements
- Install pedestrian scaled lighting on both sides of street
- Install landscape enhancements on both sides of street



■ 3.3 Bank Lane Core • Deerpath to Market Square

Bank Lane from Deerpath to Market Square is one-way north with a single travel lane. It is a unique and interesting space, alley-like with adjacent outdoor courtyards and dining spaces as one approaches Market Square. What had once been a service road behind the buildings facing Western Avenue has evolved into a very special sub-area. Unique businesses fill nooks and crannies, inviting exploration, and respite from the active business district experience and nearby more heavily travelled streets.

Existing Photos: Looking North to Market Square



3.3-A: Pedestrian Experience • Place a priority on pedestrian comfort and experience by considering improvements that support walkability over vehicle use recognizing there are first floor retail businesses that rely on visibility and the limited parking available on the street.

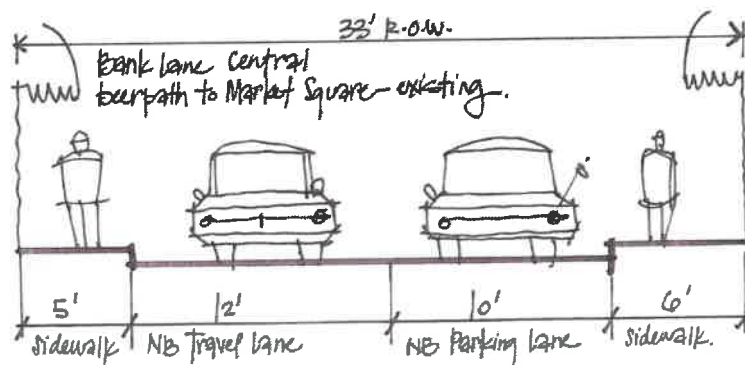
3.3-B: Parking • Recognize the need for parking to support retail businesses and restaurants and any future uses, new or expanded, that may locate in the CBD including multi-family residential.

3.3-C: Events • Continue to use this block of Bank Lane for special events, allowing short term closure to vehicles while drawing increased pedestrian travel to the area for business exposure.

Bank Lane Core - Deerpath to Market Square

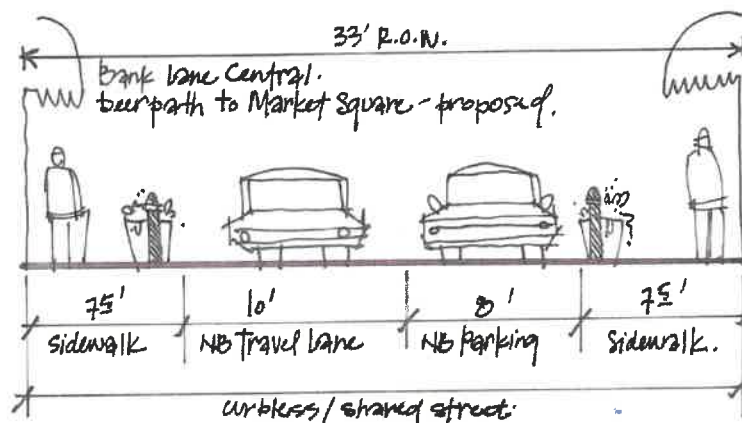
Existing Conditions - OVERVIEW OF CONSTRAINTS

- One-way north-bound travel lane
- North-bound parallel parking on east side of street
- Very narrow 5 ft sidewalk on west-side, 6 ft on east side
- Narrow sidewalk limits landscape planters and amenities



Proposed Concept - OVERVIEW OF IMPROVEMENTS

- Prioritize pedestrian comfort, experience and walkability
- Convert to curbless street; continue to use for special events/short term closures
- Widen sidewalks to 7.5 feet (reduce width of travel / parking lanes)
- Install bollards to define pedestrian zone
- Install planters, lighting, and pedestrian amenities



■ 3.4 Bank Lane North · Market Square to Wisconsin Avenue

Bank Lane from Market Square north to its terminus at Wisconsin Avenue continues as a narrow, single lane one-way north street with narrow sidewalks. Significant opportunities exist to enhance this portion of Bank Lane and encourage pedestrian activity between restaurants and businesses between Market Square and Wisconsin Avenue, including on Westminster.

Existing Photo: Looking North from Bank Lane to Westminster



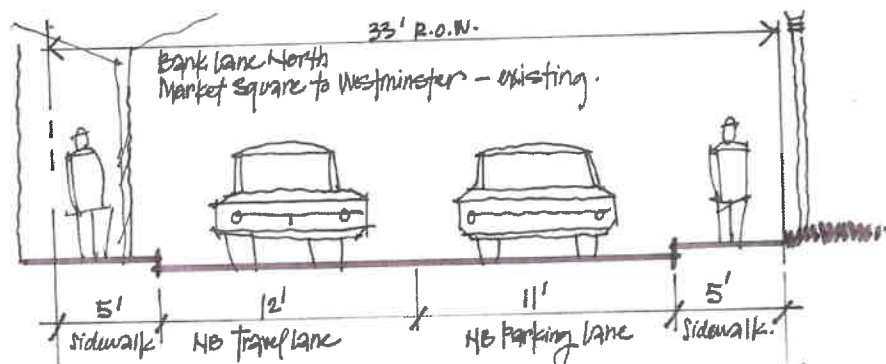
3.4-A: Adaptive Reuse Opportunities · Recognize that adaptive reuse and development opportunities exist along this stretch of Bank Lane including the Post Office, activating Market Square's North Courtyard, upgrading or replacing some underutilized buildings, and the potential for future development of portions of existing parking lots.

3.4-B: Pedestrian Experience · Encourage new development / redevelopment to give priority to pedestrian amenities to create a distinctive and active Bank Lane pedestrian link from Illinois Road to Wisconsin Avenue, a corridor of restaurants, outdoor spaces, and a favorite place for an evening stroll.

Bank Lane Core · Market Square to Wisconsin Avenue

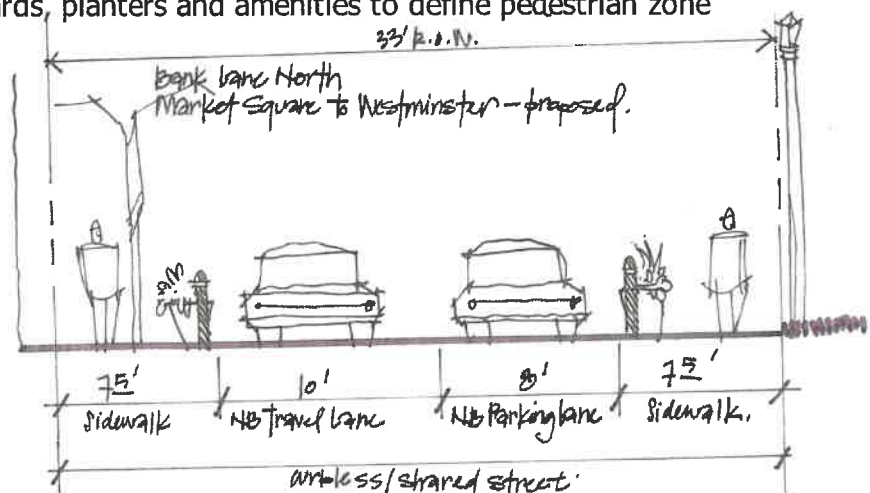
Existing Conditions - OVERVIEW OF CONSTRAINTS

- One-way north-bound travel lane
- North-bound parallel parking on east side of street
- Narrow 5 ft sidewalks
- No landscape planters or amenities in public r.o.w



Proposed Concept - OVERVIEW OF IMPROVEMENTS

- Recognize adaptive reuse and development opportunities
- Prioritize pedestrian experience
- Create a distinctive and active Bank Lane to draw people to the north
- Convert to curbless street (no curb, at grade)
- Widen sidewalks to 7.5 feet (reduce width of travel / parking lanes)
- Install bollards, planters and amenities to define pedestrian zone



4 • Maintain & Enhance Infrastructure

The City-owned surface parking lots cover more than 4 acres of land in the CBD. They serve an important role in providing access to and supporting CBD vitality and represent a significant opportunity to serve as a potential catalyst for future redevelopment within the Inner Ring.

Parking is essential to sustain businesses in the CBD. Surface lots and structures must be planned, designed and managed thoughtfully to meet the needs of varying users, and accommodate changes over time, while providing safe, intuitive access. Given that the historic and established CBD Core is entirely built-out, proactive planning and efficient utilization of parking areas and potential redevelopment sites within the Inner Ring is critical. The surface parking lots owned by the City could, if developed at the proper scale and in a manner consistent with the character of the CBD with a mix of uses such as a variety of housing types, limited retail space, quality restaurant opportunities, outdoor gathering areas, and parking with limited visibility from the streetscape, enhance and support long term, sustainable vibrancy in the CBD. The recommendations that follow take into account these cross-cutting benefits and opportunities.

4.1: Intuitive Parking & Business Success

Recognize that easy to use parking, in the right locations, offered in a welcoming manner with clear signage and wayfinding is critical to the success of existing businesses and essential in attracting new businesses.

4.2: Planned Improvements & Locations

Plan for parking improvements in various locations to support businesses in the Core and Inner Ring, which historically have minimal, if any, onsite parking.

4.3: Pedestrian Connections & Amenities

Enhance pedestrian connections to parking through landscaping, appropriate signage, and well maintained and lighted walkways including under viaducts.



4.4: Parking Availability

Ensure that adequate parking on site or off site is planned for and provided when considering new development, redevelopment, or adaptive reuse of existing buildings.

4.5: Parking Requirements

Meet parking requirements through newly created spaces planned as part of future developments, through shared on-site parking agreements, or allocations as part of a future parking structure, if one is constructed. Surface parking lost through new development or renovation must be replaced in some similarly convenient manner.

4.6: Parking Policies

Consider where, when and whether accepting payment in lieu of parking requirements benefits the community, and what other forms of creative compensation may be warranted and/or appropriate to incentivize added character and vibrancy in the CBD.

4.7: Develop Parking Lot/Structure Development Parameters

Assure that parking lots and parking structures are designed and landscaped to fit in with and not be disruptive to the established character of the CBD and streetscapes. Give consideration to the following

4.7-A: Conceal or screen parking lots to minimize visual, light, sound and activity impacts on streetscapes and adjacent residential neighborhoods

4.7-B: Design new parking structures in ways that are compatible with the scale, materials and character of surroundings, and avoid the appearance of a parking structure while still making it easy to find.

4.7-C: Assure massing, height, connections and features achieve an appropriate transition from more intense development to adjacent residential neighborhoods. Avoid over-building, monolithic structures, and monotony; pay deference to significant historic structures.

4.7-D: Direct traffic away from residential streets, avoiding ingress and egress points.

4.7-E: Integrate interesting pedestrian connections, green space, outdoor gathering areas, and landscaped streetscapes; make parking part of the "Lake Forest experience" through creative wayfinding, programming opportunities / spaces, public art and materials.

4.7-F: Take advantage of changes in topography to minimize appearance of massing.

4.7-G: Build in sustainability elements such as: permeable paving, energy saving measures, alternate energy technologies, bike racks, building orientation to minimize heating/cooling demands, natural building materials, EV charging stations, recycling opportunities, water saving measures and court yard, roof top gardens.

4.8: Identify Stormwater Opportunities

Evaluate existing infrastructure in the CBD and identify needed improvements: streets, sidewalks, stormwater management, lighting.

4.9: Prioritize Public Improvements

Prioritize infrastructure improvements in the CBD in the Capital Improvement Plan especially those improvements necessary to protect private investments and promote public safety.

4.10: Incentivize Private Improvements

Consider incentives to support private stormwater management initiatives brought forward by CBD property owners.

4.11: Development Requirements

Require stormwater management improvements in conjunction with redevelopment and new development and take advantage of opportunities to collaborate on improvements as development occurs.

4.12: Inviting, Directional Signage

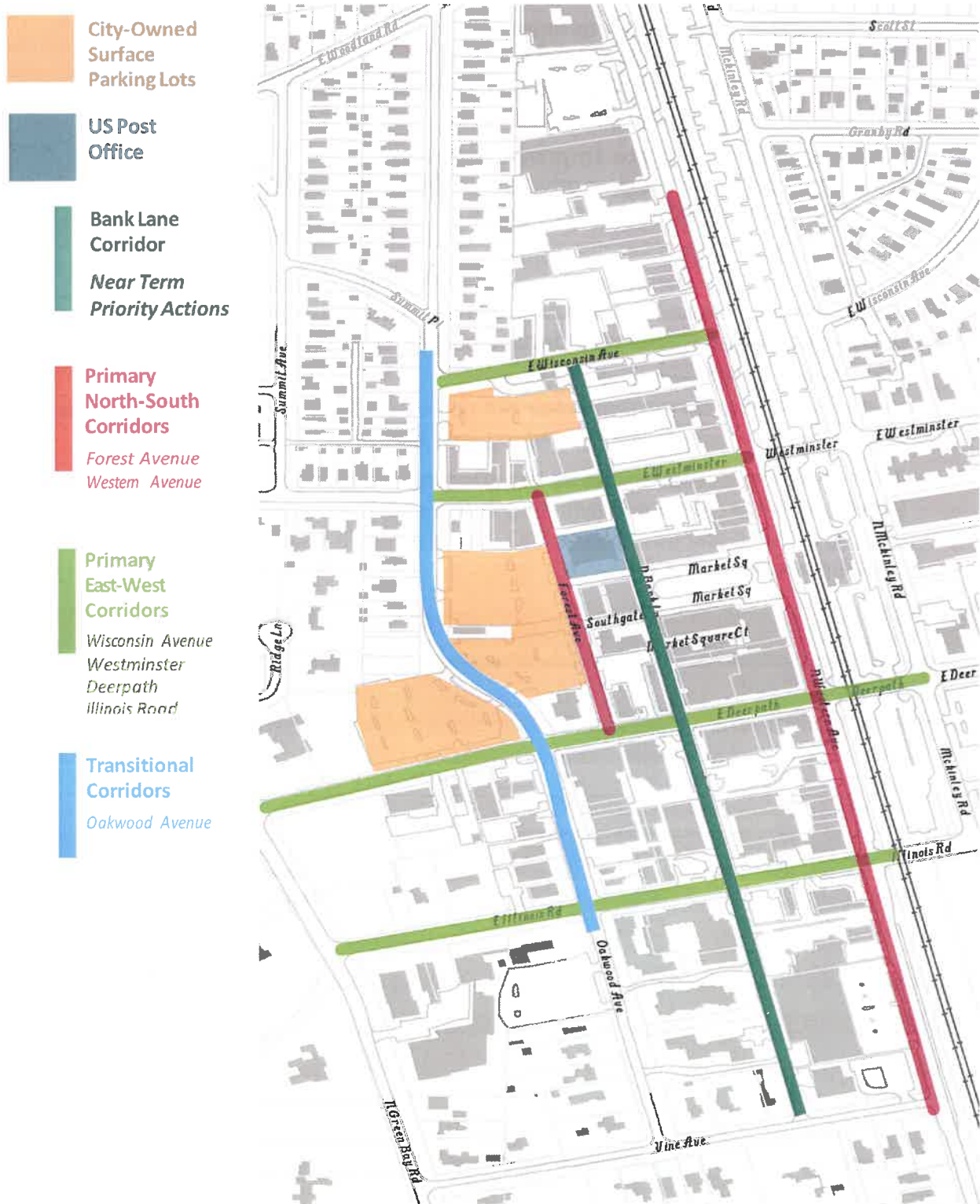
Invite people into the CBD with clear but understated signage that directs visitors to the Core, restaurants, shops, parking, and bicycle racks.

4.13: Develop Comprehensive Wayfinding & Signage

Develop a comprehensive Wayfinding & Signage Plan to guide pedestrians and vehicles easily to and through the CBD. Signage should respect and align with the overall character of the CBD.

Insert photos

5 • Support & Foster Public Private Partnerships



■ 5.1 U.S. Post Office

The Post Office is adjacent to and anchors the northwest corner of Market Square. Both the use and its Art Deco Post Office architecture are valued and contribute to the character of the Core.

5.1-A: Continue to monitor and remain in communication with the U.S. Postal Service with respect to the Lake Forest Post Office and any future intentions to downsize to a smaller location in or near Market Square.

5.1-B: Encourage the Post Office to retain a presence in the CBD going forward if the Post Office leaves the existing building.

5.1-C: Recognize that preservation, restoration of the building will be costly and may require incentives or assistance from the City or outside groups to make adaptive reuse of the building for desired uses possible.

5.1-D: Lead efforts to explore opportunities for public/private partnerships to support adaptive reuse of building for one or more uses to add vitality to Core: restaurants, retail, entertainment venue.



■ 5.2 & 5.3 Streetscape Corridor Enhancements

Various street corridors “knit together” the CBD as a whole providing pedestrian and vehicle access through, to, and beyond the CBD in all directions. Parking is well interspersed throughout the CBD in various forms (on street parking, public lots, private lots) encouraging residents and visitors to park and meander from restaurants to local businesses, making stops along the way.

The various street corridors in the CBD have distinctly different building types, forms, and character. Two-sided streetscapes offer the opportunity for building facades and block faces to relate to each across the street creating a unified character. Depending on the width of the street and sidewalk, building heights, closed or transparent building facades, and the presence of or lack of landscaping and gathering spaces, the character of each street corridor offers a unique experience. Enhancing the public infrastructure in the corridors where and when needed on an ongoing basis should be a priority for the City. Private property owners should be encourage to do their part to maintain and enhance the corridors.



■ 5.2 Primary & Transitional North/South Corridors

Western Avenue, Forest Avenue, Oakwood Avenue

Insert map / photos

Western Avenue is the primary North/South Corridor and borders the entire east edge of the CBD from north to south. Together, Western Avenue, the railroad tracks and McKinley Road provide an approximately 300 foot separation distance between the CBD and the residential neighborhoods to the east. Wide sidewalks extend along the west side of Western Avenue through the Core, Inner Ring, and beyond, creating a generally comfortable and active pedestrian experience although at times bicycles and scooters share the space causing congestion.

5.2-A: Invite businesses to actively use outdoor space along Western Avenue for limited seating and benches in good weather while maintaining an unobstructed sidewalk sufficient in width to support comfortable pedestrian use.

5.2-B: Continually maintain and enhance the landscaping along both sides of Western Avenue the full length of the CBD; maintain a similar density of plant material throughout.

5.2-C: Consider ways to better identify the most heavily used mid-block crosswalks. Shoppers and restaurant patrons frequently cross Western Avenue to reach the diagonal on-street parking on the east side of the street.

Forest Avenue extends from Deerpath north to Westminster, intersecting with Northgate and Southgate, which provide easy vehicle and pedestrian connections to Market Square. The expansive surface parking lots to the west make this narrow corridor appear wider.

5.2-D: Consider ways to enhance and bring awareness to Forest Avenue as a north/south pedestrian corridor.

5.2-E: Significant redevelopment and adaptive retrofit opportunities exist along Forest Avenue. The Character Guidelines and Development Parameters discussed earlier in this chapter must assure development connects with and supports Market Square, forms an appropriate edge to the business district, and respects and protects the neighborhood to the west.

Insert map / photo

Oakwood Avenue North extends from just north of Deerpath to Wisconsin Avenue. It is a "Transitional Corridor" given the interfacing of residential on the west side of the street with the business district on the east side. Any future development must pay special deference to this unique interface and preserving the residential character of the neighborhood.

5.2-F: Avoid encroachment of the CBD beyond the current limits.

5.2-G: Protect, preserve, enhance the residential character of Oakwood Avenue.

5.2-H: Street frontage on east side of Oakwood Avenue must respect the established residential character on the west side in terms of use, massing, rooflines, setbacks, architectural styles, materials, and landscaping.

5.2-I: Create a pedestrian friendly streetscape.

5.2-J: Vehicular ingress/egress for any future development with frontage on Oakwood Avenue must be mindful of the residential neighborhood. Traffic studies should be conducted for any significant development or redevelopment in this transitional area to assess potential impacts on the residential character of the neighborhood as a result of traffic volumes, cut-through traffic, and ingress/egress points.

5.2-K: Consider ways to discourage "cut through" traffic on Oakwood Avenue by minimizing any new access points, street designs, and wayfinding/directional signage.

5.2-L: Provide pedestrian connections from residential neighborhood to/through CBD.

Insert map / photo

***Oakwood Avenue South** extends from Deerpath south to just past Illinois Road with both sides of the street developed with commercial buildings of various types. This portion of Oakwood Avenue essentially forms the west edge of the business district and is used by some as a "bypass" to avoid congestion on Deerpath at times.*

5.2-M: Recognize that Oakwood Avenue has not successfully functioned as a location for retail businesses in part due to building configurations and distance from the Core.

5.2-N: Support personal service businesses, professional and medical offices, and multi-family residential along this corridor.

5.2-O: Explore opportunities to enhance the functionality of buildings, activate open spaces, add pedestrian pathways and improve connections to the greater CBD.

5.2-P: If sites redevelop, parking should be added away from the streetscape, behind, under, or internal to buildings, to support a mix of uses with adequate parking.

■ 5.3 Primary East/West Street Corridors

Deerpath, Illinois Road, Westminster, Wisconsin Avenue

Insert map / photo

Deerpath is the primary east-west entrance to the CBD and is heavily traveled and congested at times. The entry corridor should represent the best the City has to offer and evoke a sense that one has arrived somewhere special. The streetscape should present high quality architecture, well landscaped streets, consistent lighting, green spaces, and safe and well placed pedestrian crossings and amenities.

5.3-A: When implementing the Deerpath Streetscape Improvement Plan consider the improvements in the context of infrastructure improvements that may be needed on Bank Lane to avoid ongoing construction in the CBD. Plan for a subsequent phase of the Deerpath Streetscape Improvement Plan extending to Route 41, a high visibility entry into the CBD.

5.3-B: Enhance the walkability along Deerpath encouraging pedestrian activity between Veterans Park and the CBD.

5.3-C: Encourage replacement of buildings along Deerpath that do not contribute positively to creating a welcoming entry to the CBD. Plan for a streetscape that along which buildings on either side relate to each other in massing, height, style, detailing, and materials.

5.3-D: Character Guidelines should seek to enhance the streetscape environment and encourage pedestrian activity, safety and comfort via setbacks, seat walls, furnishings, landscaping and other elements.

5.3-E: Consider limiting turns on to Deerpath in the most congested blocks by making Bank Lane one way south.

Insert map / photo

Illinois Road anchors the south end of the Inner Ring with historic buildings and a unique blend of uses, a distinctive hotel, restaurants, and specialty businesses.

5.3-F: Encourage continued development of hospitality-oriented businesses as additive uses to the Deer Path Inn and other businesses in the area.

5.3-G: Plan for increased parking to support uses, build-in excess parking, in appropriate forms and locations, as new development and redevelopment occurs.

5.3-H: Consider opportunities for public/private partnerships to support parking in this corridor.

Insert map / photo

Westminster west of Western Avenue, is an active corridor, just beyond the Core of the CBD. A mix of uses and building types line this street although over time, some buildings fronting on the street have been lost and replaced with auto-oriented development diminishing the pedestrian attractiveness, connectivity, and sense of vitality along this corridor.

5.3-I: Encourage appropriate redevelopment and reuse of underutilized and outdated properties in a manner that welcomes pedestrian activity and steps down as Westminster approaches Oakwood Avenue.

5.3-J: Protect and respect the Oakwood Avenue residential neighborhood as redevelopment occurs along Westminster.

5.3-K: Pay attention to how buildings on street frontages relate to buildings across the street.

CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT
RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

Insert map / photo

Wisconsin Avenue west of Western Avenue is anchored with substantial buildings at Western Avenue quickly stepping down to smaller scale buildings to the west. Wisconsin Avenue is the north end of Bank Lane.

5.3-L: Development on Wisconsin Avenue should provide an attractive visual terminus at the north end of Bank Lane.

5.3-M: Maintain a significant step down in scale at the shared edge of the business district and adjacent residential neighborhood.

5.3-N: Preserve and protect the Oakwood Avenue residential neighborhood as redevelopment occurs along Wisconsin Avenue.

Plan Commission Meeting – June 14, 2023
Agenda Item 4

Code Amendment – Outdoor Speakers at Restaurants

Staff Report and Recommendation
Minutes from the April, 2023 Plan Commission Meeting



STAFF REPORT AND RECOMMENDATION

TO:	Chairman Dixon and members of the Plan Commission
DATE:	June 14, 2023
FROM:	Catherine J. Czerniak, Director of Community Development
SUBJECT:	Code Amendment – Outdoor Speakers at Restaurants

Background

During consideration of a request for a Special Use Permit for Sophia Steak, the Plan Commission directed staff to revisit the current prohibition in the Zoning Code on outdoor speakers on dining patios at restaurants. The Commission cited several reasons for recommending review of the Code language.

- Outdoor dining has become a major component of restaurant business particularly since the start of the pandemic.
- Low volume background music is a reasonable accommodation.
- Several restaurants in the community have outdoor speakers which were installed without approval or permits, the current prohibition has not been consistently enforced since the onset of the pandemic.

The City Council accepted the Commission's recommendation for review of this provision and directed staff to conduct research and bring this matter before the Plan Commission for discussion and if determined to be appropriate, a public hearing to consider an amendment to the Code.

Research – Previously Presented to the Commission

In April 2023, information gathered by staff was presented to the Commission, that information is provided again below as a basis for the recommendation that follows.

Repeated in Part from an Earlier Staff Report

Review of Code Provisions in Other Communities

To gain further insight on the topic, Code provisions relating to noise from various communities were reviewed by staff. Some broad conclusions are offered below.

- Many municipalities have specific regulations pertaining to outdoor speakers or amplification of outdoor noise generally.
- Most cities allow outdoor speakers at restaurants/outdoor dining within reason or under some restrictions.

- Cities commonly use “reasonableness” as a key standard to determine if noise is considered excessive.

Recommended Code Amendment

Strike the following text from the Code sections relating to Performance Standards for Restaurants in the B-1, B-2, B-3 and B-4 zoning districts.

No loudspeakers or amplification of sound are permitted outside the building.

Insert the following text in the Code sections relating to Performance Standards for Restaurants in the B-1, B-2, B-3 and B-4 zoning districts.

Outdoor speakers are permitted on restaurant patios located on private property in compliance with the following standards.

- a. Speakers shall be no larger than 12 inches by 12 inches and shall be directed toward the patio. A no fee permit is required prior to the installation of outdoor speakers. A site plan indicating the proposed location of the speakers and a cut sheet of the speakers shall be submitted with the application for permit.*
- b. For larger patios, multiple, small speakers shall be located around the patio to minimize the volume needed to reach across the patio.*
- c. At the property line, the sound level shall not exceed five decibels above the median ambient sound level at the property line. (to be measured as an average over a 15 minute time period)*
- d. Outdoor speakers shall be used only for music, no announcements or orders shall be transmitted over the speakers.*
- e. The speakers shall be active only when there are diners on the patios and in conformance with the permitted operating hours for the patio.*
- f. For restaurants authorized through a Special Use Permit, further limitations may be imposed up to and including a prohibition on outdoor speakers.*

Enforcement

The enforcement of the above standards will be on a complaint basis. The City has obtained a sound meter based on the recommendation of an acoustical engineer who has advised the City in the past on sound related issues.

Following a complaint, the City will evaluate the ambient sound levels at one or more locations on the property line taking an average over a 15 minute period, and the sound level with the outdoor speakers activated using the same process. An initial violation would result in a courtesy notice from the City to the property owner and subsequent violations would result in a formal Notice of Violation and fines as provided for in the City Code.

Public Notice

Notice of this public hearing was published in a newspaper with local circulation. The agenda for this meeting was posted at five public locations and on the City's website.

Staff Recommendation

Approve a motion forwarding a recommendation to the City Council in support of amendments to the Zoning Code, Sections 159.109, B-1 Neighborhood Business District, 159.111, B-2 Community Commercial District, 159.112 B-3 Traditional Business District and 159.113 B-4 Preservation Business District to permit outdoor speakers in dining areas of restaurants with some limitations as detailed in the staff report and as modified by the Commission (if appropriate).

Excerpt
The City of Lake Forest
Plan Commission
Proceedings of the October 12, 2022 Meeting

A meeting of the Lake Forest Plan Commission was held on Wednesday October 12, 2022, at 6:30 p.m.

Commission members present: Chairman Dixon and Commissioners Jamie Moorhead, Louis Pickus, Mark Pasquesi, and Barrett Davie

Commissioners absent: Commissioner Stephen Douglass (one position vacant)

Staff present: Catherine Czerniak, Director of Community Development

4. Information and Commission Discussion and Direction: Topic – Outdoor speakers at restaurants. No Commission action is requested at this time.
Presented by: City staff

Ms. Czerniak introduced the agenda item and noted that Reagan Walsh, a Management Analyst with the City, conducted research and prepared the summary tables included in the Commission's packet. She noted that at the Commission's public hearing on a request for a Special Use Permit for Sophia Steak Lake Forest, the restaurant owners requested approval of outdoor speakers on the patio for the purpose of playing subtle background music. She stated that the Commission acknowledged that the Code presently specifically prohibits outdoor speakers at restaurants and forwarded a recommendation to the City Council that the applicable Code provision be reconsidered. The Council authorized the reconsideration and directed staff to present information to the Plan Commission for consideration. She stated that the question before the Commission is whether or not the Code should be amended to allow some flexibility with respect to outdoor speakers at restaurants. She stated that during the pandemic, the City Council directed staff to be flexible and creative in an effort to help businesses survive indoor shutdowns. She acknowledged that as a result, several restaurants installed outdoor speakers in conjunction with increasing outdoor dining opportunities and those speakers remain in place, and in some cases in use today. She noted that a few days after the opening of Sophia Steak Lake Forest, the City began receiving complaints about loud music on the patio despite the fact that outdoor speakers were not included in the approval of the restaurant. She stated that the complaints came from residents of the apartments on the north side of Laurel Avenue. She suggested that if outdoor speakers are permitted, it may be appropriate to establish different regulations or limitations for restaurants located adjacent to residential development than for restaurants located amongst other commercial uses. She stated that based on the study conducted of other municipalities on the North Shore and beyond, allowing outdoor speakers in outdoor dining areas is appropriate.

She suggested that the speakers be limited to music as opposed to announcements of various types. She stated that in establishing regulations for outdoor music, consideration should be given to establishing objective standards to allow for effective and efficient enforcement of the regulations.

Commissioner Pasquesi stated that in his opinion, it is important for the City to find a way to allow outdoor speakers on patios at restaurants. He stated that there should be limits on the decibels permitted but acknowledged that enforcement may be challenging. He stated that in his opinion, the decibel level should be consistent across the Central Business District and measured at a similar point for all restaurants.

Commissioner Moorhead agreed that outdoor speakers at restaurants should be permitted with some limit on decibels. He stated that for restaurants that require a Special Use Permit, the request for outdoor speakers should be considered as part of that process. He stated that from an enforcement perspective, the City should be given as many tools as possible.

In response to questions from Chairman Dixon, Ms. Czerniak confirmed that many communities do not have specific regulations pertaining to outdoor speakers at restaurants. She added that several communities studied limit noise generally, not specifically limited to restaurants, either using a reasonableness standard, or by specifying a decibel limit at the property line or at some other distance beyond the property line.

In response to questions from Commissioner Pasquesi, Ms. Czerniak stated that permitted decibel levels vary from community to community noting that a decibel level of 65 at the property line appears to be used in various places.

Chairman Dixon agreed in general with the comments of Commissioners Moorhead and Pasquesi, but stated that in his opinion, the sound level should be based on a "no unreasonable loud noise" standard. He stated that from an enforcement perspective, increasing fees and escalating fines could be considered. He suggested researching other College towns to find out what standards are in place.

Ms. Czerniak commented that responding to noise complaints with only a reasonableness standard can be tricky because of differing opinions on what is reasonable.

Commissioner Pickus agreed that the prohibition should be lifted. He stated support for an objective and agreed that a reasonableness standard can be difficult to enforce. He suggested that the City invest in a high quality decibel meter. He stated that a decibel limit should be set and measured at the property line. He suggested that neighbors could be invited to hear what the specified decibel level sounds like to make them aware of what is permitted. He acknowledged that different neighborhoods may need to be treated differently.

Commissioner Davie stated support for using a “reasonableness” standard as provided for in the Code relating to noise generally.

Ms. Czerniak noted that currently, only restaurants within 150 feet of residential zoning require a Special Use Permit. She noted that restaurants sited further away from residential zoning districts do not require approval through a Special Use Permit. She stated that depending on how the Code is amended, existing restaurants approved through a Special Use Permit may or may not be required to request an amendment to the Special Use Permit to allow the addition of outdoor speakers on patios.

Ms. Czerniak summarized that based on the Commission’s discussion, there appears to be interest in considering a draft of a Code amendment that allows outdoor speakers at restaurants, for music, with some limitations. She added that in drafting a proposed Code amendment, consideration should be given to whether restaurants that require approval through a Special Use Permit process should be treated differently from those that do not. She stated that staff will reach out to a noise consultant to get input on an appropriate decibel range for this type of sound depending on the surrounding uses.
