

# Executive Summary

## An Overview of the East Side Plan

With the plans to establish a new commuter rail station in Romeoville along the Metra Heritage Corridor (HC) rail line, the Village of Romeoville has taken a proactive planning approach to prepare a conceptual development plan for the station area and surroundings. This planning effort has provided the Village with an informed understanding of the resources and actions needed to prepare Romeoville's East Side for commuter rail service, enhance the multimodal connectivity to and from the station area, and make the East Side viable for transit-oriented development.

### Focus of the East Side Plan

This planning process focuses on the creation of a land use development plan that seeks to capitalize on proximity to the proposed Metra commuter rail station and the prospects of creating a unique transit-oriented development (TOD) on the East Side of Romeoville. The potential TOD that

will be explored for the East Side will stray from traditional norms. Ultimately, the TOD in Romeoville will derive its distinction and success from the linkages it will make to connect employees to jobs, customers to businesses, residents to diverse housing options, explorers to trails, and travelers to the region.

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Source: Telsa Associates, Inc.

## Opportunity for Transit-Oriented Development

Transit-oriented development (TOD) is a prevalent planning concept that holds great potential to create sustainable communities, merging land use and transportation planning principles. TOD is a smart growth approach to community development that promotes compact development, connectivity, multi-modal transportation, pedestrian-friendly environments, and sustainable design, which are the traits that people – from homebuyers to business owners to investors to developers – are increasingly seeking in a community.

With the community's desire to enhance public transit options, the availability of undeveloped land parcels, and the proposed plans to establish a new commuter rail station along the Metra HC rail line, Romeoville has the capacity to capitalize on these assets to further develop its multimodal transportation network and encourage sensible development around a new transit station for the Village.

The East Side of Romeoville poses unique circumstances that inspire the community to think outside the box and establish a distinctive TOD that can become the model that breaks the mold of the typical high density, mixed use TOD prototype.



In addition, the East Side of Romeoville poses unique circumstances – namely the opportunity to strike a balanced mix of uses adjacent to the prominent CITGO refinery – that inspire the community to think outside the box and establish a distinctive TOD that can become the model that breaks the mold of the typical high density, mixed use TOD prototype.

The East Side TOD in Romeoville will derive its distinction and success from the linkages it will make to connect employees to jobs, customers to businesses, residents to diverse housing options, explorers to trails, and travelers to the region.

By focusing potential development on the East Side, Romeoville will open up its capacity to establish a linkage to its historic beginnings around the original Romeo settlement, which has the potential to enhance the community's identity, create a sense of place, and connect the East Side to the rest of Romeoville. The latter can be accomplished by providing access to a multimodal transportation network that enhances accessibility for all citizens.

Improved transit facilities will not only provide for access to local travel markets, but will also help connect Village residents to employment opportunities in Chicago and the region and connect the Village's largest employers with workers from other areas. This results in reducing congestion on local roads and the need for long commutes. In addition, connecting the proposed Metra site to the Village's existing Pace bus routes and local paratransit modes is a key component of a successful transit system.

### Metra Commuter Rail Site

The proposed Metra station would be established along the west side of the railroad and south of 135<sup>th</sup> Street. This future commuter rail station would be located south of the existing Lemont station and north of the existing Lockport station along the Metra Heritage Corridor (HC) rail line. Metra will construct platforms at this station, while the Village will build the station, pedestrian bridge, and a commuter parking lot on the site.

## Existing Conditions Assessment Report

An Existing Conditions Assessment Report was an initial step for the East Side Plan, summarizing the core elements that have an impact on planning for the Romeoville East Side Plan. These core elements included: the public participation process; zoning; existing land use; community facilities, utilities, and infrastructure; environmental features; the transportation network; and an assessment of development opportunities. The Existing Conditions Assessment Report is available under separate cover.

## Planning Process

Throughout the duration of the planning process, a Steering Committee, generally comprised of Village staff, public officials, and representatives from the Regional Transportation Authority (RTA), Metra, and Pace, provided guidance and feedback for each component of the scope of work, which included the elements summarized in the Existing Conditions Assessment Report and the East Side Plan document.



## Public Participation

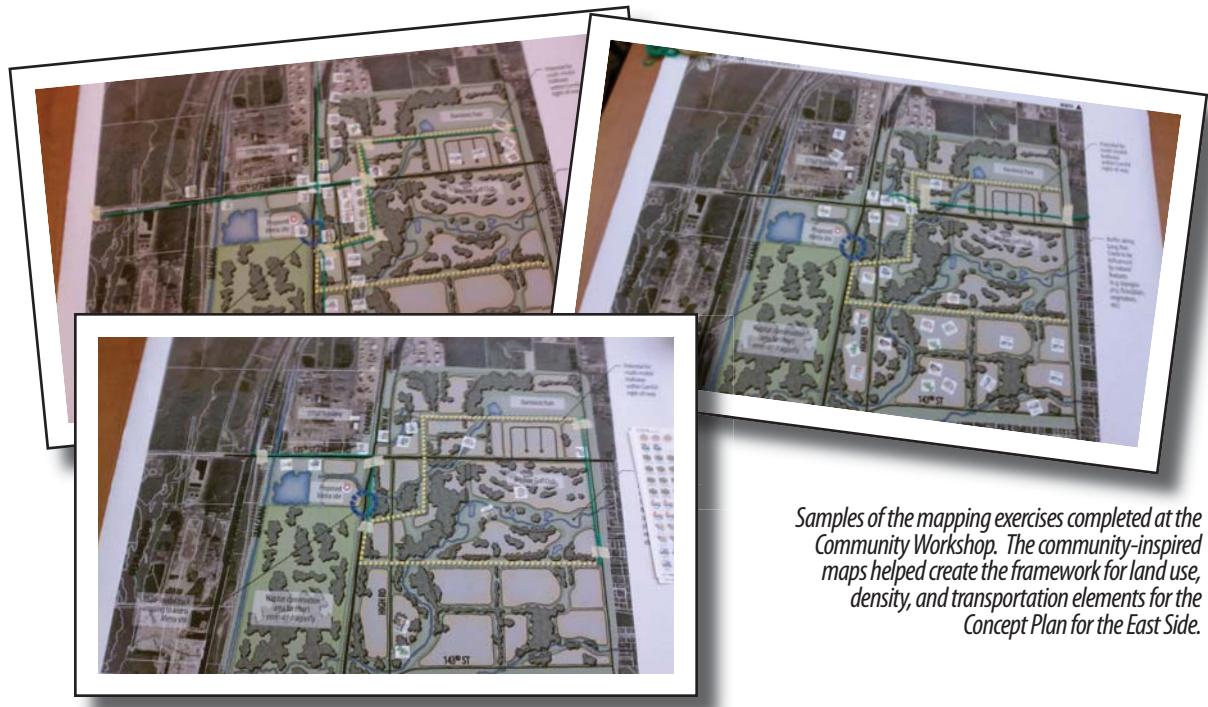
To ensure that the East Side Plan had a broad level of support and understanding, the planning process included an extensive public participation component designed to involve community stakeholders in crafting a plan that represented a vision for the Study Area that is responsive to the goals and aspirations of Romeoville residents, businesses, and property owners. As summarized in the Existing Conditions Assessment Report, the public participation process included the following elements:

- Community survey\*
- Key stakeholder interviews\*
- Community workshop\*
- Public open houses
- Project website

## Community Workshop

A community workshop was conducted on September 28, 2011, providing community members with an opportunity to actively participate in a dynamic work session designed to obtain input into the planning process via a series of interactive activities. Workshop participants took part in two activities: (1) participate in an image preference survey to rate key site, streetscape, and urban design elements that they feel are appropriate for the proposed Metra station site and the East Side; and (2) collaborate on an interactive mapping exercise to brainstorm creative site design ideas for the Study Area. The workshop findings are summarized in the Appendix, with a few samples of the mapping exercise results shown below.

\* See Appendix for summary of results/findings.



The community-driven input from the workshop was critical to ensure the East Side Plan reflected the ideas and aspirations of the Romeoville community.

## Concept Plan

Section 1 of this plan provides an overview of the Concept Plan for the East Side, which summarizes the land use, density, and transportation aspects of the proposed development plan in a graphic form (a snapshot of the Concept Plan is provided in Figure ES-1). The mapping exercise results from the community workshop played an integral role in shaping a framework for the Concept Plan. Two alternative Concept Plans were initially drafted to provide variations in the intensity and type of development, with the preferred option summarized in Section 1; the second alternative is provided in the Appendix.

A development capacity analysis for the Concept Plan is also provided, summarizing the potential densities, buildable areas, residential dwelling units, retail/office space, and parking generated by the plan.

As demonstrated in the Concept Plan in Section 1 of this plan, care was taken to preserve any existing uses that are viable and lend unique character to the area. Sensitive environmental elements -- such as Long Run Creek, the creek's floodplain, and the Hine's Emerald Dragonfly Conservation Area -- were also preserved.

In addition, a bonding capacity analysis was prepared to provide an understanding of the financial constraints of extending municipal utilities to the East Side and the potential absorption and development of land.

## Transportation Improvement Plan

Section 2 provides the Transportation Improvement Plan associated with the Concept Plan. In particular, this section summarizes how the Concept Plan impacts the following transportation elements: the Metra station; transit services and facilities; potential roadway/intersection improvements; the regional trail system; and the Village's pedestrian/bicycle system.

## Signage Plan

Section 3 provides the Signage Plan that outlines a hierarchy of signage that should be integrated into the streetscape for the East Side and extension into the rest of Romeoville. The recommended signage, which includes a gateway/event sign, wayfinding sign, and fabric banner, is intended to help motorists, commuters, pedestrians, and bicyclists navigate to and throughout the East Side and Village. A map of pro-

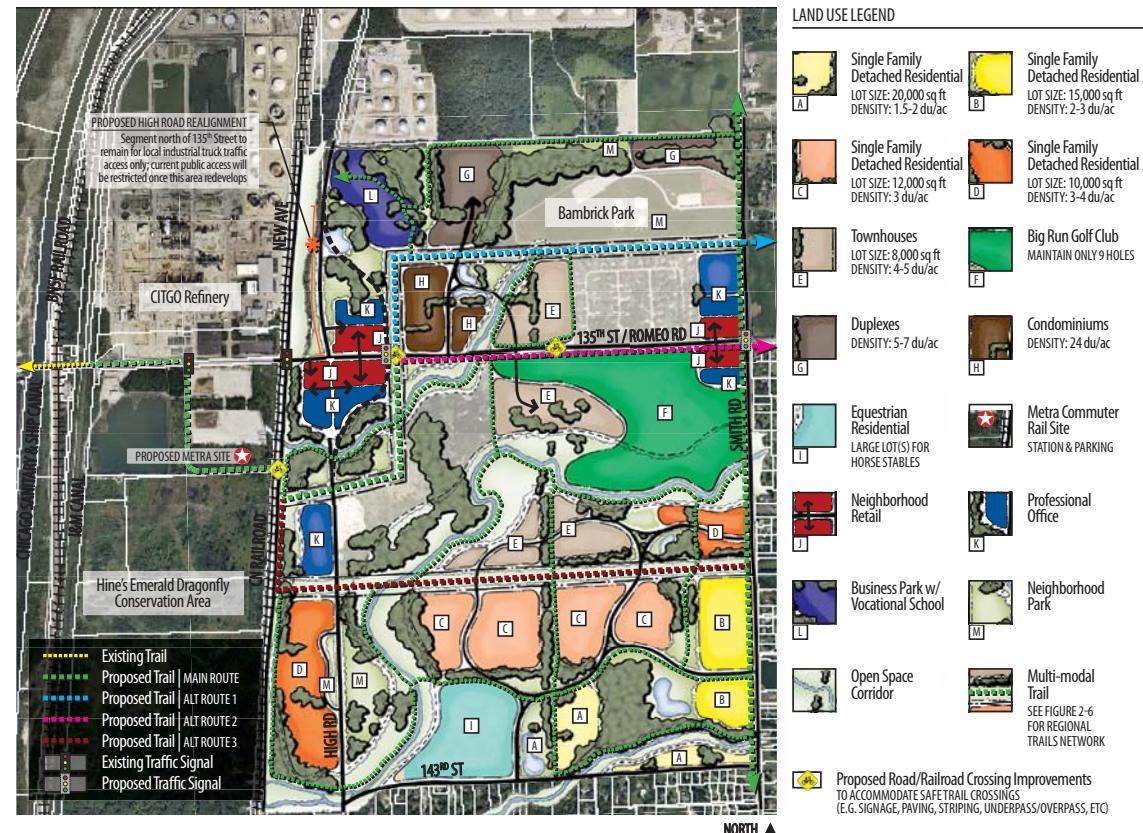


FIGURE ES-1  
Concept Plan | PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE

See Figure 1-2 in Section 1 for full-page layout of Concept Plan.

posed locations for the signage is provided to illustrate how they relate to the local transportation network.

## Design Guidelines

Section 4 provides a series of Design Guidelines intended to communicate the design intent for future development and site improvements for the East Side. Rather than dictate a specific design for specific properties, the Design Guidelines establish a set of standards and identify elements of structural, site, and streetscape design that are applicable to typical property types relating to land use, development form, and urban design. Intended to supplement the Village's existing regulations established in the Zoning Code, the Design Guidelines cover the following topics: architecture; site design; access and circulation; and signage.

## Implementation Plan

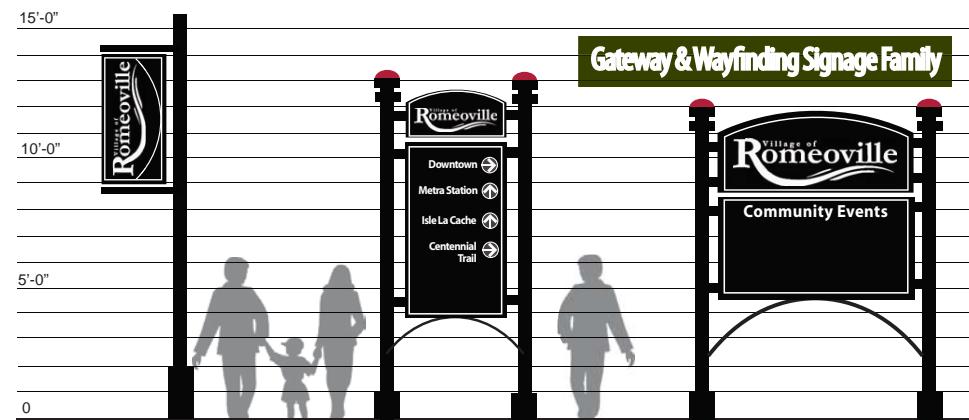
Section 5 provides an Implementation Plan that outlines specific implementation actions that the Village and its partners are encouraged to take to translate this plan from paper to the real world. It is understood that certain actions are contingent on elements that will take time to materialize -- including an improved economy, a supportable marketplace, and funding capacity to extend municipal utilities -- to help spur development projects on the East Side. However, the Village is encouraged to be proactive and continually make progress by taking actions that it has control over, including reviewing its zoning standards, maintaining communication with property owners, and seeking grants and funding sources. This will ensure the appropriate tools and programs are in place once the development market rebounds and the East Side becomes a viable location for new projects.

As shown in the graphic on the top right, a series of five implementation strategies is recommended for implementing the East Side Plan. As provided in Section 5, each strategy is outfitted with a series of tasks, potential partners, and phasing. Section 5 also provides a listing of funding and support resources that the Village may pursue to help put the East Side Plan into action.

## Strategies

### FOR THE EAST SIDE

- 1 : Build awareness of the planned Metra station, development of the East Side, and improved linkages to downtown.
- 2 : Secure the resources needed to construct a commuter rail station with adequate parking facilities.
- 3 : Maintain open communication with property owners of parcels that are planned for development and/or annexation, if applicable.
- 4 : Continue to coordinate projects with other organizations or agencies.
- 5 : Foster a strong character and sense of place on the East Side through streetscape enhancements, design guidelines, and transportation improvements.



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