

VILLAGE OF ROMEOVILLE

# EAST SIDE PLAN | EXISTING CONDITIONS ASSESSMENT REPORT



Adopted by Village Board on April 18, 2012

SUBMITTED BY THE CONSULTANT TEAM OF:

TESKA ASSOCIATES, INC. :: FISH TRANSPORTATION GROUP :: GRUEN GRUEN + ASSOCIATES

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Village of Romeoville, Illinois

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Teska Associates, Inc. :: Fish Transportation Group :: Gruen Gruen + Associates



# Table of Contents

SECTION	PAGE	SECTION	PAGE
<b>1: INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>1-1</b>	Bus Service	4-2
Study Area	1-2	Heritage Corridor Transportation Survey	4-3
Planning Process	1-6	Metra Commuter Rail Service	4-3
Downtown Redevelopment Efforts	1-7	Heritage Corridor Improvements	4-5
Need for Transit in Romeoville	1-7	High Speed Rail	4-5
Opportunity for Transit-Oriented Development	1-11	Bicycle & Pedestrian Circulation	4-6
<b>2: RELATIONSHIP TO COMMUNITY PLANS</b>	<b>2-1</b>	<b>5: DOWNTOWN MARKET ASSESSMENT</b>	<b>5-1</b>
Comprehensive Plan	2-1	Apartment Development Opportunities	5-1
Downtown Master Plan	2-5	Retail Development Opportunities	5-12
Transportation-Related Documents	2-6		
<b>3: PLANNING &amp; URBAN DESIGN ASSESSMENT</b>	<b>3-1</b>	<b>6: EAST SIDE DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES</b>	<b>6-1</b>
Existing Land Use	3-1	Development Influences & Opportunities	6-1
Zoning	3-5	Commercial Development	6-2
Environmental Characteristics	3-9	Industrial Development	6-3
Utilities	3-14	I-55 Submarket Trends	6-3
Sustainability	3-17	Residential Development	6-3
Community Character	3-18		
<b>4: TRANSPORTATION ASSESSMENT</b>	<b>4-1</b>	<b>7: ISSUES, CHALLENGES &amp; OPPORTUNITIES</b>	<b>7-1</b>
Regional Setting	4-1	Current Issues & Challenges	7-1
Existing Roadway Characteristics	4-1	Potential Opportunities	7-2
		Issues, Challenges & Opportunities Maps	7-4

By Section

Topics Relevant to Downtown & East Side



Source: Testa Associates, Inc.

# Table of Contents

## By Area (Downtown)

### Topics Relevant to Downtown Romeoville

SECTION	PAGE	SECTION	PAGE
<b>1: INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>1-1</b>	<b>4: TRANSPORTATION ASSESSMENT</b>	<b>4-1</b>
Study Area	1-2	Regional Setting	4-1
Study Area Map	1-4	Existing Roadway Characteristics	4-1
Downtown Redevelopment Efforts	1-7	Bus Service	4-2
Need for Transit in Romeoville	1-7	Heritage Corridor Transportation Survey	4-3
Opportunity for Transit-Oriented Development	1-11	Metra Commuter Rail Service	4-3
<b>2: RELATIONSHIP TO COMMUNITY PLANS</b>	<b>2-1</b>	Heritage Corridor Improvements	4-5
Comprehensive Plan	2-1	High Speed Rail	4-5
Downtown Master Plan	2-5	Bicycle & Pedestrian Circulation	4-6
Transportation-Related Documents	2-6	<b>5: DOWNTOWN MARKET ASSESSMENT</b>	<b>5-1</b>
<b>3: PLANNING &amp; URBAN DESIGN ASSESSMENT</b>	<b>3-1</b>	Apartment Development Opportunities	5-1
Existing Land Use Description	3-1	Retail Development Opportunities	5-12
Existing Land Use Map	3-2	<b>7: ISSUES, CHALLENGES &amp; OPPORTUNITIES</b>	<b>7-1</b>
Zoning Description	3-5	Current Issues & Challenges	7-1
Zoning Map	3-6	Potential Opportunities	7-2
Environmental Characteristics	3-9	Issues, Challenges & Opportunities Map	7-4
Utilities	3-14		
Sustainability	3-17		
Community Character	3-18		



Source: Terra Associates, Inc.

# Table of Contents

SECTION	PAGE	SECTION	PAGE
<b>1: INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>1-1</b>	<b>4: TRANSPORTATION ASSESSMENT</b>	<b>4-1</b>
Study Area	1-2	Regional Setting	4-1
Study Area Map	1-5	Existing Roadway Characteristics	4-1
Need for Transit in Romeoville	1-7	Bus Service	4-2
Opportunity for Transit-Oriented Development	1-11	Heritage Corridor Transportation Survey	4-3
<b>2: RELATIONSHIP TO COMMUNITY PLANS</b>	<b>2-1</b>	Metra Commuter Rail Service	4-3
Comprehensive Plan	2-1	Heritage Corridor Improvements	4-5
Downtown Master Plan	2-5	High Speed Rail	4-5
Transportation-Related Documents	2-6	Bicycle & Pedestrian Circulation	4-6
<b>3: PLANNING &amp; URBAN DESIGN ASSESSMENT</b>	<b>3-1</b>	<b>6: EAST SIDE DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES</b>	<b>6-1</b>
Existing Land Use Map	3-3	Development Influences & Opportunities	6-1
Existing Land Use Description	3-4	Commercial Development	6-2
Zoning Map	3-6	Industrial Development	6-3
Zoning Description	3-7	I-55 Submarket Trends	6-3
Zoning Designations	3-8	Residential Development	6-3
Environmental Characteristics	3-9	<b>7: ISSUES, CHALLENGES &amp; OPPORTUNITIES</b>	<b>7-1</b>
Utilities	3-14	Current Issues & Challenges	7-1
Sustainability	3-17	Potential Opportunities	7-2
Community Character	3-18	Issues, Challenges & Opportunities Map	7-4

By Area (East Side)

Topics Relevant to the East Side



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# Introduction

## 1

### SECTION

Romeoville's strategy to continue implementing its Downtown Master Plan and establish a linkage to its historic beginnings on the east side of the Des Plaines River is vital to enhancing the community's identity, creating a sense of place, augmenting the tax base, and establishing long-term sustainable growth and development of the community. This 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.

This planning process focuses on two distinct focus areas: Downtown Romeoville and the Village's East Side, which contains the proposed Metra site. The former will mostly focus on revitalization strategies; the latter will focus on crafting a land use plan that seeks to capitalize on proximity to the proposed Metra station. While each focus area is characterized by its own set of issues and opportunities, they do share a common objective to create linkages to each other and to the region through the development of a strong multimodal transportation network.

And, just as Downtown Romeoville originally evolved into a non-traditional downtown with the intent to move towards a more traditional form, the potential TOD that will



Source: Testa Associates, Inc.

*The Canadian National (CN) Railroad runs north to south through the Study Area, creating the opportunity for a new Metra commuter rail station in Romeoville and the potential for transit-oriented development.*

The downtown and TOD focus areas share a common opportunity to create linkages through the development of a strong multimodal transportation network.

be explored for the East Side will also 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.

In addition to presenting an opportunity to establish transit facilities and transit-oriented development, the East Side Plan also opens the opportunity for Romeoville to advance itself as a pioneer in TOD design and change the way people view TOD's as a vital catalyst in forging connections within the community and beyond.

## Study Area

As depicted in the aerial base maps in Figures 1-1 through 1-3, the overall Study Area is comprised of the following two focus areas: (1) the Downtown Area; and (2) the East Side TOD Area. One of the primary objectives of the East Side Plan is to link the two areas together by building up Romeoville's multi-modal transportation network and enhancing the identities of the two areas through streetscape design, enhanced signage, and physical improvements.

The overall Study Area, which is outlined by the yellow dashed line in Figure 1-1, generally lies within the following boundaries: 127<sup>th</sup> Street and Normantown Road on the north; Fenton Avenue and Troxel Avenue on the west; Taylor Road and 143<sup>rd</sup> Street on the south; and Smith Road on the east. The segment of Smith Road running north of 135<sup>th</sup> Street is the county line between Will and Cook Counties.

Each focus area is described below.



*Located along IL Route 53, Downtown Romeoville has a current site layout and streetscape character that is more representative of a suburban retail strip center than a traditional downtown.*



*This eastward view towards the 135<sup>th</sup> Street/New Avenue intersection illustrates the dense tree coverage that forms a natural buffer between the CITGO refinery and the East Side TOD Area.*

Source: Tesla Associates, Inc.

### Downtown Area

The Downtown Area is located at the northwest section of the overall Study Area. Downtown Romeoville is generally bounded by Normantown Road to the north, Dalhart Avenue to the west, Alexander Circle to the south, and IL Route 53 to the east. Parcels along the outer perimeter of these general boundaries may also be considered to allow for linkages and continuity in redevelopment concepts.

The Downtown Area is depicted in Figure 1-2.

### East Side TOD Area

The East Side TOD Area is generally located east of the Chicago Sanitary and Ship Canal to Smith Road, extending north to the Village's FPA boundary and south to 143<sup>rd</sup> Street. The future Metra site is part of this area. The TOD area will center around the proposed Metra station site. In addition, the TOD area will assess adjacent properties – including the historic Romeo town settlement, Big Run Golf Club, and other

vacant/undeveloped parcels towards Smith Road and 143<sup>rd</sup> Street – to determine how they can be enhanced or redeveloped to tie into the TOD concept.

Care will be taken to preserve any existing uses that are viable and lend unique character to the area, including historic structures within the original Romeo settlement, the existing Old Orchard neighborhood, and the equestrian facility along 143<sup>rd</sup> Street. If redevelopment is viable for the Big Run Golf Club, it may continue to be partially maintained as a golf facility.

The East Side TOD Area is depicted in Figure 1-3.

### Future Metra Station Site

The Metra Heritage Corridor (HC) rail line runs along the CN Railroad. The Village is collaborating with Metra to develop plans to establish a new Metra station along the west side of the railroad and south of 135<sup>th</sup> Street. This future Metra



The overall Study Area covers a broad portion of the Village of Romeoville. On the aerial map below, Downtown Romeoville (marked by a blue star) is located at the top left corner at the southwest corner of IL Route 53 and Normantown Road. The East Side of the Village is located along the 135<sup>th</sup> Street / Romeo Road corridor, generally west of the Des Plaines River to Smith Road. The proposed site for the planned Metra commuter rail station is located along the Canadian National Railroad (marked by a red star). See Figure 1-2 and Figure 1-3 for closer views of Downtown Romeoville and the East Side, respectively.

FIGURE 1-1  
**Study Area | OVERALL**



The Downtown area is generally bounded by Normantown Road to the north, IL Route 53 to the east, Alexander Circle to the south, and Dalhart Avenue to the west. Residential neighborhoods border the north, west, and south. Other commercial uses are to the east.

FIGURE 1-2  
**Study Area | DOWNTOWN AREA**



The East Side of Romeoville generally runs along the 135<sup>th</sup> Street / Romeo Road corridor, extending east to Smith Road, north to the Village's FPA boundary, and south to 143<sup>rd</sup> Street. The proposed site for the planned Metra commuter rail station is located along the Canadian National Railroad.

FIGURE 1-3

## Study Area | EAST SIDE TOD AREA

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.

## 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, will provide guidance and feedback for each component of the scope of work. These components include:

- (1) Existing Conditions Assessment
- (2) Market Study
- (3) Transportation Improvement Plan
- (4) Concept Plans
- (5) Signage Plan
- (6) Design Guidelines
- (7) Implementation Plan

To ensure that the final draft of the East Side Plan has a broad level of support and understanding, the planning process includes an extensive public participation component designed to involve community stakeholders in crafting a plan that represents a vision for the Study Area that is responsive to the goals and aspirations of Romeoville residents, businesses, and property owners. The public participation process will include the following elements.

### Community Survey

A community survey was administered to the community at the start of the planning process to gather feedback relating to a variety of topics, including land use, transit, and economic development. The survey was designed to be both web- and paper-based to enable a broader reach of the community. The survey results, which are summarized in Appendix A (to be provided; survey in progress), will be considered during the concept development phase.

### Key Stakeholder Interviews

In-person interviews were conducted on July 7 and 21, 2011, with various community stakeholders to share and discuss insights and ideas relating to the Study Area and visions for how they would like the area to be planned. A summary of interviews, which is provided in Appendix B, will be considered during the concept development phase.

### Community Workshop

A community workshop will invite community members to actively participate in a dynamic session designed to obtain input into the planning process via a series of interactive activities. The objective of the workshop will be to encourage community members to brainstorm creative ideas for the TOD area.

### Public Open House

Public open houses will provide an informal public review process for community members to review the draft concept plan alternatives, share feedback on each alternative, and state their preferences for a preferred concept. Two open houses will be planned.



Linked to the existing Village of Romeoville website, the project website provides the Village with a variety of content relating to the planning process, including: draft documents, presentations, calendar of key dates, links to relevant resources, and a means to provide feedback.

### Project Website

A project website provides an online resource and forum to keep the public informed and engaged in the planning process. The website enables community members to view documents, provide feedback, access the community survey, find online resources, and view a schedule of meetings and key dates.

**Website:** [www.TeskaAssociates.com/Romeoville](http://www.TeskaAssociates.com/Romeoville)

## Downtown Redevelopment Efforts

Lacking a traditional downtown, Romeoville established a 40-acre site along IL Route 53 in the mid 1960's. While Downtown Romeoville has been home to a variety of commercial uses and small businesses over the past 40+ years, it has experienced its share of vacancies and also includes some land that has remained undeveloped. With the large

Downtown revitalization strategies will strike an appropriate balance between meeting past ambitions and integrating more practical visions.



Source: Teska Associates, Inc.

*Although some smaller downtown businesses provide goods and services, large vacant units and undeveloped parcels are two indicators of the need for reinvestment and revitalization of Downtown Romeoville.*

building setbacks and expansive parking areas, the character of Downtown Romeoville has grown to resemble an aging retail strip center rather than a compact pedestrian-friendly mixed use district like most traditional downtowns.

To help preserve and revitalize Downtown Romeoville as a core place within the Village, the Downtown Romeoville Redevelopment Commission (DRRC) formed as a group of concerned business people, property owners, residents, and Village officials.

In 2003, the Village and DRRC prepared a Downtown Master Plan to help guide the evolution of the downtown from its present under-utilized state to a more traditional downtown setting with a mix of retail, office, civic, and public uses in a pedestrian-friendly environment. While the Downtown Master Plan was developed several years ago before the downturn in the economy, it remains to be seen whether



Source: Teska Associates, Inc.

*Despite the expansive parking lots and auto-oriented site layout, Downtown Romeoville does have a few attractive pedestrian paths along the streetscape, including this one along Normantown Road.*

or not the town center concept envisioned for Downtown Romeoville is still viable and will come to fruition.

It is the intent of this planning process to assess present and anticipated market conditions to determine the optimal revitalization strategies for Downtown Romeoville. Revitalization strategies will honor past recommendations wherever feasible, as well as explore alternative concepts to strike an appropriate balance between past ambitions and more practical visions.

## Need for Transit in Romeoville

The community's desire to establish a new Metra station and expanded transit service in Romeoville has been well documented as far back as the Village's 2003 Comprehensive Plan and perhaps in general discussions even further back. While growth and development have slowed in re-



Source: Teska Associates, Inc.

*Starting in the 1960's, Downtown Romeoville developed over time with much of the development occurring close to IL Route 53. However, a few interior parcels remain undeveloped and provide opportunities.*

cent years locally, regionally, and nationally, the need for expanded transit service in Romeoville trended the other way and has picked up steam, most notably with preliminary concept plans for different aspects of the proposed Metra site starting to materialize in 2010.

Regardless of when the economy will completely rebound and trend towards greater development capacity, the need for expanded transit service in Romeoville will continue to garner interest and move closer to establishing full-fledged plans for a new Metra station and associated expansion of Pace bus service. Even as gas prices soar, road congestion does not seem to be waning. However, establishing commuter rail service and expanded bus service would offer commuters more transportation options to get to where they need to be more quickly and less expensively. In addition to saving time and money, a new transit facility would also create a node around which to concentrate new devel-

opment that directly benefit from proximity to new commuter rail and expanded bus services.

The Romeoville East Side Plan aims to take the proper steps to not only reduce road congestion and build up a more complete multi-modal transportation network, but also create a healthier community by providing opportunities for safer and more efficient pedestrian and bicycle linkages.

### Existing Transit Service via Metra & Pace

Presently, Romeoville has limited public transportation options available. Relative to the Study Area, the only transit options are Pace Bus Routes 834 and 855, which both run along IL Route 53. Pace Bus Route 834 provides service to Metra stations in Lockport to the south and Downers Grove to the north, as well as Park-n-Ride lots in Romeoville (at



Source: Lisle Area Chamber of Commerce

Based on proximity and findings from the Community Survey, Romeoville residents currently access Metra commuter rail service as close as Lemont and Lockport and as far as Naperville, Lisle, and Downers Grove.

FIGURE 1-4  
Distance to Nearest Metra Stations

Miles*	Metra Station	Metra Line
3.8	Lemont	Heritage Corridor
4.0	Lockport	Heritage Corridor
10.3	Joliet	HC / Rock Island
12.6	Downers Grove	BNSF
13.4	Naperville	BNSF
13.4	Lisle	BNSF
14.0	Belmont	BNSF
16.6	Route 59	BNSF

\*Mileage approximate, as measured from the intersection of 135<sup>th</sup> Street and New Avenue.

Source: MapQuest.

Spartans' Square) and Bolingbrook. Pace Bus Route 855 is a non-stop express bus providing part-time service to the Park-n-Ride lot at Spartans Square in Romeoville, as well as other park-and-ride lots in Bolingbrook, Plainfield, and Burr Ridge. However, Route 855 does not directly access any nearby Metra stations. Average weekday bus ridership for Routes 834 and 855 is 841 and 266 riders, respectively.<sup>1</sup>

Pace Bus Route 755 is the third bus line serving Romeoville, with service along I-55 between Plainfield and the Illinois Medical District in Chicago. Route 755 does not presently serve the Study Area.

1 Source: RTAMS, Ridership Statistics, Pace Bus Route Detail, June 2011.

FIGURE 1-5  
Weekday Boardings - Metra Heritage Corridor Line

Metra Station	1999	2002	*2006
Joliet	253	313	395
Lockport	201	303	552
Lemont	341	407	381
Willow Springs	82	142	97
Summit	66	79	64
Glenn	-	-	-
Brighton Park	-	-	-
Halsted	-	-	-
Union Station	905	1,180	1,421

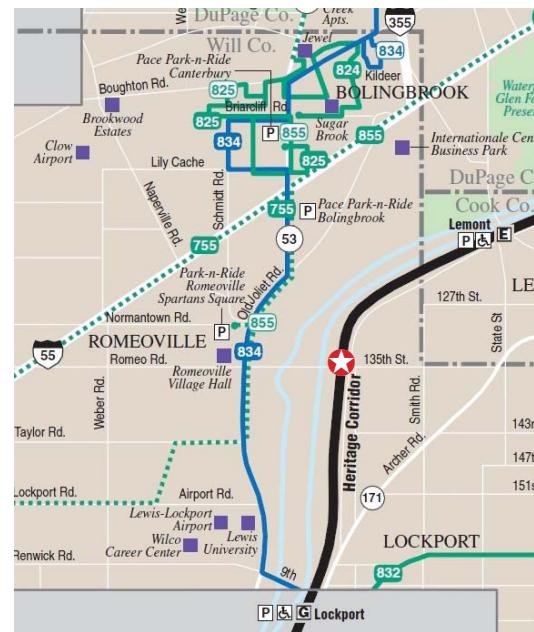
\*Most current data available; new data survey is expected to be conducted in Fall 2012.

Source: Metra.

The table in Figure 1-4 lists approximate mileage to the nearest Metra stations and park-and-ride lots in the vicinity, relative to the proposed location of the future Metra station in Romeoville at the southwest corner of 135<sup>th</sup> Street and the CN Railroad/New Avenue. Based on weekday boardings over time<sup>2</sup> (see Figure 1-5), the Metra stations at Lockport and Lemont are the second and fourth busiest stations, respectively, along the Metra Heritage Corridor (HC) rail line. This reinforces the potential to add a new Metra station in Romeoville to help redistribute rail passengers and alleviate crowdedness at park-and-ride lots and commuter parking

<sup>2</sup> Data based on 2006 counts provided by Metra; more current data is presently being tabulated but is unavailable at this time.

**FIGURE 1-6**  
**RTA System Map for the Romeoville Area**



lots at the Lockport and Lemont stations.

The map in Figure 1-6 shows all Metra commuter rail lines and Pace bus routes in the greater region around Romeoville. The red star indicates the proposed location of the future Metra station in Romeoville along the Metra Heritage Corridor (HC) rail line, which is marked by the solid black line. Aside from the area along IL Route 53, the various colored lines that symbolize an integrated network of bus routes are noticeably sparse throughout Romeoville, particularly its East Side, which would include the proposed Metra station and TOD area. This scarcity of bus service and the present lack of commuter rail service signify a limited public transit system in Romeoville.

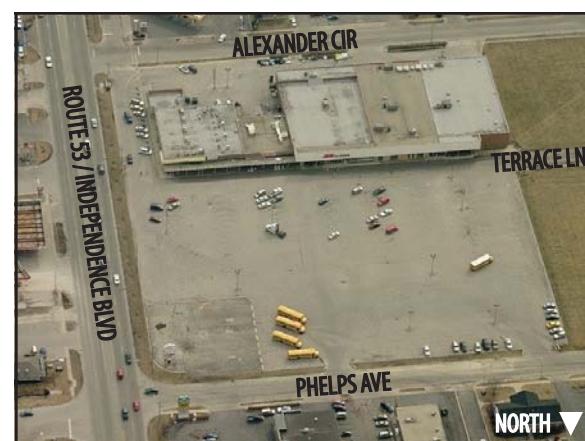
### Park-n-Ride Lot at Spartans' Square

Located in Downtown Romeoville, the Park-n-Ride lot at Spartans' Square, which is a large multi-tenant retail cen-

ter along the west side of IL Route 53, offers bus access to nearby Metra commuter rail stations. The Park-n-Ride lot presently utilizes the expansive parking lot that serves Spartans' Square. However, since some of the units within Spartans' Square are vacant, and given the sheer size of the parking lot, plenty of parking spaces are available for commuters who wish to access the Park-n-Ride service provided by Pace Bus Route 855.

### Dial-A-Ride Paratransit Service

In addition to the fixed bus routes provided by Pace, Romeoville is served by other public transportation options. First Transit, a national paratransit service operator, runs two Dial-A-Ride paratransit programs sponsored by Central Will and DuPage Township. The DuPage Township Dial-A-Ride program serves Romeoville riders north of 135<sup>th</sup> Street, while the Central Will program serves rides to the south. Both services are open only to seniors and disabled riders.



The Spartans' Square parking lot serves as a Park-n-Ride commuter lot with bus service from Pace Bus Route 855. Other nearby Park-n-Ride commuter lots are located in Bolingbrook, Plainfield, and Burr Ridge.



The Village's Ride Around Town program offers Romeoville residents with paratransit service for various types of trips. Other Dial-A-Ride paratransit programs are provided by Central Will and DuPage Townships.

**FIGURE 1-7**  
**Means of Transportation to Work**

Mean	2009 *Workers	
	#	%
Car, Truck, or Van	15,944	89.9%
- Drove Alone	14,092	79.4%
- Carpoled	1,852	10.4%
Public Transportation	420	2.4%
- Bus or trolley bus	100	0.6%
- Streetcar or trolley car	32	0.2%
- Subway or elevated train	19	0.1%
- Railroad	269	1.5%
- Ferryboat	0	0.0%
Taxicab	8	0.0%
Motorcycle	0	0.0%
Biked	0	0.0%
Walked	483	2.7%
Other Means	334	1.9%
Worked at Home	555	3.1%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>17,744</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

#### Additional Notes

A majority (80.9%) of all workers who carpooled to work participated in a 2-person carpool.

About two-thirds (64.0%) of all workers who rode public transportation to work took a train; about a quarter (23.8%) took a bus.

*\* Workers age 16 years and over; Village of Romeoville.*

*Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2005-2009 American Community Survey.*

#### Romeoville's Ride Around Town Program

The Village operates the Ride Around Town program, which offers paratransit service for Romeoville residents seeking rides within a 10-mile radius of the Village for various ap-

**FIGURE 1-8**  
**Travel Time to Work**

Travel Time	2009 *Workers	
	#	%
Less than 5 minutes	368	2.1%
5 to 14 minutes	2,714	15.8%
15 to 29 minutes	4,132	24.0%
30 to 44 minutes	4,567	26.6%
45 to 59 minutes	2,452	14.3%
60 or more minutes	2,956	17.2%
Less than 30 minutes	7,214	42.0%
30 or more minutes	9,975	58.0%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>17,189</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

*\* Workers age 16 years and over; Village of Romeoville.*

*Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2005-2009 American Community Survey.*

pointments, shopping, and dining. The Ride Around Town program serves a three service areas that progressively extend outward to nearby communities at fixed fare rates.

#### Commuting Characteristics

With limited public transportation options available in Romeoville, it is little surprise that only 2.4% of all workers (age 16 years and over) use public transportation as a means of transportation to work, as summarized in Figure 1-7. More workers walk to work (2.7%) or work at home (3.1%) than commute via transit (2.4%). In addition, more than half (58%) of all workers spend 30 minutes or more commuting to work and almost one-third (31.5%) allot 45 minutes or more on their commutes, as summarized in Figure 1-8.

Even for those residents that commute via public transportation, it is likely that many still require some commuting via private automobile to gain access to a Metra train or Park-n-Ride facility. Increased public transportation options within Romeoville are needed to accommodate not only commutes to work but also the general travel needs of residents and visitors. By providing viable public transportation options, commute times improve and roads become less congested; in turn, these improvements help enhance the quality of life in Romeoville, allowing residents to use their time for more important matters, and improving the environment with less automobile-induced impacts.

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

## Commuting Survey Findings

The findings from the community survey present an array of preferences and feedback relating to the prospects for Downtown Romeoville and the East Side. In particular, the survey findings indicate significant community insight into transit service in Romeoville. Key transit-related survey findings are summarized in Figure 1-9, which provide first-hand preferences and observations of community members. The complete survey results are provided in Appendix A.

## 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, pedes-



*The Canadian Railroad traverses parallel to New Avenue and intersects at 135<sup>th</sup> Street. Romeoville's proposed Metra station would be located along the west side of the railroad via the Heritage Corridor Line.*

A 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.

trian-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 Metra station along the Heritage Corridor Metra commuter train line, Romeoville can capitalize on these assets to further develop its multi-modal transportation network and encourage sensible development around a new transit hub for the Village.

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

While development of the East Side will not be reflective of the textbook example of a TOD, the TOD in Romeoville will derive its distinction and success from the linkages it will make to connect employees to jobs, customers to business-

es, residents to diverse housing options, explorers to trails, and travelers to the region.

The Romeoville East Side Plan presents an opportunity to not only establish transit facilities and transit-oriented development, but also advance Romeoville as a leader in developing a creative prototype for TOD's.



*Multi-use trails, such as this pathway leading from 135<sup>th</sup> Street to the Centennial Trail, provide pedestrians and bicyclists with an off-road option to travel to various points within the Village and through the region.*

FIGURE 1-9  
**Community Survey Results**

Below is a sample results page from the community survey that was administered during the initial phases of the planning process. Some representative survey findings relating to Downtown Romeoville and the East Side are summarized to the right. Complete survey results are provided in Appendix A.

12. Do you take transit for any other type of trip besides work? (check all that apply)						
	Metra (train)	Pace (bus)	Dial-A-Ride Program (bus/van)	Romeoville Ride Around Town Program (bus/van)	I do not take any form of transit	Response Count
Shopping	29.3% (65)	2.3% (5)	0.5% (1)	1.8% (4)	<b>67.6% (150)</b>	222
Dining	26.3% (56)	1.9% (4)	0.5% (1)	0.5% (1)	<b>71.8% (153)</b>	213
Entertainment	47.1% (121)	3.9% (10)	0.8% (2)	0.8% (2)	<b>51.4% (132)</b>	257
Medical	3.3% (6)	1.1% (2)	0.6% (1)	1.1% (2)	<b>95.0% (172)</b>	181
Education	4.4% (8)	0.5% (1)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	<b>95.1% (173)</b>	182
Other	12.4% (12)	1.0% (1)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	<b>86.6% (84)</b>	97
If you selected Other, please specify:						14
						<b>answered question</b> 273
						<b>skipped question</b> 54

**91%** of survey respondents indicated that shopping and dining are important activities/services that should be attracted to Downtown Romeoville

Other activities/services that were ranked as "important" include:

- » Entertainment
- » Parks and recreation
- » Personal services
- » Financial services
- » Medical/healthcare

**81%** of survey respondents would shop/dine/visit Downtown Romeoville a lot more if the following "first priority" improvements were made:

- » Types of stores
- » Transit service access
- » General physical appearance
- » Flooding/stormwater mgmt
- » Types of restaurants

**44%** of survey respondents stated that they know about Downtown Romeoville and shop/visit there

**52%** of survey respondents stated that they know about the East Side and the potential plans for a Metra station

**23%** of survey respondents take Metra for trips other than for work (e.g. shopping, dining, entertainment, education, etc)

**64%** of survey respondents do not currently take any form of transit to work

**79%** of survey respondents indicated that retail businesses and restaurants are important uses that should be attracted to the East Side

Other uses that were ranked as "important" include:

- » Recreation/parks/open space
- » Entertainment
- » Mixed use buildings
- » Offices
- » Medical/healthcare

**88%** of current transit users would use the new Metra station in Romeoville

**38%** of current transit users access Metra stations other than the ones in Lockport or Lemont as their origin station; many access the BNSF Line rather than the Heritage Corridor Line

**86%** or current Metra riders arrive at the station via car (either being dropped off or driving alone and parking)

**96%** of survey respondents indicated that they would take Metra more often if service was more frequent

Other factors that would encourage greater Metra ridership include:

- » Weekend service
- » Better walking/biking routes to the station
- » More express service
- » Better connections with other transit

# Relationship to Community Plans

## SECTION 2

As residential and commercial development boomed on the Romeoville's West Side in and around the Weber Road corridor during much of the first half of the 2000's, this planning process marks the first comprehensive evaluation of the development potential of the Village's East Side. While the proposed Metra station is the primary impetus for the East Side Plan, this area is also significant because it was the location of the original Romeo settlement and serves as the eastern gateway into Romeoville.

To ensure the East Side Plan carefully considers past planning efforts and ideas, it is important to assess existing

community plans, particularly from the dual perspective of revitalizing Downtown Romeoville and guiding the evolution of the proposed Metra area and overall East Side. This section summarizes Romeoville's development policies as expressed in its Comprehensive Plan, Downtown Master Plan, and other relevant planning documents.

### Comprehensive Plan

#### Romeoville Vision Statement

As shown in Figure 2-1, the second paragraph of the Romeoville Vision statement, which is a core component of



Source: Village of Romeoville Comprehensive Plan.

*It is the goal of Romeoville residents to create a community wherein families can be provided a safe and secure neighborhood; where there is diversity and respect; where children are provided opportunities for growth and development; and where residents can be assured that the value of their property will be maintained.*

*The vision for Romeoville includes providing residents with choices and options for housing, travel, recreation, cultural activities and employment opportunities; providing for their basic personal needs; and where the community is visually attractive and appealing.*

*Residents want Romeoville to be a place where there is an open exchange of information among its residents, business owners and government; where the local government is fiscally responsible, yet attends to the community's needs for expanding services; and where they can be filled with pride about calling Romeoville home.*

FIGURE 2-1  
Romeoville Vision Statement

Comprehensive Plan recommendations support the overarching notion of creating linkages within the community, which for Romeoville will likely be the defining characteristic of establishing a TOD on the East Side and forging a connection to Downtown Romeoville.

the Romeoville Comprehensive Plan, provides a perfect encapsulation of the objectives of the East Side Plan to revitalize Downtown Romeoville and explore the development potential of the proposed Metra area and overall East Side. “Providing residents with choices and options for... travel” is highly notable as it supports the prospects to establish a new Metra station and expand Pace bus service.

### **Comprehensive Plan Recommendations**

The Comprehensive Plan reinforces the Romeoville Vision statement by outlining a series of recommendations



*The Village continues to add landscaped parkways along IL Route 53 to enhance Romeoville's visual appearance, which ranked as the most important community aspect to improve, per the Comprehensive Plan.*

designed to guide the community in achieving its vision. Figure 2-2 highlights the core recommendations that specifically support revitalization of Downtown Romeoville and the development potential of the proposed Metra area and overall East Side. While some recommendations are very specific to supporting these objectives (e.g. “Work with Metra to provide convenient commuter train service to the proposed 135<sup>th</sup> Street station”), others are more general but support the overarching notion of creating linkages within the community (e.g. “Develop an interconnected network of thoroughfares in the Village and throughout Village neighborhoods”), which for Romeoville will likely be the defining characteristic of establishing a TOD on the East Side and forging a connection to Downtown Romeoville.

In addition, the recommendation to “incorporate pieces of Romeoville’s heritage” identifies the opportunity to integrate the historical and physical elements of the original Romeo settlement into the potential TOD along 135<sup>th</sup> Street near the proposed Metra station.

### **Building Support for Downtown, Transit & the East Side**

In addition to the Romeoville Vision statement and plan recommendations, an Attitude & Preference Survey associated with the Comprehensive Plan provided various points of support for objectives of the East Side Plan. In particular, survey respondents indicated support for the following:

- A “central business district with pedestrian friendly streets,” which was among the top 10 most popular community characteristics would like to see in Romeoville now and in the future.
- “A downtown area where people could walk along streets lined with shop windows and trees and outdoor dining areas,” which was supported by 75% of respondents.
- Use of new Metra rail service.
- Bike paths and trails, which were ranked the highest priority for new land use or development.
- Enhanced visual appearance, which was rated the most important community aspect to improve.
- Enhanced appearance of pedestrian and public realms, which scored higher than land or building uses in terms of imagery that reflects the community’s values and expectations of the visual appearance of Romeoville.

Although these responses were expressed several years ago, much of the same sentiments and thoughts continued to gain momentum and prevail today.

### **Future Land Use Plan**

Excerpts of Romeoville’s overall Future Land Use Plan are provided in Figure 2-3, specifically illustrating the land use recommendations for Downtown Romeoville and the East Side. Downtown Romeoville is designated as Spartan Plaza Redevelopment, which generally calls for traditional mixed use development in a pedestrian-scaled environment with public spaces and amenities.

## RECOMMENDATIONS RELATING TO DOWNTOWN, TRANSIT &amp; THE EAST SIDE

21 OUT OF 77 TOTAL RECOMMENDATIONS OUTLINED IN THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

- Work with the RTA to develop the proposed Metra commuter station at 135<sup>th</sup> Street into the hub of a village-wide transit system.*
- Encourage transit-oriented development along the Weber Road and IL 53 corridors in the Village.*
- Work with Metra to provide convenient commuter train service to the proposed 135<sup>th</sup> Street station.*
- Develop an interconnected network of thoroughfares in the Village and throughout Village neighborhoods.*
- Make travel through Romeoville a pleasant experience by increasing the efficiency of the network and improving the physical environment along thoroughfares.*
- Redevelop and transform the Spartan Plaza into the new Town Center.*
- Exploit the potential Metra commuter station by developing a transit-oriented neighborhood east of New Avenue.*
- Develop estate neighborhood north of Donovan Road, and in the vicinity of Big Run Golf Course on 135<sup>th</sup> Street.*
- Encourage mixed-use neighborhoods, development, and buildings in the Village.*
- Provide the widest choice of housing opportunities possible in the Village.*
- Physically link Romeoville neighborhoods to Heritage Corridor recreation trails.*
- Preserve and protect the natural areas in the Village.*
- Develop an extensive interconnected off-street recreational trail system linking regional recreation facilities and Village neighborhoods.*
- Incorporate pieces of Romeoville's heritage in public and private development, buildings, and public spaces.*
- Redevelop the Spartan Plaza in a new Town Center with retail, office, and civic uses and public spaces on pedestrian friendly streets.*
- Encourage the design and construction of commercial and industrial development to provide a hospitable pedestrian environment, mixed-use buildings, public amenities, and more visually attractive appearance.*
- Develop corridor improvement plans for each of the primary corridors into Romeoville to address building placement, landscaping, signs and general appearance of development and thoroughfare improvements along Weber Road, IL 53, Joliet Road, 135<sup>th</sup> Street, Normantown Road, Airport Road, Taylor Road, and Renwick Road.*
- Make Village thoroughfares more attractive by requiring landscaping, landscaped medians, attractive lighting, and other visual amenities.*
- Provide a wide variety of housing choices in the Village.*
- Exploit the economic development opportunities that lie along the IL 53 corridor, particularly in connection with the Heritage Corridor and the historic US 66 by-way.*
- Exploit the economic development opportunities connected to the proposed Metra commuter station and other land lying east of the waterways.*

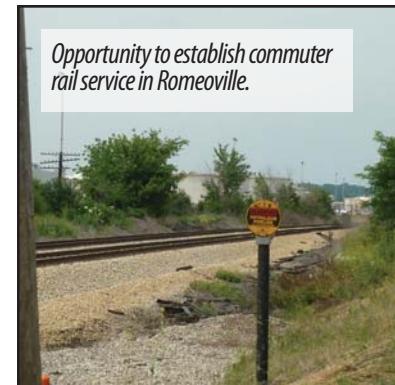
Source: Village of Romeoville Comprehensive Plan.



Source: Teska Associates, Inc.



Source: Teska Associates, Inc.



Source: Teska Associates, Inc.

FIGURE 2-2

## Recommendations for Implementing the Romeoville Vision Statement

**LAND USE KEY**

AS DEFINED BY THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

- (A) Spartan Plaza Redevelopment
- (B) Metra Station Development
- (C) Mixed Use
- (D) Estate Neighborhoods
- (E) Detached Residential Neighborhoods
- (F) Attached Residential Neighborhoods
- (G) Heritage Neighborhoods
- (H) Active Adult Neighborhoods
- (I) Commercial
- (J) Business Services
- (K) Basic Industry
- (L) Manufacturing / Production / Assembly
- (M) Conservation
- (N) Open Lands
- (O) Parks
- (P) Civic

★ Proposed Metra Site (as shown in Comp Plan)

● Downtown Romeoville



Source: Village of Romeoville Comprehensive Plan.

FIGURE 2-3

**Excerpts from the Romeoville Future Land Use Plan**

While it is anticipated that the Spartan Plaza Redevelopment concept is still desired in some form, the market assessment in Section 5 and existing redevelopment proposals in the Village's pipeline will ultimately dictate how Downtown Romeoville will evolve.

The East Side has a greater likelihood of diverging from the land use recommendations outlined in the Comprehensive Plan. The Future Land Use Plan outlines a diverse set of land use designations for the East Side, calling for the Metra site development, mixed use near the Metra site, open lands and conservation areas, and a mix of residential uses at different types and densities. Development of the Metra site will still be pursued; however, this planning process for the East Side will explore in greater detail the coverage character, and intensity of transit oriented development near the Metra site. Residential and open space/conservation opportunities will also be evaluated, but may follow an altered configuration to be more supportive of the development and linkage concepts to be explored for the TOD.



Serving as a local landmark for the community, the High Road Bible Church in the original Romeo settlement is the only institutional use located on Romeoville's East Side.

## Downtown Master Plan

Originally established in the mid 1960's, the development and redevelopment of Downtown Romeoville have been studied at various points throughout its history, with the 2003 Downtown Master Plan being the most recent complete study conducted. The comprehensive downtown plan identifies the key assets and issues that characterized Downtown Romeoville at the time of the study. Although the plan outlines a series of initiatives and a progressive implementation process (see Figure 2-4), many of the is-

sues identified in the plan persist. In addition, changes in the local and national economies and the growth of other commercial area competitors, such as the Weber Road corridor, have exacerbated some of the issues in Downtown Romeoville.

With the emergence of Romeoville's municipal campus and the potential to establish a new Metra station and TOD area on the East Side, there is momentum in the community to allocate some of its focus on reviving the downtown redevelopment efforts. With the economy still awaiting a sub-

### DOWNTOWN INITIATIVES

AS DEFINED IN THE 2003 DOWNTOWN MASTER PLAN

- Create a more viable, walkable shopping experience
- Introduce additional residents to the area
- Create a compelling space for socializing and community events
- Improve resident and visitor hospitality
- Improve overall appearance
- Program and promote the downtown

### IMPLEMENTATION

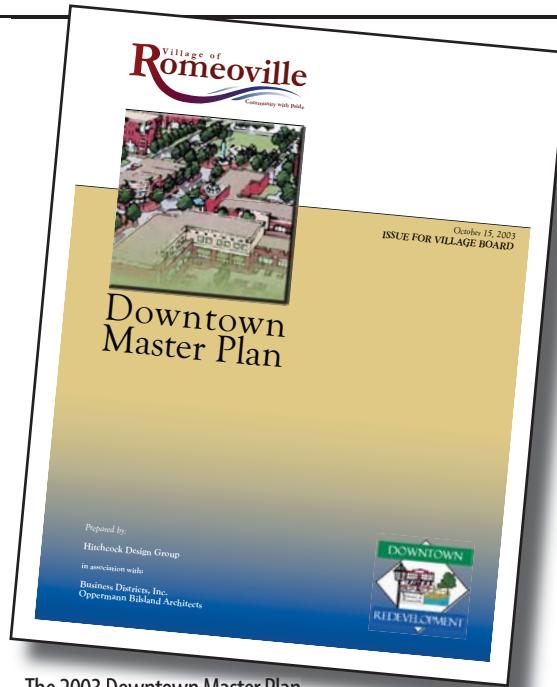
AS DEFINED IN THE 2003 DOWNTOWN MASTER PLAN

- Public Policy
- Implementation Team
- Funding
- Property Acquisition
- Owner / Developer Liaison
- Design, Engineering, Permitting
- Construction Coordination
- Public Relations
- Evaluation

Source: Village of Romeoville 2003 Downtown Master Plan.

FIGURE 2-4

## Downtown Initiatives & Implementation Recommendation Topics



The 2003 Downtown Master Plan is currently being revisited to consider updated redevelopment concepts.

Updated land use development concepts relating to Downtown will be taken into consideration as the present planning process explores potential opportunities for the renewed revitalization efforts of Downtown Romeoville.

stantial positive upswing, the present is the perfect time to prepare renewed ideas for Downtown Romeoville to keep it ready for future redevelopment. The recent proposal for the Land and Lakes Real Estate Company to become the lead developer of the downtown redevelopment project is certainly a strong indicator that the decision to revisit the Downtown Master Plan and formulate updated strategies was sensible and timely.

The consultants who originally drafted the 2003 Downtown Master Plan have maintained their relationship with the Village, having recently submitted a series of draft land use configuration concepts for Downtown. These concepts, along with any other ideas and concepts relating to Downtown, will be taken into consideration as the present

planning process explores potential opportunities for the renewed revitalization efforts of Downtown Romeoville.

The present planning process is not intended to duplicate past or concurrent efforts to formulate strategies for Downtown Romeoville. Rather, the current process will integrate concepts from other entities where appropriate and offer balance by recommending new strategies that have yet to be examined and are deemed feasible in the marketplace.

## Transportation-Related Documents

The Transportation Assessment in Section 4 covers the relevant findings from transportation documents that pertain to roadway, rail, bus, and trails access.



*The intersection of IL Route 53 and Normantown Road serves as a gateway into the Village and the downtown area. Enhancing this gateway can be a significant part of the Village's ongoing streetscaping efforts.*

# Planning & Urban Design Assessment

## 3

### SECTION

# T

This section provides an overview of general planning and urban design elements that have a significant influence on the character and evolution of Downtown Romeoville and the Village's East Side. In particular, land use, zoning, environmental characteristics, utilities, sustainability, and community character are assessed in this section.

## Existing Land Use

The existing land use composition of the overall Study Area is unique in that it is characterized by the various forms of settlement and development patterns that define Romeoville's history. While the Study Area boasts the original Romeo settlement, it also includes the expansive CITGO refinery site, suburban development patterns around the 135<sup>th</sup> Street / IL Route 53 intersection, and a non-traditional

downtown area that is more like a sprawling suburban retail strip center than a dense hub of the community's civic, retail, residential, and public uses.

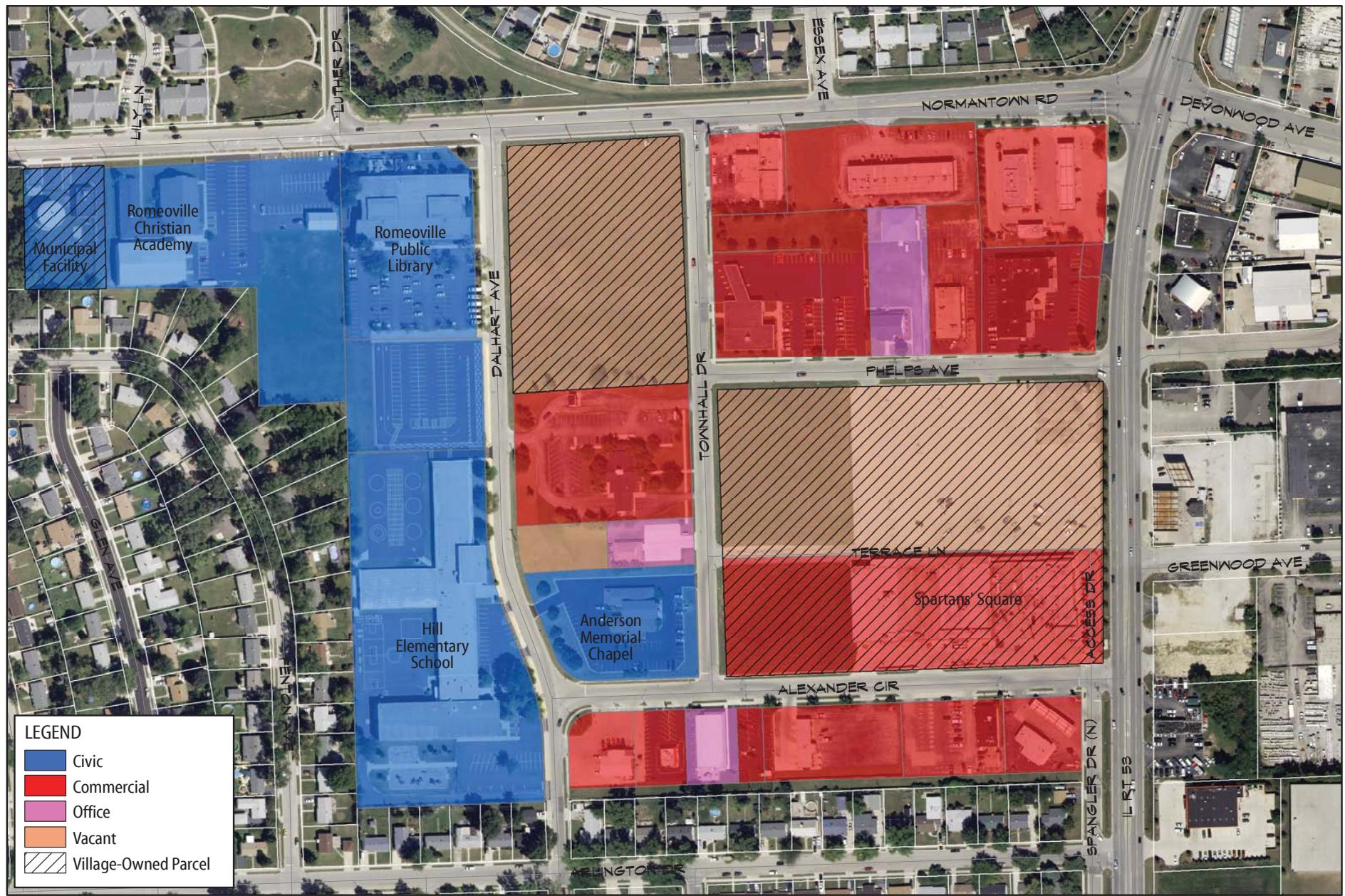
Each of the two focus areas – Downtown Romeoville and the Village's East Side – has its own distinct existing land use composition as described below and illustrated in Figures 3-1 and 3-2.

### Land Uses: Downtown

Downtown Romeoville is primarily characterized by commercial uses, including financial services, retail businesses, and a funeral home. The commercial core of Downtown Romeoville is more commonly referred to as Spartans' Square. Non-commercial uses, such as Romeoville Public Library, Hill Elementary School, and Romeoville Christian Academy,



Hill Elementary School (top left) and Romeoville Public Library (top right) may serve as long-term fixtures in the downtown landscape. Harris Bank's iconic dome building (bottom center) may also serve a prominent function in downtown's evolution, even if the building tenant changes.



Source: Teska Associates, Inc.; field work conducted on July 15, 2011.

0 50 100 200  
Feet

FIGURE 3-1  
Existing Land Use Map | DOWNTOWN AREA

East Side Plan | Village of Romeoville, Illinois



FIGURE 3-2

## Existing Land Use Map | EAST SIDE TOD AREA

East Side Plan | Village of Romeoville, Illinois

are also located in Downtown Romeoville. Although some of the commercial spaces are occupied, many of the units are currently vacant and under Village ownership. There are also a few vacant parcels.

Most of the existing downtown uses do not relate well to each other, to the street, or to the pedestrian experience. Well-established neighborhoods to the north, west, and south maintain a substantial residential market for Downtown Romeoville. The absence of stormwater detention ponds in an area dominated by impervious surfaces has contributed to flooding problems during major storm events.

### Land Uses: East Side

Although the Village's East Side includes the original Romeo settlement, it did not become the Village's central focal point. Many of the original structures of the Romeo settlement remain today in a small enclave south of 135<sup>th</sup> Street and east

of New Avenue. The CN Railroad cuts through the area following along New Avenue and providing the opportunity for the proposed Metra station and TOD. The CITGO refinery is the most prominent use, with its facilities situated north of 135<sup>th</sup> Street on both sides of the CN Railroad. Across the street from the main CITGO facilities sits additional parking and staging areas, as well as the proposed Metra site.

Big Run Golf Club is another prominent use at the southwest corner of 135<sup>th</sup> Street and Smith Road. Significant open space and recreational areas include the Romeoville Prairie Nature Preserve<sup>3</sup> and Isle a la Cache Museum<sup>4</sup> along the Des Plaines River, Bambrick Park<sup>5</sup> off of Smith Road, an equestrian facility along 143<sup>rd</sup> Street, and Long Run Seep Nature Preserve<sup>6</sup> around the 143<sup>rd</sup> Street/High Road intersection. Aside from a concrete business, Enbridge pipeline station, the Old Orchard Lane neighborhood, and a few other residential enclaves, the remainder of the East Side is comprised of general open space or vacant land.

Further west, Midwest Generation's Will County Generating Station has a major presence south of 135<sup>th</sup> Street along the western bank of the Chicago Sanitary and Ship Canal. The north side of 135<sup>th</sup> Street includes the trailhead for Centennial Trail (Schneider's Passage) and the trail's historic swing bridge. Within the Des Plaines River sits an island, which is home to Isle a la Cache Museum and a portion of the Romeoville Prairie Nature Preserve. Vinckus Memorial Park lies on the river's western bank.

ComEd right-of-way corridors are another prominent use on the East Side, with the looming electrical transmission towers cascading along the rolling topography while also preserving open spaces for wildlife and potential recreational purposes.

<sup>3</sup> Owned and maintained by the Forest Preserve District of Will County.

<sup>4</sup> Owned and maintained by the Forest Preserve District of Will County.

<sup>5</sup> Owned and maintained by the Lemont Park District.

<sup>6</sup> Owned and maintained by the Illinois Department of Natural Resources.



Source: Bing Maps.

*Anchoring the southwest corner of 135<sup>th</sup> Street and Smith Road, Big Run Golf Club provides not only recreational activity but also a pristine terrain that integrates well with the natural landscape. Whether it remains a golf course or lends itself for redevelopment, the property is a gem on the East Side.*

The D-D zoning district is intended to create an environment that reflects the characteristics typically displayed by a traditional downtown, particularly creating a distinctive, walkable neighborhood that features a variety and concentration of destinations and activities.

Contrasting from its current suburban-style physical layout, the D-D zoning district establishes standards for elements intended to make Downtown Romeoville more pedestrian-friendly and reflective of a traditional downtown.

## Zoning

The underlying zoning for both focus areas of the Study Area are described below and illustrated in Figure 3-3. While the descriptions below provide a snapshot of the current zoning situation in Downtown Romeoville and the East Side, the Zoning Code will be revisited as the East Side Plan continues to evolve throughout this planning process to ensure concepts and are supported by the Village's zoning regulations. If necessary, modifications to the Zoning Code may also be among the East Side Plan's recommendations to facilitate implementation of the final approved plan.

### Zoning: Downtown

In terms of zoning, Downtown Romeoville is designated as a Downtown District (D-D). The D-D District is intended to create an environment that reflects the characteristics typically displayed by a traditional downtown, particularly creating "a distinctive, walkable neighborhood that features a variety and concentration of valuable destinations and activities" that includes "a more viable, walkable shopping experience" offering additional residential opportunities and captivating and friendly public spaces with an attractive physical appearance.<sup>7</sup>



With a Downtown District (D-D) zoning designation, redevelopment efforts for Downtown Romeoville will focus on creating a built environment that resembles a more traditional downtown with buildings that relate well to the street and the pedestrian scale -- both of which are presently lacking.

To encourage a diverse mix of uses that define a typical downtown, the D-D District allows for a variety of permitted uses, including retail, dining and entertainment, service, office, personal care, institutional, and residential uses. A few uses are allowed as special uses, including apartments above ground floor commercial, multi-story residential condominiums, and pubs or restaurants that sell alcohol.

In addition to outlining permitted and special uses, the D-D District also defines physical attributes that can strongly influence how Downtown Romeoville is redeveloped. Today, Downtown Romeoville is defined by a more suburban layout exhibiting large building setbacks, expansive parking areas, and a general lack of cohesiveness among the existing sites, structures, and uses. Contrasting from this current physical layout, the D-D District establishes standards for the following elements that are intended to make Downtown Romeoville more pedestrian-friendly and reflective of a traditional downtown:

- **Building setbacks.** Downtown buildings "will be located close to the street to foster an animated, pedestrian-friendly environment."<sup>8</sup>
- **Building massing & form.** Downtown "shall be reminiscent of a traditional downtown with a variety of different stores and buildings constructed"<sup>9</sup> that shall have a strong relationship to the street and variations in the vertical and horizontal planes to reduce monotony.

7 Source: Section 159.76(A) of the Village of Romeoville Zoning Code.

8 Source: Section 159.76(C)(2) of the Village of Romeoville Zoning Code.

9 Source: Section 159.76(C)(3) of the Village of Romeoville Zoning Code.

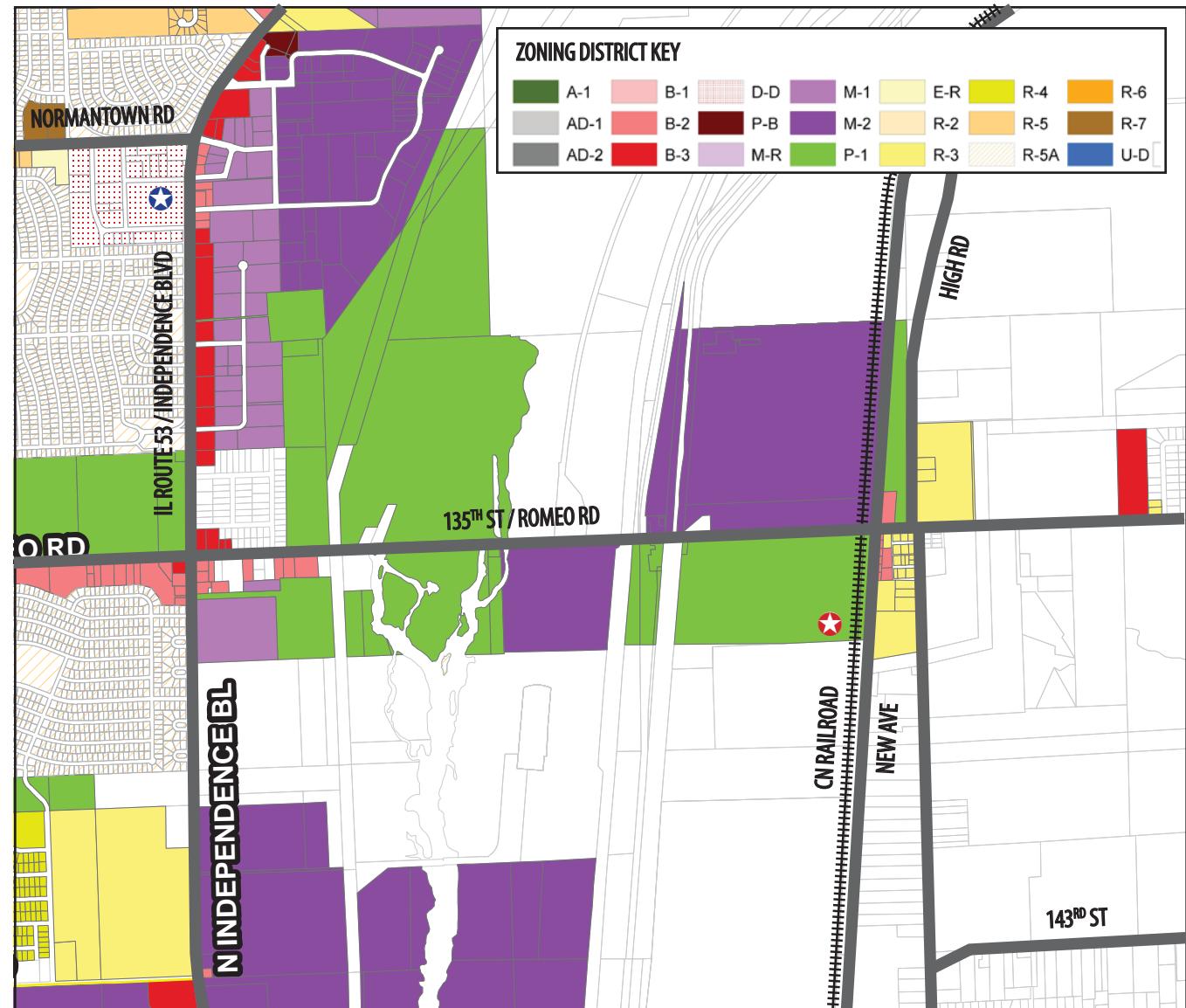
**ZONING DISTRICT KEY**

AS DEFINED BY THE 2010 OFFICIAL ZONING MAP

A-1	Agricultural
E-R	Single Family Estate Residential (1 ac)
R-1	Single Family Residential (20,000 sq ft)
R-2	Single Family Residential (15,000 sq ft)
R-3	Single Family Residential (10,000 sq ft)
R-4	Single Family Residential (8,000 sq ft)
R-5	Single Family Residential (6,500 sq ft)
R-5A	Single Family Residential (6,000 sq ft)
R-6	Attached Residential (5,500 sq ft)
R-7	General Residential (4,500 sq ft)
B-1	Local Shopping
B-2	Community Shopping
B-3	Highway / Regional Shopping
B-4	Automotive Service
P-1	Public / Private Land Conservation
P-B	Planned Business
D-D	Downtown
M-R	Manufacturing - Research
M-1	Light / Medium Manufacturing
M-2	Medium / Heavy Manufacturing
AD-1	Airport I
AD-2	Airport II
U-D	University
FP-1	Flood Plain Overlay

★ Proposed Metra Site

● Downtown Romeoville



Source: Village of Romeoville Official Zoning Map, 2010.

FIGURE 3-3

**Zoning Map | DOWNTOWN AREA & EAST SIDE TOD AREA**

East Side Plan | Village of Romeoville, Illinois

This planning process is intended to design a conceptual master plan for the East Side, which holds the potential to recommend certain parcels to be rezoned, designated for special uses, or designated as a Planned Unit Development (PUD).

**□ Architecture.** A variety of complimentary urban architectural themes shall be encouraged to create a distinct character for Downtown Romeoville. Buildings are also encouraged to exhibit 360° architecture, which is intended to provide attractive and quality physical appeal on all sides of the building.

**□ Pedestrian-friendly streetscape.** Elements such as ground floor orientation, sidewalk design, detailed building features, and pedestrian-scale elements (signage, lighting, landscaping, etc.) are encouraged to create a streetscape that is more inviting and usable by pedestrians and bicyclists.

While the existing Zoning Code is generally supportive of downtown redevelopment as outlined in the 2003 Downtown Master Plan, certain zoning regulations for the D-D District may need to be reviewed and possibly modified as a more detailed master plan is developed as part of this planning process and the concurrent master plan update (conducted by Hitchcock Design Group). Potential zoning modifications will be explored as recommendations are prepared for Downtown later in the planning process.

#### Zoning: East Side

As summarized in Figure 3-4, the East Side is characterized by a combination of zoning designations which are gener-

ally consistent with the underlying land use, but also portend potential land uses.

Overall, the existing zoning on Romeoville's East Side is generally defined by a piecemeal approach following the underlying land uses which developed over time as separate uses and not part of a cohesive master plan. This planning process, however, is intended to design a conceptual master plan for the East Side, particularly contemplating the optimal land uses and multi-modal transportation network for the area near the proposed Metra station. Concepts for the East Side hold the potential to recommend certain parcels to be rezoned, designated for special uses, or designated as a Planned Unit Development (PUD).

Designation as a PUD is generally appropriate for a TOD, particularly as defined by Romeoville's Zoning Code, which intends a PUD to "encourage and promote a more creative, imaginative and an environmentally sensitive design for the development of land"<sup>10</sup> by allowing greater flexibility in applying the standards of conventional zoning.

#### Unincorporated Areas

A significant portion of the East Side is situated within unincorporated Will County (approximately 1,600 acres). An-

<sup>10</sup> Source: Section 159.150(B) of the Village of Romeoville Zoning Code.

nexion of unincorporated parcels will be worth exploring, as it would facilitate greater control of implementing the final approved East Side Plan and provision of municipal utilities and services. Annexation would also add the new properties to the municipal tax base in Romeoville.

With Lemont, Homer Glen, and Lockport bordering Romeoville's East Side to the north, east, and south, respectively, the Village will need to consult its boundary agreements and coordinate with these neighboring communities to determine the appropriate measures for annexation and proposed development of properties along shared boundaries. For example, most properties located south of 135<sup>th</sup> Street between New Avenue and Smith Road are within Lockport's jurisdiction as dictated by the boundary agreement.

In addition, Romeoville's Facilities Planning Area (FPA) boundary extends south to 143<sup>rd</sup> Street but excludes two parcels located at the immediate northwest corner of 143<sup>rd</sup> Street and Smith Road, which borders Lockport's jurisdiction. As a result, preparing development plans for these particular areas will require coordination between Romeoville and Lockport.



Source: Tekla Associates, Inc.

Many existing homes on the Village's East Side, including most in the Old Orchard neighborhood, are currently unincorporated.

**M-2: MEDIUM / HEAVY MANUFACTURING DISTRICT**

- EXISTING USES:** CITGO refinery; Midwest Generation coal-generated power station
- POTENTIAL:** While a zoning district that allows for medium/heavy manufacturing and similar industrial uses is atypical of an area slated for a future TOD, the M-2 designations will remain as is for the CITGO refinery and the Midwest Generation facility as long as both businesses stay at their present locations, as both are viable uses in the Study Area and contribute significantly to the local employment base. Aside from these two businesses, no new properties are anticipated to carry the M-2 designation.

**P-1: PUBLIC / PRIVATE LAND CONSERVATION DISTRICT**

- EXISTING USES:** Vacant parcels, recreational areas, open space, or land under Forest Preserve jurisdiction
- POTENTIAL:** Vacant parcels, including the proposed Metra site and surrounding area, that hold the potential to be developed will be considered for rezoning to a more suitable zoning designation to be more appropriately reflective of the new land uses. Properties that are presently utilized for recreation and active open space, particularly along the Des Plaines River and I&M Canal, will maintain the P-1 designation. Even new uses may continue to maintain the P-1 designation; for example, the rural nature of the East Side and an existing equestrian center along 143<sup>rd</sup> Street may indicate the potential for other equestrian-focused uses, such as riding stables, which are permitted in a P-1 zone.

**R-3: SINGLE FAMILY RESIDENTIAL DISTRICT (MAXIMUM 10,000 SQ FT LOT SIZE)**

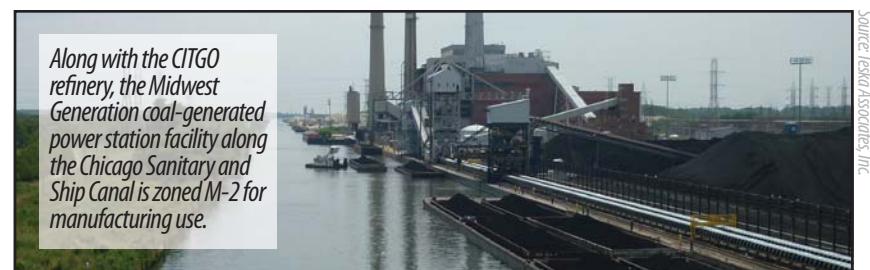
- EXISTING USES:** Existing residences, including those within the original Romeo settlement
- POTENTIAL:** An R-3 District generally allows for greater opportunities for open space, recreational facilities, and pedestrian access, which are all features that are fitting for an innovative TOD that respects the unique qualities of the East Side. Shifting from the traditional high density, mixed use TOD, Romeoville's TOD would still focus on the proposed transit facilities but also encourage conserving open spaces, creating pedestrian and bicycle connections, and providing for increased housing opportunities to support transit. While maintaining the R-3 designation would ensure compatibility with existing residential uses, there is potential to explore other residential zoning designations to support varying residential types that are appropriate for the area and can be supported by the market.

**B-2: COMMUNITY SHOPPING DISTRICT**

- EXISTING USES:** A few parcels at the northeast and southeast corners of the 135<sup>th</sup> Street/ New Avenue intersection
- POTENTIAL:** A CITGO gas station is currently situated at the northeast corner, while a combination of undeveloped parcels and single family residential homes are located at the southeast corner. As defined in the Zoning Code, the B-2 designation is appropriate for this location as it provides for commercial uses at a major intersection. The intersection will become even more prominent as it is most proximate to the proposed Metra site, creating potential opportunities for commercial businesses that cater to commuters. The B-2 designation may also apply to other areas on the East Side, such as the southwest corner of 135<sup>th</sup> Street and New Avenue, which is even more proximate to the proposed Metra site. The 135<sup>th</sup> Street/Smith Road intersection also holds the potential for commercial uses and the B-2 zoning designation, particularly as the eastern gateway into the TOD area and the Village as a whole.

**B-3: HIGHWAY / REGIONAL SHOPPING DISTRICT**

- EXISTING USES:** A few parcels at the northeast and southeast corners of the 135<sup>th</sup> Street/ New Avenue intersection
- POTENTIAL:** While the B-3 designation may be appropriate given the size of the parcel and its location along a major road, the future zoning designation of this parcel may be reassessed based on the conceptual development plan to be recommended for the East Side. It is possible that the B-3 designation will remain as is; however, rezoning may be needed to fit the future land use strategy, particularly as it relates to developing the East Side as a TOD.



Source: Village of Romeoville Official Zoning Map & Zoning Code, 2010.

FIGURE 3-4

**Zoning Designations | EAST SIDE TOD AREA**

## Environmental Characteristics

Whereas Downtown Romeoville is mostly built out with intentions to redevelop, the East Side is partly built out with greenfields that represent potential areas for new development. However, whether its redevelopment or new development, the environmental characteristics of each focus area will play a critical role in assessing how Downtown Romeoville and the East Side will each evolve.

### Topography

Downtown Romeoville has a relatively even topography, save for a few high spots along Normantown Road. Flooding has become an issue at certain spots within Downtown Romeoville, although this may be less an issue with topography and more an issue with the adequacy of an aging utility infrastructure and an extensive amount of impervious surfaces. However, topography may play a role in deter-

mining the optimal locations for any new stormwater management elements, such as detention ponds and updated stormwater pipelines.

Topography is more prominent on the East Side, with the most substantial topographic change sloping upward from west to east around the 135<sup>th</sup> Street/New Avenue intersection. A significant bluff runs along the east side of New Avenue, creating a major drop-off in topography and dramatic westward views. The landscape is defined by rolling topography in the area located between New Avenue and Smith Road. A series of creeks that run through the area located south of 135<sup>th</sup> Street and east of New Avenue create a range of bluffs that progressively raise the topography in a southeasterly direction, creating remarkable views of the overall landscape looking north and east. The rolling topography near the southwest corner of 135<sup>th</sup> Street and Smith Road were cleverly integrated into the golf course

design of the Big Run Golf Club. Although not an intense change in slope, the topography along the railroad tracks is significant enough to create a visual contrast relative to the proposed Metra site to the west, which would create some unique views between the tracks and the Metra station and commuter parking lot.

The significant topographic changes on the East Side will be a major factor in developing conceptual plans to maximize site lines at high points, identify stormwater management facilities at low points, and incorporate topographic attributes into site designs. Integrating the rolling topography and its spectacular views will play a vital part in maintaining the pastoral character of Romeoville's East Side, even as it introduces sensibly designed development into the landscape to support the proposed TOD.



The rolling topography that defines the East Side is quite apparent at various points, including along roadways like High Road (left), within the Big Run Golf Club property (center), and along the ComEd right-of-way (right). Topography will play a critical role in how the East Side evolves.



Source: Telsa Associates, Inc.

The rolling topography of the East Side is prominent along this west-bound stretch of 135<sup>th</sup> Street between High Road and the CN Railroad. Along with the dense tree cover, the bluff created by this topographic rise helps separate the CITGO refinery from the rest of the East Side.

## Water Elements

The East Side is defined by various water elements. Although located outside the primary East Side focus area, the Des Plaines River is the most prominent water element. Given its distance from the Metra site, the Des Plaines River will have a limited impact on how the TOD area will evolve. However, the river provides opportunities for trail and recreational linkages to the TOD. These trail linkages to, from, and across the Des Plaines River may also present opportunities to form the broader link between the East Side and Downtown Romeoville.

Two man-made water elements -- the Chicago Sanitary and Ship Canal and I&M Canal -- both run in a north-south direction before extending eastward around the CITGO refinery. The Chicago Sanitary and Ship Canal is presently utilized for water-based transportation purposes, generally for the movement of barges and other commercial/industrial freight. Although transportation operations ceased in 1933, the I&M Canal still remains as a significant element in the Chicago region's landscape, particularly offering a historic link to the past and opportunities for recreational trails along the canal channels. The Centennial Trail/I&M Canal Trail runs along the west side of the I&M Canal providing a 12.5-mile path stretching from Joliet north to the Will County/Cook County border.

Bruce Lake, formerly known as Romeo Beach, is located immediately west of the proposed Metra site and east of the I&M Canal. A few small ponds are interspersed throughout the area.

A series of creeks run through the East Side, some of which create a range of bluffs that progressively elevate the area's

Existing and future trail linkages along local water elements, such as the I&M Canal and Des Plaines River, present opportunities to form the broader link between the East Side and Downtown Romeoville.

topography in a southeasterly direction and produce dramatic views of the overall landscape to the north and east. Long Run Creek is the most prominent creek because it not only spans across multiple communities, but also feeds into the large wetland area located south of the Metra site between the two railroads. This is significant because this particular wetland area serves as a conservation area for the endangered Hine's emerald dragonfly.

These water elements offer the potential to integrate well-designed water-related features (e.g. bridges, culverts,

docks, educational facilities, waterfront trails and trail connections, etc.) into the site designs for the proposed TOD and East Side. Proposed site designs shall also carefully consider how these water elements will be protected, whether they are enhanced with water features or left as is.

Water elements are illustrated in the Environmental Features Map in Figure 3-5. No major water elements are located in Downtown Romeoville.



Source: Tecta Associates, Inc.

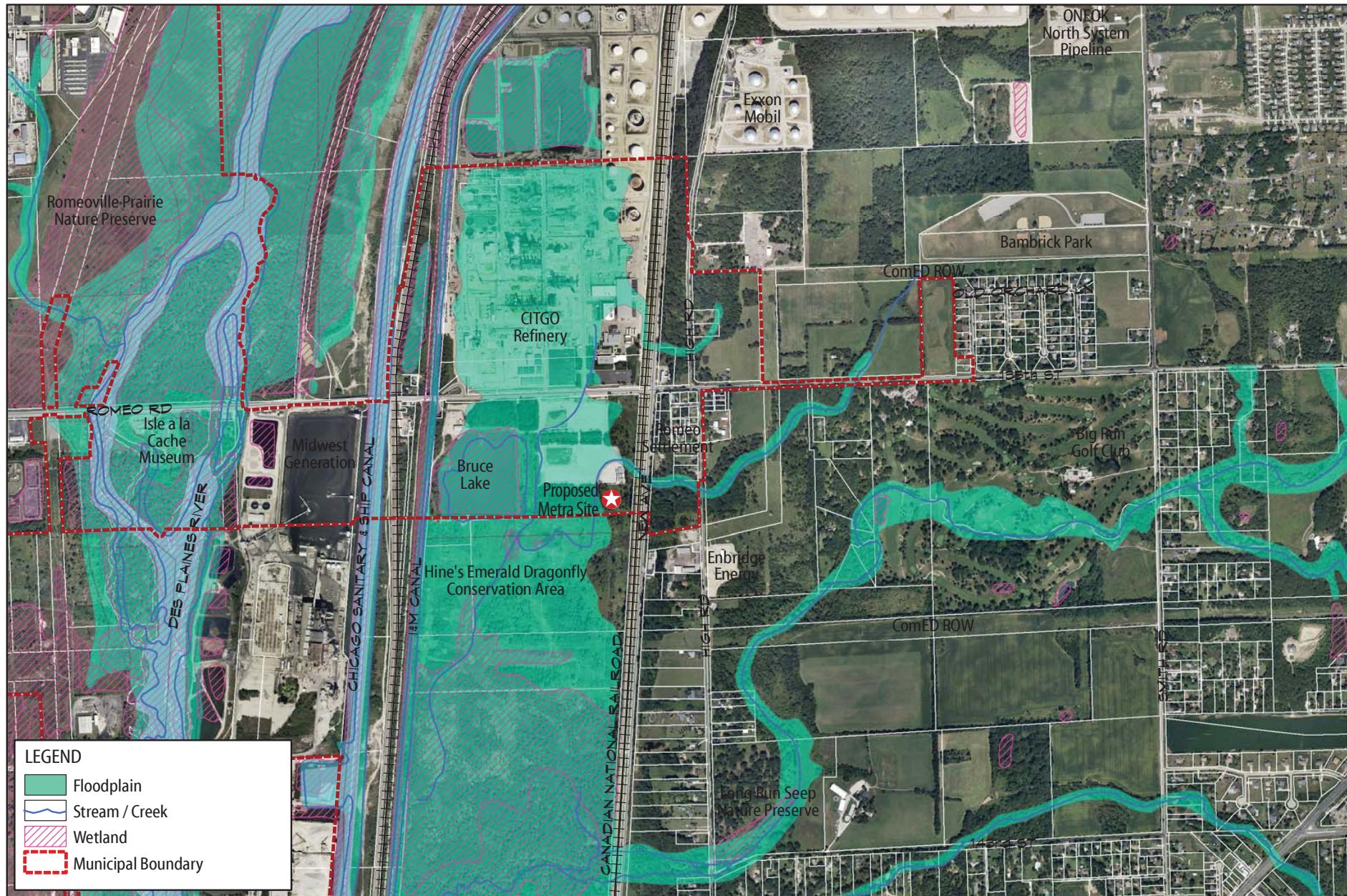


Source: Tecta Associates, Inc.

*The Des Plaines River flows along the western edge of the East Side. The natural landscape with native plantings around the riverside provides a vivid contrast to the more intensive industrial uses nearby.*

*The I&M Canal (above) is one of two canals traversing through the East Side, with the other being the Chicago Sanitary and Ship Canal. Though no longer active, the I&M Canal offers a recreational trail along its banks.*

NORTH ▲



Source: Teska Associates, Inc.; field work conducted on July 15, 2011.

0 250 500 1,000  
Feet



FIGURE 3-5  
Environmental Features Map

## Wetlands

Large wetland areas appear along the Des Plaines River, Chicago Sanitary and Ship Canal, and I&M Canal. As previously described, the large wetland area located south of the Metra site between the two railroads is highly significant to the region, as it is designated as a conservation area for the Hine's emerald dragonfly, which thrive in the marshy conditions created by wetlands. A few smaller wetlands are scattered throughout the area east of the CN Railroad. Many of the wetlands are located near local streams and within floodplains.

Large or small, wetlands provide vital benefits to both the natural and built environments, reinforcing the need to carefully consider how they will be integrated into the design and function of the proposed TOD and East Side.

Wetlands are illustrated in the Environmental Features Map in Figure 3-5. No wetlands are located in Downtown Romeoville.

## Floodplain

Floodplains are rather extensive on Romeoville's East Side as they are generally formed by the outflow of local wetlands, creeks, the Des Plaines River, and the two canals. Floodplains will need to be carefully taken into account as conceptual site designs are considered for the proposed TOD and East Side. In many cases, areas covered by floodplain will best be suited for non-structural development, such as parking, outdoor recreation, and open space conservation.

Floodplains are illustrated in the Environmental Features Map in Figure 3-5. No floodplains are located in Downtown Romeoville.

Big or small, wetlands provide vital benefits to both the natural and built environments, reinforcing the need to carefully consider how they will be integrated into the design and function of the proposed TOD and East Side.

## Tree Masses

Significant tree masses characterize various sections of the East Side of Romeoville. While tree preservation will be of utmost importance when considering conceptual site designs for the TOD and East Side, there may also be opportunities to judiciously remove unhealthy trees and replace them with new trees or other landscaping.

No significant tree masses are located downtown.

## Hine's Emerald Dragonfly

According to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), the Hine's emerald dragonfly was identified as an endangered

species in 1995 and steps are being taken to protect and enhance their wetland habitats, which have been compromised by urban and industrial development. The impacts of pesticides and pollutants on wetlands and the deteriorating quality of groundwater also imperil the dragonfly's capacity to breed, grow, and develop.

The Hine's emerald dragonfly typically seeks calcareous (high in calcium carbonate) spring-fed marshes, wetlands, and sedge meadows overlaying dolomite bedrock. The quarries and wetlands located on Romeoville's East Side are thus an attractive environment for the dragonfly to establish its habitat. The map excerpts in Figure 3-6 illustrate



The tree masses located along High Road towards New Avenue and the CN Railroad create a dense natural buffer between the CITGO refinery and the rest of the East Side, which rises atop a bluff along High Road and weaves among rolling topography progressing eastward.

the general areas on Romeoville's East Side that have been identified as habitat restoration areas for the Hine's emerald dragonfly. The habitat restoration area that is most proximate to the Study Area is located immediately south of the proposed Metra site between the I&M Canal and the CN Railroad.

The map excerpts in Figure 3-6 also illustrate the coverage of the broader habitat conservation planning (HCP) areas and groundwater recharge and buffer zones, as coordinated by the Biodiversity Project<sup>11</sup> and Applied Ecological Services<sup>12</sup>, Inc. and in partnership with the Village of Romeoville. In particular, Downtown Romeoville is located within the

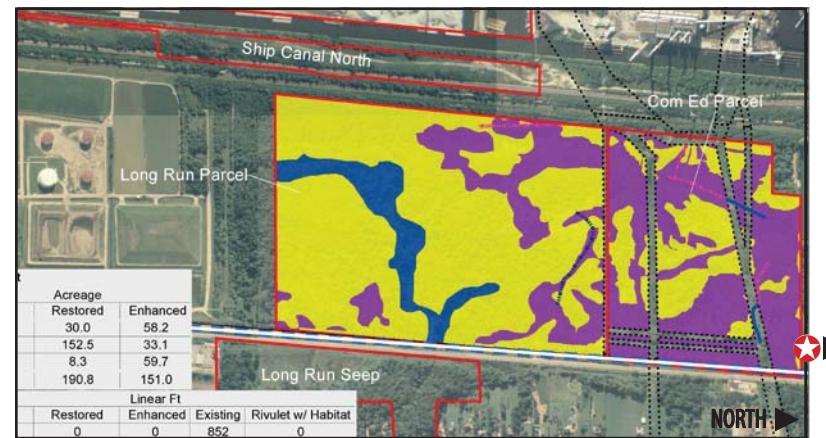
11 The Biodiversity Project is a Chicago-based organization that protects the environment through advocacy, public education, outreach, and action.

12 Applied Ecological Services, Inc. is a Wisconsin-based ecological services firm that develops land use solutions that properly balance culture, cost, and ecology.



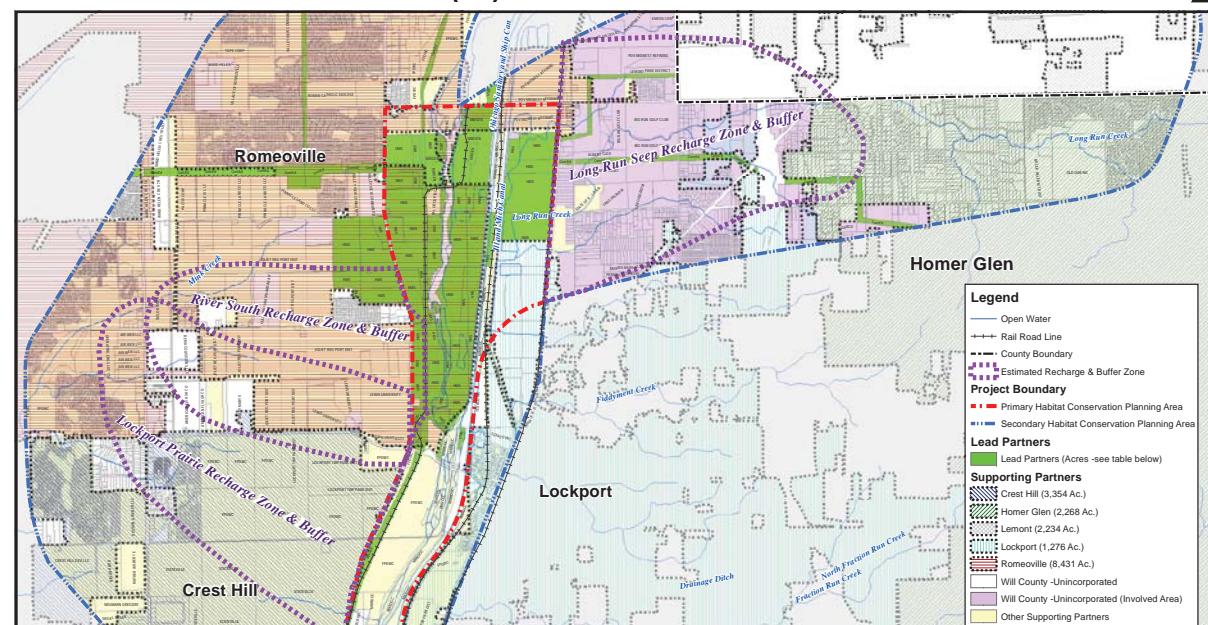
The Hine's emerald dragonfly makes its home in Romeoville.

#### DRAGONFLY HABITAT RESTORATION AREAS



The map excerpt to the left illustrates the dragonfly habitat restoration areas designated for Romeoville's East Side (yellow, blue, and purple shading). This particular area is located south of the proposed Metra station site, which is marked by the red star. The extensive wetland coverage in this area creates an ideal environment for the Hine's emerald dragonfly to thrive.

#### COVERAGE OF HABITAT CONSERVATION PLANNING (HCP) AREAS TO PROTECT DRAGONFLY HABITATS



Source: Habitat Conservation Planning Area, Applied Ecological Services, Inc., 2010.

FIGURE 3-6  
Habitat Conservation Planning (HCP) Areas | HINE'S EMERALD DRAGONFLY

secondary habitat conservation planning (HCP) area but outside any recharge and buffer zone. The East Side is split between the primary and secondary HCP areas and is mostly covered by the Long Run Seep recharge and buffer zone. The groundwater recharge and buffer zones generally indicate the areas within which Best Management Practices for shallow groundwater well recharge should be pursued.

As TOD development concepts are considered for the East Side, carefully consideration will be made to ensure the protection of the habitat restoration areas for the Hine's emerald dragonfly.

## Utilities

The availability and quality of the Village's water and wastewater utilities infrastructure varies between Downtown Romeoville and the East Side. Downtown Romeoville is served by an established but aging utilities infrastructure. On the other hand, the East Side is only partially built out and is presently served by private utilities, with the exception of limited stormwater infrastructure along 135<sup>th</sup> Street.

Below is a description of the water, wastewater, and stormwater utilities infrastructure serving the Study Area. The presence and impact of other non-municipal pipelines are also described.

<sup>13</sup> Source: Village of Romeoville 2010 Water Quality Report; Prepared by the Village Public Works Department, 2010.

<sup>14</sup> Source: Village of Romeoville 2010 Report on Water and Wastewater Service to the East Side of the Facilities Planning Area; Prepared by Robinson Engineering, September 2010.

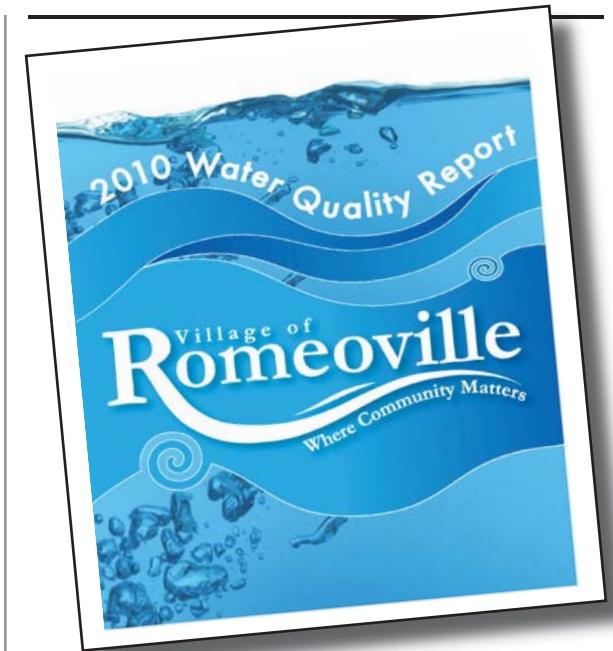
### Water Utilities

Downtown Romeoville is located within the Village's Water Plant Service Area #2 (Normantown)<sup>13</sup>, which provides an established water utility infrastructure. However, much like the building stock and site design in Downtown Romeoville, the water utilities are aging and were designed for the present configuration of downtown structures and properties. As redevelopment scenarios are considered for Downtown Romeoville, the configuration and capacity of existing water utilities will be considered to ensure a revitalized downtown is adequately provided with municipal water service.

Municipal water service serving Romeoville's East Side is limited. As proposed in the Village's 2010 Report on Water and Wastewater Service to the East Side of the Facilities Planning Area<sup>14</sup>, water service to the East Side may expand, including new 8- and 12-inch water mains extending east to Smith Road, north towards the I-355 overpass at New Avenue (to the county line), and south to 143<sup>rd</sup> Street. In addition, two alternative options were proposed for a new elevated water tank and well house. Additional water utilities may need to be considered as development concepts for the East Side are evaluated.

### Wastewater Utilities

Similar to water utilities, Downtown Romeoville is served by an established but aging wastewater utility infrastructure, particularly designed for the present configuration of downtown structures and properties. As redevelopment scenarios are considered for Downtown Romeoville, the configuration and capacity of existing wastewater utilities will be considered to ensure a revitalized downtown is adequately provided with municipal wastewater service.



In addition to maintaining the community's water utility facilities, the Village annually reports on water quality in Romeoville. Future development of the East Side may require new areas to assess and serve.

Like water service, municipal wastewater service serving Romeoville's East Side is limited. The Village's 2010 Report on Water and Wastewater Service to the East Side of the Facilities Planning Area<sup>15</sup> indicates that Romeoville's existing wastewater treatment facility will likely have sufficient permitted remaining capacity to handle the 20-year project

<sup>15</sup> Source: Village of Romeoville 2010 Report on Water and Wastewater Service to the East Side of the Facilities Planning Area; Prepared by Robinson Engineering, September 2010.



As new development is considered for the East Side, water and wastewater utilities will need to be extended to properly serve new uses. For example, a potential force main along 135<sup>th</sup> Street would link to the Village's existing wastewater treatment facility near the Des Plaines River.

flows within the entire FPA, accounting for development growth scenarios defined in the report. However, additional capacity may need to be added to the wastewater treatment facility to adequately handle operational remaining capacity<sup>16</sup> as the East Side builds out over time.

Even if the Water and Wastewater Service Report indicated no need for additional capacity, the capacity of existing wastewater utilities on the East Side should still be monitored as development concepts for the East Side are assessed.

<sup>16</sup> Operational remaining capacity is typically the better indicator as it is based on actual hydraulic and organic loadings on the wastewater treatment facility and thus reflects actual capacity; on the other hand, permitted operational remaining capacity relates to capacity levels permitted by the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency (IEPA). [Source: Village of Romeoville 2010 Report on Water and Wastewater Service to the East Side of the Facilities Planning Area; Prepared by Robinson Engineering, September 2010.]

To accommodate potential development growth on the East Side, the Water and Wastewater Service Report recommends potential expansion of wastewater service to the East Side, including new drainage interceptors. Three options are proposed to convey and treat wastewater from the East Side as new development justifies the cost:

- **Option 1.** Install a new 16-inch force main is proposed along 135<sup>th</sup> Street that would extend west from a proposed lift station to the Village's existing wastewater treatment facility, which is located near the southeast corner of 135<sup>th</sup> Street and IL Route 53.
- **Option 2.** Establish a new wastewater treatment facility near the natural drainage point near the I&M Canal, which would preclude the need for any new lift stations on the East Side.
- **Option 3.** Convey wastewater to the City of Lockport for treatment, which may not be a viable option due to issues relating to availability of a nearby treatment facility, need for additional infrastructure, and related costs. In the end, costs may make Options 1 or 2 more feasible.

Property acquisition would be necessary for either Option 1 or 2 to establish the new facilities. The Water and Wastewater Service Report ultimately recommends Option 1 as the most cost effective solution which minimizes additional infrastructure construction and utilizes existing available wastewater treatment capacity.

### **Stormwater Management**

The 2003 Downtown Master Plan documented the stormwater management issues that have troubled Downtown Romeoville. Built decades before contemporary stormwater management techniques and best practices, downtown infrastructure has constrained abilities to properly handle stormwater. The extensive amount of parking with impervious surfaces left unmitigated by the lack of landscaping also contributes to the volume of stormwater runoff generated by downtown uses, particularly the Spartan Square site.

As the downtown master plan update, which is being conducted by Hitchcock Design Group concurrently with the East Side Plan, develops new conceptual site designs for Downtown Romeoville, modern stormwater management techniques will be explored to curtail flooding problems like

To accommodate potential development growth on the East Side, the the Village's Water and Wastewater Service Report recommends potential expansion of wastewater service to the East Side.

the major flooding event in July 2003. Some stormwater management best practices also offer the added value of beautifying the built environment with attractive landscaping and better engineered sites.

Since the East Side is not built out to the extent of the downtown area, stormwater management planning must be integrated with long range plans. The extensive amount of water bodies, wetlands, and floodplains provide natural opportunities for better stormwater management. As development concepts are considered for the TOD and East Side, stormwater management best practices will need to be integrated into site designs to minimize flooding problems in an organized manner.

Encouraging stormwater management practices that specifically replenish groundwater on the East Side will also provide the added benefit of improving the natural habitat of the Hine's emerald dragonfly.



*The Enbridge Energy Lockport Station, which is located along High Road near the original Romeo settlement, is one of the national companies that operate pipelines that run through the East Side.*

## Pipelines

In addition to water and wastewater utility lines, an extensive series of pipelines traverse through Romeoville conveying gas and liquid materials to users within the Village and well beyond as pass-through connectors navigating across the continent. The map in Figure 3-7 illustrates the network of gas transmission and hazardous liquid pipelines that traverse the Study Area. With the CITGO refinery and a few other industrial users on Romeoville's East Side, the network of pipelines is more substantial to serve the specific production and operational needs of these commercial and industrial users.

Development concepts for the East Side will need to carefully consider the location of certain potential uses, particularly to ensure any necessary excavation will not have adverse impacts on any pipelines. Since the map in Figure 3-7

does not depict gas gathering and gas distribution systems that serve specific properties, a more detailed survey of the pipeline network would need to be conducted to identify the location and content of all pipelines.

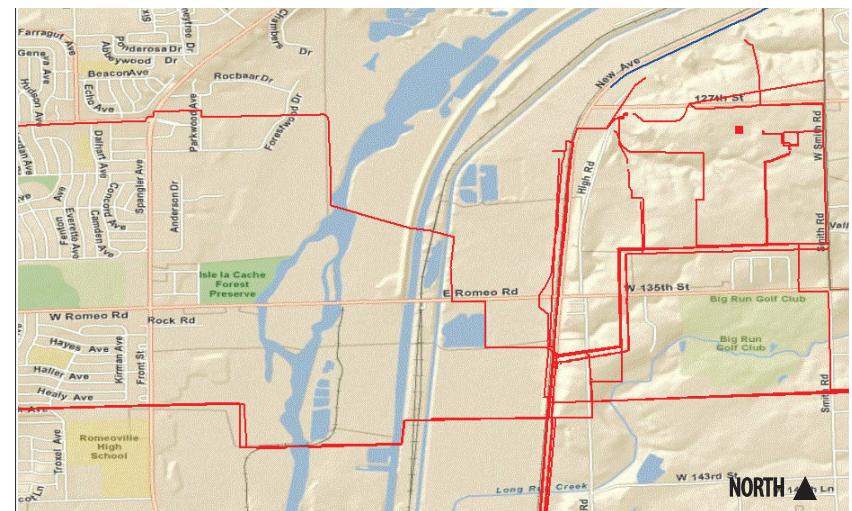
## Other Utilities

Electrical transmission and telephone lines that serve both Downtown Romeoville and the East Side remain above ground and generally run along roadways. Although these utility lines serve functional purposes, they also create visual clutter along the streetscape. Urbanized areas have transitioned to placing electrical and telephone lines below ground, especially bundling them along the same underground channels that also carry telecommunication lines such as broadband cable. Burying electrical and telephone lines should be considered to not only modernize the utility transmission system but also clear the streetscape wherever-

### MAP KEY

- Gas Transmission Pipeline
- Hazardous Liquid Pipeline
- LNG Plants
- Breakout Tanks

*Source: Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration, U.S. Department of Transportation, 2011.*



**FIGURE 3-7**  
**National Pipelines Map**

Sustainability is an emerging topic that touches almost every facet of community life and development. Romeoville has an extraordinary opportunity to not only create two special places downtown and on the East Side, but also design them in such a way that links them and intrinsically encourages sustainable living.

er possible to provide increased space for other streetscape elements such as signage, landscaping, lighting, and enhanced pedestrian amenities.

The larger ComEd electrical transmission towers traverse along wide right-of-way corridors to the north and south of 135<sup>th</sup> Street. As they maintain open spaces and follow along the rolling topography of the East Side, the ComEd right-of-way corridors provide excellent opportunities to introduce new trails.



While the ComEd electrical transmission lines dot the East Side landscape, the ComEd right-of-way also creates the opportunity for establishing trail connections, particularly to the proposed Metra station.

## Sustainability

From setting up an electronics recycling program to adopting its Open Space and Park Land Acquisition Plan, Romeoville is a progressive-minded community when it comes to issues relating to sustainability. Whether it's safeguarding the environment or taking household measures to lower energy costs, every step counts.

The strategies that will result from this planning process to revitalize Downtown Romeoville and prepare conceptual plans for the East Side hold the potential to build upon the community's emerging culture of making Romeoville's built and natural environments more sustainable.

The East Side Plan can propose inventive strategies that incorporate sustainability measures into a revitalized downtown and a unique development centered on the East Side. While traditional measures such as instituting best practices in stormwater management and encouraging green buildings will be embraced, innovative strategies that forge connections between Downtown and the East Side.

In addition, developing a creative TOD that breaks the traditional mold may change the way people view livable com-

munities served by a fully integrated multi-modal transportation network which, in turn, enhance sustainability.

Sustainable development will be the chief common goal shared by the efforts to revitalize Downtown Romeoville and prepare development concepts for the East Side. Environmental integrity, economic prosperity, and community livability are the principal components of sustainable development, as outlined in Figure 3-8.

Sustainability is an emerging topic that touches almost every facet of community life and development. Romeoville has an extraordinary opportunity to not only create two special places downtown and on the East Side, but also design them in such a way that links them and intrinsically encourages sustainable living.



Source: Testa Associates, Inc.

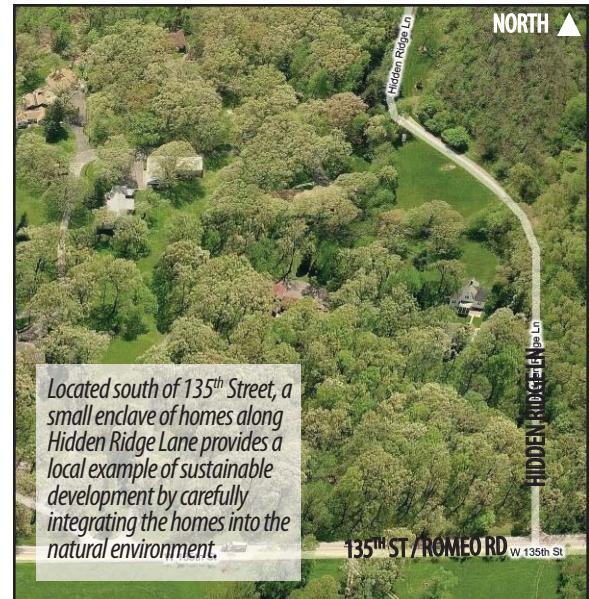
Landscaping helps manage stormwater on sites with extensive amounts of impervious surfaces. Although the parkway along IL Route 53 is laid with grass and some plantings, additional sustainability measures are encouraged for Downtown Romeoville.

FIGURE 3-8

**Components of Sustainable Development**

- **Environmental integrity** involves protection and improvement of the natural environment by enhancing it and increasing biodiversity through sound decisions in land use, development, and stewardship practices.
- **Economic prosperity** is enhanced by supporting cost effective conservation development, improving stormwater management, and maintaining water quality, which will enhance community well being and development prospects.
- **Community livability** ensures mobility and access to employment, recreational, education, and shopping opportunities, particularly when conservation development strikes a balance between the natural and built environments.

Source: "Conservation Development in Practice," The Nature Conservancy and Chicago Wilderness.

**Community Character**

Just as important as developing structures and creating public spaces, incorporating community character into the design of these structures and spaces ensures that Downtown and the East Side truly reflect the distinct characteristics that define Romeoville and enrich its identity. Community character traits can range from physical attributes (e.g. rolling topography and pastoral nature east of New Avenue) to local cultural attitudes (e.g. growing emphasis on sustainability). Recognizing these traits that shape Romeoville's community character will be valuable to the planning and design of development concepts for key sites, public spaces, gateways, streetscape, signage, architecture, and other urban design elements.

Prominent community character traits in Romeoville are described below.

## History

From the original Romeo settlement to the I&M Canal Passage to Bruce Lake (formerly Romeo Beach), Romeoville – particularly the East Side – maintains various linkages to its storied past. In addition to preserving physical historical elements, new development can reflect certain historic attributes, such as architectural patterns and industrial heritage of the two canals.

Harkening to Romeoville's past can also be applied to the revitalization efforts of the downtown area. Historic Route 66 is also part of Romeoville's history, as the renowned roadway is now present day IL Route 53. Specifically, IL Route 53 follows old Route 66 south of the first junction with I-55 towards Joliet. Some businesses in Downtown Romeoville reference Route 66 in their signage and theme.



*The I&M Canal Passage provides a link to Romeoville's past.*

## Industrial Heritage

As a subset of the Village's history, the industrial heritage of Romeoville has always been a prominent facet of the community's identity. From the historic use of the network of railroads and shipping canals to the excavation of local quarries to the crude oil refinement at the CITGO facilities today, industry has traditionally been a major strength of the local economy. Romeoville's industrial past and present can be encapsulated in historical tributes or informational kiosks along the local trail network. And while the future may not necessarily encourage the types of industry that characterize Romeoville's past, new businesses downtown and on the East Side may reflect the Village's capacity to be a strong employment center that innovatively connects people to jobs, businesses to resources, and customers to products and services.



*The shipping canal is a lasting reminder of the local industrial heritage.*

## Rolling Topography

The varying topography creates scenic vistas and unique site design of properties on the East Side. While the views of open spaces and waterways create appealing natural backdrops, the integration of built structures atop high points, into hillsides, and within valleys can also produce attractive views when designed properly. As a result, the topographic profile of the East Side will influence site design concepts for the East Side. The topography in Downtown Romeoville is generally level; however, there are some grade changes, particularly along IL Route 53, which may factor into site redevelopment.



*The rolling topography is one of the East Side's most prominent features.*

While new development relating to the TOD will have an impact on the existing pastoral nature, land planning approaches such as conservation design are often lauded for their abilities to be highly conscious of the natural environment

### Pastoral Nature

Even as parts of the East Side have evolved to become an industrial center accessing the railroads and canals, the far eastern portions of the East Side have generally maintained a pastoral nature with the rolling topography, green open spaces, natural waterways, and tree masses concealing interspersed private homes. While new development relating to the TOD will have an impact on the existing pastoral nature, land planning approaches such as conservation design are often lauded for their abilities to be highly conscious of the natural environment by conserving the most sensitive elements and integrating them into site designs where appropriate. The East Side has struck a fine balance thus far with heavy industrial uses integrated into the present rural setting; creative site design can maintain that fine balance as development concepts will be considered for the proposed TOD.



*Many properties on the East Side maintain a pastoral quality.*

### Nature Conservation

Nature conservation is a strong characteristic of Romeoville and the region. In addition to the broad coverage of the Romeoville Prairie Nature Preserve, much of the land along the Des Plaines River and the two shipping canals has been preserved to sustain their natural qualities. For example, the Isle a la Cache Museum is situated in a natural setting with native plantings along the river banks. The Village is also a member of the partnership that strives to protect the endangered Hine's emerald dragonfly by providing for habitat conservation planning (HCP) areas and groundwater recharge and buffer zones.



*Protection of creeks and wetlands will preserve local dragonfly habitats.*

Source: Teska Associates, Inc.

## Landscaped Streetscapes

The Village takes great pride in the appearance of its streetscapes. The Downtown Master Plan and Transportation Corridor Beautification Plan both outline specific recommendations for enhancing the Village's streetscapes. Although Downtown Romeoville presently lacks substantial landscaping treatments, the landscaped medians along IL Route 53 and along the parallel frontage roads (e.g. Spangler Road) which lead to downtown are a testament to the Village's commitment to maintaining attractive transportation corridors.

Landscaped streetscapes also extend to the East Side, most notably with the landscaped parkway along the south side of 135<sup>th</sup> Street fronting CITGO's auxiliary parking and staging area lots. This dedication to enhancing the Village's streetscapes will continue as development concepts for Downtown Romeoville and the East Side are prepared and evaluated.



Landscaped parkways along IL Route 53 extend towards downtown.

## Sustainability

Building upon its ongoing sustainability efforts throughout the Village, the Romeoville community has an extraordinary opportunity to create two special places – a revitalized downtown and a new TOD on the East Side – that can be designed in such a way that links them and intrinsically encourages sustainable living.

While the other aforementioned character traits can enhance the sustainable quality of Romeoville's character, sustainability reciprocates by being a contributing factor to the enhancement of the community's character. This is a strong indicator that enhancing one character trait can often help enhance other traits.



Native plantings can markedly improve the sustainability of sites.

The Village takes pride in the appearance of its streetscape; this dedication to enhancing the community's streetscapes will continue as development concepts for Downtown Romeoville and the East Side are prepared and evaluated.

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# Transportation Assessment

## SECTION 4

This section provides an overview of existing transportation conditions in the Study Area.

### Regional Setting

The Village of Romeoville is located in northern Will County, with good access to many parts of the region through interstates and major arterials. I-55, I-355, Weber Road, Joliet Road (IL Route 53), Archer Road / State Street (IL Route 171) and Renwick Road all provide connections to Romeoville. Pace local and express buses provide service to the Village, and existing commuter rail service is located nearby in adjacent communities. Potential new improvements to road-

ways, bus service, and commuter rail service will continue to help Romeoville capitalize on its regional access.

### Existing Roadway Characteristics

Major roadways within the Study Area include IL Route 53, 135<sup>th</sup> Street, and New Avenue. These roadways, along with future improvements are described in the Romeoville Master Transportation Plan (November 2009).

#### IL Route 53

IL Route 53 is the main north-south road through the Village, under the jurisdiction of the Illinois Department of



Source: Teska Associates, Inc.

*This northward view of IL Route 53 shows Downtown Romeoville on the left side of the photo, with the Shell gas station sign marking the southeast corner of downtown. The tall pole signs, including the one for Spartans' Square, and deep lot setbacks are atypical of a traditional downtown.*

Transportation (IDOT). North of the Village of Romeoville, IL Route 53 provides access to I-55 and I-355. Between the northern village limits at 135<sup>th</sup> Street, IL Route 53 carries about 33,000 average daily traffic (ADT). South of 135<sup>th</sup> Street, IL Route 53 carries between 26,000 and 29,000 ADT.

### New Avenue

New Avenue, located in the eastern portion of the Study Area, provides connections north to Lemont and south to IL Route 171 (Archer Road / State Street). It is an unmarked, state-maintained route. North of 135<sup>th</sup> Street, New Avenue carries about 8,000 ADT. South of 135<sup>th</sup> Street it carries about 10,000 ADT. The intersection of New Avenue and 135<sup>th</sup> Street was recently improved.

### 135<sup>th</sup> Street / Romeo Road

135<sup>th</sup> Street / Romeo Road is an east-west arterial under the jurisdiction of the Village of Romeoville. 135<sup>th</sup> Street termi-

nates on the west side of Romeoville at Weber Road, which provides access to I-55. East of IL Route 53, 135<sup>th</sup> Street carries 13,800 ADT. IDOT is currently studying improvements to the interchange at I-55 and Weber Road, which could impact traffic volumes on 135<sup>th</sup> Street.

Additionally, Will County is currently in the process of widening 135<sup>th</sup> Street from High Road (just east of New Avenue) to IL Route 171 (Will County has jurisdiction from High Road to Archer Avenue).

As part of Phase I of this project, the County is acquiring right-of-way (ROW) to improve the alignment and signalize the intersection of 135<sup>th</sup> Street and Archer Avenue with completion in 2012. Phase II will focus on Archer Avenue to Smith Road with completion in 2015. Phase III will focus on Smith Road to High Road with completion in 2017.

### **Bus Service**

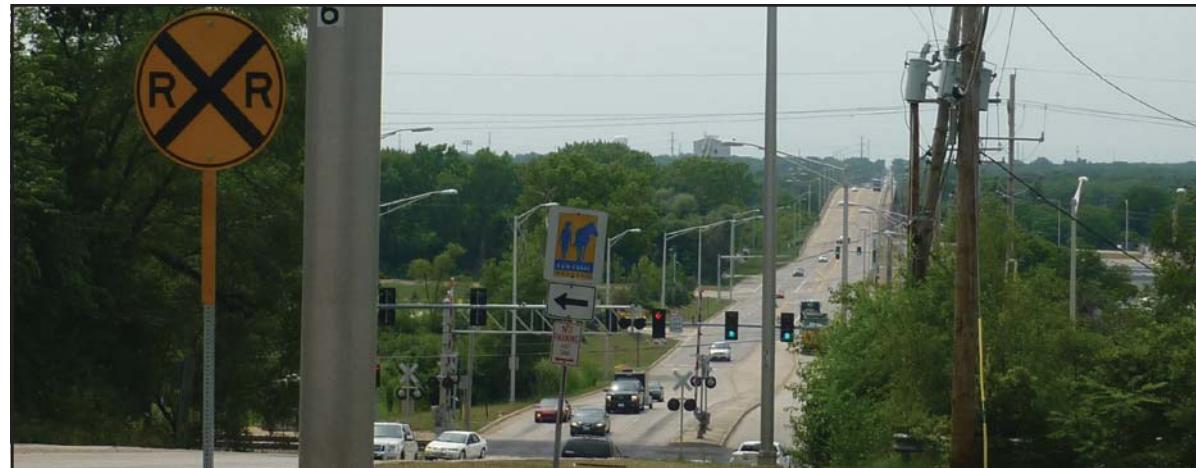
#### Pace Route 834

Pace Route 834 travels along IL Route 53 with a stop at the Spartans' Square Park-n-Ride lot. Service is provided from Yorktown Shopping Center to Joliet Union Station and provides connections to the Downers Grove Main Street Metra Station located on the BNSF Line, the Lockport Metra Station on the Heritage Corridor Line, and Joliet Union Station on the Rock Island Line. Service operates Monday through Saturday on an approximately hour headway.

Pace Route 834, which has an average weekday bus ridership of 841 riders<sup>17</sup>, is one of the strongest performing routes in Joliet, so there could be potential for future service improvements. This route is scheduled to change from operating on a "flag stop" basis to a "posted stop" basis, which means the vehicle will only stop at posted/signed stops.

#### Pace Route 855

Pace Route 855 travels along I-55 with stops at various park-and-ride lots between Plainfield and Burr Ridge. Pace Route 855, which has an average weekday bus ridership of 266 riders<sup>17</sup>, is travels non-stop from Burr Ridge to North Michigan Avenue in Downtown Chicago. Service operates rush hour only Monday through Friday. Two trips are provided from the Spartans' Square Park-n-Ride lot in Romeoville during the A.M. peak period. There are six return trips in the P.M. peak period, stopping upon request at any of the park-and-ride lots served.



Source: Teska Associates, Inc.

*This westward view of 135<sup>th</sup> Street illustrates the rolling topography that defines the East Side. The railroad crossing sign in the foreground indicates the approach to the Canadian National Railroad, which carries the Metra Heritage Corridor Line and provides the opportunity for a new commuter station.*

<sup>17</sup> Source: RTAMS, Ridership Statistics, Pace Bus Route Detail, June 2011.

Starting in November 2011, Pace Route 855 service along I-55 is planned to begin operating along the shoulders of I-55 to improve travel time and service reliability. Currently no additional service is planned to be added when the bus shoulders improvement is implemented, but could be a future possibility.

### **Spartans' Square Park-n-Ride Lot**

Spartans' Square Park-n-Ride is located in the parking lot of Spartan Square. It currently has about 20-30 vehicles parked on a daily basis. No changes are envisioned for the location of this lot in the near future. Long-term changes would depend on improvements to the I-55 / Weber Road interchange.

### **Romeoville's Ride Around Town Program**

Romeoville's Ride Around Town service is a general purpose dial-a-ride service provided by the Village of Romeoville to its residents. Appointments must be made 24 hours in advance on a first come, first service basis. Fare is \$1.50 one-way within Romeoville, increasing based on distance of destination. Service operates on Mondays from 9:30 am to 1:00 pm and on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 9:30 am until 3:00 pm.

### **Heritage Corridor Transportation Survey**

Pace recently conducted an online survey of communities whose residents use Metra's Heritage Corridor service in order to assess origin-destination information and commute needs. The survey also explores the possibility of providing bus service to supplement Heritage Corridor service.

The majority of survey respondents were from either Lockport (29%) or Lemont (25%), with the next highest

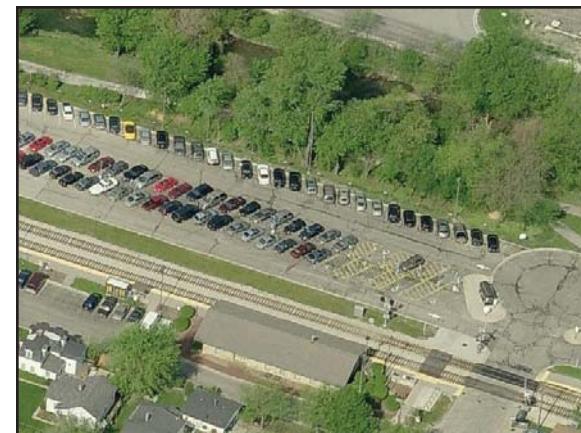
response rate coming from Joliet (10%). Romeoville residents comprised 9% of the survey respondents. Findings from this survey include:

- ❑ 73% of respondents use the I-55 / Heritage Corridor to travel to/from work.
- ❑ 32% of respondents use the Heritage Corridor 5 days a week. Only 8% of respondents use Pace service at least one or more days a week, and only 2% use vanpool.
- ❑ When asked what other Metra lines were used, 37% use the Rock Island Line, 36% use the BNSF Line, and 22% use the Southwest Service Line.
- ❑ Of those who use the Heritage Corridor for their morning commute, 42% board at the Lockport station, 37% board at the Lemont station, and 18% board at the Joliet station.
- ❑ When asked if they would use Pace service if it was utilized to supplement Metra Heritage Corridor service, 30% responded they would definitely use Pace service, 28% would probably use the service, while only 9% respondents answered that they would definitely not use the service.
- ❑ Several comments expressed a desire for midday service to be provided by either Pace or Metra. However, most respondents expressed that they would like more departure time options during the morning and evening peak periods.
- ❑ Currently, the first Metra Heritage Corridor train arrives at Chicago Union Station at 6:50 am. 19% of people

who provided their ideal arrival time in Chicago listed between 6:16 and 6:30 am. The last train to arrive at Chicago Union Station arrives at 8:10 am. Of the people who provided their ideal arrival time in Chicago, 27% would like to arrive between 8:15 and 8:30 am.

- ❑ Of respondents who provided their ideal departure time from Chicago, 17% listed a departure time between 4:31 and 4:45 pm, and 15% listed a departure time between 6:15 and 6:30 pm. The first departure from Chicago Union Station provided by Metra Heritage Corridor trains is 4:50 pm and the last departure is 6:12 pm.

The survey findings are currently under review by Pace and Metra to determine future potential actions.



Source: Bing Maps.

*Located along the Heritage Corridor Line and south of Romeoville, the Lockport Metra Station is similar to the transit opportunity in Romeoville in that trail connections are available next to the station.*

## Metra Commuter Rail Service

The Village of Romeoville is served via the Lemont and Lockport stations on the Metra Heritage Corridor. This line originates in Downtown Chicago at Union Station and terminates at Joliet, a distance of nearly 40 miles. The Heritage Corridor Line carries nearly 3,000 trips per weekday. The Lemont station is located in the "E" fare zone, while the Lockport station is located in the "G" fare zone. Three inbound trains provide service in the A.M. peak period and three outbound trains provide service in the P.M. peak period.

A new station is planned for the Village of Romeoville, to be located south of 135<sup>th</sup> Street, west of the Canadian National

**FIGURE 4-1**  
**Weekday Boardings Over Time**

Metra Station	1999	2002	*2006
Joliet	253	313	395
Lockport	201	303	552
Lemont	341	407	381
Willow Springs	82	142	97
Summit	66	79	64
Glenn	-	-	-
Brighton Park	-	-	-
Halsted	-	-	-
Union Station	905	1,180	1,421
Heritage Corridor	1,848	2,424	2,910
<b>TOTAL</b>			

\* Most current data available; new data survey is expected to be conducted in Fall 2012.

Source: Metra.

Railroad and New Avenue. A 600-space surface parking lot is also proposed, scheduled to be completed in 2014.

### Ridership

Per Metra's System-wide Boarding / Alighting Counts conducted in Fall 2006, there were 381 boardings at the Lemont station and 552 boardings at the Lockport station. The table in Figure 4-1 shows ridership over the last decade.

No official ridership forecasts have been developed for the proposed Romeoville station. However, it is anticipated that this station will attract some new riders as well as Romeoville residents who are travelling to other nearby stations. As presented below in the table in Figure 4-2, there were

**FIGURE 4-2**  
**Station Origins for Romeoville Residents, 2006**

Metra Station	Rail Line	*Number of Romeoville Residents
Lemont	Heritage Corridor	68
Lockport	Heritage Corridor	108
Joliet	Rock Island / HC	18
Downers Grove	BNSF	20
Belmont	BNSF	19
Lisle	BNSF	17
Naperville	BNSF	17
Route 59	BNSF	19

\* Most current data available; new data survey is expected to be conducted in Fall 2012.

Source: Metra.

286 Romeoville residents found to be using other Metra stations (per Metra counts). While many of those traveling to stations along other lines, such as the BNSF, may not be attracted to the more limited service along the Heritage Corridor, those commuting to other Heritage Corridor stations may find the proposed Romeoville station more attractive, particularly since parking at both Lemont and Lockport are fully utilized. Based on this, it would be reasonable to anticipate about 250 to 300 riders initially. As future service improvements are considered for the Heritage Corridor, this number would increase.

### Station Origins

As mentioned, many Romeoville residents use Metra com-

**FIGURE 4-3**  
**Mode of Access to Station, 2006**

Mode	**Lockport	**Heritage Corridor	**Metra System
Walk	2%	6%	21%
Drive Alone	76%	71%	54%
Dropped Off	11%	15%	14%
Carpool*	10%	6%	4%
Bus	3%	1%	4%
Bike	-	-	1%
Taxi	-	1%	1%
Rapid Transit	-	1%	1%
Other	-	2%	1%

\* As driver or passenger.

\*\* Most current data available; new data survey is expected to be conducted in Fall 2012.

Source: Metra.

muter rail service by traveling to other stations along various lines. The table in Figure 4-2 shows some of the nearby stations use by Romeoville residents. The map in Figure 4-4 illustrates the distribution of the origins of Romeoville commuters to various Metra stations in the region.

#### Mode of Access

Although there is no existing Metra station in Romeoville, it is anticipated that the mode of access to the future station would be similar to that of Lockport and the Heritage Corridor Line in general. The Heritage Corridor differs from Metra system-wide with a very low walk access and much higher drive alone access. The table in Figure 4-3 shows mode of access to the Lockport Metra Station compared to the Heritage Corridor and the entire Metra system.

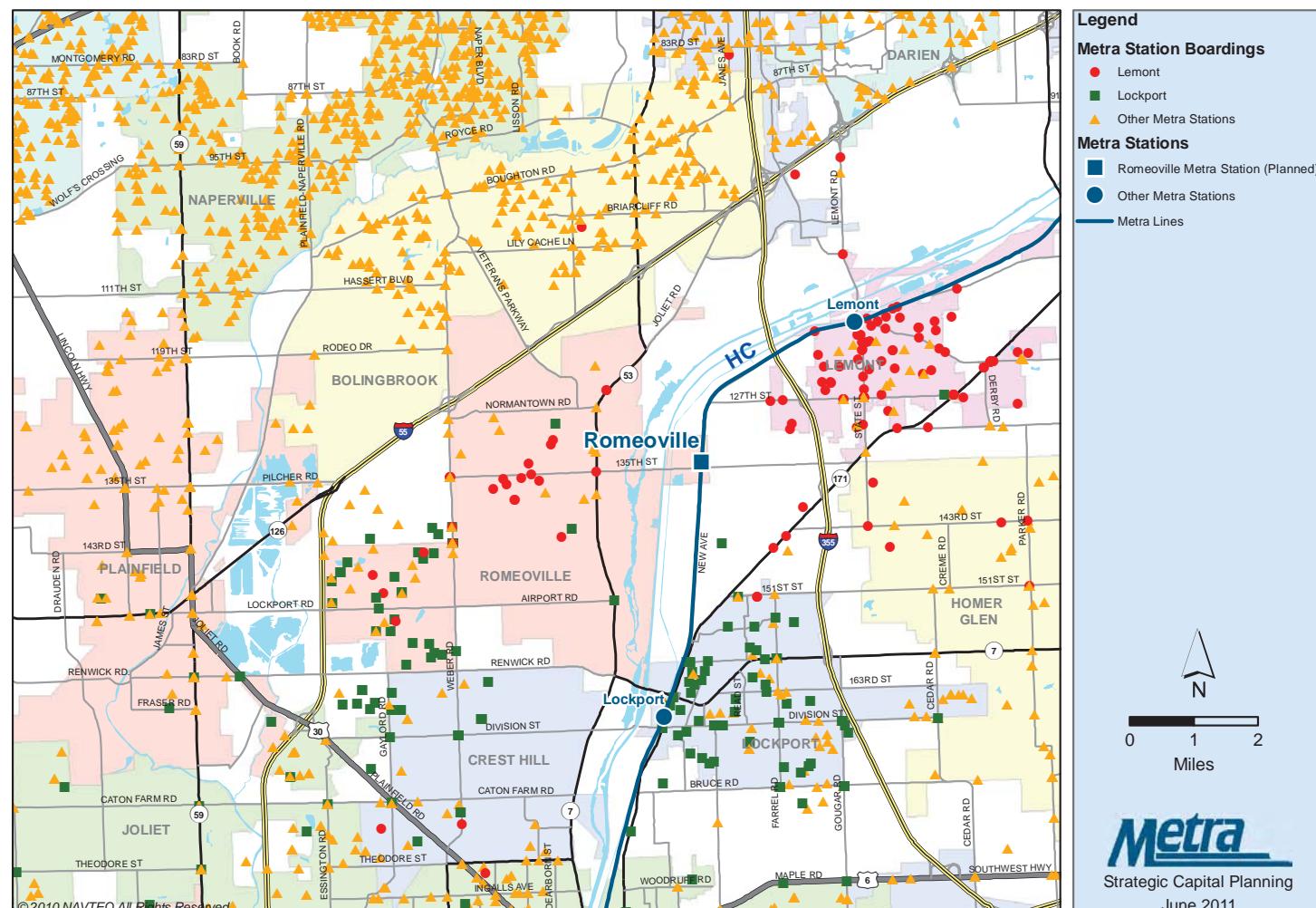


FIGURE 4-4  
Origins of Metra Riders in the Romeoville Area

## Heritage Corridor Improvements

The Heritage Corridor is a 38-mile commuter rail line serving southwest Cook and northwest Will County. The Heritage Corridor improvement project will seek to provide full-service commuter rail service on the line which currently has limited service. This line, owned by the Canadian National Railroad (CN), is also a busy freight line. Included in the improvement project would be additional stations, improved peak and off-peak service frequencies, and weekend service. Work on the Heritage Corridor is defined in CMAP's Go To 2040 Plan as "fiscally unconstrained," meaning "projects... showed regional benefits, but are not far enough along in the study phase to have firm cost estimates, alignment, or limits."

IDOT has recently agreed to fund a line capacity study for the Heritage Corridor. This study is to be completed by the end of 2011 and is being completed by the CN. The intent of this study will be to determine the type of infrastructure that will be needed to support an increase in commuter service, as well as determine if the Heritage Corridor could be used for the planned high speed rail service between Chicago and St. Louis. In addition to the Line Capacity Analysis Study, which is in progress by the CN and will be completed in 2012, several CREATE projects along this line will help facilitate expansion service.

## High Speed Rail

The Chicago to St. Louis high speed rail corridor is 284 miles long and has distinct line configuration/ownership arrangements by line section. The Canadian National (CN) portion of the corridor between Joliet and Chicago (37 miles) is al-

ready equipped with two tracks. The Union Pacific Railroad (UPRR) portion of the corridor between Joliet and Godfrey (215 miles) is equipped with one track. The UPRR and Kansas City Southern (KCS) portion of the corridor between Godfrey and East St. Louis (29 miles) is equipped with one track for the first 10 miles, and the additional 19 miles is already equipped with two tracks. The Terminal Railroad Association (TRRA) portion of the corridor between East St. Louis and St. Louis, MO (3 miles) extends over the Mississippi River Bridge and into the St. Louis Terminal.

The overall purpose of this project is to enhance the passenger transportation network within the Chicago to St. Louis corridor, resulting in a more balanced use of the modal components. The current Chicago to St. Louis corridor operates on only one set of track; however, future visions for this corridor include the full build-out of an additional second track. The full build-out of an additional second track will be determined in the Tier 1 Study. The construction of this potential second track is not currently funded.

In 2010, Illinois received federal funding to complete a Tier 1 Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). Currently underway, this project is the next step in the Illinois High Speed Rail Chicago to St. Louis program. The 16-month Tier 1 EIS will identify and evaluate improvements needed to accommodate higher speed (125 mph maximum) trains and additional daily round trips. Higher speed trains would reduce travel time, increase service reliability and enhance safety. The Tier 1 EIS is separate from the construction currently taking place along the corridor.

The current corridor consists primarily of a single track that is shared by both freight and passenger rail service (Amtrak).

The Tier 1 EIS study area is shown in Figure 4-5. This study will determine routing alternatives between Chicago and Joliet, the Springfield area, and the approach to St. Louis. This corridor includes approximately 284 miles of primarily Union Pacific railroad track. Amtrak currently provides existing passenger service to nine counties serving the cities of Chicago, Summit, Joliet, Dwight, Pontiac, Bloomington-Normal, Lincoln, Springfield, Carlinville, Alton and St. Louis.

FIGURE 4-5  
Tier 1 EIS Study Area for High Speed Rail



Sources: Illinois Department of Transportation; Midwest High-Speed Rail.



Source: Testa Associates, Inc.

## Bicycle & Pedestrian Circulation

The Village developed a comprehensive Bicycle Trail Master Plan in 2006 that identified the type and location of all existing and future bicycles facilities. The Village does have existing bike paths throughout the community.

The Centennial Trail / I&M Canal Trail is a 12.5-mile regional trail of the Forest Preserve District of Will County (FPDWC). This trail extends between the Cook County Line and the City of Joliet along the Des Plaines River, I&M Canal, and the Chicago Sanitary and Ship Canal, connecting along 135<sup>th</sup> Street to the Village of Romeoville.

At 135<sup>th</sup> Street in Romeoville, the Centennial Trail / I&M Canal Trail passes over a historic swing bridge, which for many years spanned the Des Plaines River on 135<sup>th</sup> Street. A small parking facility is located at Schneider's Passage on 135<sup>th</sup> Street. Additional parking is available at Isle a la Cache Museum.

Starting in 2011, the FPDWC is developing the Veterans Memorial Trail across the Des Plaines River connecting the Centennial Trail to International Parkway at I-355. This trail is planned as a 10-foot wide, multi-purpose trail paved with asphalt for non-motorized, bicycle, and pedestrian use. The project includes two segments: Segment I connects Centennial Trail to Bluff Road, and Segment II connects Bluff Road to International Parkway. Connections at 135<sup>th</sup> Street could connect either along 135<sup>th</sup> Street or north or south of the ComED right-of-way.

A Phase I engineering study for Segment I (to include connections to New Avenue) has received IDOT authorization and is currently underway, and will continue through mid-2013. As part of this project, a new bike path / pedestrian crossing is a proposed option to access the proposed Romeoville Metra Station.

In addition to this proposed bike path / pedestrian crossing, other options are being explored to provide access

to the Metra Station. One potential option is an at-grade "diversion" crossing design, which is being considered by CN Railroad and Metra and would create a safe crossing environment at track level. Another potential option would be to provide crossing access for Metra commuters that is separate from access for regular pedestrians and bicyclists who do not need to utilize the station. These separate crossings may run parallel to each other and possibly share infrastructure, such as columns or piers to elevate them above the railroad tracks and New Avenue.

Pedestrian facilities vary within the Village of Romeoville. In the downtown area, sidewalks are generally available. Sidewalks are available along portions of IL Route 53, although not continuous. No sidewalks are located south of Belmont Drive. Sidewalks are located along the west side of IL Route 53 between Belmont Drive and Alexander Circle, generally along the frontage road. Sidewalks are sporadic between Alexander Circle and Normantown Road.

Intersections do not have marked crosswalks. The intersection of Normantown Road and IL Route 53 has large turning radii and numerous curb cuts on the south side of the intersection, creating many conflict points between pedestrians and vehicles. Signalized intersections are located at Normantown Road, Belmont Drive, and 135<sup>th</sup> Street, providing limited protected crossings for pedestrians.

Along 135<sup>th</sup> Street, a sidewalk is located on the south side of the roadway, ending at the Centennial Trail. There is no continuous sidewalk or path connection to the CITGO refinery.

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# Downtown Market Assessment

SECTION 5

T

The market assessment in this section provides an overview of the market reconnaissance and analysis of the development potential of Downtown Romeoville and the Village's East Side.

## Apartment Development Opportunities

In order to identify whether sufficient demand may exist to support the development of apartment uses in Downtown Romeoville and to make rental rate estimates, GG+A conducted inspections of apartment projects and interviews with leasing agents of the developments described below. Interviews were directed toward obtaining data and insights concerning:

- The relevant geographic market area within which apartment uses built Downtown will compete for tenants;
- The likely demographic and employment characteristics of the tenants that will be attracted to the potential developments; and
- The characteristics and performance of competing apartment projects.

This market assessment presents: (a) a definition of the primary market area within which apartment uses built

Downtown would compete for tenants; (b) a description of the types of renters likely to be attracted to apartment uses in the Downtown; (c) an analysis of apartment market supply characteristics and trends; and (d) an analysis of demographic and employment-related determinants of future demand potential for apartment units.

### Summary of Market Opportunities

The current market conditions for apartment uses are favorable with extremely high occupancy rates and rising rents. The impacts of the Great Recession have stimulated the demand for apartments from households which formerly occupied ownership housing as well as households which currently lack the confidence or ability to obtain loans to invest in for-sale housing. In addition, the longer-term demographic- and employment-determinants of demand for apartment units appear sufficient to support additional apartment uses in Romeoville. Sources of demand for

The current market conditions in Downtown Romeoville for apartment uses are favorable with extremely high occupancy rates and rising rents.

apartment units include Echo boomers, including students, older-aged households seeking to trade down from their single-family units, and households attracted to the market area because of employment opportunities.

Assuming a density of 12- units per acre, the Village-owned site of approximately nine acres could accommodate 108 units. As described below, the market demand holds potential for supporting this number of units in the Downtown. This assumes the units are competitively priced and include features such as private entries, attached parking, well-sized units, and preferred common area amenities.

In order to enhance the competitive position of an apartment use built Downtown, we think the Village's plans to create a second recreational center of 30,000 square feet of space would be a desirable complimentary use. In addition, while the competitive conditions are intense, if a small-format grocery store could be attracted proximate to the apartment use, such a use would help the apartment project attract tenants and the uses would be mutually reinforcing.

### **Market Area Definition**

The interviews with leasing agents for the two existing Romeoville apartment developments, Remington Apartments and HighPoint Apartments, indicate that the primary geographic areas within which rental apartment projects in Romeoville compete for tenants includes Romeoville, Bolingbrook, and Crest Hill. The market-rate HighPoint Reflections apartments compete for market rate tenants with the Remington Apartments because the projects are located within approximately two miles of each other.



Source: Apartments.com



Source: Apartments.com



Source: RentHomes.com

*The apartment projects surveyed for the market reconnaissance included (clockwise, from top left): (1) HighPoint in Romeoville; (2) Remington in Romeoville; (3) Riverstone in Bolingbrook; (4) Sutton Place in Crest Hill; (5) The Woodlands of Crest Hill; and (6) Lincoln at River Run in Bolingbrook. The two apartment complexes in Romeoville are located along the Weber Road corridor on the Village's west side.*

Lincoln at River Run is a 374-unit, nine-year-old apartment development in Bolingbrook located approximately four miles north of the Downtown. The leasing agent for Lincoln at River Run indicated that the Remington Apartments represent the primary source of competition for tenants, in addition to three apartment communities located in Naperville (Glenmuir, Thornberry Woods Apartments, AMLI at River Run) and the Retreat at Seven Bridges in Woodridge.

Other multi-family projects outside of Romeoville but within the relevant market area include AMC @ Riverstone, a 789-unit subsidized housing development built 35 years ago also located in Bolingbrook, approximately 2.5 miles north of the Downtown. Many of the units and common areas have been remodeled. This subsidized development competes directly with HighPoint Serenity in Romeoville, the other primary subsidized multi-family rental development in the primary market area.

Two apartment developments in Crest Hill also are within the primary market area. Sutton Place, built approximately nine years ago, includes 18 two-story buildings of one- and two-bedroom units. Sutton Place, currently about 98 percent leased, is approximately eight miles south of the Downtown. The 35-year-old Woodlands development, including 730 units, is approximately seven miles south of the Downtown.

While the Woodlands development competes with apartment projects in Romeoville and Bolingbrook, it also competes with apartment developments located nearby in North Joliet. Sutton Place has attracted and lost tenants from both Remington Apartments and HighPoint Reflections of Romeoville. Sutton Place, which features private entry units, obtains higher rents than the Woodlands and

competes more with the Remington Apartments community in Romeoville.

The map in Figure 5-1 shows the relative locations of these apartment complexes.

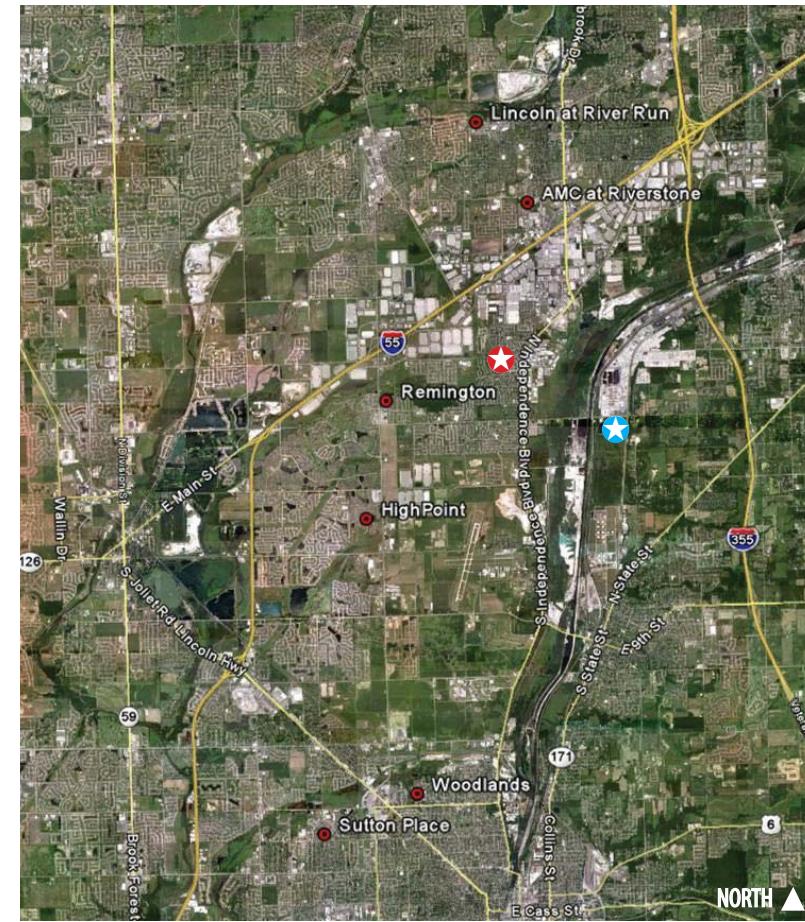
Interestingly, none of the leasing agents indicated that rental competition from existing single-family housing in the primary market area was significant.

### Primary Types of Household Demand for Apartments

Apartment complexes located within the primary market area appeal to households seeking locations near their places of employment. This includes "corporate transients" relocating to the area to be close to new employment opportunities with businesses located along Interstate 55. Temporary contractors brought in by large industrial employers, such as Citgo, also stimulate demand for apartments. A second primary source of demand for apartments

FIGURE 5-1  
**Apartment Projects  
in Primary Market Area**

- ★ Downtown Romeoville
- ★ Proposed Metra Site
- Nearby Apartment Project



Source: Gruen Gruen + Associates.

in the market area is college students attending Lewis University or Joliet Community College. A third and important source of demand has emerged since the Great Recession and housing foreclosure crises: households, which have been forced to move-out of for-sale, single-family or townhouse housing units.

#### Characteristics of Apartment Projects Surveyed

The table in Figure 5-2 summarizes the apartment projects surveyed in the primary market area.

#### Number of Units

The Romeoville apartment projects include 902 units. The apartment projects surveyed within the market area, but outside Romeoville, include 2,010 units.

#### Age and Type of Units

The two Romeoville projects were built approximately 11 and 14 years ago. These apartment projects differ in their provision of amenities. Remington Apartments has a smaller scale of amenities that are for the exclusive use of residents. HighPoint has a larger community center operated by a church for the activities of church members and the larger area community, including residents. In addition, HighPoint includes units reserved for lower-income residents. Two of the other developments in the market area were each built 35 years go, while the newest project in Bolingbrook (Lincoln at River Run) was built approximately nine years ago. The 35-year-old Woodlands was last reno-

**FIGURE 5-2**  
**Characteristics of Existing Apartment Communities**

Apartment Complex/ Location	Age # Years	Type of Units <sup>1</sup>	Number of Units #	Unit Size # Sq Ft	Monthly Rents \$	Monthly Rents \$ per Sq Ft	Occupancy Rate %	Features / Amenities
HighPoint Reflections Romeoville	14	1/1 1/1 2/2 2/2	64 32 128 64	631-701 807-880 885-950 1,078-1,155	950-970 1,045-1,065 1,115-1,135 1,235-1,255	1.38-1.51 1.21-1.29 1.19-1.26 1.09-1.15	Mid 80% for 2000-04 90% for 2005 91% for 2006-07 98% for 2011	27,000 square foot community center with gym and health club, organized ath- letic leagues, rent- to-own program, private garages, in- unit washer/dryer, paddleboats, pool
HighPoint Serenity Romeoville	14	2/2	100 100	885 950	910-1,050 910-1,070	1.03-1.19 0.96-1.13	98% for 2011	
Remington Apartments Romeoville	11	1/1 2/1 2/2 3/2	180 959 150 20	700 801 959 991 995 1,036 1,089 1,167 1,123 1,364 1,417 1,346 1,406	985-1,020 1,005-1,050 1,300 1,180 1,245-1,400 1,157-1,187 1,465-1,505 1,320-1,340 1,310-1,450 1,725 1,640 1,813-1,883 1,618-1,628	1.41-1.46 1.25-1.31 1.36 1.19 1.25-1.41 1.12-1.15 1.35-1.38 1.13-1.15 1.17-1.29 1.26 1.16 1.35-1.40 1.09-1.15	85-87% for 2000-04 90-91% for 2005 92% for 2006-07 99% for 2011  Note: Over past two years three bedroom units 100% leased; no rental concessions provided	Fitness Center, con- ference centers, pool, high speed internet access, attached garages, Plainfield schools, laundry facility, furnished apartments available

<sup>1</sup> First figure refers to number of bedrooms while second figure refers to number of bathrooms.

Source: Leasing agents and property managers for apartment communities shown on this table; Gruen Gruen + Associates.

FIGURE 5-2 (CONTINUED)

## Characteristics of Existing Apartment Communities

Apartment Complex/ Location	Age # Years	Type of Units <sup>1</sup>	Number of Units #	Unit Size # Sq Ft	Monthly Rents \$	Monthly Rents \$ per Sq Ft	Occupancy Rate %	Features / Amenities
Lincoln at River Run Bolingbrook	9	1/1	374	670	989	1.48	90% for 2007 97.5% for 2011	Washer/dryers, at-tached garages, pool, business center, high speed internet access, washer/dryer in unit, extra storage, fireplaces, dishwashers, private exterior entryways
		1/1		744	1,029	1.38		
		1/1 Grg.		807	1,204	1.49		
		1/1		884	1,065	1.20		
		2/2		1,045	1,299	1.24		
		3/2		1,157	1,399	1.21		
				1,262	1,725	1.37		
AMC at Riverstone Bolingbrook	35	Studio	789	400	575	1.44	90% for 2007 96% for 2011	Short term leases avail-able, clubhouse, fitness center, pool, tennis cts, laundry facilities, ga-rages/covered parking
		1/1		672	684	1.02		
		2/1		862	876	1.02		
		2/1.5		928	876	0.94		
Sutton Place Crest Hill	8	1/1	93	886	945	1.07	96% for 2007 98% for 2011	High speed internet, op-tional garages, private exterior entryways
				966	975	1.01		
		2/2		88 <sup>2</sup>	1,114	1.00		
Woodlands Crest Hill	35	Studio	730	374	650	1.75	93% for 2007 95% for 2011	Pool, short term leases, health club, high speed internet, furnished apartments available, clubhouse, laundry facility, tennis courts
		1/1		598	600	1.00		
		1/1 den		874	650	0.74		
		2/1		816	750	0.92		
		2/1.5		874	900	1.03		
TOTAL	-	-	2,912	-	-	-	97% for 2011	

<sup>1</sup>First figure refers to number of bedrooms while second figure refers to number of bathrooms.<sup>2</sup>Three additional units not rentable.

Source: Leasing agents and property managers for apartment communities shown on this table; Gruen Gruen + Associates.

vated about 14 years ago. The same developer also built the 35-year-old AMC at Riverstone project in Bolingbrook and the projects have similar designs. All of the projects are suburban style, low-rise developments, some of which are exterior walk-up type facilities and which offer private entry and attached garage, while others provide surface parking and common entry ways. Appendix A includes photographs of the apartment developments. Due to an increasing share of renters which have previously occupied single-family units, a preference is indicated for private entry as contrasted with common entryways.

Unit Sizes

Newer apartment projects contain larger size units than older projects. Leasing agents indicated that many households, especially those moving out of homes, prefer larger two-and three-bedroom units. The HighPoint Reflections development in Romeoville includes 96 one bedroom units ranging in size from 631 square feet to 880 square feet and 256 two bedroom units ranging in size from 1,078 square feet, to 1,173 square feet. The HighPoint Serenity development includes 100 two bedroom units at 885 square feet and 100 two bedroom units with 950 square feet of space. The Remington Apartments in Romeoville includes 180 one bedroom units ranging in size from 700 to 800 square feet; 150 two bedroom units ranging in size from 960 square feet to 1,123 square feet; and 20 three bedroom units ranging in size from 1,346 to 1,400 square feet.

The Remington Apartments contains larger unit sizes for two-bedroom apartments than the unit sizes of the HighPoint development. Remington includes three bedroom units which HighPoint does not include.

The newest project, Lincoln at River Run in Bolingbrook, includes one bedroom units ranging from 670 to 884 square feet, two bedroom units averaging 1,045 square feet and three bedroom units ranging from 1,157 to 1,262 square feet. The two oldest developments, the AMC at Riverstone in Bolingbrook and the Woodlands in Crest Hill, have smaller unit sizes with studio units of only 400 square feet or less and two bedroom units containing less than 1,000 square feet of space. The Sutton Place project in Crest Hill has one

bedroom units ranging in size from 886 to 966 square feet and two bedroom units ranging in size from 1,114 to 1,138 square feet of space.

### Rental Rates

Rental rates have increased throughout the primary market area since the impacts of the Great Recession and housing foreclosure crises have taken effect. None of the projects surveyed are currently offering concessions or "move-in specials."

The HighPoint development, which is located in the Romeoville/Bolingbrook school district (Valley View 365U), has enjoyed significant rental rate increases this past year of \$75

to \$100 per unit. Rents per square foot range from \$1.09 to \$1.15 for the largest two bedroom units to \$1.28 to \$1.51 per square foot for the smallest one bedroom units.

The rents at the Remington Apartments development, which is located in the Plainfield school district (Plainfield Community School District 202), have increased 10 to 15 percent in the past few years. Prior the impacts of the Great Recession, discounts on asking rates of \$25 to \$50 per month were not uncommon. Remington Apartments' rents are higher than those at Highpoint. Rents for the larger units range from \$1.12 to \$1.40 per square foot. The rents for the smaller units range from \$1.41 to \$1.46 per square foot. Leasing agents at both the HighPoint and Remington developments indicate due to the impacts of the foreclosure crises, rents and occupancies have increased for the larger-sized units.

The newest and highest-quality development in the market area, Lincoln at River Run in Bolingbrook, commands the highest rents one bedroom units ranging from \$1.20 to \$1.49 per square foot, and two bedroom units obtaining rents of \$1.24 per square foot and three bedroom units obtaining rents of \$1.21 to \$1.37 per square foot. This project is more aligned or competitive with the Naperville projects referred to above than with the older AMC at Riverstone development in Bolingbrook. New rental product obtains a premium as indicated by substantially lower rents at the 35-year-old AMC at Riverstone development also located in Bolingbrook. Studio units rent for \$1.44 per square foot, one and two bedroom, one-bath units rent for \$1.02 per square foot and two bedroom, 1.5 bath units rent for \$0.94 per square foot.



An aerial view of the Remington apartment complex located at the northeast corner of Weber Road and Grand Boulevard in Romeoville.

Rents at the apartment communities located in Crest Hill are lower than those in Romeoville and Bolingbrook. The newer development Sutton Place, however, obtains higher rents than the older Woodlands development. One bedroom units in Sutton Place obtain rents of \$1.01 to \$1.07 per square foot compared to comparably-sized one bedroom plus den and two bedroom units at Woodlands of \$0.74 to \$0.92 per square foot. The much smaller two bed, 1.5 bath units at the Woodland obtain nearly comparable rents (\$1.03 per square foot rents) as the much larger two bedroom units at Sutton Place (\$0.99-\$1.00 per square foot rents).

#### Types of Renters Attracted

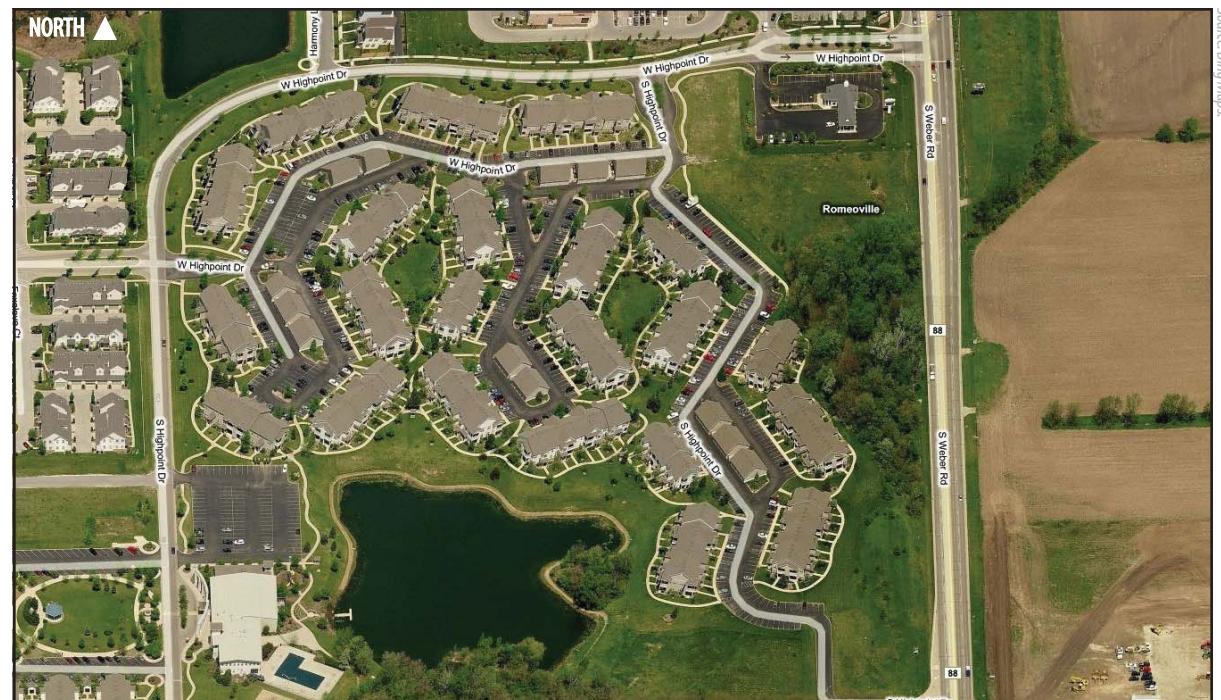
The market-rate HighPoint Reflections facility with 352 units serves renters relocating to the area for employment opportunities or waiting for the completion of their new single-family homes, or more recently, searching or waiting to buy an existing home. According to the leasing agent, approximately 40 percent of tenants attracted to the development have moved from out of the region. The proximity to the highway has been a key advantage because of the high proportion of renters attracted to employment opportunities along Interstate 55. Since the Great Recession and housing foreclosure crises, a major source of demand has been family households forced out of their single-family housing units. Some renters participate in the "rent to own" program. The primary reason tenants move out is to purchase a housing unit. Many stay within the Romeoville and Plainfield area.

The HighPoint Serenity apartments are all two-bedroom, one-bath units available under the Section 8, or Housing Choice Voucher Program, a Federal housing program which provides housing assistance to low-income renters and

homeowners. This assistance comes in the form of rental subsidies, limiting the monthly rent payment of the assistance recipient. The lower-income, larger-size (typically four members) households move from within Romeoville and also originate from Joliet.

The Remington Apartments serves three primary types of households: "corporate transients"; students attending Joliet Community College and Lewis University; and households affected by the Great Recession and housing foreclosure crises. Prior to the Great Recession and housing crises, households waiting for the completion of a new home in Romeoville, Joliet, or Plainfield were also an important

source of demand. The leasing agent indicated that over the past several years, the tenant make-up has changed considerably. Many current tenants plan to lease a unit in Remington for more than a year. A significant share of households have moved to the project from outside the region. Most households are not moving from within Romeoville. When renters move out, they primarily do so to purchase housing in Plainfield or leave the market area. As indicated above, the project is located in the Plainfield school system and renter households with children prefer to stay in the Plainfield school district. Rents are higher for Remington Apartments than rents at HighPoint in part because of the preference for the Plainfield school district (and Plainfield



An aerial view of the HighPoint apartment complex located at the southwest corner of Weber Road and Highpoint Drive in Romeoville.

lacks apartment product). Another factor that explains the rental differential between the projects relates to the closer proximity to I-55 of the Remington Apartments than the HighPoint development, which is an advantage to the households attracted to the area because of employment opportunities.

The Lincoln at River Run development in Bolingbrook attracts households from Bolingbrook, Plainfield, Romeoville, and Chicago. Some tenants have moved from the HighPoint development in Romeoville. About 10 percent of the renters are via corporate housing programs. Some of the companies which rent the housing operate out of facilities in Rome-

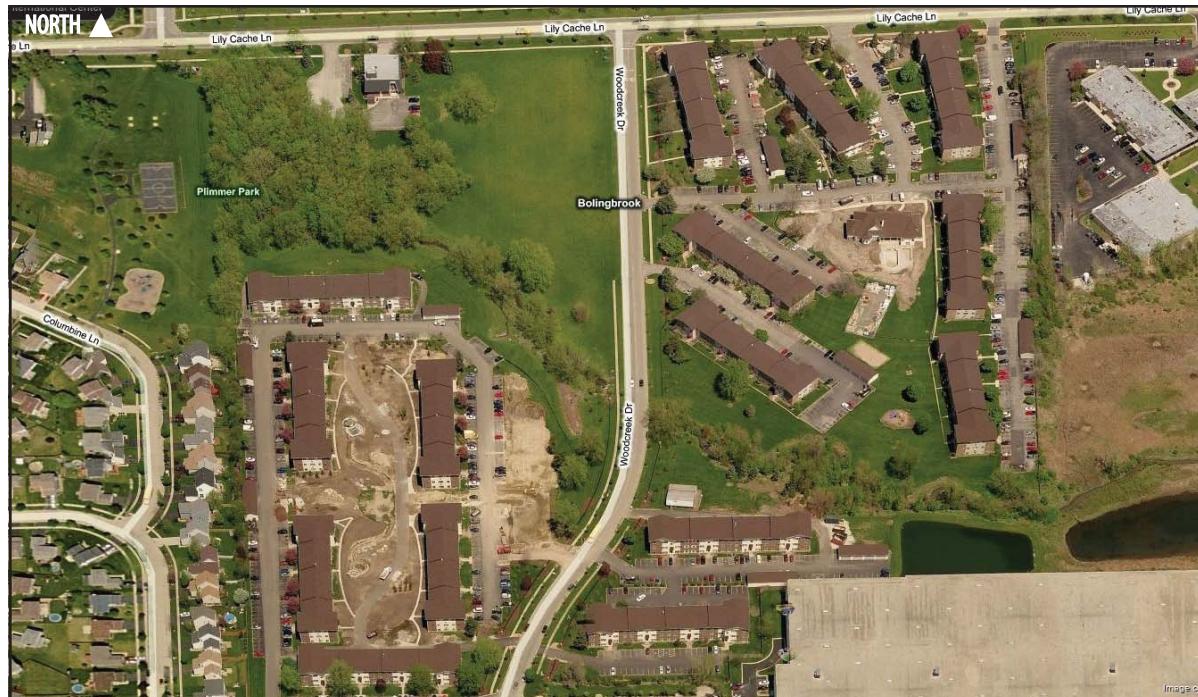
oville. In addition to renters moving because of proximity to work opportunities, households attracted in the past one to two years have frequently been moving from homes lost due to foreclosures. A few students have also been attracted but this is a limited source of demand given few schools are located near the facility.

The AMC @ Riverstone subsidized rental housing project serves younger (some households are between 18-years and 30-years-old), lower-skilled "hourly" workers. Most renters move to the project from Romeoville and Bolingbrook. The project has also attracted family households forced to move out of their owned housing units due to the

foreclosure crises. The project has also appealed to households attracted to the area because of work opportunities in the distribution and industrial facilities in Bolingbrook and Romeoville.

The Sutton Place Apartments in Crest Hill opened in 2003 and was fully built-out in 2005. It has attracted a higher proportion of older age (45 to 50-years or older) households. The development has attracted empty-nester households, which have sold their homes for various reasons as well as corporate employees and professionals anticipating renting for not more than a year. Before the Great Recession, the other primary sources of demand were family households waiting for a house to be completed. Since the impacts of the Great Recession have been felt, an important source of demand has been family households forced out of housing units lost due to foreclosures or because of the inability to obtain loans to purchase for-sale housing. Divorced individuals are another source of demand. In March, the project had a waiting list for two available units. The larger units are preferred by family households.

The Woodlands attracts single young adults from the area and others which have been transferred to the area for employment reasons. Prior to the Great Recession, this project also included workers which resided in the apartment units as second residences during the work week. For example, some individuals working in the construction and manufacturing sectors maintained temporary apartments when they had projects in the area but maintain permanent residences in Indiana or elsewhere in the Chicago region. The Woodlands also attracts households waiting to move into or build a new home in the area and more recently households which have left their housing units due to unemployment or loan foreclosures.



An aerial view of the Lincoln River Run apartment complex located near IL Route 53 in neighboring Bolingbrook.

## Occupancy Rates

Consistent with the rent increases reported since 2007, occupancy rates have increased so that overall the 2,912 units are approximately 97 percent leased.

The HighPoint complex is 98 percent leased. The 120 units of affordable tax credit housing is 97.5 percent leased. For three months last year, the complex was 100 percent leased. Occupancy rates have significantly increased from approximately 90-to-91 percent in 2005 through 2007 and the even lower rates in the first part of the past decade.

Occupancy rates at the Remington have increased to 99 percent. This compares to an 89 percent to 91 percent occupancy rate about four years ago. In the past, turnover was relatively high with few tenants remaining more than a year at the property. Even “corporate transients” are tending to stay longer as some are working for local companies for two or three years. The one bedroom and three bedroom units have been fully or nearly fully occupied over the past few years. Prior to the Great Recession, the three-bedroom units had the highest percentage of vacancy. Most occupants of the three bedroom units were families living in the units for a short time while new homes were being completed. The leasing agent indicated that one reason the larger-sized

units were more difficult to rent than one bedroom units is that for households planning to remain in the area for more than a year or two, it was more cost effective to purchase for-sale housing units. Now, the larger units are consistently fully leased due to the increase in households which moved out of ownership housing, or which do not currently have the confidence to purchase for-sale housing.

The Lincoln at River Run development is approximately 98 percent leased up from 90 percent in 2007. The AMC at Riverstone in Bolingbrook has experienced an increase in its occupancy rate from 90 percent in 2007 to 96 percent today. The occupancy rate for the Sutton Place develop-

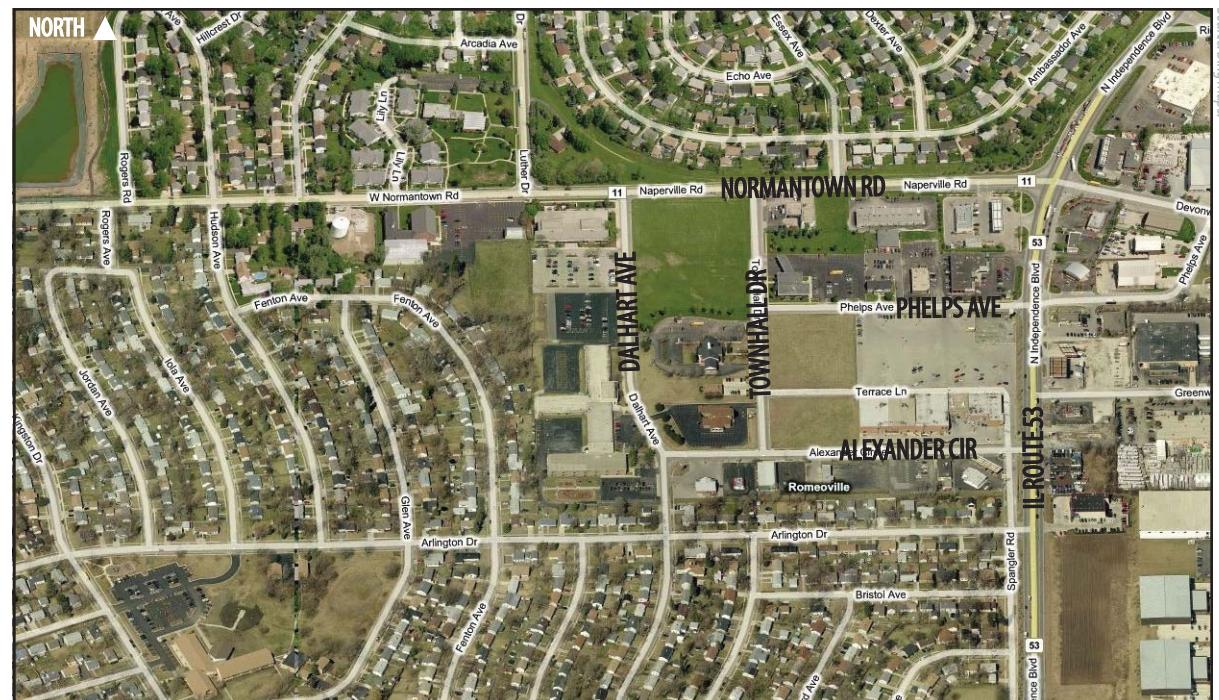
ment in Crest Hill has increased from 96 percent in 2007 to 98 percent in 2011. Similarly, the Woodlands development in Crest Hill has also experienced an increase in occupancy rates, from 93 percent in 2007 to 95 percent today.

## Future Supply

Discussions with staff of the three municipalities in the primary market area did not indicate any planned future supply of apartment uses.

## Conclusions Drawn from Review of Rental Supply

The supply analysis and interviews suggest occupancy rates and rents have increased in the past few or more years. The



*This aerial view illustrates how Downtown Romeoville is surrounded by mostly single family residential neighborhoods to the north, west, and south.*

The high occupancy rates and increasing rental rates suggest that in the current market and economic environment, additional apartment units could be supported in the market area.

major source of the increase have been households forced out of their existing housing units or households which lack confidence or the ability to purchase existing or new housing units.

Consistent with the reported influx of demand from these types of households, larger two and three bedroom units which used to be more difficult to rent than smaller units have become preferred types of units.

In addition, the market area does not contain any new rental products. But the newer rental communities command rent premiums of approximately 20 percent to 30 percent over older communities. The nine-year old Lincoln at River Run apartments in Bolingbrook obtains comparable per square foot rents on some unit types as the 11-year old Remington Apartments in Romeoville and significantly higher rents than the older projects and those in less desirable locations such as in Crest Hill.

The high occupancy rates and increasing rental rates suggest that in the current market and economic environment, additional apartment units could be supported in the market area. Even if a new project built in Downtown siphoned off two percent of the demand (equivalent to 58 units) from existing apartment surveyed, the overall occupancy rate at the existing products would be a high 95 percent.

#### Estimated Supportable Demand for Potential Apartment Use in Downtown Romeoville

Demand for apartment units is likely to arise from Echo Boomers, older households, and most important, employment growth and the need to house new workers.

Echo Boomers, also known as Generation Y or the Millennials, are (largely the children of the Baby Boomers) currently between the ages of 11 and 28. The recent severe recession particularly impacted this group's ability to find work, so that many returned to their parents' homes or "doubled up" with friends in high density living relationships. As jobs become available for this group these young adults will generate demand for apartments. Given the housing foreclosure crises has disenchanted many with the value of a home as an investment, many Echo Boomers will opt to rent housing units. According to the 2010 Census, Romeoville includes approximately 12,284 residents between the ages of 10 and 29. This population group represents 31 percent of the total Village population. If even one percent of the existing individuals in this age group elected to rent an apartment in the Downtown, this would support 123 units.

In addition, the interviews suggest potential demand for housing will arise from shifts in lifestyle or lifecycle changes. For example, some older, empty-nester households (i.e., children have moved out of the household) may seek to

**FIGURE 5-3**  
**Employment-Driven Rental Housing Demand in the Primary Market Area**

	2010-2020 #
Potential Employment Growth <sup>1</sup>	6,200 jobs
Total New Housing Units Demanded <sup>2</sup>	4,960 jobs
Rental Housing Demand <sup>3</sup>	990 units
Rental Housing Demand Potentially Captured at Downtown Site @ 10% capture rate	99 units

<sup>1</sup> The projection of future employment growth is based on the growth rates forecast by CMAP in its 2040 Forecast of Population, Households and Employment.

<sup>2</sup> Based on a jobs-to-housing balance of 1.25 (i.e. four new housing units per every five jobs added). This is a conservative assumption given that the current jobs-to-housing balance of the primary market area approximates 1.0 (one job per housing unit).

<sup>3</sup> According to the 2010 Census, approximately 18.7 percent of the existing stock of occupied housing units in the primary market area is comprised by rental housing units. Assumes tenure characteristics will remain similar so that 20 percent of total new housing unit demand will consist of rental product.

Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, 2010; Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning, 2040 Forecast of Population, Households and Employment; Gruen Gruen + Associates.

trade down from older, single-family homes they no longer wish to maintain or need, and who for lifestyle or social reasons desire to move from their existing single-family neighborhoods but stay in Romeoville or move from neighboring communities such as Crest Hill.

The table in Figure 5-3 presents an estimate of demand for apartment units based on employment growth forecast by the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning.

CMAP forecasts a growth of 6,200 jobs between 2010 and 2020 in the primary market area communities of Romeoville, Bolingbrook and Crest Hill. If a very sound jobs-to-housing balance of 1.25 jobs per household is maintained, approximately 4,960 new housing units would be needed to accommodate the potential forecast growth in jobs. Currently, 20 percent of the primary market area housing stock is comprised of rental housing units. If this same ratio is maintained, the forecast job growth would create demand for an additional 990 rental housing units. If a well-

If a well-designed and priced apartment project in the Downtown could be positioned to capture ten percent of the potential demand, this would equate to supportable demand of nearly 100 units.

designed and priced apartment project in the Downtown could be positioned to capture ten percent of the potential demand, this would equate to supportable demand of nearly 100 units.

#### **Market Demand Supported Apartment Units Accommodated on Village of Romeoville-Owned Site in Downtown**

If an apartment use was built Downtown at the same density as the Remington apartment complex at 12 units per acre, the Village-owned site of approximately nine acres could accommodate 108 units. This number of units would appear to be supported by the demographic and employ-

ment determinants of demand and the current sources of demand that are driven by the housing crisis.

#### **Complimentary Uses**

In order to enhance the competitive position of an apartment use built Downtown, we think the Village's plans to create a second recreational center of 30,000 square feet of space would be a desirable complimentary use. In addition, while the competitive conditions are intense, if a small-format grocery store could be attracted proximate to the apartment use, such a use would help the apartment project attract tenants and the uses would be mutually reinforcing.

## Retail Development Opportunities

GG+A conducted a reconnaissance of the retail market potential of the "Downtown" at IL Route 53 and Normantown Road in Romeoville. This subsection presents the results of our retail market reconnaissance. Conclusions drawn from the market reconnaissance are presented at the end of this report.

### Summary of Market Opportunities

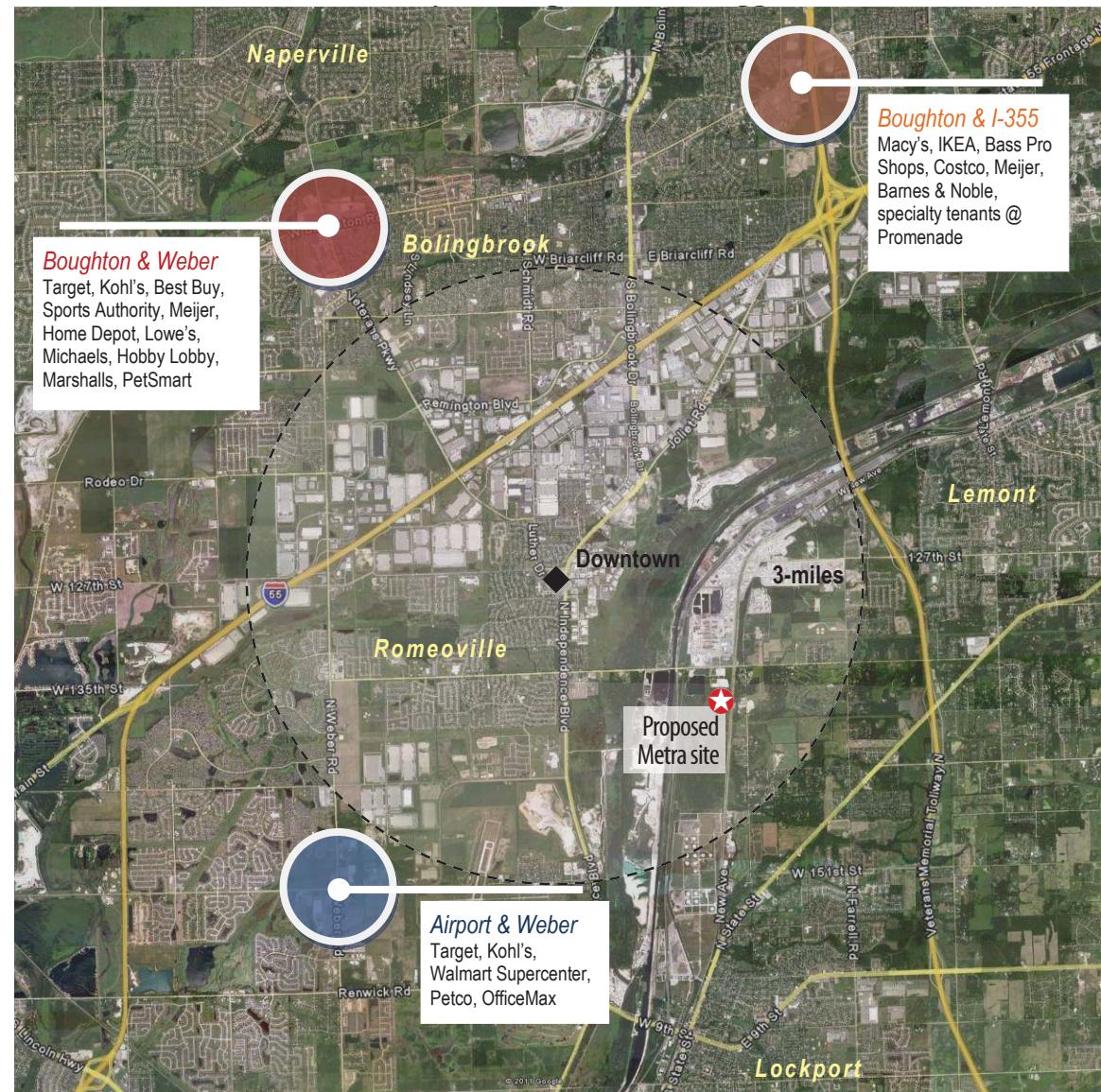
The retail market reconnaissance suggests that market conditions will be highly competitive for the foreseeable future, especially for the commercial uses not located in the dominant agglomerations.

Retail demand at the site is not likely to be regional- or community-serving in nature because of the following: (a) the availability of regional and community shopping centers and major freestanding uses located within four to five miles of the site; (b) the lack of a significant mix or agglomeration of commercial uses in the immediate area; and (c) a location less accessible and visible to either Interstate 55 or Weber Road relative to potential competing locations.

### Review of Area Retail Supply: Community- & Regional- Serving Retail

As shown on the Map in Figure 5-4, the Downtown is circumscribed by several dominant retail agglomerations. A full array of necessity and discretionary shopping opportunities exist within a 10-minute drive of the Downtown. It would be extremely challenging to create a significant retail complex to compete with these alternative locations both within and near Romeoville because many of the dominant retailers have located in these existing retail clusters. The combination of hard and soft goods retailing have created

FIGURE 5-4  
Community & Regional Retail Agglomerations



Source: Gruen Gruen + Associates.

major retail destinations in well-established locations. A variety of popular restaurants have also located in these locations, providing lunch- and dinner-time traffic and support for retail tenants. The established nature and destination quality of the retail agglomerations makes competing with them as a new entrant in the market very difficult.

For example, less than five miles north of the Downtown, the Boughton Road corridor in Bolingbrook contains a relatively complete supply of category-killer, general merchandise, and specialty retailers. The node at Boughton and Weber Roads (approximately four miles northwest of the Downtown) contains well over one million square feet of retail and restaurant space; anchored by tenants such as Best Buy, Target, Kohl's, Home Depot, Lowe's, Sports Authority, and Meijer. Retailers at this location serve a collective trade area that encompasses Bolingbrook, Romeoville, and the south end of Naperville.<sup>18</sup>

Approximately five miles northeast of the Downtown at the intersection of Boughton Road and Interstate 355, an increasingly strong retail agglomeration exists that includes major destination retailers serving extensive trade areas. In addition to the 750,000-square-foot Bolingbrook Promenade, adjacent freestanding retailers include Ikea, Bass Pro Shops, Costco, and Meijer. The Promenade also includes a cinema and a number of casual dining and fast-casual restaurants.

<sup>18</sup> Although some of the tenancies present at this agglomeration have now opened stores in Romeoville (e.g. Target, Kohl's), it still captures the expenditures of Romeoville households. For example, a leasing agent for a local apartment community who has lived near the Downtown for most of her life indicated she most frequently shops at Boughton and Weber Roads because it is easily accessible (via Veteran's Parkway) and is much more conducive to multi-purpose shopping trips.

Nearest to the Downtown, located in Romeoville at the intersection of Weber Road and Airport Road, are two recently developed power centers. The 400,000-square-foot Romeoville Crossing project is anchored by a 200,000-square-foot Wal-Mart Supercenter. At the northeast corner of the intersection, Kohl's and Target have each opened stores. Each project contains considerable land on which to accommodate additional anchor tenants.

The Downtown is "betwixt and between" each of these agglomerations. It is not sufficiently close enough to capture potential spill-over demands; but too proximate to establish a trade area that is not already served by retailers in these well-established locations.

## Locational Advantages & Constraints of Downtown as a Commercial Location

The identification of significant regional-and community-serving retail developments proximate to the site suggest an assessment of the locational advantages and disadvantages of the site for neighborhood or convenience/necessity uses be considered. The relative advantages and disadvantages of the Downtown location are presented next.

### IL Route 53 Traffic

Proximity to high volumes of vehicular traffic on IL Route 53 can be expected to represent both an advantage, and at times, a constraint. According to the Illinois Department of Transportation ("IDOT"), nearly 32,000 cars pass by the



Source: pinoychicago via Panoramio

*One of the corners of the intersection of Weber Road and Airport Road in Romeoville is anchored by a retail power center, which includes Target.*

site each day. The primary advantage associated with high volumes of traffic relates to the level of exposure. Although many smaller retail and personal service-related tenants (e.g. dentists or dry cleaners) may not directly capture a significant proportion of their sales from IL Route 53 pass-through traffic, exposure through signage and street visibility is often an important source of advertising for small service providers and necessity-oriented retailers.

IL Route 53 is not generally conducive to destination-oriented traffic or "in and out" trips. The high travel speeds and the lack of a signalized intersection directly abutting the site may make it somewhat challenging to access the site (left in and left out) during peak morning and evening hours. Ideally, direct access to the site would be made through a controlled intersection.

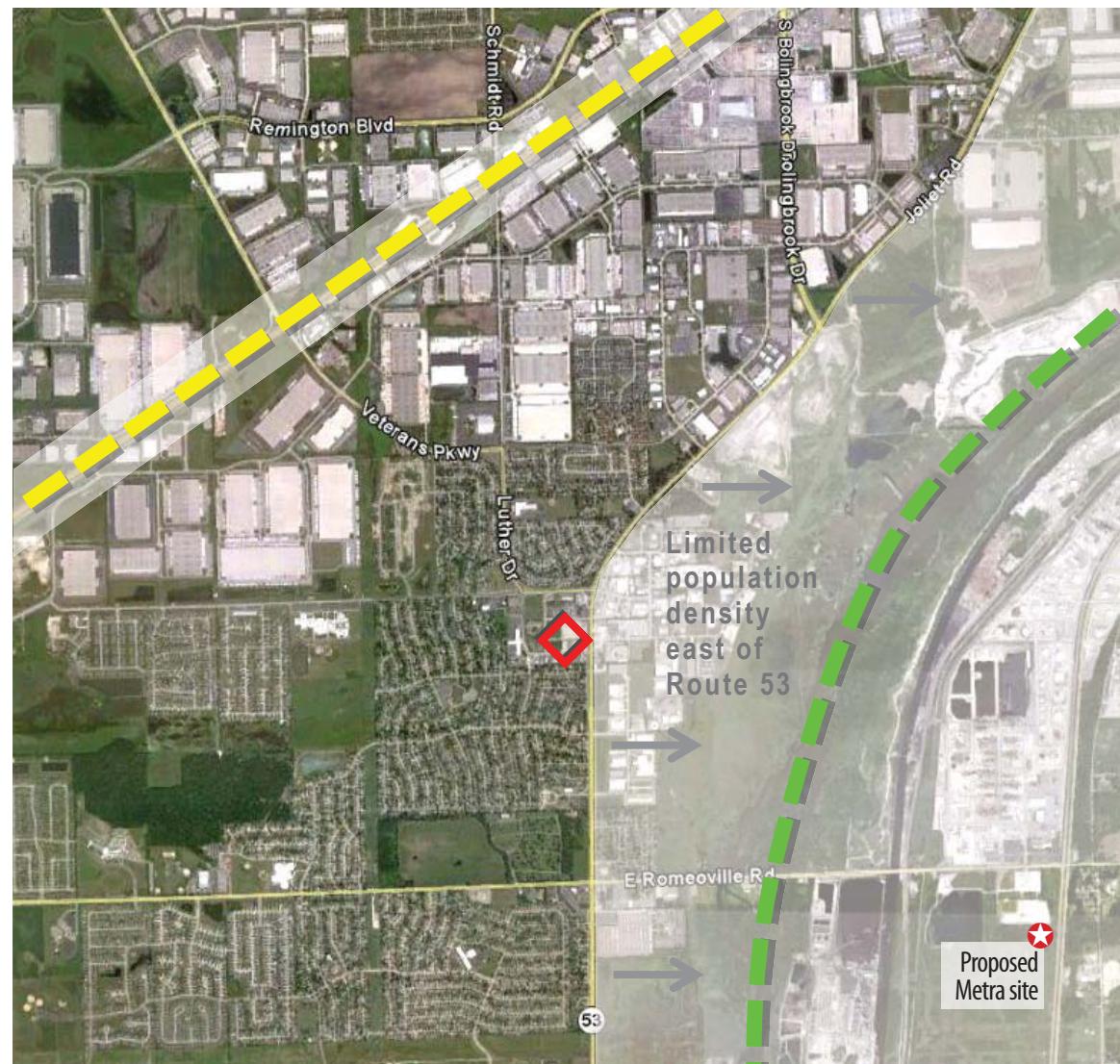
### Visibility

Visibility to the Downtown site is less than ideal. Most retailers and restaurants will prefer "four way" street intersection visibility when considering smaller not well established commercial locations. Although close to the primary intersection along IL Route 53 (at Normantown Road, the "hard corner"), existing uses adjacent to the site limit visibility from this east-west arterial street.

### Lack of Critical Mass

Another constraint relates to the locational image and adjoining uses, which are local-serving in nature. The IL Route 53 corridor on the east side of Romeoville does not include a well-established critical mass of retail and restaurant uses. The Downtown and surrounding areas also currently lack significant activity generators (such as large medical or entertainment uses).

FIGURE 5-5  
Physical & Symbolic Barriers to the Trade Area



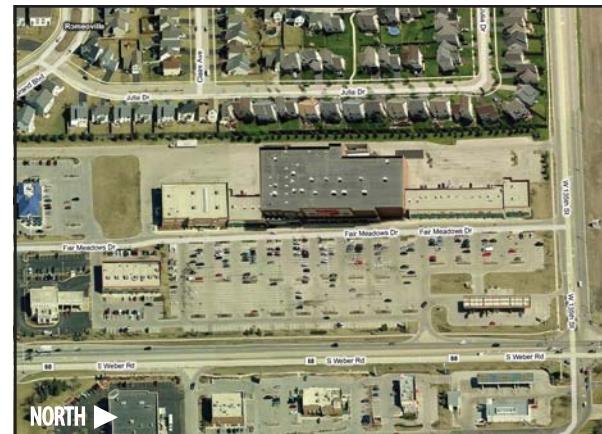
Source: Gruen Gruen + Associates.

Many of its existing commercial spaces are competitively obsolete. The limited presence and “hodge podge” of existing retail, commercial, and restaurant uses in the vicinity make it challenging to capture customers and patrons from beyond the immediate neighborhoods.

The lack of a critical mass in a location not on the preferred commercial corridors near highways will discourage the attraction of national retailers and restaurants which typically seek locations near large high-volume community or regional-serving retailers.

#### **Physical & Symbolic Barriers Limit the Trade Area**

Another disadvantage of the Downtown location relates to the geography of the community. The Downtown is not centrally located to most households in Romeoville as recent housing growth has primarily occurred south and west of the Downtown. The presence of actual and symbolic barriers will constrain the trade area for retail and commercial uses at the site.



The Dominick's at Weber Road and 135<sup>th</sup> Street in Romeoville (left) and the Food 4 Less at IL Route 53 and Lily Cache Lane in Bolingbrook (right) are two of seven grocery stores located within five miles of Downtown Romeoville. Nine general merchandise stores are also located within the same radius.

As shown on the map in Figure 5-5, Interstate 55 to the north and the Canal/River to the east of the Downtown serve as symbolic boundaries and physical barriers that will make it difficult to attract households from beyond the immediate area. In addition, the market potential is limited to the east of IL Route 53 which is primarily comprised of open space and heavy industrial uses.

#### **Existing Neighborhood Retail & Grocery Store Supply Limit Trade Area that Neighborhood Uses Located in the Downtown Potentially Serve**

The existing neighborhood retail and grocery stores located near the Downtown limit the trade area potential of neighborhood uses located in the Downtown. Three full-service grocery stores exist within approximately three miles of the Site. These include:

- ❑ Dominick's, located at the northwest corner of Weber Road and 135<sup>th</sup> Street in the Romeoville Town Center shopping center;



- ❑ Food 4 Less, located at the northwest corner of IL Route 53 and 107<sup>th</sup> Street in the Pheasant Hill Plaza shopping center (in Bolingbrook); and

- ❑ Jewel-Osco, located at the southwest corner of Weber Road and Taylor Road in the High Point Square shopping center.

Each store contains approximately 65,000 square feet of space. The two full-service grocery stores on Weber Road in Romeoville, Dominick's and Jewel, reportedly serve a primary trade area consisting of Romeoville and unincorporated Plainfield (i.e. the Carillon community). The Food 4 Less just north of I-55 on IL Route 53 also serves households residing near the Downtown.

In addition to these full-service supermarkets, the immediate area surrounding the site contains smaller-format grocers and multiple drug stores. The broader area contains general merchandise stores and warehouse clubs including grocery components.

The table in Figure 5-6 identifies the freestanding grocery stores and general merchandise stores that carry groceries within five miles of the Downtown. Within five miles of the Downtown, eight traditional grocery stores exist totaling 368,000 square feet of space. Another seven larger general merchandise stores selling groceries exist within the five-mile radius. A 160,000-square-foot Meijer store is also proposed for a 40-acre site at the northeast corner of Weber Road and Renwick Road on the south side of Romeoville.

The map in Figure 5-7 shows the location of these stores and an overlapping 3-mile trade area served by the two nearest full-service grocery stores (Dominick's and Food 4 Less) relative to the Downtown.

### Conclusions Drawn from Reconnaissance

The older subdivisions on the northeast side of Romeoville have not experienced the same level of growth that occurred elsewhere in the community throughout the past decade, nor do they include a significant source of office employment. Infill residential development near the Downtown has been minimal. Households in the older Romeoville subdivisions have considerably greater access to nearby shopping and dining alternatives that did not exist in the past.

The retail market reconnaissance suggests that market conditions will be highly competitive for the foreseeable future, especially for the commercial uses not located in the dominant agglomerations. The lower rental rates, higher vacancy rates, higher tenant turnover, and signs of greater deferred maintenance in commercial facilities located in or near the Downtown location is explained by the population and development shifts away from IL Route 53.

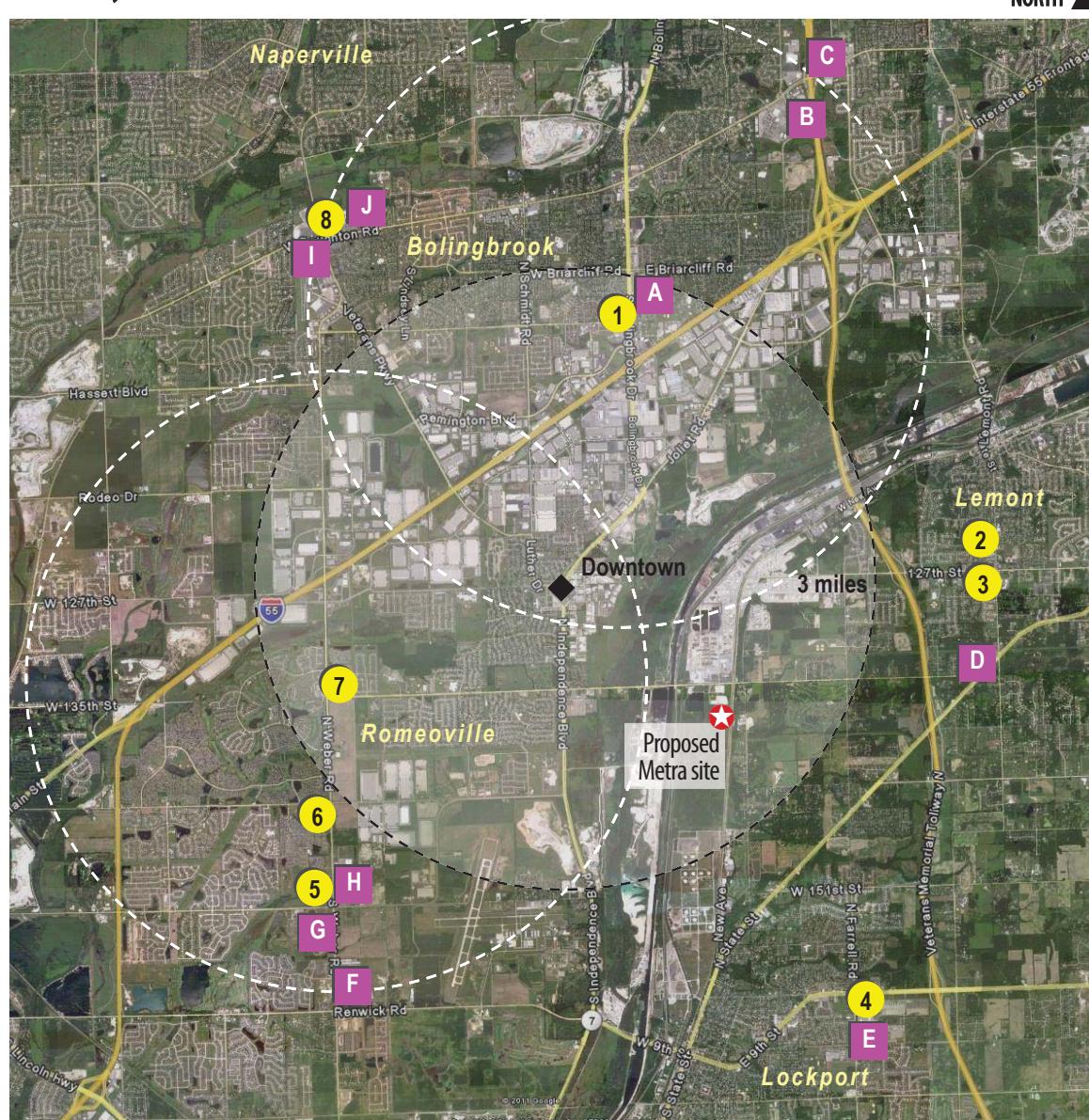
For new commercial space to succeed in the Downtown, they will need to capture demand being realized by existing stores and shopping clusters located outside the Downtown on Weber and Boughton Roads.

**FIGURE 5-6**  
**Grocery & General Merchandise Stores Located Within Approximately 5 Miles of Downtown**

Map ID	Name	Location	Distance from Downtown # Miles	Store Size # Sq Ft
<b>Grocery / Supermarket</b>				
1	Food 4 Less	NWC Route 53 and 107 <sup>th</sup> , Bolingbrook	2.7	63,000
2	Chipain's	NWC State and Wend, Lemont	4.2	20,000
3	Jewel-Osco	SWC State and 127 <sup>th</sup> , Lemont	4.2	70,000
4	Jewel-Osco	SEC 159 <sup>th</sup> and Farrell, Lockport	4.9	65,000
5	Aldi	NWC Weber and Airport, Romeoville	3.8	16,000
6	Jewel-Osco	SWC Weber and Taylor, Romeoville	3.1	63,000
7	Dominick's	NEC Weber and 135 <sup>th</sup> , Romeoville	2.5	65,000
8	Jewel-Osco	NEW Weber and Boughton, Bolingbrook	4.2	71,000
<b>TOTAL</b>				<b>368,000</b>
<b>General Merchandise / Superstores</b>				
A	Wal-Mart	SEC Rt 53 and Briarcliff, Bolingbrook	3.1	157,000
B	Meijer	SWC Boughton and I-355, Bolingbrook	5.2	200,000
C	Costco	NEC Boughton and I-355, Bolingbrook	5.8	152,000
D	Target	NWC Archer and State, Lemont	4.1	120,000
E	Wal-Mart	SEC 159 <sup>th</sup> and Farrell, Lockport	5.1	200,000
F	Meijer (proposed)	NEC Weber and Renwick, Romeoville	4.3	156,000
G	Wal-Mart	SWC Weber and Airport, Romeoville	3.9	200,000
H	Target	NEC Weber and Airport, Romeoville	3.7	120,000
I	Meijer	SWC Boughton and Weber, Bolingbrook	4.1	190,000
J	Target	NEC Boughton and Weber, Bolingbrook	4.2	125,000
<b>TOTAL</b>				<b>1,620,000</b>

Sources: The Shiner Group; Edgemark Real Estate; Loopnet; Gruen Gruen + Associates.

FIGURE 5-7  
Area Grocery & General Merchandise Stores



Source: Gruen Gruen + Associates.

The supply analysis and interviews suggest that for new commercial space to succeed, the Downtown will need to capture demand now being realized by existing stores and shopping clusters located outside the Downtown on Weber and Boughton Roads. These locations tend to offer greater accessibility, visibility and agglomeration advantages than does the location of the Downtown. An ample amount of land also remains available in the Weber Road corridor to accommodate future commercial needs.

Commercial use in the Downtown should be targeted to strengthen the competitive position of the location for apartments and enhancing the appeal of the neighborhood to existing and perspective new households. Such a strategy calls for seeking to attract eating and drinking establishments and a small-format grocery that had previously indicated interest in locating within the Downtown. Given the competitive market conditions, it is likely that favorable transactions will be required to induce commercial uses to locate in the Downtown.

Commercial use in the Downtown should be targeted to strengthen the competitive position of the location for apartments and enhancing the appeal of the neighborhood to existing and perspective new households.

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# East Side Development Opportunities

## SECTION

## 6

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The East Side TOD Area presents a complex set of issues – presenting issues and offers opportunities for development that must be considered in relation to the establishment of transit supportive land uses. This section explores the potential for various land uses that might be appropriate for this part of the Study Area, including commercial, industrial, and residential for development within the vicinity of the proposed Metra station on the East Side of Romeoville (see the Study Area Map in Figure 1-3 in Section 1).

### Development Influences & Opportunities

Existing land uses, lack of infrastructure, utility and pipeline corridors, dramatic changes to topography, and high quality natural areas combine to pose various constraints on development potential for the East Side. However, current plans by Metra call for the establishment of a new commuter train station at the southwest corner of the intersection of

New Avenue and 135<sup>th</sup> Street, which signal the opportunity for new public and private investments that seek to capitalize on such service. While initial estimates indicate daily ridership is very low, growth in ridership in nearby stations and long term development potential on the East Side and greater Romeoville area provide the potential for increased ridership.

Ultimately, the TOD area 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. While the availability of utilities, impact of heavy industrial uses, and environmental constraints are significant determining factors in the types of land uses that can be supported, the East Side possesses unique characteristics that both provide an opportunity for establishment of high quality projects. The presence of extensive



steep slopes, high quality woodlands, topographic variety, and open space corridors along natural waterways provide opportunities for environmental conservation, open space preservation, sustainability initiatives, and unique development opportunities.

Improving options to serve local travel markets within the Village, plus enhancing regional travel markets, could include modes of travel that extend beyond the commuter rail line. This could provide an opportunity for the East Side to achieve new potential beyond its historic industrial roots through the planning and provision of critical transportation linkages, including pedestrian and bicycle connections, and residential developments that can take advantage of proximity to excellent transportation options, as well as high quality natural features.

## Commercial Development

Although existing uses pose significant barriers, the natural characteristics of the area may provide some opportunities for unique uses catering to nearby business that would take advantage of trails, biking, and other recreational opportunities.

Real estate professionals and property owners interviewed during this process suggest that limited commercial uses oriented to serving Metra commuters and nearby residential areas may be possible at the intersection of Smith Road and 135<sup>th</sup> Street.

Uses in this area should complement other commercial offerings in the area, cater to local neighborhood oriented needs, and in particular should not detract from the downtown commercial area.

Improving options to serve local travel markets within the Village could provide an opportunity for the East Side to achieve new potential beyond its historic industrial roots through the planning and provision of critical transportation linkages, including pedestrian and bicycle connections, and residential developments that can take advantage of proximity to excellent transportation options, as well as high quality natural features.

The establishment of significant commercial uses in the East Side TOD Area is constrained by several locational disadvantages, including the following:

- The absence of an agglomeration or clustering of commercial uses in the vicinity of the site.
- Current lack of sufficient residential density to support commercial development.
- Proximity to the CITGO refinery which creates a dis-amenity for commercial uses within the immediate vicinity of the refinery.
- The lack of a positive image or identity as an office location, which is typically defined or branded by the character and image of the neighboring uses; the neighboring use of a refinery does not increase the locational value and image of the site for office users.
- Location not central or highly accessible compared to alternatives.



Source: Tecta Associates, Inc.

*The open space corridors along the local creeks, particularly Long Run Creek, provide opportunities for environmental conservation, sustainability initiatives, and unique development concepts.*

## Industrial Development

The East Side TOD Area possesses several disadvantages for successful modern industrial developments. It lacks the requisite access and identity to key transportation links; lacks proximity to support services; and lacks the image or identity as a place for contemporary industrial businesses. In addition, the I-55 industrial market in which space built at the site would compete is highly competitive with no shortage of building space options for users.

## I-55 Submarket Trends

According to the market assessment report (see full report in Appendix C), the amount vacant industrial space, combined with lower rents than typical prior to the recession, provide significant completion in areas with better location.



*The CITGO gas station at the corner of 135<sup>th</sup> Street and New Avenue is one of the only commercial businesses that is presently located on the East Side. There may be options for other complimentary commercial uses.*

In addition to the significant amount of existing available industrial space, according to the Village of Romeoville Community Development Department, the Village contains approximately 500 acres of land available for industrial, office, and warehouse uses. In addition, the Comprehensive Plan contemplates an additional 200 acres of land for future development of industrial uses if such land is annexed. The local airport also contains significant acreage on which industrial development could occur.

Although the proximity of the CITGO refinery will likely deter many larger, higher quality industrial users, especially those which depend upon engineering and other high skill labor, from considering the location, certain smaller independent and entrepreneurial companies seeking access to Metra may consider locations on the East Side, similar to the concrete business (Concrete By Wagner, Inc.) on High Road.

## Residential Development

Site observations, combined with information provided by real estate professionals and land owners, suggest opportunities may exist over the long term for residential development of various types and densities. However, the costs of extending public utility service will likely make the site less appealing to residential developers, given the availability of other sites with utilities and already established as residential locations near employment nodes, schools, shopping, and other services and amenities.

Furthermore, proximity to the CITGO refinery may act as a disamenity to development. Multiple oil and natural gas pipelines that are present in the area may pose real and perceived safety hazards to prospective households. In addition, the presence of these pipelines and the associated

easements could raise development costs or otherwise have an impact on development.

Upon investigation of the area, existing single family homes in the mid to upper price ranges, have been established in the area since the establishment of the CITGO refinery, some include newer subdivisions to the northeast of the Study Area. As described previously in the site analyses summarized in Section 3, the East Side's significant asset is its varied topography, with wooded areas along floodplains and along ridges that mask the physical presence of the refinery. Careful site planning and extensive landscaped buffer areas may be able to mitigate these location limitations, and provide opportunities for residential uses that would take advantage of access to the new Metra station, existing regional bike paths and future bike routes that will connect the East Side of Romeoville to the station and Downtown.

However, in the near term several factors suggest that housing development in the East Side will not likely occur due to the economic recession and downturn in the housing market; ample, alternative housing locations are readily available; and the negative image associated with a residential location adjacent to a major refinery.

Accordingly, residential uses should be given a low priority in the near term as the Metra station area will not have the service or ridership to generate interest, and will not likely justify Village investment in utilities or other public services. Given the civic priority indicated for the Downtown Area, priority in terms of infill residential development should be given to the Downtown.

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# Issues, Challenges & Opportunities

## SECTION 7

Below is a summary of issues, challenges, and opportunities relating to the revitalization of Downtown Romeoville and potential development of the Village's East Side TOD Area.

### Current Issues & Challenges

#### Downtown Area

- ❑ Limited downtown development options exacerbated by poor market conditions and competition from other existing community and regional retail agglomerations, both in Romeoville and Bolingbrook.
- ❑ Lack of a downtown critical mass including well-established retail businesses and restaurants; the lack of a significant activity generator, such as a large medical or entertainment use, also impact the critical mass necessary to attract other businesses or investment.

- ❑ The lack of a signalized intersection into the Spartans' Square site and high-speed traffic make IL Route 53 unfavorable to destination-oriented traffic.
- ❑ Less than ideal visibility of the Downtown area, particularly for prospective retailers and restaurants considering a smaller, not well-established commercial location.
- ❑ Physical and symbolic barriers are created by the fact that the Downtown is not centrally located in the Village, with the high growth areas occurring to the south and west. I-55, the river, and canals also create physical barriers that may deter visitors to Downtown.
- ❑ Competition from other potential retail sites that offer greater accessibility, visibility, and agglomeration advantages than Downtown Romeoville.



Source: Tesla Associates, Inc.

- The existence of multiple grocery and general merchandise stores within 5 miles of Downtown.
- Limited pedestrian and bikeway connectivity.

### East Side TOD Area

- Planning for a non-traditional TOD that strays from the common axioms of dense residential and mixed use development.
- The secluded location of the proposed Metra site will accommodate only a commuter rail station and parking but little else on the immediate site (CITGO will still operate its auxiliary parking and staging area).
- The impact of nearby intensive industrial activities at the CITGO refinery and the Midwest Generation coal facility.
- The lack of municipal water and wastewater utilities to the East Side.
- Competition to potentially attract industrial space users to the East Side from the overall I-55 industrial market, which has no shortage of building space options for users in other communities.
- Locational disadvantages that may prevent the attraction of potential office and industrial space users.
- Since there has not been an operating commuter rail station in Romeoville, there is not the same type of "culture" of Metra use compared to communities that have had a station in their town for years or decades,

where it has received significant use for generations. A new station takes some time to establish itself as an important element in the community.

- Unlike many Metra routes, the Heritage Corridor only operates five days per week and for those days only 3 inbound / 3 outbound trains. As a result, it will be difficult for the new station in Romeoville to generate a significant amount of activity, at least at the onset.

### Potential Opportunities

#### Downtown Area

- Strong support for a revitalized Downtown, enhanced transit service, and growth of the East Side, extending as far back to the community's vision statement and recommendations from the Village's Comprehensive Plan. Survey results also contribute to this support.

- Increased awareness and desire for transit helps to encourage transit usage, build up Romeoville's transit infrastructure, and promote more sustainable living.

- An existing system of Pace bus service and paratransit service upon which to build an enhanced transit system for Romeoville.

- Strong employment base to support downtown retail.

- The D-D zoning district designated for Downtown provides the zoning support that encourages revitalizing the Downtown in a more traditional form, with greater orientation to the pedestrian, bicycle, and streetscape.

- A favorable market generated by high occupancy rates and rising rents creates the opportunity to enhance the Village's stock of apartment housing, particularly in Downtown.



Source: Fehr Associates, Inc.

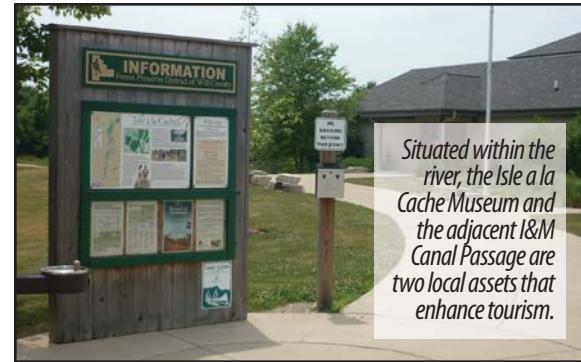
- ❑ The competitive positioning offered by the potential to build a second recreational center of 30,000 sq ft as a desirable complimentary use to an enhanced apartment housing stock in Downtown.

### East Side TOD Area

- ❑ The planned Metra station and commuter parking will enhance the Village's transit infrastructure.
- ❑ Potential findings from the Heritage Corridor Line Capacity Analysis currently being undertaken by CN, which will have bearing on the proposed Metra station in Romeoville as well as the prospects for high speed rail service between Chicago and St. Louis.
- ❑ Willingness of certain property owners to participate in the planning process. This includes the owner of the Big Run Golf Club property, which provides a prime location for potential redevelopment with a natural landscape as a backdrop.

- ❑ The rolling topography and significant changes in elevation of the East Side creates opportunities to encourage creative site design and enhance the physical separation between the CITGO refinery and the rest of the East Side.

- ❑ The existing regional trail network provides a strong foundation to create new trail linkages that connect to Downtown and the rest of the community.
- ❑ Continued support of preserving the natural habitats of the Hine's emerald dragonfly, which makes its home in the wetlands on the East Side; this makes Romeoville one of the few locations in the region that has habitats that allow the endangered species to thrive.
- ❑ A strong foundation of community characteristics -- including history, industrial heritage, rolling topography, pastoral nature, nature conservation, landscaped streetscapes, and a culture of sustainability -- upon which to build urban design themes.



*Situated within the river, the Isle a la Cache Museum and the adjacent I&M Canal Passage are two local assets that enhance tourism.*

- ❑ The opportunity to redevelop Downtown and develop the East Side with a cognizant eye on sustainability practices relating to the transportation network as well as the built and natural environments.
- ❑ Historical and recreational tourism, such as at the Isle a la Cache Museum, and bike trails attract visitors and residents alike to the area.

## Issues, Challenges & Opportunities Map

The Issues, Challenges & Opportunities Maps in Figures 7-1 and 7-2 illustrate the key issues that will have an impact on the development concepts for Downtown Romeoville and the East Side, respectively. Key issues relate to site, transportation, environmental, and design elements. Transportation issues are described in greater detail in the Transportation Assessment in Section 4.

The intent of the Issues, Challenges & Opportunities Maps is to present the existing conditions of each focus area and the opportunities that each offers, which will inform planning, design, transportation, and market recommendations in the later phases of this project.

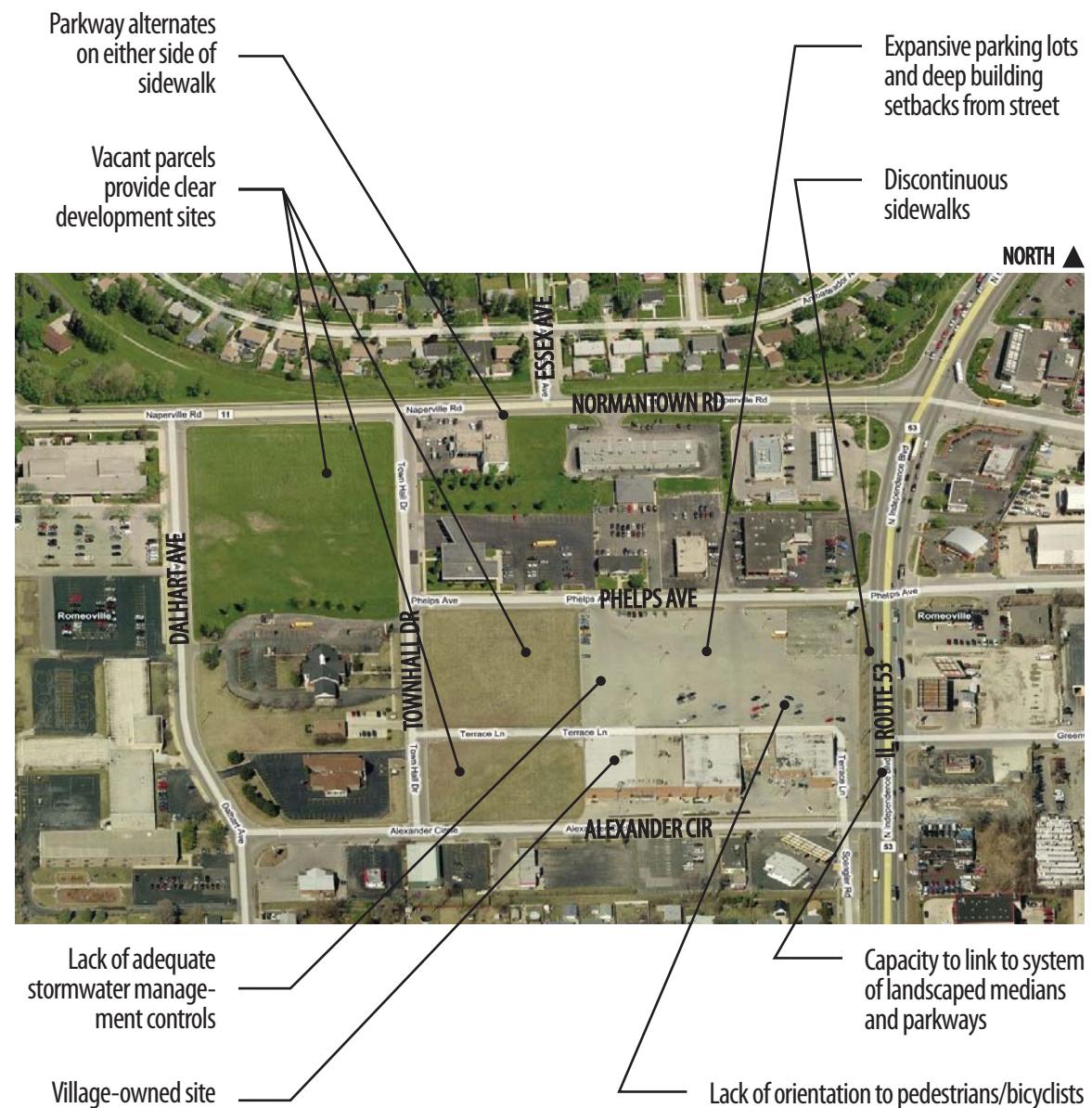
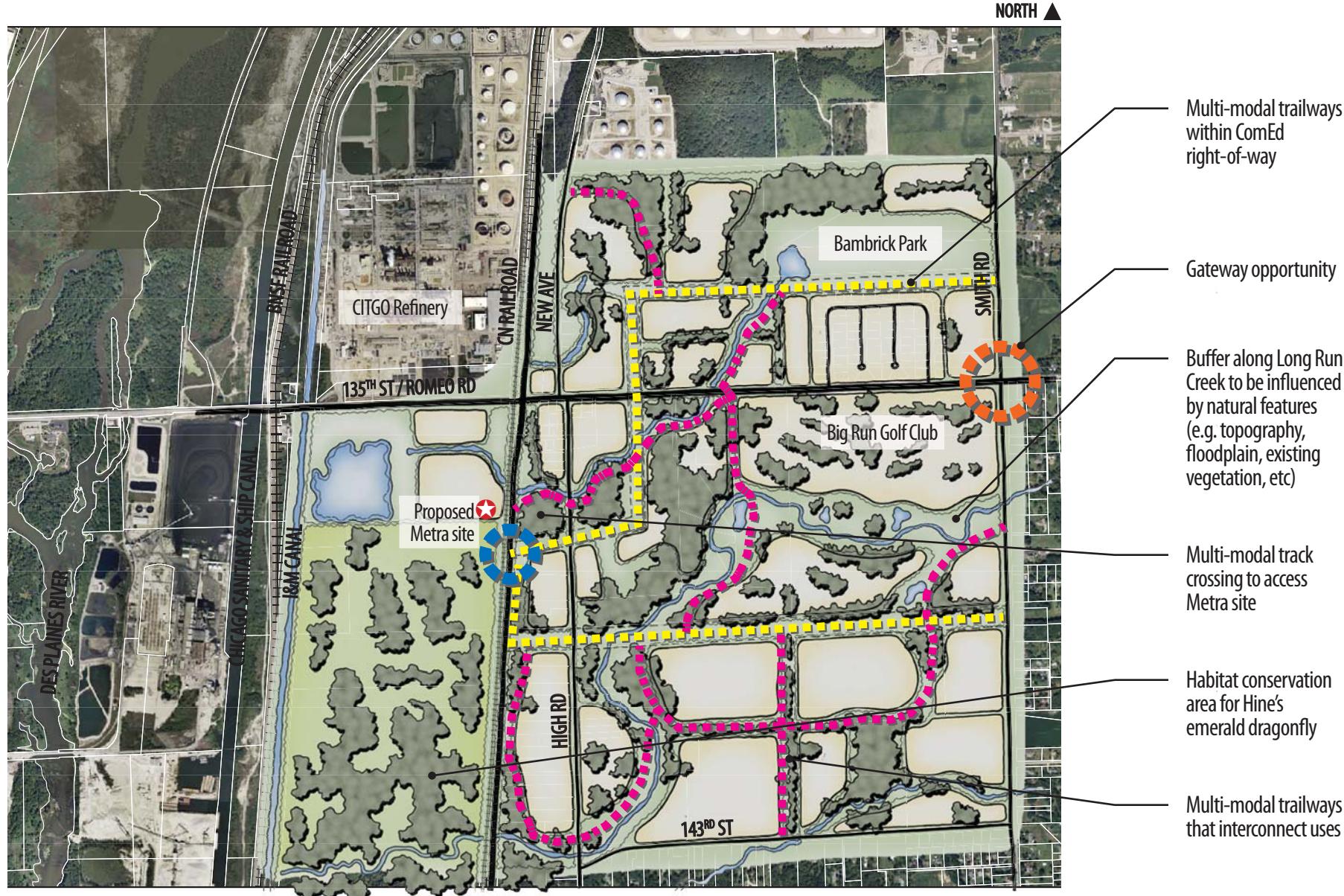


FIGURE 7-1

## Issues, Challenges & Opportunities Map | DOWNTOWN AREA



Source: Teska Associates, Inc.; field work.

FIGURE 7-2

## Issues, Challenges & Opportunities Map | EAST SIDE TOD AREA

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