City of Marengo
Western Corridor Planning Project

Adopted
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Submitted By:

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Section 1: Introduction

The City of Marengo is a community of approximately 7,826 residents (according ESRI's 2008 estimates) situated 28 miles east of Rockford and approximately 60 miles northwest of Chicago's Loop. Marengo's strategic location, only 6 miles north of Interstate 90 along US Route 20 and a proposed transit extension, possesses a high degree of potential for future development.

This attractive location has brought increased pressure for residential development in the area, providing the basis for 2030 population projections of 18,213 people. As development pressure increased the City was able to protect Marengo's desirable rural and residential character through the adoption of progressive planning practices.

The City's previously prepared plans and studies have "set the stage" for development and investment in the Western Corridor and the Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) area including the Comprehensive Plan, its Framework Plan and Metra Station Plans. In an effort to look in greater detail at the Western Corridor, the City initiated this Study to create a Land Use and Development Concept and Transportation and Access Plan for the area that builds upon the recommendations of the Comprehensive Plan.

City's Comprehensive Plan

In May of 2004, the City adopted the Comprehensive Plan. The City commissioned the undertaking of the Comprehensive Plan in response to growing development pressures in order to ensure there was policy in place to address these pressures and dictate the nature, scale, and pace of future development. The Western Corridor is situated within one of the City's Primary Growth Areas. Future development to occur within the next 20 years is encouraged to concentrate in either the southern or western areas of the City. The plan's recommendations regarding a myriad of subjects including land use, development and design guidelines, conservation, and transportation have been made toward this end.

Purpose of Western Corridor Plan

The Western Corridor Planning Area, located just west of Marengo's Downtown, is largely undeveloped and future growth there will be significantly influenced by the creation of a transit station. As the population of

Marengo continues to grow, a plan for the future of the Western Corridor Study Area became increasingly important as does the introduction of potential transit service.

Key recommendations of the Plan are a Land Use and Development Concept Plan and a Transportation and Access Plan for the area. Together, these plans create an exciting and appropriately scaled development pattern for the Western Corridor. In addition to vehicular and public transit transportation recommendations, this Plan also includes recommendations to improve the efficiency of pedestrian connections within and to the area from Downtown Marengo. One such recommendations is a connection from the proposed station area to the Downtown Area.

The Plan provides a detailed sub-area plan for the western corridor of Marengo, focusing on the potential transit station. In addition to the creation of an integrated land use plan for the area, this study proposes an implementation strategy that will:

- ◊ Comply with the goals, objectives and standards of the City's Comprehensive Plan, and any amendments thereto, and
- ◊ Provide recommendations as to how the potential transit station and surrounding area can be integrated with the City's downtown.

Currently the site of the potential transit station is largely undeveloped, allowing the City the ability to plan for a station and development in the surrounding area. The City of Marengo believes that this is an opportune time to begin effective planning for a possible transit line extension. By formulating a land use plan now, Marengo will be better able to preserve the land needed for a transit station and related development. With this corridor having a fully developed transit oriented site plan, complications that may arise when the time comes to extend transit service would be mitigated.

The Comprehensive Plan for the City of Marengo was adopted in April 2004. This Framework Plan illustrates anticipated and desired land use distribution, open space, park and conservation areas as well as potential commercial and residential development opportunities. The Comprehensive Plan directs future development and character of Marengo. In the Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) study area, a Commercial Development Center is proposed at the intersection of Ritz Road and US 20. This is a Regional Level Center with a large Market Service Radius. The Transit-Oriented Design proposed in this document, incorporates this important commercial node within the Station District. Complimentary land uses are located adjacent to the Station District, consistent with the Comprehensive Plan.

Potential Future Transit Options

As of the date of this study, no formal studies have been conducted to determine appropriate transportation modes for the site. Therefore, for purposes of this analysis, it is assumed that the future transit service may be either commuter rail or alternative transit technologies such as Bus Rapid Transit (BRT).

Metra is currently conducting an initial study to determine the feasibility of extending commuter rail service along the Union Pacific Railroad (UPRR) Belvidere Subdivision, which runs through parts of Kane and McHenry Counties, including the Village of Huntley and the City of Marengo. Should the results of Metra's study indicate that commuter rail service along the UPRR Belvidere Subdivision is feasible, further study would be necessary to evaluate the most effective transit alternative through the corridor. Due to the high capital costs associated with large transit investment, funding through the highly-competitive Federal Transit Administration's New Starts Program would likely be sought. This program includes a multi-step process that begins with analysis of all potential transit alternatives (e.g. modes, alignments, operating plans, etc.) within the corridor based on projected ridership, costs, land use benefits, and other projections. Should a project advance out of the Alternatives Analysis phase, the Preliminary Engineering and Final Design phases would follow, before construction and testing could begin. It generally takes projects between eight and ten years to complete the New Starts program, but the ever-changing nature of the program can cause this timeframe to be extended.

Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) is a term given to a variety of public transit alternatives that, through improvements to infrastructure, vehicles and scheduling, use buses to provide a service that is of a higher quality and speed than an ordinary bus route. Each BRT system uses different improvements depending on ridership, existing road networks, and distances travelled. The goal of such systems is to at least approach the service quality of rail transit while utilizing the cost savings of construction and operation expenses of bus transit. BRT's may run in a variety of configurations, however, dedicated bus lanes that offer preferential treatment at intersections are preferred.

Study Area

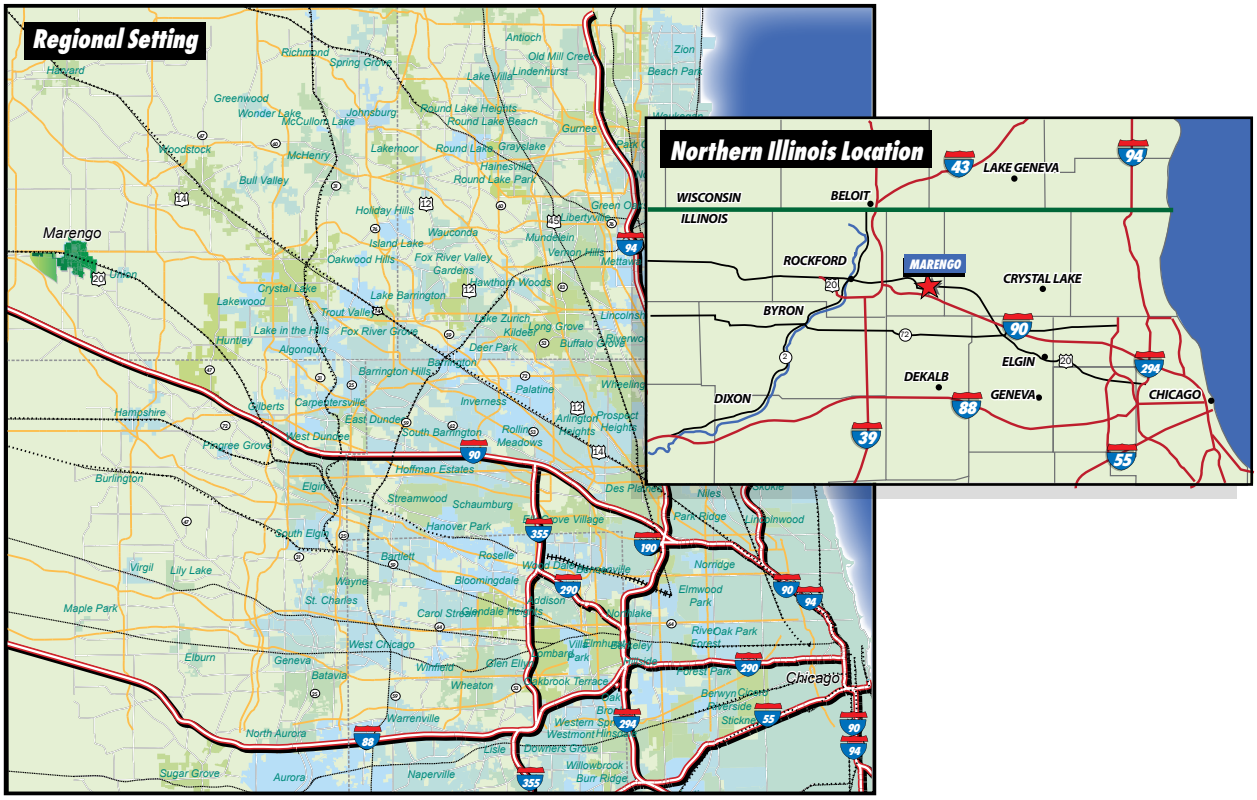
The study area for the project is shown on Figure 1. The boundaries of the study area on the east are Ritz/ Meyer Roads, and the Belvidere Subdivision of the Union Pacific Railroad to the north. General boundaries to west and south are Thorn Road and Pleasant Grove Road respectively. Currently the site of the potential transit station is largely undeveloped, allowing the City the ability to plan for a station and develop appropriate uses centered around a future station.

The majority of the Western Corridor planning area is located outside of the City's current incorporated area. However, the City of Marengo is permitted to plan for the area according to the Illinois Municipal Code (Municipal Code 65 ILCS 5/1-1-1 through 11-152-4), which states: "Any municipality may adopt [a] development plan applicable to contiguous land within 1.5 miles of municipality's corporate limits and not included in any other municipality."

Planning process

The planning process for the study was meant to bolster the City's planning efforts and enhance its existing character while embracing and capitalizing on the development momentum in the area. The planning process incorporated a multi-step work program that included documenting the Western Corridor's existing conditions to provide a concise and accurate assessment of strengths, weaknesses, issues and opportunities. Community outreach and citizen participation were emphasized in the first steps, however, public participation was included throughout the entire process. The process also included the establishment of a "Vision" for the Western Corridor. This Vision served as a foundation for the formulation of goals and objectives; development and evaluation of alternative plans and policies; and preparation of the final Western Corridor and TOD Plan along with recommendations and implementation strategies.

Figure 1:
Study Area and Regional Setting



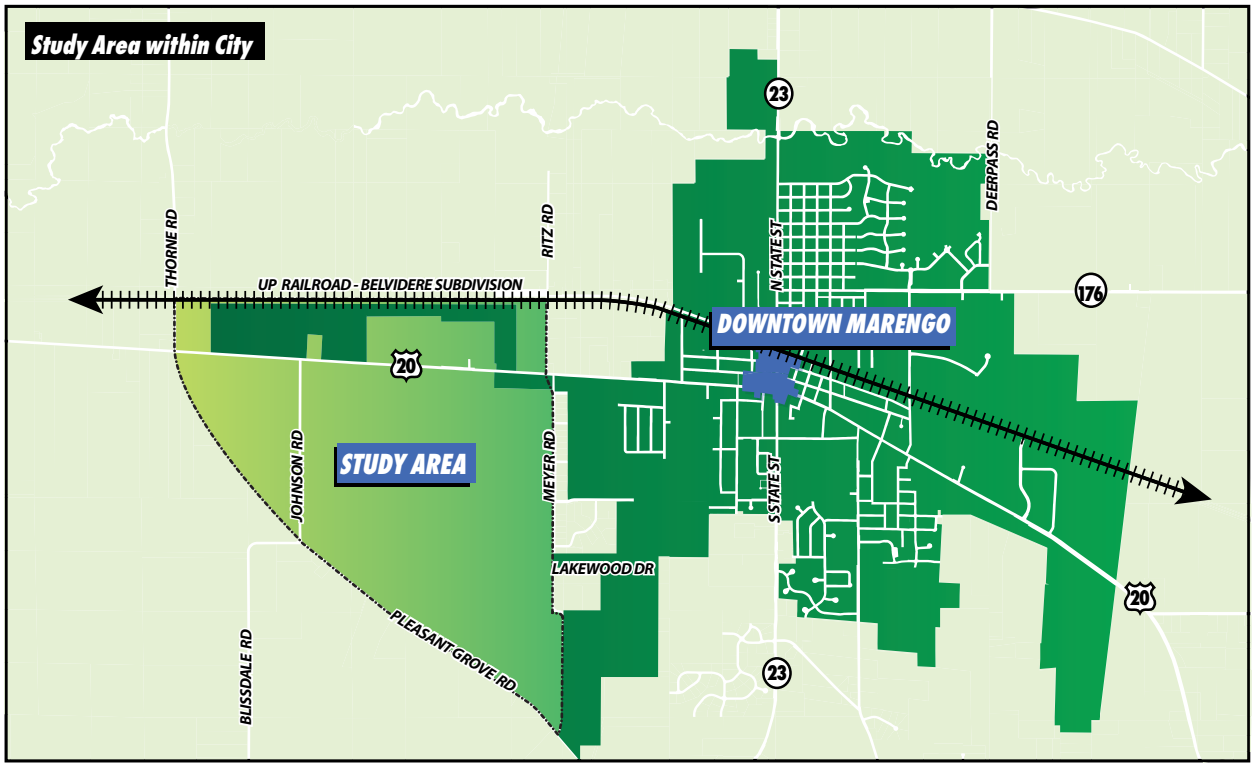
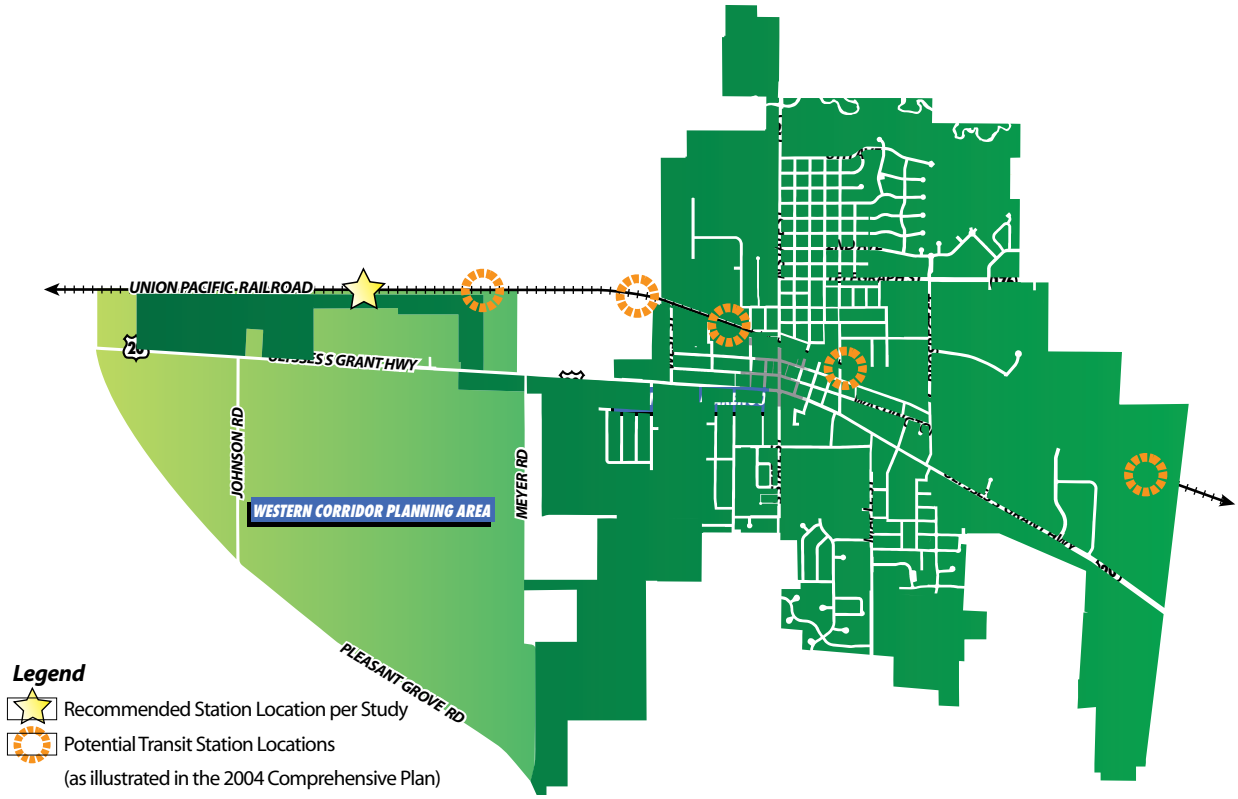


Figure 2:
Potential Transit Station Locations



Location of Potential Transit Station

The potential transit station location was selected from one of the proposed Marengo Transit Stations in the City's current Comprehensive Plan which was approved by City Council - Ordinance 04-5-7 on May 25, 2004. The Comprehensive Plan includes a Framework Plan that identifies three general locations for a potential transit station (referred to as potential Metra station). The Comprehensive Plan states that one potential location for a full service station, including adequate commuter parking is on the Arnold Engineering site, another potential location is west of Ritz Road, and a third potential location is east of Downtown. Although the Plan also stated that an additional smaller satellite station located in the downtown would be desirable, more recent analysis shows that this would not be possible due to Metra's general station spacing requirements. A more detailed analysis of the Comprehensive Plan, as it relates to the Western Corridor Study, is included in Section 3 of the Existing Conditions Report.

The Steering Committee formed for this project reconfirmed with the City's preference that the future transit station location be located west of Ritz Road. This was the Steering Committee's preferred option due to the availability of the land to accommodate Metra's ideal acreage of 50 acres for a potential commuter parking area, coach yard, and transit station, as well as, the potential for transit-oriented development opportunities.

In addition to the sites discussed above, two more detailed site plans for potential Commuter Station sites are contained within the Comprehensive Plan. These two Concept Plans locate the future commuter station either west of Ritz Road or on the existing Arnold Engineering site. The current understanding regarding those sites is that they are no longer plausible given the expected added costs of land assemblage, demolition, and potential environmental remediation that may be needed.

Section 2:
Demographic & Market Analysis

This section is a summary of the detailed Demographic and Market Analysis that was conducted in conjunction with the September 22, 2008 Existing Conditions Report that was completed as part of this Study. Please refer to the complete Analysis for more detailed information.

Located within Marengo Township, the City of Marengo is in southwest McHenry County, which is part of the six-county region that makes up the greater "Chicagoland" area. McHenry County is one of the fastest growing areas in the Chicago region, with population growing nearly 50% over the past 10 years. With the continued increase in growth in the region, the development of accessible transportation has been and will be of increasing importance not only for the county as a whole but also for municipalities such as Marengo in which its location along an existing rail line could make it a vital portal to the surrounding area.

For purposes of this study and analyzing the market, existing conditions are compared to 2013 projections. When possible, existing conditions are also compared to 2030 projections. Data was obtained from ESRI, a nationally recognized provider of economic data.

Population and Households, City of Marengo

From 2006 to 2008, the population of Marengo increased from 7,632 (according to a 2006 Special Census) to an estimated 7,826 (according to ESRI's estimate for 2008). Over the next five years, ESRI estimates that the population is projected to increase 2.49% annually, to 8,848. Long term projections for the City of Marengo indicate that the population will more than double by 2030 to approximately 18,313.

As with the projected increase in population the overall population of McHenry County is projected to experience a significant amount of growth. From the population count in the 2000 US Census, it is projected that McHenry County's total population of residents will increase approximately 75% by the year 2030 to 457,594.

The City of Marengo currently has an estimated 2,962 households. Out of the total households, 66.4% are owner occupied, 29.5% are renter occupied, and 4.1% remain vacant. With a projected increase in population over the next five years, by 2013, the number of households in Marengo is also expected to increase to 3,354, with the percentage of owner occupancy, renter occupancy, and vacancy remaining relatively constant. Long term projections for the number of households in the City of Marengo is estimated at 5,985 by 2030.

Current Metra Ridership

Based upon Metra's 2006 Origin-Destination Survey, 33% of the 33 Marengo residents that rode Metra used the Crystal Lake UP-NW Station, 24% used the Elgin MD-W Station at Chicago Avenue, 18% used the Fox River Grove UP-NW Station, 15% used the Big Timber Road Station, and 9% used other stations.

Residential Market

The recent downturn in the housing market has consequently caused residential development to slow significantly throughout the region. From 2006 to 2007, the number of building permits within McHenry County has decreased approximately 36% to 1,563. This slowdown in new residential development throughout McHenry County has continued into 2008. From the first half of 2007 to the first half of 2008, the number of residential building permits has decreased approximately 69% to 291 permits.

Although the housing market is not currently in a robust state, the City of Marengo could be well positioned to experience new growth in the future with the introduction of transit service.

Consumer Expenditures and Retail Potential

When examining the consumer expenditures and retail potential for the City of Marengo, an analysis using a 10 mile radius from the potential future transit station was used. While it is possible that future consumer expenditures and retail potential could go beyond this area, especially if a transit station is developed within the City of

Marengo, this analysis will give an appropriate indication of possible future retail potential.

Exactly how far a consumer will travel and where retailers are located, is primarily dictated by store type and characteristics of a retail node. The International Council of Shopping Centers (ICSC) and The Urban Land Institute (ULI) categorize shopping centers utilizing several criteria.

The following is an overview of shopping center classifications.

- ◊ Large regional and super regional malls containing department stores (Macys, Nordstrom), fashion and apparel (Talbots, Ann Taylor) and home furnishings (Restoration Hardware, Crate and Barrel) attract customers from a trade area that can extend up to 25 miles.
- ◊ Lifestyle Centers include some of the same users as Regional Malls, including large format bookstores (Borders, Barnes & Noble) but do not have anchors. The typical trade area is approximately 8 to 12 miles.
- ◊ Community Centers include big box discount stores (Target, Meijer), home improvement stores (Home Depot, Menards), Sporting Goods (Sports Authority, Dicks) and attract from a three to six mile trade area.
- ◊ Neighborhood Centers typically attract from within three miles or a drive of under 10 minutes and are anchored by a grocery store (Dominick's, Jewel).

This data is integral to understanding overall market potential for the City of Marengo and the immediate surrounding area. To assess the potential for retail development, the analysis compares projected spending by market area households to the existing supply of retail space. This provides an indication of "surplus" or "leakage" for each retail category. Simply put, a surplus indicates that there is at least enough space to accommodate demand and leakage indicates that demand exceeds supply and consumers are spending dollars outside of the market area.

It is important to distinguish between support in the market and development potential of a specific site or location. The availability of alternative sites, specifications of particular retailers, the number of projects actively pursuing tenants and similar issues can affect whether market potential translates to development potential.

While store sizes and sales generation vary by particular retailers a benchmark sales per square foot number is used in order to equate consumer expenditures to a preliminary indication of development potential. A generally accepted range is $250 to $325 per square foot. A per square foot amount of $300 per square foot is used in this analysis. If analyzing potential for specific uses or creating a site specific development program, sales data specific to each use would be applied.

The purpose of this analysis is to demonstrate overall potential, but not to outline a potential program of uses. While market support is indicated in several categories it is important to reiterate that this represents development potential for the defined market area. The study area could capture a large share of this market if developed and properly positioned, however other sites within the market, including other nearby communities, could also capture some of this potential.

In analyzing existing retail supply and demand of the10 mile market radius, there is currently a retail gap of approximately $259 million. Within a 10 mile radius, in 2008 there are approximately 15,825 households. With a current retail demand of $543,968,725, this equates to a potential expenditure per household of $34,374, with a current supply of only $17,987 per household. This figure includes all retail and eating/drinking establishments.

Applying a benchmark of $300 per square foot, an approximate gap in square footage of approximately 863,333 is estimated. While these figures are for current conditions in the defined area, projections of additional future households and corresponding increases in consumer expenditures will result in a need for additional retail square footage.

It is projected that by 2030, the number of households within a 10 mile radius from the City of Marengo will increase to approximately 40,931. The potential increase of 25,106 households by 2030 could create an additional demand in consumer expenditures of approximately $863 million. Potential demand is figured in constant 2008 dollars. Using the above benchmark of $300 per square foot would translate to a need for an ad-

ditional 2.8 million square feet of space.

Ultimately the placement of the future transit station and the character of development in the surrounding area will dictate the scale and amount of commercial space that will be supportable. In the interim, if a another transit related use in the form of a park and ride, shuttle service etc. is provided, retail such as a coffee shop, dry cleaners, casual dining and/or a gas station with a convenience store may be supportable.

Market Summary

In that the proposed station site is situated approximately 25 miles or less from the City of Rockford, the busy Illinois 47 Corridor, Interstate 90 and the Wisconsin state line the area is well positioned to take advantage of forecasted growth for the area. Depending on future road configurations/widenings, access to the site and development in surrounding communities, the station area has the potential to absorb a proportionate share of area development. If the area is easily accessible and ample parking is provided, commercial development at a regional level may be obtainable. This would likely be integrated into a mixed use development that includes townhomes, rowhomes and/or condominium units supported by both the new transit station and natural growth forecasted for the area. Given the proposed location of the station approximately 1.5 miles from Marengo's existing downtown, the new development would serve to complement rather than compete with the established commercial base. The types of uses both envisioned and supportable at build-out would be different than those found in the downtown. Downtown Marengo would continue to evolve as a base for local restaurants and niche retailing in a historic setting. The influx of new residents, visitors, commuters and workers would not only support the station area development but also provide a base from which the downtown can draw.

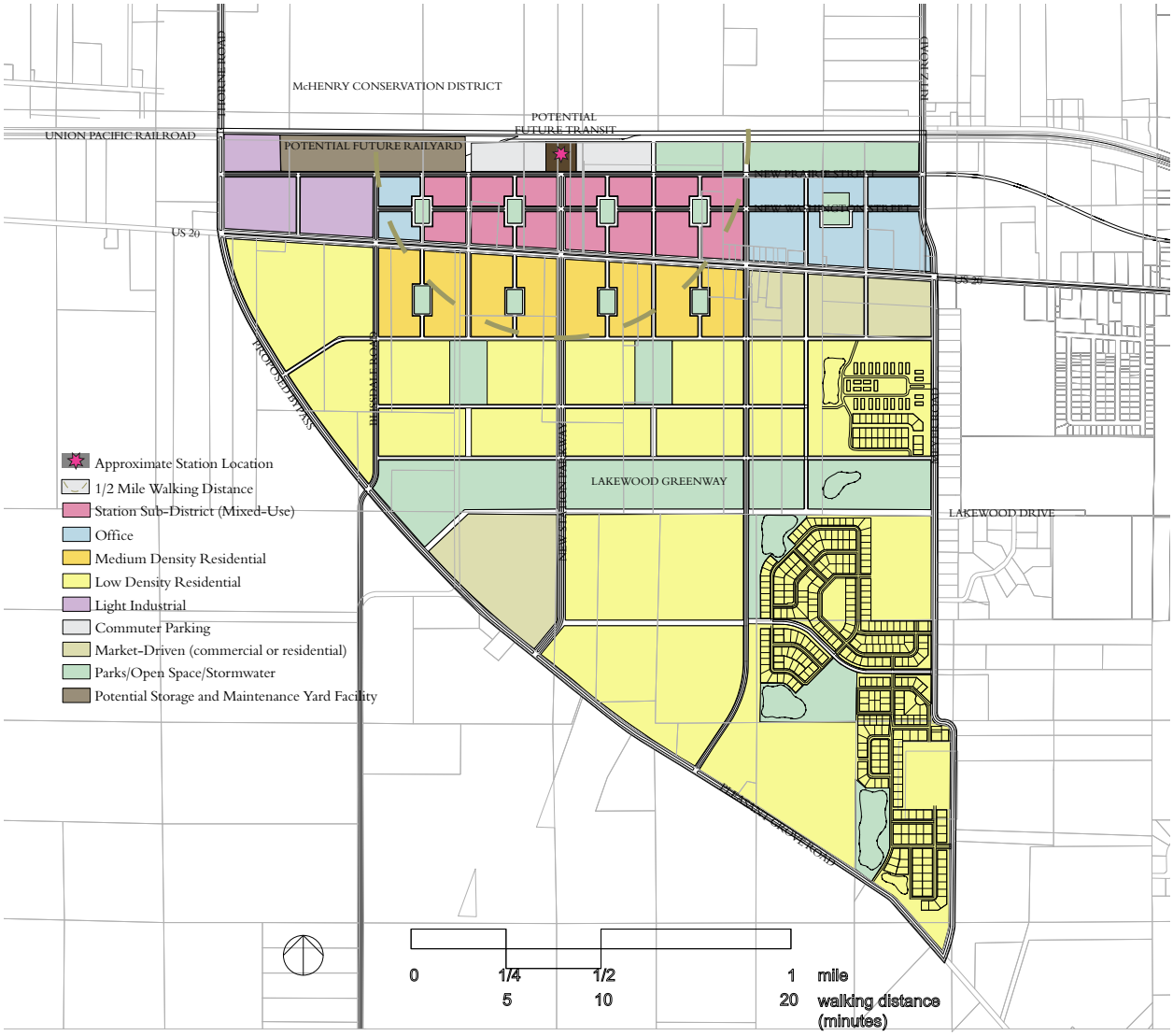
Section 3:
Land Use and Development Plan

Planning Principals:

The TOD area will serve as a gateway into Marengo.

- ◊ A mix of uses are possible within the plan with some flexible areas that will be "market driven". Market Driven may include residential or commercial uses depending upon the type and quality of potential proposals. If non-residential uses are located adjacent to residential uses, buffering and screening is important.
- ◊ Commercial and mixed-use development along the transit corridor will generate activity, and economic revenue.
- ◊ Medium density housing near the commuter rail will create a buffer between the transit corridor and the single family residential areas in the development. Typically, medium density housing would be townhomes, however, condominium or apartments are appropriate within the Station Sub-District.
- ◊ Sufficient parking near the transit corridor will serve commuters, as well as users of the commercial, mixed-use, and office developments.
- ◊ Light industrial uses will be placed at the corner of the development, near the rail line to create a buffer between the single-family housing and the rail yard.
- ◊ Proposed park sites shown on this Plan illustrate potential locations. Ownership and maintenance of these parks may become that of the Park District, or HOAs.
- ◊ Trails should be linked throughout the area, to other regional trails, and the Downtown area.
- ◊ Johnson Road is realigned to create a grid system in this area.

Figure 3:
LAND USE AND DEVELOPMENT PLAN



Notes

- This alternative assumes a transit station and platform located adjacent to a new yard lead track, so as not to interfere with operations on the existing main line track.
- Twenty (20) acres is required for the station and commuter parking facilities and thirty (30) acres of land are required for the storage and maintenance yard facility.

Key Land Use and Development Concepts

Land uses should be organized to support T.O.D. development goals, while respecting contextual development. The land uses should provide some flexibility, but should assist in creating a safe, vibrant, and economically viable development.

Planning Principles:

- ◊ Assign more flexible and active land uses adjacent to the potential transit station.
- ◊ Allow for new land uses to seamlessly integrate with the existing and proposed developments.
- ◊ Create residential developments that promote a healthy lifestyle.
- ◊ Introduce variety in housing choices and land uses to encourage more sustainable planning practices.

Plan for potential future mass transit (possibly rail and/or bus service) with adjacent land uses that are flexible and active. These land uses should capitalize on its location to the potential transit station.

Residential Development that offers variety and promotes a healthy lifestyle.

Figure 4:
Open Space Concept Plan

Planning Principles:

- ◊ The plan proposes a significant new open space for Marengo, the Lakewood Greenway.
- ◊ Lakewood Greenway will serve as a "green" corridor between the development, providing a link to the existing Indian Oaks Park, and creating opportunities for potential trails, bike paths, wetlands, and other natural features.
- ◊ A greater number of public parks will be integrated into the neighborhoods to provide open space for community recreation.
- ◊ The plan will provide connections to other regional bike trails and the downtown.

Key Open Space Concepts

Retain sufficient amount of land for open space. The spaces should allow for a variety of uses and incorporate natural features that reflect the ideals of a sustainable development.

Planning Principles:

- ◊ Encourage conservation through the Kishwaukee Greenway and the Lakewood Greenway.
- ◊ Establish "green" linkages with the existing park system and between areas within the site.
- ◊ Create a series of neighborhood parks that can be used for recreation by residents.
- ◊ Provide opportunities for trails, bike paths, wetlands and natural habitats.

Neighborhood park that can be used for recreation by residents.

Neighborhood Park that can include recreational and passive amenities such as open play areas and playgrounds.

Opportunities for bike paths, trails, wetlands, and natural habitats.

Creates "green" linkages between areas within the site.

Section 4:
Transit-Oriented Development Plan

Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) is typically located within a 1/2 mile radius of a transit (bus or rail) station. Generally, this 1/2 mile radius equates to a 10-minute walking distance. Due to its proximity to transit service, TOD areas generally include a mix of uses at higher densities with lower parking requirements.

A mix of uses can include residential, commercial/retail, office, employment opportunities and parks. To take advantage of the transit service, TOD areas are planned for and designed with pedestrian mobility and connectivity in mind. The ideal TOD would allow residents to live, shop and work all within walking distance or by using the transit service. Transit-Oriented Developments offer communities a variety of benefits including transit use, economic development, public health, sustainability, quality of life, and community character.

Although many communities struggle to develop TOD areas within built-up communities, or older downtown areas, the City of Marengo has a tremendous opportunity to plan for a new TOD area with very little of the land area already developed. As discussed in the community workshops, transit agencies would ideally need 20-acres of commuter parking (including the station), and 30-acres adjacent to, or within close proximity, for a storage and rail yard. It is important to note that this acreage requirement is specific for this area and that each potential/existing transit station requires its own unique acreage requirement. This approximate 50-acre requirement would cover much of the City's current Downtown area.

As stated throughout this report however, the unknown variable of when and what type of transit will service the Western Corridor affects the ultimate timing, phasing, and scale of future developments within the TOD.

The following components are presented in this section along with a TOD Plan for the City of Marengo:

- ◊ Scale Comparisons
- ◊ TOD Urban Design Principles
- ◊ TOD Plan and Illustrative Concept
- ◊ TOD Land Use Plan
- ◊ TOD Open Space Plan
- ◊ TOD Roadway Plan
- ◊ TOD Parking Plan

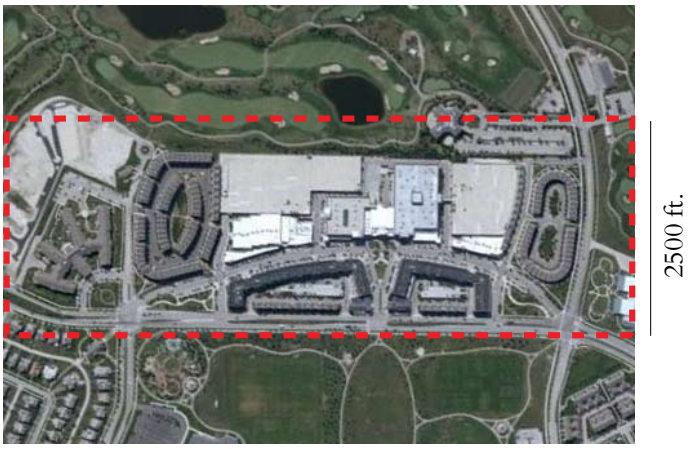
Scale Comparisons

In an effort to aid in visualizing the amount of acreage involved within the Transit-Oriented Development District and the potential size of development that could occur in this area, examples of existing TOD Districts within the region are illustrated and compared in this section. It is important to note that these examples ***do not represent*** the type of development desired by residents, or the type of development recommended in this Plan for the City of Marengo. These comparisons are included to illustrate what other TOD Districts in the region have constructed within the same acreage.

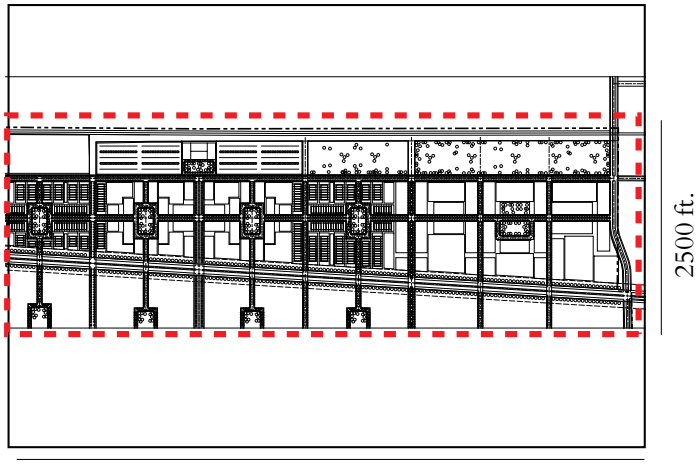
Village of Glenview, Il

The Glen is a 1,121 acre mixed-use district, with new homes, offices, and retail space. Public amenities include Lake Glenview, Park Center, Gallery Park, Air Station Prairie, two golf courses, and a Metra Station. The District offers 450,000 square feet of retail and theater uses, 154 townhomes and 183 apartments on 45 acres.

The red square equals the approximate area of the Marengo Transit-Oriented Development Area.



The Glen Town Center, Glenview, Illinois



Marengo Transit-Oriented Development District

Scale Comparisons

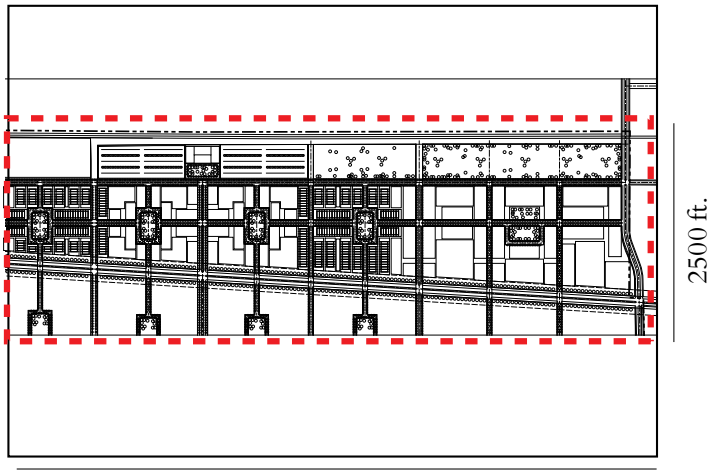
Arlington Heights, Il

The Village of Arlington Heights has begun an extensive revitalization of its town center. The area was designed with two tax increment financing districts, as well as a zoning ordinance designed to allow for a creative mix of densities. The commuter rail station was moved and rebuilt to make it a more integral part of the downtown.

The revitalization has resulted in over 600 new residential units and mixed-use development that offers restaurants, retail, and entertainment options in the central business district near transit.

The red square equals the approximate area of the Marengo Transit-Oriented Development Area.

Arlington Heights Station, Arlington Heights, Illinois



Marengo Transit-Oriented Development District

Scale Comparisons

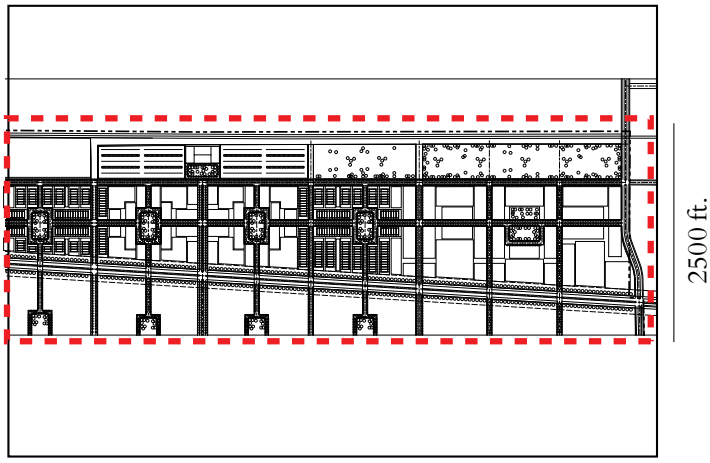
Wheaton, Il

The train station located in the historic downtown area of Wheaton, Illinois serves as a stop on Metra's Union Pacific West Line with service to Chicago. Metra has two stops along the line in Wheaton, one at College Avenue serving Wheaton College, and another at West Street in the heart of Downtown Wheaton.

The train station's proximity to downtown supports local commercial and retail businesses close to the station. Lower density residential development is within ½ mile from the train station.

The red square equals the approximate area of the Marengo Transit-Oriented Development Area.

Wheaton Station, Wheaton, Illinois



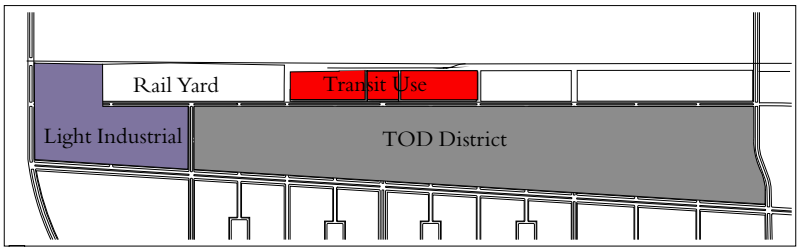
Marengo Transit-Oriented Development District

TOD Urban Design Principles

The following urban design principles were created based upon community input that was received throughout the planning process. In addition, these principles are based upon transit-oriented development principles that encourages walkability, transit-use, higher density residential development and commercial/office opportunities.

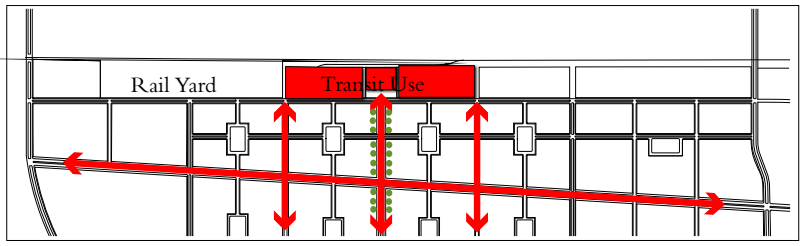
Principle 1:

Accommodate transit uses, mixed-use development and future light industrial land uses.



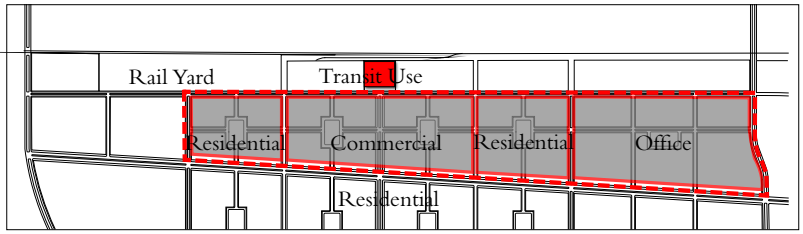
Principle 2:

Create direct and clear access to a potential future transit station and commuter parking areas. The Plan should also accomodate potential kiss-and-ride and bus riders.



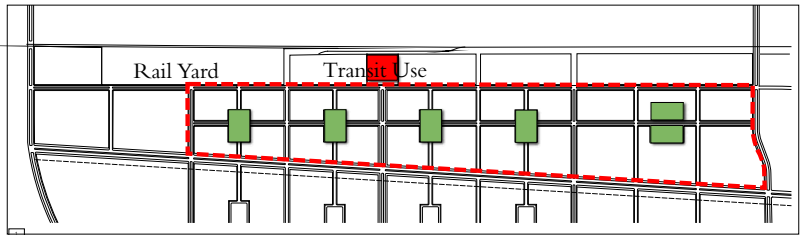
Principle 3:

Create a mixed-use transit-oriented district with subdistricts.



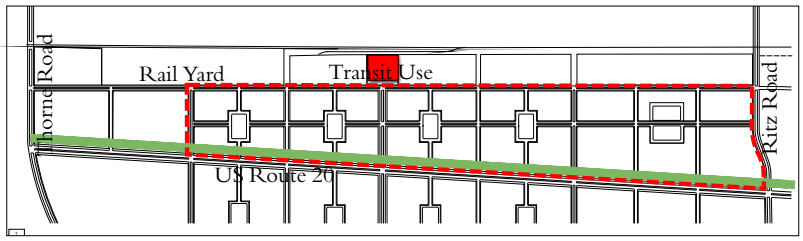
Principle 4:

Use public parks and open space to define districts.



Principle 5:

Provide clear access to US 20 via Ritz Road on the east and Thorne Road on the west.



Principle 6:

Incorporate storm water management strategies into the development, including a naturalized conservancy area to the north.

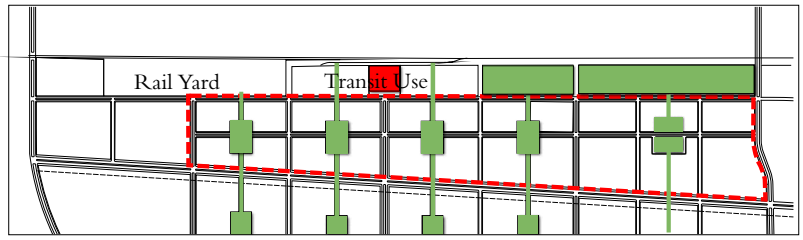
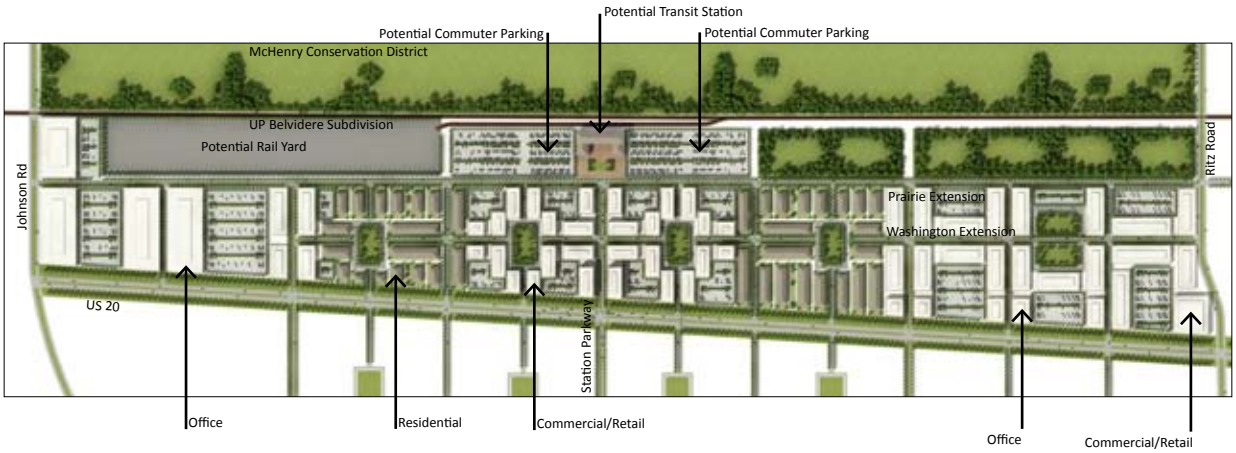


Figure 5:
Transit-Oriented Development Concept

Illustrative Plan



Planning Principles:

- ◊ The intersection of Station Parkway and Washington Street extension frames the commercial district.
- ◊ Main Street links open space within the development.
- ◊ Proposed Prairie Extension creates additional means of access from downtown Marengo.
- ◊ Medium-density housing near the potential transit station will create a buffer between the transit corridor and the single family residential areas.
- ◊ Sufficient parking near the Union Pacific Railroad-Belvidere Subdivision and within the block structure will serve the potential transit riders, as well as users of the commercial, mixed-use, and office functions.
- ◊ Light industrial and office uses are proposed in the western section of the development, near the Union Pacific Railroad and proposed railyard.

Transit-Oriented Development Area Distribution

TOD Development Area

	Acreage	SF	% of Devel. Area	FAR	Built Area (SF)
Net Development Area	144.0	6,271,796			
Open Space	28.8	1,254,359	20.0%		
Residential	36.0	1,567,949	25.0%	0.25	391,987
Commercial/Retail	43.2	1,881,539	30.0%	0.50	940,769
Office	36.0	1,567,949	25.0%	0.50	783,975
Total Built Area					2,116,731

Figure 6: Preliminary TOD Concept Plan Illustration

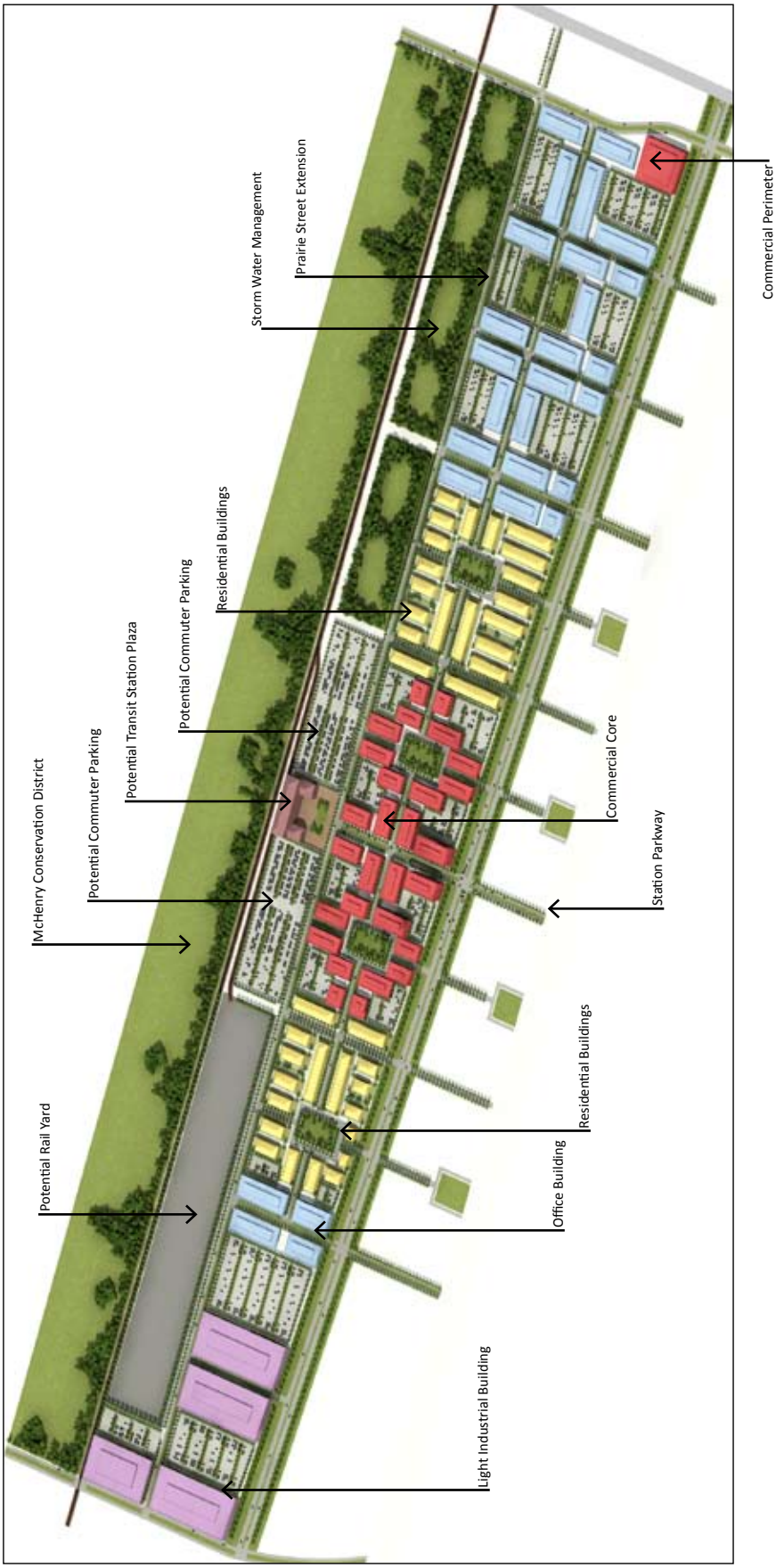
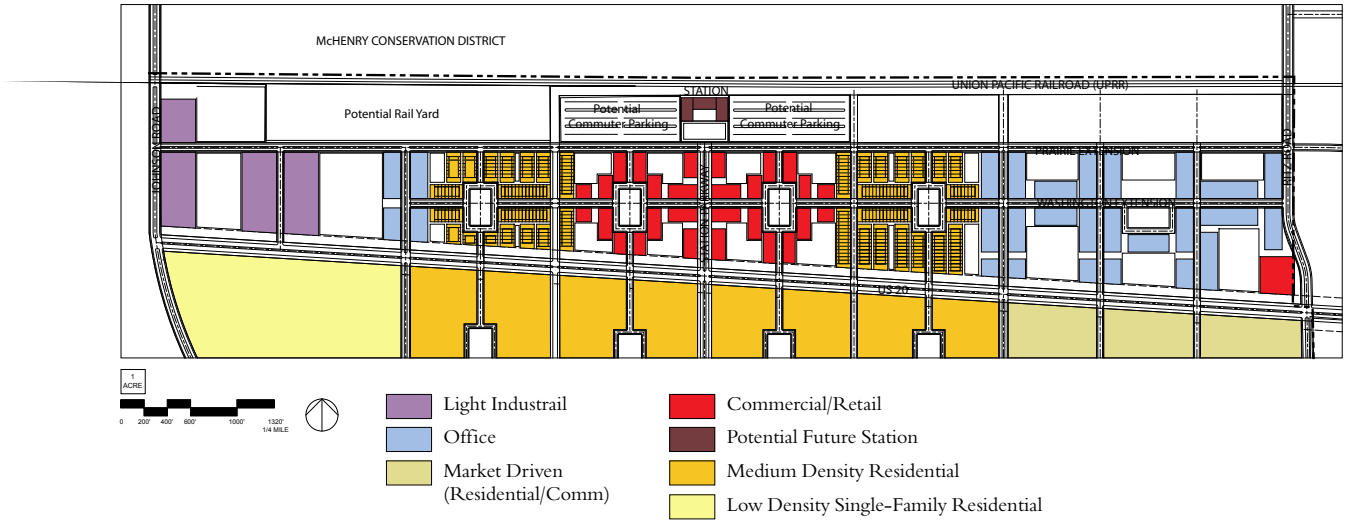


Figure 7:
TOD Land Use Plan

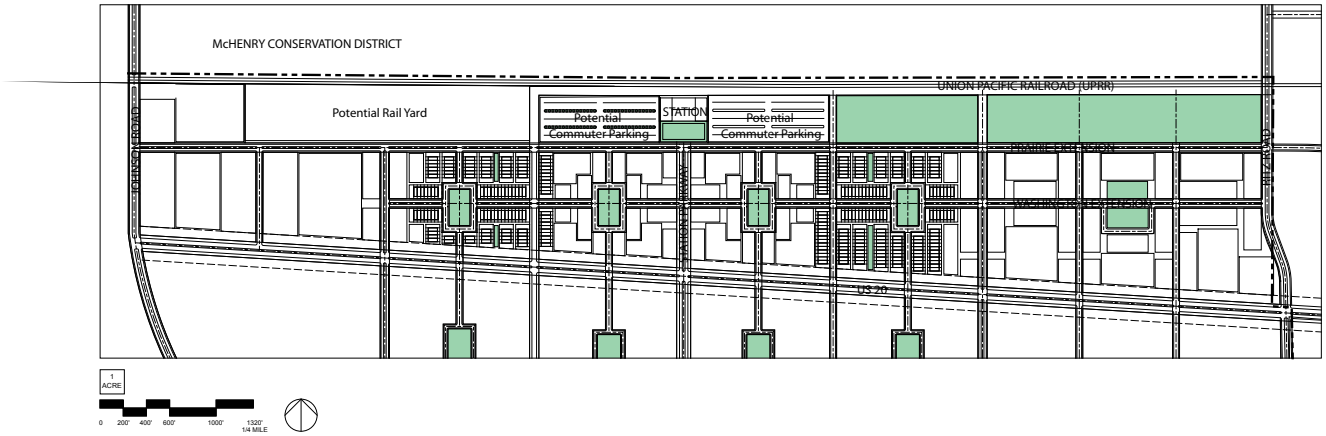


Transit-Oriented Development Area Land Use Plan

Planning Principles:

- ◊ Development blocks provide a flexible development pattern that creates a walkable and appropriately-scaled district.
- ◊ Development blocks are smaller adjacent to the transit station to ensure a more intimate scale and foster walkability. Special uses, such as office and light industrial land uses to the west, may require larger development blocks.
- ◊ A dynamic commercial core anchors development around the Station Parkway.
- ◊ Mid-density residential units frame commercial development on the east side of the site.
- ◊ On the west side of the site, office and light industrial land uses create an employment center within the Station District.

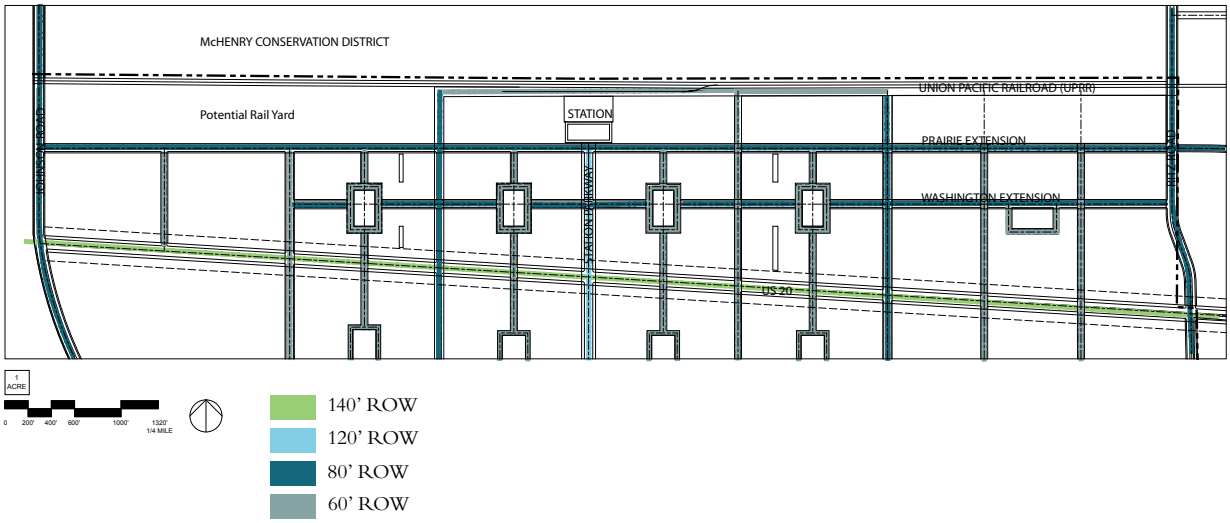
Figure 8:
TOD Open Space Plan



Transit-Oriented Development Open Space Plan

- ◊ Open space is strategically linked east-west to provide storm water management.
- ◊ Depressed swales located within parkways provide additional storm water management support.
- ◊ The District Park acts as a gateway into the Station District.
- ◊ Smaller neighborhood parks add scale and amenity to residential neighborhoods.
- ◊ Office and light industrial blocks use open space and parks as a part of the entry sequence and approach to the buildings.
- ◊ The proposed Station Parkway connects the transit station with US 20, supporting a large park within the District.

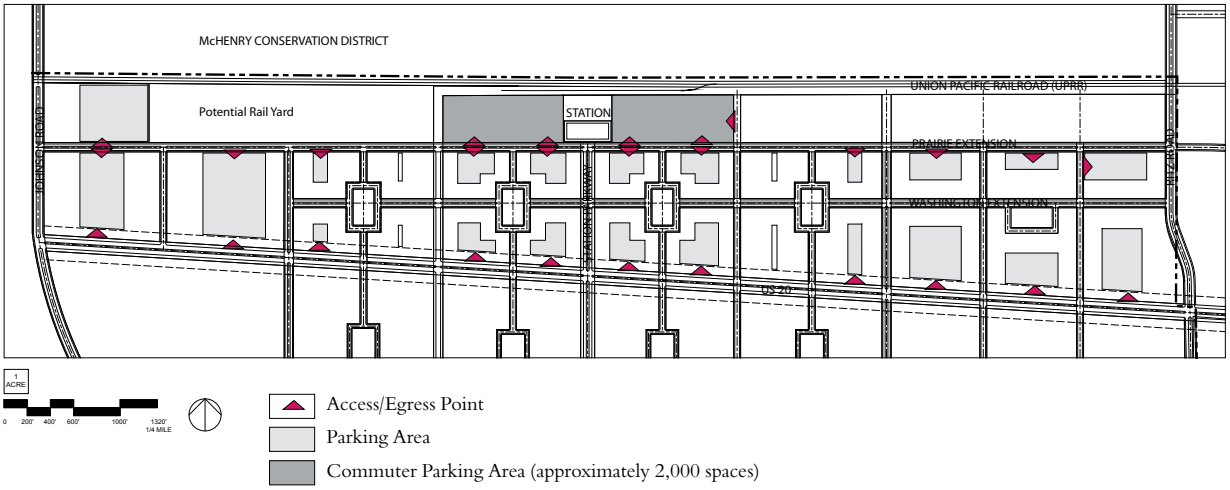
Figure 9:
TOD Roadway Plan



Transit-Oriented Development Roadway Plan

- ◊ Station Parkway connects on-axis from the transit station to US 20.
- ◊ Secondary east-west streets connect to downtown Marengo on the east providing means of access to the Station District.
- ◊ Inter-block alleyways connect parking at the rear of buildings to primary and secondary roadways.
- ◊ Smaller interblock alleyways and pathways respond to smaller scale development and are more intimate structure.

Figure 10:
TOD Parking Plan



Transit-Oriented Development Parking Plan

- ◊ Service and parking are accessed from the rear of buildings on the interior of the development and along the frontage road at US 20.
- ◊ Parking areas are accessed from east-west roads and are intersected within the block by north-south roads.
- ◊ Blocks are organized with shared access to reduce excessive use of curb cuts.
- ◊ Exact ridership and parking projections, including Phase 1 projections, are unknown at this time until an Alternatives Anlaysis phase is completed as part of the FTA's New Starts process. For purposes of this study, Metra only requires 2,000 commuter parking spaces at full build-out (approximately 20-acres including the potential station). This amount needs to be reserved in order to ensure growth of the potential rail line.
- ◊ Due to the unknown timeline of when potential transit service will be brought to this area, whether as a park-and-ride, bus service, or ultimately a commuter rail line, there will be a need to phase the addition of commuter parking.
- ◊ It is recommended that the implementation of these commuter parking lots should be phased over a number of years as demand increases. It is important to preserve parcels for future parking to meet commuter parking requirements. As more parking is needed, the land should be converted as planned, pending further studies, including ridership and parking projections.
- ◊ The City should continue to work with the transportation agencies to determine the appropriate timing and amount of parking desired.

Section 5:
TOD District Design Guidelines

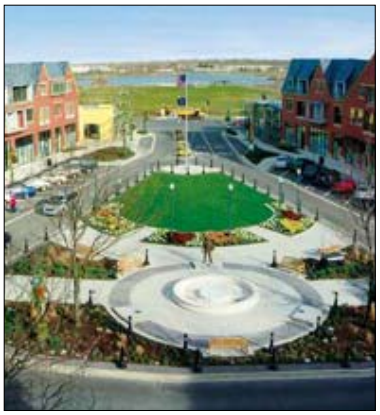
These Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) Design Guidelines present basic principles that should be used in improving the overall appearance and character of future development throughout the Western Corridor and particularly the TOD District. The guidelines focus on promoting high quality improvements and developments that will complement and enhance the overall character of the City.

These guidelines are intended to create attractive and appropriate mixed-use, office, residential, light-industrial, and commercial development that is primarily designed to accommodate vehicular orientation and traffic circulation, while also providing safe and attractive pedestrian and bicycle circulation and amenities. Future development within this area will contribute significantly to the overall image and character of the City as perceived by motorists passing through the City as well as those shopping, dining, visiting, or commuting to and from the City of Marengo.

Design guidelines are created and used by communities to convey a sense of the preferred quality for a place, in this case, for the future potential Transit-Oriented Development District of the City. Although text is a necessary component of Design Guidelines, the use of photographs and illustrations are heavily used to convey the information clearly and concisely. Although their application falls within the regulatory realm, design guidelines follow a more "visionary" format and are written to be suggestive.

Visual Preference Survey

As part of the planning process for creating this Plan and these guidelines, a Visual Preference Survey (VPS) was conducted with the public. The purpose of the VPS was to determine which aspects of architecture, building materials, lighting, signage, screening, parking area screening, TOD form, and pedestrian realm and streetscaping residents found to be most preferable. The results of the VPS are summarized earlier in this report, however, the information gathered from conducting those VPSs are incorporated into these guidelines.



Pedestrian-Oriented Space

Seasonal Character

Mixed-Use Buildings

Strong Civic Character

Landscaped Median

TOD District Character

The Station Area will be characterized by a mix of land uses, pedestrian-oriented spaces and coherent road framework. The district will foster interaction with the environment and provide commercial and retail opportunities. The district will provide activity throughout the day and evening hours to serve residents, commuters and visitors. Incorporation of sustainable infrastructure and architecture elements will establish the Marengo Station District as a leader in green technology and innovative design. Boulevards and multi-modal street systems which bring surrounding traffic into and through the Station District site connect to existing routes and establish the Station District as a unique destination within Marengo. Landscaped parkways and broad sidewalks encourage pedestrian interaction with the environment.

Guidelines:

- ◊ Commercial and retail uses at the street level enhance the pedestrian experience and give scale to multi-story buildings.
- ◊ Create an environment that changes seasonally.
- ◊ Create opportunities for public green space within the boulevard right of way.
- ◊ A heavily landscaped street edge with integral lighting adds identity and character to the boulevard and street network.
- ◊ Broad sidewalks are encouraged to promote walking and support commercial uses.
- ◊ Ornamental, pedestrian scale street elements and furnishings are encouraged.

Indoor/Outdoor Dining

Appropriate Scale

Live/Work Environments

Ground Level Retail Storefronts

Two to Three Story Buildings are Encouraged.

Street Life

Mixed-Use Development

It is important that all architecture create a unified streetwall, articulated through similar building height, scale, materiality, massing and overall organization of the facade. Creation of street-level activities add interest and enhances pedestrian appeal.

Mixed-use buildings include complimentary uses. Inclusion of residential units is encouraged and increases the likelihood of activity in the district throughout the day and evening hours.

Guidelines:

- ◊ Encourage interaction with buildings through inviting and easy to find entrances, large windows or storefronts and minimum setbacks.
- ◊ Provide accessibility to buildings from parking areas so as not to interfere with sidewalk activity or threaten the safety of pedestrians.
- ◊ Development that 'holds the corner' is encouraged to establish uniformity and organization within the development.
- ◊ Create a TOD District that is responsive to visitor's and resident's needs.

Decorative Corner

Active Streetlife

Appropriate Scale

Destination Retail

Outdoor Festivities

Dining Options

TOD Commercial Development

Commercial development is the key to a successful mixed-use TOD District. An appropriate mix of businesses that respond to market demand and consumer needs is desired. Stand-alone commercial development is preferred within the TOD District, along the Station Parkway, and east of residential development along Ritz Road. Availability of dining and entertainment options is an important element in the viability of the TOD District. A variety of activities establishes the TOD District as a destination for both visitors and residents. Expanding the hours of operation of businesses or providing specialized services will encourage continued investment and support of the TOD District area.

Guidelines:

- ◊ Provide expanded entertainment, and dining options and venues to cater to 'after work' activity.
- ◊ Consider commercial and hospitality options for the TOD District as complimentary functions to those provided in Downtown Marengo.
- ◊ Invigorate street with appropriate lighting and decorative elements, responsive to seasonal/local festivities.
- ◊ Provide opportunities for outdoor festivities.
- ◊ Commercial development should be appropriately scaled to context and accessible by pedestrians.
- ◊ Architecture should reflect character of a commercial district through storefront windows, street presence and signage.

Medium-Density Housing

Attached Single-Family Housing

Single-Family Detached Housing

Accessible Residential Environment

Pedestrian Passages

Western Corridor Single-Family Homes

TOD Residential Development

The incorporation of residential development is necessary to ensure the vibrancy of the district. Placement of medium density residential adjacent to the commercial district provides amenity to the residents. Attached, townhomes are proposed for blocks east of Station Parkway, while south of US 20, single family homes are recommended. The architecture of these buildings should include sustainable and cost-efficient local materials.

Guidelines:

- ◊ Encourage increase in density of residential closer to the transit station.
- ◊ Provide clearly identified entries to buildings.
- ◊ Provide access to parking in a clear, safe way. It is preferable parking be located on the rear of buildings.

Western Corridor Residential Development

As shown in the Land Use Plan, single-family residential homes are recommended in the majority of the Study Area south of US 20.

Guidelines:

- ◊ Detached Single-Family homes should be constructed of high-quality materials and monotony should be strongly discouraged.
- ◊ Garages should not be prominent features, and front porches should be encouraged.

Appropriately Scaled Building

Office Building

Modern Office Building

Clear Entry Sequence

Welcoming Facade

Office/Industrial Development

Office and light industrial buildings are proposed west of the commercial district. These uses generally require larger building footprints and site area than commercial and residential uses. The location of places of employment or manufacturing reduces reliance on the automobile and reinforces sustainability aspects present in a transit-oriented development. This mix of uses also reduces infrastructure requirements and redundancy in systems. Architecture should be responsive to context. Large expanses of building without glass are discouraged Buildings are encouraged to meet the street in a sensitive way and have clearly marked entrances.

Guidelines:

- ◊ Light industrial and office buildings should be designed using "green building" technologies and construction techniques.
- ◊ Buildings should fit into context.
- ◊ Building massing is encouraged to respond to its environment, orientation and surroundings.
- ◊ Sensitivity to pedestrian movement is encouraged. It is recommended that buildings face onto a public way with pedestrian access.

Transportation Connection

Interactive Elements

Shopping District Plaza

Public Plaza

Landmark Feature

Neighborhood Park

Parks and Plazas

Parks provide relief in a busy commercial environment and offer residents amenity within mid-density housing blocks. Within the development, parks are planned as one element in a strategy that links open space into a cohesive and logical framework.

Parks. Create places of gathering to facilitate both active and passive interaction for all ages and ability levels.

Plazas. Establish meeting spaces with opportunity for diverse activities within the development. Plazas are planned for the TOD District adjacent to the station area.

Mid-block courts and connections. Integrate publicly-accessible open space within the block. Courts occur along secondary axis within the development. Mid-block connections promote coherent block design by integrating connections between the mid-block court and streets that have active frontage and landscaping.

Guidelines:

- ◊ Provide a mix of vegetation and landscape types, with emphasis on use of native landscapes. Create landscapes that respond to land use and spatial organization.
- ◊ Integrate stormwater management and functional aspects into water element design.
- ◊ Distinguish formal and informal pathways to provide pedestrian accessibility throughout spaces.
- ◊ Encourage a variety of activity and gathering spaces.
- ◊ Use landmark features and monuments to punctuate special spaces.
- ◊ Encourage movement throughout the site.

Paving Patterns

Canopies and Dining

Planting Boxes

Walkability

Street Identity

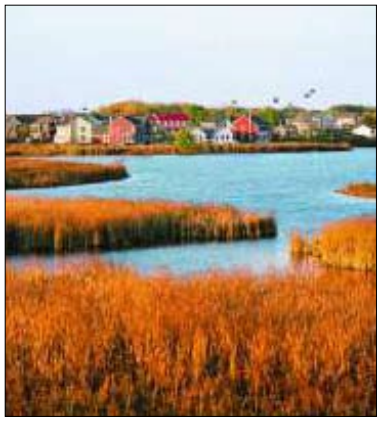
Multi-Modal Opportunities

TOD Streetscape

The creation of a streetscape vocabulary that is unique and uniform to the Station District will add character, importance and identity to the District. Specific elements may include: lighting elements, benches, trash receptacles and signage or wayfinding elements. Elements should be used to enhance the specific nature of each environment. Office and light industrial blocks may have a different character than residential and commercial areas. Unifying elements such as signage and canopies or awnings will define the district as a whole and create wayfinding clarity.

Guidelines:

- ◊ Create street identity through use of furnishings, lighting and plantings.
- ◊ Define edges and zones of activity with landscape elements.
- ◊ Use broad sidewalks for cafe zones.
- ◊ Encourage markets and public events within plazas.
- ◊ Add street medians for visual interest and pedestrian safety.
- ◊ Define the pedestrian environment with spatial separators such as medians, parkways and planters.
- ◊ Integrate naturalized landscaping into the overall street design.
- ◊ Use 'cafe zones' to invigorate the street and provide interest along the building face.
- ◊ Create multi-modal environments with integral bike lanes.



Native Plantings

Rainwater Garden

Alternative Energy

Stormwater Management

Bioswale

Bicycle Storage

Sustainable Strategies

Integration of energy-reducing and water use reducing systems in buildings, in the landscape, and in the infrastructure creates a sustainable base for development. Incorporation of dry detention storm water management as a naturalized landscape feature provides both function and beauty on the site. Incorporation of pervious pavers, where applicable, will decrease the amount of untreated storm drainage entering the sewer system. Sensitivity should be given in choosing building materials, furnishings and fixtures.

Guidelines:

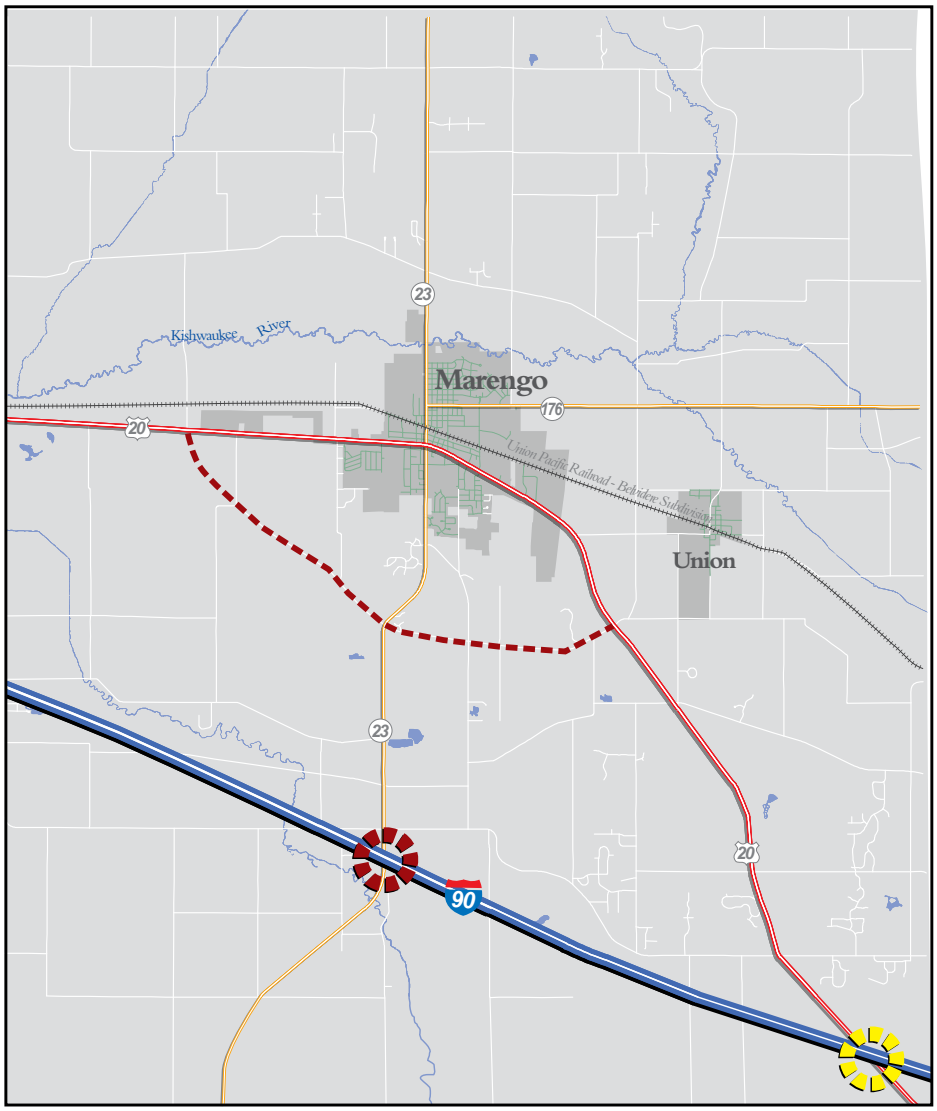
- ◊ Integrate stormwater management into landscape design including raingardens, bioswales and depressed areas within medians.
- ◊ Coordinate programmed areas that will benefit from sun exposures in appropriate zones within the building. South facing building faces along US 20 should be considered for passive heating and cooling strategies.
- ◊ Use of native plant species is encouraged. Hearty vegetation (xeriscapes) reduces water consumption.
- ◊ Consider installation of alternative positive energy sources such as solar panels to offset energy consumption in buildings.

Section 6:
Transportation and Circulation Plan

Regional Access

From a regional perspective, Marengo is indirectly served by Interstate 90 (I-90) which has a full access interchange with U.S. Route 20 (US 20) approximately 8 miles southeast of the city core and a full access interchange with Belvidere road approximately 12 miles west of the of the city core. The city is directly served by three regional highways, US 20, Illinois Route 23 (IL 23), and Illinois Route 176 (IL 176). These highways and the access to I-90 provide Marengo with excellent regional connectivity. With the development of the Western Corridor and other city growth, a new I-90 interchange at IL 23 would benefit the community by reducing the travel distance to the interstate by more than half, providing a more direct route to the station area, and diverting truck traffic around downtown Marengo via a truck bypass route. The spacing between this new interchange and the nearest interchanges at US 20 (approximately 6 miles east) and Belvidere Road (approximately 11 miles west) would be ideal. A full interchange would better connect residents to both the Chicago and Rockford metropolitan areas.

Figure ii:
Regional Transportation Access Plan



Existing Full Interchange
Potential Full Interchange
Proposed Truck By Pass

Truck Route/Bypass

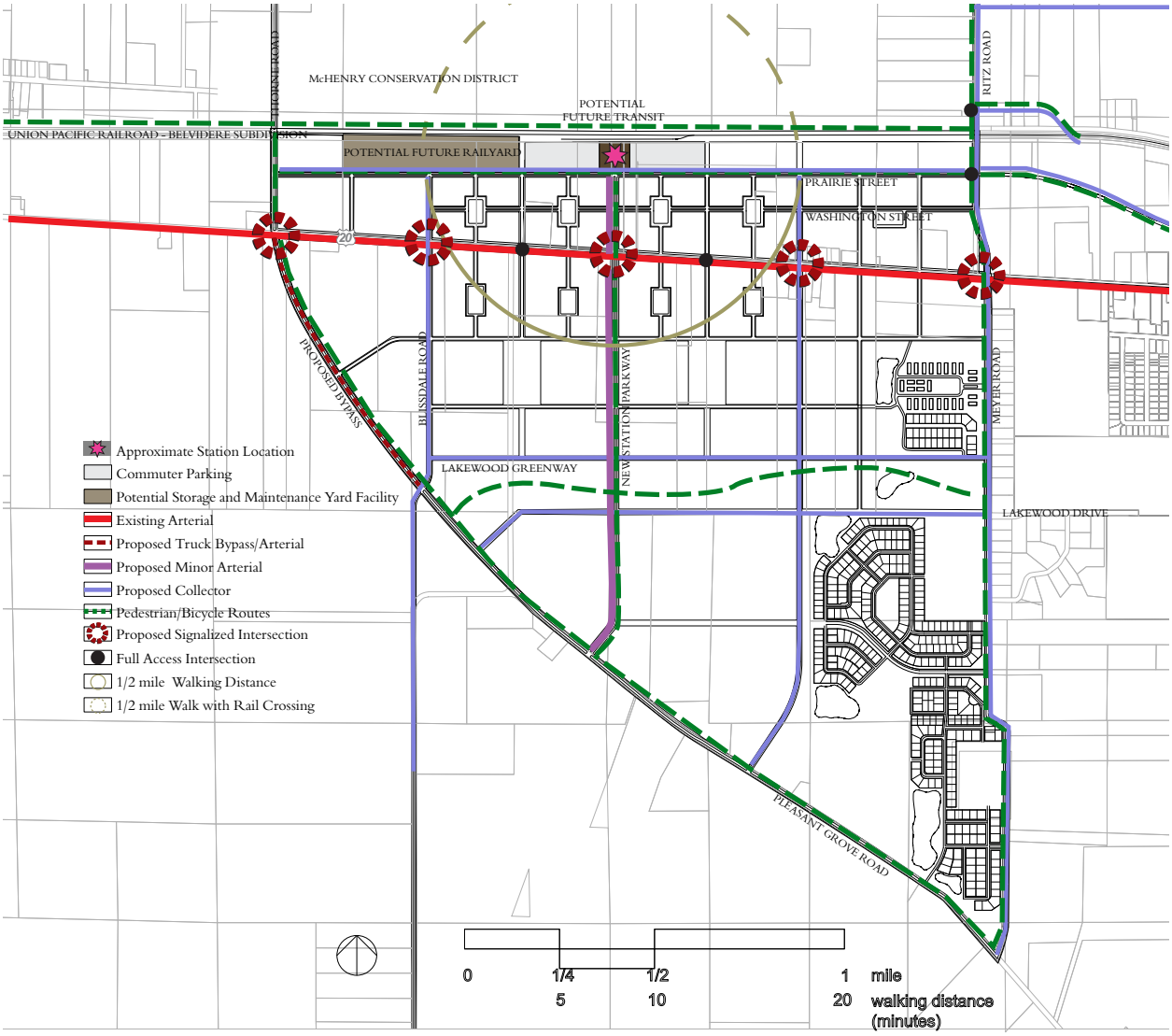
Currently, US 20 and IL 23 are designated truck routes by IDOT, McHenry County, and the City of Marengo. Both of these highways extend directly though the City resulting in a large amount of truck traffic through Marengo, which is undesirable to its residents and does not promote a pedestrian friendly "Main Street" through town. As such, a bypass route around downtown was included in the plan connecting US 20 to Pleasant Grove via a new roadway extending south from Thorne Road. The new truck route designation would be Pleasant Grove Road connecting to Coral Road. This route would connect US 20 to IL 23 and back to US 20. With a new I-90 interchange at IL 23, the bypass would divert the heavy truck volume around Marengo from US 20 to IL 23 and directly to the interstate. It is important to note that the development of a bypass may also reroute other through traffic around downtown which could be undesirable to commercial uses that depend on business from US 20 traffic. In order to accommodate the truck traffic and additional through volumes, the bypass would need adequate right-of way to function as a typical arterial roadway, or 120 feet. Furthermore, roadway upgrades would be required to handle the larger trucks.

Road Framework Plan

The Western Corridor roadway network plan was developed with the intent to integrate the new street network into the existing network and provide continuity through Marengo. A system of street grids and functional hierarchy was used to create connectivity and provide flexibility for multi-modal activity. The road framework consists of major arterials, minor arterials, collectors, and local streets. Major arterials function primarily to move traffic between major subareas of a metropolitan area and adjacent communities. Minor arterials provide mobility within and between adjacent subareas of a metropolitan area and do not generally extend as far as major arterials. Collectors primarily serve to distribute traffic between arterials and local streets, and have a secondary function to provide property access. Local streets have a primary function of land access. These basic roadway hierarchy principles were used to lay out the street grid, which is illustrated Figure 12.

Key components of the plan include extensions and realignments of existing roads in order to create cohesiveness between the Western Corridor and other parts of the city and surrounding area. As the plan shows, Blissdale Road will be extended north and realigned to connect into the street grid. Prairie Street will be extended west and will serve as a continuous east-west collector through the TOD area and provide a direct route from the core of the city to the station. Furthermore, a new east-west road is planned between IL 23 and Ritz Road north of the rail line to provide an additional connection between the city and the Western Corridor. Railroad Street will be realigned to intersect Ritz Road further to the north to minimize intersection conflicts with the railroad tracks. Also, Ritz Road will be realigned to intersect US 20 opposite Meyer Road to create a more ideal, four-legged intersection. The Ritz Road/Meyer Road intersection will also be a location of a new traffic signal.

Figure 12:
Transportation and Circulation Plan



Planning Principles

- ◊ The existing street network will be improved and integrated with the new network.
- ◊ A tighter block structure will create a more compact development, allowing for flexibility in modes of transportation.
- ◊ Johnson Rd. will be abandoned and replaced with two additional arterial roads
- ◊ Additional intersections at US 20, will create connectivity within the development.
- ◊ The creation of Station Parkway will create a cohesive development and allow for multi-modal activity.
- ◊ The addition of local streets to the network will provide opportunities for multi-modal linkages throughout the development.

Figure 13:
Transportation and Circulation Key Concepts

Arterials connect key project areas, while maintaining a pedestrian scale environment.

Arterial street with "green" buffers.

Clear pedestrian pathways that encourage walking.

Local streets encourage walking.

Pedestrian-scaled, walkable streets that serve local traffic.

Key Concepts

Establishing a clear roadway framework will define the overall structure of the project area while meeting transportation requirements. Roads should be context –sensitive and support TOD development goals.

Planning Principles:

◊ Establish a clear hierarchy of roads within the project area:

- Type 1: Arterial: US 20 and Pleasant Grove Road
- Type 2: Parkways and Collectors
- Type 3: Local Streets

◊ Assign design attributes and guidelines to all roadway types, to ensure road design is consistent with Transit-Oriented Neighborhood design goals.

- Type 1 roads will require design specifications consistent with State guidelines.
- Type 2 roads should be site responsive, and connect key project areas while maintaining a pedestrian-scale environment.
- Type 3 roads should be designed as pedestrian-scaled, walkable streets that serve local traffic.

Right-of-Way

The roadway rights-of-way are of great importance in the long-range design and modification of the roadway system. As implementation of the Western Corridor Plan proceeds and new roads are planned and developed, it is important for right-of-way standards to be implemented. In general, adequate right-of-way allows for appropriate operation of the roadway, future capacity improvements, multi-modal travel options including transit and pedestrian/ bicycle features, and streetscape enhancements. The following is a discussion of the key roadways in the Western Corridor Plan with respect to right-of-way.

- ◊ US 20: With the development of the station area, right-of-way along US 20 should be preserved to create a special treatment to the roadway announcing entrance into an important area. Within a 140-foot right-of-way, the roadway could eventually be widened to four lanes to accommodate increased travel demand, while maintaining the opportunity to create an enhanced experience with planted medians, multi-use paths and desirable setbacks through the Western Corridor. Through the already developed portions of the city, US 20 will transition to a two-lane roadway as it is currently. As planned, US 20 will taper to back to its current section east of Meyer Road and also west of Pleasant Grove Road.
- ◊ Station Parkway: As a major spine through the Western Corridor, Station Parkway will serve as a gateway from US 20 to the station area as well from US 20 south throughout the study area. Within a 120-foot right-of-way, it is recommended that Station Parkway be a four-lane roadway with a planted median as well as multi-use paths and planted parkway on both sides.
- ◊ Truck Bypass/Pleasant Grove Road: With the proposed extension of Pleasant Grove Road, the intention is to create a truck bypass of US 20 around downtown Marengo. The roadway would ideally function as a four-lane arterial requiring 120-foot right-of-way. This would allow adequate width for multi-use paths/bike trails which are proposed along the route.

As mentioned previously, there are several collector roadways planned in the Western Corridor that will connect the arterials to the local streets. Such roadways include Washington Street extension, Prairie Street extension, Blissdale Road, Ritz Road, and Meyer Road. A typical collector will require an 80-foot right-of-way to provide, for example, a two-lane road with a median and a bike lane, parking lane, and sidewalk or multi-use path on both sides.

Also, the road framework plan consists of many local streets that will provide property access, ideally from a collector. A typical local street requires a 60-foot right-of-way to provide a two-lane road with a bike lane, parking lane and sidewalk on both sides.

Signalized Intersections

With the development of the Western Corridor and its road network, increased access to US 20 will be required through the area. As such, several traffic signals may be required as new intersections are introduced and travel demand increases. Traffic signals, if warranted, provide a safe and effective way for motorists to enter and leave traffic streams. In general, a traffic signal is warranted if the hourly volumes that travel through the intersection are higher than the threshold levels as outlined in the Federal Highway Administration Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD). In many cases, the traffic volumes through the intersection must meet threshold levels for at least eight hours of a typical day. Typically, signalized intersections are required by IDOT to be spaced no less than ¼ -mile apart. This is important in planning a roadway network in order to provide adequate spacing between the intersections where a traffic signal is planned. Traffic signals should also be planned in accordance with the functional classification of the roadway. Locations along US 20 where a traffic signal may be necessary include Ritz Road/Meyer Road, the new collector road west of Meyer Road, Station Parkway, Blissdale Road, and the extension of Pleasant Grove Road.

Station Area

The driving factor behind the Western Corridor planning effort is a transit-oriented development around the proposed location of a future transit station.

The principles of complete streets will be carried throughout the station area to create a balanced system considering all modes of transportation relatively equal. A wide range of measures are available for streets through the station area to control traffic movements, reduce speeds, and provide a safer and more pleasant condition for all users in the district. As the street prototypes show, bike lanes, multi-use paths, high visibility crosswalks, landscaped medians and adequate parkways are all elements included within the station area plans to calm traffic and integrate the different modes of travel.

The concept is also carried into the transit element of the development by planning for bus routes and turnouts. Feeder service to the transit hub may be provided by bus routes from downtown Marengo. A bus turn-out, as appropriate, is planned in front of the station along Prairie Street. Turnouts are lay-by curbcuts that allow buses to exit the through traffic stream and also create a sheltered area, setback from the roadway, for those waiting for the bus.

In order to accommodate drop-off/pick-up activity that will occur in front of the station, a kiss-n-ride area is proposed on the north side of Prairie Street, south of the tracks. The area will be a lay-by recessed curb cut and should provide adequate storage in order to accommodate loading traffic adequately without back-ups into the through traffic flow on the street. The designation of a kiss-n-ride area will help limit the impact of loading activities on traffic operations.

As the TOD plans show, parking will be located in proximity to the station and the commercial uses. Adequate parking is important for the viability of the district and sufficient parking for commuters and land-uses in the station area should be provided. However, the transit-oriented nature of the area and the interaction of uses should be considered in determining supply to avoid excess parking in the commercial areas. Usually parking needs for TODs are reduced to account for increased transit/multi-modal use and decreased vehicular use. Furthermore, by eliminating excessive parking, patrons are encouraged to use modes of travel other than the automobile.

The park-n-ride lots will be located just south of the tracks in close proximity to the station. The lot drive-aisles should be oriented in the east-west direction in order to provide pedestrians with a clear path toward the station, minimizing conflicts with vehicles. It may be appropriate to phase the implementation of these lots over a number of years as demand increases. However, the potential phasing of commuter parking is unknown at this time until further studies are completed, including ridership and parking projections.

Bicycle/Pedestrian Connectivity

The majority of the contemplated bicycle facilities will be shared-use paths, which are typically located within the parkway, run parallel to key roadways, and are shared by cyclists and pedestrians. The Comprehensive Plan proposes a path along the following roadways: Pleasant Grove Road/Coral Road, Thorne Road, railroad right-of-way, Ritz Road/Meyer Road and Lakewood Greenway. Additionally, right-of-way will be preserved on new streets to provide bike lanes and sidewalks and /or multi-use paths.

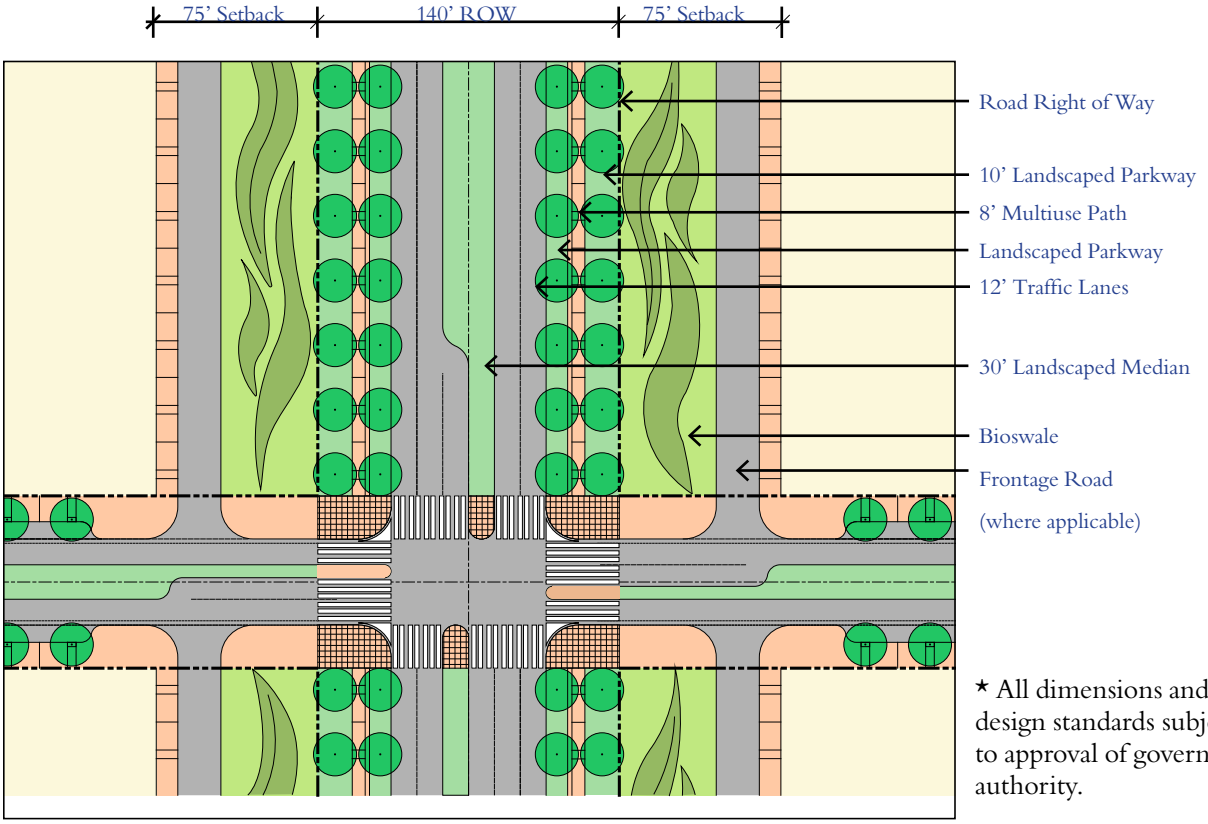
Complete Streets

A wide range of measures is available to local jurisdictions for controlling traffic movements, reducing motor vehicle speeds on local streets, and providing safer and more pleasant conditions for pedestrians and bicyclists. The objectives of complete streets and traffic calming include the following:

- ◊ Promote safe and pleasant conditions for motorists, bicyclists, pedestrians, and residents on major and local roadways and streets.
- ◊ Mitigate the impacts of vehicular traffic, including air pollution, accidents, and noise.
- ◊ Offer equal status to all road users.
- ◊ Increase landscaping opportunities and play space on public rights-of-way.

Techniques range from non-physical measures (e.g. targeted speed enforcement, lane striping, high visibility crosswalks) to vertical deflections (e.g. speed humps) to horizontal deflections (e.g., chicanes, traffic circles) to other physical features that either slow traffic or introduce a new "roadway personality" to the motorist. These include planted medians and other constructed devices that integrates all modes in a safe and efficient manner. The following typical cross-sections illustrate how the City can promote complete streets into the development of the Western Corridor.

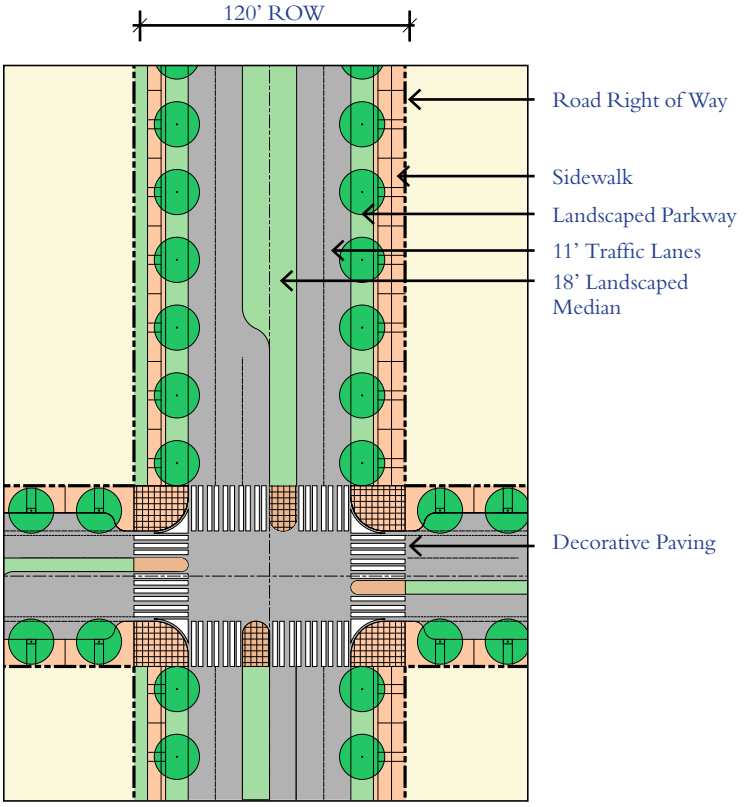
Figure 14:
Typical ROW Concepts
Concept One: US 20 (140' ROW)



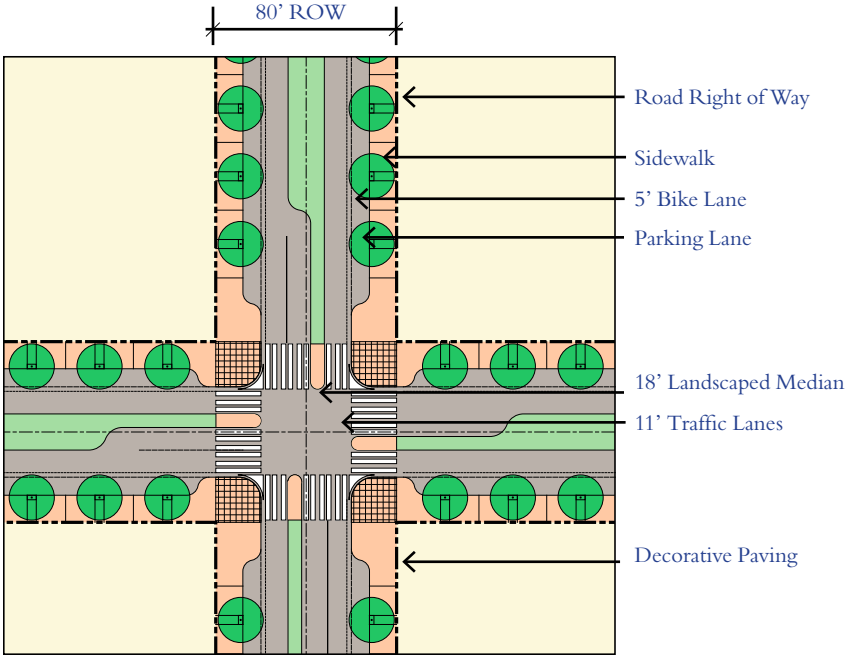
* All dimensions and design standards subject to approval of governing authority.

Figure 15:
Typical ROW Concepts

Concept Two: Typical Minor Arterial (120' ROW)



Concept Three: Typical Collector (80' ROW)



* All dimensions and design standards subject to approval of governing authority.

Figure 16:
Typical ROW Concepts

Concept Four: Typical Local (60' ROW)

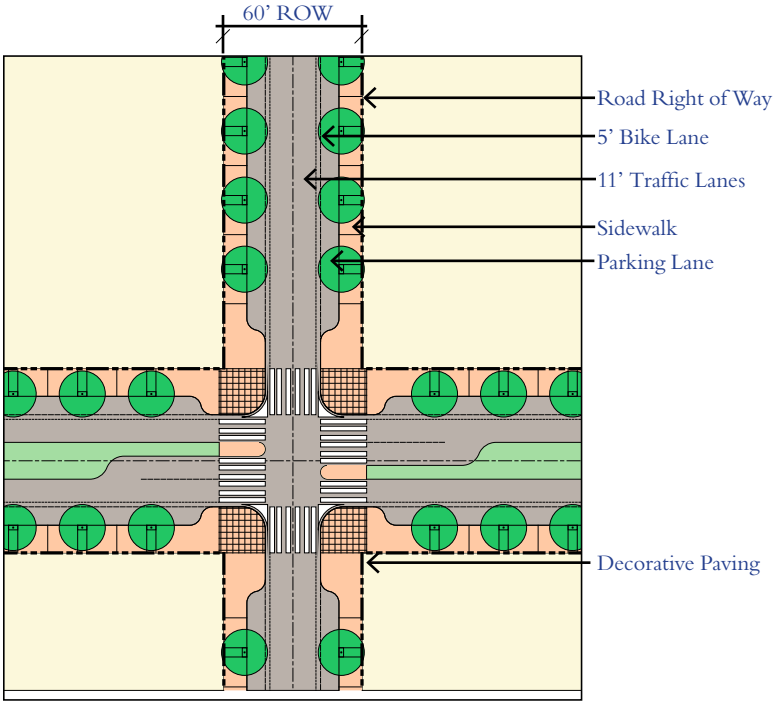
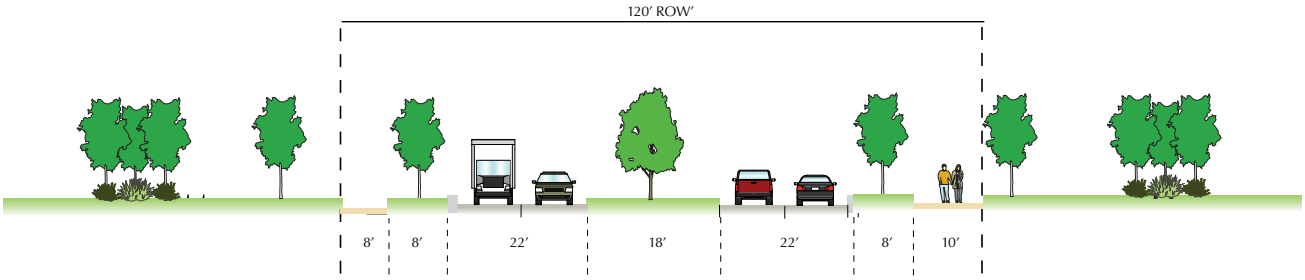


Figure 17:
Typical Cross-Section Concepts

Concept Two: Typical Minor Arterial (120' ROW)



Section 7: Implementation Strategies

This section describes specific actions required to carry out the new Western Corridor and Transit-Oriented Development Plan, including recommendations regarding priority improvement projects and development sites, and implementation techniques. This section also provides the detail necessary to allow the City to track the progress and effectiveness of the Plan and maximize its usefulness as a tool to achieve the community's vision for the area.

In order for the Plan to be fully implemented, it must be based on a strong partnership between the City, other public agencies, various neighborhood groups, local business owners, and the private sector. The City's "partners" should include:

- ◊ The Regional Transportation Authority, Metra, and Pace;
- ◊ Other Governmental and service districts, such as the school district, private utility companies, the Park District, the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT), the McHenry County Division of Transportation, neighboring township agencies, etc;
- ◊ The development community that includes builders and developers, who should be encouraged to undertake improvements and new construction that conform to the Plan and enhance the overall quality and character of the Western Corridor; and
- ◊ The Marengo community, including all residents and businesses within the City's planning jurisdiction.

The Implementation section is intended as a "road map" for City staff and officials in their efforts to realize the vision set forth in this document. It is also a reference for other stakeholders and interested parties, such as residents, business owners, community organizations, and potential developers.

The following implementation strategies are designed to assist the City in developing the Western Corridor and TOD Area as a vibrant mixed-use and commercial district that serves as a gateway into the community and is surrounded by residential neighborhoods built of the same spirit and quality as Marengo's earliest and most enduring neighborhoods.

I. Overall Implementation Strategies

II. TOD Implementation Strategies and City Role in Development

III. Administrative Actions

I. Overall Implementation Strategies

This Study recommends key strategies to assist the City in implementing the recommendations and vision for the Western Corridor and TOD area. The implementation strategies include a variety of tasks that involves working with other governmental agencies, private property owners and developers, and internally with City Staff and elected/appointed officials.

Work with Metra, Pace, and RTA

As of the date of this study, no formal studies have been conducted to determine the most effective transit mode for the corridor. Therefore, for purposes of analysis, the planning process will include multiple modal tech¬nologies such as Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) or commuter rail.

Metra is currently conducting an initial study to determine the feasibility of extending commuter rail service along the Union Pacific Railroad (UPRR) Belvidere Subdivision, which runs through parts of Kane and McHenry Counties, including the Village of Huntley and the City of Marengo. Should the results of Metra's study indicate that commuter rail service along the UPRR Belvidere Subdivision is feasible, further study would be necessary to evaluate the most effective transit alternative through the corridor. Due to the high capital costs associated with large transit investment, funding through the highly-competitive Federal Transit Administration's New Starts Program would likely be sought. This program includes a multi-step process that begins with

analysis of all potential transit alternatives (e.g. modes, alignments, operating plans, etc.) within the corridor based on projected ridership, costs, land use benefits, and other projections. Should a project advance out of the Alternatives Analysis phase, the Preliminary Engineering and Final Design phases would follow, before construction and testing could begin. It generally takes projects between eight and ten years to complete the New Starts program, but the ever-changing nature of the program can cause this timeframe to be extended.

The most important implementation strategy that the City should undertake is the continued support of future transit service provided in the City of Marengo. The planning process for this Study centered upon working with the community to determine a future vision for this area with the addition of transit service. As stated throughout this plan, a future transit station in this area will create the market demand for higher density, mixed-use development that includes residential, retail, office, parks and industrial uses. Without the transit station, a less dense development is mostly like to occur. The Land Use Plan recommended in this report will still be appropriate for the area, however, the density of future development upon those land uses will likely be less. Without a future transit service in operation, it is very unlikely that the recommended TOD District densities identified in this study will become desirable properties for the type of development. Without the introduction of transit, these properties may be developed over time, but with potentially different types of development designs and densities.

Members of RTA, Metra, and Pace have been involved throughout this process, and had representation on the project's Steering Committee. Potential estimated acreages desired by the agencies for the potential rail yard, station and commuter parking are reflected in this Plan. It is important for the City to continue to work with these agencies to support their efforts to bring transit service to the City and to create an appropriate future transit station that encourages these agencies to bring service to the City.

Work with IDOT, and McHenry County Division of Transportation

The City should continue to work with IDOT and McHenry County to coordinate necessary transportation network improvements within the Western Corridor and TOD area.

US Route 20

With the development of the station area, right-of-way along US 20 should be preserved to create a special treatment to the roadway announcing entrance into an important area. Within a 140-foot right-of-way, the roadway could eventually be widened to four lanes to accommodate increased travel demand, while maintaining the opportunity to create an enhanced experience with planted medians, multi-use paths and desirable setbacks through the Western Corridor. As future development occurs within the Western Corridor, adjacent to US Route 20, the City should work with developers to ensure a 140-foot right-of-way is dedicated. In addition to the additional right-of-way, the City should also work with IDOT to monitor if warrants are met for future signalized intersections along US Route 20 through this area. As identified on the Transportation and Circulation Plan, future signalized intersections are ideally spaced at a minimum distance of ¼ miles.

Truck Route Bypass/Pleasant Grove Road

With the proposed extension of Pleasant Grove Road, the intention is to create a truck bypass of US 20 around downtown Marengo. The roadway would ideally function as a four-lane arterial requiring 120-foot right-of-way. This would allow adequate width for multi-use paths/bike trails which are proposed along the route. This new bypass route around downtown was included in the plan connecting US 20 to Pleasant Grove via a new roadway extending south from Thorne Road. The new truck route designation would be Pleasant Grove Road connecting to Coral Road. In order to accommodate the truck traffic and additional through volumes, roadway upgrades would be required to handle the larger trucks. The City should work with the transportation agencies, including Riley and Coral Townships, and future developers to plan for and construct this new designated truck-route.

New I-90 Interchange

The City should continue to work with IDOT to support a future I-90 interchange at IL 23. With the de-

velopment of the Western Corridor and other city growth, a new I-90 interchange at IL 23 would benefit the community by reducing the travel distance to the interstate by half, providing a more direct route to the station area, and diverting truck traffic around downtown Marengo via a truck bypass route. The spacing between this new interchange and the nearest interchanges at US 20 and Belvidere would be ideal. A full interchange would better connect residents to the Chicago and Rockford metropolitan areas.

Pedestrian and Bicycle Circulation

Planning for the Western Corridor and TOD area provides the City with an excellent opportunity to plan for future pedestrian and bicycle circulation and connectivity. As new development occurs within the area, the City should continue to require sidewalks along residential streets and plan for a bicycle path network through the area. The majority of the contemplated bicycle facilities will be shared-use paths, which typically run parallel to key roadways and are shared by cyclists and pedestrians. The Plan proposes a multi-use path along the following roadways: Pleasant Grove Road/Coral Road, Thorne Road, Railroad right-of-way, Ritz Road/Meyer Road and Lakewood Greenway. These connections are important for future residents and business within the Western Corridor while providing linkages with other areas of Marengo including the Downtown Area.

Parks and Open Space

As new development occurs in this area, the City should continue to work with developers to acquire new parks and open space within the Western Corridor and TOD Area. As identified in the Parks and Open Space Plan, the potential exists for a significant amount of new parks and open space within the area. One of the major recommendations of the Plan is to create a proposed Lakewood Greenway that would traverse the entire corridor east to west.

The City should work with the Marengo Park District to identify if they have specific parks and recreation goals that could be met within this area. It is also important to note that the parks and open space identified in this plan are general locations only, and the exact size and location of each park may change based upon future development proposals and road configurations. Future parks may also be owned and maintained by entities other than the Marengo Park District, such as homeowner associations.

- ◊ Create local parks and open space features as development occurs.
- ◊ The Plan indicates that an area of open space is to be centrally located within each major residential block. While a central location is preferred, as residential development occurs, open space and parks should be created in areas that allow for maximum access from surrounding residents.
- ◊ Development should adhere to the open space standards established in the City's subdivision ordinance.
- ◊ The location of the Lakewood Greenway should be retained as this significant open space feature forms a central east-west axis within the Western Corridor and protects and enhances a natural feature. A creek, which is currently tiled, should be day lighted and utilized as the central natural feature within the Lakewood Greenway.

Work with Current Property Owners and Future Developers

The City of Marengo needs to rely on property owners and developers to construct the type of developments desired by the community along within the Western Corridor and TOD area. This Plan presents many recommendations for future developers to follow, such as recommended land uses, and design guidelines, that should be followed to create the area desired by the community.. The City should begin to meet with current property owners to present this Plan's recommendations and the community's vision for the property in this area. The City should also take a proactive role in marketing the area to future developers.

Work to Refine Internal Processes

Although the current economic climate is experiencing a significant downturn, the City should take this opportunity to review and update their current internal processes. Staff should review their existing zoning codes, annexation procedures and boundary agreements to analyze what is currently working, or what may need to be

revised. City staff should focus on reviewing their current annexation policies and make any necessary refinements. This is especially important due to the fact that the majority of the Study Area is currently outside of the City's municipal boundary (however, the area is entirely within the City's 1.5 mile planning jurisdiction).

II. Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) Implementation Strategies

In addition to the overall implementation strategy of working with Metra, Pace and other transportation agencies to support and attract a new transit service station in the Western Corridor, the following strategies are presented to assist the City in realizing the type of TOD District desired by its residents.

City Role in TOD Development

The City of Marengo can choose to involve itself in the plan implementation process in a number of ways. How in depth the City decides to be involved in the areas development will directly impact the manner and pace at which the TOD Area develops. These are potential City roles, and is not an exhaustive list. It is also important of course for the City to continue to communicate with the transportation agencies regarding their future plans, needs, and potential timing to bring transit service to the area.

Hands-on

In assuming a hands-on approach to development, the City is taking on the role of a development entity that will form a partnership with private sector entities. Initial steps to such an approach would involve land acquisition and site assemblage in the TOD Area as well as the issuing of an RFQ or RFP for development of assembled project sites. This proactive approach gives the City a large amount of control of the details of future development, but is costly with regard to staff resources and funding and exposes the City financially.

Flexible

As a flexible partner in development of the TOD Area, the City's primary goal is to incentivize development to achieve plan goals and act as mediator between private sector interests and the local community. Incentives could come in the form of monetary incentives such as TIF, SSA, or Business District funds which would likely be used for the construction of infrastructure and other public amenities. The City may also offer procedural incentives such as simplifying the planning and approval process, offering technical assistance, or assisting the private-sector in working with land owners to assemble project sites. In utilizing this approach, the City may go so far as to market their plans to private development entities, but would not necessarily have a direct hand in site assembly or the development of infrastructure. This position uses a moderate amount of City resources.

Reactive

In choosing a reactive position, the City will limit its control over the TOD Planning Area to zoning and other traditional regulatory controls. The City could also utilize this Western Corridor and TOD Area Plan as grounds for rejecting development proposals that do not reflect the intent of the plans recommendations. By being 'market driven', the reactive approach involves little financial risk and costs, but relinquishes control over much of the development process. This approach can also take longer to achieve plan goals and may prevent development from occurring in cases where some sort of catalyst project is needed due to initial lack of market interest.

Property Acquisition

The proposed transit station is intended to serve as a focus of activity within the TOD Area and its location will have a significant impact on how the remainder of the TOD Area and portions of the Western Corridor develop. While the timing of the transit station's construction and use is currently unknown, the City should work to secure the site such that future development and infrastructure can be adequately planned for. The City should work with Metra, Pace and RTA to confirm the acreage and locations recommended in this Plan for the proposed transit station and rail yard facilities. Once a station location has been identified and secured, the site can be used as a public amenity such as a park prior to the construction of the station and rail yard facilities.

Depending on the City's level of involvement in the implementation process of the Western Corridor and TOD Area Plan, the City may also pursue the acquisition and assembly of other sites for development.

Phasing of Proposed Development

- ◊ While it is hoped that the proposed transit station will serve as a catalyst development in the nearby surrounding area, the timing of the construction of the station is uncertain. In the interim, the City should encourage neighborhood scale retail and medium density residential development. Doing so will help ensure the health of the mixed-use station sub-district once the transit station is completed and operational.
- ◊ In general, medium density residential areas near the proposed station location should be a priority over more remote low density residential areas The City should actively pursue office and industrial development. This development should be built-to-suit within acceptable design parameters for the district (e.g. provide good pedestrian access).
- ◊ Roads and parks within residential areas should be created as residential development occurs. The City may need to invest in roads and other infrastructure in future office parks, the station sub-district and industrial areas in order to attract businesses.

Phased Commuter Parking Approach

As the TOD plans show, parking will be located in proximity to the station and the commercial uses in the transit-oriented development. Adequate parking is important for the viability of the district and sufficient parking for commuters and land-uses in the station area should be provided. However, the transit-oriented nature of the area and the interaction of uses should be considered in determining supply to avoid excess parking in the commercial areas. Usually parking needs for TODs are reduced to account for increased transit/multi-modal use and decreased vehicular use. Furthermore, by eliminating excessive parking, patrons are encouraged to use other modes of travel than vehicular.

The park-n-ride lots for commuters will be located just south of the tracks in close proximity to the station. The lot drive-aisles should be oriented in the east-west direction in order to provide pedestrians with a clear path toward the station, minimizing conflicts with vehicles. It may be appropriate to phase the implementation of these lots over a number of years as demand increases. It is important, though, to preserve approximately 20 acres for a potential full build-out of commuter parking. However, the potential phasing of commuter parking is unknown at this time until further studies are completed, including ridership and parking projections. Main full-access points to the parking lots should generally be provided aligned with the street grid.

Existing Businesses and Residences

As development occurs, existing businesses located within the Western Corridor and TOD Area will need to be relocated. These businesses are valued employers and service providers within the community and the development of the Western Corridor should not compromise their ability to succeed. The City should work with the businesses located along US 20 and elsewhere within the Western Corridor to provide viable relocation opportunities elsewhere within the community. One potential solution is to work with developers to offer the businesses a comparable location in new office and industrial development areas to be created on the north side of US 20 in the Western Corridor.

III. Administrative Actions

The following are actions that the City should undertake as administrative items to implement the recommendations of the Western Corridor and TOD Plan.

Adopt the Plan

The Western Corridor and TOD Plan should become the City of Marengo's official policy guide for improvement and development within the Western Corridor and TOD Area.

The Plan should be adopted by the City Council and then used on a regular basis by City staff, boards, and commissions to review and evaluate all proposals within the planning area.

Once adopted, the City should make the Western Corridor and TOD Plan available on the City's website.

Review and Update Development Codes

Building upon the City's current Comprehensive Plan, and this Western Corridor and TOD Plan, the City should review and update the City's current development controls including zoning, subdivision regulations, and other related codes and ordinances to reflect the recommendations in this document. It is essential that all development controls are consistent with and complement the new Plan.

Comprehensive Plan Analysis

Given the significant level of agreement between the two plans, it is recommended that the Western Corridor and TOD Area plan be amended as a subarea plan to the existing Comprehensive Plan after the following items have been addressed:

- ◊ A definition for the Medium Density Residential classification used in this Plan is created that relates to the Residential T.N.D. land use indicated in the Comprehensive Plan.
- ◊ The TOD District land use is defined in relation to other commercial uses indicated in the Comprehensive Plan. Such a definition should also include language regarding a mix of uses and relationship to the proposed transit station.

Zoning Ordinance Updates

The majority of land uses called for in the proposed concept can successfully be accommodated within the existing zoning ordinance.

- ◊ Low density residential can be accommodated within existing R-1 and R-2 zoning districts.
- ◊ Medium density residential can be accommodated within existing R-3 zoning district.
- ◊ Light Industrial and Office uses can be accommodated within existing Office, Research and Light Industrial (ORI) district.
- ◊ TOD District use cannot be accommodated within existing business (B-1, B-2, B-3 and BP) districts. The B-2 General Business District allows for mixed-use buildings with residential dwelling units located on the upper floors as a special use, but minimum setback requirements would prevent the creation of a street wall and commercial density called for in the station sub-district. The Zoning Ordinance should be revised to allow for mixed-use buildings with minimal or no setbacks. The creation of a new zoning district that is intended solely for us in the station sub-district may be appropriate.
- ◊ Parking requirements may also need to be revised for all zoning districts within the Western Corridor. This is particularly true in the station sub-district where shared parking facilities would require fewer parking spaces overall.

Subdivision Ordinance Updates

None of the recommendations made in the proposed concept appear to be at odds with the subdivision ordinance. The Traditional Subdivision Standards set forth in the Subdivision Ordinance are the design standards most appropriate for the residential areas indicated in the proposed concept. No residential density requirements or ranges are stated in the Subdivision Ordinance.

Zoning Amendments and Potential Overlay District

The City should develop and adopt a TOD Area Overlay District that would require all new development within the identified TOD District to apply as a planned unit development (PUD), thus giving the City more control over the quality and character of new development. The City should also make necessary Zoning Map amendments to reflect the Plans land use designations. The creation of new zoning classification will likely be required.

City Role in TOD Development

The City of Marengo should decide upon its role in seeing the TOD come to fruition. As discussed earlier in this section, the City may decide to involve itself in the plan implementation process in a number of ways. How in depth the City decides to be involved in the areas development will directly impact the manner and pace at which the TOD Area develops.

Update the Plan on a Regular Basis

It is important to emphasize that the Western Corridor and TOD Plan is not a static document. The Plan should be revised and updated accordingly. This is of particular importance given the uncertain time horizon for the proposed future transit station and the upturn in the residential development market.

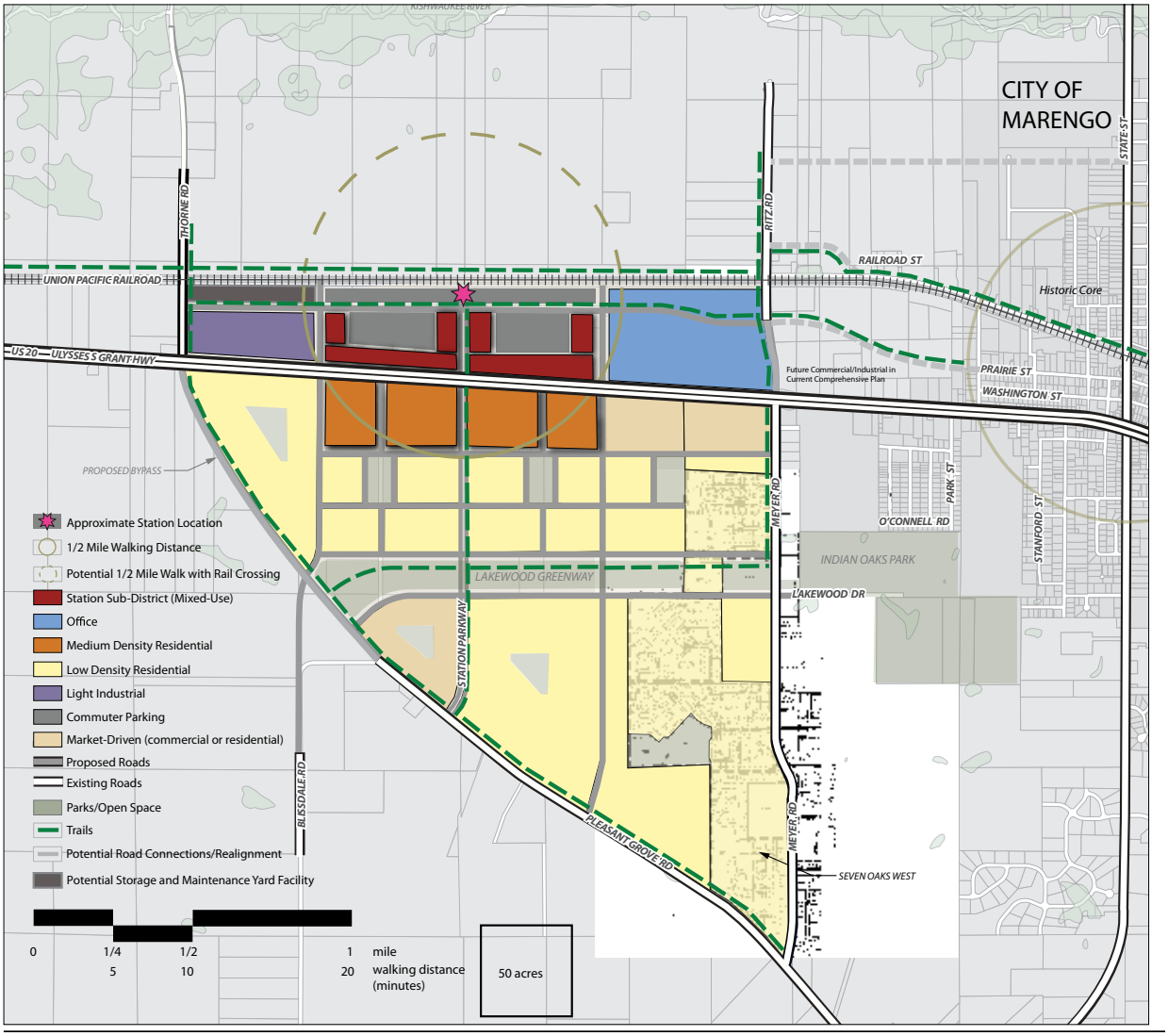
Capital Improvements Program

The Capital Improvements Program (CIP) establishes schedules and priorities for all public improvement projects within a five-year period. All projects on the CIP are reviewed, prioritized, and potential funding sources identified. The City of Marengo's financial resources will always be limited and public dollars must be spent wisely. The Capital Improvements Program would allow the City to provide the most desirable public improvements within the Corridor, yet stay within budget constraints.

Appendix

Appendix I:
Preferred Land Use Concept

Based upon public input, a Preferred Land Use and Development Concept Plan was selected from three (3) potential concept plans that were presented by the Consultant Team. The Preferred Concept Plan was used as the foundation for the Western Corridor and TOD Area Land Use Plan. The concepts illustrated in the graphic have been refined and more detailed plans are incorporated into the document.



Appendix 2:
Community Outreach

Residents had several ways to participate in the planning process for the City's Western Corridor and TOD Plan. Several community outreach activities were undertaken to promote community involvement and encourage citizen participation throughout the process. A summary of the issues and opportunities identified by the community is included in the following figure; however, a complete analysis of each community outreach activity is included in the Existing Conditions Report on file with the City. The following outreach activities have been conducted as part of this study:

- ◊ A Project Initiation Meeting and Workshop was held with the Steering Committee on August 7, 2008 at City Hall.
- ◊ A Transit-Oriented Development Workshop and Visual Preference Survey was held with the residents of Marengo on September 10, 2008 at City Hall.
- ◊ An On-line Community Questionnaire and an On-line Visual Preference Survey were posted on the City's website on September 11, 2008.
- ◊ A Community Workshop to review preliminary Land Use and Development Concept Plans in an effort to create a preferred concept plan on January 21, 2009 at City Hall.
- ◊ An Open House was held on April 14, 2009 at City Hall to present the preferred Land Use and Development Concept Plan as well as the Preliminary Transportation and Access Plan.

Summary of Project Initiation Meeting and Workshop

On August 7, 2008, a Steering Committee meeting was held at City Hall with nine (9) committee members. The Steering Committee is comprised of elected and appointed officials, City staff, representatives from the Regional Transportation Authority (RTA), Pace, Metra, and the Consultant Team.

Members had an opportunity to identify issues and concerns confronting the Western Corridor and Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) area, priority projects, desirable and undesirable uses, and development types. The group discussed several topics throughout the meeting, including traffic, infrastructure, existing land use, and possible impacts of future development in this area on Downtown Marengo.

Traffic

Traffic issues were cited by many Steering Committee Members as one of their top three issues or concerns. Most commented specifically about the high volume of truck traffic that passes through the Downtown on a daily basis. While existing traffic patterns already pose potential safety problems, there were also concerns regarding any additional truck traffic through the Downtown that may be generated by development in the Western Corridor. The possibility of a truck by-pass was mentioned as one means of mitigating this issue, but it was noted that precautions would need to be taken to ensure local commuter traffic still passed through Downtown to support local businesses. Intersection improvements along the roads surrounding the Western Corridor, the widening of US Route 20 to accommodate turning lanes, and general street improvements throughout the community were all listed as potential improvements.

Infrastructure

While the majority of concerns about infrastructure parallel traffic concerns, the provision of utilities to the Western Corridor was also listed. This could be coordinated with any projects to widen US Route 20. A number of Committee Members also expressed concern over the general condition of the Downtown area. Comments shed light on a desire to enhance the area in coordination with new development in the Western Corridor. Committee members stated a need to implement streetscape improvements within the Downtown Area. New development in the Western Corridor should also extend the local bike path networks and improve bike and pedestrian accessibility between the Western Corridor and the Downtown. All committee members underscored the need for the identification of long-term funding mechanisms to pay for infrastructure improve-

ments and other planning implementation.

Land Use

Overall, the Committee desires a mix of uses for the Western Corridor/TOD area including retail, residential, and light industrial uses. It was suggested that future commercial development in the corridor provide a mix of housing choices. Committee members stated that they would prefer ownership housing over rental housing in this area. Some committee members expressed a desire to see additional retailers in the community including a grocer, pharmacy, and home goods store. A few also expressed a desire to see more manufacturing in the corridor and felt this would be most appropriate in the western portion of the corridor, away from the TOD area. Heavy industry was listed as an undesirable use in areas near the future transit station, but stated that this use would be acceptable in other areas of the corridor. It was also discussed, that if new industrial land uses were located in this area, that a plan needs to be in place to direct truck routes around the Downtown area.

Community Workshop and Visual Preference Survey

On September 10, 2008, a community workshop was held at City Hall with over 40 members of the community including several members of the Steering Committee. The purpose of the workshop was three fold, allowing the Consultant Team to: (1) introduce the concept and basic principles of transit-oriented development to the community; (2) solicit feedback from the community regarding their aspirations and concerns related to the Western Corridor/Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) Plan; and (3) conduct a visual preference survey to solicit community feedback on potential development and land use related components.

Throughout the workshop several topics were touched on by the community including conservation and preservation, traffic and access, the costs of future development, the proposed location of the potential future transit station and TOD area, and possible impacts of future development in this area on Downtown Marengo.

Downtown Marengo

The most common concern cited by residents who attended the workshop was the potential negative impacts that the proposed TOD could have on the health of Downtown Marengo. The location of the TOD area approximately one mile to the west of Downtown was noted to be a significant distance between the two destinations. Residents stated concern that potential future commercial development within the Study Area would undermine existing commercial endeavors within the Downtown. Many stated fears that new development in the Western Corridor and TOD area would 'kill' Downtown Marengo. As a partial solution to this dilemma, some residents suggested that a shuttle service be provided between the TOD area and existing businesses in Downtown Marengo. It was felt that this action in concert with other transportation and access improvements would help functionally connect the Study Area to Downtown.

Traffic and Access

Residents noted that providing sufficient pedestrian and transportation access to the Study Area was one key component to successfully integrating new development within the existing community. Residents who routinely utilize US Route 20 to reach their homes noted that there are already issues with congestion during rush periods and were concerned that additional development in the Study Area would exacerbate these problems. Heavy truck traffic and overall congestion in Downtown Marengo are currently a significant issue facing the community. In addition to vehicular access to the Study Area, residents also stated a desire to see improved connectivity between the Study Area and existing walking and biking paths and trails. It was felt that improved access to the Study Area would serve to not only connect residents to the area's natural amenities and potential new commercial development, but would also serve as another means of connecting the TOD area to Downtown Marengo.

Conservation and Preservation

Residents emphasized the location of the Kishwaukee River when discussing the issues of conservation and preservation. Many community members stated concern over the location of the TOD area with regard to water resources and agricultural areas. In particular, it was noted that the Kishwaukee River watershed occupies much of the area to the north of the railroad. Residents also stated a desire to preserve Marengo's rural charac-

ter and preserve agricultural uses in the Western Corridor and TOD area.

Development Costs and Sources of Funds

If significant development were to take place within the Western Corridor, community members raised concerns over the provision of utilities and services to the Study Area and associated costs of creating and expanding infrastructure. Particular questions were raised regarding the costs of providing new water treatment facilities and schools. Residents stated the need to identify what portions of new infrastructure would be publicly funded and to identify potential funding sources in advance of development. Should additional residential development occur within the Study Area, there is also a need to identify any potential shortcomings in school funding and capacity. The additional stress on the road network caused by traffic generated in the Study Area was also a concern of some who wished to see additional, long-term funding sources identified for road maintenance.

Desired Development

Community members were also asked to specify what types of land use and development they wanted to see. Responses to this question varied widely. Several residents stated that they wished the Western Corridor to remain predominantly agricultural with extremely limited development within the TOD area and the Kishwaukee River watershed. Civic amenities such as a park, new post office, library, or amphitheater were also noted as desirable future uses within the Study Area.

Retail space along US Route 20 was the use most consistently mentioned by residents although the type of retail deemed desirable varied. Some residents thought the creation of 'big box' retail would be a positive addition to the community while others stated explicitly that small retailers would be solely preferred. Strip retail development was also discouraged. Most residents agreed that heavy industrial use was inappropriate for the Study Area given environmental concerns, but some believed light industrial and other commercial uses would be appropriate. Some residents believed single family residential development would be an acceptable use within the Study Area, but discouraged any form of multi-family housing. Others stated that they would like to encourage denser, single-family and multi-family housing near the potential future transit station.

Visual Preference Survey

A Visual Preference Survey was conducted as part of the September 10, 2008 community workshop (and also made available on-line). The survey was conducted to obtain residents' general opinions and comments regarding the function, appearance, and overall character of the Study Area. Residents were shown 59 unique images covering the subjects of architecture, streetscape and pedestrian realm amenities, transit station form, and residential development. The images were taken in areas surrounding various transit stations throughout the Chicago-land region and detailed items such as street lights, single family and multi-family residential development patterns and architecture, refuse enclosures, retail façades, landscaped parking lots, and multi-story mixed-use developments. Residents were asked to rank each of the images, based on their preference of between 0, indicating undesirable, and 10, indicating desirable.

Architecture

In general, the community showed a preference for what could be considered neo-traditional architecture. Two of the four most preferred buildings were two-story mixed-use buildings with office space or residential units above ground floor retail. The other two most preferred images featured two-story commercial buildings with prairie-style architectural details. Brick appears to be building material preferred by local residents.

Those images least preferred by community members utilized a mix of materials in their exteriors, namely brick and stucco. Three of the least preferred buildings depicted were single-story retail and included a strip center and a dollar store (formerly a grocery store). The other image depicted a multi-story, wood frame retail building that lacked little architectural ornamentation.

Streetscape & Pedestrian Realm Amenities

An examination of the most preferred images regarding streetscape and pedestrian realm amenities indicates that residents desire a pedestrian realm that yields a sense of enclosure and offers varied visual context. Street lighting that was preferred was at a pedestrian scale and takes steps to ensure that walkways, cross-walks, and other pedestrian corridors are well lit. Moreover, the most desirable images depict a well-defined pedestrian area that buffers people walking on the sidewalk from vehicular traffic using trees, shrubs, planters, and ornamental posts.

The least desired images depict large open parking lots that are uninviting to those walking through an area. They also show auto-oriented streetlights that do little to provide light for pedestrians, and sidewalks with little landscaping beyond a typical turf grass.

Transit Station Form

The top three most preferred images, which all received an average rating of 5.1 or higher, indicate that residents would prefer to have a station that is located near green space and a mix of uses. The most desirable station area was situated within a downtown context surrounded by several small commercial buildings on all sides, a small park to the south, and small parking areas scattered throughout the area. Another desirable image features a park adjacent to the transit station with a small strip of commercial buildings on one side and parking dominating the area around the station. The third most preferred transit station image depicts a station adjacent to a commuter parking lot surrounded by agriculture and open space across a highway from a single-family subdivision.

Three of the four least preferred images depict similar scenarios wherein a transit station is surrounded by large areas of parking on all sides with the exception of one or two small commercial buildings. The final, less favored image depicts a transit station situated within a downtown area. However, the primary difference between this image and other, more desirable images is that the station is located along a service street 'behind' the majority of the downtown's commercial establishments.

Residential Development: Results for the residential portion of the survey were skewed heavily to the undesirable end of the range with the relatively low average score for all images of 2.8. Here it is important to note the distinction between preferences of development in general versus preferences for development within the Study Area. Based on the relatively low scores all residential images received, it is reasonable to infer that those residents who did not wish to see any residential development or preferred very low-density residential development within the Study Area consistently indicated a value of 0 or 1 as their preference. Another consideration is that residents only desired large lot single family residential development. It should also be noted that residents gave an aerial image of Marengo's Downtown residential area a below average ranking of only 2.7.

Two of the three images deemed least desirable by residents depict relatively dense single-family home developments with both a rectilinear and curvilinear street pattern. The remaining image that was least preferred by the community is a bird's eye view of a townhome development featuring pairs of six-unit buildings centered on shared parking areas surrounding a central common open space area.

Desirable Transit Development

- *Mix of uses surrounding transit station*
- *Open space located nearby*
- *Parking located near the station*
- *Street grid system in place*
- *Landscaping throughout area*
- *Some parking located in rear of buildings*

- *Mix of uses surrounding transit station*
- *Architecturally designed station*
- *Parking located near the station*
- *Street grid system in place*
- *Landscaping throughout area*
- *Landscaped gathering places and plazas*

- *Mix of uses surrounding transit station*
- *Open space located south of the station*
- *Parking located near the station*
- *Although larger parking areas, landscaping and trees break up its appearance*
- *Road underpass*
- *Landscaping throughout area*
- *Some parking located in rear of buildings*

- *Mix of uses surrounding transit station*
- *Parking located near the station and screened*
- *Landscaping throughout area*
- *Pedestrian and road underpass*
- *Residential uses located nearby*

Desirable Residential

- *Street grid maintained*
- *Primarily single-family detached homes*
- *Garages located in the rear with alleys*
- *Larger trees can be seen in the photo*

- *Street grid maintained*
- *Some curvilinear streets are shown*
- *Primarily multi-family attached homes*
- *On-street parking*
- *Larger trees can be seen in the photo*
- *Sidewalks located throughout*
- *Community pool shown in the photo*

- *Street grid maintained*
- *Primarily multi-family attached homes*
- *Parking located at-grade, at the front of the units*
- *Central stormwater/open space feature*

Desirable Commercial

- *Earth-toned building*
- *Appears multi-story building*
- *Appropriate and attractive architecture*
- *Landscaping*
- *Located close to the street*
- *Interest added with awnings, windows, doors*
- *Subtle signage*
- *Roof variations*

- *Earth-toned building*
- *Multi-story building*
- *Appropriate and attractive architecture*
- *Brick facade*
- *Landscaping*
- *Interest added with awnings and windows*
- *Appears mixed-use*
- *Roof variations*

- *Earth-toned building*
- *Multi-story building*
- *Appropriate and attractive architecture*
- *Brick facade*
- *Located close to the street*
- *Interest added with windows*
- *Subtle signage*
- *Roof variations*

- *Earth-toned building with accent color*
- *Multi-story building*
- *Appropriate and attractive architecture*
- *Landscaping*
- *Located close to the street*
- *Interest added with awnings, windows, doors*
- *Subtle signage*
- *Roof variations*

Desirable Streetscaping

- *Natural setting*
- *Formal and native plantings*
- *Mixture of landscaping elements*
- *Natural stormwater detention*
- *Waterfall feature*

- *Formal and native plantings*
- *Mixture of landscaping elements*
- *Natural stormwater detention*
- *Waterfall feature*

- *Outdoor seating area*
- *Vareity of landscaping*
- *Use of awnings and shade trees creates a pedestrian environment*
- *Colorful architecture shown in photo*
- *Wrought-Iron fencing element*

- *Pedestrian-scaled lighting*
- *Historic and traditional setting*
- *Use of awnings and landscaping*
- *Street trees*
- *Window displays*
- *Brick facades*
- *Sidewalks and brick-paver crossings*