



Village of Winnetka

Village Council Study Session

October 14, 2025 at 7:00 PM

Village Hall
510 Green Bay Road

AGENDA

1. **Call to Order**
2. **Public Comments**
3. **Discussion**
 - a. Post Office Discussion
4. **Closed Session**
5. **Adjournment**

NOTICE

Village Council meetings are video recorded. All agenda materials are available at villageofwinnetka.org (Governance > Agendas & Minutes); the Reference Desk at the Winnetka Library; or in the Manager's Office at Village Hall (2nd floor). The Village of Winnetka, in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, requests that all persons with disabilities who require certain accommodations to allow them to observe and/or participate in this meeting or have questions about the accessibility of the meeting or facilities, contact the Village ADA Coordinator, 510 Green Bay Road, Winnetka, Illinois 60093, 847-716-3543; T.D.D. 847-501-6041.



Agenda Item Executive Summary

TITLE: Post Office Discussion

PRESENTER: Scott Mangum

AGENDA DATE: October 14, 2025

CONSENT: No

ITEM TYPE: Presentation

ITEM HISTORY:

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

DEMOLITION AND RESTORATION OPTIONS

With the multiple systems in the building beyond their useful life and the USPS expected to vacate the building in the near-term, Engineering Department staff has developed two options for demolition and site restoration. The existing parking layout has a total of 38 parking spaces, with 31 available to the public as either 4-hour parking (9) or A Zone parking (22).

Option 1. Grass Island and Partial Parking.

Number of Parking Spaces: 33

Conceptual Cost Estimate: \$592,000

Attached is a separate report providing information regarding the Subject Property.

Option 2. Full Parking Lot.

Number of Parking Spaces: 99

Conceptual Cost Estimate: \$910,875

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT OPTIONS

Winnetka Council Caucus (WCC) Survey. Earlier this year the WCC surveyed resident opinions about the ways in which they would like to be able to use this site in the future. The WCC offered the following insights and recommendations:

- Almost a quarter (24.3%) of residents prefer the space to be used for an outdoor park or a year-round communal space, and an additional 16.8% want a space to congregate with indoor/outdoor flexibility and space for kids to play. Taken together, this suggests that approximately 41 % of residents want this space to become a place to congregate and/or be active.

- The next 2 options suggest that approximately 38% of residents would favor some form of mixed-use residential / retail / service space, but residents are split on whether it should include housing (similar to One Winnetka). ***The Village Council should pursue a public engagement process by engaging a design professional that will evaluate the future use of the post office site soliciting further public input on the site options available to determine the best use of the site for the community.***
- Finally, with only 5.2% indicating interest in an indoor cultural space, ***the Village Council should not develop additional indoor cultural space at this site.*** Local theaters already exist, and the Winnetka Community House already features public art.

Option 1. Issue an RFP/RFQ to continue to pursue conceptual design for a public plaza. If the Village Council feels that there is consensus about using the space for a purely public purpose staff would seek a designer with this expertise. A public engagement limited to the design of the public space could be part the projects scope. Note that future construction of this option is likely to be completely financed by the Village, minus any grant funding that could be obtained.

Option 2. Contract a land use planning consultant to perform public engagement and analysis of options ranging from fully public gathering/open spaces to commercial or mixed-use developments that devote a portion of the site to public uses. Note that this option could involve a public-private partnership with a developer taking on some or all the construction cost.

Attached is a separate report providing background information regarding the Subject Property.

RECOMMENDATION:

Following a presentation from staff and after hearing comments from the public, the Council is requested to provide policy direction regarding the options presented for demolition and site restoration of the existing site, and how to pursue public engagement and planning for this project.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Memorandum: Post Office Site, Next Steps
2. Ad Hoc Post Office Committee Report, Excerpt (Site Plan Concept Designs)
3. Winnetka Futures 2040 Comprehensive Plan, Excerpt (Pillars 2 and 3)
4. 2016 Downtown Master Plan, Excerpt
5. 2018 Winnetka Downtown Streetscape and Signage Plan, Excerpt



MEMORANDUM VILLAGE OF WINNETKA

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

TO: VILLAGE COUNCIL
FROM: SCOTT MANGUM, COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DIRECTOR
DATE: OCTOBER 9, 2025
SUBJECT: POST OFFICE SITE, NEXT STEPS

INTRODUCTION

At the October 14, 2025, Village Council Study Session, the Village Council is scheduled to review the background of previous discussions about redevelopment of the current US Post Office site in the West Elm Business District, provide direction for demolition of the existing building and restoration options, and provide direction about consulting for additional design services.

BACKGROUND

Early History. The current site of the Post Office was the original location of the Horace Mann School, which was constructed in 1899. The Village's first comprehensive plan in 1921, the *Plan of Winnetka* (often referred to as the "*Bennett Plan*"), specifically identified the creation of a Village Center that included the construction of a new Village Hall with an open court to the west leading to the block with Horace Mann School. The Plan identified that the school building would eventually be removed and replaced with a community auditorium as its central building.

In 1925, a new Village Hall was constructed, and in 1938, voters approved the sale of the Horace Mann School site and the construction of a new school, which would become Crow Island School.

In 1940, the Federal government purchased the site to construct a new Post Office facility; however, that never occurred due to World War II. Horace Mann was demolished in 1942. In 1946, the Village purchased the two lots where the parking lots currently exists, and the Federal Government sold the middle lot to Adlin Realty Co. In 1958, the current Post Office facility was constructed. In 1982, the Village purchased the middle lot where the Post Office building is located and assumed the lease with the Post Office. The reason for purchasing the site was for control of the area to



achieve future community goals. During 2014, the Village's current lease with the Post Office was amended and allows either party to terminate the lease with a one-year notice. Also, the Post Office distribution operation was ended, and additional parking was made available to the community.

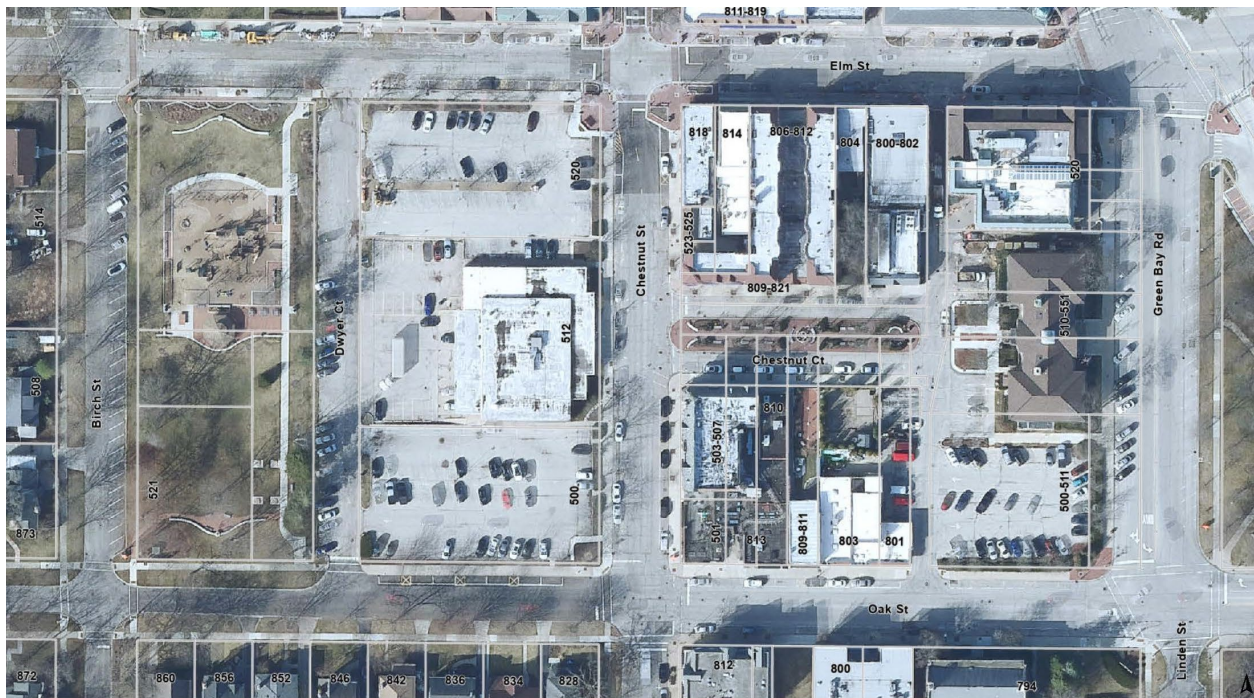
Since purchasing the site in 1982, the Village has undertaken several efforts to determine how this parcel might be used.

Comprehensive Plan Recommendations. In 1986 the Village Comprehensive Plan described a redevelopment concept for the Village-owned 'Post Office Block'. The plan envisioned relocation of the post office to another location in the business district and the site redeveloped as mixed-use development that included a combination of retail, office, and housing. Importantly, the 1986 Plan's redevelopment concept focused attention on the need to "...maintain pedestrian access in an east/west direction, through the block, connecting Moffat Mall to Dwyer Park."

Later, in 1999, the Village updated its Comprehensive Plan into the *Winnetka 2020 Plan*. The Winnetka 2020 Plan expands on the notion of a mixed-use redevelopment of the site. The plan describes the site as "an opportunity to create a special core area that could accommodate many goals at once; aesthetic, economic, parking and social."

The current Comprehensive Plan, *Winnetka Futures 2040*, mentions the post office site as one opportunity to provide community gathering and event spaces unique to the needs of the three business districts (Pillar 2, Vibrant Business Districts, goal 2.5, and Pillar 3, Community Heritage and Placemaking, goal 3.4 and 3.6, make reference to Post Office planning considerations).

Ad Hoc Post Office Committee. The most significant effort to study redeveloping the Post Office site, including both parking lots to the north and south, occurred from December 2004 through April 2008 when the Village Ad Hoc Post Office Committee studied the issue and presented its recommendations to the Village Council.



Dwyer Park, Post Office Site, Moffat Mall and Village Hall - 2020

During this time, the Post Office Committee formally met 27 times. The Village also hired The Lakota group and BauerLatazo Studio to conduct design workshops (focus groups) and to develop conceptual plans for the site. During June and July of 2005, the Village held a series of seven focus groups and two village wide meetings to solicit public input as to how the site might redevelop.

Between September 2005 and February 2007, the Committee undertook several activities including: review of the focus group input; review of concept plans prepared by the consultant team, establishment of site development principles; review of parking study and parking; and economic modeling of concept plans. In March 2007, two village-wide meetings were held at North Shore Country Day School to obtain public input on the concept plans. Prior to the meeting a *"Status Report of the Post Office Site Redevelopment Committee"* was mailed to all residents.

During the Committee's work, several residents proposed different concepts for the site, which included mixed-use development ideas, relocation of the public library to the site, and preserving most of the site as open space.

On July 9, 2007, the Ad Hoc Post Office Committee submitted a report summarizing its recommendations for the redevelopment of the Post Office site. Members of the Committee consisted of Julian D'Esposito (Chairman), Paul Dunn, Nan Greenough, Pete Henderson, Louise Holland, Maureen Mitchel, Christopher Rintz, and Roberta Rubin.

The Committee identified two main objectives for redeveloping the Post Office site (1) "to transform the West Elm Business District into a magnet attracting people day and evening on a year-round basis – a gathering place for our families and friends" and (2) "to serve as a catalyst for improvements in the larger West Elm Business District, the level of commercial activity, the uses, buildings, landscaping, lighting, vehicular and pedestrians traffic pattern and streetscape." The Committee identified two reuses of the site that could achieve these objectives:

- 1) A mixed-use development combining a mix of retail uses with upper story residential units and adequate parking.
- 2) Relocation of the public library to the site, which would offer an opportunity to realize a central feature of the Bennett Plan, which envisioned a landscape corridor connecting the Village Hall with another community building. The library as an anchor use combined with some complementary retail uses could also achieve the identified objectives.

The Committee's work focused on planning for a mixed-use development for the Site and made recommendations regarding (a) land uses to incorporate on various portions of the site, (b) the architectural design for the site, (c) parking and vehicular circulation, and (d) the need for public investment to facilitate the development of a mixed-use project. The report included 10 different site plan concept designs for the Site that would achieve to various degrees the recommendations for the redevelopment of the Site. The site plan concept designs are included as an attachment.

One of the key design considerations was the focus on pedestrian activity. In addition to creating a focal point at the intersection of Elm and Chestnut streets, which would create four corners of retail and pedestrian vibrancy, a second pedestrian focal point would be to create a landscaped extension of Moffat Mall through the site connecting to Dwyer Park. This extension could be completely pedestrian in nature, such as a landscape area or a plaza, or if necessary, it could be available for vehicular access to parking areas and could be designed to permit a conversion to pedestrian-only setting on occasions when activity in Dwyer Park or the Post Office site is devoted to fairs, shows or markets meeting the gathering place objective envisioned for this block.

Between September 2007 and April 2008, the Village Council discussed the Committee's report and continued to take comments from the public. During its sixth meeting discussing the Committee's report and ideas from the public, on April 18, 2018, the Village Council adopted R-22-2008, A Resolution Expressing Planning and Development Principles for the Post Office Site. The planning and development principles adopted by the Council were a pared down version of what the Post Office Committee had recommended. In addition to setting out planning and development principles, the Village Council also acknowledged that it was providing the Library District time to conduct a needs analysis to determine if a new library building on the Post Office site would meet its operational needs. The Library District did not advance any further discussions with the Village.

Due to the Great Recession, the Village put on hold the redevelopment of the Post Office site, and with the economic recovery that followed, the Village focused its attention on a downtown mater plan and redevelopment of what has become known as the One Winnetka site.

Downtown Master Plan. Adopted in 2016, the Downtown Master Plan included a development scenario for the eastern half of the post office block as a development site. The scenario showed three buildings: a four-story mixed-use at the corner of Elm and Chestnut Streets, a three-story commercial building mid-block on Chestnut Street, and a two and a half story residential building along Oak Street.

FIGURE 6.1. DOWNTOWN ELM - POST OFFICE SITE

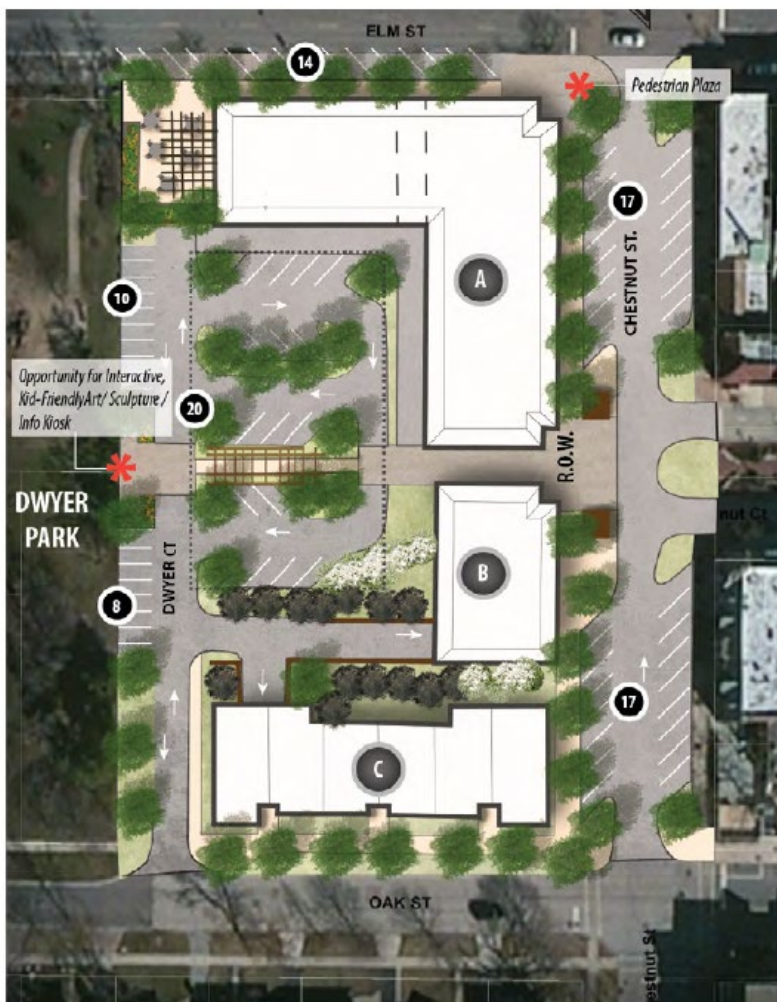
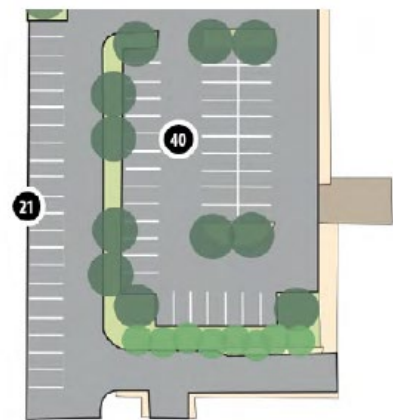


TABLE 6.1: POST OFFICE: DEVELOPMENT SCENARIO

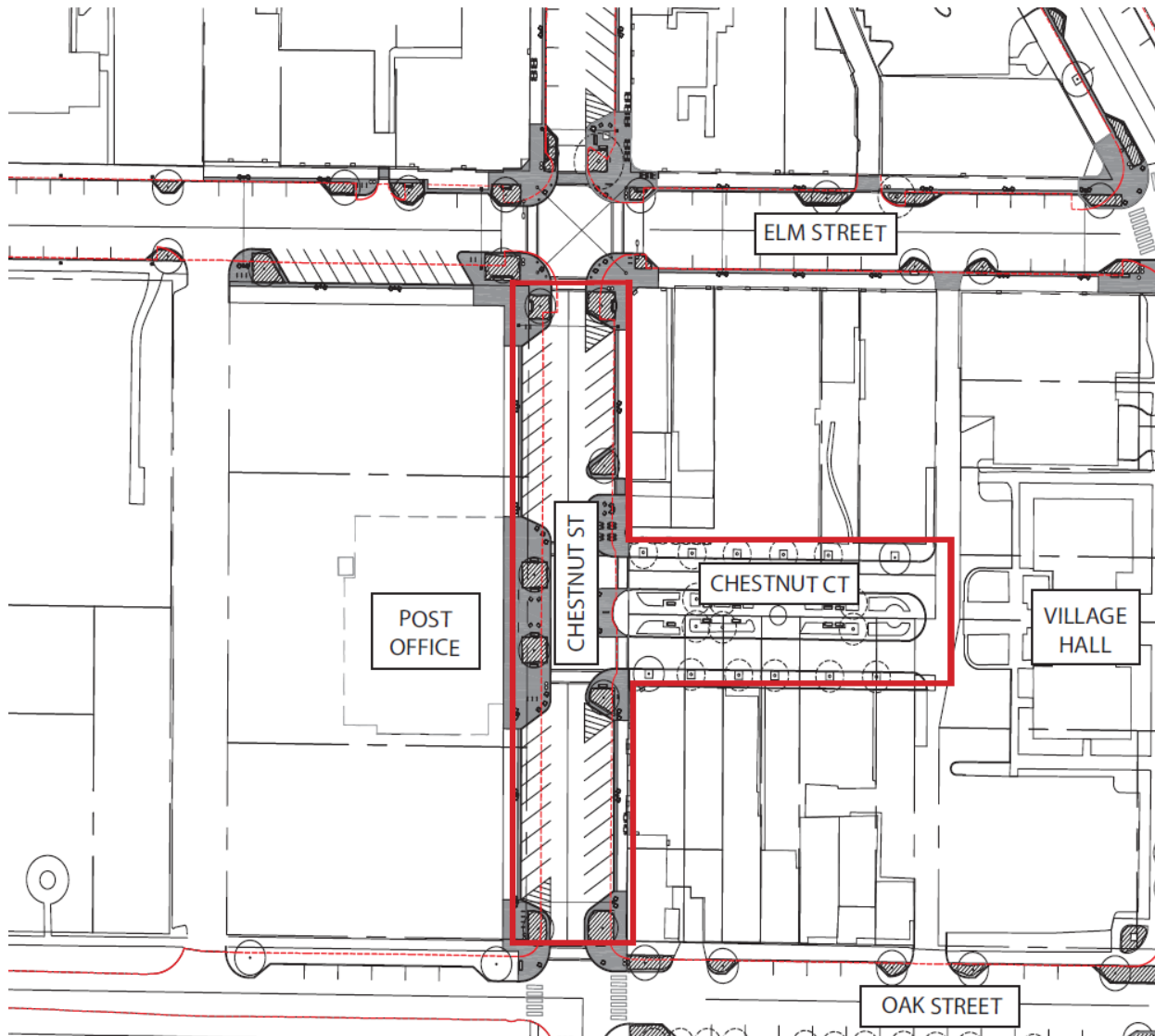
PARKING ALTERNATIVE 1



PARKING ALTERNATIVE 2



Downtown Streetscape and Signage Plan. The 2018 Winnetka Downtown Streetscape and Signage Plan identified outdoor living rooms where strategic investment in streetscape improvements could have the most impact on the Downtown's active use areas. The plan called for the configuration of diagonal on-street parking (from existing parallel parking) on both the east and west sides of Chestnut Street and the south side of Elm St on the post office block to add more adjacent street parking. As the bump out on the southeast corner of Elm and Chestnut was offset to accommodate future diagonal parking configuration, potentially consider implementing the diagonal parking along the eastern portion of the post office site during site demolition and restoration.



Winnetka Downtown Streetscape and Signage Plan - 2018

Public Plaza Concept Plan. At a Village Council Study Session on May 10, 2022, former President Rintz presented a concept plan for a new public gathering space at the current location of the US Post Office in the West Elm Business District. The concept plan called for development of a space where community members could gather in unprogrammed passive open space, and for smaller scale musical performances, markets, and other events. The space was designed to serve as an extension of the Business District’s “community center” function, and would be improved with elements such as seating, landscaping, and lighting that promote the space for meeting up with friends and other smaller informal gatherings to enhance vitality. With planning assistance from The Lakota Group, a visual representation of what such a space could look like on a portion of the Post Office block was presented during the study session.



Lakota Rendering of Post Office Plaza Concept Plan - 2022

In May of 2024, Village staff contacted nine design firms requesting collateral material from them. They were informed that the Village was seeking professional services from a qualified landscape architecture or architectural firm to provide programming confirmation and conceptual design services for a public plaza outdoor gathering and performance space in downtown Winnetka. Four firms responded and the responses were transmitted to the Village Council, however, there was no further discussion or action.

DEMOLITION AND RESTORATION OPTIONS

With the multiple systems in the building beyond their useful life and the USPS expected to vacate the building in the near-term, Engineering Department staff has developed two options for demolition and site restoration. The existing parking layout within the post office site has a total of 38 parking spaces, with 31 available to the public as either 4-hour parking (9) or A Zone parking (22).

Option 1. Grass island and partial parking totaling 33 parking spaces within post office site footprint, an increase of two public parking spaces from the existing condition.

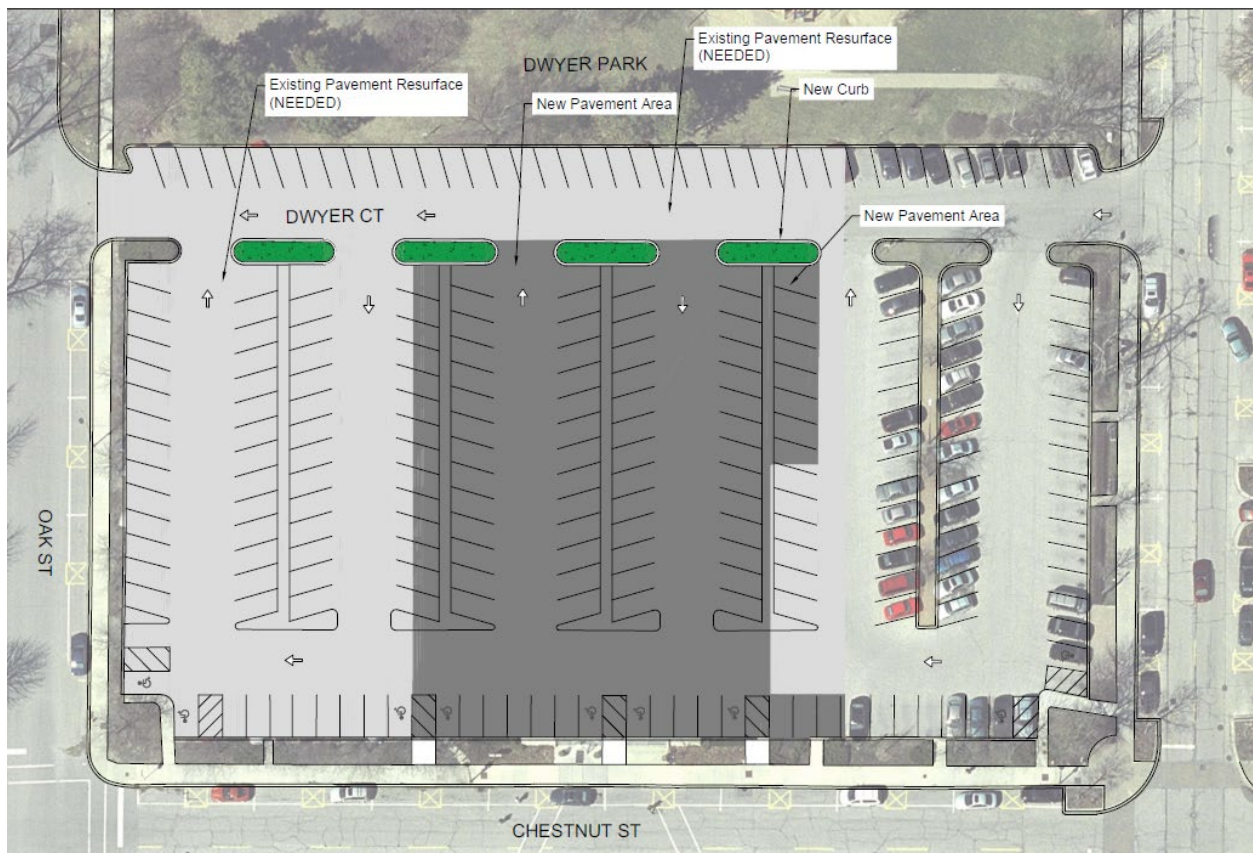


Option 1. Grass Island and Partial Parking

Post Office Demolition and Site Restoration
Conceptual - Cost Estimate for
Option 1 - Grass Island and Partial Parking

<u>Items</u>	<u>Budgetary Cost</u>	
Building Demolition	\$	175,000
Site Leveling - Clay Fill	\$	25,000
Site Restoration - Parking Area	\$	265,000
Electrical Cost - Lighting Improvement	\$	50,000
<i>Sub-Total</i>		\$ 515,000
Optional Resurfacing (South of Post Office)	\$	49,000
<i>Total Amount</i>		\$ 564,000
5% - Contingency		\$ 28,200.0
<i>Total Budget Amount</i>		\$ 592,200

Option 2. Full parking lot totaling 99 parking spaces within post office site footprint, an increase of 68 public parking spaces from the existing condition.



Option 2. Full Parking

Post Office Demolition and Site Restoration
Conceptual - Cost Estimate for
Option 2 - Full Parking Lot

<u>Items</u>	<u>Budgetary Cost</u>	
Building Demolition	\$	175,000
Site Leveling - Clay Fill	\$	25,000
Site Restoration - Parking Area	\$	600,000
Electrical Cost - Lighting Improvement	\$	67,500
<i>Sub-Total</i>		\$ 867,500
<i>5% - Contingency</i>		\$ 43,375.0
<i>Total Budget Amount</i>		\$ 910,875

In either option, building demolition and restoration could occur in 2026.

2025 CAUCUS SURVEY AND PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT OPTIONS

Winnetka Council Caucus (WCC) Survey. Earlier this year the WCC surveyed resident opinions about the ways in which they would like to be able to use this site in the future. The WCC offered the following insights and recommendations:

- Almost a quarter (24.3%) of residents prefer the space to be used for an outdoor park or a year-round communal space, and an additional 16.8% want a space to congregate with indoor/outdoor flexibility and space for kids to play. Taken together, this suggests that approximately 41% of residents want this space to become a place to congregate and/or be active.
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- Finally, with only 5.2% indicating interest in an indoor cultural space, ***the Village Council should not develop additional indoor cultural space at this site.*** Local theaters already exist, and the Winnetka Community House already features public art.

ENGAGEMENT OPTIONS

Option 1. Issue an RFP/RFQ for a landscape architecture or architectural firm to provide programming confirmation and conceptual design services for a public plaza outdoor gathering and performance space. If the Village Council feels that there is consensus about using the space for a purely public purpose staff would seek a designer with this expertise. A public engagement limited to the “placemaking” exercise of the design and programming of the public space should be part the project scope. Note that future construction of this option is likely to be completely financed by the Village, minus any grant funding that could be obtained.

Option 2. Contract a land use planning consultant to perform direct public engagement and analysis of options ranging from fully public gathering/open spaces to commercial or mixed-use developments that devote a portion of the site to public uses.

RECOMMENDATION

Following a presentation from staff and after hearing comments from the public, the Council is requested to provide policy direction regarding the options presented for demolition and site restoration of the existing site, and how to pursue public engagement and planning for this project.

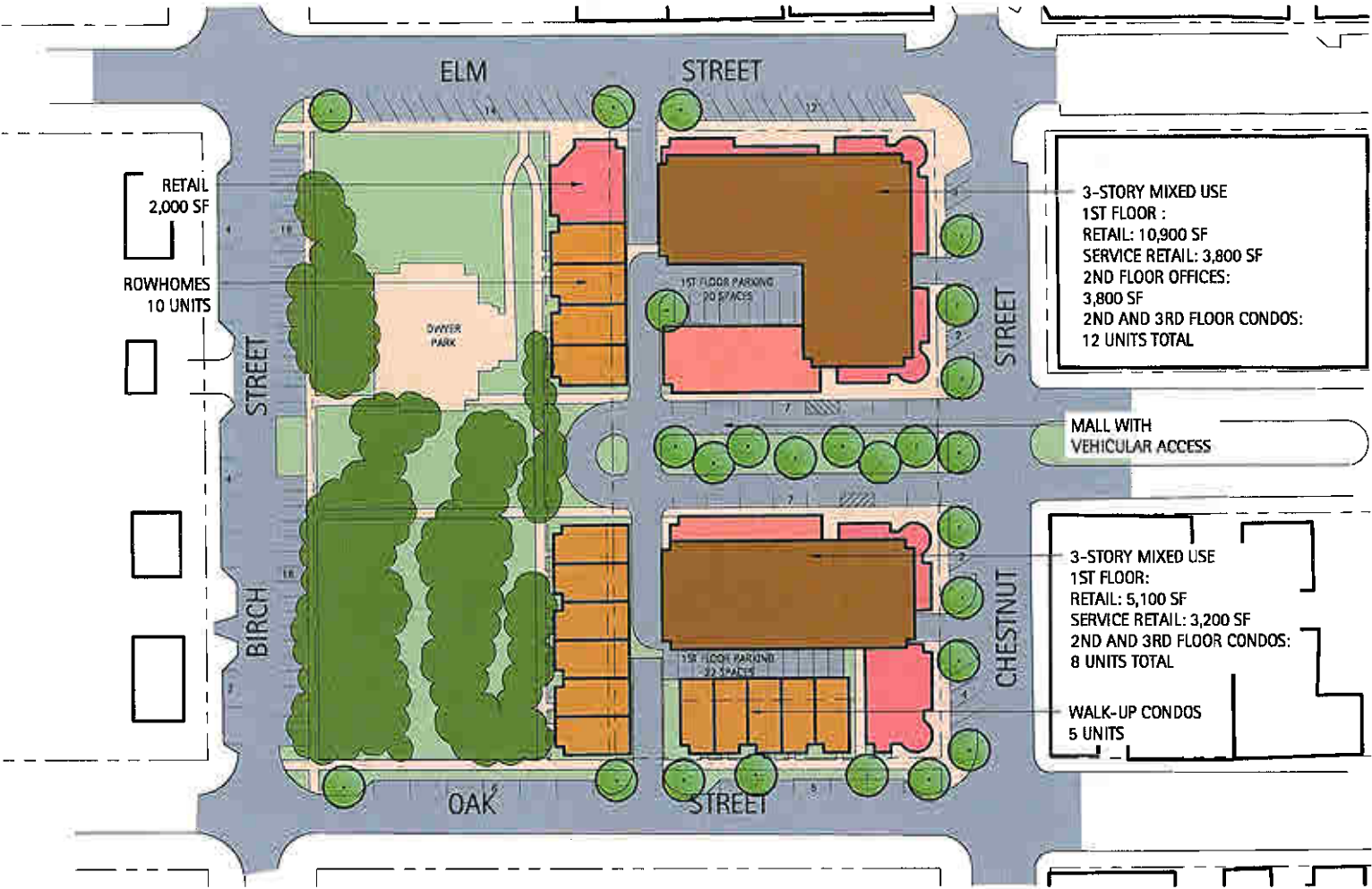
ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 2: Ad Hoc Post Office Committee Report, Excerpt (Site Plan Concept Designs)

Attachment 3: Winnetka Futures 2040 Comprehensive Plan, Excerpt (Pillars 2 and 3)

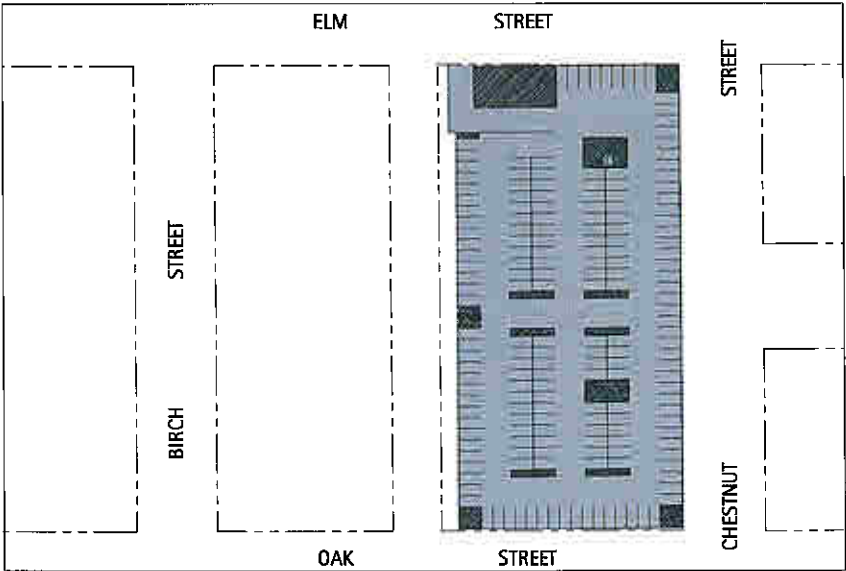
Attachment 4: 2016 Downtown Master Plan, Excerpt

Attachment 5: 2018 Winnetka Downtown Streetscape and Signage Plan, Excerpt



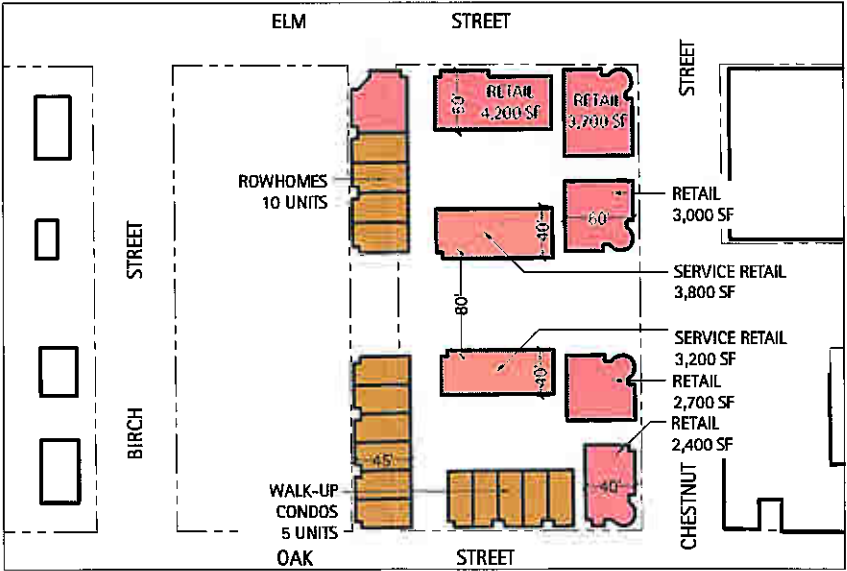
Overall Illustrative Plan

Scale: 1" = 100'-0"



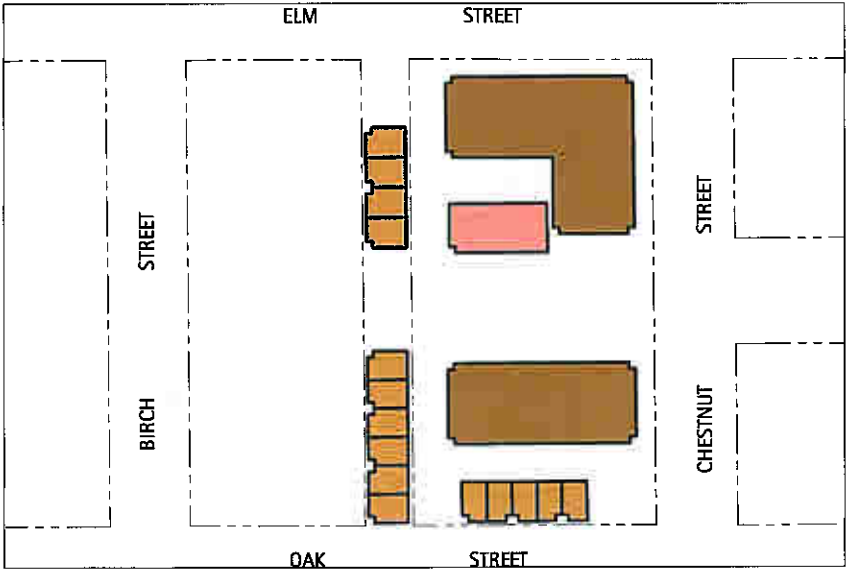
Underground Level

Scale: NTS



Ground Level

Scale: NTS



2nd + 3rd Floor Levels

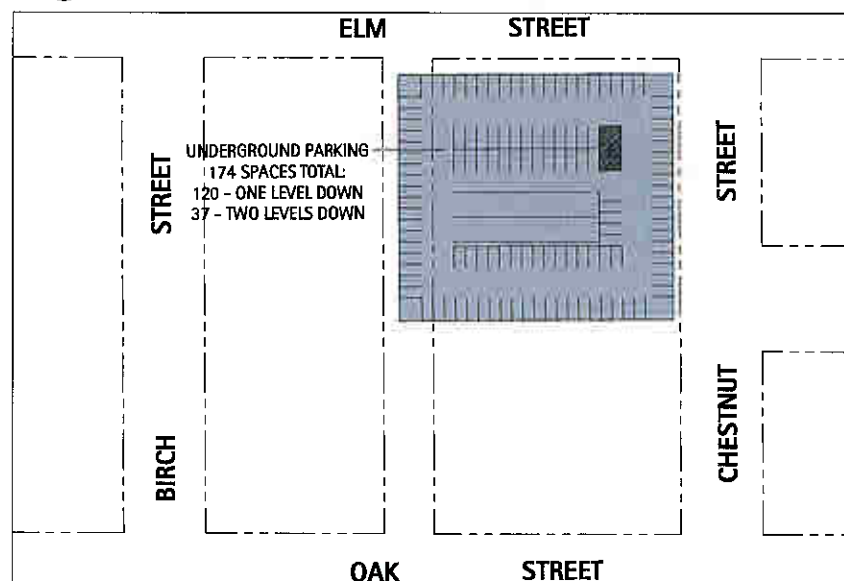
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SITE DATA		Plan w/ Additional Angled Parking
TOTAL SITE AREA:	2.02 Ac.	
USE	Plan as shown	
Retail	18,000 GSF	15,200 GSF
Office/Service Retail	10,800 GSF	9,300 GSF
Condominiums	20 UNITS	20 UNITS
Rowhomes	10 UNITS	9 UNITS
Walk-up Condominiums	5 UNITS	4 UNITS
PARKING DEMAND	CARS	
Village-Established		
Replacement	183	183
New Retail (4 cars/1000 sf)	72	61
New Office/Service (3 Cars/1000sf)	32	28
New Residential (2 cars/unit)	70	66
TOTAL DEMAND	357	338
PARKING SUPPLY	CARS	
On-Street	94	114
On-Site Surface	42	38
In-Building/ At-Grade	20	18
Underground Deck:		
One Level Down	170	168
Two Levels Down	31	0
TOTAL SUPPLY	357	338
Existing Open Space	1.21 Ac.	1.21 Ac.
Additional Open Space	0.10 Ac.	0.10 Ac.
Total Open Space	1.31 Ac. (40.6%)	1.31 Ac. (40.6%)
Density	17.3 DU/Ac.	16.3 DU/Ac.



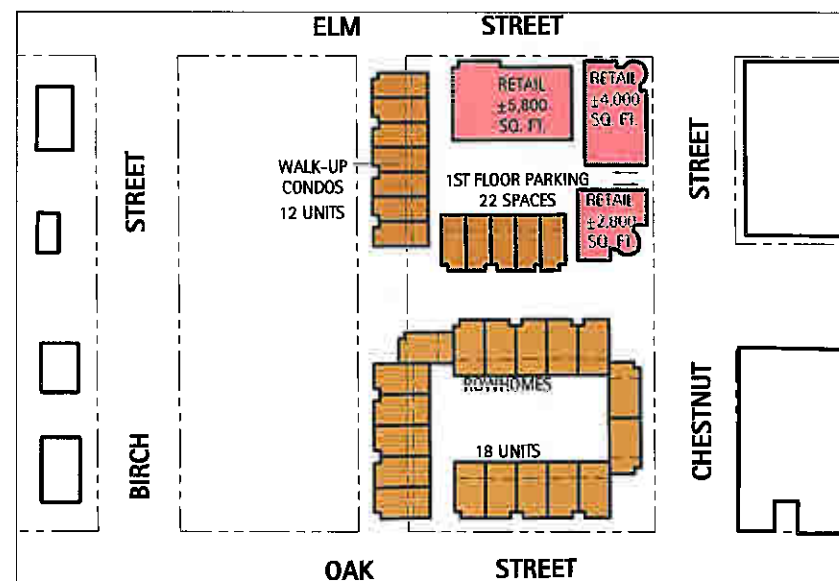
Overall Illustrative Plan

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Underground Level

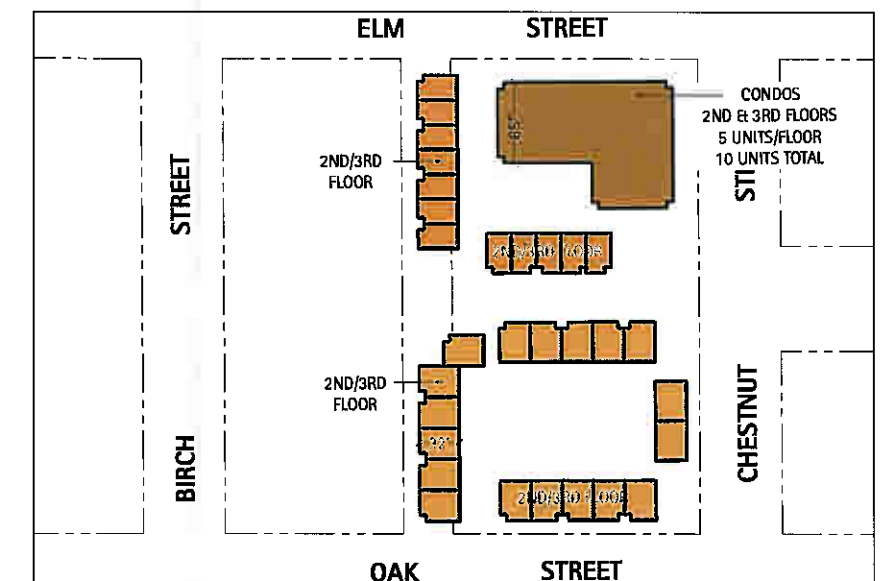
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Ground Level

Scale: NTS

SITE DATA		Plan w/ Additional
TOTAL SITE AREA:	2.02 Ac.	Angled Parking
USE		
Retail	12,600 GSF	10,800 GSF
Condominiums	10 UNITS	10 UNITS
Rowhomes	18 UNITS	16 UNITS
Walk-Up Condos	12 UNITS	11 UNITS
PARKING DEMAND		CARS
Village-Established		
Replacement	183	183
New Retail (4 cars/1000 sf)	50	43
New Residential (2 cars/unit)	80	74
TOTAL DEMAND	313	300
PARKING SUPPLY		CARS
On-Street	99	119
On-Site Surface	22	18
In-Building/At-Grade:	36	32
Underground Deck:		
One Level Down	120	100
Two Levels Down	36	31
TOTAL SUPPLY	313	300
Existing Open Space	1.21 Ac.	1.21 Ac.
Additional Open Space	0.29 Ac.	0.29 Ac.
Total Open Space	1.50 Ac. (46.4%)	1.50 Ac. (46.4%)
Density	20.3 DU/Ac.	18.3 DU/Ac.



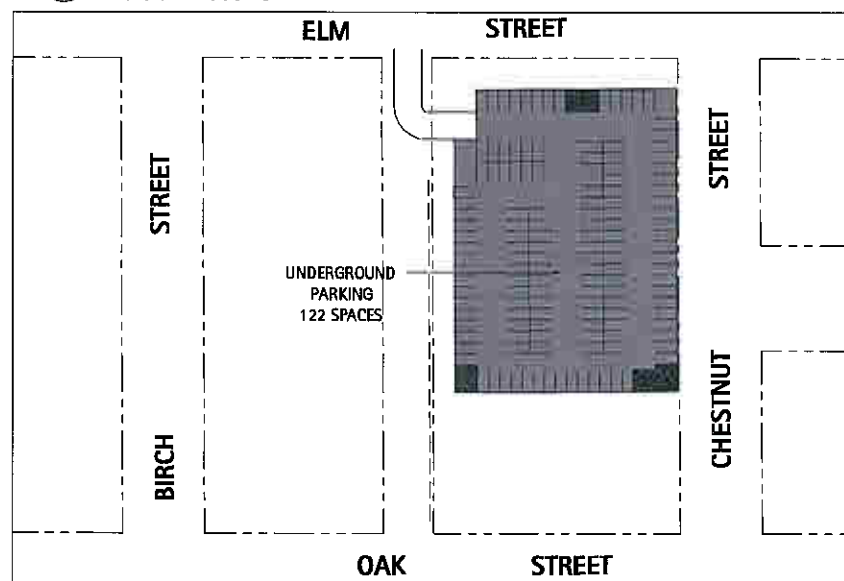
2nd + 3rd Floor Levels

Scale: NTS



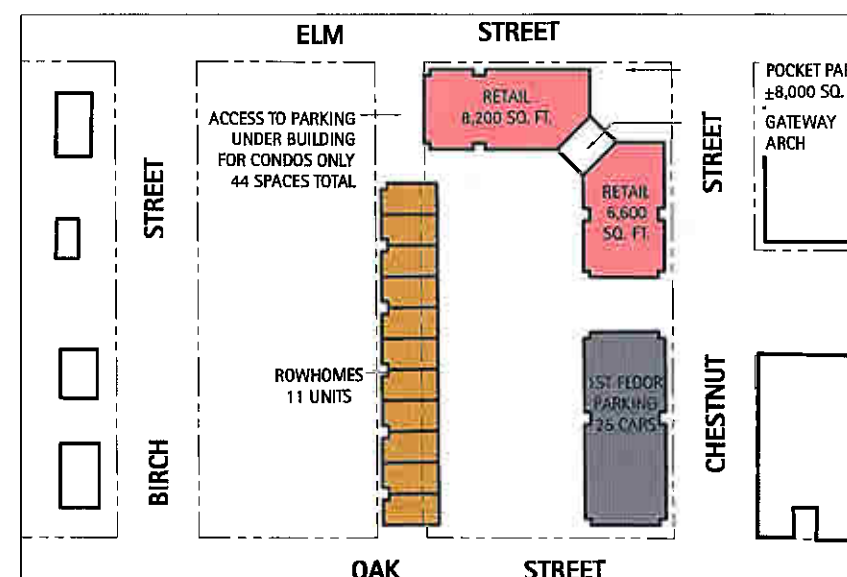
Overall Illustrative Plan

Scale: 1" = 100'-0"



Underground Level

Scale: NTS



Ground Level

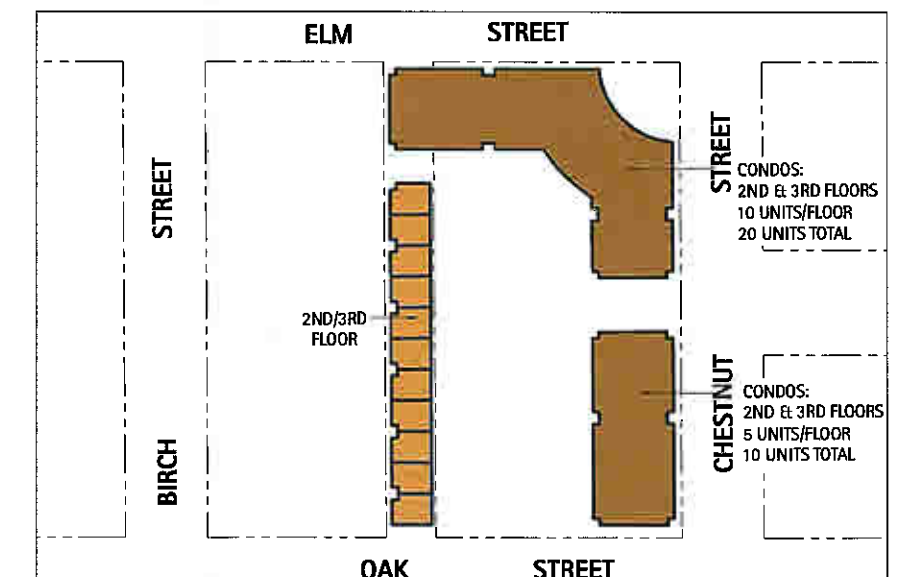
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SITE DATA		Plan w/ Additional Angled Parking
TOTAL SITE AREA: 2.02 Ac.		
USE		
Retail	14,800 GSF	13,000 GSF
Condominiums	30 UNITS	28 UNITS
Rowhomes	11 UNITS	11 UNITS

PARKING DEMAND		CARS
Village-Established		
Replacement	183	183
New Retail (4 cars/1000 sf)	59	52
New Residential (2 cars/unit)	82	78
TOTAL DEMAND	324	313

PARKING SUPPLY		CARS
On-Street		109
On-Site Surface		46
In-Building/ At-Grade		47
Underground Deck:		
One Level Down	122	107
TOTAL SUPPLY	324	313

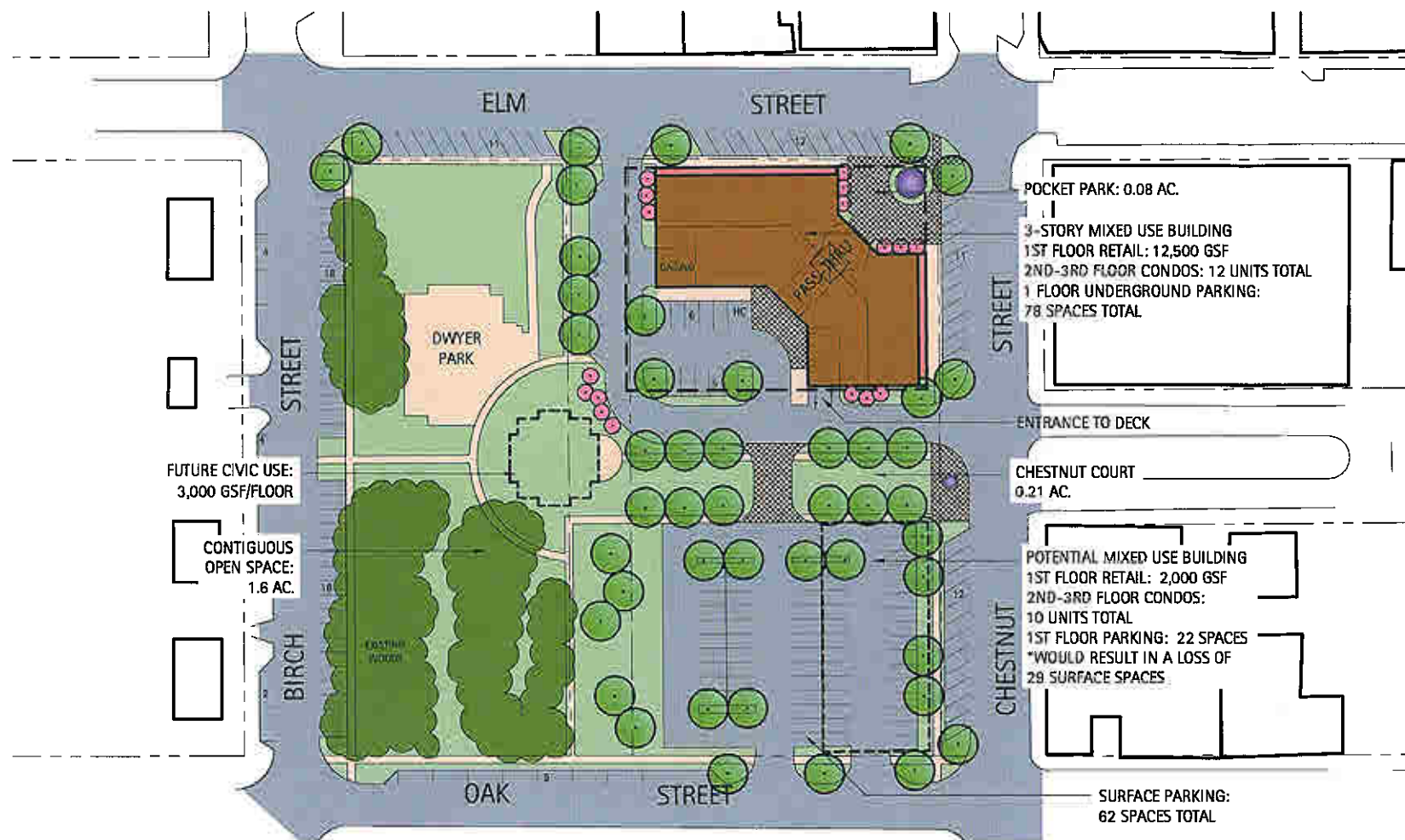
Existing Open Space	1.21 Ac.	1.21 Ac.
Additional Open Space	0.18 Ac.	0.18 Ac.
Total Open Space	1.39 Ac. (43.0%)	1.39 Ac. (43.0%)
Density	20.3 DU/Ac.	19.3 Ac.



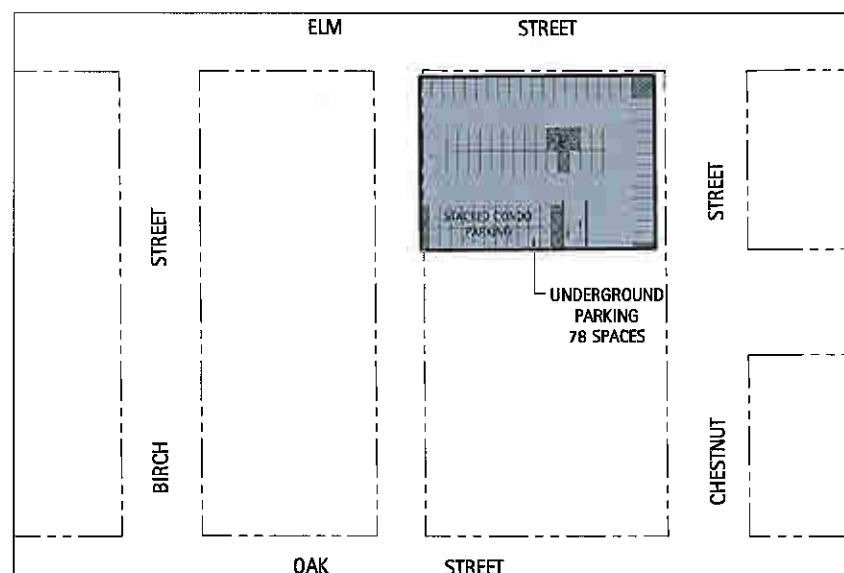
2nd + 3rd Floor Levels

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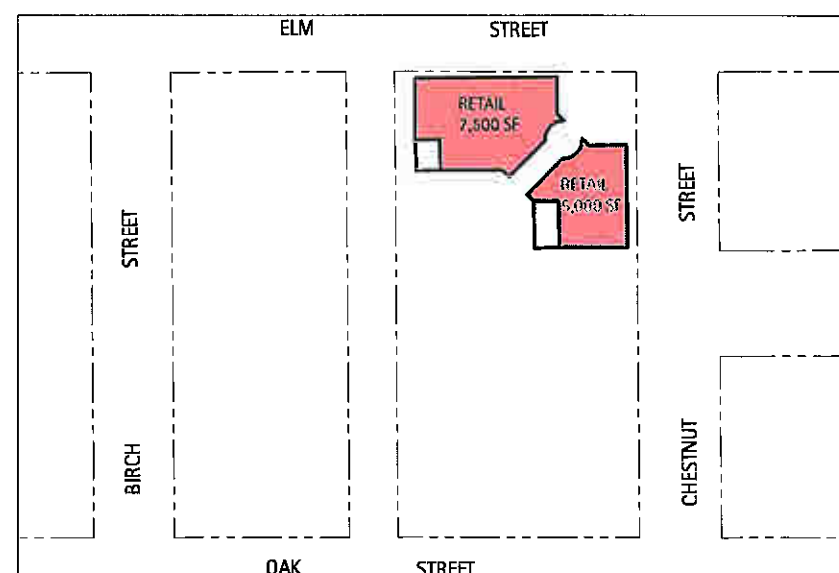




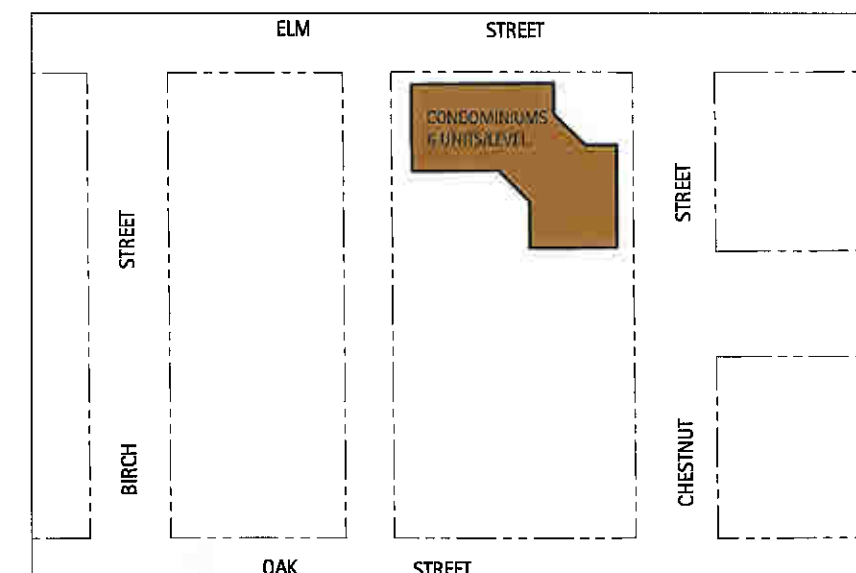
Overall Illustrative Plan
Scale: 1" = 100'-0"



Underground Level
Scale: NTS



Ground Level
Scale: NTS



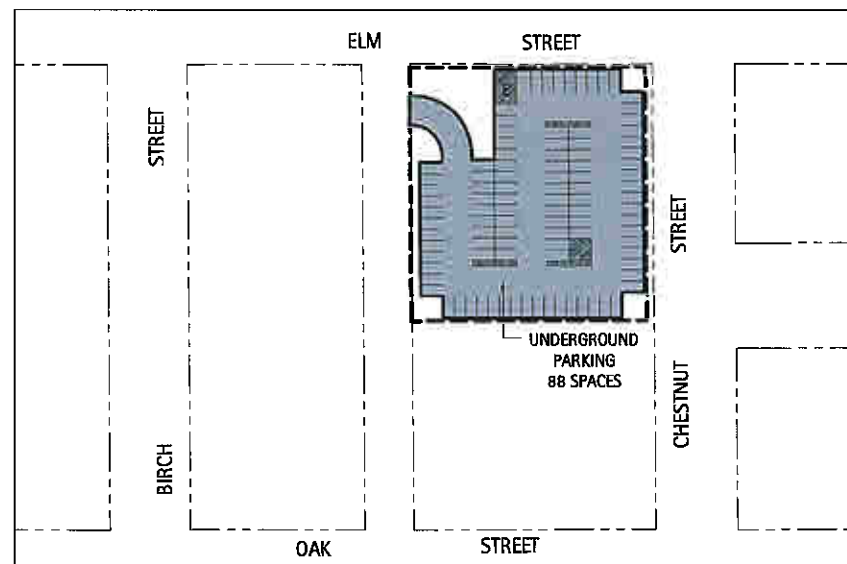
2nd + 3rd Floor Levels
Scale: NTS

SITE DATA		Plan w/ Additional Angled Parking
TOTAL SITE AREA:	2.02 Ac.	
USE	Plan as Shown	
Retail	12,500 GSF	10,700 GSF
Condominiums	12 UNITS	12 UNITS
Rowhomes	0 UNITS	0 UNITS
PARKING DEMAND		
Village-Established		
Replacement	183	183
New Retail (4 cars/1000 sf)	50	43
New Civic (4 cars/1000 sf)	0	0
New Residential (2 cars/unit)	24	24
TOTAL DEMAND	257	250
PARKING SUPPLY		
On-Street	101	121
On-Site Surface	78	72
In-Building/At-Grade	0	0
Underground Deck	78	57
TOTAL SUPPLY	257	250
Existing Open Space	1.21 Ac.	1.21 Ac.
Additional Open Space	0.55 Ac.	0.51 Ac.
Open Space*	1.76 Ac. (54.5%)	1.72 Ac. (53.3%)
Density	5.9 DU/Ac.	5.9 DU/Ac.
*Civic Building results in a loss of 0.07 Ac. of Open Space		



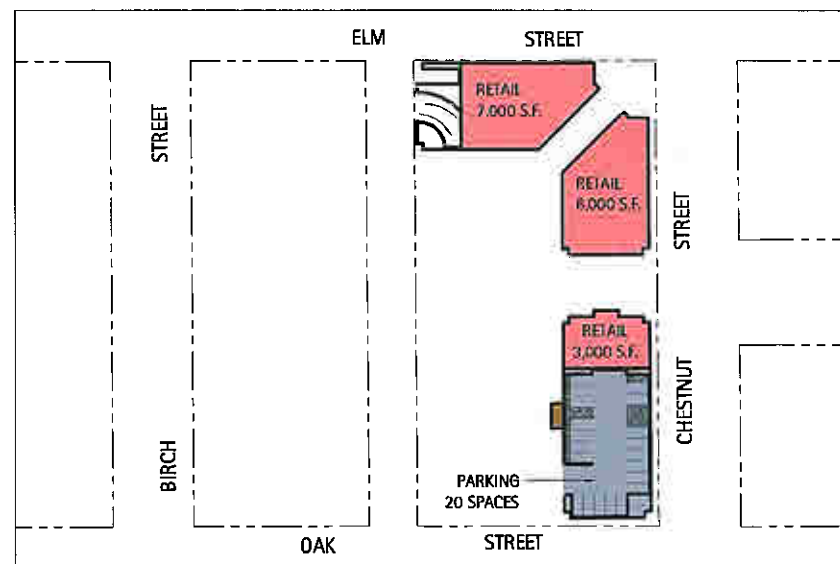
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Scale: 1" = 100'-0"



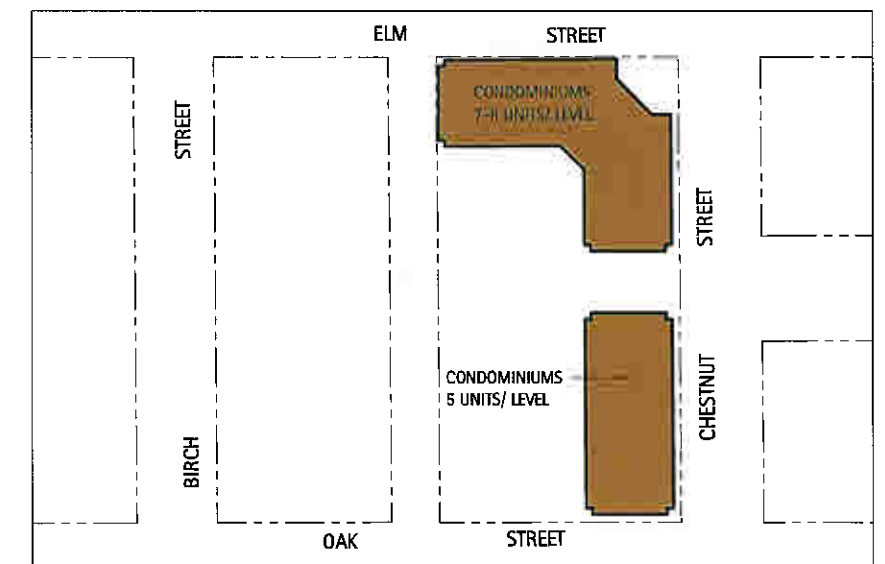
Underground Level

Scale: NTS



Ground Level

Scale: NTS



2nd + 3rd Floor Levels

Scale: NTS

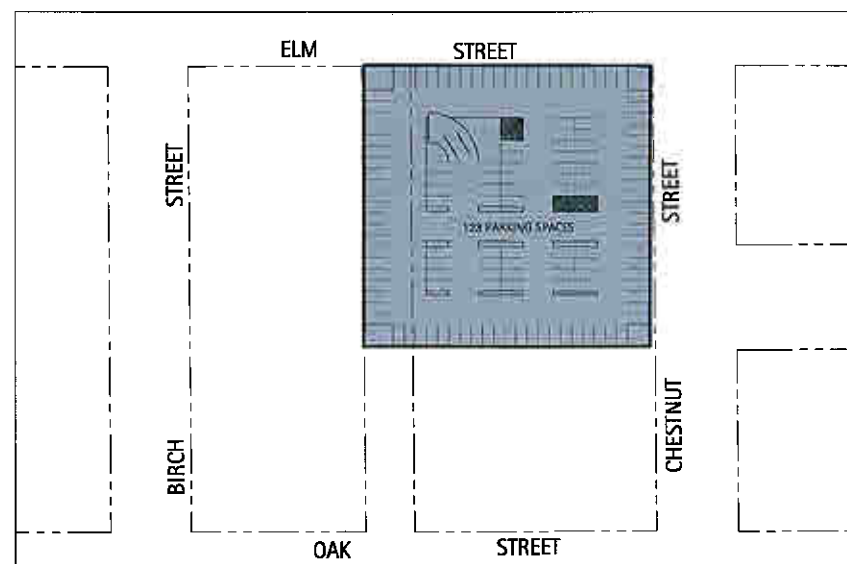
SITE DATA		Plan w/ Additional
TOTAL SITE AREA:	2.02 Ac.	Angled Parking
USE		
Retail	16,000 GSF	14,000 GSF
Condominiums	25 UNITS	25 UNITS
PARKING DEMAND		CARS
Village-Established		
Replacement	183	183
New Retail (4 cars/1000 sf)	64	56
New Residential (2 cars/unit)	50	50
TOTAL DEMAND	297	289
PARKING SUPPLY		CARS
On-Street	105	125
On-Site Surface	84	75
In-Building/At-Grade	20	20
Underground Deck	88	69
TOTAL SUPPLY	297	289
Existing Open Space	1.21 Ac.	1.21 Ac.
Additional Open Space	0.16 Ac.	0.16 Ac.
Total Open Space	1.37 Ac. (42.4%)	1.37 Ac. (42.4%)
Density	12.4 DU/Ac.	12.4 DU/Ac.





Overall Illustrative Plan

Scale: 1" = 100'-0"



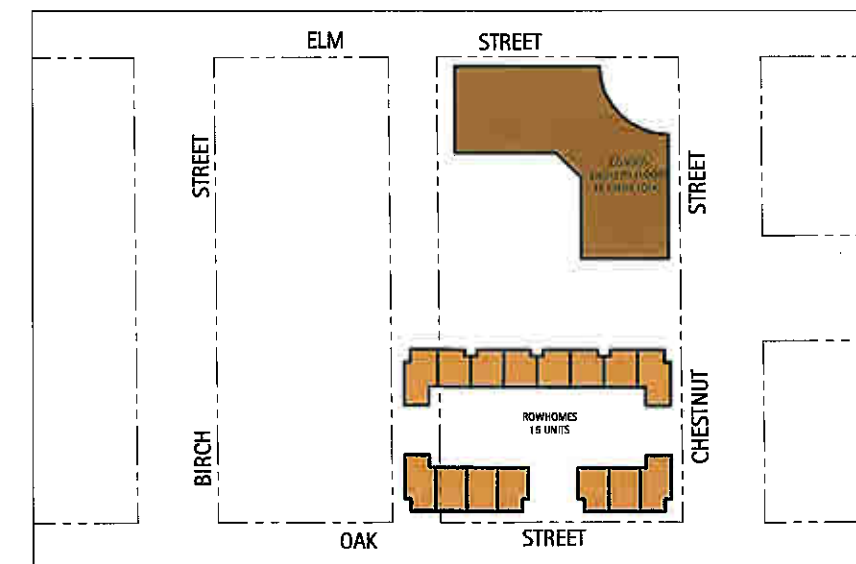
Underground Level

Scale: NTS



Ground Level

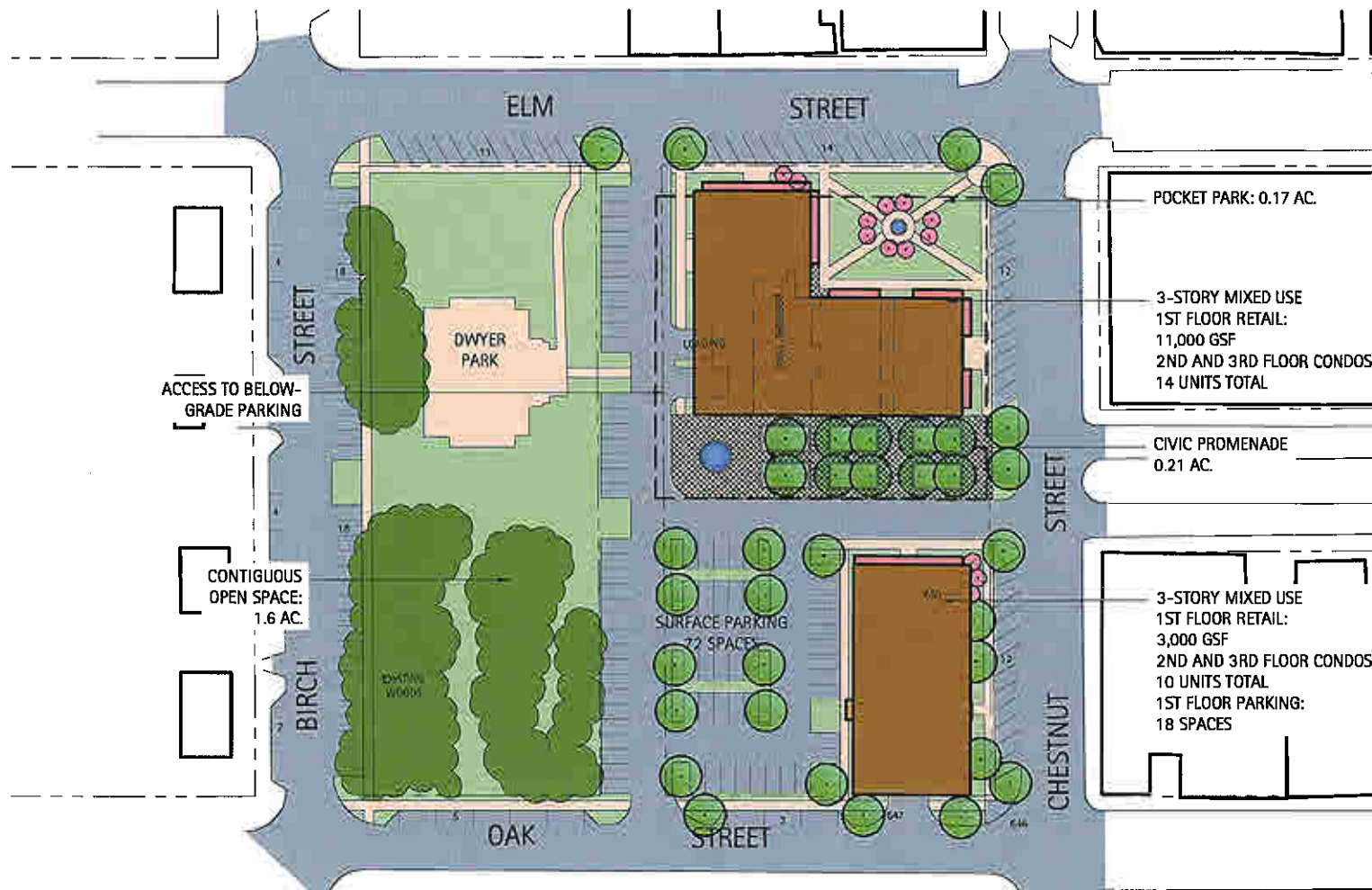
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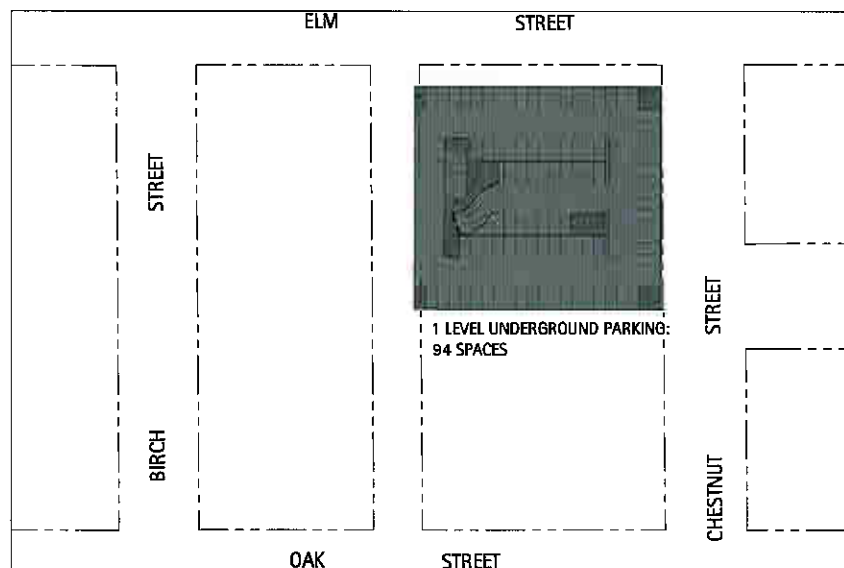
2nd + 3rd Floor Levels

Scale: NTS

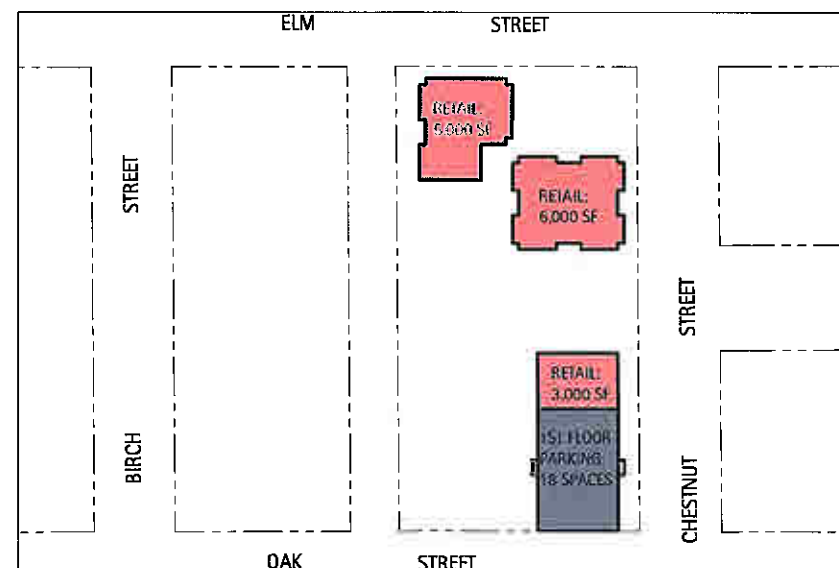
SITE DATA		Plan w/ Additional
TOTAL SITE AREA: 2.02 Ac.	Plan as Shown	Angled Parking
USE		
Retail	12,250 GSF	10,550 GSF
Condominiums	15 UNITS	14 UNITS
Rowhomes	15 UNITS	13 UNITS
PARKING DEMAND		
Village-Established		
Replacement	183	183
New Retail (4 cars/1000 sf)	49	42
New Residential (2 cars/unit)	60	54
TOTAL DEMAND	292	279
PARKING SUPPLY		
On-Street	109	129
On-Site Surface	30	16
In-Building/At-Grade	30	26
Underground Deck	123	108
TOTAL SUPPLY	292	279
Existing Open Space	1.21 Ac.	1.21 Ac.
Additional Open Space	0.15 Ac.	0.25 Ac.
Total Open Space	1.36 Ac. (42.1%)	1.46 Ac. (45.2%)
Density	14.9 DU/Ac.	13.4 DU/Ac.



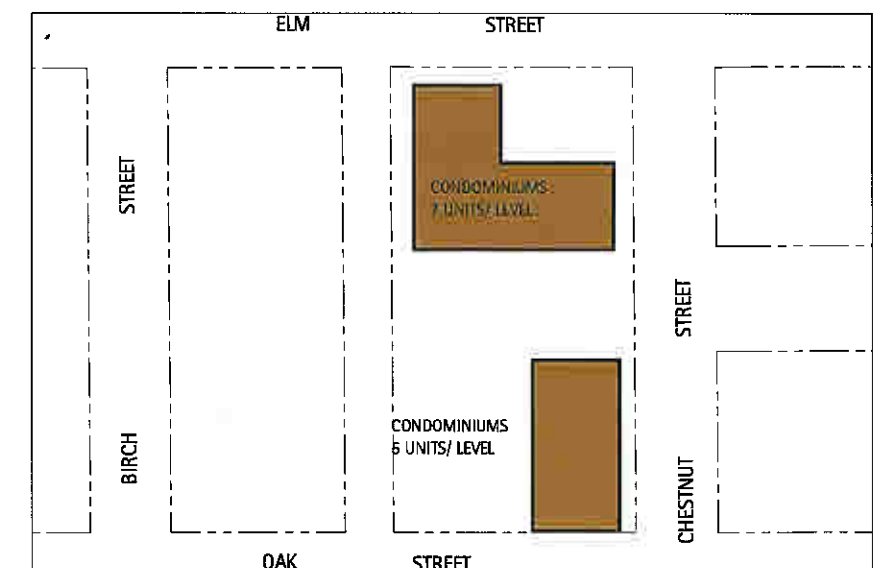
Overall Illustrative Plan
Scale: 1" = 100'-0"



Underground Level
Scale: NTS

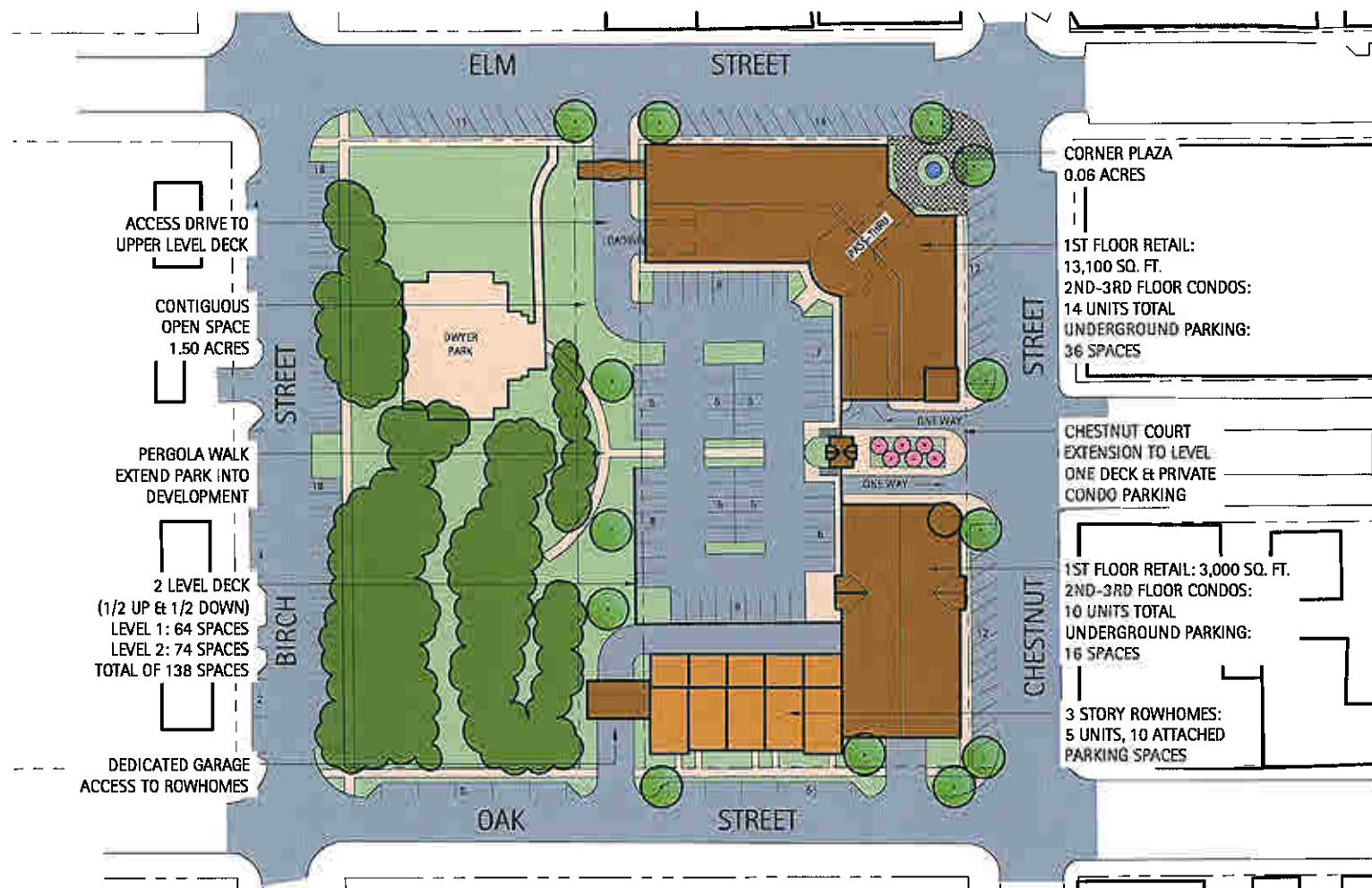


Ground Level
Scale: NTS



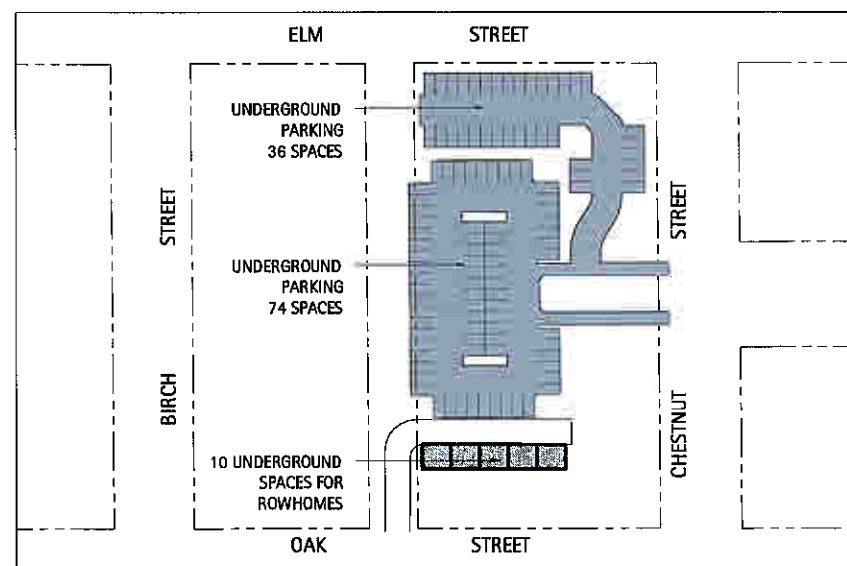
2nd + 3rd Floor Levels
Scale: NTS

SITE DATA		Plan w/ Additional Angled Parking
TOTAL SITE AREA:	2.02 Ac.	
USE	Plan as Shown	
Retail	14,000 GSF	12,200 GSF
Civic	0 GSF	0 GSF
Condominiums	24 UNITS	24 UNITS
Rowhomes*	0 UNITS	0 UNITS
PARKING DEMAND		
Village-Established		
Replacement	183	183
New Retail (4 cars/1000 sf)	56	49
New Civic (4 cars/1000 sf)	0	0
New Residential (2 cars/unit)	48	48
TOTAL DEMAND	287	280
PARKING SUPPLY		
On-Street	103	123
On-Site Surface	72	67
In-Building/At-Grade	18	18
Underground Deck	94	72
TOTAL SUPPLY	287	280
Existing Open Space	1.21 Ac.	1.21 Ac.
Additional Open Space	0.38 Ac.	0.34 Ac.
Open Space*	1.59 Ac. (49.2%)	1.55 Ac. (48.0%)
Density	11.9 DU/Ac.	11.9 DU/Ac.
*Civic Building results in a loss of 0.06 Ac. of Open Space		



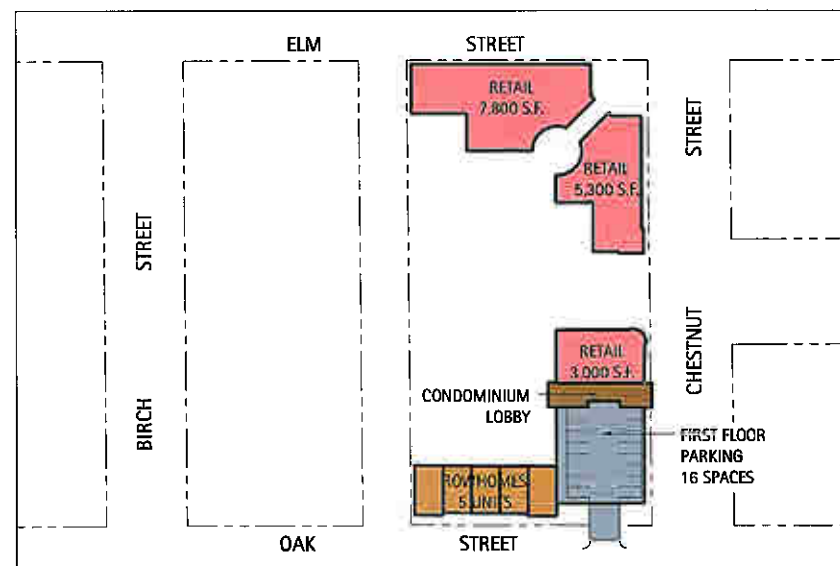
Overall Illustrative Plan

Scale: 1" = 100'-0"



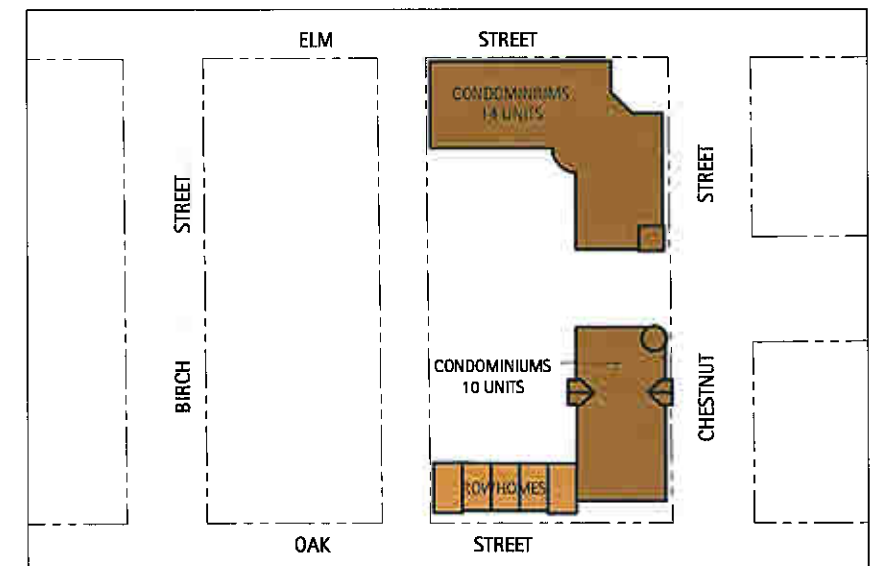
Underground Level

Scale: NTS



Ground Level

Scale: NTS

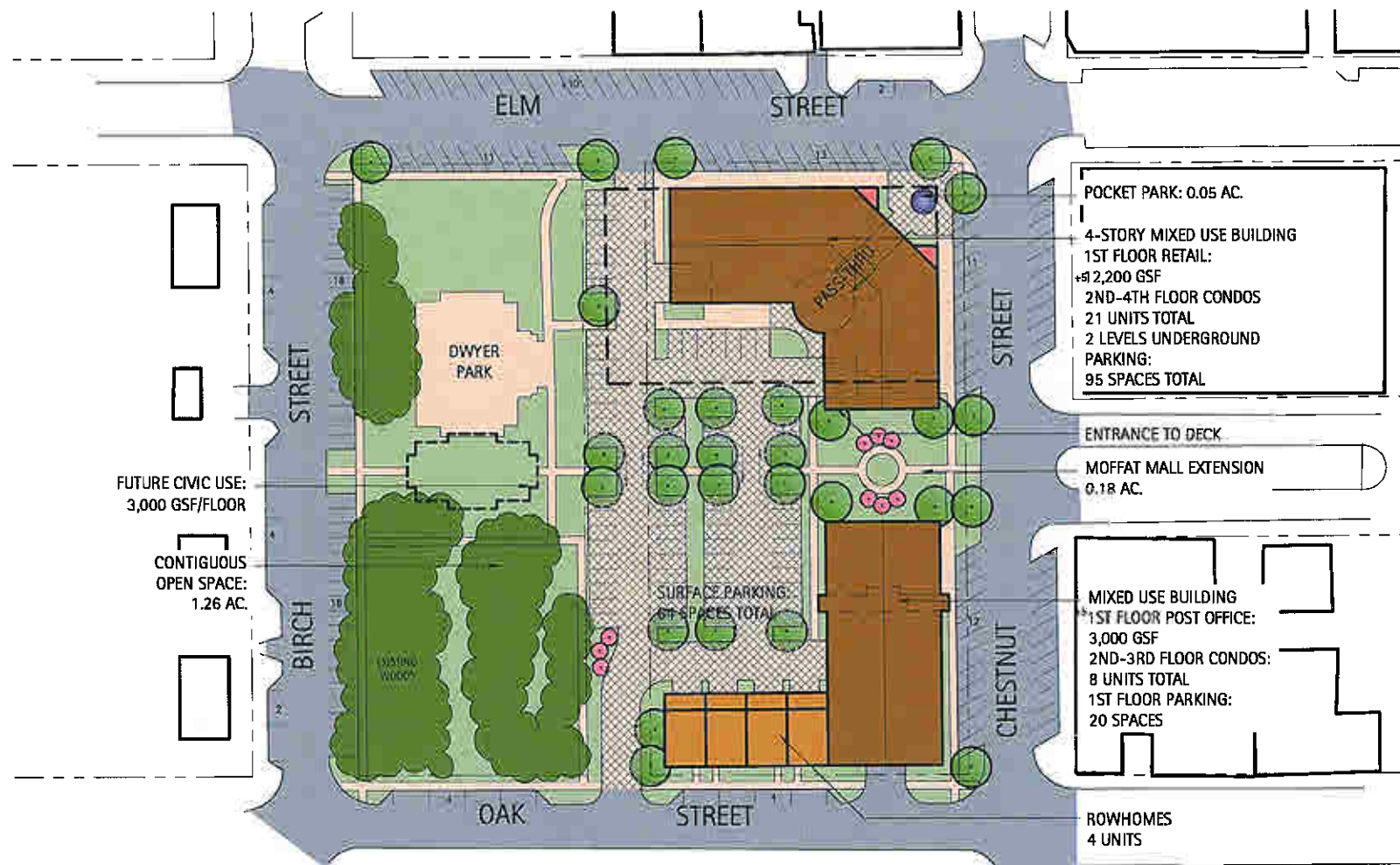


2nd + 3rd Floor Levels

Scale: NTS

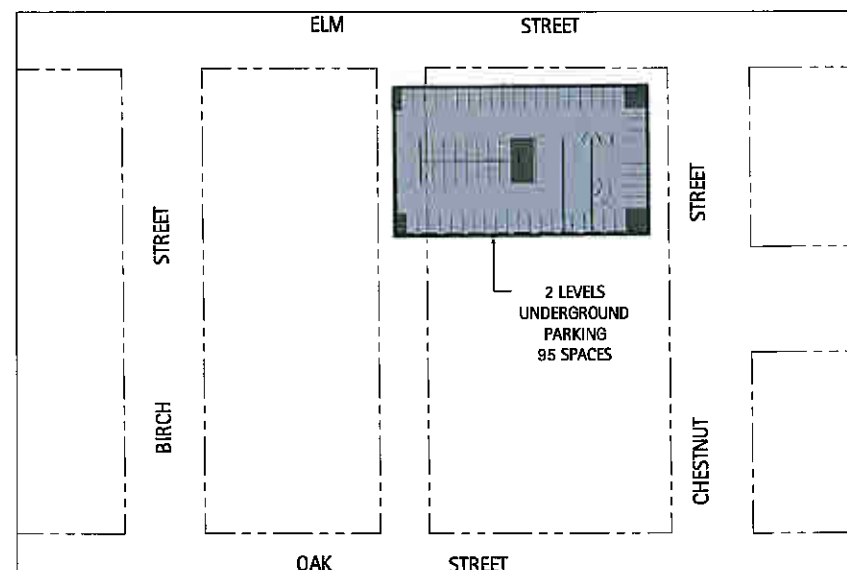
SITE DATA		Plan w/ Additional
TOTAL SITE AREA:	2.02 Ac.	Plan as Shown
USE		
Retail	16,100 GSF	14,400 GSF
Condominiums	24 UNITS	24 UNITS
Rowhomes	5 UNITS	4 UNITS
PARKING DEMAND		CARS
Village-Established		
Replacement	183	183
New Retail (4 cars/1000 sf)	64	58
New Residential (2 cars/unit)	58	56
TOTAL	305	297
PARKING SUPPLY		CARS
On-Street	105	125
Underground Deck	36	32
At-Grade/ In-Building	26	24
1/2 Above & 1/2 Below Deck	138	116
TOTAL	305	297
Existing Open Space	1.21 Ac.	1.21 Ac.
Additional Open Space	0.39 Ac.	0.34 Ac.
Total Open Space	1.60 Ac. (49.5%)	1.55 (48.0%)
Density	14.4 DU/Ac.	13.9 DU/Ac.





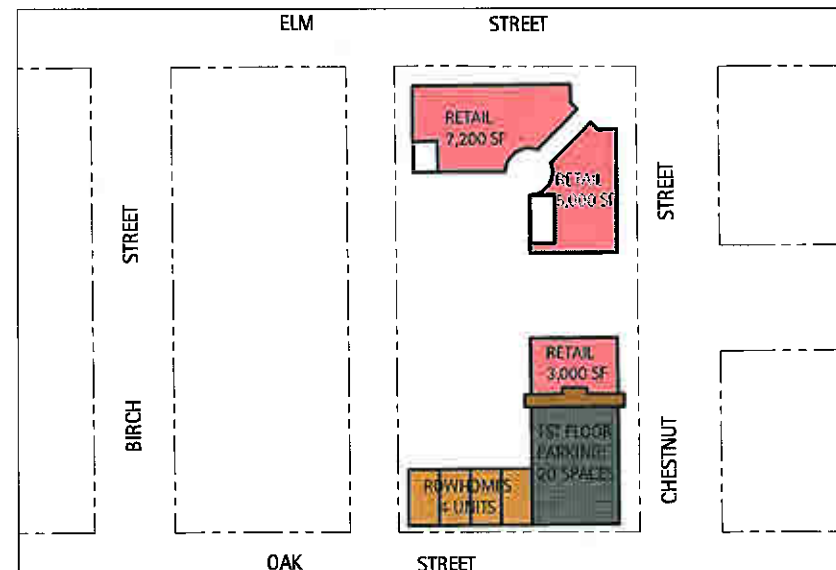
Overall Illustrative Plan

Scale: 1" = 100'-0"



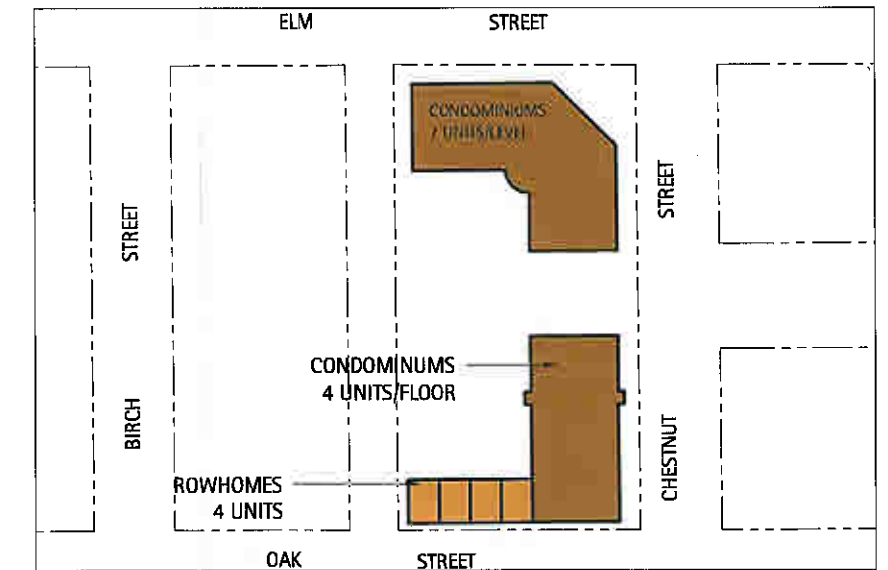
Underground Level

Scale: NTS



Ground Level

Scale: NTS



2nd + 3rd Floor Levels

Scale: NTS

SITE DATA
TOTAL SITE AREA: 2.02 Ac.

USE

Retail	15,200 GSF
Civic	0 GSF
Condominiums	29 UNITS
Rowhomes*	4 UNITS

PARKING DEMAND

	CARS
Village-Established	
Replacement	183
New Retail (4 cars/1000 sf)	61
New Civic (4 cars/1000 sf)	0
New Residential (2 cars/unit)	66
TOTAL DEMAND	310

PARKING SUPPLY

	CARS
On-Street	123
On-Site Surface	64
In-Building/At-Grade	28
Underground Deck	95
TOTAL SUPPLY	310

Existing Open Space	1.21 Ac.
Additional Open Space	0.36 Ac
Open Space*	1.57 Ac. (48.6%)
Density	16.3 DU/Ac.

*Civic Building results in a loss of 0.06 Ac. of Open Space





SITE DATA

TOTAL SITE AREA: 2.02 Ac.

USE

Retail	0 GSF
Condominiums	0 UNITS
Rowhomes	0 UNITS

PARKING DEMAND

	CARS
Village-Established Replacement	183
New Retail (4 cars/1000 sf)	0
New Civic (4 cars/1000 sf)	0
New Residential (2 cars/unit)	0

TOTAL DEMAND 183

PARKING SUPPLY

	CARS
On-Street	65
On-Site Surface*	145
In-Building/At-Grade	0
Underground Deck	0

TOTAL SUPPLY 210

Existing Open Space	1.21 Ac.
Additional Open Space	0.52 Ac
Open Space	1.73 Ac. (53.6%)
Density	0 DU/Ac.

*Could achieve additional 24 parking spaces on site by utilizing the additional 0.34 Ac. of open space shown on the plan.

Overall Illustrative Plan
Scale: 1" = 100'-0"



PILLAR 2

Vibrant Business Districts

VISION STATEMENT

“A community with a strong commitment to supporting and enhancing its unique, walkable, mixed-use business districts, which serve both as the community’s commercial cores and its social centers.”



PILLAR 2:

Vibrant Business Districts

Vision Statement: A community with a strong commitment to supporting and enhancing its unique, walkable, mixed-use business districts, which serve both as the community’s commercial and social centers.

Goal 2.1: The Village will continue to provide a future vision for its commercial districts.
Goal 2.2: The Village will provide zoning and development regulations and processes that allow land uses offering the products, services, and housing opportunities that residents desire. Such uses should be permitted in the most timely manner, while also ensuring compatibility with goals of the district in which they would locate.
Goal 2.3: The Village will continue to encourage the highest-quality design, materials, and maintenance for building exteriors, landscaping, and signage in the commercial districts and along the Green Bay Road corridor.
Goal 2.4: The Village will provide a business environment focused on retaining successful existing businesses, attracting businesses to the community that meet a market need, and assisting start-up business through local permitting and licensing processes.
Goal 2.5: The Village will partner with others to provide public infrastructure to support vibrant business districts.
Goal 2.6: The Village will partner with the Chamber of Commerce, Winnetka merchant groups, and other community organizations to promote and market Winnetka businesses and community events, and to let the region know of the community as a niche retail, dining, and event destination.

Winnetka Futures 2040 Plan includes ten Community Pillars. The following section describes Winnetka’s vision for **Pillar 2: Vibrant Business Districts**. A summary of the existing conditions analysis along with community input received over the course of the process are shared in the next few pages. Following that is a list of actionable initiatives for each of the goals listed above.

Note that the order of goals and initiatives does not reflect their level of priority.

Retail Assessment



NATIONAL TRENDS

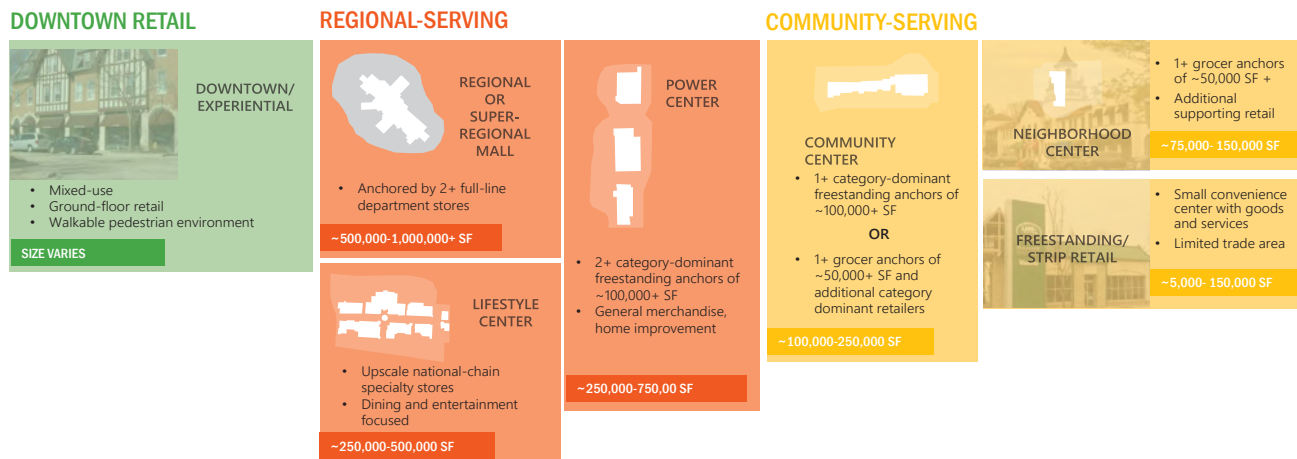
Winnetka's retail clusters compete with nearby downtowns and auto-oriented retail clusters.

Retail clusters can be categorized into three major typologies: Downtown Retail, Regional-Serving, and Community-Serving (Figure 24). Typologies differ based on scale, number and type of anchors, and size of trade area. Hubbard Woods and Elm Street can be categorized as Downtown Retail, while the Indian Hill retail cluster more closely aligns with Community-Serving Retail (Freestanding / Strip Retail). Retail in the Village competes with other nearby downtowns, such as Wilmette, and nearby auto-oriented retail clusters including Plaza del Lago, Edens Plaza, Northfield, and the Westfield Old Orchard Mall.

Village retail is well-positioned to accommodate the rise of experiential retail.

A rapidly-shifting retail landscape is altering traditional drivers-of-retail demand. As e-commerce continues to grow, many traditional and big box retailers are downsizing their store footprints. Concurrently, there has been significant new demand for value- and convenience-oriented retailers, which have continued to expand throughout the country. A "clicks-to-bricks" trend among some retailers that were formerly online-only has seen the establishment of a brick-and-mortar presence. Furthermore, the growth of experiential and food-and-beverage destination retail is driving demand. Value and convenience-oriented retailers are not well-suited for Winnetka. However, the shift toward experiential retail, and food and beverage, provides an opportunity for Winnetka's retail nodes to expand current offerings.

FIGURE 24: RETAIL TYPOLOGIES



The pandemic accelerated trends already underway in the retail landscape, most prominently fast-tracking the shift towards e-commerce nationally. However, Winnetka retailers have been resilient. Experiential retail and food-and-beverage operators developed creative service-delivery models to continue operations.

Many Winnetka retailers also offer unique experiences that can't be replicated through e-commerce. Despite a challenging retail environment nationally, the Village reported a net increase of 21 new or expanded storefronts from March 2020 to November 2021. Many new retailers can be characterized as local, non-chain retailers unique to Winnetka. The largest share of opening retailers were restaurants, some of which attract both local and regional patrons.

IMPACT OF E-COMMERCE AND OMNI-CHANNEL

A shift toward online shopping is slowing brick-and-mortar retail development.

The rise of e-commerce (Figure 25 and Figure 26') has reduced overall demand for retail square footage over time, and changed the way retailers use brick-and-mortar space. E-commerce has given rise to the growth of omni-channel retail, where retailers rent space as a showroom or as a fulfillment center to complete in-store pickups and returns.

The rise of e-commerce and omni-channel retail may threaten some of Winnetka's retail establishments.

Winnetka currently has a significant number of clothing and miscellaneous retail stores, categories which are among the highest annual rates of e-commerce growth.

FIGURE 25: E-COMMERCE AS A PERCENT OF TOTAL SALES NATIONALLY

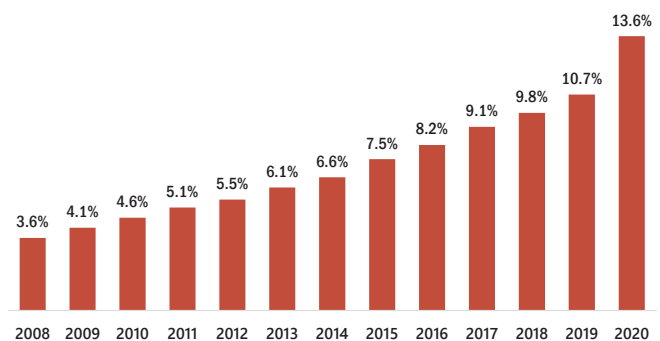
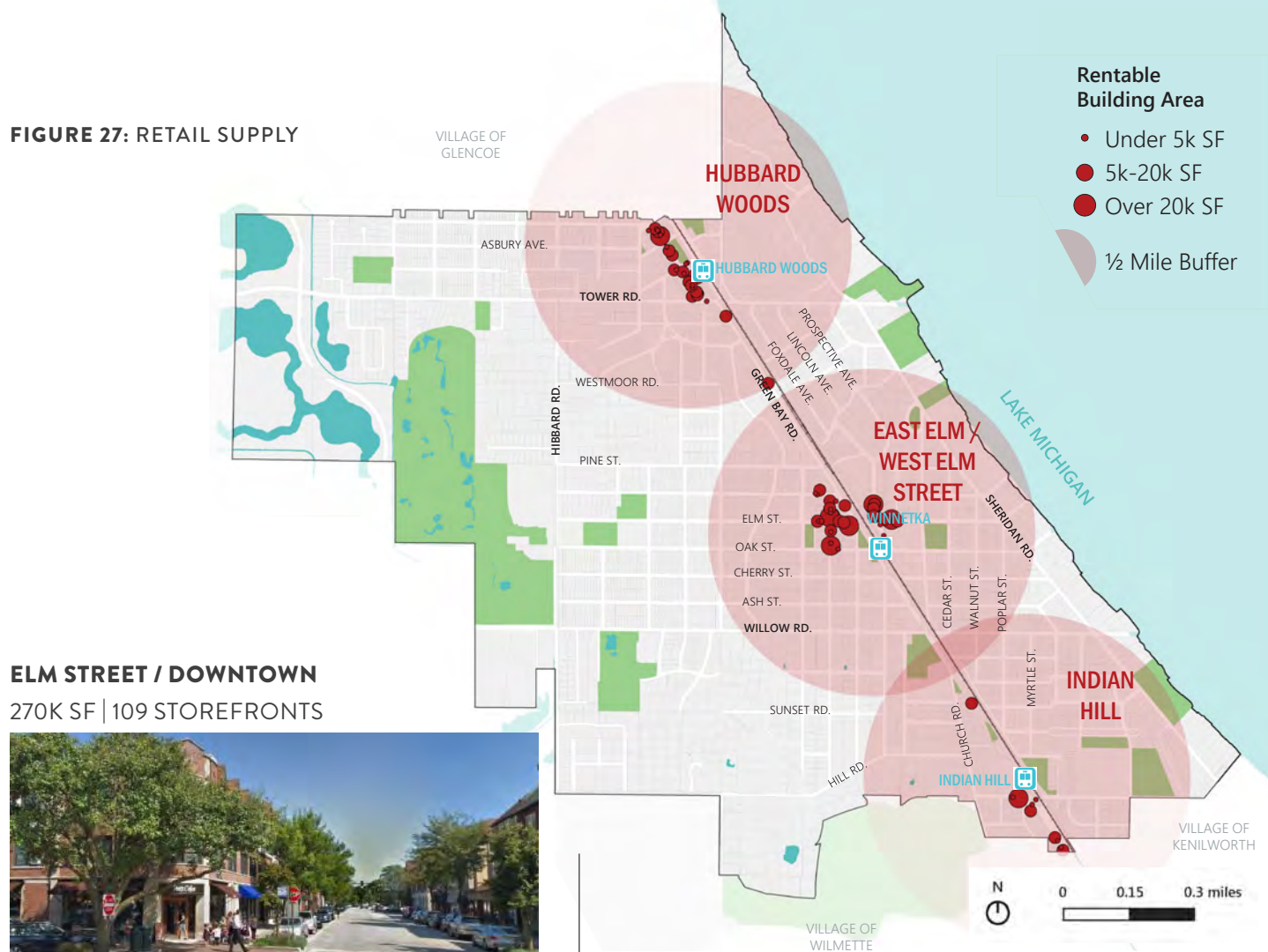


FIGURE 26: E-COMMERCE AVERAGE ANNUAL GROWTH RATE: TOP RETAIL CATEGORIES (NATIONAL)



1. Source: CNBC; US BLS; Estimated Quarterly U.S. Retail Sales (Not Adjusted): Total and E-commerce. Estimates are based on data from the Monthly Retail Trade Survey and administrative records for fourth quarter of each year.

FIGURE 27: RETAIL SUPPLY



EXISTING RETAIL SUPPLY

Winnetka's retail inventory is located entirely within 1/2 mile of each Metra station, and each retail cluster has a different character, use mix, and performance (Figure 27¹). However, across all three clusters, retail is predominantly in older, sometimes historic, single- or two-story buildings. The historic building character provides a unique sense of place, although retail tenants and landlords alike find the small spaces challenging and expensive to operate. The older buildings often include irregular spaces, and many require significant interior improvements to be fully operational.

1. Source: Google Maps, CoStar (data downloaded on 9/29/2021), Winnetka Q3 2021 Vacancy Report, SB Friedman

VILLAGE RETAIL TRENDS

Since 2009, retail rents in the Village have ranged from \$25-40 per square foot on average (triple net) (Figure 28¹). Historically, Hubbard Woods commanded the highest rents in the Village; however **Elm Street retail rents have surpassed Hubbard Woods since 2017**. Elm Street has also consistently had the lowest vacancy rate (Figure 29²).

Indian Hill has the smallest inventory, significantly higher vacancy, and lower rents than the other two clusters.

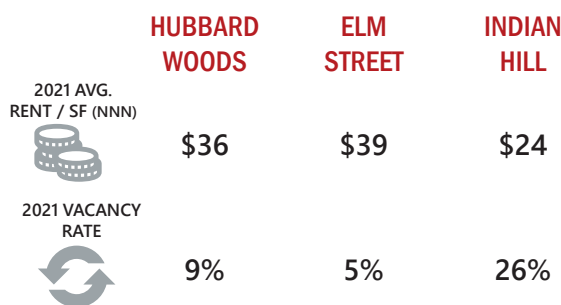


FIGURE 28: AVERAGE ANNUAL RENT

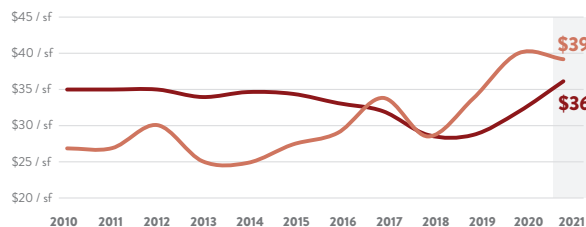
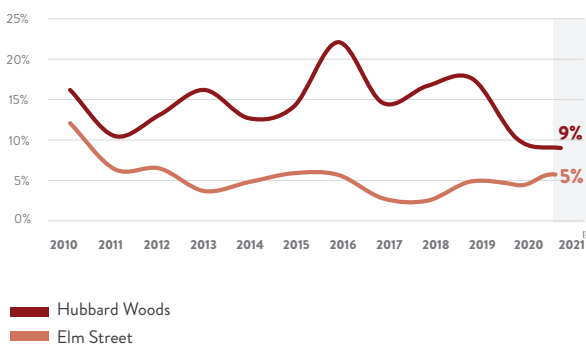


FIGURE 29: AVERAGE VACANCY RATE



1. Indian Hill historic data not available. Source: CoStar (data downloaded on 1/29/2020), SB Friedman, Winnetka Q4 2019 Retail Report.

2. Current vacancy rates as indicated in Winnetka Q3 2021 Retail Report. Historic data is reported by CoStar and Winnetka Retail Reports Q2 2020 – Q3 2021

COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS

BUSINESS OWNERS

A small group of Winnetka business owners gathered on February 12, 2020 and again on October 14, 2021 for a focus group discussion. Key themes that came out of those discussions are summarized below:

Vibrancy

Business owners feel that surrounding community business districts are more vibrant than Winnetka. New businesses are choosing Wilmette, as it feels more urban. Participants felt Wilmette, Glencoe and Highland Park all have a 'vibe' that Winnetka is missing. Winnetka needs to find its niche and become a destination. Current businesses with niche markets in Winnetka are expanding, while some of the older businesses are struggling to compete with online shopping. Local businesses have found that they cannot survive on Winnetka residents alone: they require shoppers from outside of the Village to be sustainable. Mino's and Spirit Elephant are examples of restaurants in Winnetka that serve as regional destinations, attracting customers from a broader area. Business owners also felt that supporting more pop-up shops in vacant storefronts could help add to that vibrancy, as would encouraging more nightlife.

Development

New development in the business districts could bring much needed vibrancy to the area and bring more people into the downtown. The success of One Winnetka or development of the post office site would benefit local businesses, bringing more foot traffic to the area and indicating that the Village is able to attract substantial new investment. Additional residential development in the downtown would help support the business districts: new units and greater diversity of the existing housing stock will allow for a broader range of residents and shoppers to add vibrancy to the business districts.

Connectivity

Participants recognized the three separate business districts in the Village have their own issues, but suggested that making them feel more cohesive would be beneficial. Green Bay Road is the spine that connects these districts: business owners felt more could be done to seamlessly connect these districts and make it more walkable and inviting. Neighboring communities have accomplished this through a transfer of ownership from IDOT (Illinois Department of Transportation), a tactic the Village has considered.

Policy

Business owners have the perception that the Village does not make it easy for businesses to thrive, particularly given the changing retail environment. There is also concern over lack of business representation related to improvements in the business districts. Multiple participants mentioned special use permit fees as inhibitive to attracting new businesses, particularly those without existing connections to the Village. There is a need for more flexibility in the zoning code, allowing more flexibility in storefront designs and parking standards. Policy tools that could combat rising rent levels for businesses are also of interest. One suggestion was to fine landlords for properties kept vacant for an extended period of time, thereby encouraging owners to rent the spaces.

RETAIL ENVIRONMENT

The questions below were asked at the October 20, 2021 Community Open House.

How often do you visit the Village's three commercial districts?

- » **Elm Street / Downtown** - The majority of participants indicated that they visit downtown Winnetka weekly. Some indicated that they visit daily and others, monthly. The feedback was mainly provided by empty nesters and young seniors (ages 55 - 74).
- » **Hubbard Woods** - Similarly, the majority of participants indicated that they visit Hubbard Woods weekly. Some indicated that they visit daily. The feedback was mainly provided by empty nesters and young seniors (ages 55 - 74).
- » **Indian Hill** - Participants representing empty nesters and young seniors (ages 55 - 74) indicated that they almost never visit Indian Hill. A few young families (ages 20 - 35) indicated that they visit Indian Hill weekly.

What brings you to Winnetka's commercial districts?

While responses varied, the main reason that participants visit the commercial districts was the local businesses. Restaurants, coffee shops, grocery stores, banks, post office visits, book stores, and doctor office visits were all popular responses. Participants ages 35 to 75 provided the most feedback.

What types of stores, restaurants, or services would bring you to Winnetka's commercial district more often?

A wide range of options were provided by participants, with a hardware store being the most popular vote. Other options included a deli, entertainment, local bar/pub, food court, drug store, and bakery. The largest demographic group that provided feedback was empty nesters and young seniors (ages 55 - 74), followed by family years (ages 35 - 54). A large chain supermarket was mentioned by young professionals and young families (ages 20 - 34).

What discourages you from visiting Winnetka's commercial district more often?

There were limited responses to this question, but parking and parking time limits were mentioned in four of the six responses. A lack of variety and limited options were also mentioned. Empty nesters and young seniors (ages 55 - 74) provided the most feedback.



Spirit Elephant, Winnetka



Pomeroy, Winnetka

RECENT IMPROVEMENTS

The aging retail inventory in the Village requires varying levels of improvement to remain viable as tenants turn over. Recent retail improvements¹ in Winnetka include the 2009 development of 910 Green Bay Road, a retail/office building in the Hubbard Woods cluster, which is currently occupied by several retailers. In 2017, a former gas station within the Elm Street cluster was rehabbed into Fred's Garage restaurant.

Over the past two years, multiple storefronts have changed over to new concepts or ownership. While most retail turnover in the Village has seen similar retail typologies opening in the closed storefronts, there have been several cases of storefronts transforming to other typologies. 921 Green Bay Road, for example, transformed from an antique mall to a popular cafe/event space.

The Village has seen a number of new restaurants open in recent years. In addition to Fred's Garage, other new restaurants include Mino's, 501 Local, Jimoto, Towne & Oak, Tocco, Pomeroy, Soupicurean, Hometown Coffee & Juice, La Taquiza, Spirit Elephant, Little Honeycomb, and Guanajuato Mexican Restaurant.

The Village has seen the expansion of a number of high-end women's clothing stores, including neapolitan, Valentina, and Bunny & Babe, to name a few.

The limited availability of privately-owned vacant land limits the overall development opportunities in the Village. Recent changes to the retail landscape demonstrate how creative solutions are often necessary to repurpose existing space, attract new users, or develop new retail space.

50+

**Businesses opened since January of 2020.
Additional businesses have relocated or
expanded as well.**

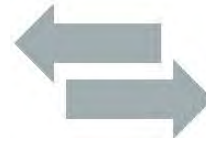
1. Chicago Tribune, CoStar (downloaded 9/29/2021), SB Friedman, Winnetka

KEY DEMAND CONSIDERATIONS



POPULATION AND EMPLOYMENT INCREASE

Local population and employment growth drive baseline demand for additional retail square footage. Increases in Village employees and population (per CMAP projections), could drive additional demand for downtown retail centers.



SALES LEAKAGES

Retail tenants in Winnetka compete with other retail supply in nearby peer communities. Winnetka has an opportunity to capture dollars currently being spent in other Village downtowns and nearby shopping centers that may have a more diverse retail mix.



EXPERIENCE-ORIENTED RETAIL GROWTH

The growth in experience-oriented retail, such as entertainment and food and beverage retailers, drive growth for new retail space. These experience-oriented retail tenants often have different space needs compared to traditional retailers (e.g. a walkable, urban setting).



Good Grapes, Winnetka



La Taquiza, Winnetka



Bratschi, Winnetka



Bunny & Babe, Winnetka



North Shore Fine Gardening and Plant Perfect Design, Winnetka

Comparable Communities: Downtowns

A look at what Winnetka's comparable communities are doing to activate their downtown districts.

SCARSDALE, NY

BIG IDEA: Pedestrian Focus

To activate street life, Scarsdale requires pedestrian arcades to be included in new developments. They also permit and promote sidewalk cafes/outdoor dining for all restaurants.

Their Village Center has a core retail zone, similar to Winnetka's Overlay District, which allows retail, cultural uses, and restaurants by right.



COMMUNITY OPEN HOUSE RESULTS

What big ideas are suitable for Winnetka to activate its commercial districts?

While responses varied to this question, there was an overwhelming focus on activating the streetscape and providing more gathering spaces, such as plazas, sidewalk cafes, public spaces, music or entertainment venues, and movie theaters. Other responses included downtown mixed-use developments that would provide a hybrid of housing, retail, experiences, and public spaces, among other active uses. All persona groups engaged with this topic, yet empty nester and young seniors (ages 55 - 74) provided the most feedback, followed by family years (ages 35 - 55) and young families (ages 20 - 34).

BETHESDA, MD

BIG IDEA: Housing + Public Spaces

Bethesda's strategy to activate its downtown focuses on **bringing density and public life to the district**. They promote a diversified mix of housing options in their downtown through mixed-use and multi-unit residential development, and encourage streets to be designed as social spaces for gatherings, events, and recreation.



RADNOR, PA

BIG IDEA: Town Commons

Radnor's strategy focuses on **creating a town commons** and promenade on specific underutilized, township-controlled downtown parcels. They also promote **second and third floor units** for residential uses, and have eliminated parking requirements for downtown residential uses.



Vibrant Business Districts

***Vision Statement:** A community with a strong commitment to supporting and enhancing its unique, walkable, mixed-use business districts, which serve both as the community’s commercial and social centers.*

GOAL 2.1

The Village will continue to provide a future vision for the Village’s commercial districts.

Long-term success for Winnetka’s commercial districts requires strong leadership: a clear vision of progress and the steps needed to get there. The Village has shown leadership over the years by establishing a vision in the 2016 Downtown Master Plan and dedicating resources to help achieve it. It can continue to do so with the initiatives below that provide a path toward vibrant, resilient, and sustainable commercial districts.

Initiative 2.1.1

Continue to implement the action plan outlined in the 2016 Downtown Master Plan.
(refer to initiative 3.4.1)

The 2016 Downtown Master Plan includes a prioritized list of recommendations specific to economic development, transportation and infrastructure, urban design, and land use and zoning. The Village has already begun advancing several of the strategies (e.g., streetscape improvements, expanded outdoor dining) and should continue implementing additional strategies (e.g., targeted business attraction efforts).

Initiative 2.1.2

Regularly review and update the Downtown Master Plan to adjust to changing market conditions and community needs.

While many of the goals in the Downtown Master Plan are relevant today, the market has substantially changed within the Village since its approval. In particular, commercial zones and public places are far more vibrant, a result of significant investments in the public realm in 2020. The Plan should be regularly revisited to ensure Village actions continue to align with market conditions and community objectives.

Initiative 2.1.3

Given the train stations serving the Indian Hill, Elm Street, and Hubbard Woods business districts, as well as the PACE bus line that runs along the Green Bay Road corridor, consider Transit Oriented Development (TOD) principles when planning, developing regulations, and making infrastructure improvements in the business districts.

This may include additional bicycle parking, reduced vehicle parking requirements, pedestrian and walkability improvements, and appropriate multi-family residential density.



Multi-family Development Character

GOAL 2.2

*The Village will **provide zoning and development regulations** and processes that allow land uses offering the products, services, and housing opportunities that residents desire. Such uses should be permitted in the most timely manner, while also ensuring compatibility with goals of the district in which they would locate.*

Zoning regulations can guide and shape the character of a commercial district, but they must acknowledge economic realities, evolving consumer needs, and the ongoing need for investment and improvement. The initiatives below can help the Village craft regulations that will maintain the distinct character of commercial districts while allowing flexibility and resiliency in responding to changes.

Initiative 2.2.1

*Given that each of Winnetka's three business districts may have its own market niche, **consider establishing unique zoning regulations and, in particular, allowed land uses for the Hubbard Woods and Elm Street business districts, as was done with the C-1 Neighborhood Commercial District in the Indian Hill Business District.** This may occur through the creation of new zoning districts or through amendments to the existing C-1 District, the C-2 General Retail Commercial District, or the Commercial Overlay District.*

The three commercial districts in the Village are each distinct from one another. The fragmented nature of the districts, which could be perceived as a weakness, also presents the opportunity to create distinct zones with their own sense of place while collectively consistent with the character of development in Winnetka.



Hubbard Woods © The Lakota Group

Initiative 2.2.2

*When considering changes to the commercial zoning districts, **study which land uses should be allowed in each district and consider adding a catch-all category such as “Commercial Uses Not Otherwise Regulated” as a special use** to allow consideration of new land uses not currently contemplated within the Zoning Code.*

Initiative 2.2.3

Consider amending the Zoning Code to require review by the Plan Commission and approval by Village Council only for those special uses located in the C-1 Neighborhood District and the C-2 General Retail Commercial District, similar to what is now required for special uses in the Commercial Overlay District.

Prolonged reviews during the entitlement process can reduce developer interest, particularly when municipal reviews are perceived as unpredictable. The Village currently allows for expedited reviews for special uses within the Commercial Overlay District. Expanding expedited review to incorporate additional uses consistent with community objectives would attract additional investment that might not otherwise be realized.

Initiative 2.2.4

Review regulations for pop-up or short-term land uses. This might include streamlining occupancy permit reviews or sign permit applications and review processes.

Existing land use and zoning regulations can inadvertently create barriers for pop-up users and events. Recognizing this, the city of Norfolk, Virginia has experimented with granting pop-up users zoning “grace periods” during which they are allowed to divert from certain zoning restrictions. In the city of Chicago, landlords (referred to as “hosts”) and pop-up businesses go through separate permitting processes. A pop-up business’s permit is not tied to a location, allowing them to shift among permitted host locations.

Initiative 2.2.5

Encourage multi-family development in and around the commercial districts to serve a diverse range of residents and to provide additional housing opportunities near commercial activity and the train stations.

Multi-family development has the greatest feasibility near the existing train stations and commercial districts. The Village currently maintains an inventory of available buildings on a public-facing website. This list of properties could be expanded to include target redevelopment sites or vacant land appropriate for multi-family development. The Village can also increase awareness of development opportunities through outreach to the development community and including information on the Village website.

GOAL 2.3

The Village will continue to encourage the highest-quality design, materials, and maintenance for building exteriors, landscaping, and signage in the commercial districts and along the Green Bay Road corridor.

The built environment in Winnetka’s commercial districts projects the care, investment, and support for these areas within the Village. Design guidelines ensure a level of quality in new construction, and an architectural review process evaluates projects for consistency with the Village’s design standards and architectural character. However, there must also be some flexibility that allows new, fresh ideas to enliven commercial districts with variety and creativity. The initiatives below provide ideas and examples for the Village to encourage high-quality design in the commercial districts.

Initiative 2.3.1

Update the 2003 Design Guidelines to allow for alternative architectural designs, including contemporary styles, that complement existing traditional building designs. The updated guidelines should be presented in a more user-friendly format than the earlier guidelines.

Design guidelines and the Design Review process are in place to ensure new development is consistent with the Village’s unique character and overall design aesthetic. While design consistency is crucial, allowing room for flexibility and design creativity that supports complementary alternative designs brings new energy into the built environment. The Village’s Design Guidelines are often the first exposure

that developers and architects have to Winnetka’s overall character and design review culture. Guidelines can be supportive of modern-day architecture, while at the same time respectful of the Village’s existing urban fabric.

Initiative 2.3.2

Update the Sign Code regulations to ensure they adequately address current sign technology and the needs of Winnetka businesses and institutions, while maintaining the pedestrian-focused community character of these areas that residents have come to expect. (refer to initiative 3.3.2)

Signs represent a key intersection between governmental regulations and the quality of the built environment.

Commercial districts depend on signs to communicate essential information. However, poor regulation or outdated or overly-strict codes can be ineffective and lead to visual clutter. Signs codes must regularly be reviewed and updated to ensure they meet the needs of the business community in a way that respects the Village's aesthetic and allows the use of new and evolving technology in appropriate ways.



Winnetka Signage © The Lakota Group

Initiative 2.3.3

Updates to the Design Guidelines and Sign Code should consider changes that would allow the administrative approval of certain exterior building, landscaping, and signage improvements. Updates should provide for variations to these standards that facilitate, when appropriate, creative and compatible designs.

Initiative 2.3.4

Conduct an architectural survey of the buildings in the Village's commercial districts to identify historic and architecturally significant buildings; review the Village's development processes to identify obstacles to the preservation of such buildings.

Residents and property owners can become accustomed to having architecturally significant buildings around them and lose perspective on the value they bring to the community. An architectural survey will document these buildings and allow for increased appreciation and preservation of significant buildings in the commercial districts.

Initiative 2.3.5

Provide information and access to financial incentives, such as the Cook County Class L temporary property assessment reduction and the Federal rehabilitation tax credit, for the preservation and restoration of historic commercial buildings.

The Cook County Class L property tax incentive encourages the preservation and rehabilitation of landmark commercial, industrial, and income-producing, or not-for-profit, buildings. Owners can have their property assessment levels reduced for a 12-year period, provided they invest at least half of the value of the landmark building in a rehabilitation project approved by the County. This incentive is attractive to developers contemplating rehabilitation of historic properties in the Village downtown nodes.

Initiative 2.3.6

Given the age of Winnetka's commercial building stock, consider the role enhanced code enforcement could have in preserving commercial districts and promoting investment in the rehabilitation of older commercial and mixed-use structures.

Code enforcement can either be proactive or reactive. Proactive code enforcement – using systematic and planned inspections rather than responding to complaints – can prompt property owners to improve the quality of buildings they would otherwise allow to remain underutilized. Winnetka has a limited number of commercial properties. It is essential that property owners maintain storefronts and residential units in older buildings rather than let them deteriorate. Code enforcement can be a tool for upkeep.



Lincoln Avenue, Winnetka

GOAL 2.4

The Village will provide a business environment focusing on retaining successful existing businesses, attracting businesses to the community that meet a market need, and assisting start-up businesses through local permitting and licensing processes.

Like cultivating a garden, healthy commercial districts and local economies require ongoing care and attention. Starting a new business is hard, and navigating the local approval process can be daunting for new business owners. The Village is in the best position to guide applicants through these processes as efficiently as possible. It is also important to listen to existing businesses, be aware of the issues and concerns they face, and determine how the Village may be able to respond. Taken together, these efforts contribute toward healthy and vibrant commercial areas.

Initiative 2.4.1

Continue to employ a full-time economic development coordinator to lead the Village's business retention and attraction efforts as well as its promotion and marketing activities.

In 2017, the Village created a full-time economic development coordinator position. The position engages in business recruitment, retention, and expansion efforts, as well as in business promotions, marketing, and targeted events. Continued investment in economic development staff allows for dedicated efforts towards realizing economic development objectives.

Initiative 2.4.2

Work with commercial property owners and the real estate brokerage community to identify target tenants for commercial districts that advance strategic marketing initiatives.

Winnetka is home to many residents actively working in real estate professionally. Leveraging these talents to engage with real estate brokers, developers, property owners, and others will provide the Village with better insights as to what future opportunities may exist within the commercial districts. The Village can engage on an ad-hoc basis or set up a more formal advisory committee that would inform strategic marketing initiatives to be championed by staff.

Initiative 2.4.3

Explore how to leverage the Village's current retail market strengths of high-end apparel stores, home goods stores, interior design businesses, and dining establishments to attract complementary and compatible businesses.

Since the pandemic, the community has become a North Shore destination for high-end apparel, home goods, dining, and more. To increase awareness of Village strengths and attract additional complementary and compatible tenants, economic development staff should attend retailer conferences to engage specific tenants the Village would like to pursue. Outreach allows Winnetka to provide information on existing demographics, available properties, and current business anchors. The Village could also proactively reach out to major restauranters within the Chicagoland area.



Bedside Manor LTD. © Village of Winnetka

Initiative 2.4.4

Consider developing targeted financial incentives that encourage investment in buildings, assist in the retention of businesses and in the attraction of new businesses.

The Village can develop targeted financial incentives to encourage investment in specific properties and overcome hurdles related to rehabbing older buildings. Incentives may include business permit fee waivers, provision of small business grants to cover building rehabilitation expenses, expedited review of required zoning approvals, or free/reduced-cost design assistance to prospective users.

Initiative 2.4.5

Explore regulatory tools that disincentivize long-term commercial vacancies and consider implementation of such tools.

Over 100 municipalities in Illinois use a vacant building ordinance (VBO) to address residential and commercial vacancies. VBOs often require that property owners register vacant buildings with the municipality and provide contact information for the responsible party. In some municipalities, owners must pay a registration fee which may motivate them to activate spaces. Property owners are often required to maintain, secure, and insure vacant properties in addition to preparing plans to either demolish the property or return it to productive use.

Initiative 2.4.6

Advocate for changing Cook County Assessor's Office commercial vacancy assessment practices, which tend to inadvertently encourage long-term vacancy.

The Cook County Assessor's Office (CCAO) has a statutory obligation to assess properties at market value. Vacancy reduces the net operating income, and therefore assessed value, of properties. However, there are concerns that this approach incentivizes building owners to leave properties or leasable spaces vacant. The CCAO attempts to control excessive vacancy by requiring evidence of a good-faith effort to lease the property. Within the Village, properties known to be intentionally vacant continue to receive a vacancy adjustment to assessed value. The Village should advocate for a more stringent review of vacancy appeals at the CCAO to limit intentional vacancy.

Initiative 2.4.7

When appropriate, consider streamlining special approval and permitting processes so it is easy and convenient for prospective businesses to follow the requirements.

Some of the Village's entitlement processes are currently perceived as lengthy and unpredictable. Complex and time-consuming entitlement review periods are often a deterrent to businesses and developers. Potential strategies to streamline the special approvals and permitting processes could include reducing the submittal requirements, committing to a concise timeline for municipal review, and streamlining public comment periods.



Chestnut St, Winnetka

GOAL 2.5

The Village will partner with others to provide public infrastructure to support vibrant business districts.

As custodians of the public realm, the Village is in the best position to ensure its use benefits the commercial districts as much as possible. This can be as straightforward as ensuring public utilities are provided in a consistent and reliable manner. It can also be more complex, like facilitating the shared use of public open space for events and building community. Whatever the means, it is essential to understand the impact that public infrastructure has in the business districts and the power it has to affect positive change.

Initiative 2.5.1

Continue the Village's streetscape improvement efforts that are occurring in the Elm Street Business District by implementing similar, but district-appropriate, improvements in the Hubbard Woods and Indian Hill business districts and along the Green Bay Road corridor.

Initiative 2.5.2

Establish a clear requirement that new developments in the business districts are responsible for streetscape improvements consistent with those for the business district in which it is located.

Initiative 2.5.3

Invest in the utility infrastructure needed to provide reliable services and to allow for future redevelopment.

Initiative 2.5.4

Provide community gathering and event spaces unique to the needs of each of the three business districts.

Through the use of Village-owned property, Winnetka has the opportunity to create public gathering spaces, such as the Village's recent efforts to partner with a cafe to create a small public gathering space in the Indian Hill Business District. In addition, the Village can create larger public gathering spaces for the community as a whole, such as the recently-discussed plaza on the Post Office

site in the Elm Street Business District. Other ideas include evaluating opportunities to repurpose parking spaces, boulevards, and sidewalks. These could be used for temporary seating areas, parklets, pop-up art fairs or markets, food truck serving areas, or myriad of other public events.

Initiative 2.5.5

Continue to support Pace's and Metra's efforts to provide commuter bus and rail service. These enable access for employees of and visitors to Winnetka businesses.

Initiative 2.5.6

To ensure the Village's commercial districts maintain their traditional design and pedestrian-friendly streetscapes, establish a clear policy delineating the Village's role and the private sector's role in providing parking for commercial uses and multi-family residential uses in the Village's business districts.

Part of this effort could include evaluating alternative zoning code parking requirements, such as reductions based on proximity to transit, a fee-in-lieu program, or reductions to off-street parking requirements for the provision of car-sharing facilities and bicycles.

GOAL 2.6

*The Village will **partner with the Chamber of Commerce, Winnetka merchant groups, and other community organizations to promote and market Winnetka businesses and community events** and to let the region know of the community as a niche retail, dining, and event destination.*

Winnetka will need to start conversations and get people talking about the Village. Groups like the Chamber of Commerce have networks that can jump-start efforts to get the word out. Collaboration with merchant groups and other organizations can help create messaging campaigns that capture different viewpoints, market niches, and areas of focus. Partnerships and collaborations will build on shared creativity, energy, and enthusiasm to let the region know what Winnetka has to offer.

Initiative 2.6.1

Develop and implement a branding campaign that promotes and markets Winnetka businesses and increases awareness of Winnetka retailers to potential customers in surrounding communities and the region.

The Village presently lacks a brand that outwardly communicates the Village's economic-related objectives to prospective property owners, developers, or businesses. The Village can increase awareness of development opportunities by conducting a Village branding exercise which can then be used on the Village website or any additional marketing materials.

Initiative 2.6.2

Promote and market the existing fashion and design districts as well as dining opportunities within the Village.

To further grow and solidify the Village's status as a North Shore shopping and dining destination, the Village should encourage restaurants and retailers to continue to participate in area events, such as the North Shore Restaurant Month, which will increase visibility and exposure to potential customers in neighboring communities. The Village should also continue to invest in events which showcase its unique retailers.

Initiative 2.6.3

Continue existing efforts to build relationships and communication with local businesses and entrepreneurs to identify needs and opportunities (e.g., business retention visits, regular business community surveys).

Regular communication and relationship-building between the Village and local business owners is beneficial to both parties. Business owners can provide valuable and timely on-the-ground information to the Village. This can be accomplished through regular meetings and/or surveys. The Village significantly expanded outreach to the business community in 2020 to support struggling small businesses. Continued, frequent touchpoints with businesses will help identify challenges and solutions moving forward.



BloOuts Winnetka © Village of Winnetka

Initiative 2.6.4

Explore the creation of more small business nights to activate commercial zones and increase awareness of local retailers to those diners that come to the area in the evening.

Winnetka has historically hosted various creative events designed to build awareness of small businesses. Existing events, including the Small Business Saturday Scavenger Hunt and Night Out on Elm, are opportunities for residents to explore small businesses they may not otherwise visit. Such events are often hosted in partnership with the Chamber of Commerce and are both beneficial to existing retailers and attractive to prospective businesses.

Initiative 2.6.5

Explore the creation of a program to activate vacant storefront windows.

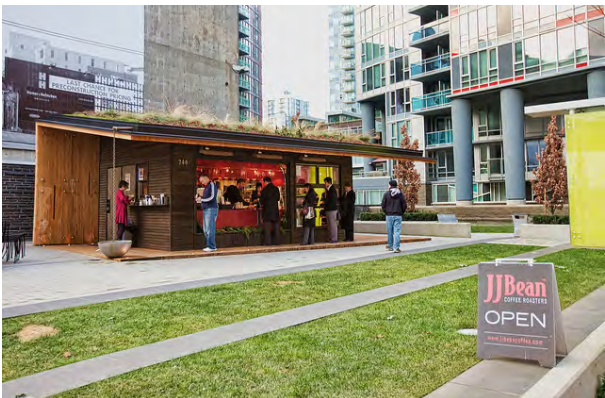
Such a program could include existing businesses decorating nearby vacant storefront windows, or collaborations with art organizations and local schools to produce materials to place in empty windows.



Activated Vacant Storefront

Initiative 2.6.6

Encourage temporary and permanent street and sidewalk installations and activities that foster social interactivity, such as small musical performance groups on street corners or installations of interactive public art.



Pop-up Shop Activation, CBC Vancouver Plaza



Plaza Space

Initiative 2.6.7

Continue to partner with others to promote business and community events, such as the Winnetka Music Festival, the Winnetka Farmers Market, and Art in the Village, which provide vibrancy and a sense of community.



PILLAR 3

Community Heritage & Placemaking

VISION STATEMENT

“Winnetka’s authentic heritage can be found in its walkable streets, its rich tapestry of commercial and residential architecture, its natural resources, including the lakefront, and in its cultural activities.”



PILLAR 3:

Community Heritage & Placemaking

***Vision Statement:** Winnetka's authentic heritage can be found in its walkable streets, its rich tapestry of commercial and residential architecture, its natural resources, including the lakefront, and in its cultural activities.*

Goal 3.1: The Village will adopt and utilize tools that support Winnetka’s rich physical heritage, which is reflected in its history, architecture, neighborhood character, open space, and natural resources.
Goal 3.2: The Village will create and maintain new educational tools, publications, and programs that inform residents, developers, and commercial property owners about the benefits of contributing to the community’s heritage.
Goal 3.3: The Village will identify policies, code amendments, and regulatory mechanisms that encourage context-sensitive design and building conservation solutions to maintain Winnetka’s authentic commercial, institutional, and multi-family residential community character and sense of place.
Goal 3.4: The Village will continue to encourage the enhancement of its public spaces, streetscapes, plazas, alleys, and corridors through creative, cost-effective placemaking and public art initiatives. These will enhance social gatherings, events, and recreation for residents of all ages and abilities.
Goal 3.5: The Village will be prudent in its investment and management of public placemaking initiatives, seeking a sustainable, long-term view in the selection of high-quality materials, product durability, product lifecycle, and maintenance responsibility.
Goal 3.6: The Village will continue to support community-wide arts and cultural efforts by providing welcoming spaces to support active participation, promotion, and programming efforts.

Winnetka Futures 2040 Plan includes ten Community Pillars. The following section describes Winnetka’s vision for ***Pillar 3: Community Heritage & Placemaking.*** A summary of the existing conditions analysis along with community input received over the course of the process are shared in the next few pages. Following that is a list of actionable initiatives for each of the goals listed above.

Note that the order of goals and initiatives does not reflect their level of priority.

Community Spaces

Community spaces are areas in Winnetka where residents gather, connect, socialize, and pursue shared interests or activities. These spaces could include a community center, community garden, outdoor plaza, lakefront beaches, or local business such as a coffee shop or restaurant. These spaces help build community and establish or strengthen connections between residents.

WINNETKA COMMUNITY HOUSE

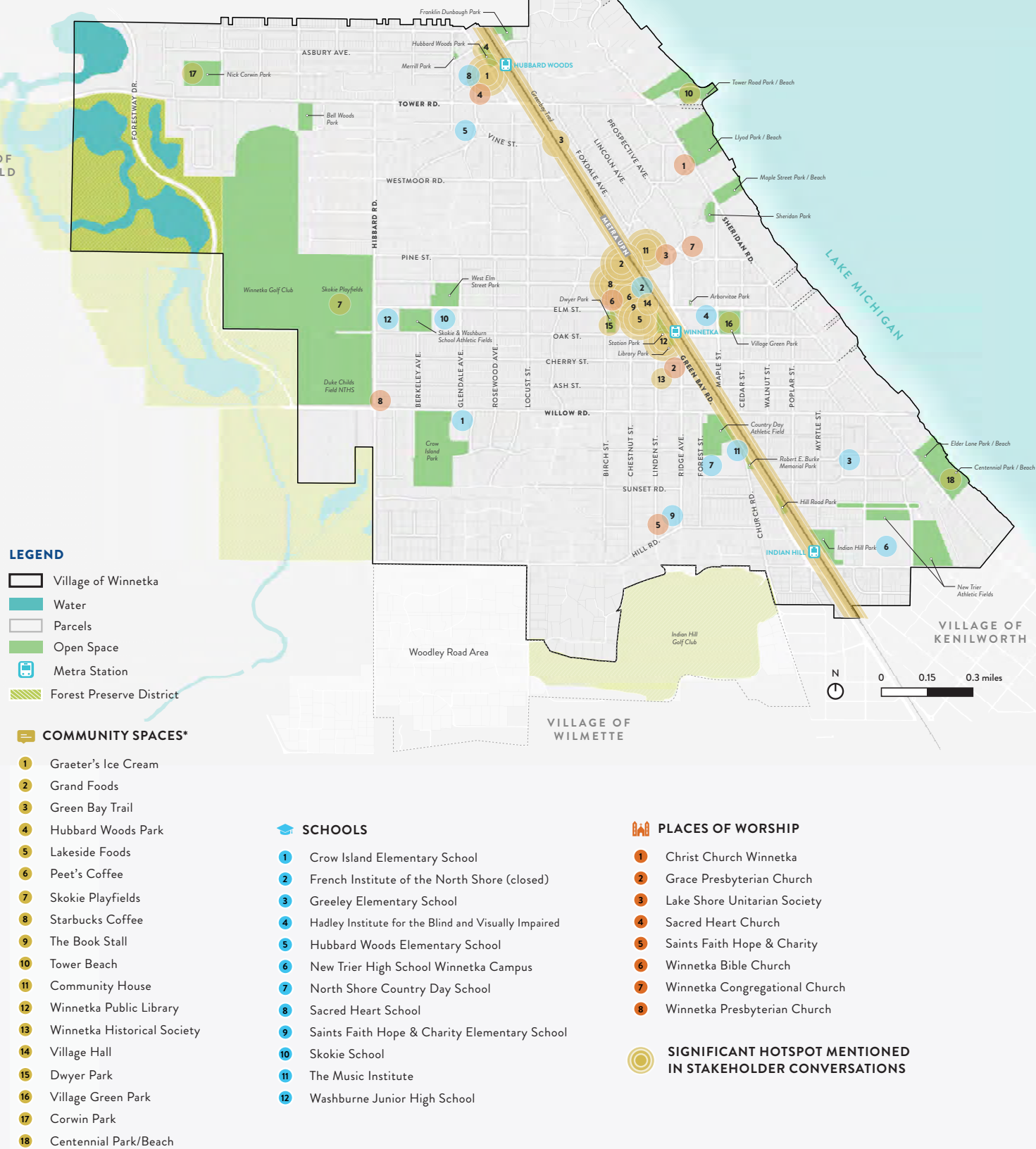
Doubtless the most significant and unique community space in the Village is the Winnetka Community House (“WCH”). This 3-acre community center was originally built in 1911 and has been expanded several times.

About a decade ago, the Winnetka Community House put an addition on the rear (west) side of the building, adjacent to its Historic Garden. In the addition is the Garden Room, which seats 250 people theater style, and on the second floor is a 2,500 sq. ft. meeting hall that can be sectioned off into four separate meeting rooms.



Winnetka Community House © Enjoy Illinois

FIGURE 30: COMMUNITY SPACES



*Community Spaces identified based on conversations with Winnetka residents



Theater production at Matz Hall in the Community House

In the older section of the WCH is Room 101, a large room with a high ceiling that accommodates up to 175 people in “theatre style” or 125 seated at tables and chairs. Room 101 is well used for lunches and events, guest speakers, Rotary Club, Historical Society, and other organizations. Theater and dance productions are held year-round in historic Matz Hall, a 3,000 square foot theatre space with seating for up to 364 guests and a large stage with high-tech capabilities. It is used by groups like Children’s Theatre of Winnetka and Village Follies. Matz Hall is a fairly flexible space: with moveable seats and a flat, open floorplan, it also hosts events, such as the annual Chamber of Commerce Recognition luncheon. Meeting rooms are upstairs, as well as the North Shore Art League’s space. The small gymnasium hosts a youth basketball program and has spectator seating in a small balcony.

The WCH offers a wide range of programs for children in art, dance, education, music, fine arts, and athletics. Adult programming is more limited, with a focus on dog obedience and fitness center classes. Other significant charitable uses of the WCH include: the Winnetka Congregational Church rummage sale, which takes place through most of the building and which the deed covenants oblige WCH to host; and the Antiques + Modernism Show, which is an important fundraising event for the WCH, with dealers from across the country selling high-quality home furnishings and accessories, artwork, clothing, and jewelry.

The WCH rents spaces for events and meetings. Historically, local organizations were able to use meeting space at little or no cost, but financial constraints have caused the WCH to increase fees. Some organizations, such as the Volunteer Center, report moving their events to other facilities such as the Kenilworth Club, in order to save costs.

In 2018 the WCH tore down the free-standing building it owned on the adjoining land to the south and cleared it for parking. Lack of parking has been a longstanding issue for users of WCH programs.

COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS

RECREATION, ARTS, & CULTURE

Local recreation, arts and culture representatives met with our team on February 12, 2020 and again in October 2021 for a discussion about Winnetka’s future. Key themes that came out of those discussions are summarized below.

Engagement Through The Ages

There is a change of demographics in the community, but the desire to be connected to community and to have an engaging lifestyle is relevant to all. Young families moving to Winnetka often give up the more dynamic lifestyle the City of Chicago offers to be in a better school district. At the same time, empty nesters and seniors who have been in the Village for decades still want to feel relevant and part of an active community scene. Events, like the Winnetka Music Festival, bring a vibrant sense of community that relates to all ages. To stay relevant, arts and recreation programs must evolve with the changing times.

A Place to Connect

The Community House is a hub of activity for people to explore and pursue their best self. It is a place where people can connect. The relationships in this community are very important and spaces like the Community House provide a place for people to come together. The challenge for the Village is to create more vital engagement areas, not necessarily vital commercial areas. Building a sense of community through makers space, yoga, dance studios, etc., will activate Winnetka more than retail can. There is a need for a signature building or element to attract people — something recognizable that will become a destination to attract people from across the North Shore, like the Writers Theatre in Glencoe, the Robert Crowne Center in Evanston, or even the Deerpath Inn in Lake Forest. An existing underutilized place for people to connect is the Green Bay Trail. More could be done to activate the trail, market it, and program it. There is potential for more multi-jurisdictional collaboration to make that happen.

Collaboration

Collaboration is key to bring more vitality to Winnetka’s community life: there are a wealth of organizations in Winnetka and across the North Shore doing good work, and the more they work together, the better. Successful collaborations exist today: the Historical Society partners with the Botanical Gardens as well as the Landmark Preservation Commission to put on events. There are many excellent facility-bound programs within District 36, New Trier, and the Music Institute, for example. How could we get those excellent programs out into the community? New Trier could have performances at the Community House or in public spaces on a Saturday afternoon—or other, similar ways for students to engage more with the community and with the arts.

Winnetka Community House Tenants

The WCH also rents space to some tenants important to the community:

The North Shore Art League

The North Shore Art League (NSAL) has been in the WCH since its founding in 1924. NSAL is a nonprofit organization that offers art classes for adults and children. Located on the second floor of the Community House, NSAL classes are held in an historic, professional art studio featuring skylights, a large stone fireplace, and a well-equipped print room facility.

The Winnetka Club

Since its beginning in 1908, The Winnetka Club has been an integral part of the civic and philanthropic life of the North Shore community. When it lost its original club building a few years ago, it moved into the WCH. Its philanthropic efforts support annual scholarships for graduating high school seniors who live in New Trier Township, as well as many other philanthropic endeavors throughout the North Shore and greater Chicago communities.

The WYO

The Winnetka Youth Organization, known as “The WYO” by those who frequent the space, is a nonprofit teen drop-in center. Established in 1969, the WYO is the only youth organization of its kind in Winnetka. Each year, the WYO provides services to up to 1,000 adolescents from the community. The mission of the WYO is to foster individual development in North Shore junior high and high school youth by providing adult-to-youth mentoring, youth services, and opportunities for leadership, citizenship and education within a safe, informal environment.

Winnetka Community Nursery School

A nationally accredited preschool for children ages 3–5, WCNS was founded during the Second World War to care for children whose mothers wished to take part in the war effort. Since 1972, it has been located in its own space in what was then the newly-built west wing of the WCH. In 1961, the full-day program was replaced with a morning-only program due to limited demand, only to be reopened in 1975 to meet the changing needs of the community. WCNS today offers a morning program with indoor and outdoor activities and an extended day program for children ages 3 – 6.

COMMUNITY OPEN HOUSE RESULTS

ARTS & CULTURE

Where else does Winnetka celebrate arts and culture?

There were limited responses to this question, all of which provided by empty nesters and young seniors (ages 55 to 74). Responses included the New Trier Jazzfest, the Library, and Winnetka chapel.

Would you like to see additional arts and culture initiatives taken in Winnetka?

Public Art

The majority of participants highly ranked full wall murals and partial wall murals. There were mixed responses to art sculptures, interactive art, and mosaic installation. A majority of responses disliked large-scale installations. The majority of responses were from empty nesters, young seniors, and family years (ages 35 to 54) participants.

Gathering and Performance Spaces

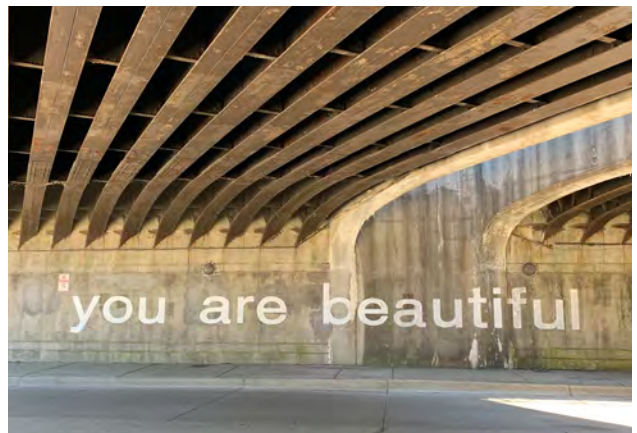
The majority of participants liked the initiatives that focused on gathering spaces, including an outdoor cinema, an outdoor shaded amphitheater, outdoor multi-use spaces, small private entertaining spaces, professional theaters, and public plazas.



Public Art, Winnetka



Sidewalk Art in Winnetka



You Are Beautiful Mural in Winnetka



Holiday Event in Winnetka



Winnetka Music Festival



Wedding at the Winnetka Community House

Community Heritage & Placemaking

***Vision Statement:** Winnetka's authentic heritage can be found in its walkable streets, its rich tapestry of commercial and residential architecture, its natural resources, including the lakefront, and in its cultural activities.*

GOAL 3.1

The Village will adopt and utilize tools that support Winnetka's rich physical heritage, which is reflected in its history, architecture, neighborhood character, open space, and natural resources.

The Village plays a vital role in ensuring Winnetka's heritage continues to be manifested in its physical form. This can be achieved through a variety of tools and incentives.

Initiative 3.1.1

Engage in initiatives identified in Pillar 1, Quality Livable Neighborhoods, that will encourage renovation of existing homes and construction of new homes that strengthen and maintain the rich and diverse character of the Village's residential neighborhoods. (refer to initiatives 1.1.1 - 1.1.5)

Initiative 3.1.2

Continue efforts to maintain and enhance the tree canopy on public and private lands throughout the community.

Trees and urban forestry can improve community health, improve water and air quality, and promote disaster resiliency. While municipalities across the nation have employed a variety of incentives and tools to improve and sustain urban forests, one long-time staple has been to gift residents free trees to plant in their yards.



Tree Canopy Providing Shade - Winnetka © The Lakota Group

VERMONT, IL

CASE STUDY:
Urban & Community Forestry Program

The city of Vermont provides tree stormwater credits, as well as impervious-area reduction credits. These credits can benefit homeowners through reduced water bills or stormwater fees. Communities can benefit from such implemented credits and incentives for tree canopy development and protection.



Initiative 3.1.3

Build upon Winnetka's history of major public works initiatives, which have reshaped the community in the past. These have included lowering the railroad grade, enhancing the Skokie Lagoons, and the purchase and conversion of the former Chicago North Shore and Milwaukee railroad to establish the Green Bay Trail.

Initiative 3.1.4

Consider allowing the use of open space and parkway lands for pollinator gardens, community gardens, and native plants. (refer to initiative 1.5.2)

Pollinator species can greatly benefit from small-scale open spaces and parkways that connect larger habitat patches. Manicured lawns often pose a challenge for species like hummingbirds, bees, and butterflies. Pollinator pathways are meant to ensure prosperity of pollinators in developed areas with fragmented landscapes.

RIVER FOREST, IL

CASE STUDY:

Parkway Pollinator Gardens

In partnership with PlanItGreen, the ComEd Green Region Grant Program, and Openlands, the Village of River Forest offers 27,000 square feet of native gardens, including 36 Parkway Pollinator Gardens, along its Lake Street. Aside from its inherent value of supporting pollinators, this initiative is dedicated to educating residents about fertilization and habitat management. Another aspect of the Parkway for Pollinators Initiative asks residents to pledge to the Healthy Lawn, Healthy Family Campaign, requiring residents not to use synthetic chemicals on their lawns and gardens, and implementing sustainable lawn care practices.



Butterfly Garden

GOAL 3.2

The Village will create and maintain new educational tools, publications, and programs that inform residents, developers, and commercial property owners about the benefits of contributing to the community's heritage.

Infill development and rebuilds are inevitable in a thriving community like Winnetka. Providing guidance on what makes this community unique would be one of many steppingstones that can ensure compatible developments and the preservation of community character. While Winnetka as a community possesses an overall uniform character, it is key to distinguish between the different character areas within the Village.

Initiative 3.2.1

Provide summary information and links to federal and state financial incentives, such as the State of Illinois Property Tax Assessment Freeze or federal and state historic tax credits, so that Winnetka property owners are aware of programs to offset costs to restore qualifying historic structures.

Rewarding owners for sensitively reinvesting in qualifying historic buildings is recognized as an important strategy on the federal and state levels, and in many communities on a local level as well. Providing commercial property owners and homeowners a list of potential resources and incentives can promote historic preservation and help retain community character.

Initiative 3.2.2

Provide information to Winnetka property owners concerning non-financial tools and resources available to assist with preservation of historic and architecturally significant structures.



HIGHLAND PARK, IL

CASE STUDY:

Supporting Local Preservation

The City of Highland Park, along with other Illinois communities including Winnetka, has been leveraging state and federal incentives to support local preservation efforts. The Mary Adams House, a Frank Lloyd Wright design of 1905, used a property tax assessment freeze incentive for the renovation. The tax incentive is made available through Illinois's Property Tax Assessment Freeze for Historic Residences program, administered by the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency (IHPA). The owner of a locally landmarked or National Register-listed historic home can get the assessed valuation of the property frozen for eight years in the year a qualified renovation on the home takes place.

Initiative 3.2.3

Publish information regarding potentially historic and architecturally significant buildings so as to educate property owners and developers of the Village's potentially significant buildings and structures.

Local preservation planning can be strengthened with continued efforts to identify and document important historic resources. Survey and inventory initiatives can provide crucial information on historic context, and can help identify properties, buildings, and structures that are or may be eligible for preservation. Making these databases publicly available can build interest in preservation and encourage community members and property owners to maintain Winnetka's unique character.



William McJunkin House © Wikipedia

GOAL 3.3

The Village will identify policies, code amendments, and regulatory mechanisms that encourage context-sensitive design and building conservation solutions to maintain Winnetka's authentic commercial, institutional, and multi-family residential community character and sense of place.

Successful context-sensitive design is a holistic approach to planning, design, and engineering that is typically implemented through zoning and development ordinances that manage certain components of urban design. While maintaining Winnetka's authenticity is the primary purpose of such practices, ensuring flexibility is key to avoiding homogeneity.

Initiative 3.3.1

Update existing commercial design guidelines to address current design issues, concerns, and contexts more adequately.



ILLINOIS COMMUNITIES

CASE STUDY:

Commercial Design Guidelines

Various municipalities in Illinois have continued to update their design guidelines to promote high-quality non-residential building design and ensure enhanced quality of life. These guidelines often address aspects of building massing as influenced by surrounding context, pedestrian friendliness, visual attractiveness, and sustainable design techniques and technologies that minimize environmental impacts.

Initiative 3.3.2

Review sign regulations to ensure they adequately address current sign technology and the needs of Winnetka institutions and the business community while maintaining the pedestrian-focused community character that residents have come to expect. (refer to initiative 2.3.2)



Signage on Storefronts, Winnetka

GOAL 3.4

The Village will continue to encourage the enhancement of its public spaces, streetscapes, plazas, alleys, and corridors through creative, cost-effective placemaking and public art initiatives to enhance social gatherings, events, and recreation for residents of all ages and abilities.

Active and outdoor gathering spaces have been a priority for many Winnetkans, allowing people to meet others, spend time together, and make memories. Open spaces can be further amplified through placemaking initiatives and public art that add comfort, safety, attractiveness, and liveliness. Aside from its inherent value, placemaking can help “bind” commercial streets into socially-cohesive places that narrate a neighborhood’s history and heritage.

Initiative 3.4.1

Continue to implement the Village’s Downtown Master Plan and Downtown Master Streetscape and Signage Plan. Streetscape improvements (like those completed in the Elm Street Business District) can further enhance the Hubbard Woods and Indian Hill Business Districts, offering upgrades to mobility and to public gathering and event spaces. (refer to initiative 2.1.1)



Downtown Winnetka Streetscape Improvements

Initiative 3.4.2

Pursue Green Bay Road improvements that increase and contribute to placemaking throughout the Village. (refer to initiative 8.1.1)

Green Bay Road, one of Winnetka’s major north-south connector streets, is heavily-focused on automotive transportation, does not cater to pedestrians, and lacks overall character. With efforts in mind to consider a road diet that can bring alternative modes of transportation to Green Bay Road, the Village should leverage this opportunity to introduce placemaking initiatives. Such initiatives could include murals, public art, pocket parks, plazas, linear parks, decorative medians, and branded pedestrian crossings and intersections, as well as temporary art activations that can bring life to the corridor.

Initiative 3.4.3

In cooperation with the Park District, pursue Green Bay Trail improvements that enhance its usability through improved access and signage. Enhance trail landscaping through upgrades to the natural systems.

Initiative 3.4.4

Maintain a vibrant dining experience throughout the Village's commercial areas by encouraging more outdoor dining opportunities. Establish a Village-wide policy for such temporary uses on public sidewalks, public streets, parking lots, and in public parks.



CASE STUDY: Outdoor Dining

VENTURA, CA

In order to create more outdoor dining space, downtown Ventura, California, closed its main street to vehicular traffic at the start of the pandemic and has maintained the closure. In order to bring more design consistency and greater safety to restaurant parklets, the city previously developed model templates that restaurants could use to create semi-permanent structures. Today, the city is writing design guidelines for its outdoor dining program, and the road closure will be maintained until June of 2024, with additional studies underway to evaluate the potential for a permanent street closure and creation of a pedestrian mall.



Initiative 3.4.5

Activate streets and open spaces with temporary and permanent uses that can be catalysts for future investment and growth. Strategies include pop-up businesses, art fairs, recreational activities, cultural celebrations, and civic functions.

Pop-up businesses and activations have gained popularity over the last two years, with more small businesses exploring ways to expand and realize the benefits of face-to-face customer relationships. While some pop-up shops become permanent fixtures, others rely on large or seasonal events that typically drive traffic and sales, such as the Chicago Christkindlemarket holiday pop-up shops

Initiative 3.4.6

Create gateways at Village entrances that integrate elements such as signage, wayfinding, landscaping, and building forms unique to Winnetka.



Winnetka Signage

Initiative 3.4.7

Benchmark and measure the outcomes of public investment in placemaking initiatives. Examples include the visibility of cultural groups or businesses in the community, the activation of underutilized public spaces around the Village, a reduction in vacant storefronts over a period of time, or visitor and foot traffic increases in the commercial districts.

GOAL 3.5

The Village will be prudent in its investment and management of public placemaking initiatives, seeking a sustainable, long-term view in the selection of high-quality materials, product durability, product lifecycle, and maintenance responsibility.

Initiative 3.5.1

Use decorative streetlights and other outdoor lighting as effective placemaking tools along Green Bay Road, the Green Bay Trail, and other high-traffic commercial areas.



Decorative Trail Lights © Dazuma

GOAL 3.6

The Village will continue to support community-wide arts and cultural efforts by providing welcoming spaces to support active participation, promotion, and programming efforts.

Initiative 3.6.1

Identify and create additional gathering spaces in the community, whether public, non-profit, or private, for cultural and entertainment events such as live performances and concerts.

The community is interested in additional gathering spaces for entertainment and cultural events to complement the performance spaces in the Community House or the small gathering and performance space at Hubbard Woods Park. A larger and more permanent outdoor space for live concerts and performances, as well small private indoor spaces would complement the existing venues in the community.

Initiative 3.6.2

Partner with Winnetka institutions and businesses to integrate public art and art spaces throughout the Village and continue to support Winnetka as an arts and cultural destination.



Winnetka Music Festival



Public Plaza Concept Explored for Post Office Site

ATTACHMENT 4

BUSINESS DISTRICT RECOMMENDATIONS

As noted at the beginning of this chapter – ongoing land use and redevelopment in the business districts will reflect the current mixed use characteristics, as regulated by the underlying zoning. Therefore, the land use plan does not seek to designate land use beyond the underlying existing mixed use character of the districts. Where a specific concept or change of existing land use mix is anticipated, it is noted below.

ELM STREET

The Elm Street District is bisected by Green Bay Road and the Metra right-of-way. Both sides of Green Bay Road are a mix of uses including retail, personal/household services, restaurants, and government/institutional services. Office/professional services in the area include banks/financial services and medical offices. The area includes two large parks (Dwyer Park and Station Park) and the Green Bay Trail (along the east side of the tracks). Primary land use characteristics are:

- Mixed-use buildings (commercial on first floor and apartments or office on upper floors) are located throughout the district.
- Commercial uses are focused along Chestnut Street and Elm Streets and Lincoln Avenue.
- Single and multifamily housing are located throughout the district, but primarily south of Elm Street.
- Uses at the edges of the district commonly abut single family residential uses.
- Off-street parking is available on both sides of Green Bay Road.

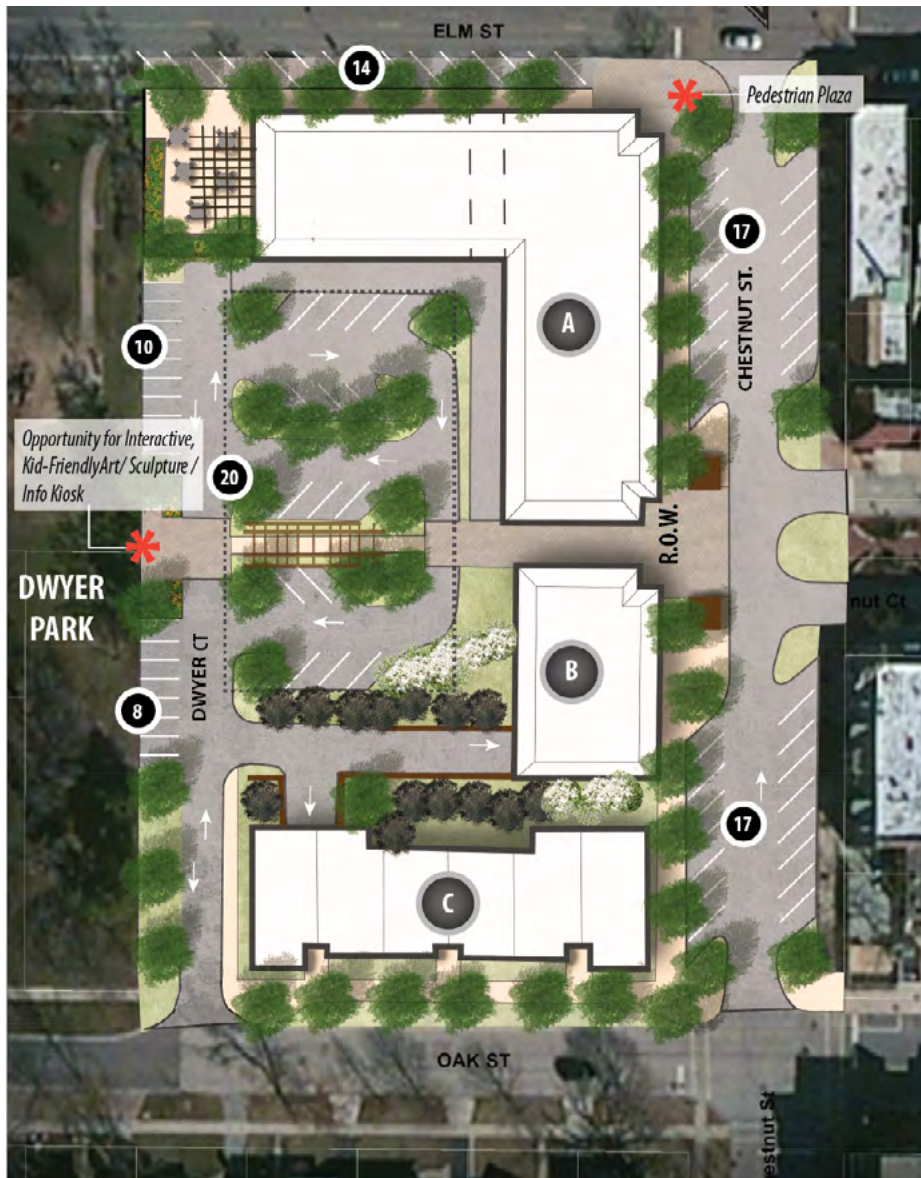
1. POST OFFICE SITE:

The Post Office Site is the most significant land use and development question addressed in this plan. Redevelopment of the Village owned property has been contemplated for a number of years and is again now that the national and local economies are rebounding. The site represents a significant opportunity to enhance the downtown and advance the Vision of a more vibrant place to live and experience the community.

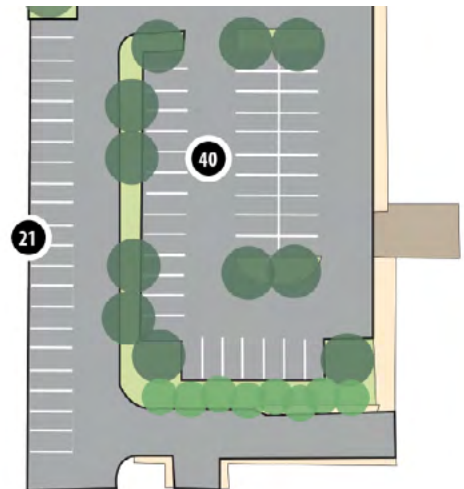
Figure 6.1 and Table 6.1 show a potential mixed use development concept with retail, office, condominiums, townhomes, and underground parking for residential and office uses, as well as key site development objectives. Development of the site will include replacing some or all of the existing public parking for downtown employees and customers, as well as new development on the property. Options for how public parking is provided on the redeveloped site will depend on the amount and location of other parking available in the district (existing now or to be built).

The approach to public parking shown on the plan reflects an ideal situation in which a strong, pedestrian friendly, mid-block, visual and physical connection between Moffat Mall and Dwyer Park is created. The challenge with this approach is that it reduces the amount of available parking. An alternative parking scenario is shown as Parking Alternative 1, which provides about 20 more spaces. Reducing the amount of public parking on the Post Office site depends on whether parking spaces to accommodate demand for downtown commuter parking can be added to the district. Parking Alternative 2 reflects the option of including a two-level parking deck as part of the development. This alternative adds greatly to the cost of developing the site, but is anticipated to be necessary if no other significant parking resource is added in the district on either the west or east side of Green Bay Road.

FIGURE 6.1. DOWNTOWN ELM - POST OFFICE SITE



PARKING ALTERNATIVE 1



PARKING ALTERNATIVE 2

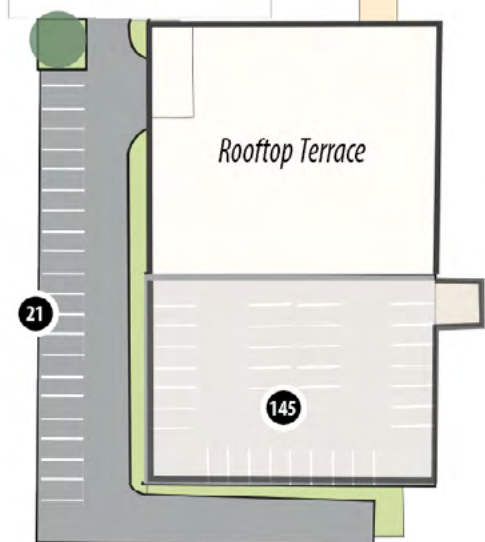


TABLE 6.1: POST OFFICE: DEVELOPMENT SCENARIO

Building A:

- A mixed use, four story building is located at the corner of Elm and Chestnut Streets.
- Ground floor commercial and/or restaurant.
- Three stories of condominium units above.

Building B:

- A three story commercial building is located mid-block on Chestnut Street.
- First floor commercial.
- Upper floor office.

Building C:

- Residential uses (2 ½ stories) located along Oak Street.
- Either townhomes or condominium units.

Site and Urban Design

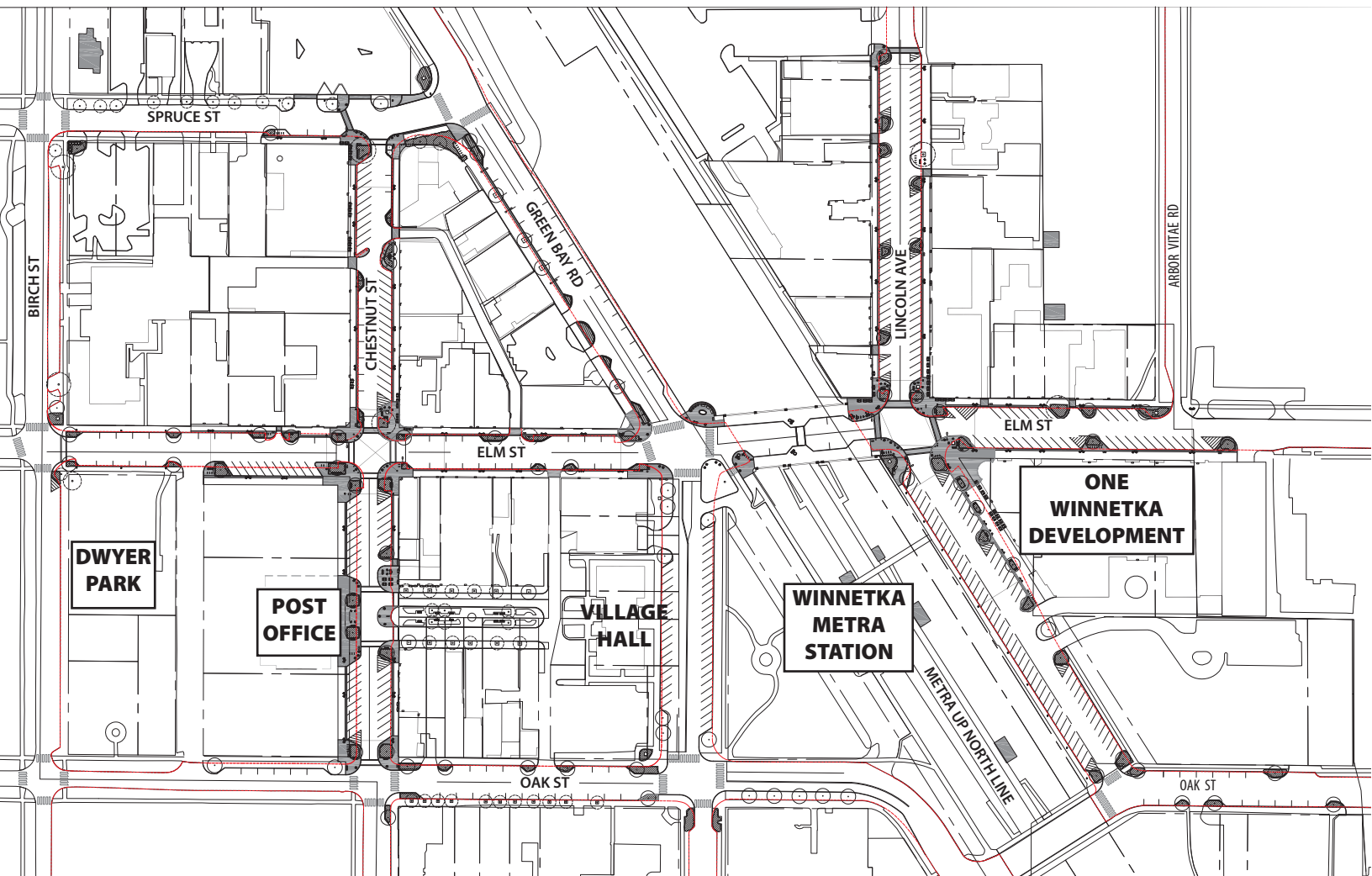
- Building heights step down moving south on site to reflect and complement existing Oak Street residential. Heights of buildings are reflective of area character, nearby structures, and street width.
- Pedestrian plaza at corner of Elm and Chestnut Streets.
- Pedestrian plaza / connection across from Moffat Mall creates a gathering place, builds on design character of downtown, reflects unique Moffat Mall design, and forms an access point through to Dwyer Park. Alternative designs without a connection to the park facilitate increased parking.
- Building architecture should reflect and complement upscale historic character of the district.
- Connections to Dwyer Park reinforced with outdoor plaza at west end of site along Elm Street.

ATTACHMENT 5

STREETSCAPE PLAN

The streetscape typologies and selected products and materials described above are applied to the Elm Street District as shown in the following drawings. Key focus areas identified by the Task Force include reinforcing the Shopping and Dining Streets with streetscape improvements that support pedestrian use and activity in these areas.

The overall streetscape plan, enlargement areas and key focus areas are depicted on the following pages. The streetscape plan identifies outdoor living rooms where strategic investment in streetscape improvements can have the most impact on the Downtown's active use areas.





SW QUADRANT



