



# Skokie Highway Corridor Strategic Plan

The Skokie Highway Corridor is home to more than 300 Highland Park businesses, and each year these businesses generate approximately \$3 million in revenue to the City, or 60% of the total sales tax revenue to the City. In addition, each day more than 50,000 motorists pass through Highland Park as they drive along the corridor--making the Skokie Highway Corridor not only the most visible area of the City, but potentially the most visited area.

In recognition of both the economic contribution which this business community makes to the City, and the future potential of this important corridor, the City's Business & Economic Development Commission undertook a study addressing key issues critical to ensuring the future economic vitality of the corridor, and resulting in a series of recommendations which include a detailed implementation strategy designed to guide future development of the corridor.

The purpose of this endeavor is to:

- Protect and strengthen the economic vitality of the Skokie Highway Corridor in order to realize its full market potential as a regional center not in competition with downtown,
- Improve the image of the corridor by creating an attractive and unified appearance,
- Improve accessibility and traffic safety along the corridor, and
- Minimize impacts to adjacent residential communities.

## Previous Plans & Studies

Various aspects of the Skokie Highway Corridor have been studied in recent years, including traffic and safety issues, economic development, and stormwater management. This strategic planning process began with a review of these studies in order to build upon previous work, and many elements from these previous studies have been incorporated into the Skokie Highway Corridor Strategic Plan. Previous studies reviewed include: City of Highland Park Comprehensive Master Plan (Demetriou, 1976); Skokie Corridor Area Master Plan (JJR, 1987); Skokie Corridor Stormwater Management Plan (Epstein Engineering, 1988); 41 Strategic Regional Arterial Plan (1993); Greenways Plan (1995.)

## Plan Formulation & Organization

The Skokie Highway Corridor consists of three business districts: **North Corridor**, **Briergate Crossing**, and **South Corridor**.

The **North Corridor** district begins at the northern City limit and extends just south of Park Avenue West. North Corridor businesses face and take access from Route 41, where high traffic speeds and restricted business access occur.

**Briergate Crossing** is directly west of the Route 41/Central Avenue/Deerfield Road highway interchange and includes a range of light industrial, business service and retail uses located along Old Skokie Road, Old Deerfield Road, and Deerfield Road. The main access to this district is via the highway interchange. Internal circulation within the district is hampered by the east/west separation caused by the Union Pacific Railroad.

The **South Corridor** begins just north of Clavey Road and extends to the southern City limit at Lake-Cook Road. This district includes the Crossroads Shopping Center and a variety of retail and auto-related uses.

For each of these business districts, the Highland Park Business & Economic Development Commission (BEDC) established a subcommittee consisting of BEDC members, business operators, property owners, Plan Commissioners, Design Review Commissioners, and Environmental Commissioners. Under the leadership of BEDC, the subcommittees assessed existing conditions within each business district and identified opportunities for economic development, aesthetic improvements, improved traffic safety, and better access. The need to ensure compatibility of future development with surrounding neighborhoods guided these efforts.

The Strategic Plan which resulted from this effort is presented in three sections with specific recommendations for each business district followed by the actions needed to implement the proposed changes.

The following people are recognized and thanked for their dedication and efforts in the strategic planning process:

**Members of the City Council:** Mayor Raymond Geraci and Councilman Michael Belsky, Jack Blane, Michael Brenner, Peter Koukos, Steve Mandel and Marilyn Weinger.

**Members of the Business and Economic Development Commission:** Chairman Ronald Kaplan, Vice Chairman Gary Levenstein, Mari Barnes, Robert Buhai, Steve Hamel, Michael Harding, Brian Hoffman, Fran Krasnow, Robert Smith, Jeff Taylor, and Michael Weiner.

**Members of the North Corridor Subcommittee:** Chairman Michael Harding, Dean Andrea, Joannie Barrus, Gerald Brin, Robert Buhai, Amy Pessis, Maureen Shea, Francis Sheahan, Ruth Spero, Janet Swartz and Sandy Takiff.

**Members of the Briergate Crossing Subcommittee:** Chairman Burt Ruder, David Brunjes, Leo Carter, Ron Foreman, Dick Guggenheim, Mike Malanafant, David Multack, Leo Ori, Corky Peterson, Bill Sherman, Rick Shoemaker, Ruthie Wander, Dick Williams, and Mark Williams.

**Members of the South Corridor Subcommittee:** Chairman Ron Zweig, the late Harold Eisenberg, Deborah Goldstein, Linda Kellough, Glen Muller, Richard Nelson, Perry Snyderman, and Mike Stein.

**City of Highland Park Staff:** City Manager David Limardi, Ellen Berkelhamer, Eileen Figel, Ron Kroop, Michael Kruse, Damon Ohlerking, Stephanie Sievers, and Peter Waldock.

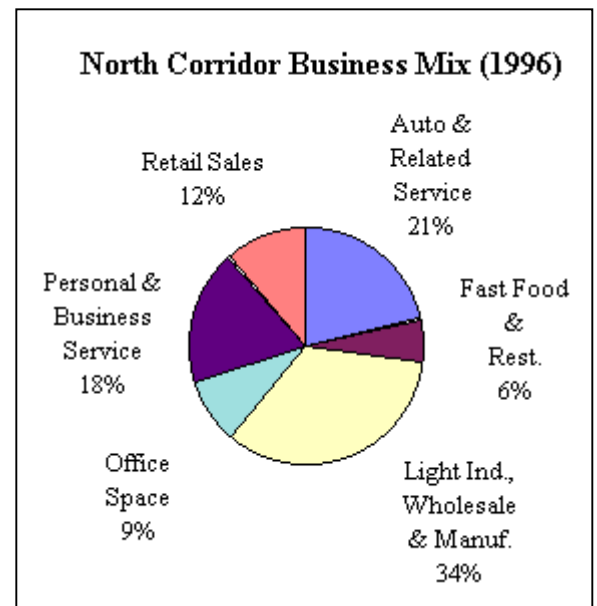
For more information regarding the Skokie Highway Corridor Strategic Plan, please contact the Department of Community Development at 847-432-0867.

# North Skokie Highway Corridor

## Historical Development

Development of the North Corridor generally began during the 1930s and 1940s as gas stations, burger stands, other restaurants, and building materials supply yards were established at main intersections and a few other sites. During the 1950s, development accelerated as business operators requiring large sites (such as auto dealers and Mutual True Value Hardware) relocated to the corridor from smaller downtown sites where expansion was not possible.

Today the North Corridor includes 100 businesses representing a mixture of land uses including six auto dealers and numerous auto-related services (such as gas stations, auto repair, car washes, etc.), food establishments, and building and landscaping supply yards. One-third of North Corridor businesses are categorized as Light Industry/Wholesale/Manufacturing, including the construction contractors and suppliers, distributors, and home improvement establishments.



## Signs

Because motorists are traveling at high speeds, and because many buildings are set back significantly from the highway, it is often difficult to see building address and business identification signs. Additionally, franchise operators are often required to install specific signs which are inconsistent with the City's sign code. Finally, there are a number of obsolete and unsightly signs which detract from the appearance of the corridor, and which do not conform with current City codes.

## Recommendation & Implementation Strategy

Install address identification signs at driveway entrances to help motorists identify corridor destinations. (Note: If highway is widened, signs may need to be relocated or replaced.)

- Approve uniform design and landscaping improvements for address identification signs and prepare information flyer for business operators. (Completed 1996.)
- Designate BEDC outreach person to contact business operators, explain program, and urge participation. (Completed 1996.)
- Establish cost sharing program to provide City matching funds to business operators and property owners for sign fabrication. City responsible for sign installation and landscaping. (Completed 1996.)
- Install signs from outreach effort. (1997 and ongoing)
- Continue to receive and process applications to produce and install additional signs. (As needed.)

Establish special sign standards for this highway-oriented district which meet visibility requirements, encourage creativity, and ensure a high standard of appearance.

- Hire design professional to develop design guidelines for highway. (Completed 1997.)
- Meet with North Corridor auto dealer representative and DRC representative to discuss special needs and develop draft proposal. (Completed 1997.)
- North Corridor auto dealer representative to host meeting with auto dealers and City staff to present draft proposal and solicit input from dealers. (Completed 1997.)
- Revise proposal to incorporate dealers' comments and forward to DRC for recommendation to City Council. (Short term.)

Require property owners and business operators to remove nonconforming signs, unsafe signs, and illegal signs.

- Survey businesses and identify nonconforming signs. (Short term.)
- Identify amortization period and notify property owners that nonconforming signs must be removed within one year. (Short term.)
- Unsafe or illegal signs to be removed immediately. (Short term.)

## **Traffic & Accessibility**

Several factors combine to create accessibility and traffic safety problems for North Corridor sites. These include numerous driveway entrances (forty-five in the North Corridor alone), heavy traffic volumes, high speeds, and poor visibility of site addresses and business signage. The existing situation is neither safe nor conducive to desired retail development. Within a twelve month period during 1994 and 1995, 91 traffic accidents were reported at the Route 41/Half Day Road intersection, and 58 accidents were reported at the Route 41/Park Avenue West intersection. Also during this period, 108 non-intersection accidents occurred within the North Corridor. Over 25% of these accidents occurred in southbound lanes when motorists failed to reduce speed and collided with the car in front. In many of these cases, the front car had slowed to enter a business driveway or to attempt to read a business identification sign.

Projecting that traffic volumes along Route 41 will continue to increase in future years, the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) has proposed widening Route 41 to 3 lanes in each direction and limiting access to adjacent sites. Limited intersection improvements were implemented in 1996 in order to reconfigure the off ramps at Route 22 and Park Avenue West to include double left turn lanes. Other highway improvements, such as the widening of Route 41 to six lanes, should be supported **if adequate access to adjacent commercial sites can be assured.**

## **Recommendations & Implementation Strategy**

Consolidate smaller lots into larger development parcels and decrease the number of curb cuts required.

- Identify who controls all "development opportunity" sites. Establish "outreach team" to meet with property owners and identify anything which would restrict site redevelopment, including long term lease commitments, contractual obligations, etc. Review strategic plan with property owner and determine where to refer development inquiries. Facilitate interaction between brokers, developers, etc. (Database Completed 1997.)
- Establish a business attraction /retention program to include a site consolidation component and facilitation of interaction between brokers, developers, and property owners. (Short term.)

Establish a non-continuous acceleration/deceleration lane to improve traffic safety and access to businesses along the west side of the highway. Reopen discussions with IDOT regarding proposed improvements to Route 41. Note: This issue will be studied by City's consulting engineers in conjunction with the Street Plan update.

- Establish a BEDC subcommittee, to include business operators, to work with City staff to study IDOT's SRA plan and to ensure adequate access to adjacent businesses is addressed in plan. (Short term.)
- In conjunction with any Route 41 construction, install curbs, replace overhead utility lines with underground utility lines, and install landscaping improvements within the public right-of-way. (Long term.)

Establish an interior circulation system to decrease the number of curb cuts with fewer driveways serving consolidated sites.

- Hire traffic consultant to study proposed plan and offer recommendations for internal circulation system. (To be done in conjunction with Street Plan update, 1997)
- Have City representatives meet with ComEd to determine feasibility of backage road. (Short term.)

Explore utilization of the ComEd right-of-way for parking, storage, and other appropriate uses.

- City staff will facilitate requests made by business operators to utilize right-of-way. (On-going.)

## **Land Use Compatibility**

The North Corridor today represents a mixture of land uses including auto dealers, fast food and other restaurants, building and landscaping supply yards, etc. In some instances, this diverse mixture of uses creates incompatibilities, such as dust from building supply yards which damages the finish of automobiles at nearby dealerships. In order to promote an atmosphere which is conducive to future retail development in the North Corridor, existing industrial uses and uses which require large areas for outdoor storage should be phased out over time and replaced with revenue-generating retail uses.

### **Recommendations & Implementation Strategy**

Prohibit uses in the B3 and I zoning districts which are incompatible with revenue-generating retail uses.

- Establish a BEDC subcommittee to study existing zoning regulations and forward detailed recommendation to the Plan Commission regarding zoning text and map amendments and map amendment to rezone entire North Corridor to B3. (Short term.)
- Establish minimum lot sizes. Process in conjunction with other zoning revisions. (Long term.)

## **Site Beautification**

Many North Corridor sites are in need of beautification. These needs include: screening of outdoor storage areas, installation of curbs, landscaping improvements, and elimination of overhead utility lines at front of sites.

### **Recommendations & Implementation Strategy**

Add shrubs and other landscaping where opportunities for improvements exist in areas which will not be impacted by future highway widening. However, avoid adding new trees which would further obstruct views at sites likely to be developed with retail or service uses.

- Compare landscape improvement plan with proposed right-of-way expansion and identify sites for landscaping improvements. (Long term.)
- Estimate cost and request funding for implementation. (Long term.)

Screen outdoor storage areas, heavy mechanical equipment, and electrical equipment at ComEd sites.

- Complete survey of sites. (Short term.)
- Review necessary code changes in conjunction with proposed zoning changes. (Short term.)
- Amend City Code as necessary. (Short term.)
- Notify property owners of screening requirements to be met within 1 year of notification (after City has made initial investment in address identification signage and landscaping improvements.) (Short term.)

Eliminate overhead power lines along Route 41 at front of businesses.

- To be implemented in conjunction with improvements to the highway to establish an acceleration/ deceleration lane. (Long term.)

## **Stormwater Detention & Flood Plain Management**

Stormwater Detention will be required for new development along the corridor. For some sites, it may be difficult to provide on-site detention; therefore opportunities for off-site detention should be identified. Many North Corridor sites are located within the flood plain. Developers of these sites will also be required to provide flood plain compensatory storage.

## Recommendations & Implementation Strategy

Identify & pursue opportunities for off-site flood plain compensatory storage and stormwater detention—including regional facilities within the same watershed.

- Identify appropriate sites. (Short term.)
- Estimate amount of development which might require off-site storage and/or detention; estimate amount of storage and/or detention required. (Short term.)
- Hire consultant to review Epstein plan, review sites and estimated need, then analyze the feasibility of off-site facilities, including size, and cost. (Short term.)
- Estimate financial return to City through payment-in-lieu program. (Short term.)

## Skokie Valley Pedestrian/Bicycle Trail

A pedestrian & bicycle pathway is to be built along the ComEd right-of-way from Park Avenue West north to the City of Lake Forest. The pathway will be funded by the Illinois Department of Natural Resources and Lake County Department of Transportation and is to be constructed late 1999.

### Recommendations & Implementation Strategy

Construct a pedestrian/bicycle trail along the ComEd right-of-way from Park Avenue West to the City of Lake Forest.

- To be completed by 1999 by Lake County.

Consider additional bicycle/pedestrian bridges across Route 41 consistent with the Greenways Plan.

- Work is proceeding to identify location and design of new pedestrian bridge over Route 41 near Park Avenue West consistent with funding provided by IDOT.

## Development Opportunities

Four areas within the North Corridor have been identified as "development opportunities." As indicated below, three of these sites should be used to relocate auto dealers from the South Corridor to the North Corridor, thereby making the South Corridor sites available for retail development which can benefit from the "critical mass" created by the recent retail development south of Lake-Cook Road. Pro-active City involvement may be required to facilitate development. Potential benefits resulting from development are substantial, including: improved traffic safety, beautification, increased land value, and increased sales tax generation.

**Half-Day Road.** With a total area of 38 acres, this site represents the largest undeveloped parcel within the North Corridor. However, numerous site constraints limit developable area to only 7 or 8 acres. Development considerations include: (1) on-site wetlands that must be preserved or relocated, (2) flood plain restrictions, and (3) reconfiguration of off-ramps at Route 41 which will bisect this site and limit accessibility.

- Recommended use: open space.

**Dealer's Ready Mix/Menoni & Mocogni.** Over time, land-intensive uses such as the cement yard and materials yard located on this site are expected to be replaced with retail uses. Combining the two parcels will create a development site approximately 7 acres in area. Development considerations include: (1) Proximity to Dominick's Finer Foods and Target create potential for a "critical mass" of retail development at this intersection, and (2) The intersection location affords good access and high visibility.

- Recommended use: auto dealership.
- Other appropriate use: mid-box retail.

**K-mart.** This site is approximately 15 acres in area. However, flood plain and stormwater detention requirements limit the buildable area of the site. Development considerations include: (1) Good access and visibility from Route 41, and (2) limited visibility along Park Avenue West.

- Recommended use: Auto dealership.
- Other appropriate uses: Retail or a combination of retail/office. To increase marketability of the site, consideration should be given to a monument sign within the right-of-way at Park Avenue. Note: After the Strategic Planning process was concluded, Target announced plans to build a store at this site. Target construction was completed in 1998.

**O'Brien Gears & Adjacent Sites.** If the O'Brien Gears site is consolidated with adjacent lots, a development site of approximately 2.5 acres is achieved. Development considerations include: (1) Potentially good access from Route 41, and (2) high visibility.

- Recommended use: Auto dealership.
- Other appropriate use: Mid-box retail.

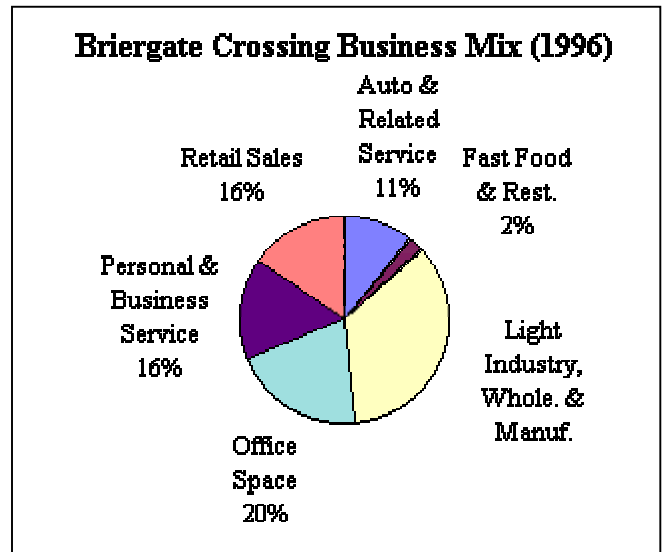


## Briergate Crossing District

The Briergate Crossing long range plan calls for certain public improvements and marketing strategies designed to attract businesses and customers alike to the district, as well as enhance the district's identity in the community. The implementation of many elements of the plan will depend on a cooperative effort between the City and the private business operators and property owners. The strategic planning process included a study of financing options for funding recommended improvements along Old Skokie and Old Deerfield Roads. Such improvements include parking, drainage, and lighting along Old Skokie Road, and curb, gutter, storm sewer and parking along Old Deerfield Road. The Briergate Crossing Subcommittee has endorsed a proposal for the property owners to contribute 50 percent of the cost of the proposed improvements, not to exceed \$500,000, through the implementation of a Special Service Area to cover the entire Briergate Crossing Business District.

### Historical Development

Development of the Briergate Crossing District historically included service and light industrial uses at a time when Old Skokie Road was a part of the Skokie Valley highway system. Today, this district includes approximately 130 businesses. The predominant uses in the Briergate Crossing District are still service and light industrial, although a number of office and retail establishments currently exist. This business district has become known as "Briergate Crossing" due to the inclusion in the district of the former Briergate Train Station, (one of the four Highland Park stations used by the former Chicago, North Shore and Milwaukee Railroad, and the only such structure still standing.)



## Existing Character & Land Use Compatibility

**Old Skokie Road.** Old Skokie Road contains predominantly services uses, although a number of destination retail uses have also located along the street. Many of the parcels are small with shallow lot depths, developed parcel by parcel. The parcels are generally not connected through shared curb cuts or parking. Old Skokie Road is accessed only from Route 41 entry/exit ramps. Southbound Route 41 traffic must exit on the Deerfield Road ramp before turning off onto Old Skokie Road, and northbound highway traffic must exit onto Deerfield Road, then proceed back down the southbound highway entry ramp, before turning off on Old Skokie Road. Local traffic must also first proceed down an entry ramp before accessing Old Skokie Road.

**Old Deerfield Road.** Old Deerfield Road contains predominantly service and light industrial uses, with one large destination retailer. Old Deerfield Road is currently split into two sections by the Union Pacific Railroad Crossing, which is currently closed to vehicular traffic. East of the tracks, Old Deerfield Road is accessed from Old Skokie Road. West of the tracks, Old Deerfield Road may be accessed from Ridge Road or Richfield Avenue, off of Deerfield Road.

**Deerfield Road.** The Toys ‘R Us retail center, and associated surface parking lot are accessed from Deerfield Road. The predominant uses in this portion of the Briergate Crossing district are retail.

The Briergate Crossing business district serves an important function within the City by providing affordable locations for business service operators and destination retailers who require lower land costs, and who do not require a downtown location. The ability of the district to serve this function should be maintained.

### Recommendation & Implementation Strategy

Amend the Zoning Ordinance to prohibit certain high intensity, larger-lot uses. (Short-term.)

- The Briergate Crossing Subcommittee has recommended that the current zoning designation of the district, "I" Light Industrial, be maintained, but that the Zoning Ordinance should be amended to prohibit certain high intensity, larger-lot uses from being permitted in the "I" zoning district. Specific uses which the Subcommittee has recommended removing from the Table of Permitted and Conditional Uses contained in the Zoning Ordinance are: Bus Terminals, Motor Vehicle Wrecking & Salvage Yards, Taxicab Storage, Truck Terminals, Asphalt Plants, Blacksmith Shop, Construction Hauling Companies, Excavation Companies, Ready-Mix Concrete Yards, Road Paving Companies, Rock & Stone Supply Yards, Sand Gravel & Earth Sales & Storage Facilities, Feed & Grain Storage and Sales Offices, Metal Salvage Yards & Operations, Open Storage Yards and Zoos. The Subcommittee has also recommended that the Table of Permitted and Conditional Uses be amended to require primarily off use for certain other transportation, material supply, construction and storage uses, with material or equipment storage only allowed as an accessory use, subject to maximum size limits. These uses include Aircraft and Accessories Sales and Service Facilities, General Construction Companies, Lumber & Building Material Yard & Storage Facilities, Masonry, Stonework & Tile Setting Shops, Roofing Companies, Sewer Companies, Sheetmetal & Gutter Service Shop, Swimming Pool Companies, Tennis Court Companies, and Water Well Drilling Companies.

### District Visibility

The Briergate Crossing District is difficult to locate because there is limited visibility to the district from Route 41, Central Avenue and Deerfield Road.

### Recommendations & Implementation Strategy

Enhance visibility and appearance of Route 41 through removal of excess vegetation.

- City Staff to prepare plan. (Short-term.)
- Remove vegetation. (Short-term.)

## **District Identity and Marketing Program**

A marketing program has been developed for the Briergate Crossing business district in Highland Park to strengthen the identity of this business community. The program has been developed to increase awareness of the location and identity of the district.

### **Recommendations & Implementation Strategy**

Create and distribute a "Briergate Crossing" logo for district businesses to use on stationery, business cards, and in advertisements. (Completed in 1996.)

Create a design for street/wall banners (consistent with logo.)

- Local business/property owners to develop design; implement a fundraising campaign; open district bank account; solicit proposals for production of banners; obtain DRC approval. (After completion of public improvements.)

Erect district identification signs along Route 41 to be visible to the 50,000 motorists who pass the district everyday. One sign would be located at the south end of Opportunity, Inc.--the south end of the district; the other would be located at the north end of the ComEd property--the north end of the district.

- Local businesses/property owners to implement a fundraising campaign; open district bank account; solicit proposals for construction of sign and materials. (Short-term.)
- Design signs and bring to DRC. (Short-term.)
- Install signs. (Short-term.)

With support of business operators and property owners, change the name of "Old Skokie Road" to "Briergate Crossing Road" to reinforce the identity of the district to its users and to passersby, and to cause a change in street signs on the highway. (Long-term.)

## **Site, Accessibility & Circulation**

The Briergate Crossing District is difficult to access for two main reasons: (1) Accessibility to the east side of the district can only be achieved from the highway interchange; and (2) there is currently no vehicular connection between the east and west sides of the district.

### **Recommendation & Implementation Strategy**

Open Old Deerfield Road Railroad Crossing.

- City Staff to work with Union Pacific to develop final plans and costs. (Completed in 1997.)
- Open crossing. (1999.)

Enhance directional signage at strategic Route 41 access points.

- City Staff to work with IDOT on signage options. (Short-term.)

Create a backage road and additional parking areas along the ComEd right-of-way and/or City utility easements. (Long-term.)

Maintain the existing pedestrian/bike path along the ComEd right-of-way. (As needed.)

Repair or reconstruct the existing pedestrian overpass. (It is necessary to maintain the bridge in its current location as it is used both by City residents and employees of Opportunity, Inc.) (As needed.)

Create a path leading from improved Berkeley Road (west of the tracks) to the existing pedestrian/bike path along ComEd property. Signage on path should indicate that pedestrians and bicyclists may travel south to access the pedestrian overpass at Old Deerfield Road, or north to a proposed pedestrian overpass leading to the Taylor Avenue area in a location north of the Williams Furniture and Autosonics properties. (Long-term.)

Erect street signs marking "Richfield Lane," the extension of Richfield Avenue east of Old Deerfield Road. Encourage business owners on the street to use a "Richfield Lane" address instead of Old Deerfield Road to eliminate the confusion customers have had finding these businesses. (Long-term.)

## **Physical Improvements**

The Briergate Crossing Business District contains shallow lot depths which make on-site improvements such as parking and stormwater management impossible to achieve. The district is currently in need of these and other public improvements which will make the district more user-friendly and encourage the location of additional businesses into the district.

## **Recommendations & Implementation Strategies**

Improve Old Deerfield Road with curb, gutter, storm sewers, and approximately 20 parking spaces. Improve Old Skokie Road with approximately 180 parking spaces and associated lighting.

- Obtain support from City Council for funding mechanism and timing of proposed improvements. (Short-term.)
- If City Council supports SSA funding, City Staff to develop engineering plans for improvements and obtain exact costs. (Short-term.)
- If SSA is adopted, City to contract for improvements. (Short-term.)

Consider opportunities for regional stormwater management on the east side of Old Skokie Road in locations such as the Central Avenue/Deerfield Road cloverleaves, the Park District property north of the Toys 'R Us retail center, and the strip of IDOT land north of the pedestrian bridge.

## **Development Opportunities**

**Denzel Site.** The Denzel site, approximately 6 acres in area, represents the largest parcel of land available for redevelopment in this district. The site is immediately adjacent to the Toys 'R Us shopping center where a surplus of off-street parking currently exists. Development potential would be enhanced by: (1) An agreement between the owners of the Denzel site and the Toys 'R Us site to allow the combined sites to function as a unified shopping center with shared parking and internal circulation, and (2) Opening the railroad crossing at Old Deerfield Road to improve site access and circulation.

- Recommended Uses: Strip or large scale retail, or business service. (In September of 1996, Jewel-Osco announced plans to build a 70,000 sq. ft. store at this site. The development includes shared parking and access with the Toys 'R Us site. Construction was completed in 1999.)

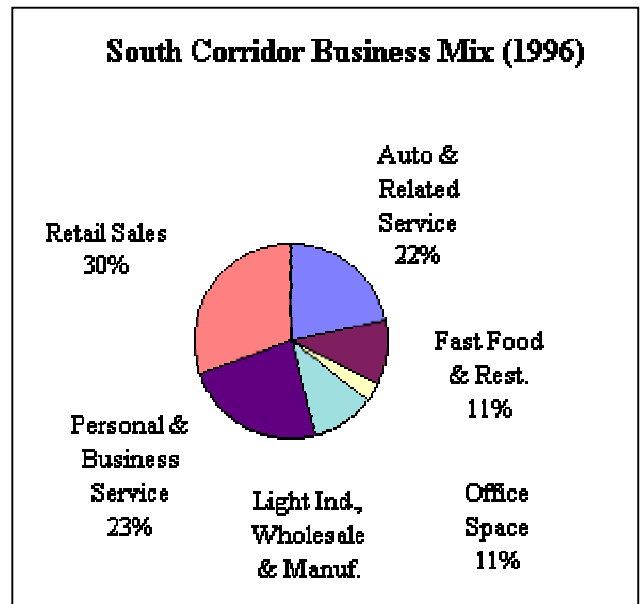
# South Skokie Highway Corridor

## Historical Development

Development of the South Corridor historically included a mix of retail and retail-oriented service uses at a time when this portion of the Corridor was part of the Skokie Valley highway system.

The Crossroads Shopping Center on the east side of the South Corridor was developed in the late 1950's and included such retail uses as Sears, Dominick's, Cotey Furniture and Crossroads Pharmacy. In 1976, Sears closed its Highland Park store in favor of the Sears in Northbrook Court, and Gold Standard replaced Sears in the Crossroads Shopping Center. In 1984, infill development allowed the expansion of Crossroads to create a linked strip center.

The development on the west side of the South Corridor historically occurred on a small parcel-by-parcel basis resulting in a mix of retail and service uses, such as clothing stores and restaurants, along with a number of auto-related uses such as dealerships, a gas station, hand car wash, auto repair and license service.



## Existing Character

**East Side of Skokie Valley Road.** The predominant land use on the east side of Skokie Valley Road is the Crossroads Shopping Center and its associated surface parking lot. At the north end of the Center, connected through a shared parking lot, is the Timbers Restaurant. There are currently three separate entrances to the Center along Skokie Valley Road, at the Center's north, middle and south ends. South of the Crossroads Shopping Center are a Marriott Courtyard Hotel and a Pier 1 Imports. The Marriott and Pier 1 are currently not connected through a vehicular or pedestrian access to the Crossroads Shopping Center. Access to the Marriott and Pier 1 can be gained from two entries, one on Lake-Cook Road and the other on Skokie Valley Road.

**West Side of Skokie Valley Road.** The west side of Skokie Valley Road contains small parcels with shallow lot depths developed on a piecemeal basis with small retail or service uses. Structures have been designed without uniformity of architectural, landscape or signage design. Each parcel contains its own curb cut and parking facility on site. There is generally no interconnection between the separate users on the west side of Skokie Valley Road.

The South Corridor is currently zoned "B3 Highway Commercial," which allows a variety of service and retail uses. The Highland Park Zoning Ordinance should be amended to refine the types of uses allowed in the South Corridor area and encourage the desired retail character and mix of retail uses. Because "B3" zoning also applies to the North Corridor, either an overlay zone or an entirely new zoning classification should be established so that the zoning changes affect only the South Corridor, and not the North Corridor, unless uniform change is appropriate.

## Recommendations & Implementation Strategy

Amend the Zoning Ordinance to encourage desired retail character and mix of retail uses, and to establish a minimum lot size requirement to encourage large-scale retail development.

- Convene BEDC subcommittee to study zoning issues. (Short-term)
- Plan Commission to hold public hearing to consider Zoning Ordinance text amendment. (Short-term)

## Site Visibility and Beautification

Certain South Corridor sites need improved visibility from roadways, or are in need of landscaping or signage improvements.

### Recommendations & Implementation Strategy

Improve visibility through landscaping and signage improvements for sites at the south end of the corridor.

- City staff to develop new codes (i.e. Landscape Ordinance) and amend existing codes (i.e. Signs) as necessary, with provisions specifically pertaining to the South Corridor area. (Short-term.)

Create a gateway/entry feature to the City and the South Corridor area at the intersection of Skokie Valley Road and Lake-Cook Road.

- City Staff to work with property owners to create plans for an appropriate entry feature. (Short-term.)

Encourage clean-up, enhance land-scaping and establish new signage along the east facade of the Crossroads Shopping Center.

- City Staff to work with Federal Realty and IDOT. (Short-term.)

Establish effective screening from the adjacent residential uses along the west edge of the South Corridor.

## Access and Circulation

Certain factors combine to create accessibility and circulation problems for South Corridor sites. These include: (1) insufficient loading/unloading areas for auto dealers, which cause car delivery to occur within the Skokie Valley Road right-of-way and thereby blocking traffic flow, (2) U-turn traffic at Skokie Valley Road and Clavey Road, (3) numerous curb cuts, and (4) a lack of pedestrian walkways or bicycle path connections along Skokie Valley Road right-of-way or on the east side of the South Corridor.

### Recommendations & Implementation Strategy

Construct a backage road along the Commonwealth Edison (ComEd) right-of-way on the west side of the South Corridor, extending from Lake-Cook Road on the south to Clavey Road on the north, with an additional leg beginning at a point directly across from the Route 41 southbound entry/exit ramp. The backage road should co-exist with the existing bicycle path current within the ComEd right-of-way. (Long-term.)

Install additional traffic signals along Skokie Valley Road where warranted; if appropriate, at a main entrance to the Crossroads Shopping Center. (Long-term.)

Reduce the number of separate entrances to the Crossroads Shopping Center as appropriate. (Long-term.)

Create additional parking areas on the ComEd right-of-way on the west side of the South Corridor and provide access to those parking areas by creating a system of shared driveways. (Long-term.)

Complete the sidewalk within the east side of the Skokie Valley Road right-of-way. (Short-term.)

Create a pedestrian link and auto link from the Crossroads Shopping Center to the Marriott Courtyard Hotel and Pier 1 Imports. (Long-term.)

# Development Opportunities

## Recommendations & Implementation Strategy

### Auto Dealerships.

In order to allow existing dealerships to expand and make available South Corridor sites for retail development, opportunities to relocate all of the auto dealerships along Skokie Valley Road between Lake-Cook Road and Clavey Road to another location within the Skokie Highway Corridor should be explored. The dealerships should remain within the City of Highland Park and within the Skokie Highway Corridor, either within the triangle of land north of Clavey Road that currently contains three auto dealerships, or within an area of the North Highway Corridor designated for such development. This may include a multi-level or multi-dealership facility.

Encourage relocation of auto dealerships between Lake-Cook and Clavey Roads to designated areas within the North Highway Corridor; assemble these sites for large-scale retail uses.

- City Staff to work with property owners to review Skokie Corridor Strategic Plan and discuss potential redevelopment opportunities. (On-going.)

### East Side of Skokie Valley Road.

Encourage the expansion of the Crossroads Shopping Center, or the redevelopment of a new mixed-use center, that extends from Lake-Cook Road on the south to the Route 41 southbound entry/exit ramp on the north.

- Relocate auto dealer south of Crossroads to site within North Corridor. (On-going.)

Develop a mixed-use hotel/office complex at the southeastern edge of the Corridor along Lake-Cook Road that is attached to an expanded Crossroads or other new Shopping Center immediately to the north. (Long-term.)

Develop expanded parking facilities to include a parking deck to serve the recommended expanded mixed-use development on the east side of the South Corridor. (Long-term.)

### West Side of Skokie Valley Road.

The west side of the South Corridor is currently constrained by shallow lot depths, ranging typically from 150 to just under 300 ft. This is inadequate for the development of large scale business parks or corporate office headquarters; however, it may be possible to develop big or medium box retail uses if a number of sites can be consolidated to allow for greater flexibility in site planning.

Redevelopment should occur on a large scale basis, which may be achieved through the adoption of a minimum lot size requirement and a decrease in required yard setbacks.

Shared ingress/egress and parking facilities should be created as west side parcels are redeveloped.

Note: Implementation of elements of this plan can only occur through a concerted effort between the public and private sector. The City should consider adopting the necessary ordinances to allow for financing options such as a private development corporation, redevelopment district or a tax increment financing district to encourage retail redevelopment of the South Skokie Highway Corridor business district.