



Winnetka Downtown Master Plan

Work Plan

The work plan provided in the RFP is thorough and appropriate for a downtown / business district plan and we propose to follow it. Details of our methodology for the specific tasks are noted in the sections below, along with anticipated task deliverables, meetings and role of Village staff.

TASK 1

DATA COLLECTION – EXISTING CONDITIONS

Primary work in this task will consist of field data collection, and review of policy and regulatory related Village documents. As specified in the RFP, data would be collected for the overall study area at the parcel / building level and include: land use, streetscape, parking, transportation systems, urban design conditions, and zoning. Existing conditions contained in Village reports, documents, databases or the GIS system would be used as a base line for data collection and then field verified as needed.

Existing Village plans and regulatory ordinances will be reviewed to determine their relevance to and impact on the study area. The consultant will confer with Village staff and the Working Group to best understand the status of implementation recommendations in the plans, consistency of current development regulations with those plans, and the extent to which development regulations support desired forms of development in the study area. This evaluation (in concert with the data collection described above and the stakeholder discussions in Task 2) is an important start to the process. It defines an initial understanding for the consultant team of the policy objectives of the Village, and the relative consistency of these objectives with existing conditions of the study area. In short, this task frames the question “Are we where we want to be? And if not, what is the difference between our goals and where we are today?”

- Deliverable - Existing Conditions Report.
- Meetings - Present report to Working Group.
- Staff Role - Provide any available existing conditions reports, data, and relevant GIS files. Also provide status on planning policy implementation, current infrastructure projects, and development code effectiveness.

TASK 2

COMMUNITY INPUT - VISIONING

The first step in this task is creation of the Communications Plan described in the RFP. The plan would customize the range of input techniques we apply to what works in Winnetka.

We have consistently had good results with traditional meetings and workshops as sources of public input by making them interactive and enjoyable. Recently we have made use of 21st century technology to employ websites and smart phones as public input tools. These work well in communities with high levels of public interest and engagement; we have recently used them in Glencoe, Champaign, and Chicago, IL.

We have found individual and small group interviews to be one of the most effective tools to get honest, off-the-record input into the beginning stages of the plan. Too often, planning processes have neglected to focus on these interviews relying largely on public meetings. Yet if individuals, business owners and property owners are brought in very early into the process, we can make sure the process incorporates their perspectives from a very early stage.

A variety of community input techniques will be applied as determined appropriate to the meetings specified in the RFP for public input tasks over the course of the project:

1. Stakeholder interviews (min of 20 stakeholders interviewed individually or in groups)
 2. Village representatives (initial meeting)
 3. Monthly meetings with Working Group (12 meetings plus 2 for plan drafting)
 4. Three status meeting with the Village Council
 5. Two public input sessions for the community
- Deliverables - 1) Communications Plan at outset of task and 2) Community Input / Vision Report as concluding item. The Vision Report will present an updated draft vision statement / goals / objectives for consideration by the Working Group.
 - Meetings - Community meetings noted above.
 - Staff Role - Assist with outreach / logistics for stakeholder and overall community meetings.



Provide insight regarding past public input in support of preparing the Communications Plan.

TASK 3 MARKET ANALYSIS

There have been a variety of planning efforts conducted in Winnetka over the years, but too often studies do not take into account the realities of the market, the interests of property owners, and the ability to educate all constituencies on the importance of reaching shared goals that benefit all sides of the equation.

We have selected three market firms with exceptional track records. They all understand high-end suburban development, have experience in commercial, residential, and mixed-use, and have long track records not only at market analysis, but strategic thinking.

Teska will work hand-in-hand with the market firm from day 1 in a partnership effort to identify the demand, consider all options, understand the dynamics of the complex nature of redevelopment, and put forward a number of scenarios for the Village to choose from.

We have taken note of recent changes to the Winnetka zoning ordinance which have implemented the recommendations of ULI and are similar to our team's philosophy – having clear expectations and desires can dramatically improve the development environment in the community.

All three market firms that we recommend have committed to completing the tasks set out in the RFP. This will be done early in the project to inform the planning process, set expectations, educate the community and gain consensus on overall market strategies.

The analysis completed in Task 3 will then be incorporated into the land use strategies in Task in Task 4.

As a result of the Market Analysis, the Village will have an understanding of:

1. The key product types best justified in the market for each of the four business districts;
2. Detailed analysis of existing conditions including identification of barriers to existing commercial spaces

3. Understanding of competitive retail markets including nearby downtowns and shopping centers;
4. Analysis of the supply and demand for various housing product types including targeted price points, types of amenities required, and appropriateness for each business district;
5. Understanding of trends in mixed-use development in suburban downtowns including a review of all projects under development or construction in similar high-end markets;
6. Evaluation of potential redevelopment sites from a market point of view;
7. Identification of development barriers as perceived by the development community.

Approaches proposed by the three market analysis firms to this and other development related tasks of the downtown plan are presented in Section 9.

- Deliverable - Market Analysis Report.
- Meetings - Present report to Working Group.
- Staff Role - Village and GIS Consortium to provide existing data and reports (beyond what has been provided for this proposal).

TASK 4 RECOMMENDATIONS & SITE SPECIFIC OPPORTUNITIES

A plan for overall land use in the study area business districts will be determined in this task. This plan element considers what aspects of the business districts should remain unchanged and what areas should be considered for other type of land uses or businesses. To that end, analysis in this task is combined with the Task 3 Market Analysis and Task 7 Regulatory Review to find the balance between market realities, community desires, and regulatory standards.

As noted in the approach section of this proposal, this is where the planning process asks the questions “Do we have what we want?”, “What can we expect to attract?”, and “How do we secure what’s best for the Village?” The overall land use plan will address these questions generally for the complete study area.



As directed in the RFP, four specific sites (one of which will be the Post Office site) will be considered at a higher level of analysis. This step will apply the expertise of all members of the consultant team in addressing: land use, circulation and access, parking, and building form / orientation. Findings from the Market Assessment will be key to this work to ensure a realistic set of plan recommendations. We find that this point in the process can become challenging as the realities of development finance are balanced against a community vision for the end product. It will be important to work closely with the Working Group along with staff to consider trade-offs that may be necessary to facilitate development. As we have done with clients in the past, we will work closely with the Village to consider how factors like building size, land sale price, and permitted land use impact development feasibility. Teska has experience working with communities to determine appropriate land use, form and density of development on public property, including having recently advised the City of Lake Forest in a developer selection process for a City owned site in the downtown.

Teska's experience with private sector development clients will come into play in this task. That work has helped us to understand the real world needs of the development community in site planning and construction. This is particularly true in that the Village has identified specific sites, and that those sites are complex, relatively small, infill parcels. In working with developers we have learned that attention to detail (even seemingly mundane items like trash removal, snow storage, and delivery locations) is essential to planning for feasible development.

As part of the Communication Plan process, the consultant and Village will consider if it is appropriate for Winnetka that the four site specific evaluations be done in a charrette format. This intensive workshop approach brings all professional disciplines, stakeholders, Village officials, and public together at one time to develop draft plans. Rather than asking people to simply react to an end product, they are invited to contribute to the plans as they are developed.

- Deliverable - Market Analysis Report.
- Meetings - Present report to Working Group.
- Staff Role - Village and GIS Consortium to provide existing data and reports (beyond what has been provided for this proposal).

TASK 5 PARKING, TRANSPORTATION, AND CIRCULATION

Transportation infrastructure has a powerful impact on influencing the character of a place. In downtown districts where streets serve an important role as public space, strategies aimed at promoting regional accessibility such as abundant parking and fast traffic can conflict with maintaining a walkable, bikeable and transit-oriented character. The Parking, Transportation, and Circulation analysis will focus on developing a balance that ensures transportation in Winnetka continues to support the economic development and quality of life goals.

The parking analysis will include a parking utilization and turnover study during a weekday and weekend to quantify all observations the team completes of parking in the four business districts. We will provide recommendations to improve the existing parking conditions, including wayfinding, additional parking locations, shared parking policy and incentives to walk from less convenient parking locations. Recommendations will also be provided to protect neighborhood residential streets from overflow commercial parking.

The transportation existing conditions analysis will provide a snapshot of existing transportation infrastructure, policies, and operations. The consultant will conduct observations of the transportation network as a pedestrian, a bicyclist, a transit rider, and a driver. All existing transportation data will be analyzed, including volumes, crashes, barriers/gaps, and connections to destinations.

The overall goal of the transportation and circulation plan will be to encourage more activity in Downtown Winnetka and minimize any negative transportation impacts through a multi-modal perspective. SSE is a national leader in multi-modal Downtown transportation planning and our success with other communities will inform how we approach potential recommendations. On-street parking, intersection geometry, traffic signals, stop-sign and crosswalk locations will be examined with an eye to improving conditions for pedestrians, bicycles and transit, while also accommodating automobile traffic with



strategies that are sensitive to enhancing downtown's vitality as a walkable center. We will consider the role of streets not only as a place for people, bikes, buses and cars to move, but also work closely with the entire team to identify opportunities for economic development within the right-of-way.

Building a culture of respect for all users on Downtown streets will require more than infrastructure; it will involve a multi-faceted set of solutions that includes policies for pedestrians and bicyclists, programs that will educate motorists, pedestrians, and bicyclists, strategies to encourage people to walk and bike more, and policies to enforce certain user behavior. These will all be included in the transportation plan.

The most challenging part of any transportation plan is typically implementation, since so many plans rely on one or two big-ticket items. Our team has had great success with transportation implementation by identifying short-medium- and long-term actions to achieve the goals that result from this planning process and parallel ones too. Our approach will focus on a strategy to leverage the various initiatives to generate a whole greater than a simple sum of parts. This will involve specifying sequencing, coordination of activities, and identifying various implementation "paths" that show how results and changes from achieving a certain project can help feed-into and make a subsequent project easier to complete and/or more successful. We will also consider implementation issues that arise from policies and practices, particularly those relating to transportation agency norms, and discuss as solutions leading industry design standards for Downtown areas.

- Deliverable - Parking and Transportation Report
- Meetings - Present report to Working Group
- Staff Role – Provide history and perspectives on past and current transportation issues in districts.

While the four business districts are well known in the community and surrounding area, use of wayfinding to clarify access (whether by car, bike, foot, or public transportation), parking locations, community facilities and amenities invites more frequent use by all. Wayfinding signage and streetscaping also represents an opportunity to enhance the aesthetic of a business district and establish (or reinforce) a local brand. Teska has recently conducted wayfinding assignments for Glendale Heights, Oak Lawn and Fox River Grove. Streetscaping projects are currently underway or have recently been completed in Evanston, Lemont, and Glencoe.

To evaluate the potential for these enhancements the consultant will work with Village Utility and Public Works staff to understand thoroughly the status of current utilities and infrastructure in the business districts, any planned changes to those services that could impact the areas, and related issues. In addition, we would review the 2007 Commercial Districts Master Streetscape and Wayfinding Plan and anticipated next steps in those programs. It is not anticipated at this time that an entirely new streetscape program would be recommended. The focus would be on expanding current improvements considered most desirable and recommending how to maximize existing infrastructure investment.

Notions raised in the RFP related to technological amenities present exciting options to potentially provide conveniences to visitors and put Winnetka on the cutting edge of such technology. The consultant team will evaluate best practices in these areas and suggest how they might be incorporated into Winnetka business districts.

- Deliverable - Infrastructure Findings and Recommendations Memorandum
- Meetings - Present report to Working Group
- Staff Role - Provide direction regarding utility systems, needs, and plans.

TASK 6 INFRASTRUCTURE

Streetscape and wayfinding are important elements in making business districts more inviting and comfortable for visitors. More to the point, they serve as economic development components for the business districts.

TASK 7 LAND USE AND REGULATORY REVIEW

The consultant will consider the regulatory elements noted in the RFP (Commercial sign code, Zoning Ordinance, Retail Overlay District, and Commercial Design Guidelines) in light of the market evaluation, vision, existing conditions evaluations and preliminary land use plans. Again, the plan will ask the



questions, “Do our own codes advance or hinder the form of development considered desirable by the community” and “Do current codes dovetail with or butt up against current market realities?”

As noted in the RFP, it is not the intent of this task to rewrite the codes, but to consider the extent to which they promote quality development that supports the character of the Village. Therefore, the consultant work will focus on identifying issues and provide recommendations for bringing the regulations in line with the community vision set forth as part of the plan process.

The issues noted in this task will be considered throughout the plan process, and specifically investigated during the stakeholder interviews. Based on the findings of the ULI work, it will be essential to understand the give and take between local land use regulations and ongoing development and leasing in the business districts. In all communities there is an inherent conflict between land use regulations and business operations. It need not be overbearing or burdensome, but it must be recognized: businesses often convey a need for signs larger than permitted by the sign code, zoning entitlement may take longer than desired, landlords seek to rent to businesses not permitted by the overlay district, and design guidelines may require costly aesthetic improvements for new businesses. These become real costs to the business and development communities.

The bottom line is that regulations must be predictable to applicants. For the business community, while the regulations may add to the cost of doing business, those costs must be understood from the outset and not a surprise late in the application process. From the Village’s perspective, the regulations must clearly add value to the community. If a sign code regulation is in place but does not enhance the community, it can be eliminated.

- Deliverable - Technical Audit of Land Use and Regulatory Standards
- Meetings - Present report to Working Group
- Staff Role - Assist consultant in understanding current applications of code and outline the extent to which development occurring under the codes meet the standards and expectations of the community.

TASK 8 IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

As noted in the approach section of this proposal, implementation strategies must be aspirational in aim but realistic in application. With this in mind, the consultant will make action oriented and realistic recommendations for plan implementation.

Recommendations will include prioritization and rationale for actions related to revising regulations, facilitating new development, installing new infrastructure, and others. The team’s expertise in these areas allows us to understand the magnitude of those recommendations (in terms of staff time required and cost of installation). Our team’s experience in implementation has been to work with the Village to prioritize, set realistic timelines, and assign specific responsibilities so that the actions identified will be implemented.

- Deliverable - Draft Implementation Strategies Report.
- Meetings - Present report to Working Group.
- Staff Role - Work with Consultant to outline budget and staffing practices.

TASK 9 SCHEDULE OF REPORTS TO VILLAGE COUNCIL

The consultant will conduct project status meetings with the Village Council as directed in the RFP.

TASK 10 FINAL REPORT AND ADOPTION

The consultant will compile all the elements of the work to date into a complete downtown plan. A draft report will first be prepared and presented to the Working Group. The plan will be revised based on comments from the group.

- Deliverable - Final Downtown Plan (25 copies).
- Meetings - Present report to Working Group.



- Staff Role - Compile comments from Working Group into a single set of Village comments.