



Memorandum

Winnetka Downtown Master Plan

Date: October 20th, 2015

**Subject: Kick-Off Meeting Steering Committee + Working Group
Results Priority Exercise (page 1) and Feedback from Walking Tour (page 4)**

QUESTION #1

What are the Greatest Assets of Elm Street District?

Overall Themes:

- **Attractive architecture, charm, appearance, scale**
- **Variety and mix of retailers and unique merchants**
- **Access and walkability**
- **Post Office Site**

Group 1

Architecture and uses / Good mix of retail, restaurants and offices

Heart and soul of community / Pleasant Environment

Access – Walkability, train stations, accessible parking

Group 2

Scale of buildings / consistent, high-quality architecture on both sides of tracks / “Has all the stops”

Welcoming, softening appearance – Buildings, streetscape, parks, sidewalks, trees, etc.

Free parking – Balanced relative to demand versus need

Group 3

Redevelopment of Post Office Site

Diversity of retail - Grand Food, Chestnut Court, Coffee Shops, Laundry Mall / Quality architecture

Access – Train station and parking

Group 4

Compact, walkable, attractive district with a variety of stores

Independent, unique retailers with the opportunity for more food and beverage

Parking is good – Balanced relative to demand versus need

Group 5

Independent shops, restaurants and coffee shops -- -intriguing appearance with charm



Access to transit – Metra
Post Office Site

QUESTION #2

What are the Greatest Challenges Facing Hubbard Woods?

Overall Themes:

- **Parking and traffic along Green Bay**
- **Vacancies**
- **Lack of cohesion / mix of uses**

Group 1

Heavy traffic, especially at Tower and Green Bay Road
Parking – Not enough in the right spot
Lack of gathering places / Vacant Storefronts

Group 2

Difficulty of movement / Parking - On-street Green Bay road, lot and periphery
Supply and demand – Not enough retailers for vacancies / Few “need” stores, more specialty
Lacks strong theme – Design district? / Unanchored and disconnected / No signage

Group 3

Parking, traffic, parking garage and lack of foot traffic
Vacancy rate / Cost of occupancy
Obsolete buildings - No family restaurants

Group 4

Quality of streetscape along Green Bay – Narrow R.O.W lacks pedestrian amenities, IDOT hold-ups
Need for more complimentary uses with staying power / lack of food and beverage
Infrastructure issues, stressful parking, deteriorating train station

Group 5

Vacancies, including vacant land, aging train station
No central theme or thread through district – lack of cohesion, restaurants, coffee shops
Difficult wayfinding – Parking deck, tower court alley



QUESTION #3

What are the Greatest Needs of Indian Hill?

Overall Themes:

- Lack of identity
- Address high school population
- Safety and connectivity of street crossings at Green Bay and Winnetka

Group 1

Streetscape improvements

PR and branding

Retail east of the railroad

Group 2

Stores don't tailor to New Trier students

Doesn't feel like a district – busy intersection

Pedestrian relief and safety at intersection of Green Bay and Winnetka

Group 3

Lack of character / doesn't look like Winnetka

Lack of commercial development to attract people

Needs rezoning for multi-family, mixed use and parking

Group 4

Not inviting or walkable - improve safety via the connectivity of sidewalks

Factor in the high school – student population, desired uses, foot traffic, parking demand, etc.

Lack of identity / gateway – no sense of arrival / blurred line between Kenilworth

Group 5

Lack of identity at south entry

Failure to take advantage of student population

More attention to pedestrian crossing at Green Bay and Winnetka



Feedback from Downtown Master Plan Walking Tour

Two walking tours were conducted through the Downtown. Led by Michael Blue and Scott Goldstein of Teska Associates, the groups stopped at various key locations and participants, including members of the Steering Committee and Working Groups, were asked to discuss and provide comment on certain questions and/or whatever came to mind. Following is a summary of the comments made by participants throughout the tours.

Stop 1 (Pine & Green Bay) – What’s striking about this gateway?

- Guardrail is noticeable
- Absence of any bike lane
- No sidewalk on east side of GBR
- Nice appearance for grocery store (Grand Foods), including landscaped parkway; odd transition to sidewalk being adjacent to moving traffic ½ block south
- Growth along railroad tracks not attractive
- Chain link fencing
- No sign announcing entry – not a true gateway?

Stop 2 (Green Bay, Chestnut and Spruce) – looking south, is the appearance and character inviting?

- Gas station wall blank and unattractive – could be a nice gateway feature
- This is an important fork in the road, and you need to know to turn here to enter downtown (not intuitive, no signage).
- Hanging basket planters are nice
- Street lighting is dated
- Laundry mall building has attractive scale and inviting appearance, storefronts lit at dusk and active with visitors
- Outdoor seating (at Laundry) is inviting, but has a challenging view (of service station and a parking lot);
- Parking appears to be plentiful

Stop 3 (Elm and Chestnut) – what is uniquely Winnetka about this stop? What tells you that you are in Winnetka?

- This corner represents the established character of the village.
- There is a lot of mingling and pedestrian activity at this corner.
- This is a place where people bring their dogs.
- The tree at the northeast corner of the intersection is very important
- This intersection is the true heart of East Elm (more than one person saying that East elm has its own “heart”).

WINNETKA

DOWNTOWN MASTER PLAN

- Post office is a significant component of this district's identity and activity level;
- 4 way stop (makes for better pedestrian environment)
- Commercial space on 3 corners provides strength
- Architecture itself isn't necessarily unique to Winnetka, but buildings are of high quality and appropriate scale
- Active pedestrian environment and assortment of independent shops make this a uniquely Winnetka area;
- Brick areas of sidewalks nice

Stop 4 (East edge of Dwyer Park) - what makes for a positive downtown feeling? What is important about the edges of downtown abutting homes?

- Park provides room for significant landscaping and a buffer from commercial activity.
- Church on northeast corner provides a nice transition and adds visual interest
- Park is definitely "part of downtown"

Stop 5 (Oak and Chestnut) – looking north – appearance and character inviting?

- The group did not like the newer building at the southeast corner of Oak & Chestnut.
 - The design elements used on this building attempted to mimic those of the building to the north (Trifecta restaurant building) and was not successful in doing so.
- Winnetka commercial architecture is eclectic.
- Commercial architecture has a lot of variety and is interesting and not boring.
- The architecture in the commercial districts is what brings people to Winnetka.
- Winnetka doesn't want to be like Evanston or Highland Park.
- On a scale of 1-5 with 5 being "very controlled" and 1 being "no control", the Village should have a mid-level "3" control regarding regulating the appearance of developments
- East side is inviting, west is not
- Buildings on east have appearance of "small town charm"
- Even though newer building southeast corner (812 oak) is newer and a story taller, it still feels inviting and does fit in relatively well; wall plane and roof plane are broken up.
- Area could benefit by some area for congregating – only space that fulfills that currently is privately owned (Trifecta);
- Oak Street (looking east) is not a particularly attractive area, but is very active during the day (Oak Street feels separated from the "warmth and inviting character" of Chestnut St

Stop 6 (Oak/Linden Green Bay) – describe landmarks visible from this spot

- Village hall the dominant landmark
- Buildings on all four corners are setback from the intersection

- There is too much concrete at this key entry, and intersection is difficult for drivers and pedestrians
- Drivers coming down green bay road from south don't know where to go, and don't have any indication that there is retail nearby in either east or west elm
- Green space at northwest corner of elm and green bay is "well intentioned", but lost amid all the concrete;
- Poor pedestrian environment for commuters leaving train and walking west

Stop 7 (chestnut court) – attractive? Why/why not?

- "It's great".
- The Mall is something that brings Winnetka residents downtown.
- There was a discussion concerning the apartments in the downtown, including the condition of the units (old, not updated), the demographics of renters (millennials, single parents) and the attractiveness of the buildings from the exterior.
- Nice building details and scale
- Pedestrian court is beautiful, but would benefit by extending westward and better interface with Chestnut Street
- Pedestrian scale lighting is attractive
- The amount of space dedicated to parking seems excessive, particularly behind Village Hall
- Garbage collection throughout the north south alleyway are in plain view

Stop 7 (chestnut court) – how might development of PO site affect this area?

- Easy to envision a connection from existing chestnut court to Dwyer park.
- Important to have a well-designed connection between dwyer park and downtown; connection could introduce downtown as an "extension of Dwyer park", and vice versa;

Stop 8 (Elm and Green Bay) – what's notable?

- General comments were made about there being disconnect between the East and West Elm districts. Specifically, the unfriendliness of pedestrian paths from one side of Green Bay Rd. to the other.
- A pedestrian landscaped island is desired to break up the distance. Participants noted that the distance and appearance of the intersection created a psychological factor that made it undesirable to cross the street.
- Crossing green bay at this location is extremely difficult for pedestrians
- View looking east is attractive and "very Winnetka";
- "even the banks (Elm and Green Bay) are attractive"
- Confusing layout for drivers
- "you would probably already need to be aware to know there are businesses to the east and west"

Stop 9 (Lincoln & Elm)

- More restaurants in this district than in West Elm.
- Street widths are wider in East Elm than in West Elm.
- There is a significant amount of traffic on Elm St.
- There is seating at every corner at the Elm - Lincoln intersection.
- “Pleasant”
- “Friendly”
- Stopping further down at the Galleria building, several comments about that development were made.
 - The center element of the building at the end of the courtyard was not looked at favorably (“look at our elevator lobby”).
 - With the courtyard feature it breaks up the street wall of the building.
 - The courtyard is underutilized.
 - The first floor window on the north end of the building are blacked out and not interesting at all.
 - There are a number of commercial offices in the building’s lower level but it is not clear what they are.
- Lincoln and Elm is at a disadvantage because it’s difficult to see from Green Bay Road
- Looking east on Elm it feels very quiet
- Very little activity (at this hour); noted that Conney’s is responsible for a large amount of the commerce during the day;

Stop 10 (Looking up Lincoln)

- Attractive scale on Lincoln, and a surprisingly large number of vehicles parked during early evening;
- Businesses are more “consumer oriented”
- Many vacancies
- Several buildings (and sidewalks) are attractively lit;