UPP 577- SPATIAL PLANNING
FALL 2021
FINAL REPORT

# FOREST PARK

## A Story of People & Place

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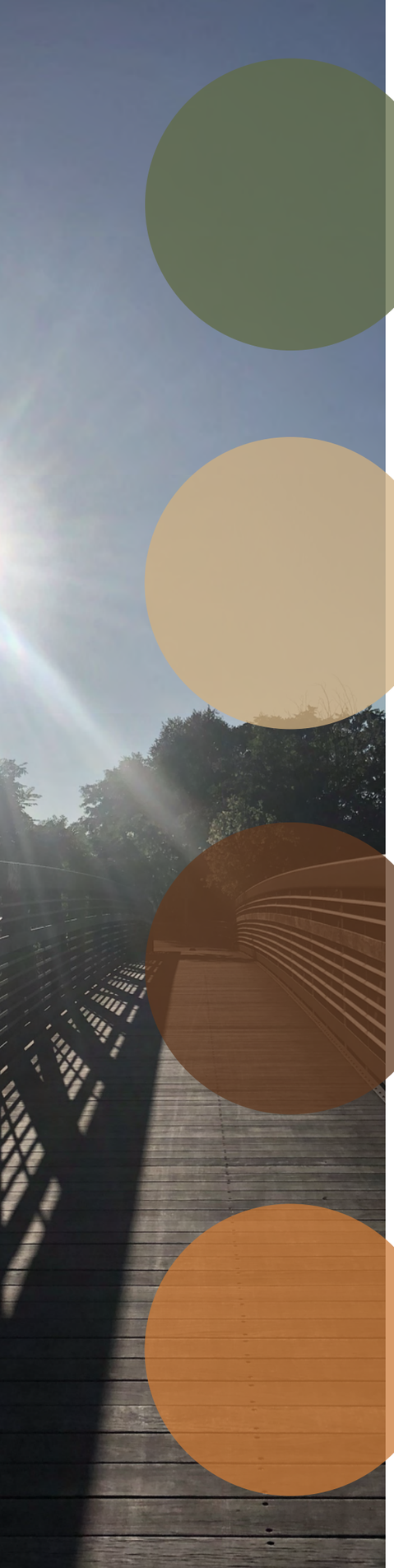

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# Introduction

To many Chicagoans, Forest Park is purely the end of the Blue Line. If you're heading west, you're most likely on the Forest Park-bound train. A few people might recognize the Village for its abundance of cemeteries, the five within the Village limits comprising their own, predominant land use category and home to more than 800,000 people – 50 times the current living population of Forest Park.

The Village of Forest Park is subject to external trends both regionally and globally. Climate change, changes in the local and national economy due to the Covid-19 pandemic, and widespread shifts to green infrastructure and electrified vehicles all play roles in the local scene. Additionally, local challenges persist as well. Despite descriptions of Forest Park as 'diverse,' recent current events and demographic data present a different story. In our report, we will demonstrate some contextual findings about the Black experience in Forest Park that reflect a concerning trend related to population loss.

Our Final Report for Spatial Planning II: Methods presents our findings from Projects 1 and 2 from each half of the Fall 2021 semester. In this final report, we rely upon previous findings from our demographic assessment in the community profile, along with an economic analysis and community engagement strategy, to develop a spatial redevelopment proposal for the area next to the Altenheim Senior Living Home.

We use a variety of techniques to present a thorough depiction of our chosen community. Our group examined the region of Forest Park through the lens of quantitative demographic and socioeconomic data, existing condition analysis, historical context, current events, and community stakeholder interviews. We used various software to create a spatial analysis of the community through mass-modeling, cross-sectional illustrations, 3D transects, aerial photographs, and on-the-ground photos taken during a site visit.

We compiled the findings of this report to the best of our ability, but wish to stress that all six of us remain outsiders to Forest Park, and this portrayal will likely contain some inaccuracies or absences of relevant information. We therefore remain open to constructive criticism of our methods and analysis.

Building on our existing knowledge of the community and its needs, we dove into economic analysis, looking at topics such as the local business market, affordability indices, and consumer spending. We sought specifically to determine whether our spatial proposal could act as an economic catalyst for the region while maintaining the character of the Village.

Our Community Engagement Strategy, Cultivating Community, is based on the principles of inclusivity, impact, and empowerment, and the belief that every individual deserves a voice in the choices regarding their community. To that end, we developed a strategy that would reach a diversity of people within Forest Park, understanding that different people show up in different ways, and we need to meet people where they are.

The final proposal for the Altenheim site, entitled Green Expanse, addresses community needs based on both empirical data and community engagement. We establish our vision, goals, and strategies around four principles: mobility and accessibility, green connectivity, flexibility, and inclusivity. Our principles are rooted in the idea of green mutualism: connecting people to the natural world and to each other through a carefully designed, yet flexible built environment.

# Land Acknowledgment

It is important to understand the historical trajectory that has brought us to reside on the land in which we are today and to do the same for the land we study, in an effort to understand our place within that history. Land acknowledgments do not exist in a past tense or historical context: colonialism is an ongoing process, and we need to build mindfulness of our present participation.

We would like to acknowledge we are studying a community first tended to by the Wea, Potawatomi, Kaskaskia, Piankeshaw, and Peoria tribes. We venerate those who have been stewards of or become a part of these lands.


*Source: Forest Park Historical Society*

# Background:
## History & Timeline

The Village of Forest Park is alive with the memories of those who have passed through before. Echoes of past joys and conflicts extending far beyond the Village boundaries are heard in winds sweeping through the tree-lined cemeteries, the whistle of trains reaching their last destination west of the city, and in the cheers of crowds at softball games. The tale of this town weaves ancient tradition into modern times, the need for a final resting place into a space for fun and games, and the actions of regional characters cast within larger sociopolitical dramas.

### The Original Settlers

Forest Park, like so many communities across the country, represents one of the many stories of white colonialist imperialism within the United States. The original inhabitants of this land as far back as 1783 were the Weanamees, who chose the area because of its beauty and notable elevation due to the glacial ridge upon which it rested. While tribal conflict forced the Weanamees west by the Potawatomis, a rival tribe from Wisconsin, the arrival of white settlers brought about centuries of forcible removal, assimilation, and control of all Indigenous groups across the region.

After Illinois joined the Union, large swathes of land west of Chicago were set aside for War of 1812 veterans, which ultimately led to decades of Indigeonous removal. The Native groups that "assimilated well" were allowed to stay, exemplified by the story of French-Native American trader, Leon Bourassa, and his Potawatomi wife, Margaret, who were given a grant of 160 acres by President Van Buren in the area north of what is currently Roosevelt Road.

Native Americans had buried their deceased near the Des Plaines River for centuries, and legend says that Margaret remained near the river to take care of her family's burial site. Today, two Potawatomi burial mounds still remain in Forest Home Cemetery.

### Growth of Cemeteries

Forest Home Cemetery, the most prominent of the official cemeteries, was constructed by Prussian immigrant, Fedinand Haase, who purchased some of the land formerly owned by Bourassa. Haase originally wanted to use the land for farming, but given the land's pastoralism, his German-immigrant counterparts urged him to open the area for everyday use. He created Haase's Park, a new space for active and passive recreation, in 1863.

Along Madison Street, German Lutherans built Concordia Cemetery in 1872, and the non-denominational German Waldheim Cemetery in 1873. The Village of Oak Park then asked Haase to build a non-sectarian, English-speaking cemetery, so he created Forest Home Cemetery from Haase's Park in 1876. As Chicago barred future cemeteries due to legal ramifications and the property gained renown for its idyllic setting, Haase began selling his land to those who deemed it ideal as a burial ground due to its accessibility & proximity to the city.

To make it easier for people from Chicago to travel to the park and future cemetery, Haase negotiated with the Galena & Chicago Union Railroad (later the Chicago and North Western) to build a spurline from the main railroad to the site in exchange for gravel needed for the company's operations. Over time, the gravel removal eroded most of the Village's original glacial ridge, uncovering several Native American burial mounds.

Although the idea of burying their dead stemmed from local indigenous tradition, Haase originally only allowed white people to be buried there. Paradoxically, the first white interment disinterred 13 Native American sites in the process.

**"A search into the history of Forest Home Cemetery reveals a rich interweaving of customs and cultures."**

- Oak Park River Forest Museum

Interment records reveal a wide range of individuals buried in Forest Park, including four executed men of the Haymarket Affair. Over 15,000 guests attended their funeral at Waldheim, the only cemetery that would accept the bodies, leading to an annual memorial honoring the labor movement. In later years, numerous other prominent labor leaders, anarchists, Socialists, and Communists were buried in "Radicals' Row." Laquan McDonald, one of the many victims of police brutality and structural racism, was buried in Forest Home Cemetery in 2015.

### Transportation and Development Emerge

The beginning of public transportation in Forest Park occurred in 1856, when the railroad constructed a hub where Des Plaines Avenue now approaches the track. The Metropolitan Westside "El" began electrified rapid transit service in 1895. Running through Garfield Park, it became known as the Garfield Line. Soon after the railroad arrived, a landowner, John Henry Quick, renamed the area Harlem after his hometown, and in the aftermath of the 1871 Great Chicago Fire, many individuals sought refuge there.

As seen within Haase's grand parkscape, leisure and pleasure have always been tenets of Forest Park. Opening in 1907, the Forest Park Amusement Park featured a "giant safety coaster," the tallest ride in the nation at the time. Although the roller coaster closed due to a fire in 1922, the Bloomer Girls brought championship softball in the 1930s, quickly becoming a town staple. In 1950, construction of the Eisenhower Expressway caused the playing field, dozens of Forest Park buildings, and a large part of Concordia Cemetery to be demolished. Today, the former location of the field is now occupied by the Forest Park CTA Blue Line station at Desplaines Avenue. The tradition of 16-inch softball lives on though: the Park District's "No-Gloves" National Tournament is held annually, and attracts nearly 10,000 people each July.

During the Great Depression, the Works Progress Administration selected Forest Park for investment, which eventually led to the US Naval Ordnance Plant, Amertorp, to open in 1942. Amertorp provided armament needs for the nation through three wars, employing over 6,000 people. Today, the 6.5 acre site on Roosevelt Road is used as an Army Reserve base – a contentious issue, as some believe its prime location could generate economic activity and help revitalize the stretch of Roosevelt Road it resides on.

Although many of the past faces of Forest Park remain invisible, their memories persist in the burial grounds and cemeteries. This quiet community outside Chicago was the final destination for many, whether a simple trip outside the city or in the journey of life, but today exists as a busy, welcoming Village with a passion for its people and history.

Forest Park Old Cemerates - *Source: Forest Park Historic Society*

***Figure 1 -*** *Forest Park Timeline in the 1800s*

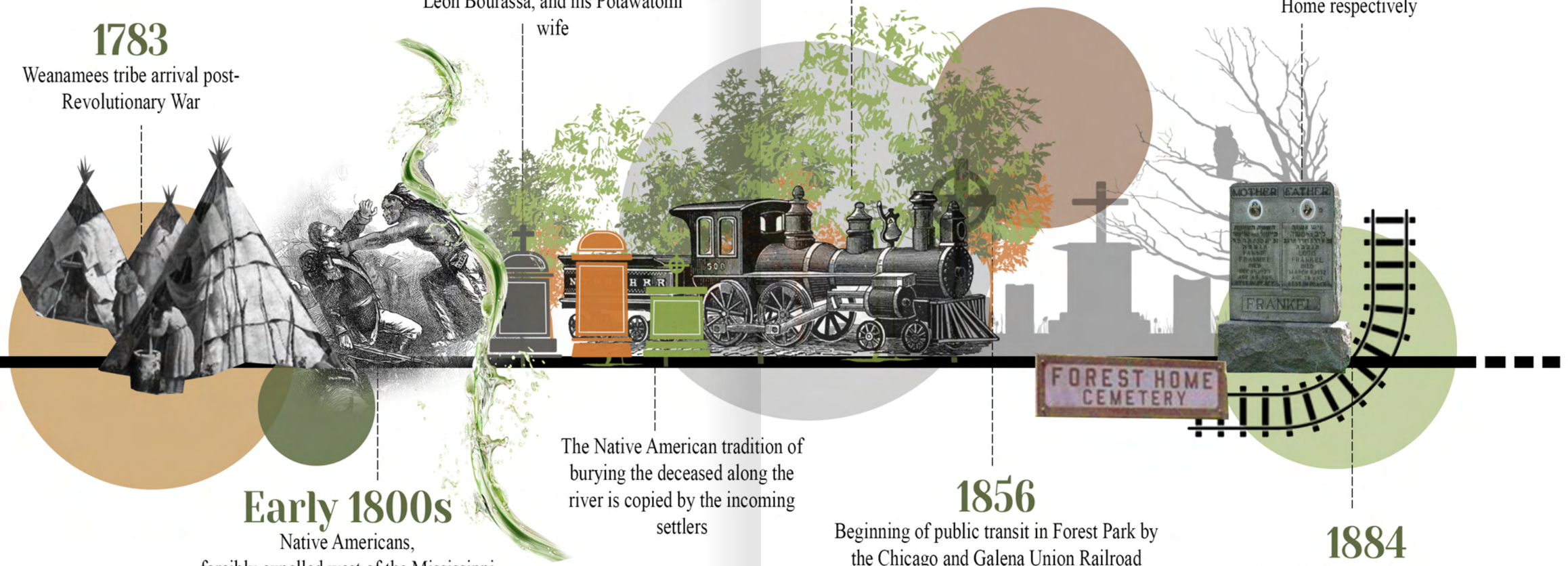
# The 1800s:

## 1783
Weanamees tribe arrival post-Revolutionary War

## Mid 1800s
160 acres of land granted to French-Native American trader, Leon Bourassa, and his Potawatomi wife

## 1850
Land bought by a Prussian immigrant, Ferdinand Haase who created Haase's Park along with a white-only cemetery

## 1862– 1876
The Land became well known for its burial grounds, establishing Concordia Cemetery, German Waldheim Cemetery, and Forest Home respectively




## Early 1800s
Native Americans, forcibly expelled west of the Mississippi River

The Native American tradition of burying the deceased along the river is copied by the incoming settlers

## 1856
Beginning of public transit in Forest Park by the Chicago and Galena Union Railroad

## 1884
Forest Park, formerly known as, Harlem, is incorporated

***Figure 2 -*** *Forest Park Timeline in the 1900s*

# The 1900s:

## 1907
The Village was renamed Forest Park

## 1908
Forest Park Amusement Park opens, bringing the Village to fame with the tallest ride in the U.S. at the time

## 1920
The Forest Park Citizens Protective League is formed to oppose industrial operations that would be built on the land the Park District now occupies

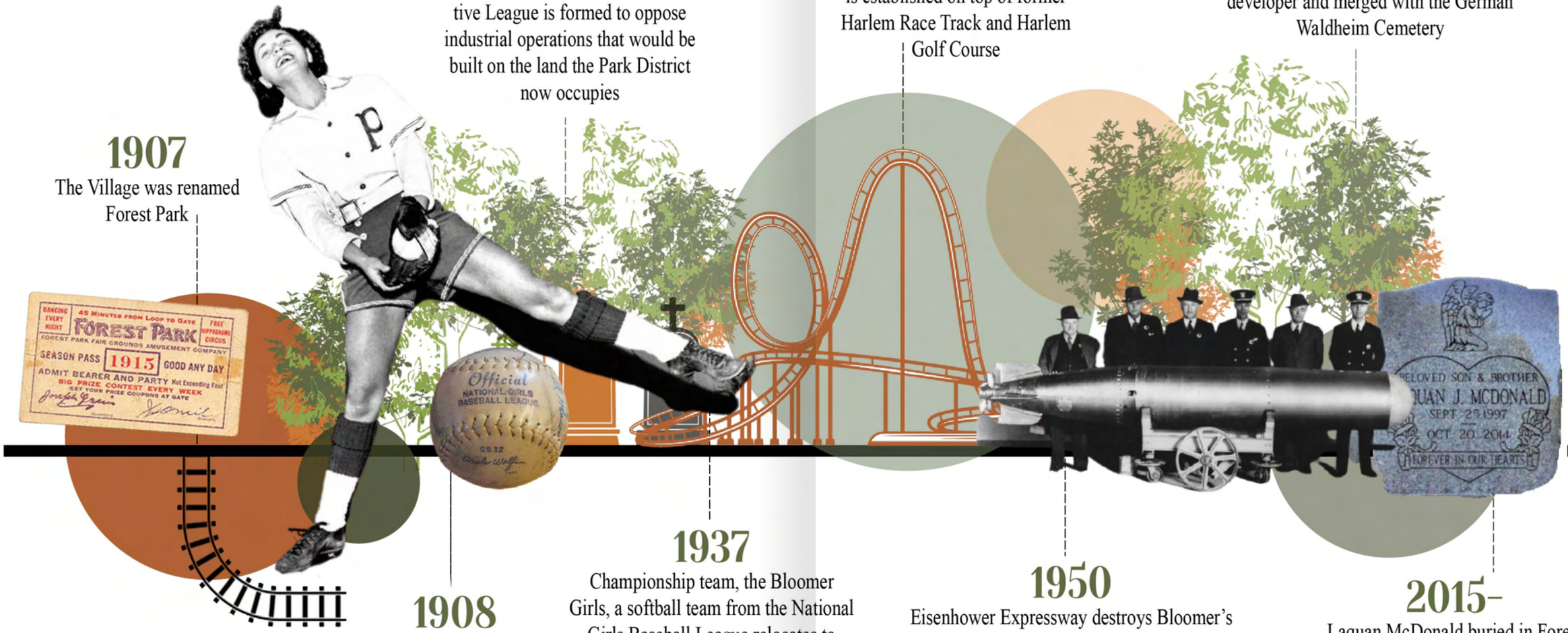
## 1937
Championship team, the Bloomer Girls, a softball team from the National Girls Baseball League relocates to Forest Park

## 1942
US Naval Ordnance Plant Amertorp is established on top of former Harlem Race Track and Harlem Golf Course

## 1950
Eisenhower Expressway destroys Bloomer's softball field, dozens of buildings, and a large sect of Concordia Cemetery

## 1968
Forest Home Cemetery is sold to a Chicago developer and merged with the German Waldheim Cemetery

## 2015–
Laquan McDonald buried in Forest Home Cemetery. Community residents and neighbors come together in pursuit of racial equity



# THE PEOPLE

# I. Community Profile

The Village of Forest Park prides itself on

**“Big city access with small town charm.”**

A quiet community with close proximity to Chicago through I-290 and public transit options such as the Chicago Transit Authority (CTA), Pace, and Metra, the Village offers a respite for those wishing to escape the commotion of city life. The Downtown corridor, Madison Street, is full of restaurants, pubs, bakeries, and small retail shops all within walking distance. In 2008, The Chicago Tribune rated the Village as “The Best in Neighborhood Dining.” The community prides itself on the development of small businesses and the geniality of residents.



# A. Demographics

## 1. Population

According to the 2020 U.S. Decennial Census, Forest Park has

**14,339** in total population

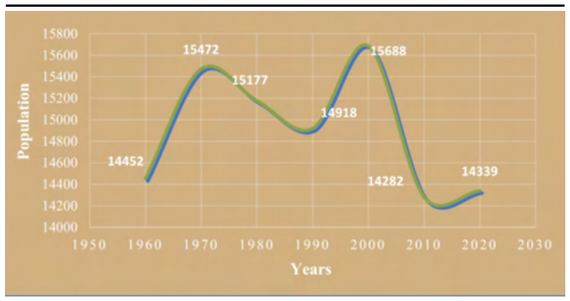
**-8.6%** over the past 20 years

**1.2%** over the last decade

**7,573** households

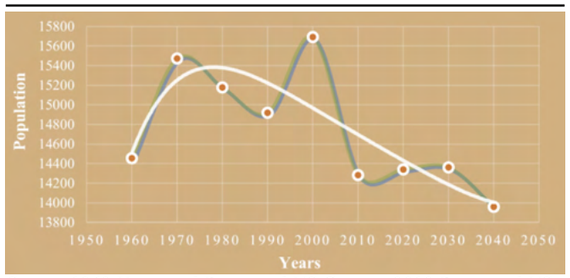
In comparison, Cook County lost 1.9% of its population within the same time (Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning, 2021.) *Figure 3* depicts Forest Park’s recorded population over time. Based on the U.S. Census data from 1960 to 2010, the population of Forest Park is projected to increase to 14,360 in 2030, and 14,569 in 2040, a 1.4% increase over ten years *(see Figure 4.)*

***Figure 3 -*** *1960-2020 Population of Forest Park*




*Source:1960 Historical Decennial US Census*

***Figure 4 -*** *2030 - 2040 Population Forecast*




*Source:1960 Historical Decennial US Census- 2010 Decennial US Census American Community Survey 5- year estimates; Table DP05*

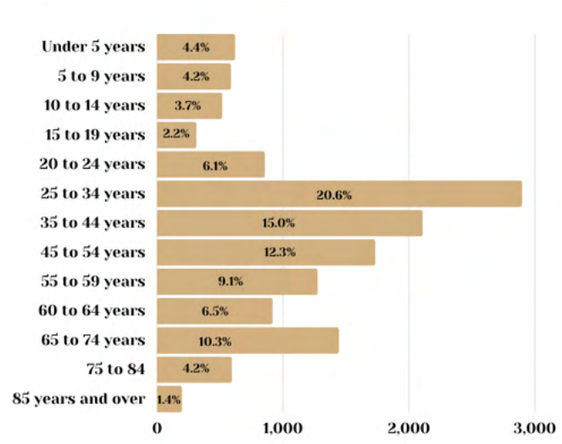
Knowing the distribution of ages within a community is vital to determining land use, social, and public service needs. Children have different spatial requirements - schools, playgrounds, adequate recreation - than an aging population. Knowing community members’ ages will inform decisions related to funding, zoning, and priority issues.

As seen in the 2000 and 2010 Census, the median age of the population within the Village of Forest Park was 38.2, which was slightly higher than that of Cook County, at 35.3. In 2019, the median age rose to 39.5 *(see Figure 5.)*

**38.2** median age in 2010

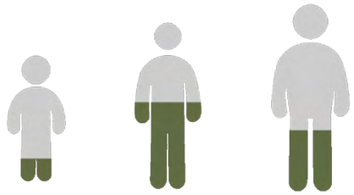
**39.5** median age in 2019

***Figure 5 -*** *Forest Park Age Breakdown*




*Source: 2019 US Census American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates; Table: DP05*

Here is the breakdown of the population percentages showing the main age ranges:



**14.5%** under 14 yrs

**48%** adults (25-54)

**31.5%** adults 55+

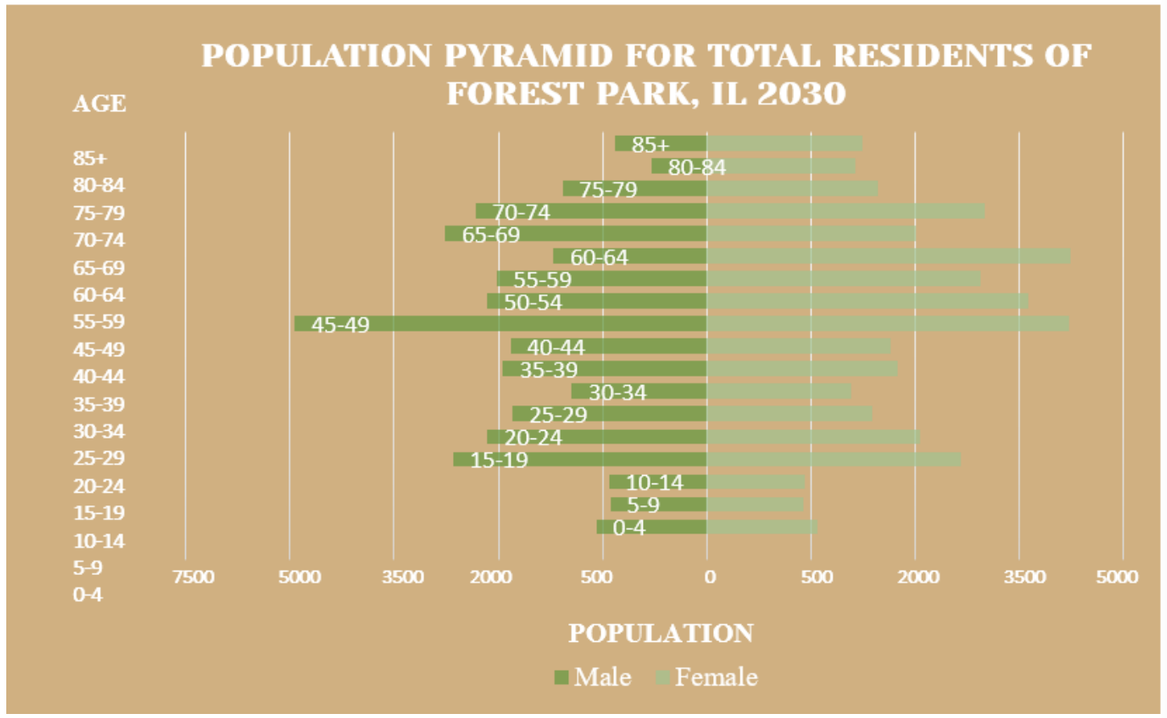
Our planning considerations must include opportunities for aging adults to engage with others through recreation, social activities, and accessible infrastructure; options for single adults looking for entertainment and ways to meet people; and families needing schools, parks, and events.
The large portion of aging adults in Forest Park will need support from proper medical facilities, community services, and a strong social network. The age cohort critical to economic growth is the 20-34 year olds, which currently comprises

**35%** of the population.

As mentioned in the 2014 Forest Park Comprehensive Plan and seen through population data, Forest Park is an aging community, and our planning considerations must include opportunities for older adults to engage with others through recreation, social activities, and accessible infrastructure. We must also seek ways to attract more young people as well.

To create a population pyramid for the year 2030, we used the 2010 American Community Survey five-year estimates for Age and Sex. Our model predicts a population of 13,498 in 2030 *(see Figure 6),* which is different from our population projection by roughly 860 people *(see Figure 5).* The majority of the population will be 60 years and older (32.2%), with the next largest population adults between 40-59 (31%), followed by adults from 20-39 (21%) and finally, adolescents and children under the age of 19 (15.8%). As mentioned in the 2014 Forest Park Comprehensive Plan and seen through population data, Forest Park is an aging community, and our planning considerations must include opportunities for older adults to engage with others through recreation, social activities, and accessible infrastructure. We must also seek ways to attract more young people as well.

***Figure 6 -*** *2030 Population Pyramid Projection for Forest Park Residents*



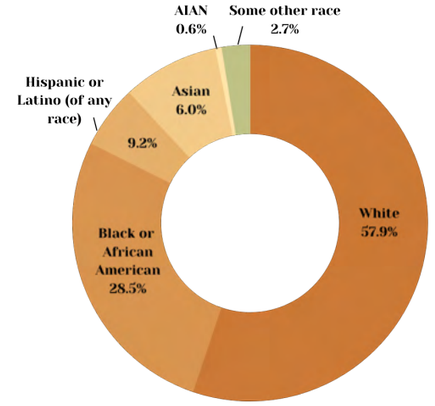

*Source: 2010 Decennial US Census data, American Community Survey 5- year estimates; Table DP05*



# 2. Race & Ethnicity

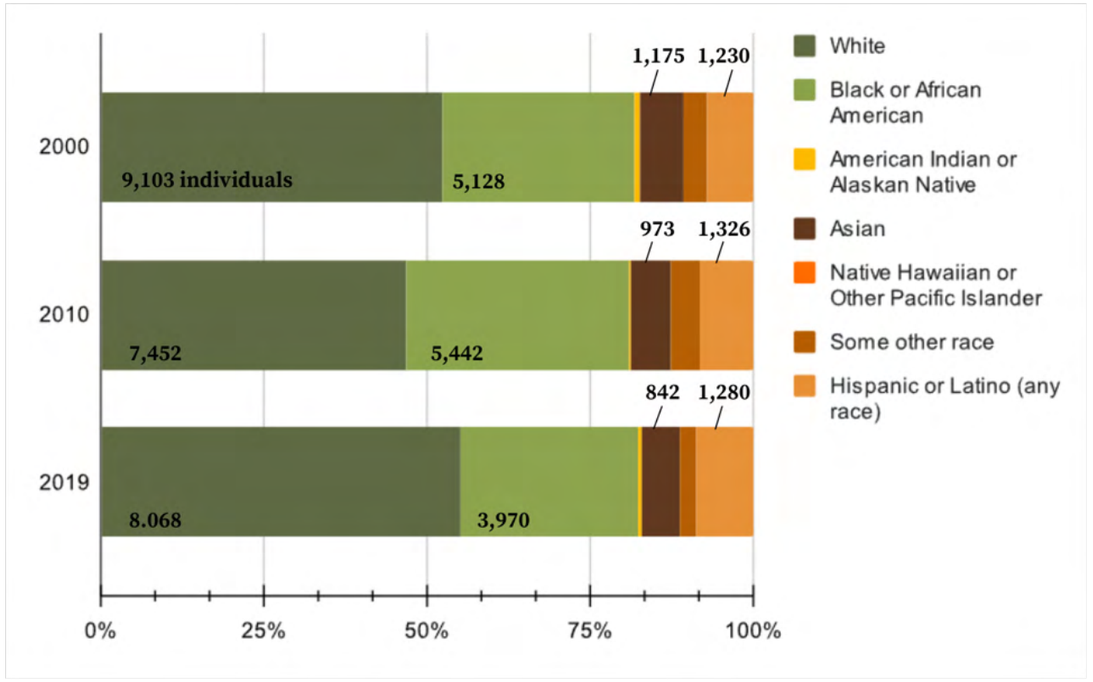
Identification of race and ethnicity of a population is crucial to be able to provide access to services and opportunities that might be inaccessible due to cultural and language barriers. Knowing the racial and ethnic composition of a community also helps small businesses better understand their market, and recognizing the full extent of diversity within a community can help strengthen social bonds, create a cohesive collective identity, and solidify common goals and vision.
Forest Park is predominately White and Black or African American, comprising 58% and 28.5% of the population respectively *(see Figure 7).* Around a tenth of the population is Hispanic or Latino, and 6% is Asian. The Black and Asian populations have seen a slight decrease over the past twenty years, while the White and Hispanic/Latino populations have increased. A concerning trend is the Black and African American population since 2000: although the Black population increased by 6% from 2000-2010, it decreased significantly (by 27%) over the next decade. This is tangential to what is happening in the greater Chicago region. Since the 1980s, a Black exodus has occurred, with thousands of individuals uprooting from Chicago in search of new opportunities elsewhere, predominantly in southern cities like Atlanta, Houston, and Memphis. After years of disinvestment, failed policies, and marginalization, these communities have set off for greener pastures. This is conjectural for why the Forest Park Black population has declined, but the trend is ever apparent in Chicago and Illinois (Kapos et al., 2021).

***Figure 7 -*** *Forest Park Race and Ethnicity*




*Source: 2019 US Census American Community Survey 5-year estimates; Table: DP05*

***Figure 8 -*** *Forest Park Race and Ethnicity Over Time: 2000, 2010, 2019*




*Source:2000 and 2010 Decennial US Census, 2019 American Community Survey 5-year estimates; Tables: DP05, Table: P009 & Table: P011*

# 3. Educational Attainment

Over half (59%; *see Figure 9)* of the Forest Park adult population has an Associate's, Bachelor's, or Graduate Degree. 17% of the population has a high school degree, presenting an opportunity for job and workforce development training programs for those without higher degrees.

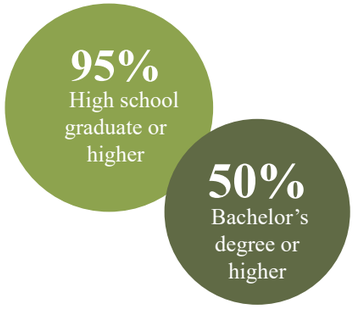
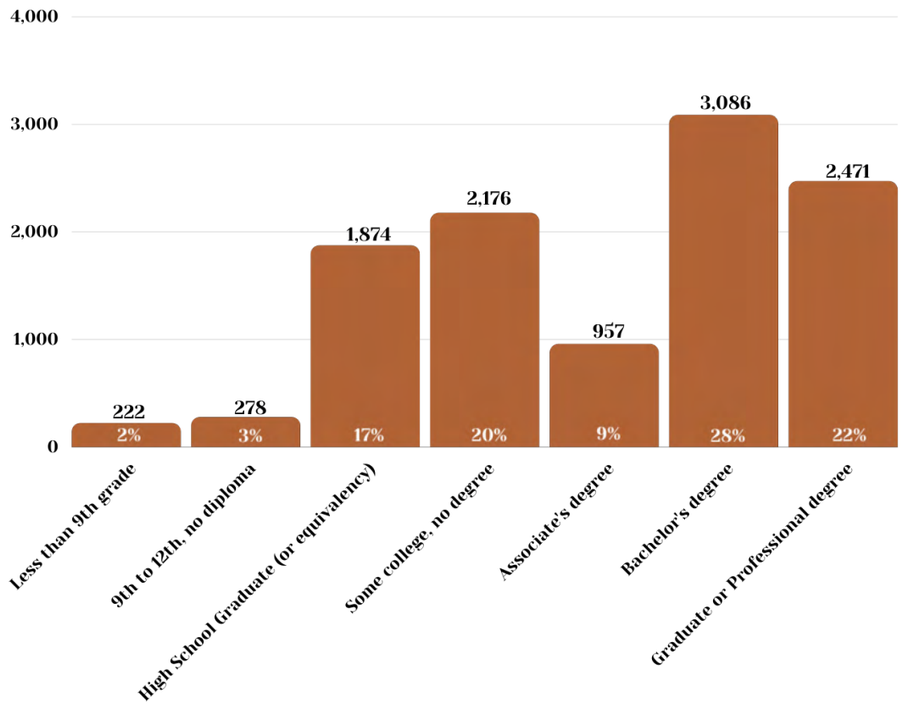



***Figure 9 -*** *2019 Forest Park Educational Attainment*




*Source: 2019 US Census American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates; Table:DP02*

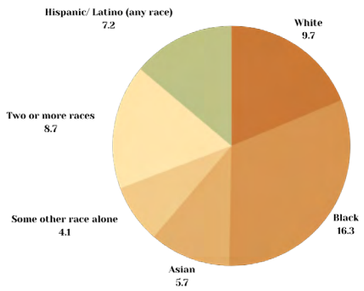
# 4. Differently-Abled Information

From 2015 to 2019, there was a 3.2% increase in those differently-abled in the population, suggesting the Village needs to expand specialized services for these citizens.


In other words, 1 in 10 people living in Forest park are estimated to have a disability.

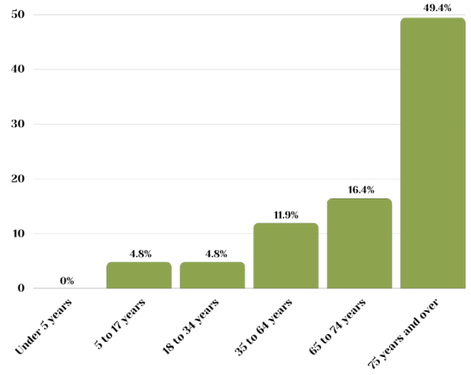
The cohort with the highest percent of those differently-abled is those aged 75 and older, at nearly half of that age group *(see Figure 11)*. Notable as well is the high rate of those differently-abled within the Black and African American community: at 16.3%, it is nearly double that of the white population, and triple that of the Asian community. In comparison to the neighboring town of Oak Park, the Village has a slightly higher demographic of differently-abled citizens. Meeting the community needs of the differently-abled individuals fosters inclusivity in the Village of Forest Park.

***Figure 10 -*** *2019 disability status by race*




*Source: 2019 US Census American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates; Table: S1810*

***Figure 11 -*** *2019 disability status by age*




*Source: 2019 US Census American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates; Table: S1810*




*source: Creative Commons n.d.*

# B. Economic Analysis

## 1. Overview

The Village of Forest Park presents itself as a traditional neighborhood that promotes both the diversity of its people and the liveliness of its spaces. The Village takes pride in its ability to combine both aspects to foster economic development and growth, highlighted through initiatives such as the Main Street program. Developed by the National Trust for Historic Preservation in 1980, this program was one of the initial seeds that inspired the Village's mission to focus on developing its business districts and urban corridors.

Over the years, many organizations in Forest Park collaborated to host programs and events that helped paint a picture of a lively economic corridor. The strength of the Village lies in its ability to provide a blend of amenities to suit a diverse, yet cohesive, residential and business community, a trait emphasized in its most recent comprehensive plan from 2014, "Picture Yourself Here."

A surface-level view of the economic engines reveals great diversity in the type of businesses, not just in terms of scale, but also in target customers. This is reflective of the Village's urban character and small-town charm that makes it attractive to an array of businesses, from local restaurants and bars to upscale retail and wellness centers.

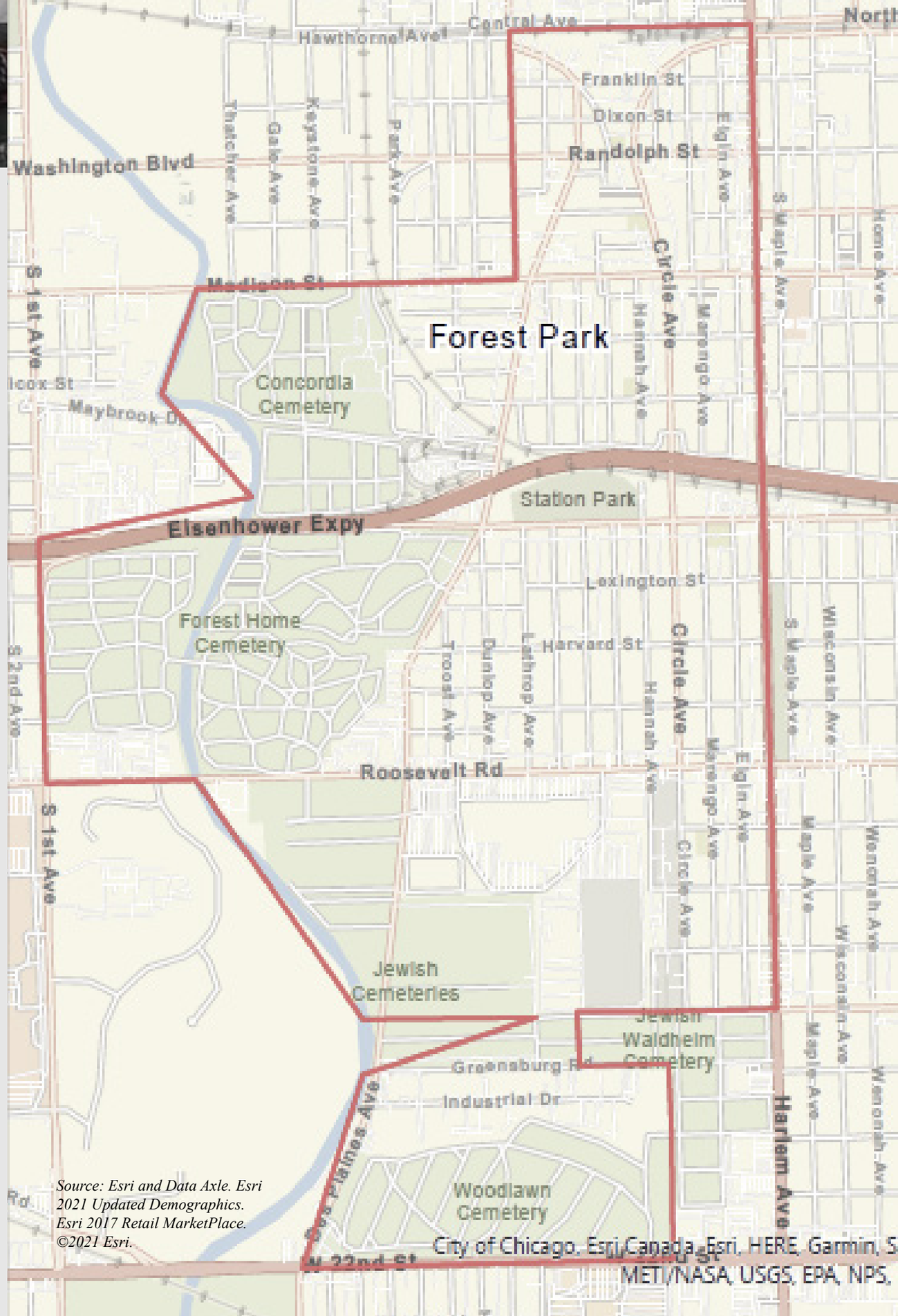
Even with high economic diversity, the Village is still considered one of the most welcoming places to business opportunities of all scales and family-related activities. This can be traced to two main factors: people and place. The people of Forest Park are a key driving force behind Forest Park's economic prosperity, as they possess both a strong sense of community and a great motivation to maintain the quaint, historic character which their identity thrives upon. The location is also an important factor, not just because of the Village's proximity to Downtown Chicago, but also because of its access to important transit modes such as Pace Suburban Bus and CTA's Blue and Green Rail Lines.

Viewing Forest Park from a broader perspective reveals that the Village has witnessed a lot of demographic fluctuation – as we described in the first part of our study – which directly affected its economic status. Over the past few decades, not only has the Village population decreased, but it has also experienced change of age groups and physical and intellectual capabilities.

As our report previously illustrated, an increasing gap between the growing elderly population and the younger population has been altering the local economy. In addition, the increasing presence of residents with various abilities and accommodation needs has shed light on the Village's expanding obligation to cater for these populations through various economic and recreational activities.

In consideration of all the previous factors, and with acknowledgment that spatial design and economic prosperity are closely related in the Village, we arrived at the following questions: If Forest Park prides itself in hosting a diverse community...

> **Does its economy have the ability to cater for such great diversity?**
>
> **How can our spatial interventions serve as economic catalysts for the area without losing the character of the Village?**




*Source: Esri and Data Axle. Esri 2021 Updated Demographics. Esri 2017 Retail MarketPlace. ©2021 Esri.*

## Framing the Study

The following section focuses on the economic analysis of Forest Park and identifies key aspects that should be taken into consideration while re-imagining some of its urban spaces. Such spaces have the power to directly affect the flow of people and their consumption patterns around main commercial corridors, making them catalyst points for building a better economic future.

The economic analysis dives into community assets of commerce and industry, property values – specifically for housing – labor force data, geographical distribution of employment, consumer spending, and retail potential. We begin by exploring the main commercial centers and corridors of the Village that present opportunities for positive development, then focus on the residents by providing an overview of socio-economic trends such as employment, income and poverty, and spending patterns. We then closely examine market opportunities and challenges through review of regional business and industry as well as local consumption patterns and spending. Finally, we look into affordability issues through examination of household and transit patterns. This study helps provide a foundation for our alternatives and proposed designs in the following sections.

The data in this analysis is taken from the following sources:

U.S. Census Bureau American Communi ty Surveys (ACS)

Esri's Forecasting Reports

Center for Neighborhood Technology's Housing and Transportation Affordability Index

ReferenceUSA

Connect to Cook online mapping website.

*Source: Creative Commons n.d.*



## Defining Commercial Areas

According to Forest Park's Comprehensive Plan, the Village includes several key commercial areas which are easily visible, have high traffic counts, greatly influence their surroundings, and vary in character depending on their location. In order to define these exact areas geographically, we used the census tool "On the Map" to gain a broad idea of the employment distribution around the Village. The data presented in *Figure 12* highlights the main concentration of jobs in Forest Park.

From this study, we defined the following streets as the primary commercial corridors:

- Madison Street
- Roosevelt Road
- Harlem Avenue

In addition, the following are secondary commercial streets with less, yet significant, impact:

- Desplaines Avenue
- Harrison Street
- Randolph Street

***Figure 12 -*** *2018 Job Distribution in Forest Park*


*Source: U.S.Census Bureau, Center for Economic Studies, LEHD via OnTheMap (Oct. 2021)*

These primary commercial corridors will inform our transect selection as we ensure that each one of the transects connects to one commercial corridor to feed it. This would also inspire the selection of our types of interventions and design alternatives for our chosen transect.

Focusing on the primary commercial corridors, we start with Madison Street, which is considered the Village's "Downtown." It is home to mostly mixed-use buildings and traditional German and Usonian architecture, and features the majority of business diversity around the area with restaurants, bars, boutiques, real estate brokers, nonprofits, as well as professional services and offices. It also includes retail space, art venues, and automotive services. There is a clustering of certain types of businesses, reflecting an economic spatial division within this main corridor. However, none of the businesses cater for audiences who are considered vulnerable, such as the elderly and differently-abled. Additionally, although this street is supposedly the busiest in Forest Park, there are still some vacant storefronts, presenting an opportunity to provide more services potentially for more vulnerable populations.

*Source: Sarah Grumulaitis, 2021*

Although Roosevelt Road is an equally important corridor, it has a very different character than Madison St. which makes it far from being a "Downtown." The road is highly automobile-oriented, with far less focus on pedestrian integration. Most businesses and services are related to car maintenance and mega retail chains. While still a significant economic source for the area, it does little for the local economy and residents' experience.


*Source: Google Maps (retrieved 11/17/2021)*

The character of Harlem Avenue is greatly affected by its location on the eastern border of the Village. It has access to both the CTA Blue and Green lines, and shares a border with the neighboring Village of Oak Park. This corridor merges some aspects of the above-mentioned streets, being highly automobile-oriented but at the same time hosting a high concentration of commercial and mixed-use buildings. Services such as restaurants and cafes attract residents to spend time there regardless of the less welcoming environment for pedestrians.


*Source: Google Maps (retrieved 11/17/2021)*

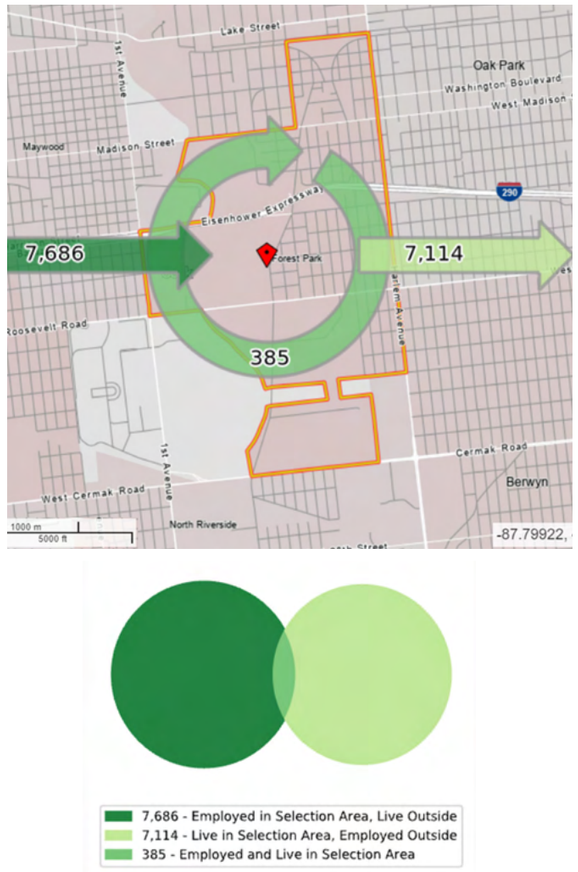


# 2. Socioeconomic trends

## Employment

*Figure 13* maps employment distribution: where people who work in Forest Park live, and where residents of Forest Park work. The map indicates that a large number of employees in Forest Park are not residents there, and an equally large number of residents work outside the area, mostly in Downtown Chicago. It also highlights a relatively low number of residents who both live and work around the area, which indicates a weak economic circularity within the area.

***Figure 13 -*** *2018 Inflow/Outflow Job Counts in Forest Park*




*Source:U.S.Census Bureau, Center for Economic Studies, LEHD via OnTheMap (Oct.2021)*

The Employment-Population Ratio is used to evaluate economic potential to create jobs. Higher ratios indicate that more of a certain population is employed, which has a positive effect on the local and regional economy. In Forest Park, 16-24-year-olds have a ratio of 64, whereas the 65+ group has a ratio of 28. The ration and labor force participation rate lies in the age range of 25-54:

**80**
best ratio at 25-54 year population.

**85.3%**
highest labor force participation rate at 25-54 year pop.

This is drastically higher than the rate of 31.2% for those over 65. Notably, the unemployment rates are quite high for every age group besides those between 25-54. The groups aged 16-24 and 55-64 hold unemployment rates of:

**16.6%** & **16%** respectively.

*Source: Creative Commons n.d.*

***Table 1-*** *Employment Status by Age*

| | Total | Labor Force Participation Rate | Employment/ Population Ratio | Unemployment rate |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 16 to 19 years | 240 | 34.2% | 34.2% | 0.0% |
| 20 to 24 years | 848 | 74.6% | 62.6% | 16.1% |
| 25 to 29 years | 1,271 | 81.2% | 80.4% | 1.0% |
| 30 to 34 years | 1,596 | 86.5% | 86.5% | 0.0% |
| 35 to 44 years | 2,092 | 89.8% | 85.1% | 5.2% |
| 45 to 54 years | 1,718 | 82.9% | 78.3% | 5.6% |
| 55 to 59 years | 1,264 | 82.9% | 76.0% | 8.3% |
| 60 to 64 years | 909 | 62.2% | 56.1% | 9.7% |
| 65 to 74 years | 1,432 | 37.4% | 37.4% | 0.0% |
| 75 years and over | 782 | 12.1% | 7.2% | 41.1% |

*Source: 2015-2019 US Census American Community Survey 5-year estimates; Table: S2301*

***Table 2-*** *Employment Status by Race*

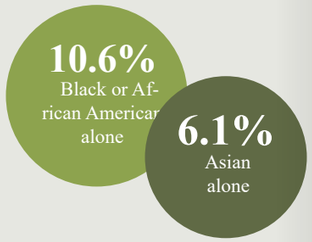
| | 2000 Data | | | 2019 Data | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Total | Employment Rate | Unemployment Rate | Total | Employment Rate | Unemployment Rate |
| White alone | 7,488 | 66.2% | 1.6% | 6,920 | 70.5% | 3.50% |
| Black or African American alone | 3,850 | 72.5% | 4.6% | 3,546 | 62.0% | 10.6% |
| American Indian and Alaska Native alone | - | - | - | 34 | 58.8% | 0.0% |
| Asian alone | 869 | 65.0% | 0.0% | 842 | 60.7% | 6.1% |
| Some other race alone | 470 | 72.6% | 4.0% | 329 | 79.3% | 0.0% |
| Two or more races | - | - | - | 481 | 70.1% | 0.0% |
| Hispanic or Latino origin (of any race) | 838 | 76.5% | 1.3% | 862 | 81.6% | 1.0% |
| White alone, not Hispanic or Latino | 7,605 | 66.4% | 1.6% | 6,599 | 69.2% | 3.6% |

*Source: 2000 Decennial US Census; Table: DP3 / 2015-2019 US Census American Community Survey 5-year estimates; Table: S2301*



Regarding labor force participation by age, this table shows that Forest Park has fairly stable participation for every group from 20-60 years old. Employment drops off around 60 years old, and is lowest for those over 75. At the other end of the spectrum, the 16-19-year-old category also has a low labor participation rate. As both the younger and older ends of the age spectrum represent social groups who work less, perhaps have more free time, and diverse skills sets and specific needs, we'd like to include both groups in our spatial design creation process.

In terms of race, the Hispanic or Latinx population in Forest Park has the highest percentage of those employed, at 81% of its population, compared to only about half of the American Indian and Alaska Native population (see Table 2.) It is noteworthy that the Black and/or African American population in the Village has a much higher unemployment rate than other races, with over 1 in 10 members of this group unemployed. This is something to consider as we form our recommendations for the areas of interest.



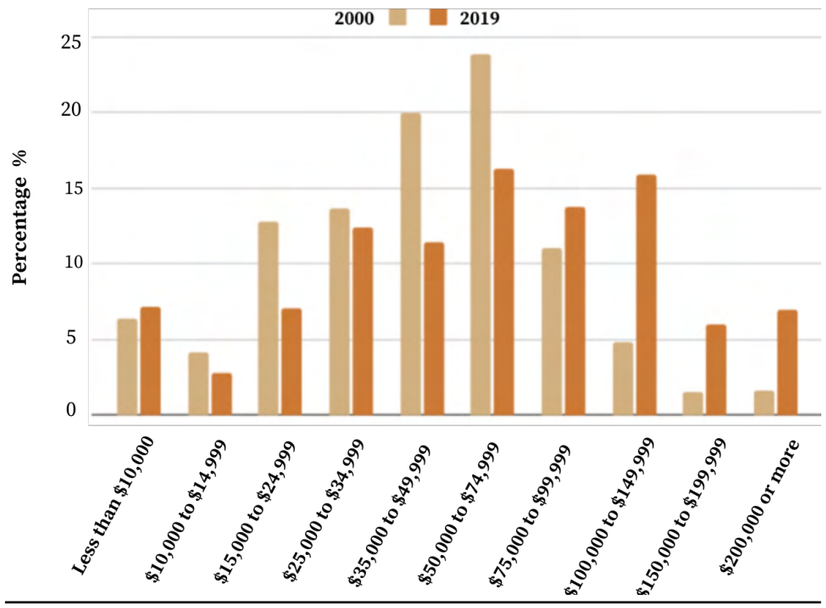

## Income and Poverty

***Table 3-*** *2019 Forest Park Income and Poverty Levels*

| Income | Cook County | Chicago | Forest Park |
|---|---|---|---|
| Less than $10,000 | 7.3% | 9.2% | 7.2% |
| $10,000 to $14,999 | 4.0% | 4.8% | 2.8% |
| $15,000 to $24,999 | 9.0% | 10.3% | 7.1% |
| $25,000 to $34,999 | 8.4% | 8.9% | 12.4% |
| $35,000 to $49,999 | 11.1% | 11.0% | 11.5% |
| $50,000 to $74,999 | 15.8% | 15.1% | 16.3% |
| $75,000 to $99,999 | 12.2% | 11.2% | 13.8% |
| $100,000 to $149,999 | 15.3% | 13.8% | 15.9% |
| $150,000 to $199,999 | 7.5% | 6.8% | 6.0% |
| $200,000 or more | 9.4% | 8.9% | 7.0% |
| Population Total | 1,972,108 | 1,066,829 | 6,996 |
| Median income (dollars) | $64,660 | $58,247 | $62,664 |
| Mean income (dollars) | $95,677 | $90,713 | $84,007 |

*Source: 2015-2019 US Census American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates; Table: S1901*

***Figure 14-*** *2019 Forest Park Income and Poverty Levels*




*Source: 2000 Census Decennial Data / US Census (2019 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates*

*Table 3* shows that the Village has a higher median income ($62,664) than that of Chicago, but a lower mean income than both Chicago and Cook County. This indicates that there is a generally stable middle class in Forest Park, with fewer households on the extreme high end and low end of the income scale.

However, as shown in *Figure 14*, the middle income bracket was more robust in 2000, with nearly 44% of households making between $35,000-$74,999 annually. These households have dropped dramatically, now comprising only 27% of the population. Households bringing in more than $100,000 annually jumped from 2000 to 2019, increasing from only around 8% of the population to nearly 29%, with the highest increase in the $100,000-149,999 group. This trend of the Village becoming more affluent, with middle income households moving out, needs to be considered in order to avoid widening the income gap.

Economic need is also visible in the public income data found in the 2019 American Community Survey. According to the ACS data, 394 children received aid in the form of Supplemental Security Income (SSI), Cash Public Assistance Income, or Food Stamps/SNAP in the past twelve months. 345 of these households were headed by women with no partner. The high percentage of women and children enrolled in these federal welfare programs might also need assistance socially, emotionally, and physically. We therefore will seek to orient our design toward children and adults to offer opportunities to recreate and enjoy their community in a peaceful, amicable and inclusive way. Additionally, we would like to offer a community-wide supported agriculture project (CWSA) where produce would be sent to the local food pantries and eligible families. Accordingly, we seek to develop a plan that would complement the existing housing and transit options in Forest Park, and want to focus specifically on affordability to paint a more complete picture of people's spending and economic opportunities.

## Affordability

The Center for Neighborhood Technology's (CNT) innovative H+T (Housing and Transit) Affordability Index shows that the average household in Forest Park spends 26% of its income on housing and 17% on transportation. This indicates that the average household in Forest Park is on the brink of being considered housing cost burdened (30% is the threshold) and is considered transportation cost burdened (15% is the threshold). 43% of the disposable income (income after tax) of the average household is spent on these two essentials. Thus, 57% of their remaining income is set aside for education, food, maintenance bills, insurance, leisure etc. 43% is not terribly unaffordable, but this burden is not distributed equitably. As seen in Figure 10, it illustrates that there are more white homeowners in Forest Park than every other race/ethnicity combined. Moreover, since the 2021 average home value is $299,397, the white population benefits far more than other races/ethnicities in the Village. Owning a home is the predominant avenue to accumulate generational wealth, and since the majority of the eligible housing stock is owned by white people, people of color cannot obtain the same access to long-term wealth as white people.

According to the 2019 5-year American Community Survey regarding Monthly Housing Costs, the majority of residents (2,221 individuals) spend between $1,000-$1,499 per month on housing, which aligns with the CNT's estimate of $1,348 per month.
CNT estimates that the average household spends $10,215 on transportation per year. This is surprising given the tendency of Forest Park residents to take public transportation, along with the Village's compact neighborhood score of 8.2 out of 10, and job access score of 9 out of 10. Apparently the surplus of automobile-oriented industries and suburban feel of the community encourages residents to utilize their personal automobiles over public transportation options at their disposal.
Since our site redesign focuses on Green Connectivity, we hope that our extended multi-use path will create flow between Madison Street, the Altenheim, the CTA Blue Line Station, and the Prairie Path in order to lure people out of their cars to achieve a multi-modal and cheaper lifestyle. Since the average household has a VMT output (vehicle miles traveled) of 14,313 miles equating to $2,027 per year, and a greenhouse gas emission output of 4.66 tons, this would position residents to lessen their carbon footprint and embrace a greener lifestyle that would better align with their values of social responsibility, equity, and cost savings.

***Table 4 -*** *2010 Census Owner Occupied Housing Units by Race*

| Census 2010 Occupied Housing Units by Race/Ethnicity of Householder and Home Ownership | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | Owner Occupied Units | |
| | Occupied Units | Number | % of Occupied |
| Total | 7,159 | 3,459 | 48.3% |
| White Alone | 4,188 | 2,460 | 58.7% |
| Black/African American Alone | 2,324 | 663 | 28.5% |
| American Indian/Alaska Native | 21 | 7 | 33.3% |
| Asian Alone | 358 | 206 | 57.5% |
| Pacific Islander Alone | 1 | 1 | 100.0% |
| Other Race Alone | 154 | 68 | 44.2% |
| Two or More Races | 113 | 54 | 47.8% |
| Hispanic Origin | 474 | 230 | 48.5% |

*Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2010 Summary File 1. Esri forecasts for 2021 and 2026*



## Inclusive Economy

One of our guiding design principles is inclusivity, meaning we factor various elements of identity – including race, culture, language, ability, financial status, and age – into our recommendations.

> **We intend to create a free civic space where people do not have to spend money or fit a certain physical, financial, or cultural identity in order to be comfortable and become involved.**

Thus, aside from the outdoor markets, concerts, and community-supported agricultural projects, this site is free everyday, which entices people who might not have disposable income along with the youth and elderly who may not be in the labor force.
Given Forest Park's aging population and plethora of organizations that support people with intellectual and physical disabilities, it is not unexpected that over 1 in 10 residents of Forest Park classify themselves as having a disability (see Table ?) The largest category of those differently-abled is males over the age of 65, but notably 10% of those aged 5-34 also had a disability. Additionally, 30.7% of all individuals with a disability were people of color, with Black individuals comprising 16.3% of the population alone. The convergence of multiple factors that cause people to become excluded strengthens our mission to create spaces for all. Furthermore, our design alternatives support the ideals of healthy living, outdoor recreation, and a better quality of life. In 2019, 5.7% of the population (787 residents) did not have healthcare coverage, despite the numerous medical and health professional services within the Village. Specifically, residents aged 26-44 were the most likely not to have health insurance, signifying that the age groups most likely to work (85.3% of this age group is in the labor force) do not have jobs that provide them with safeguards. Out of these 787 residents, 586 were employed.
This lack of health insurance can be a detriment to the community if a worker suddenly becomes ill and cannot come into work, or if a family already struggles and then is confronted with an excessive medical bill, or if an individual must pay out of pocket for medical expenses – all taking away capital that could be infused into the local economy. By providing spaces where people can access natural stress-relieving elements such as green space, healthy food, fresh air, and social opportunities, we hope to contribute to higher holistic community health.

# 3. Market Opportunities & Challenges

## Sectors and Industries Presences

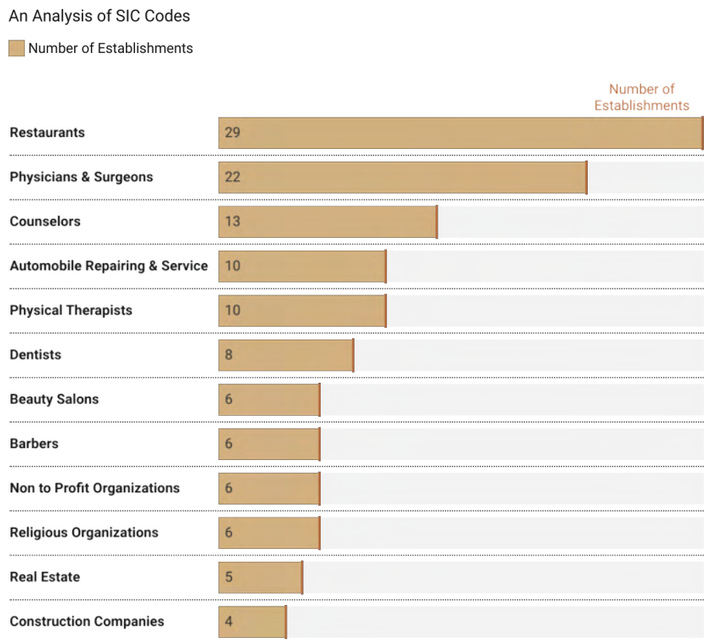
The number of businesses and establishments in the Village affects the degree of accessibility of an industry for its target group, and its physical presence in the community affects the consumption pattern of both residents and visitors. We performed an SIC code analysis to give us an idea of key sectors around the area by using the number of employees and percent of businesses as indicators. In Forest Park, there are 566 businesses total with 6,998 employees. This analysis highlighted two key sectors of Retail Trade and Services, which comprise 39% and 29.2% of all businesses, respectively. We then broke down the top industries in the Village and ranked them according to the number of establishments they held. The highest two categories display an interesting glimpse into the service economy in Forest Park. Restaurants and physicians/surgeons are the two largest sectors within the Village.

***Table 5-*** *Business Summary in Forest Park, 2021*

| SIC Sector | Number of Employees | Percent of Businesses |
|---|---|---|
| Agriculture | 75 | 0.9 |
| Communication | 10 | 0.4 |
| Construction | 441 | 5.8 |
| Finance | 440 | 9.9 |
| Government | 405 | 1.8 |
| Manufacturing | 198 | 2.5 |
| Retail Trade | 1623 | 29.2 |
| Services | 2639 | 39.0 |
| Transportation | 6 | 2.1 |
| Unclassified | 80 | 5.3 |
| Utility | 566 | 2.8 |

*Source: Copyright 2021 Data Axle, Inc. All rights reserved. Esri Total Residential Population forecasts for 2021.*

***Figure 15-*** *Top Industries in Forest Park, by SIC Code 2021*




*Source: Copyright 2021 Data Axle, Inc. All rights reserved. Esri Total Residential Population forecasts for 2021.*



## Contribution to the Larger Economic Picture

Location Quotient (LQ) is a tool to demonstrate the industries or occupations that are specialized in a regional economy as compared to the national average. A 1:1 ratio (1.0) indicates that the region's quantity of a certain industry is proportional to that of the nation's, while higher and lower numbers reflect either greater or less presence of the industry.
The Village has a proportionally higher numbers of LQ in the following sectors:

**2.06** in Finance/Insurance
**1.93** in Professional/Scientific/Tech
**1.62** in Transportation/Warehousing
**1.61** in Information
**1.25** in Health Care/Social Assistance

On the lower end of the scale, Accommodation/Food Services, one of the largest sectors nationally, only had an LQ of 0.54. Similarly, Retail Trade had an LQ of 0.66, which is one of the larger sectors nationally as well. This is of interest and concern, due to the propensity of food services in Forest Park and the benefit to a local economy which Retail Trade offers.

**0.81** of LQ — Arts Entertainment Recreation

This is informative for our study because we are attempting to develop a green space that hosts an array of cultural programming, community events, and recreational opportunities for the community. Noting the Village's lack of specialization in this industry informs the rationale of our design.
In terms of occupations, Forest Park specializes in the following which is indicated by their LQ:

**3.22** in Life/Physical/Social Sciences
**2.83** in Computer/Mathematical
**1.96** in Business/Financial
**1.46** in Healthcare Practitioner

These occupations seem logical: a large portion of the community is aging, and with the median age increasing consistently, it's clear that the Village needs workers in the health sciences fields. Secondly, through meetings with our community stakeholders, we've seen that Forest Park residents and neighbors already have a strong proclivity to cultivate community. Two of our interviewees came from social service organizations that support individuals with intellectual and physical disabilities.
Lastly, according to 2019 data, 28.9% of residents made over $100,000, signifying that they are most likely well educated and possibly working in high-paying fields such as the information sectors of business, finance, technology. These industries have outstandingly high LQs, which makes sense given the proximity of Forest Park to Chicago, the fact that 49.5% of residents hold a Bachelor's degree or higher, and the propensity of these industries' workers to spend money on education, health, and new technology. Additionally, the education sector in Forest Park has an LQ of 1.15, and residents spent almost $13 million dollars on education in 2021, with each household spending on average $1,796. This is 4% higher than the national average.

## Consumer Spending

Forest Park's spending patterns are directly affected by income and purchasing power. Esri Labor Forecasts present the amount spent on a variety of goods and services by households that reside in the area. Expenditures are shown by broad budget categories that are not mutually exclusive. A Spending Potential Index of 120 shows that average spending by consumers in this market is 20 percent above the national average. Three main types of information are provided for each one of them:

- Total and Average Amounts spent per house hold presented as annual figures.

- Spending Potential Index representing the amount spent in the area relative to a national average of 100.

As observed, Forest Park has the highest spending indices in education (104) and entertainment. Community members spend millions on entertainment activities such as dating services (127), recreational equipment (111), recreational lessons (103), and concerts/theater tickets (102) *(see Figures 6-7)* Clearly, the community loves to socialize, participate in civic activities, be outside, interact with others, and learn new skills – and there is also apparently a high level of singles.

It is interesting to note that Forest Park residents spend only 87% the national average on health care, which could mean a variety of conflicting things: residents spend less on insurance, residents spend more on insurance and have less egregious health bills, residents are healthier and have fewer health care costs, or residents can't afford to spend as much on health care. As this is an aging community with a significant portion of differently-abled individuals, this is a trend we would need to look into further.

***Table 6-*** *Consumer spending summary for Forest Park, 2021*

| 2021 Consumer Spending | |
|---|---|
| Apparel & Services: Total $ | $14,380,449 |
| Average Spent | $2,042.10 |
| Spending Potential Index | 96 |
| Education: Total $ | $12,650,153 |
| Average Spent | $1,796.39 |
| Spending Potential Index | 104 |
| Entertainment/Recreation: Total $ | $20,908,181 |
| Average Spent | $2,969.07 |
| Spending Potential Index | 92 |
| Food at Home: Total $ | $35,979,197 |
| Average Spent | $5,109.23 |
| Spending Potential Index | 94 |
| Food Away from Home: Total $ | $25,656,637 |
| Average Spent | $3,643.37 |
| Spending Potential Index | 96 |
| Health Care: Total $ | $38,135,056 |
| Average Spent | $5,415.37 |
| Spending Potential Index | 87 |
| HH Furnishings & Equipment: Total $ | $14,569,906 |
| Average Spent | $2,069.00 |
| Spending Potential Index | 92 |
| Personal Care Products & Services: Total $ | $5,986,087 |
| Average Spent | $850.05 |
| Spending Potential Index | 95 |
| Shelter: Total $ | $142,271,376 |
| Average Spent | $20,203.26 |
| Spending Potential Index | 100 |
| Support Payments/Cash Contributions/Gifts in Kind: Total $ | $14,535,311 |
| Average Spent | $2,064.09 |
| Spending Potential Index | 86 |
| Travel: Total $ | $16,709,086 |
| Average Spent | $2,372.78 |
| Spending Potential Index | 94 |
| Vehicle Maintenance & Repairs: Total $ | $6,940,564 |
| Average Spent | $985.60 |
| Spending Potential Index | 89 |

*Source: Esri forecasts for 2021 and 2026; Consumer Spending data are derived from the 2018 and 2019 Consumer Expenditure Surveys, Bureau of Labor Statistics.*

***Table 7-*** *Consumer Spending data 2018 - 2019*

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Entertainment/Recreation Fees and Admissions** | 98 | $724.27 | $5,100,337 |
| Tickets to Theatre/Operas/Concerts | 102 | $82.10 | $578,180 |
| Tickets to Movies | 98 | $54.68 | $385,090 |
| Tickets to Parks or Museums | 95 | $32.11 | $226,135 |
| Admission to Sporting Events, excl.Trips | 92 | $59.21 | $416,944 |
| Fees for Participant Sports, excl.Trips | 92 | $106.28 | $748,445 |
| Fees for Recreational Lessons | 103 | $144.21 | $1,015,537 |
| Membership Fees for Social/Recreation/Health Clubs | 98 | $244.15 | $1,719,277 |
| Dating Services | 127 | $1.52 | $10,730 |
| **Toys/Games/Crafts/Hobbies** | 92 | $106.49 | $749,889 |
| Toys/Games/Arts/Crafts/Tricycles | 94 | $92.35 | $650,350 |
| Playground Equipment | 69 | $2.30 | $16,222 |
| Play Arcade Pinball/Video Games | 75 | $1.73 | $12,154 |
| Online Gaming Services | 98 | $5.98 | $42,102 |
| Stamp & Coin Collecting | 80 | $4.13 | $29,062 |
| **Recreational Vehicles and Fees** | 85 | $96.38 | $678,698 |
| Docking and Landing Fees for Boats and Planes | 80 | $7.49 | $52,725 |
| Camp Fees | 102 | $31.51 | $221,873 |
| Payments on Boats/Trailers/Campers/RVs | 68 | $34.61 | $243,718 |
| Rental of Boats/Trailers/Campers/RVs | 104 | $22.78 | $160,383 |
| **Sports, Recreation and Exercise Equipment** | 92 | $166.53 | $1,172,679 |
| Exercise Equipment and Gear, Game Tables | 90 | $49.83 | $350,907 |
| Bicycles | 93 | $27.55 | $194,027 |
| Camping Equipment | 96 | $19.96 | $140,572 |
| Hunting and Fishing Equipment | 91 | $44.28 | $311,795 |
| Winter Sports Equipment | 111 | $8.19 | $57,707 |
| Water Sports Equipment | 84 | $7.01 | $49,372 |
| Other Sports Equipment | 91 | $6.51 | $45,818 |
| Rental/Repair of Sports/Recreation/Exercise Equipment | 97 | $2.79 | $19,647 |

*Source: Esri forecasts for 2021 and 2026; Consumer Spending data are derived from the 2018 and 2019 Consumer Expenditure Surveys, Bureau of Labor Statistics.*



## Consumption Patterns: Supply and Demand

*Table 8*, which was constructed from Esri data, breaks down each industry group and shows detailed information on their supply and demand to define the consumption patterns of the people living and working there. Values range from +100 (total leakage) to -100 (total surplus) with a positive value indicating 'leakage' of retail goods outside the community trade area. A negative value represents a surplus of retail sales, a market where customers are drawn in from outside the region. Looking at top industries defined in the previous sections and cross-referencing them with the data from Table 9, we notice that while Restaurants/Cafes and Services (specifically automobile-related) are flourishing, their supply exceeds the demand of the population in Forest Park, creating a negative "Retail Gap." Such industries are saturated, and would need to shrink rather than expand.This informs our design as we would try to avoid adding to those industries, but perhaps we could provide a space that would increase demand to balance the negative retail gap. On the other hand, industries such as food trade (e.g. grocery stores and farmers markets) do not meet the demand from the community. This creates a positive retail gap that could be tackled by offering more businesses for consumers to choose from.

***Table 8-*** *Supply vs Demand by Industries in Forest Park*

| 2017 Industry Group | NAICS | Demand (Retail Potential) | Supply (Retail Sales) | Retail Gap | Leakage/Surplus Factor | Number of Businesses |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Motor Vehicle & Parts Dealers | 441 | $45,281,623 | $114,589,121 | -$69,307,498 | -43.4 | 10 |
| Automobile Dealers | 4411 | $37,439,900 | $112,686,317 | -$75,246,417 | -50.1 | 7 |
| Other Motor Vehicle Dealers | 4412 | $3,597,621 | $0 | $3,597,621 | 100.0 | 0 |
| Auto Parts, Accessories & Tire Stores | 4413 | $4,244,102 | $1,902,803 | $2,341,299 | 38.1 | 3 |
| Furniture & Home Furnishings Stores | 442 | $7,363,624 | $6,690,720 | $672,904 | 4.8 | 6 |
| Furniture Stores | 4421 | $4,371,188 | $3,565,534 | $805,654 | 10.2 | 3 |
| Home Furnishings Stores | 4422 | $2,992,436 | $3,125,186 | -$132,750 | -2.2 | 3 |
| Electronics & Appliance Stores | 443 | $8,717,910 | $13,826,802 | -$5,108,892 | -22.7 | 6 |
| Bldg Materials, Garden Equip. & Supply Stores | 444 | $14,278,564 | $5,077,971 | $9,200,593 | 47.5 | 6 |
| Bldg Material & Supplies Dealers | 4441 | $12,920,220 | $5,077,971 | $7,842,249 | 43.6 | 6 |
| Lawn & Garden Equip & Supply Stores | 4442 | $1,358,344 | $0 | $1,358,344 | 100.0 | 0 |
| Food & Beverage Stores | 445 | $38,275,111 | $29,522,948 | $8,752,163 | 12.9 | 19 |
| Grocery Stores | 4451 | $33,520,220 | $12,338,344 | $21,181,876 | 46.2 | 8 |
| Specialty Food Stores | 4452 | $1,982,694 | $2,016,519 | -$33,825 | -0.8 | 5 |
| Beer, Wine & Liquor Stores | 4453 | $2,772,197 | $15,168,085 | -$12,395,888 | -69.1 | 6 |
| Health & Personal Care Stores | 446,4461 | $14,708,238 | $21,259,873 | -$6,551,635 | -18.2 | 5 |
| Gasoline Stations | 447,4471 | $23,393,874 | $4,521,186 | $18,872,688 | 67.6 | 3 |
| Clothing & Clothing Accessories Stores | 448 | $12,966,986 | $8,758,083 | $4,208,903 | 19.4 | 17 |
| Clothing Stores | 4481 | $8,699,486 | $5,831,225 | $2,868,261 | 19.7 | 13 |
| Shoe Stores | 4482 | $1,821,280 | $1,012,580 | $808,700 | 28.5 | 2 |
| Jewelry, Luggage & Leather Goods Stores | 4483 | $2,446,220 | $1,914,278 | $531,942 | 12.2 | 2 |
| Sporting Goods, Hobby, Book & Music Stores | 451 | $6,079,995 | $19,188,218 | -$13,108,223 | -51.9 | 10 |
| Sporting Goods/Hobby/Musical Instr Stores | 4511 | $4,992,391 | $17,965,418 | -$12,973,027 | -56.5 | 7 |
| Book, Periodical & Music Stores | 4512 | $1,087,604 | $1,222,800 | -$135,196 | -5.9 | 3 |
| General Merchandise Stores | 452 | $39,729,176 | $36,519,568 | $3,209,608 | 4.2 | 4 |
| Department Stores Excluding Leased Depts. | 4521 | $28,427,698 | $36,244,331 | -$7,816,633 | -12.1 | 3 |
| Other General Merchandise Stores | 4529 | $11,301,478 | $275,237 | $11,026,241 | 95.2 | 1 |
| Miscellaneous Store Retailers | 453 | $8,044,408 | $3,199,613 | $4,844,795 | 43.1 | 13 |
| Florists | 4531 | $509,757 | $132,869 | $376,888 | 58.6 | 1 |
| Office Supplies, Stationery & Gift Stores | 4532 | $1,468,416 | $63,269 | $1,405,147 | 91.7 | 1 |
| Used Merchandise Stores | 4533 | $819,772 | $1,233,601 | -$413,829 | -20.2 | 6 |
| Other Miscellaneous Store Retailers | 4539 | $5,246,463 | $1,769,874 | $3,476,589 | 49.5 | 5 |
| Nonstore Retailers | 454 | $6,248,325 | $852,962 | $5,395,363 | 76.0 | 1 |
| Electronic Shopping & Mail-Order Houses | 4541 | $4,885,077 | $852,962 | $4,032,115 | 70.3 | 1 |
| Vending Machine Operators | 4542 | $177,542 | $0 | $177,542 | 100.0 | 0 |
| Direct Selling Establishments | 4543 | $1,185,706 | $0 | $1,185,706 | 100.0 | 0 |
| Food Services & Drinking Places | 722 | $26,013,637 | $42,198,622 | -$16,184,985 | -23.7 | 79 |
| Special Food Services | 7223 | $603,140 | $0 | $603,140 | 100.0 | 0 |
| Drinking Places - Alcoholic Beverages | 7224 | $884,497 | $6,132,277 | -$5,247,780 | -74.8 | 12 |
| Restaurants/Other Eating Places | 7225 | $24,526,000 | $36,066,345 | -$11,540,345 | -19.0 | 68 |

*Source: Esri and Data Axle. Esri 2021 Updated Demographics. Esri 2017 Retail MarketPlace. ©2021 Esri*

The following chart uses data from Table 9 to offer more detailed information about the leakage and surplus factors, and further emphasis on the retail opportunities in Forest Park. This factor is proportional to the retail gap presented above as it measures the difference between supply and demand.

In 2021, the Median Disposable Income per household was $51,202. There is a lot of money to be spent in Forest Park, and according to *Figure 16* ample economic potential for the Village. Analyzing where the community gains and loses business and crafting recommendations accordingly will help bolster the it's prosperity, power, and identity.

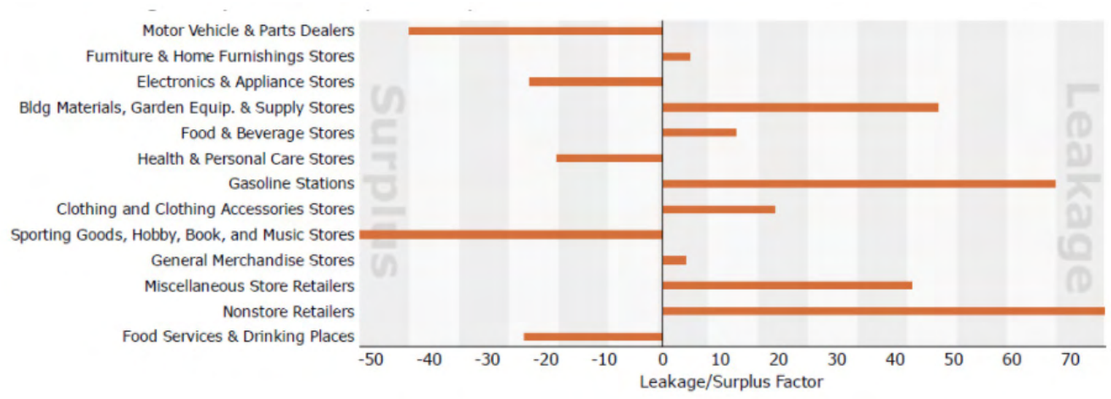
According to qualitative and quantitative data, the residents of Forest Park enjoy gardening and non-store retailers such as informal pop-up shops and markets enough to leave the Village in search of more options. Our site redesign aims to bolster community supported agriculture, which brings unique horticulture, hydroponics, and culturally relevant food sources to the community. Our design and programming can boost the economic growth of these industries by supporting the space and people who use it by developing shops and sectors to promote the community's affinity for gardening, outdoors, and informal retailers.

The surplus of health and personal care stores and sports equipment shops results in consumers from neighboring communities coming to Forest Park to shop. Since these activities are already in abundance here, our proposed site – focused on health, wellness, and recreation – will fit in well with the identity of the Village.

Our proposal would hopefully balance the surplus of health and personal care stores and sport equipment shops by providing opportunities for people to be outdoors and utilize new recreational spaces. With more people needing sports equipment, there would be a higher demand for such retail, leading to a decrease in the Retail Gap. Our presence in the community would solidify the view that Forest Park is a healthy, green oriented place. Our site development helps balance the surplus that already exists and fills in gaps in the current system.

Forest Park residents tend to shop smart and are fairly traditional in their purchases, aside from their affinity for natural, green products, health-conscious foods, and exercise gear. They admire local brands, value social equity and equal opportunity, and strive for home ownership. They love to workout, read, attend arts and cultural events and utilize the internet and the latest technology whenever they can, especially when searching for new food recipes, restaurants, and ways to learn and discover the world and people around them. Residents have a strong sense of community, volunteering for charities, helping fund raise, and recycling whenever possible (Tapestry Segmentation, 2021). The intention of our site redesign is to invigorate and revitalize a landmark site into something that the community already loves: a recreational, inclusive, and green-oriented civic space.

***Figure 16-*** *Leakage/surplus chart by Industry Subsector in Forest Park*




*Source: Esri and Data Axle. Esri 2021 Updated Demographics. Esri 2017 Retail MarketPlace. ©2021 Esri.*



# C. Cultivating Community

> **We have a lot of strengths! The biggest is our community and people: families that have been here for generations, new families, families that used to live in adjacent communities. We have a small town vibe.**
>
> - Moses Amidei, Village Administrator of Forest Park.

## Disclaimer:

*We are not members of this community, nor did we have ties to the community prior to this research. On the one hand, we have an unbiased approach to developing our ideas and plans. On the other hand, we understand that we are limited in our knowledge of what makes this community function. This is why we are pursuing a robust, comprehensive, and assorted methodology to garner participation in our community engagement strategy, herein called CES.*

# Steps for Effective Community Engagement

## MEETING PEOPLE WHERE THEY ARE

### STEP 01

**Vision and Reality**

Envision what we want to come from our engagement. Identify the nodes of the community and utilize those sources to guide our engagement.

### STEP 02

**Who needs engaging?**

Determine what groups or which areas need involvement. Learn about them to foster a greater relationship.

### STEP 03

**Actively Recruit**

Look for diverse stakeholder groups beyond the usual. Seek out the people and organizations that are building community.

### STEP 04

**Discover**

Plan a site visit. Meet residents, workers, and businessowners. Walk along the corridors and see how the built environment influences people.

***Figure 17(b) -*** *Steps for Effective Community Engagement*

## STEP 05

### Build Buzz

Arrange stake-holder interviews, virtually or in-person. Circulate a QR code survey, reach out to organizations that can promote your calls for feedback.

## STEP 06

### Ask and Learn

Listen to testimonials. Analyze the common threads. Learn what the community desires and respect the answers.

## STEP 07

### Design and Refine

Provide an engagement opportunities at the site. Give stakeholders room to learn hands-on through design and education. Take feedback into genuine consideration.

## STEP 08

### Meet them where they are

In partnership with locals, develop short and long term goals. Work together to facilitate and propel the engagement- in order to support the future of the space for residents.

# 1. Approach

The Village of Forest Park has a strong history of community development, civic engagement, and urban planning efforts. In order for our project at the Altenheim Site to be successful, our team will lead efforts for public outreach and community engagement.

**Our approach utilizes three pillars to reach an array of community members in an inclusive manner to encourage a positive impact and empower residents**

**Inclusivity**

Equitably incorporate a diversity of people, voices, ideas, and information to set the groundwork for quality outcomes and democratic legitimacy.

**Impact**

Ensure each participatory effort has potential to make a difference, and that participants are aware of that potential.

**Empowerment**

Promote a culture of participation with programs and institutions that support ownership and pride to encourage ongoing quality community guidance over the space.

Our approach to public input seeks to strike an appropriate balance between traditional in-person outreach and modern digital methods. Our in-person outreach will consist of public meetings, interviews, focus groups, fliers, an idea wall, and one large pop-up event with tactical urbanist workshops at the Altenheim site. The online methods include an interactive project website hosted through the platform Social Pinpoint, social media, visual preference surveys, QR code surveying, and Zoom interviews.

We understand that different people choose to participate in different ways: not everyone has access to the internet at home, not everyone feels comfortable meeting in-person due to COVID-19, and not everyone has spare time to attend a meeting or outreach event. The diversity of our community engagement methods will ensure that we include a multiplicity of community members through application of the tools in the International Association of Public Participation Spectrum.

All tasks below will adhere to the latest COVID-19 regulations suggested by the Center for Disease Control. Whenever safe to do so, face-to-face outreach will be the goal (with masks and appropriate social distancing if needed). Each outreach task will also have a virtual back-up plan if COVID-19 prevents safe in-person activities.

***Figure 18-*** *Our CES Elements Through Lens of IAPP Spectrum*

| Inform | Consult | Involve | Collaborate | Empower |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Fliers | Interviews | Public Meetings | Pop-up Tactical Urbanist Event | Youth Development |
| Interactive Website | Focus Groups | Visual Preference Surveys | | Council Formation |
| Social Media | Surveys | | | |

*Source:International Association of Public Participation Spectrum, 2020.*



### Audience

For this project, we are looking for diversity in our stakeholders. Since our project site is located next to the Altenheim Senior Living Home, we understand that the elderly are one of the predominant groups we want to cater to. The site is also across the street from a neighborhood full of predominantly families and singles. Furthermore, this site is in high demand due to its open space, central location to transit facilities, and its proximity to the spine of the Village, Madison Street. Given these factors, we have the privilege of extending our outreach far and wide because this site will impact the community experience as a whole. Thus, we hope to engage with residents of all ages, abilities, and backgrounds.

# 2. Findings

## Site Visits

**Time Frame: Month 1-12**

We conducted a site visit early on in our process. Walking from the Blue Line Forest Park train station to Madison St. gave us an idea of the current pedestrian conditions, connectivity from transit lines to a main commercial corridor, and main modes of transportation in the community. Being on the ground also informed us about relationships between businesses and the public, how commercial and residential areas feel to pedestrians, and what kinds of businesses are located in the main commercial strip.

## Interviews

**Time Frame: Months 1-10**

Our team interviewed an array of stakeholders, seeking out individuals and organizations that cultivate community in Forest Park and in the surrounding areas. The community leaders provided local knowledge of the study area, the Downtown, and the community as a whole by sharing their insights and lived experiences related to residing in, working in, and visiting the Village. We wanted to perform face-to-face interviews when applicable, but due to COVID-19, all of our interviews were held over the phone or on Zoom.

Over the past few weeks, members of our team have had conversations with the following community leaders to learn more about the inner goings-on of the community.

**Matt Whalen**
Director of Community Life at L'Arche

**Mike Carmody**
Executive Director of Opportunity Knocks

**Moses Amidei**
Village Administrator

**Jackie Iovinelli**
Executive Director of Park District

These glimpses into the lives of Forest Park residents have helped us expand the scope of the recommendations for our transects. Their desire for more recreation and green space, along with the need to adapt the community as it faces dual challenges of Covid-19 and climate change, inspired the recommendations for our proposed transect. Specific needs included more space for community gardens - to alleviate some of the pressure on the current gardens, which have a waitlist until 2022 - and providing more public indoor space to allow for community gatherings with adequate social distancing for Covid-19 mitigation. Additionally, as the area faces increasing flood risks due to climate change, we have added a detention pond and sunken garden in our final proposal to reduce surface-level flooding and improve drainage.

## Survey Results

**Time Frame: Months 2-12**

Our team sent out a digital survey via email to the stakeholders we had previously had conversations with during our interview sessions. The survey was built utilizing QR Code technology (as seen in *Figure 21)* so any individual could easily scan it and take it on their mobile device when they had time to do so. Besides disseminating the survey through email, we also encouraged the stakeholders we interviewed to disperse the survey amongst their friends, family, and colleagues that had connections to Forest Park.
From our engagement, we garnered a few responses from members of the community. We anonymized our survey, but since we are particularly interested in a cross-generational sample, we encouraged the surveyees to inform us of their age. We had participants ranging from 18 to 54 years old.
Some of the most telling questions we asked were:

> **What kind of community spaces would you like to see?**
> **Do you feel that Forest Park is accommodating to your needs as you move around the community?**
> **Do you think the city promotes enough community events and recreational activities that are accessible for all ages and capabilities?**

These three questions were open-ended and some were measured on a litmus scale so we could sift through a range of responses and not pigeonhole participants into black and white answers. In regards to the first question, our participants stated they wanted "More parks, open space and more space for community events." Our participants also felt that the Village could improve mobility accommodations and promote more activities that are accessible for all ages and capabilities.
Coincidentally, our selected site – the area outside of the Altenheim home – was just demolitioned and



a community group, the Concerned Van Buren Citizens (CVBC) had already sent out a survey in May 2021 to learn what residents wanted the available space to become. We would be remiss if we didn't consider the feedback solicited by this survey as well. The CVBC survey gathered 114 surveys indicating that the community cares about what happens to the space and that they have ideas about how it should be redeveloped. Overwhelmingly, the CVBC survey participants stated that they had desires for retention of the little green space the Village already has. Complementary to that, 93% had a desire for the installation of walking paths and 85% for community gardening areas. Additionally, 89% of residents stated they do not want the development to increase traffic on Van Buren (the road alongside the site). Further, the idea of commercial development seemed to irritate some residents who moved to the area for serenity.
At the end of the thorough CVBC Survey, residents were given the chance to suggest possible uses. Answers ranged from tot lots, a conservatory (similar to the one in neighboring Oak Park), outdoor workout facilities, or an Art's District (CVBC Survey, 2021). Our team is grateful and encouraged by the fact that the space already has a large buzz around it, and we intend to incorporate the suggestions made when making our recommendations for the site.

## Thoughts from Community Leaders

### Strengths of Forest Park

*"The biggest strength of Forest Park is the passion the community has for everything they do. The ideal placement of the community, its transportation, and what it offers right outside Chicago make it an ideal location."*

- Jackie Iovinelli, Executive Director, Park District of Forest Park

*"We have a lot of strengths! The biggest is our community and people: families that have been here for generations, new families, families that used to live in an adjacent community. We also have a diversity of everything: a good mix of housing options, businesses, and we're blessed with the downtown area of Madison Street that is the crown jewel. It's a spot to leisurely stroll, it has a small town vibe. Transportation comes easy to everybody here, we're a walkable community. We have great school districts that people are attracted to. We have the park district and a number of pocket parks."*

- Moses Amidei, Village Administrator of Forest Park

*"So when COVID hit and we were looking for outside areas, Altenheim was very welcoming and the Village was excellent in facilitating the use of green spaces for outside programming." The Park District is amazing, always allowing us the use of their facilities."*

- Mike Carmody, Executive Director of Opportunity Knocks

*"In Forest Park, we have a strong network of community and nonprofit organizations on Madison Street that support people with intellectual and physical disabilities. So in the last tear we've connected to provide different employment opportunities for various individuals."*

- Matt Whalen, Director of Community Life at L'Arche

### Effect of Covid-19 in the Community

*"During Covid, our number one priority was the health and wellness of our community. We focused on what we could do, not what we couldn't do. We maximized our outdoor space, we learned we could be creative. We had crowds like we've never seen before at events and the pool. We noticed our park was packed: families having picnics, people getting married. We had crowds, but not issues. Covid made us realize the need for more indoor space because we need to spread out inside."*

- Jackie Iovinelli, Executive Director, Park District of Forest Park

*"We have brick and mortar stores, mom and pop, big store chains. Because of the mix of businesses we do have, hopefully we're able to withstand challenges. We do have empty storefronts now, but [during Covid] Walmart was bustling, and our car dealership sold out."*

- Moses Amidei, Village Administrator of Forest Park

### Changes in the Future

***"We want to do more. I think people want more fitness and health and wellness opportunities, and we want to be there for people."***

- Jackie Iovinelli, Executive Director, Park District of Forest Park

*"The retail market has changed, online business has changed; what is the market going to look like in 5 years? We very much rely on retail to provide our services, so we would like to maintain it.*
*All our meetings now are on zoom - I'm going to make that permanent. We're going to celebrate more; a lot of time we forget about our successes. We're going to engage in a communications strategy that is more intentional.*
*A lot of the parklands are going to be improved in the next 3-4 years through grants or local funding. Those public spaces have been neglected for a long time."*

*- Moses Amidei, Village Administrator, Forest Park*

### Climate Change

*"Climate change causes rain events to be more frequent and more intense. Forest Park is an older, more mature community from the late 1800s. Unfortunately, we don't have a lot of division of stormwater and wastewater, so we need to start separating those sewer systems from one another, because the volume that is coming from rain events is too intense. We're also trying to do green infrastructure with our alleys (permeable pavement) to not flood our sewage system all at once.*
*I've had a few conversations about going solar to lower our footprint. We'll consider that after we replace the roofs on our buildings. Our public works buildings need new roofs, and the next step is putting up solar panels."*

- Moses Amidei, Village Administrator, Forest Park

### Diversity and Equity

*"We have listened and have made a conscious effort - we embrace diversity and try to offer everyone the same opportunity, but equitably. One of my focuses was to ensure our staff matched the diversity of our community. We work to be inclusive every day."*

- Jackie Iovinelli, Executive Director, Park District of Forest Park

*"Forest Park Against Racism came together to focus on equity and wanting to make sure the community is one that stays welcoming. [We help to] build bridges to help people see the other side with heart and passion.*

***We sensed a tension and divide in the community, and sometimes it feels very polarized. Over the past four years, there's been a tremendous amount of work done in the community because of those feelings of division.***

*This also encouraged the community to challenge the political figures that were in Forest Park, and now they have a Black mayor and more female representation.*
*FPAR met with the police department last year and had a robust conversation between community members and the police. [But] the Village has been weary of engaging. The Village-led conversation on policing felt contrived with little give and take. The police were unprepared. The language being used by the chief of police brought about a feeling of despair. The police chief admitted in the conversation to racial profiling. But they would still want to have more in depth conversations around these issues."*

**- Betty Alzamora, Co-Founder of Forest Park Against Racism**



# 3. Community Engagement Proposal

Our community engagement strategy is centered around Inclusivity, Impact, and Empowerment. Through our outreach methods, we seek to equitably integrate a diversity of people, voices, and ideas in order to ensure that participants are aware of the potential they possess to impact their communities. We hope to be more than a transient moment in the history of Forest Park, striving instead to create lasting change through empowering community members to participate in programs and institutions that support ownership of local initiatives.

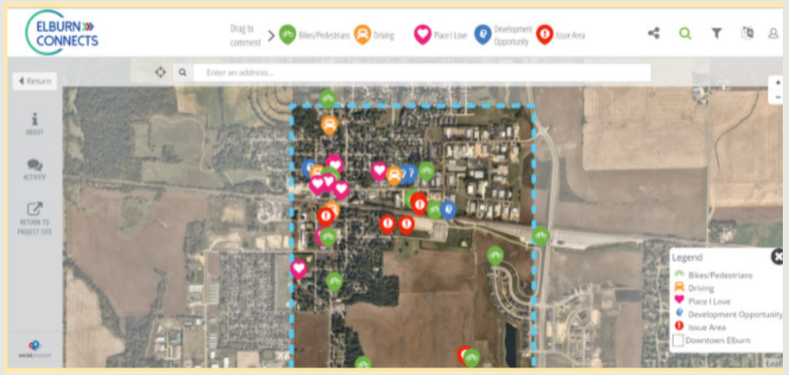
## Interactive Online Engagement

**Time: Months 1-11**

The team will create and maintain a dynamic and customizable project website via the Social Pinpoint platform for the duration of the assignment. This site will provide: background information, the project timeline, an interactive comment mapping tool, ideas wall, survey links and bi-weekly polls. Residents and stakeholders can also subscribe for email updates. For sake of transparency, all materials pertaining to the project will be hosted on the website as well.

**Mapping:**
Through Social Pinpoint, stakeholders will be able to map out their ideas, identify problem areas, and pose suggestions to the team. There is also a section to the side where people can up-vote or demote comments. This will be monitored by the team to help us locate the most pressing issues, both conceptually and spatially. Additionally, this is a transparent and user-friendly way of fostering spatial awareness and provides a snapshot of participatory planning.

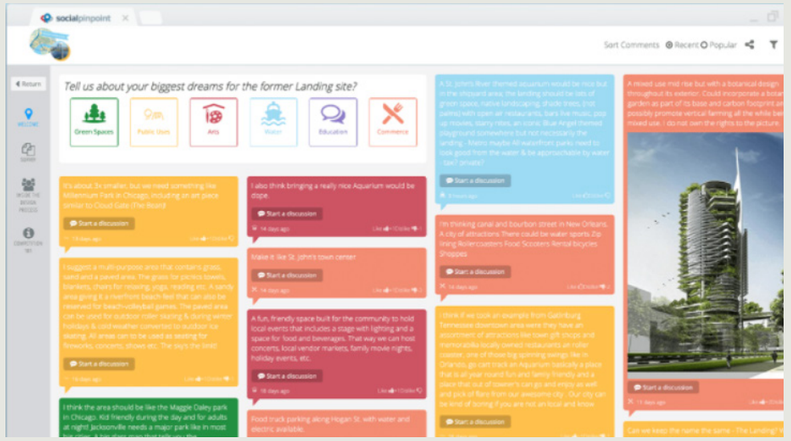
***Figure 19-*** *Mapping Platform*




*Source: Elburn Connects TOD Plan via Social Pinpoint, 2021*

**Ideas Wall:**
Also via Social Pinpoint, an Ideas Wall will allow stakeholders to write their suggestions, needs, or frustrations. It's essentially an online 'sticky notes on a wall' concept that can be used as an incubator to facilitate collaboration and brainstorming while allowing users to upload comments and photos, discuss, and like/dislikes.

***Figure 20-*** *Idea Wall*




*Source: Jacksonville Landing Design Competition via Social Pinpoint, 2021*

### Surveying
***Time Frame: Months 2-12***

We will distribute surveys throughout the community to gather local knowledge, perceptions, and goals of residents and others with inside knowledge of Forest Park. Surveys may also be catered toward specific groups - such as residents and homeowner associations, property and business owners, local developers, community groups, and schools - to gain insight into various circles. All members of the community will have the opportunity to participate in a digital survey that will be accessible through a QR code. Paper versions of the survey will also be provided at commonly visited places and at the Festival Event at the end of the engagement period. The team will work with the Village to publicize the survey via announcements on the Village website, on the Social Pinpoint platform, and other appropriate means. Two types of surveys will be circulated.

### QR Code-Based Survey
***Time Frame: Months 4-12***

First, we will have a QR code based survey that will be emailed out to stakeholders and turned into fliers and dispersed to popular local businesses, community centers, schools, cafes, and heavily-trafficked areas. Our survey will be easy and convenient by allowing anyone with access to a mobile device or computer to take it from anywhere.

***Figure 21-*** *QR Code*

*Source: Forest Park Community Survey, 2021.*

### Bi-Weekly Polls
***Time frame: Months 2-8***

Via Social Pinpoint, we will conduct polls every two weeks to hear from different groups in the community about what they're currently observing in Forest Park along with any new desires for improvements they may have.

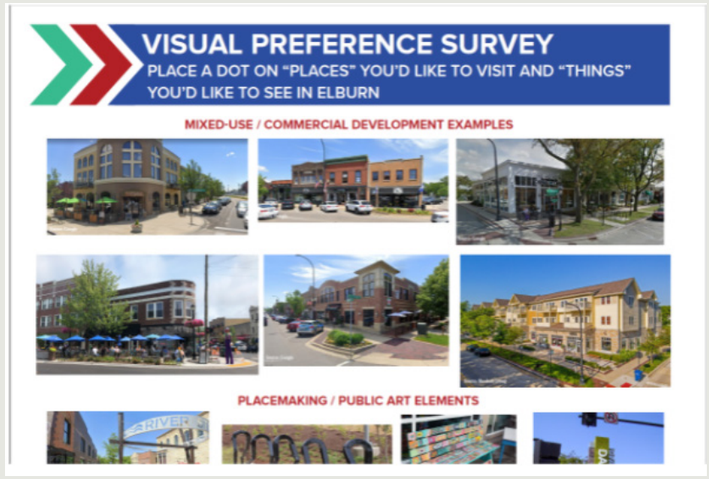
### Social Media
***Time frame: Months 1-12***

We will create a Facebook page linked to our Social Pinpoint website. We chose Facebook over other social platforms because it tends to produce better results locally. A tagline and hashtag for this project will also be created to garner buzz, solidify branding, and reach more people. We will post our QR code survey in local Facebook groups as well to meet people where they are, digitally, by bringing the information to virtual community groups they already frequent.

### Visual Preference Survey
***Time Frame: Months 2-11***

We will also be compiling visual preference surveys. Visual preference surveys (VPS) aid stakeholders in imagining what the space will look like. Moreover, it allows for stakeholders to have the power of choice, which enables project momentum because people feel invested in what will transpire. The VPS can also be blown up, refined, and altered for multiple iterations. We plan on having large boards for people to write and draw on during our promotional festival, which is described below as the Pop-Up Tactical Urbanism Festival.

***Figure 22-*** *Example of a visual preference survey*




*Source: Jacksonville Landing Design Competition via Social Pinpoint, 2021*



## In-Person Engagement

***Time: Months 1-11***

From community workshops to listening sessions and solo interviews, we will strive for our in-person engagement and facilitation methods to reach all corners of the community and develop further once we have left the table.

### Youth Leadership Development
***Time Frame: Months 6-12***

We intend to engage youth specifically because they offer valuable insights about connectivity through their unique movements within the community. As the majority of youth do not have driver's licenses, they navigate spaces more similarly to those who do not drive, such as the elderly and differently-abled. Since our space revolves around themes of green connectivity and mobility, youth engagement is crucial.
Our engagement with youth will consist of a series of workshops with creative activities designed to draw from their unique community knowledge. These activities would also be opportunities for youth in the community to learn from each other, meet other young people from schools or areas unfamiliar to them, and build camaraderie centered on community development. The workshops would be structured in such a way that eventually the young people are guiding exercises and teaching each other, contributing to leadership development which we see as crucial to empowering the community.

### Council Formation (Citizen Advisory Board)
***Time Frame: Months 10-Post***

As mentioned before, we strive to instill a lasting, self-sustaining system in the community to reach an array of community members in an inclusive manner to encourage a positive impact and empower residents. A crucial piece of that is the creation of a council toward the end of our process which would include a diversity of residents. This Citizen's Advisory Board would be responsible for maintenance of the new area and acting as the decision-making body for how the space is utilized.

### Pop-Up Tactical Urbanism Festival
***Time frame: Months 12***

At the end of our community engagement, we will be hosting an event (on-site) to promote participatory planning and community-driven design. There are two primary goals for this event: the first is to display the designs, ideas, words, maps, and findings we have gathered from previous stages of our community engagement so that residents can provide feedback on the existing proposal. The second goal is for community members to be able to engage fully in the planning process, participating in activities that promote creative envisioning of spatial possibilities for the Altenheim Site.

***We want the community to build consensus and purpose around the project, and to interact with material demonstrations of proposal alternatives through 3D visualizations, renderings, imagery, sketching, and creative brainstorming activities.***

***Figure 23-25*** *Community Tactical Urbanism Events*


*Sources (Left to Right): Michigan Municipal League, 2017; Vanessa Cascio, 2019; Complete Blocks, 2019*

We would partner with local businesses, organizations, and schools to host this full-day festival at the Altenheim site for the community. The festival would include local food vendors and music, a mobile gardening demonstration residents could interact with, a temporary 'human library' in which older residents can share stories with children and families, and an opportunity to paint brightly-colored crosswalks with fun designs on Van Buren St.
Afterward, the community boards, public sketches/designs, renderings etc. will be exhibited at key locations in the study area. Possible sites for displaying the boards and sketches include the local sporting goods store Play It Again Sports that often participates in the community development realm, the public library, the DMV or community events that attract a large number of visitors, such as the Rib Fest which is hosted annually on the Altenheim Site. Our goal for the project is to transform an informal space into a place with an identity shared with all individuals in Forest Park
Our community engagement strategy is multifaceted, comprehensive, and strives to meet people where they are. We seek to embrace a diversity of ideas from voices across all sides of Forest Park, acknowledging that the community recognizes the potential of a site such as this and wants to play a part in how it's designed, managed, and developed. In other words, we are the canvas and the community members the artists: we will provide the materials and resources through which residents can express their ideas, desires, and motivations to make the Altenheim site an inclusive, flexible place that welcomes all. Working together, we can create a space that nurtures and uplifts the unique strengths of individuals while tackling existing community problems.

> **Good design would 100% play a role in helping the people my organization serves, it's probably one of the most important things. My barometer is 'Can people enjoy going out because of the design?**
>
> - Matt Whalen, Director of Community Life at L'Arche

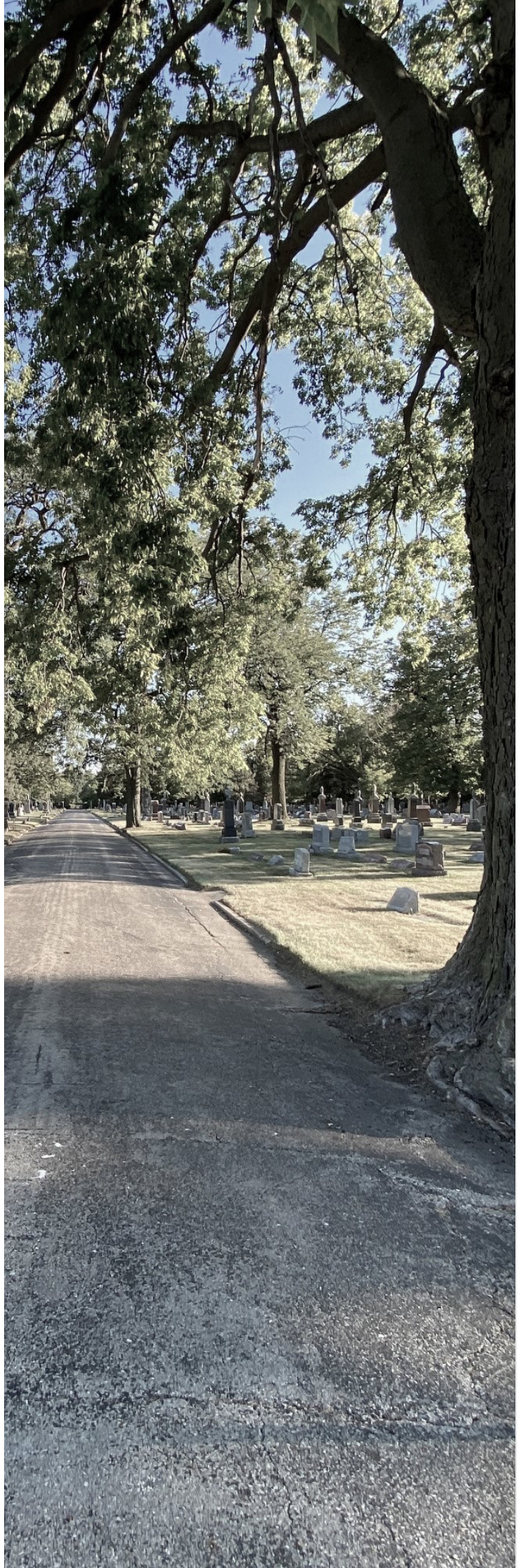


***Figure 26-*** *Timeline for Virtual Engagement Proposal*

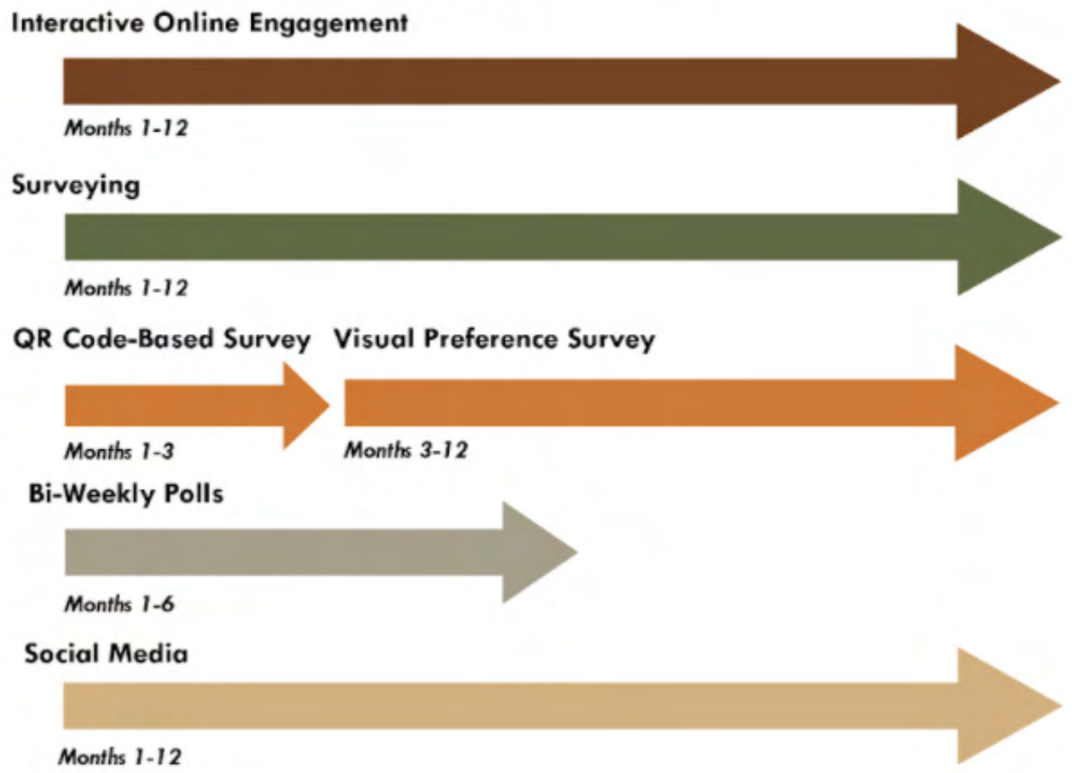
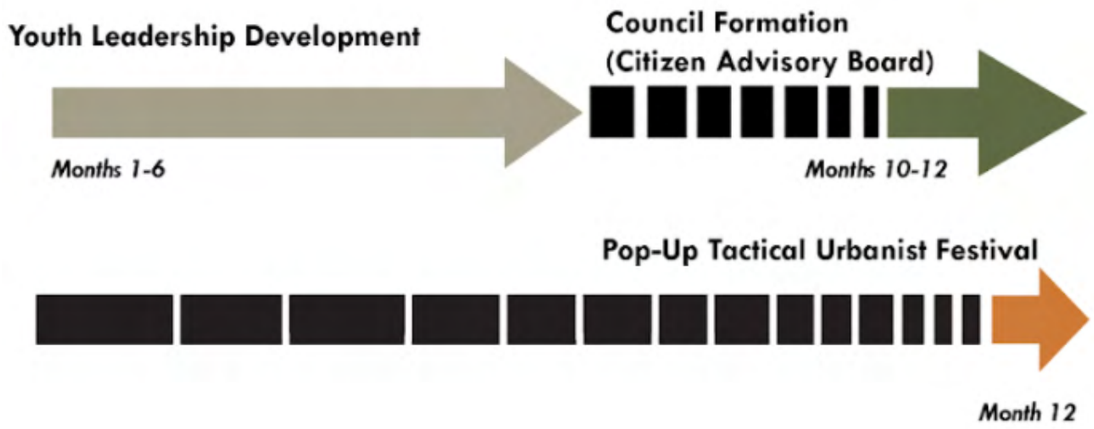



***Figure 27*** *Timeline for In-person Engagement Proposals*



# THE PLACE


# II. Existing *Physical Conditions*



## A. Housing

A diverse housing market is important for a community to be able to serve a range of income levels and demographics. Around half of Forest Park housing is considered affordable, meaning the area is open to offer more affordable options. The housing facilities in Forest Park are moderately diverse, consisting of mid to low rise structures and only a couple of G+ 7/ 8 floor buildings in the downtown area. The Median Property value in Forest Park was $234,100 in 2019, 3% less than the national average of $240,500 (DataUSA, 2019). Between 2018 and 2019, the median property value went up from $230,700 to $234,100, a 1.47% increase (DataUSA, 2019).

There is an **8.4%** vacancy rate, which indicates a slightly higher than desired rate for the community (which would be between 5-8%.) The ratio of owner-occupied and renter-occupied housing is split almost evenly, with 51.6% and 48.4%, respectively. The homeownership rate in Forest Park is approximately 13% less than the national average.

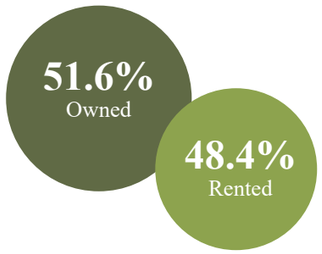



***Table 9-*** *2015- 2019 Housing Occupancy and Tenure*

| | Forest Park | | Cook County | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Count | Percent | Count | Percent |
| Occupied Housing Units | 6,996 | 91.6% | 1,972,108 | 89.9% |
| Owner-Occupied | 3,613 | 51.6% | 1,122,584 | 56.9% |
| Renter-Occupied | 3,383 | 48.4% | 849,524 | 43.1% |
| Vacant Housing Units | 641 | 8.4% | 221,230 | 10.1% |

*Source: 2015-2019 US Census American Community Survey 5-year estimates; Table:S1101*

The two most common types of housing are Multi-Family (2 or more) and Single-Family Detached, and renters comprise nearly half of households in Forest Park.

***Table 10-*** *Housing Type*

| | Forest Park | | Cook County | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Count | Percent | Count | Percent |
| Single-Family, Detached | 1,895 | 24.8% | 882,569 | 40.2% |
| Single-Family, Attached | 548 | 7.2% | 116,609 | 5.3% |
| 2 Units | 764 | 10% | 212,673 | 9.7% |
| 3 or 4 Units | 731 | 9.6% | 234,507 | 10.7% |
| 5 to 9 Units | 769 | 10.1% | 220,133 | 10% |
| 10 to 19 Units | 722 | 9.5% | 102,538 | 4.7% |
| 20 or More Units | 2179 | 28.5% | 408,192 | 18.6% |

*Source: 2015-2019 US Census American Community Survey 5-year estimates; Table: S1101*

One concern for Forest Park is an aging housing stock. The median housing age is 1958, with only 5% of the housing stock being built after 2000. Affordable funding sources for low income families to renovate aging homes will be necessary over time. The data support that very few households are burdened with housing costs totaling more than 30% of the household income. Therefore, the cost burden of housing is moderate and competitive within Cook County. Renters struggle the most, with 18.8% of these households showing elevated burden.

***Table 11-*** *2015 -2019 Housing Age*

| Year | Forest Park | Cook County |
|---|---|---|
| Built 2000 or later | 5.00% | 9.60% |
| Built 1970 to 1999 | 27.70% | 25.70% |
| Built 1940 to 1969 | 31.80% | 35.50% |
| Built Before 1940 | 35.50% | 29.10% |
| Median Year Built | 1958 | 1959 |

*Source: 2015-2019 US Census American Community Survey 5-year estimates; Table: S2504*

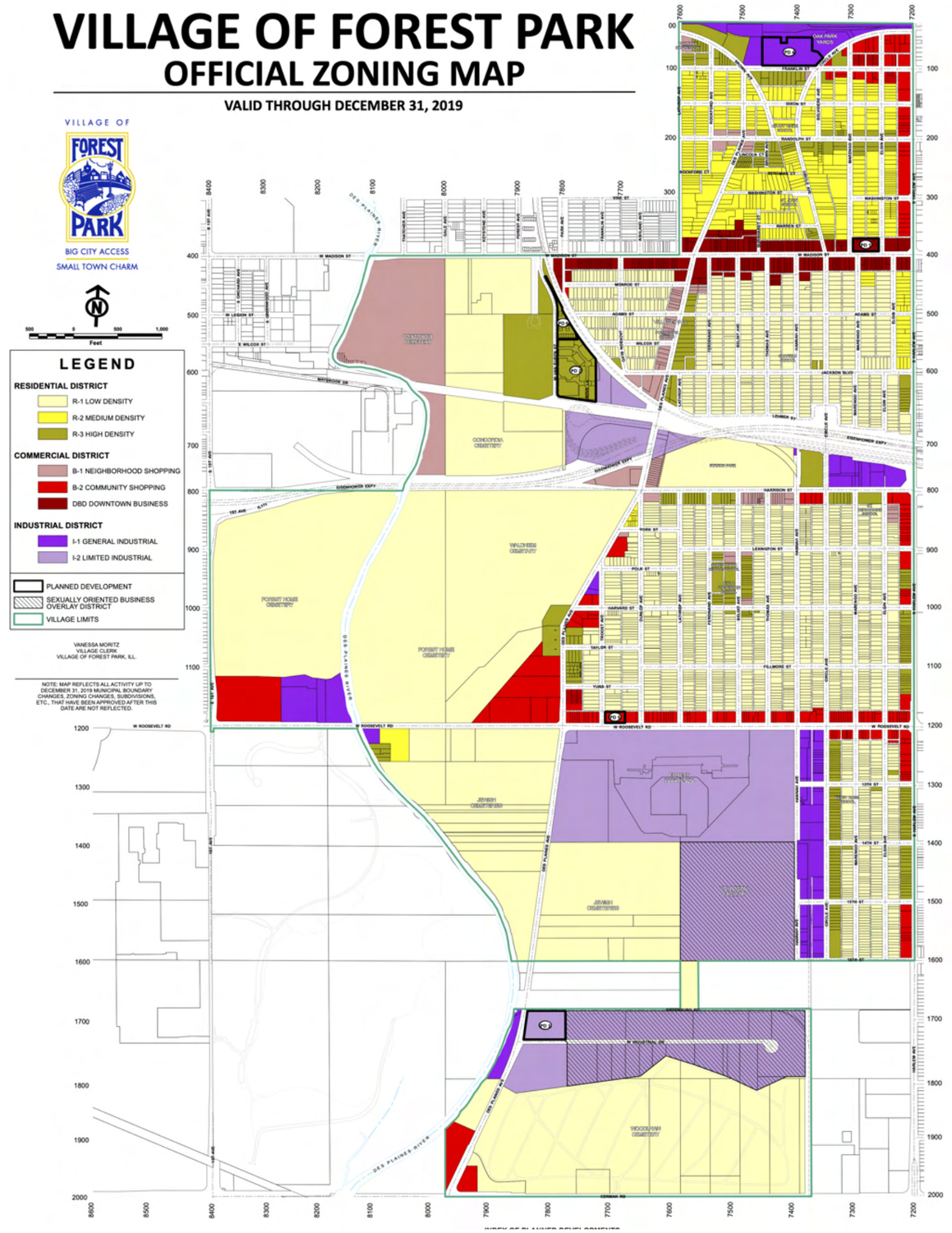
# B. Zoning & Land Use

The majority of land use in Forest Park is institutional (40%), followed by transportation (21%), and single-family and multi-family residential (13% and 10%, respectively; see Table 18.) According to the 2014 Comprehensive Plan, the large percentage of land dedicated to institutional purposes is due to its five cemeteries, including Forest Home, Concordia, Waldheim, Woodlawn, and Altenheim.

As seen in *Figure 28,* Forest Park cemeteries cover nearly half the western side of the community.

The remaining segments of land are primarily single-family detached and attached homes *(see Fig. 29),* with a section of light industrial on the southeastern end of the Village. There are also five parks totaling 17.5 acres, although most green space within the community is the five cemeteries. The main retail centers are found along the commercial streets of Des Plaines Ave, Harrison Street, Harlem Ace, Madison Street, Roosevelt Road, and Randolph Street *(see Fig. 29)*. Only 1.4% of the land is vacant.

***Figure 28-*** *Forest Park Zoning Map*




*Source: "Village Maps." Village of Forest Park, 29 June 2020, www.forestpark.net/dForest Park/resources/Village-maps/.*

***Figure 29-*** *Forest Park General and Residential Land Use Maps*

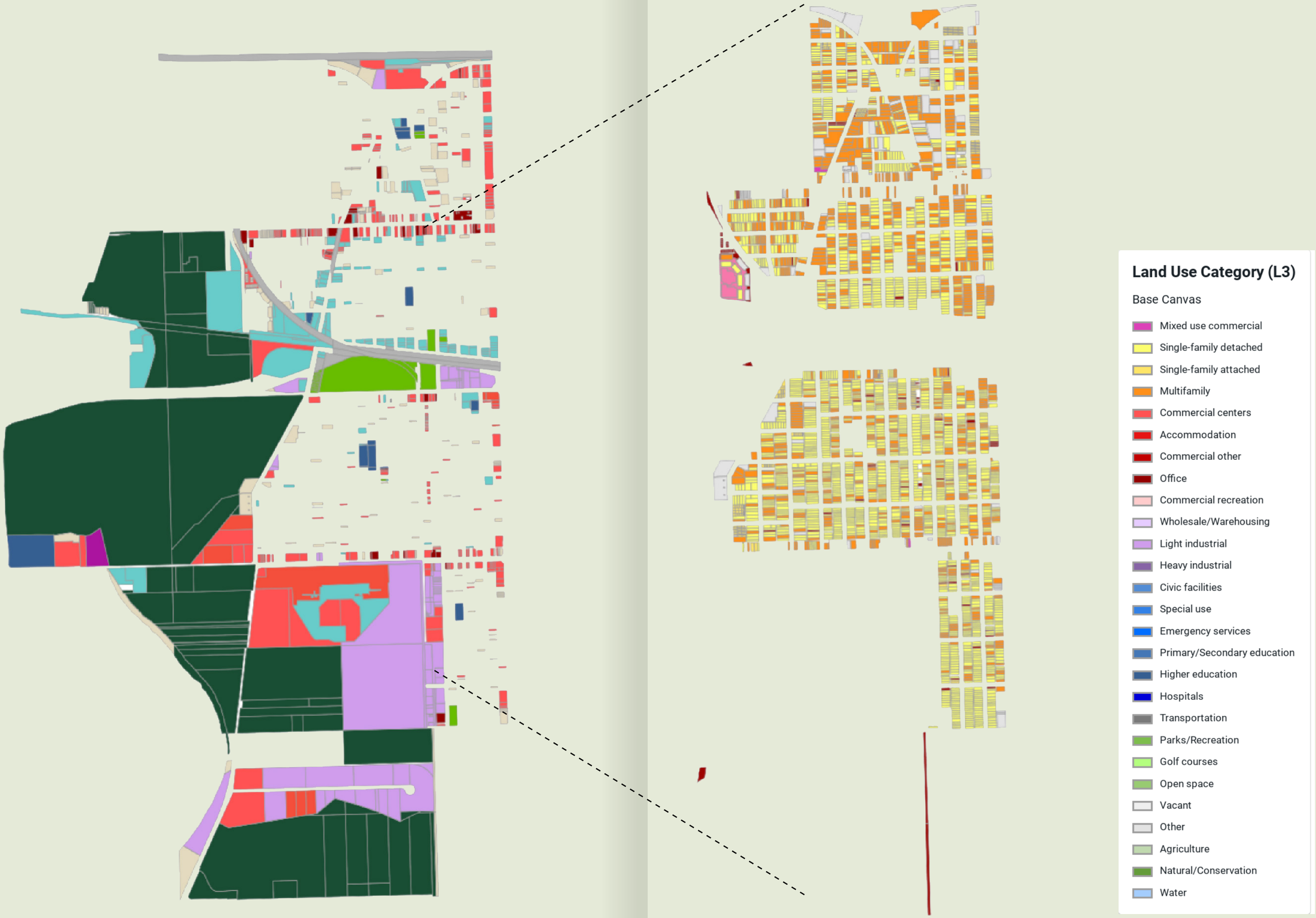
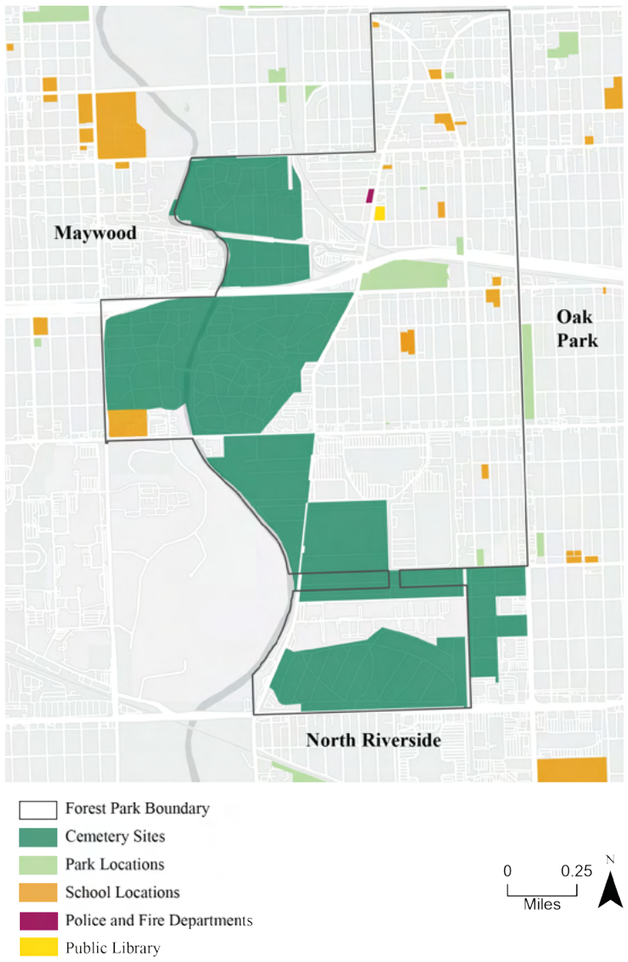


***Table 12-*** *Forest Park General Land Use, 2015*

| Categories | Percentage | Acres |
|---|---|---|
| Single-Family Residential | 13.1% | 200.9 |
| Multi-Family Residential | 10.1% | 154.5 |
| Commercial | 7.4% | 114.2 |
| Industrial | 5.7% | 88.1 |
| Institutional | 40.4% | 620.3 |
| Mixed Use | 0.8% | 11.7 |
| Transportation | 20.9% | 320.6 |
| Agricultural | 0% | 0 |
| Open Space | 1.4% | 21.4 |
| Vacant | 0.3% | 5.2 |
| **Total** | **100%** | **1,536.9** |

*Source: Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning*

***Figure 30-*** *Map of Points of Interests in Forest Park*




*Source: Cook County Data Portal, City of Chicago Data Portal, and ESRI*

> **Forest Park has maintained its old town charm with low density streets and recreational spaces.**

The Village boundaries are the Des Plaines River to the west and Highway 43 to the east, and the surrounding neighborhoods are Maywood, River Forest, Berwyn, and Oak Park. The Public Library and Howard Mohr Community Center are responsible for many community events and initiatives that serve and engage the public.

The Park District of Forest Park is the major recreation facility of the community. First established on November 14th, 1934 the Park District is located on the south side of town, with facilities in the central park including the Administrative Building, the Roos Recreation center, baseball/softball fields, batting cages, bocce ball courts, day camp building, in-line outdoor skating rink, maintenance garage, the Aquatic Center, sand volleyball court, soccer field, skate park, tennis courts, and an NFC fitness center.

Forest Park is also home to many 'tot-lots,' including the following five which are maintained by The Forest Park Recreation Board.

- **Lathrop**
- **Remembrance Park**
- **Popelka Park**
- **Veterans Park**
- **Reiger Park**



# C. Transportation

The Harlem Blue Line Station is situated on the Village's eastern edge along I-290, and the Forest Park Station, located at 711 S. Desplaines Ave, serves as the terminus of the Blue Line with access to CTA and Pace buses *(see Fig. 31)*. The Village has 10 bus shelters throughout its fixed Pace route. The Forest Park Blue Line Station encourages ridership for the differently-abled, and offers amenities such as a bus tracker and accessible parking for all riders.

***Table 13-*** *Forest Park Means of Transportation to Work Over Time*

| Mode | 2000 | 2010 | 2019 |
|---|---|---|---|
| Total | 8,406 | 7,673 | 8,126 |
| Car, truck, or van: | 75.5% | 72.1% | 68.3% |
| Drove alone | 65.7% | 63.2% | 60.7% |
| Carpooled | 9.8% | 9.0% | 7.6% |
| Public transportation | 17.0% | 17.0% | 20.8% |
| Bus or trolley bus | 2.8% | 6.8% | 2.1% |
| Subway or elevated | 12.6% | 8.7% | 15.1% |
| Railroad | 1.5% | 1.5% | 3.6% |
| Taxicab | 0.1% | 0.2% | 0.6% |
| Bicycle | 0.1% | 0.6% | 0.2% |
| Walked | 5.3% | 4.5% | 3.1% |
| Other means | 0.4% | 1.3% | 0.4% |
| Worked at home | 1.7% | 4.3% | 6.6% |

*Source: US Census (2019 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates: B08301)*

The modes in which Forest Park residents get to work has changed slightly since 2000. Although the area boasts a robust public transportation system, only around one in five residents chooses this method of transit. A majority of residents drive alone to work *(60.7%; see Table 13)*, although this proportion has decreased since 2000, when 64% of Forest Park residents would drive alone. Interestingly, the percentage of carpoolers has dropped by 2%.

The percentage of public transportation users increased from 17% in 2000 to 20% in 2019, with the greatest proportion of these users taking the 'L' to work (15%), and a smaller percent, 3.6%, taking the Metra. The number of Metra users, according to this data, has more than doubled in the past twenty years, while the number of bus riders has dropped slightly.

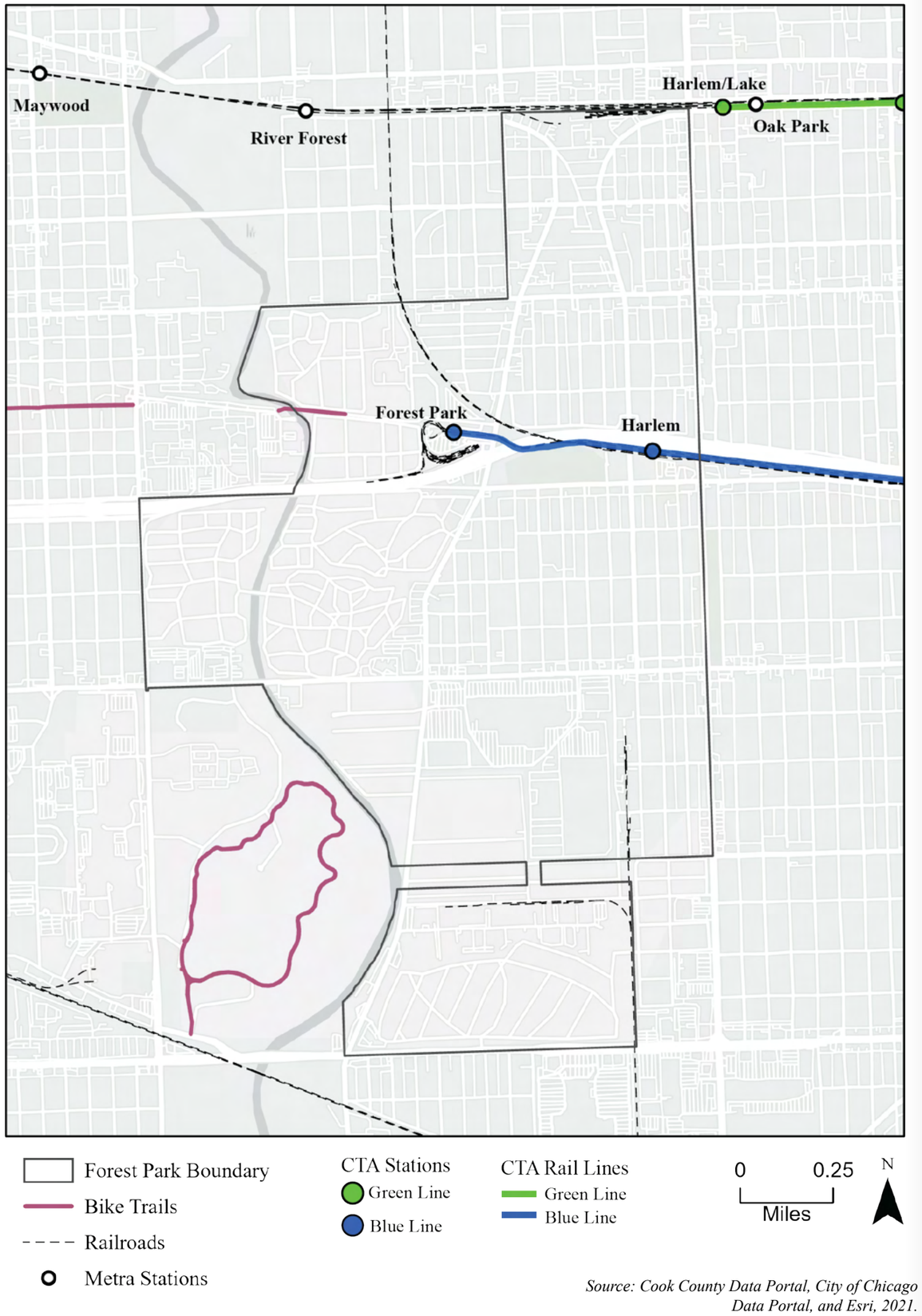
Between 2000 and 2019, there was a large increase in the percentage of Forest Park residents who worked from home, from 1.7% to 6.6%. The number of those who walked decreased slightly, from 5.3% to 3.1%.

Given this data, it's clear that our proposals need to make alternative modes of transportation more attractive to Forest Park residents.

***Figure 31-*** *Transit Map (CTA, 2021)*


*Source: Chicago Transit Authority, 2021.*

***Figure 32-*** *Public Transit Map*




*Source: Cook County Data Portal, City of Chicago Data Portal, and Esri, 2021.*

## Accessibility

Forest Park is notable for the Illinois Prairie Path which connects the community to the CTA Blue Line. Increased signage and marked bike routes on shared pavement would increase the safety of this trail.

The 2014 Comprehensive Plan of Forest Park promoted the community as walk-friendly: the Village was designated a bronze level 'Walk Friendly' community. However, as seen in *Table 13,* only 3% of Forest Park residents walk to work, and feedback from the community paints a picture of a more car-centric neighborhood than the Village perhaps would like to be seen as.

As part of the Village's Complete Streets Resolution 2011, Forest Park established a complete street policy to develop a comprehensive network of roadways, pedestrian- and bikeways, and transit facilities. Evaluating existing multi-modal transportation systems and first/last mile connections is needed to better expand integrating land use policy.

## Modal Share

The 2014 Comprehensive Plan of Forest Park focused on

**"Encouraging residents and visitors to take advantage of the Village's multi-modal transportation opportunities and promote safe and efficient travel."**

For smart growth of the economy, public transit relies on the efficiency of service, both systems of operation (via scheduling) and all modes of connective transportation. In our recommendations for the transects, we will focus on connectivity, increased opportunities for multi-modal transportation, and encouragement to use active transportation for wellness of community and the planet.


# III. Comprehensive *Plan*



The Vision of the Village of Forest Park is "to be a community, distinguished by a strong sense of place and identity, that promotes a healthy and diverse economy, provides a high quality of life responsive to all its residents and neighborhoods, and thoughtfully manages its resources in a manner that creates and sustains a safe, unique, vibrant, and rewarding community in which to live and work." The plan promotes the Village as one of the original neighborhoods in Illinois and envisions a robust quality of life for its diverse residents. It adopts a human perspective, focusing on the individual and the culture of community life that strives for a strong economy without losing the unique character of the Village.

The Comprehensive Plan emphasizes both the human and spatial character of the Village. It explains that Forest Park residents and business owners are very diverse, yet rely upon a common symbiotic relationship. The Plan highlights the diversity of the community and the importance of each individual's cultural contributions to the Village, yet there is no supporting data to solidify this concept of cohesiveness of municipality and residents. This concept will be further discussed in greater detail in the report. As for the spatial aspects, the Village promotes itself as combining the best of urban life and the ease of small town living.

A Comprehensive Plan consists of goals and strategies to further solidify the practicality of the Village's future vision. We've identified three main goals that relate to our proposal:

## 1. Promote innovative development initiatives that enhance community livability.

The first goal has two main components: adopting zoning regulations to encourage compatibility of various types of land use, and promoting transit-oriented, mixed-use centers that focus on the needs of the elderly population. Our proposal addresses the second component as it seeks to provide social opportunities and accessible amenities for populations of all ages and abilities.

## 2. Strengthen the land use and transportation relationship in Forest Park.

The second goal focuses on Complete Streets, the integration of transportation projects and land use plans to reinforce and support each other, encouragement of mixed-use, transit-oriented development, and the response to changing parking needs. Our proposal seeks to address the integration of transportation and land use through expanded connections from commercial corridors to transit stations, and the creation of a new community gathering place that offers flexible options for recreation, socialization, and exposure to green space.

## 3. Create, preserve, and maintain parks, open space, and recreational facilities to meet community and neighborhood needs.

The third goal seeks to create a system of parks and open space to meet the variety of residents' needs, to provide recreational opportunities, and to review sustainable development initiatives. The green connectivity component of our proposal strives to connect individuals to nature and to each other, and our mobility and accessibility principle aims to build a space to allow free movements for a diversity of body types and abilities.

While these goals and strategies will likely address many growing community needs, we feel that they do not go far enough to ameliorate rising problems in the Village. For example, the Plan addresses the lack of bicycle lanes, but does not explicitly mention whether the strategies will implement new lanes specifically for bikes. In addition, a glaring problem is the lack of consideration of the significant decrease in the Black and/or African-American population in Forest Park. Race is not mentioned in any of the goals and strategies, indicating that equity within the community is not at the forefront of planners' minds in this Village.

Throughout the Comprehensive Plan there was a great focus on sustainability for Forest Park, yet the data demonstrates that there is still much to be done. In order to formalize Forest Park's future vision, there must be further expansion of strategies to address key issues.

# IV. Transects
## Selection


# A. Approach

After closely examining Forest Park and its aspects, both human and spatial, we are proceeding by focusing on three key areas that would support our ideas of an efficient, inclusive, and sustainable intervention. Our research has led us to formulate a well-informed approach that revolves around green initiatives and mobility strategies:
The high presence of diversity, not just in terms of race, but also in age and ability, makes it more difficult for the space to accommodate all types of residents. This leaves some categories, such as the elderly and the differently-abled, underserved. Furthermore, the expansive green spaces that exist by looking at a map of Forest Park is highly deceiving, as most of it is dedicated to the large swathes of cemetery land, creating a barrier between residents, neighborhoods, and their ability to enjoy the idyll of the Village. Accordingly, our intervention aims to reconnect and open the neighborhood beginning with three transects that will be transformed on a microscale, and then connecting those transects to foster a greater impact at the neighborhood scale. We are using Godschalk's sustainability/ livability prism as a guide for creating a more livable community, by focusing on creating different interventions incrementally in terms of scale instead of one overarching, comprehensive plan. We believe that by breaking down our interventions into several transects we would be able to bridge the gap between livability and the three E's: Equity, Ecology, Economy in Forest Park. We're also connecting these transects to have a larger impact that is mobility and green oriented.

> "A green mutualism centered on connectivity of people with each other and their surroundings." We have chosen to examine and implement both green- and mobility-related tactical strategies as we believe they serve as great tools to bridge the gaps presented in the community.


# B. Transect 1: *The Traverse*

**Location: Former CVS Area**

The first transect, “the former CVS area, ”is located at the northeastern corner of the Village, at the intersection between Circle Ave and Harlem Ave. This specific area was selected because the CVS building and surrounding parking lot have recently become vacant, presenting a great opportunity for redevelopment. Additionally, the area is highly accessible as it is located right across the Harlem/ Lake Green Line CTA stop and is facing the entrance of the Village from the Oak Park side. The surrounding buildings are predominantly new construction with mixed-use projects, making this transect highly suitable for creating a transit-oriented development project (TOD) that could transform the neighborhood. It is important to mention that we are also tackling the TOD project differently by exploring the newly-introduced concept of employment-based TOD and mobility-hubs where residents can live, work, and commute in a more sustainable and convenient way. This transect will focus on offering more green jobs and easier modes of transportation for residents by catering for diverse needs including those lacking sufficient and enjoyable service.

***Figure 33-*** *Aerial view of the CVS Transect*

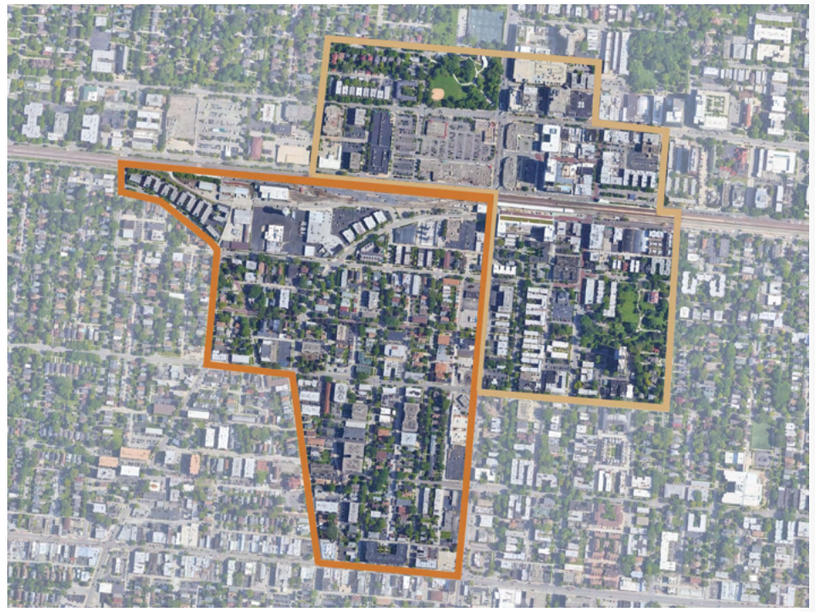


***Figure 34-*** *Present day CVS store photograph*


*Source: Google Maps (retrieved 10/17/2021)*



***Figure 35-*** *Blown up plan of the CVS Transect*


***Figure 36-*** *CVS Transect view from north east side*

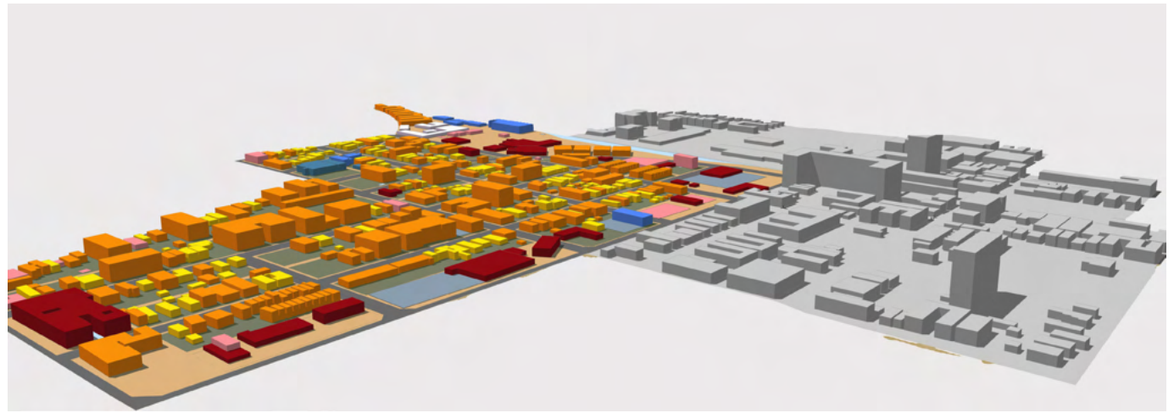


***Figure 37-*** *CVS Transect view from south west side*

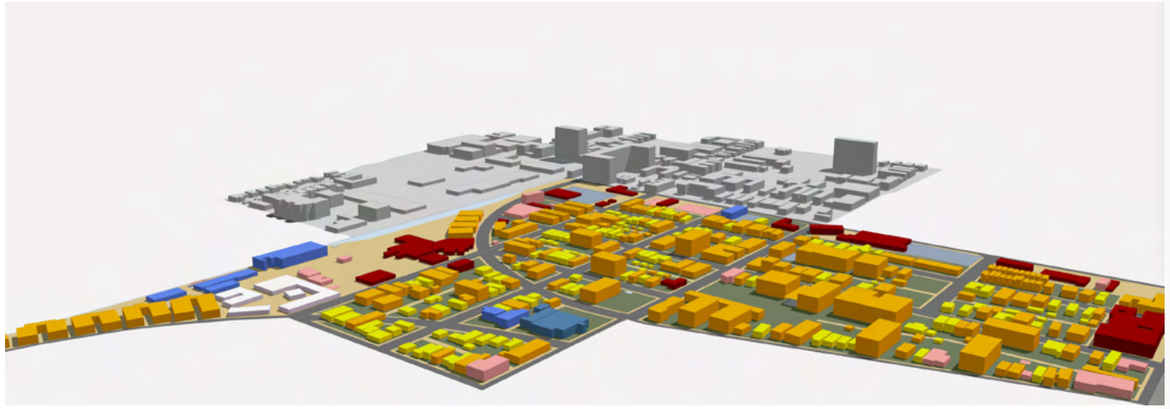


***Figure 38-*** *3d view of Main street access and pivotal aspects of the CVS Transect*

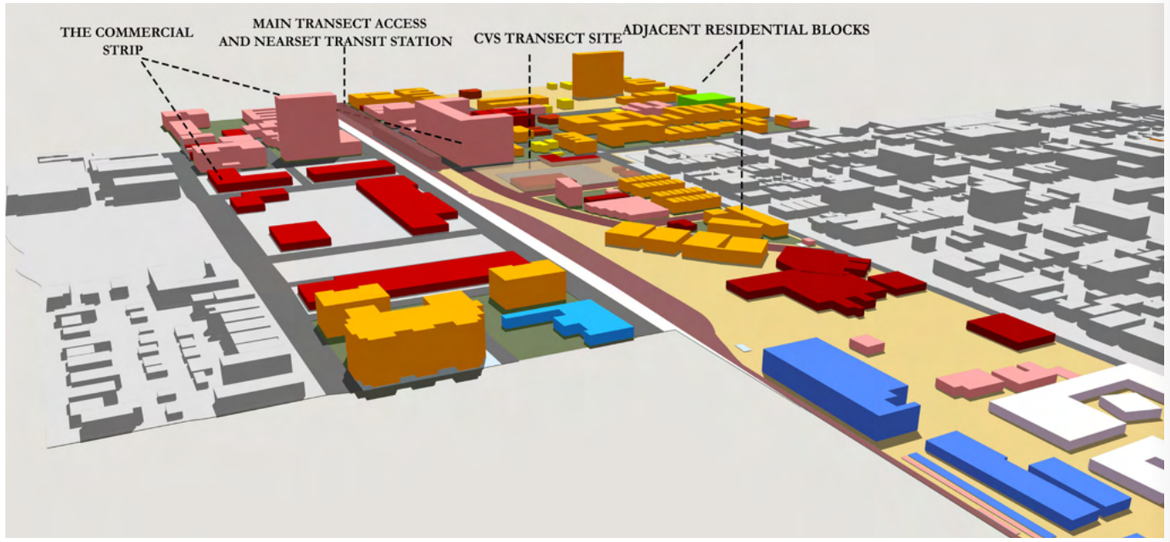



***Figure 39-*** *South elevation of the CVS transect*

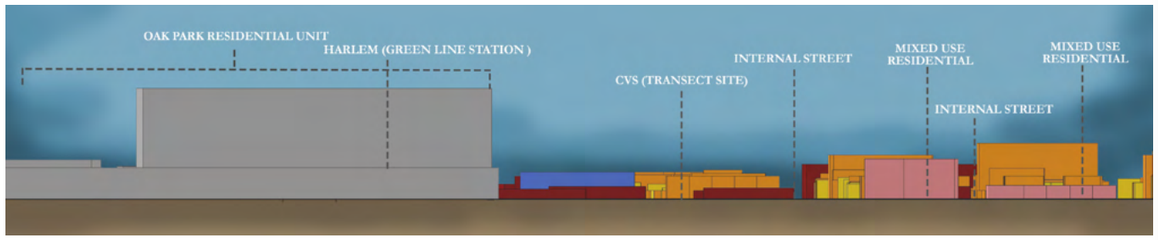
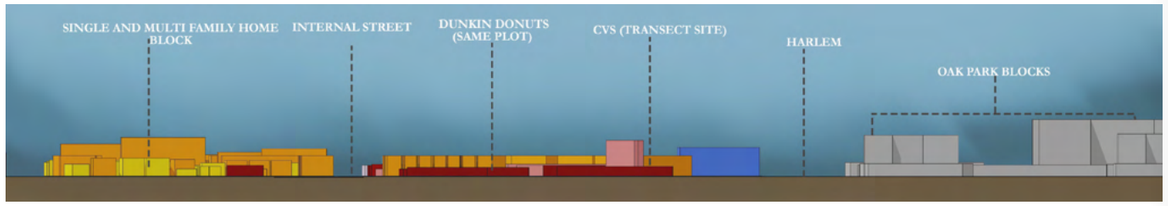



***Figure 40-*** *West elevation of the CVS transect*






# C. Transect 2: *The Oasis*

**Location: The Altenheim Area**

The second transect, referred to as “the Altenheim area”, lies along Van Buren St and is close to the intersection of Madison St. This site specifically attracted our attention due to its high accessibility, its link to Madison St – one of the main streets that is considered the downtown, its proximity to one of the main elderly enclaves, and its potential to become a complete project on its own as it presents an open canvas for planners to shape. Unlike the other two transects, this one focuses more on green-oriented activities than mobility-related ones, although it integrates both. This idea was also inspired by our meetings with stakeholders which highlighted that this area already attracts relaxation and recreation, but differently-abled people have a hard time navigating small bike lanes and uneven surfaces. Accordingly, our vision for the area is directed towards maintaining it as an open space while increasing its connection with residents – especially those in need of extra help – through projects such as community gardens, children’s play areas, and ADA-compliant and elderly seating. In addition, we will maintain the connectivity of the area on a neighborhood level by installing micro-mobility interventions such as bike sharing, and also ADA trike parking. Our aim is to promote this area as a “safe haven” for residents that is connected to the Village yet excluded from its high auto-oriented patterns.

***Figure 41 -*** *Aerial view of the Altenheim, Forest park*

***Figure 42 -*** *Present day Altenheim photograph*

*Source: Google Maps (retrieved 10/17/2021)*

***Figure 43-*** *Blown up plan of the Altenheim transect*

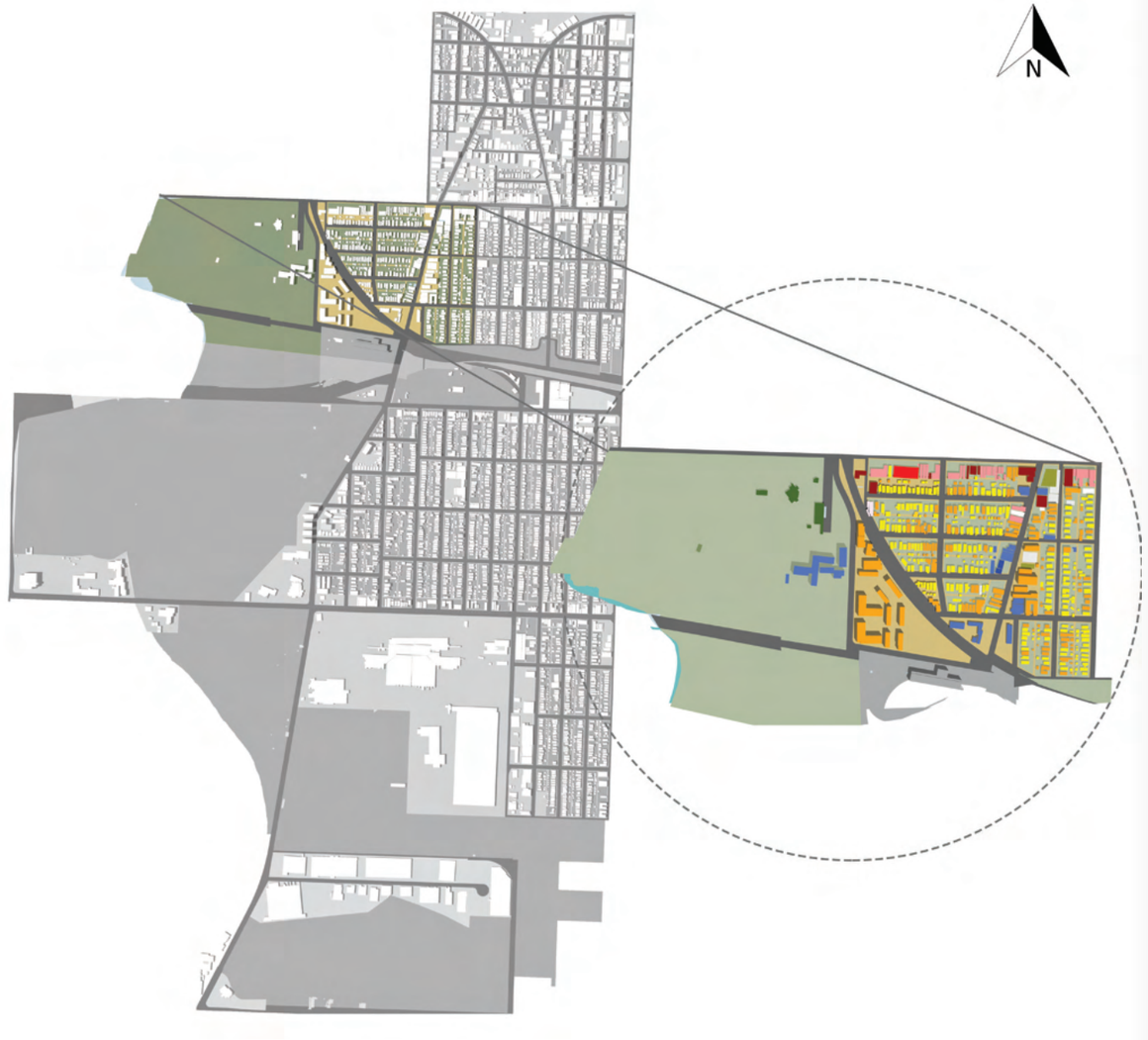



***Figure 44-*** *Altenheim Transect view from south west side*

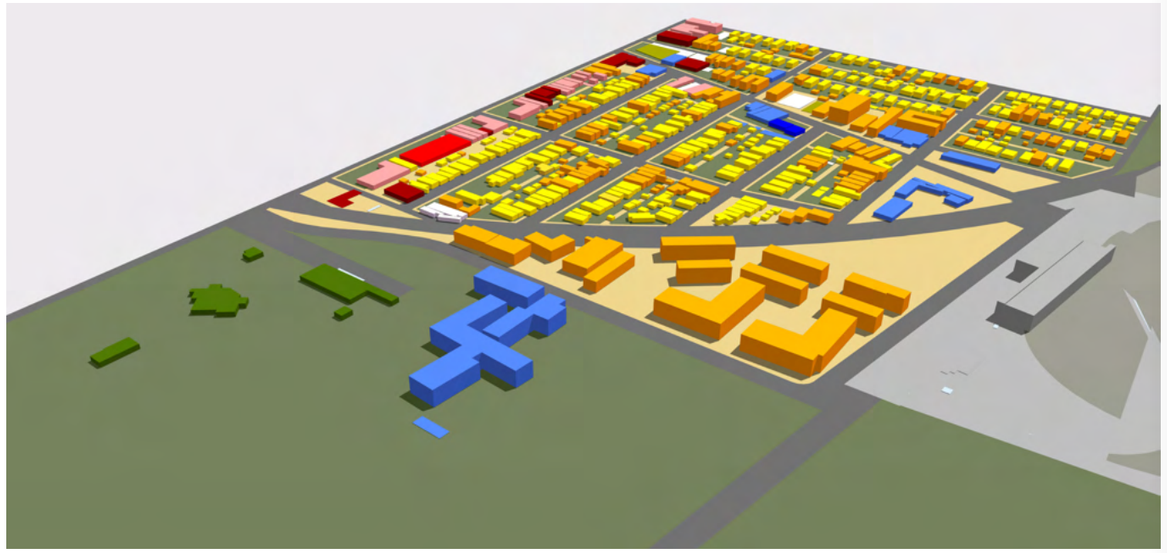




***Figure 45-*** *Altenheim Transect view from north west side*

***Figure 46-*** *3d view of Main street access and pivotal aspects of the Altenheim Transect*

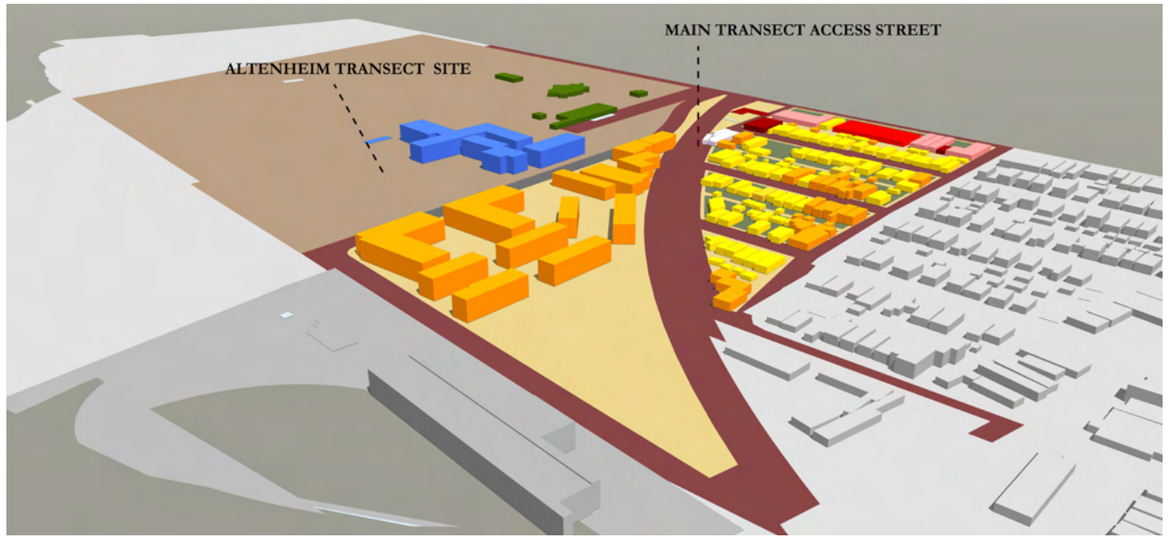



***Figure 47-*** *West elevation of the Altenheim transect*

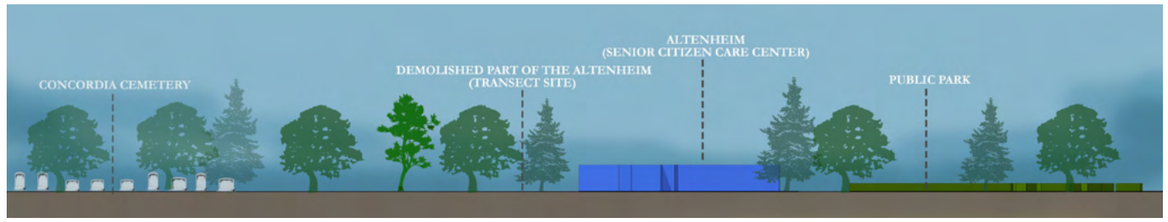
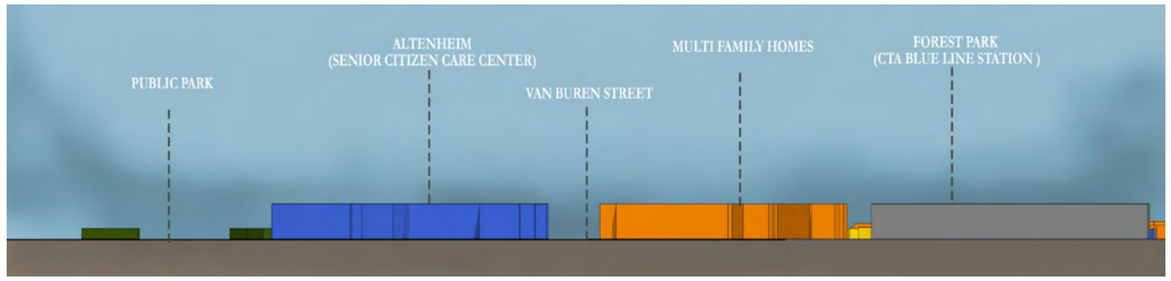



***Figure 48-*** *North elevation of the Altenheim transect*



# D. Transect 3: *The Exchange*

**Location: Portillo's Area**

Moving further south, the third transect – named the "Portillo's area" – is situated along one of the main thoroughfares, Roosevelt Road, and intersects with Des Plaines Ave. This area is highly concentrated with automobile services as well as vast and underutilized parking lots for surrounding retail such as Portillo's, Walmart and the Living Word Christian Center. Although these existing entities might present a challenge to achieve our ideal intervention, we see it as an opportunity to create a green micro-mobility project that will transform the area in "tactical" ways. Initiatives such as parklets, pop-up shops, and small-scale street furniture should be considered, as they would gradually upgrade the area and make it more oriented towards pedestrians rather than cars. In addition, we believe that "temporality" would yield great outcomes in that area in particular, envisioning this area as a hub for temporal activities such as festivals, local markets, open theaters.

***Figure 49 -*** *Aerial view of the Portillos, Forest park*


***Figure 50 -*** *Present day Portillos photograph*

*Source: Google Maps (retrieved 10/17/2021)*



***Figure 51-*** *Blown up plan of the Portillos transect*


***Figure 52-*** *Portillo's Transect view from south west side*

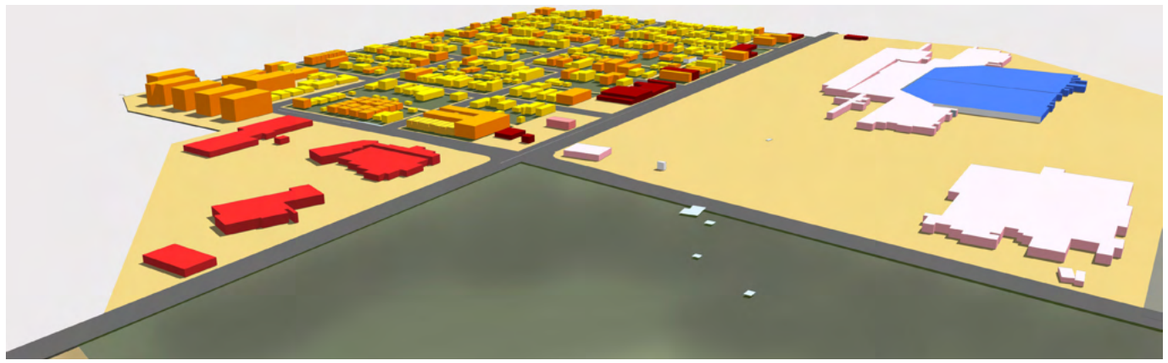


***Figure 53-*** *Portillo's Transect view from North west side*

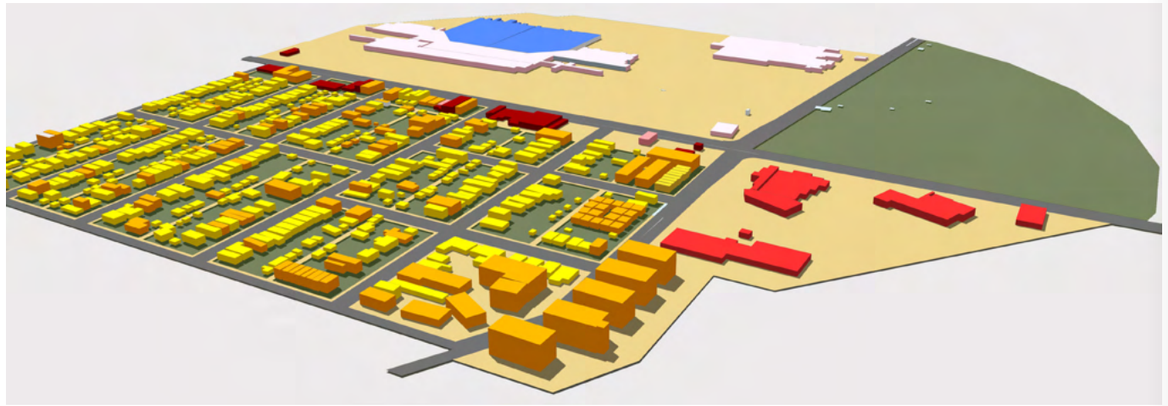


***Figure 54-*** *3d view of Main street access and pivotal aspects of the Portillos Transect*

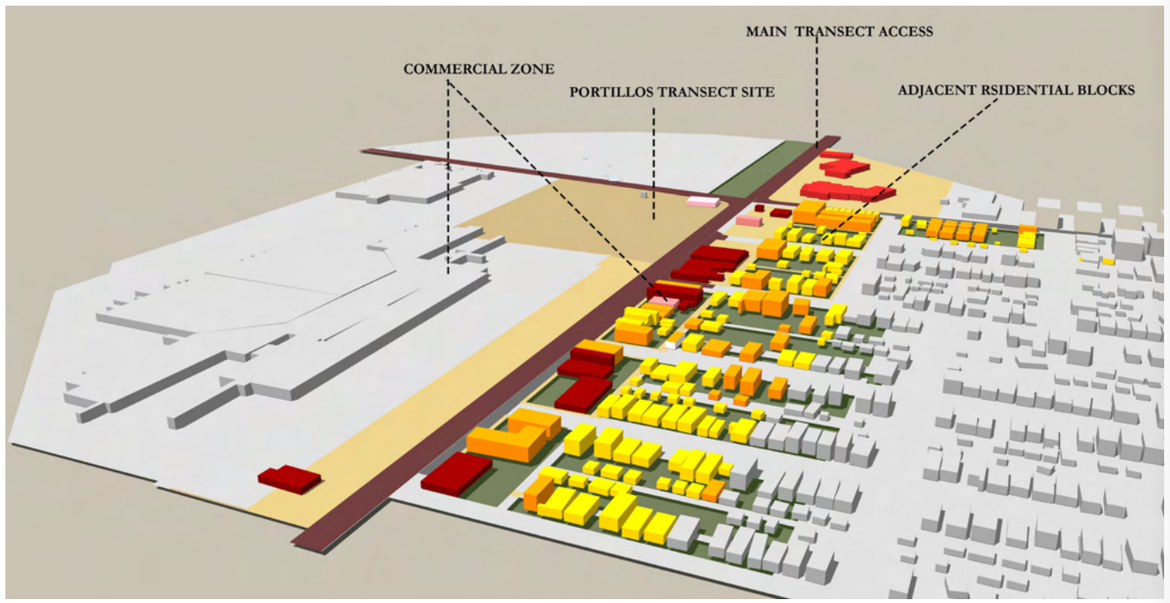



***Figure 55-*** *East elevation of the Portillos transect*

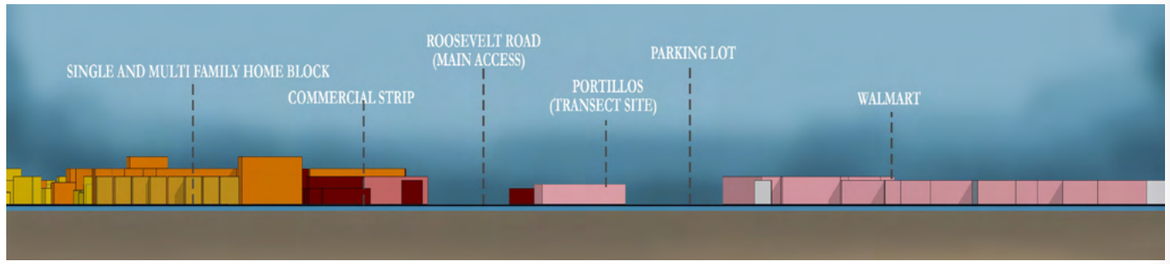
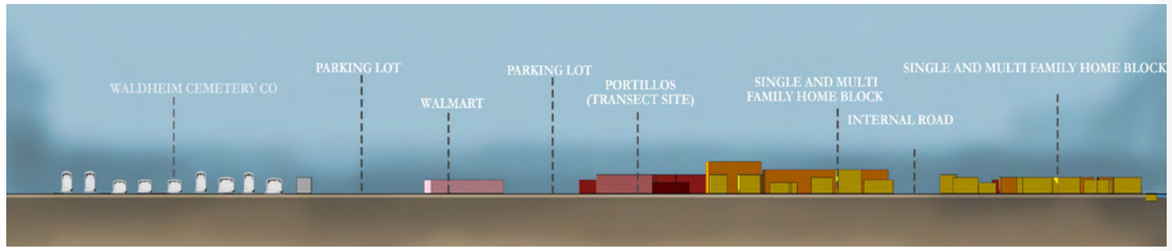


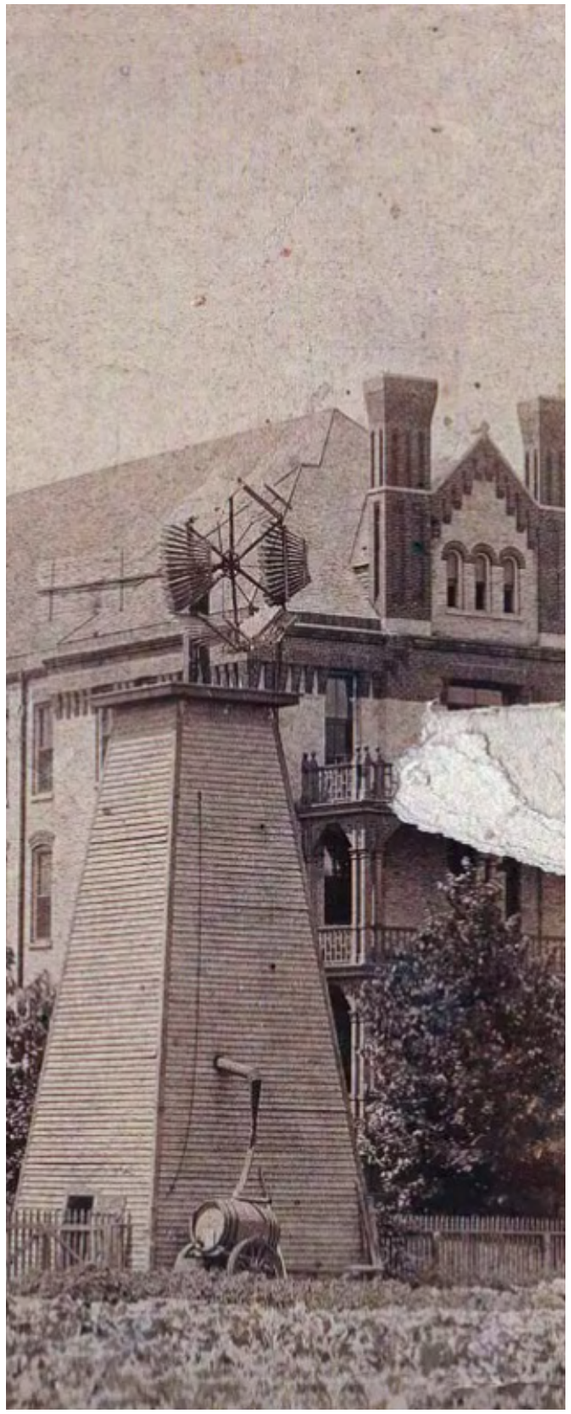

***Figure 56-*** *West elevation of the Portillos transect*






# E. Transect Selection

After assessing the three transects, our team decided to select **Transect 2** .
This is because it presented the best opportunity to place a new community hub in a centrally located area. The other two transects were located on opposite sides of the Village, either directly bordering Oak Park to the north or near the industrial corridor to the far south. This choice leverages the prime location of the Altenheim as a connection between the Forest Park Blue Line Station and Madison Street, as well as its potential to promote geographic equity in the Village. Its proximity to public transportation and to the economic corridor of Madison Street offers opportunities for connections which we plan to expand further.
This site also has the ability to serve the greatest public interest and reach the most people because of its location and historical legacy of community involvement. Locals call it "The Grove," and with that nickname comes a long physical and sentimental history that surrounds the home. The Altenheim has been a community gathering space since its founding. The Village currently capitalizes on the placemaking capabilities of the space by hosting a plethora of events such as the annual Rib Fest and, during the pandemic, drive-in movies. These became popular because they allowed for socially-distant entertainment in the largely undeveloped land.
Interviews we conducted for our community engagement strategy revealed that this area is hospitable for a cross section of people within the community. Leaders from nonprofits dedicated to disability rights and advocacy for a level playing field for those born with more challenges than others, they raved about the welcoming nature of the space and how the Village allows them to use it whenever they want. We learned residents want to keep the area similar to how it is currently, so our intention is only to add improved amenities to make the space even more usable, safe, and amenable for everyone. We strive to continue what the Village already does: meet people where they already are and where they want to be.



# THE INTERVENTION

# V. Case Studies

We categorized our case studies into four themes, each one corresponding to a specific type of intervention we want to fulfill.



# 1. Mobility Access

Identification of race and ethnicity of a population These case studies offer examples of techniques and interventions to improve the existing conditions of the streetscape and infrastructure. There is a need for improved accessibility and walkability within the corridor to improve the neighborhood and connection to our proposed site. For communities to be healthy and active, residents must have infrastructure that supports those values.
The following case study influenced our street intervention and emphasizes ensuring safety, wellness, and the freedom to move.

## Application

The selected site in Forest Park is located on Van Buren Street with nearby access to the Forest Park Blue Line stop and Madison Street. The existing conditions of Van Buren Street include a 50 foot right-of-way, narrow or missing sidewalks, no bike infrastructure, and limited signage. We hope to entice people of all ages to our selected site by implementing changes that encourage pedestrianism, cycling, and transit. These changes include the addition of wider sidewalks, bike, multi-use lanes, and traffic calming measures.

**Case Study 1: Pedestrian-friendly Public Realm *(Brooklyn, New York)***
The Downtown Brooklyn Partnership, Bjarke Ingels Group, and WXY Architecture + Urban Design firm worked in collaboration to envision a safer, greener, pedestrian friendly Brooklyn neighborhood. Among the recommended changes are protected bike lanes, safer pedestrian crossings, colorful street furniture, gathering spaces, and street calming measures. This neighborhood plan hopes to improve existing building connections and plant over 900 new trees. Improvements to connect our site to existing green spaces and transportation options follow this case study's example of improving the community's green connectivity.

***Figure 57-*** *Pedestrian-friendly Public Realm*


*Source: BIG and WXY Architecture + Urban Design, 2020.*

**Case Study 2: Smart Bus Station *(Singapore)***
DP Architects, in collaboration with the Urban Redevelopment Authority, pushed the boundaries of what a bus station could be by creating a fun, social, interactive community spot. The bus station includes free Wi-Fi, charging ports, a book exchange wall, interactive display maps, a solar-paneled roof, and swings. There is also bicycle parking, room for multiple buses, and level boarding for ease.

***Figure 58-*** *Smart Bus Station*


*Source: Ng Yi Shu and Mashable, 2017.*

# 2. Flexible Green

The Environmental Protection Agency defines green space as land partly covered with vegetation that provides recreational space for residents in the urban environment. Green spaces can foster a sense of community and provide safe public space to residents of Forest Park. Our green space will take advantage of the topography, shade, lighting, and location to attract residents and social activity. The following case studies allow the utilization of green space while balancing the flexibility for multiple uses.

## Application

Residents of Forest Park indicated the demand for additional green space for recreational use and community space. A portion of our proposed site in Forest Park is used commonly to hold festivals and seasonal activities. For this reason, in our alternatives we proposed flexible green space to allow for year-round programming and events. Our proposed changes include a large sunken grass area that can also act as a detention pond and dedicated grass space left open for permanent or temporary uses.

**Case Study 3: Vaughan Metropolitan Centre/Central Park and Masterplan *(Vaughan (Ontario), Canada)***

The Central Park Master Plan created by Claude Cormier in 2012 combines design, nature, and open space in a central park in Ontario. A key element of the proposed plan is a sunken lawn shown in the photo as a recreational space. The lawn has dual usage as a flexible recreational space and has water retention capabilities in the event of excessive rain. Other core design features of this plan surrounding the sunken lawn are wide accessible walkways, movable seating, bike rentals, and a proposed natural amphitheater. The incorporation of the lawn in this plan influenced the desire for an interactive green space in our site that can play many roles through flexible design.

***Figure 59-*** *Sunken Lawn Profile*


*Source: Claude Cormier and Associes, 2012.*

***Figure 60-*** *Central Park: Ontario, Canada*

*Source: Claude Cormier and Associes, 2012*

**Case Study 4: Tongva Park *(Santa Monica, California)***

The Tongva Park is a 7.4 acre site situated in Santa Monica, California. Tongva's vision was to convert the asphalt lot into a lush landscaped public space replicating the natural topography of the area. The design of the park creates designated niche zones for different uses while focusing on sustainable techniques and ADA considerations. Proposed additions in the plan are observation pods and hills, a discovery kids' zone, a gathering hill, and a reimagined town square. We incorporated similar natural design elements and a variety of niche zones in the proposed changes to our site.

***Figure 61-*** *Tongva Park*

*Source: James Corner Field Operations, 2013.*



# 3. Interactive Installations

Public spaces foster elements of activity, engagement, and interaction. The addition of temporary and permanent interactive installations will help ensure a vibrant space and increase attraction to visitors. Our proposed installations will incorporate a variety of ideas, technology, and materials.

## Application

Interactive installations are proposed in all three of our alternatives in a variety of ways. One central installation that is in each alternative is a central greenhouse structure that will allow for gatherings, social entrepreneurship, and year-long activities. It is important to build a site that has flexible uses for residents to gather in all four seasons.

**Case Study 5: The Dome *(Aarhus, Denmark)***

The Dome is a glass structure in the center of Aarhus where you can surround yourself in natural elements to enjoy music, art, and the café. The goal of the Dome is to foster cultural and sustainable interaction through a variety of activities year-round including yoga classes, music concerts, casual dining, and community events. Our inspiration for an indoor community flex space stems from this example.

***Figure 62-*** *The Dome*

*Source: Aarhus Kommune, n.d.*

**Case Study 6: Silk Tree Urban Park *(Tehran, Iran)***

The Silk Tree Park was inspired by the dynamics between the natural and the built environments which have the potential to foster playful interaction and empathy among people from all walks of life. Core design features include circular seating to encourage friendly interaction, and a multitude of gardens and green space. We took interest in the canopy tree installations which provide shading, rain collection, and solar energy lights.

***Figure 63-*** *Canopy Tree Installations*

*Source: Hana Abdel, 2020.*

# 4. Recreational Spaces

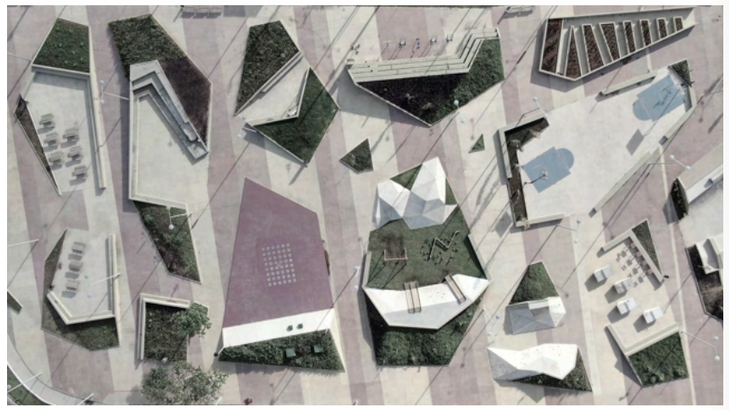
## Application

Creating an accessible public space is an essential element to our proposed site alternatives. We hope to create a space that encourages play, joy, and physical activities for people of all ages and abilities. Our public space will incorporate green assets and tactical urbanism to reimagine recreational space for a variety of users.

The Forest Park site will provide active and passive recreational activities for all abilities and ages. The following case studies inspired our ideas to foster a sense of community and create amenities that could be used by all residents of Forest Park. Within the proposed site, our three alternatives propose a multi-use track to allow for cyclists, trike riders, walkers, strollers, and runners and encourages movement through different proposed nodes and areas of the site. These nodes vary in each alternative incorporating urban farming, interactive walls, gardens, and play spaces.

**Case Study 7: Bus Terminal Urban Renovation *(São Luís, Brazil)***
Natureza Urbana in partnership with Inter-American Development Bank revitalized a bus terminal located in the center of Sao Luis to create a colorful interconnected public space. The space includes a skateboard park, playground, interactive water fountain and an area for sports and environmental education.

***Figure 64-*** *Urban Renovation Public Space*



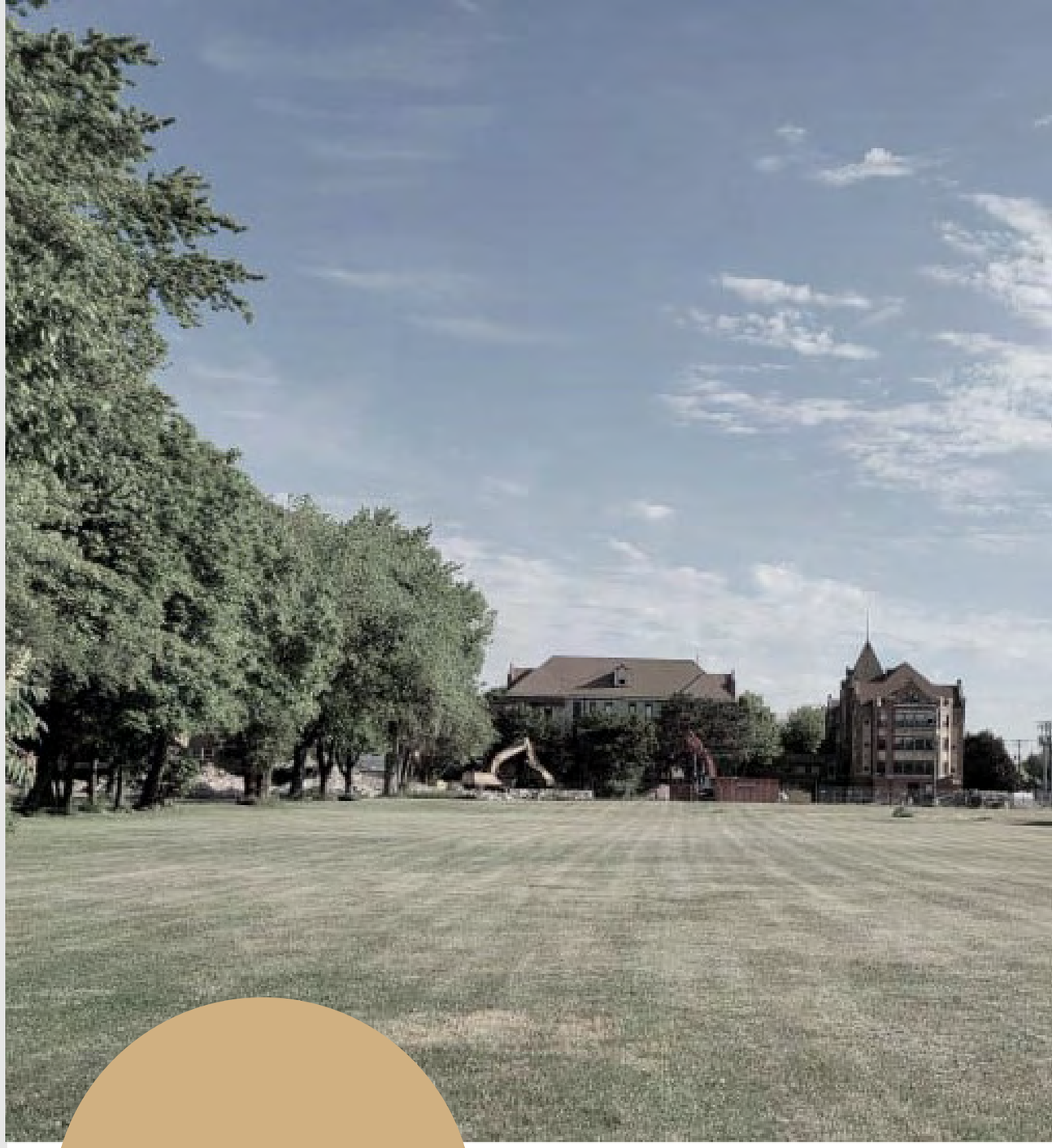
*Source: Susanna Moreira, 2020.*

***Figure 65-*** *Pixeland*

**Case Study: Pixeland**
***(Mianyang, China)***
This project designed by 100 Architects was inspired by the concept of digital pixels with each square serving a different function. The colored spaces have a variety of play equipment, leisure activities, seating, and sloped lawns.

*Source: 100 Architects, 2019.*





# VI. Alternatives

## Selection Process

# A. Guiding Principles

Our guiding principles were established through exploration of the Forest Park community profile, engagement with the community both in-person and virtually, and our economic analysis of the Village. Because demographic trends revealed an aging population with a significant portion of differently-abled residents, we sought to create a space for the elderly to interact with one another and other social groups in a space built with a diversity of abilities in mind.

Also, it is worth noting that nearly a third of individuals with disabilities are people of color; our vision and principles are rooted in equity, with the intention not only to create inclusive spaces for a diversity of abilities, but also to welcome and provide people of all races the freedom of choice and a plethora of opportunities for enjoyment.

Additionally, our interviews with leaders of community organizations revealed a need for more recreation opportunities, green space, indoor space to accommodate social distancing measures, and climate mitigation features. In light of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, our proposal also represents the future of the public realm: a variety of outdoor and indoor spaces that are flexible, community driven, free, and take social distancing measures into account.

> **Given the need for social connection, an equitable space that can adapt to a multiplicity of uses, and exposure to outdoor elements, we landed upon the idea of Green Mutualism. This concept is rooted in the desire to connect people to the natural world and to each other through a carefully designed, yet flexible built environment.**

## Vision

We have formed our proposals based on the idea of a free civic space where people can gather around community and not consumption, where residents and visitors can engage with one another through creative and social activities, and where individuals do not have to fit a specific physical, financial, or cultural form in order to feel comfortable and become involved.

## Principles

**Mobility and Accessibility** — We believe a community space should be built to allow free movement for a diversity of bodies and abilities.

**Green Connectivity** — We seek to create a space that connects individuals to nature and to each other through active transportation modes.

**Flexibility** — We strive to provide a built environment that welcomes creative thought and exploration of ways in which to interact.

**Inclusivity** — We aspire to provide a welcoming community space for all ages, races, abilities, and backgrounds.



# B. Plot selection

The following plot has been selected from the chosen Transect 2 to host our intervention. Although there are no permits to allow for using the entire green space surrounding the plot, we are designing the intervention with a potential for future expansion.

***Figure 66-*** *Chosen transect and plot*


*Source: Google Earth - Cook County Data Portal, City of Chicago Data Portal, and Esri, 2021.*


# C. Context & Transportation Changes

## Street and Transportation Interventions

To implement street interventions, first we needed a grasp of the existing conditions of Van Buren Street and Madison Street. Van Buren runs parallel to our proposed site in Forest Park with a 50-foot right of way. There are existing sidewalks only on the east side of the street as shown in *(Figure 67).*

The street has 15 foot lanes allowing room for proposed bike lanes and traffic calming measures. The proposed changes along Van Buren Street include the addition of sidewalks, a bus shelter, bike lanes, and a pedestrian island for safe crossing.

***Figure 67-*** *Van Buren Street Existing Conditions*

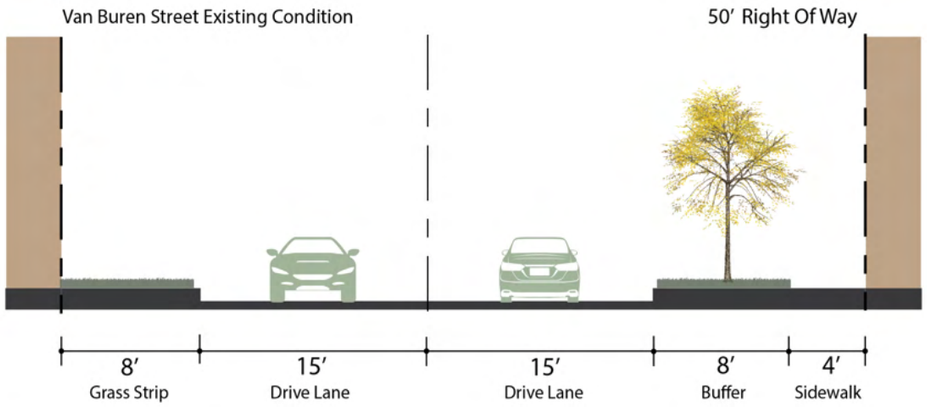
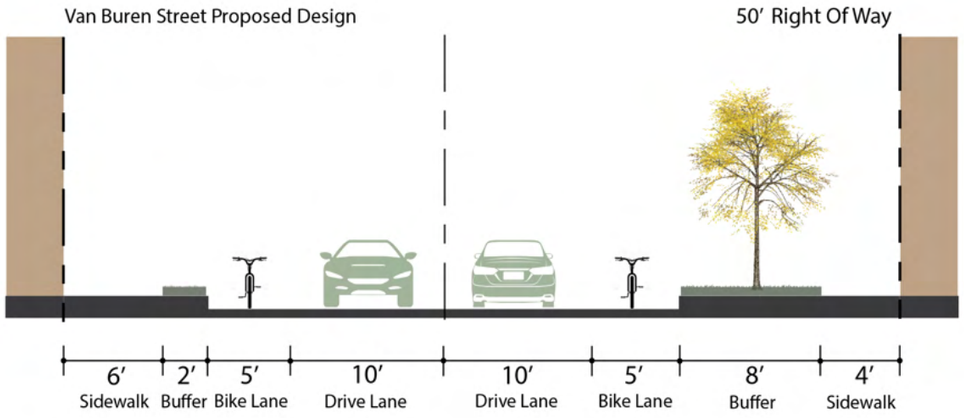


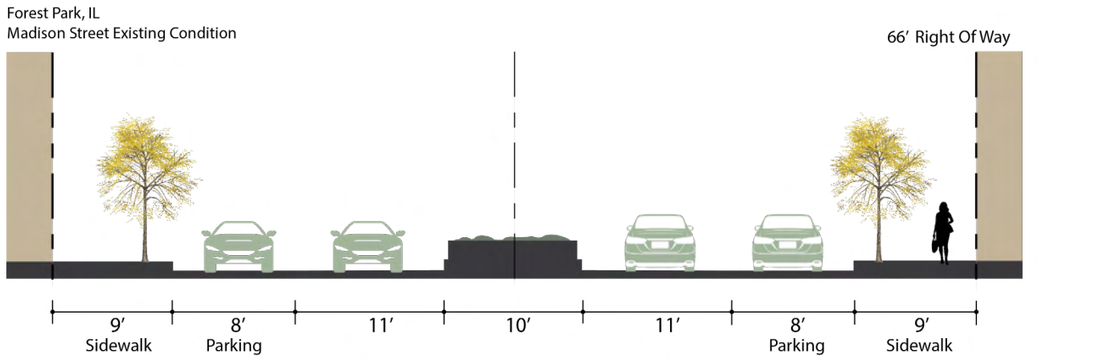

***Figure 68-*** *Van Buren Street Proposed Changes*






Madison Street runs perpendicular to Van Buren and is a vital business corridor and arterial for Forest Park. Madison Street's existing conditions are 11-foot lanes with 8-foot adjacent parking lanes, and 9-foot sidewalks lined with trees and flower planters *(Figure 69).* Madison Street has traffic calming and pedestrian measures already in place which vary along the corridor. At the intersection of Madison Street and Van Buren Street there is a nearby at-grade railroad crossing, pedestrian crosswalks, and turn lanes.

***Figure 69-*** *Madison Street Existing Conditions*




To visualize our proposed street interventions, three sections were created based on similar characteristics along the street. The location of sections 1, 2 and 3 are shown in Image 2 along with street labels and the Forest Park CTA Station.

***Figure 70-*** *Madison St. and Van Buren St. Intersection*

*Source: Google Earth Pro, 2021*

***Figure 71-*** *Street and Transportation Overview*

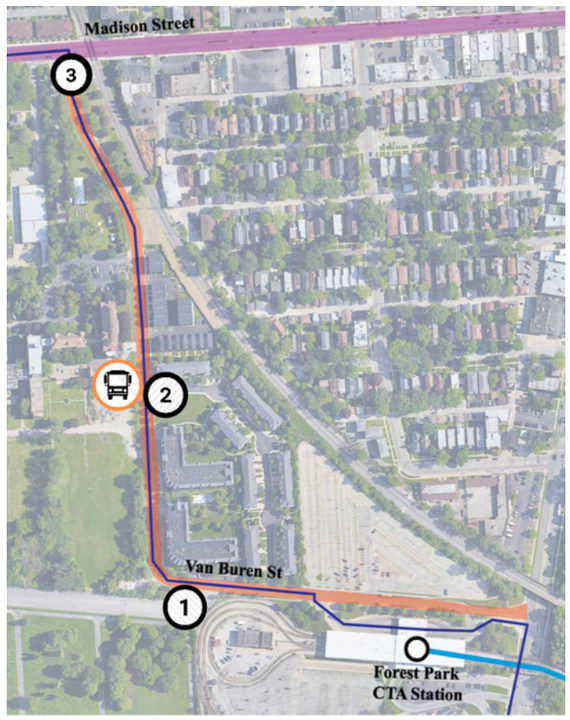
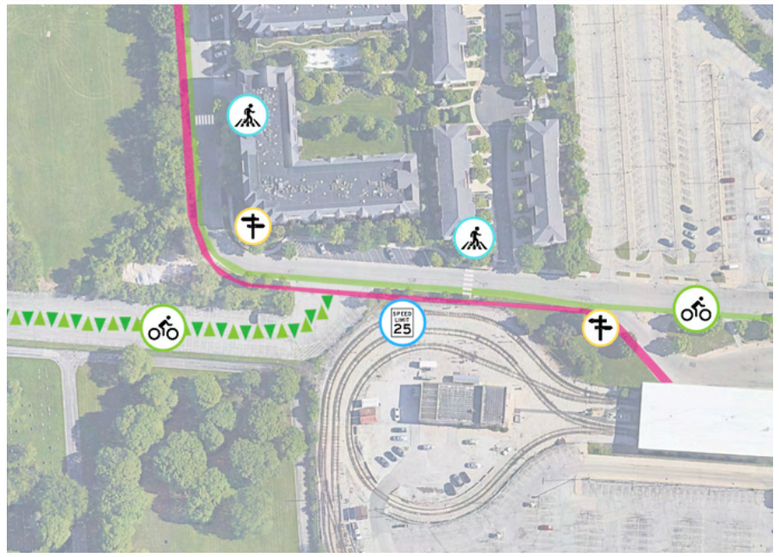
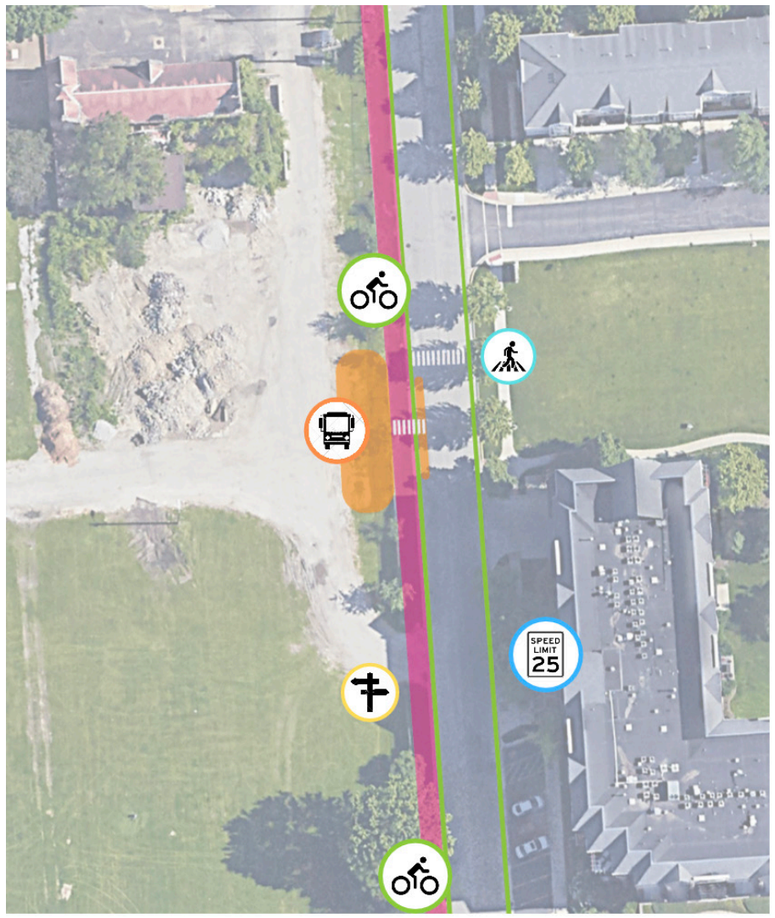


***Figure 72-*** *Intervention 1*




Section 1's street changes hope to better connect visitors and residents from the Forest Park CTA Station to our site and to Madison Street. The proposed changes include the addition of a bike lane running the length of Van Buren Street, crosswalks, and increased wayfinding. We propose in the CTA parking lot adjacent to the station a visual pathway to indicate a bicyclist path to connect the Van Buren Street bike lanes to the Prairie Path. The addition of two crosswalks in this section are aimed to slow drivers and increase pedestrian safety when crossing to the other side of the street. The pink in *Figure 73* shows the continuation of sidewalks that currently stop at the curve of the road. Our proposed wayfinding signage is important for transit riders and pedestrians to orient themselves at the station and discover the proposed site.

***Figure 73-*** *Intervention 2*




Intervention 2 has additional crosswalks, speed limit signage, bike lanes, and wayfinding proposed with new additions of a bus shelter and pedestrian island. The safety of all users of our site is important to keep in mind when implementing a proper bus shelter and bike lane intersection. For this reason, our proposed pedestrian island and crosswalk will help guide those exiting and entering at this bus stop how to safely navigate the crossing. *Figure 73* indicates in orange the general design for the bus stop intervention and the safety signage along the street.

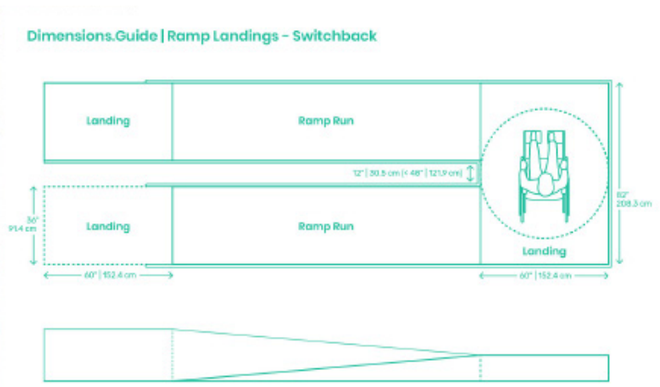


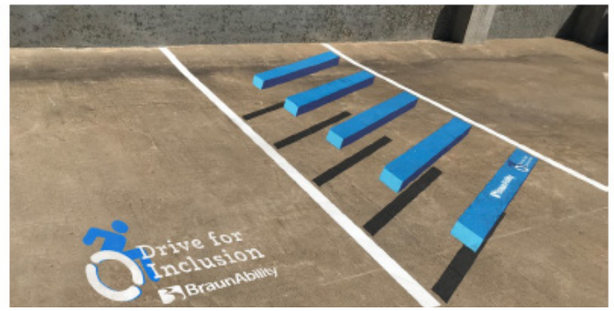
***Figure 74-*** *Intervention 3*


In section 3, our proposed changes include transitioning the cyclists from the bike lane on Van Buren Street into shared traffic lanes. The rationale for this change is Madison Street has more narrow drive lanes not allowing for protected bike lanes. Along Madison Street we are proposing cyclists indicators along the roadway and signage to create safety for cyclists turning left and right. The safety at the intersection for pedestrians will improve with better crosswalks that are clearly visible and indicated with pedestrian crossing signage.

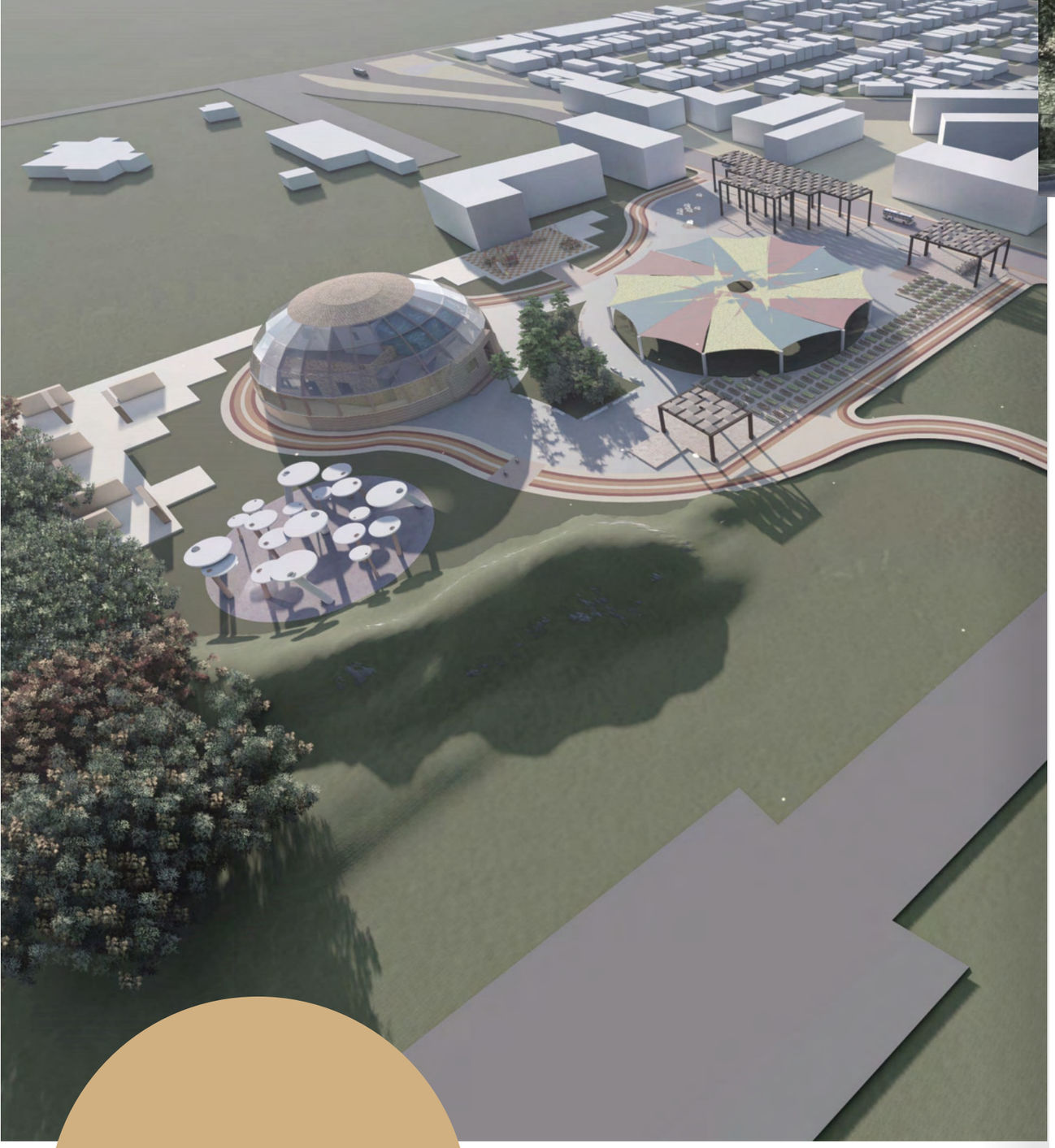
## Beyond ADA Compliant

Given the growing population of the elderly and those differently-abled, we intend to weave measures into each intervention that are not only ADA compliant, but that also include innovative tools and designs exceeding ADA guidelines. We will consider the seven principles of universal design: equitability, flexibility, simplicity and intuition, easy perceptibility of information, tolerance for error, low physical effort, and appropriate size and space for use. We will also employ devices that enhance the tactile, audible, and visual experience to serve those who might be lacking a particular sense.




*Source:dot.ny.org*



# VII. Alternatives

## Design



## A. Alternative 1:

### Green Connectivity

Reconnect people of Forest Park with their surrounding environment by offering them a green safe haven to interact with nature and with each other. It is a solution to the lack of accessible green space in the community despite the predominant land uses of the Village reflecting a great dominance of greenery. This is due to the fact that most of these spaces are occupied by cemeteries, which represents a significant physical and mental barrier between the residents and land.

The presented design offers a green hub for people of Forest Park to interact with nature and with each other. It includes different green activities such as a community garden, local farmers market, and interactive, green walls along with civic and mobility activities that promote sustainability. The concept is based on playing with several configurations of spaces that vary in privacy as well as scale to cater for different social groups. The local name for the area around the Altenheim is “The Grove,” we play on this concept by manipulating the space to offer a “green refuge” for residents to visit- a place which reduces anxiety and promotes feelings of wellbeing. In addition, an essential part of being a safe space for everyone is being an inclusive space for all ages, races, and disabilities. That’s why this design offers great attention to details such as textures, colors, sound and light in order to serve the most vulnerable and cater to all senses.

***Figure 75-*** *Primary Ideation of Alternative One*

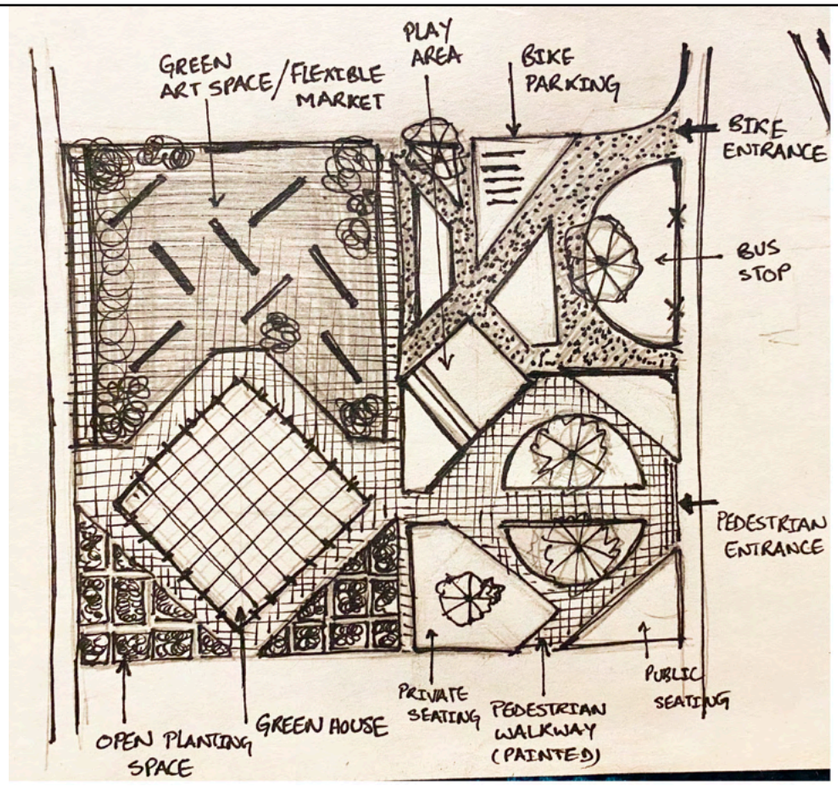


***Figure 76-*** *Site Plan of Alternative One*

***Figure 77-*** *3D View of Alternative One From Southwest Side*

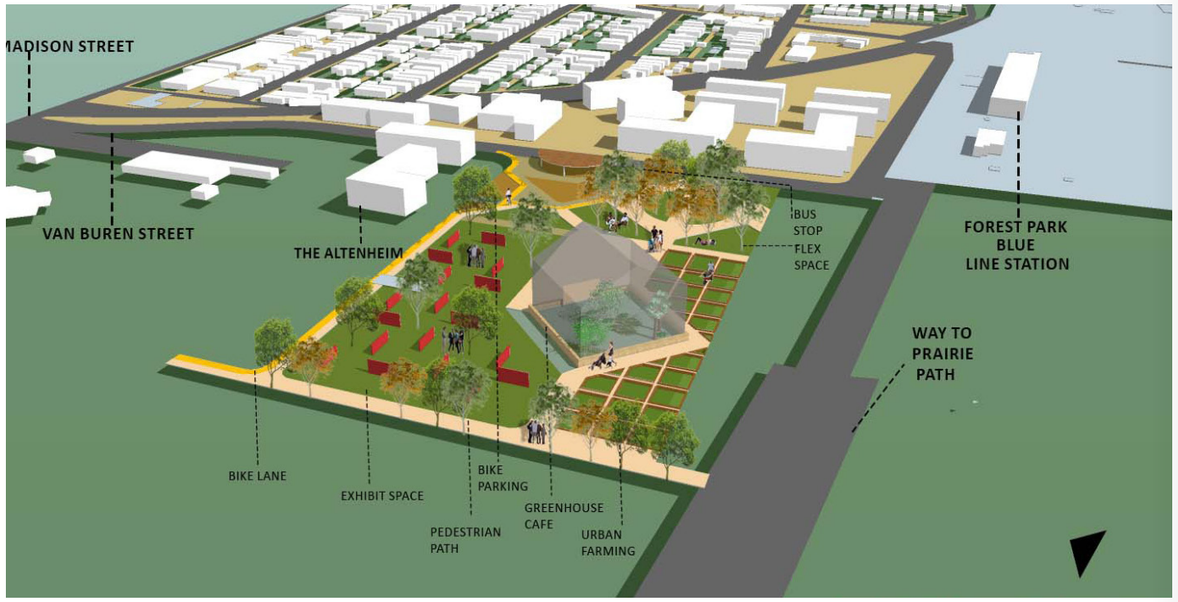



***Figure 78-*** *Before & After 3D Visualization of Alternative One*



# B. Alternative 2:

## Green Movement

This alternative aims to create a multi-modal connectivity chain between the site, the Blue Line station, and the connection to Madison Street. The intervention tries to bridge the broken gaps of connectivity between the spaces available and the actual needs of cyclists and pedestrians by providing designated spaces for both. We will keep this idea at the forefront of all the other solutions that revolve around creating a secure and experiential space for various multimodal users.

This design creates pathways for better flow and movement of users by connecting a modernized bus stop with a plaza space – creating a small terminal or mobility hub – linked to a combined multi-use path. The greenhouse/ cafe is located at the center of the site, and the amphitheater lies at the west end. The recreational mound adjacent to the amphitheater provides a vantage point where one can gaze at the entire site but can also be utilized for climbing, play, and relaxation. The north side of the park consists of a skate park which is detached from the pedestrian/ bike path by a detention canal. Lastly, the southwest side has the designated kids' play area and floor fountain. As a whole, the alternative provides active options of recreations indulging users through dynamic physical activities.

***Figure 79-*** *Primary Ideation of Alternative Two*

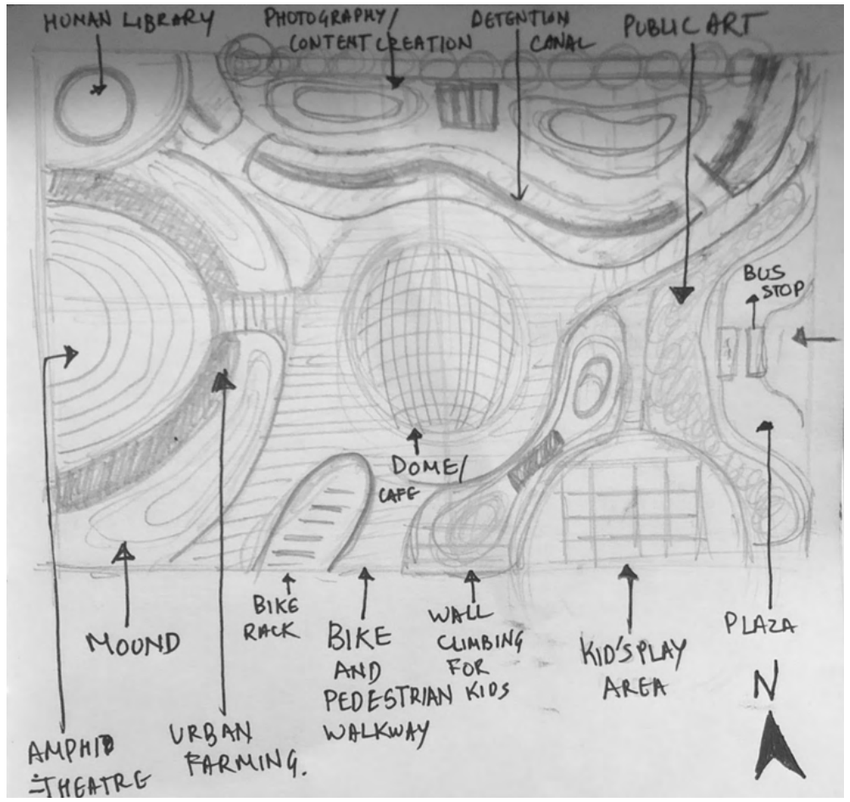


***Figure 80-*** *Site Plan of Alternative Two*

***Figure 81-*** *3D View of Alternative Two From Southwest Side*


***Figure 82-*** *Before & After 3D Visualization of Alternative Two*



# C. Alternative 3:

## Green Expanse

This proposal incorporates all of the finest ideas from the first two concept alternatives, Green Movement and Green Connectivity. In this all-encompassing plan, we lay out new multi-use paths to connect the CTA Forest Park Blue Line Station to Madison St., with bike parking and a bike repair station adjacent to the modernized bus station. The multi-use path is two-way and comprises various colors denoting width. There will allow it to accomodate for all users. The concept offers dynamic and adventurous, yet private and quiet spaces for residents of Forest Park by contrasting rectilinear spaces dedicated to mobility and walkability with curvilinear nodes that highlight places for activities- such activities differing in size and function, are included in the central space. The entire space is surrounded by raised beds for community supported agriculture (CSA) and gardening beds as well. Alongside the space, green walls will be created, helping to cool down the space and provide vibrancy.

The first activity space, and an activity within itself, is a green dome that we call “CreateOSphere,” a glass dome with a greenhouse cafe and flexible interactive spaces. This plant-filled dome would be the site of events, classes, volunteerism and space for local collaborations among businesses and organizations. We envision youth programming involving a CSA, sustainable art, urban design.

The second area is a sunken park which acts as a space for festivals and temporary activities as well as a water detention pond, which could collect precipitation in all seasons. Lastly, the node on the southwestern side is called the “human library,” in which residents sit in groups where the elderly can pass on stories and teach workshops to younger generations. This space is more private and secluded than the others as it relies on intimate settings rather than large gatherings. Finally, the whole space is designed with interactive seating spaces that would support all ages and abilities.

***Figure 83-*** *Primary Ideation of Alternative Three*

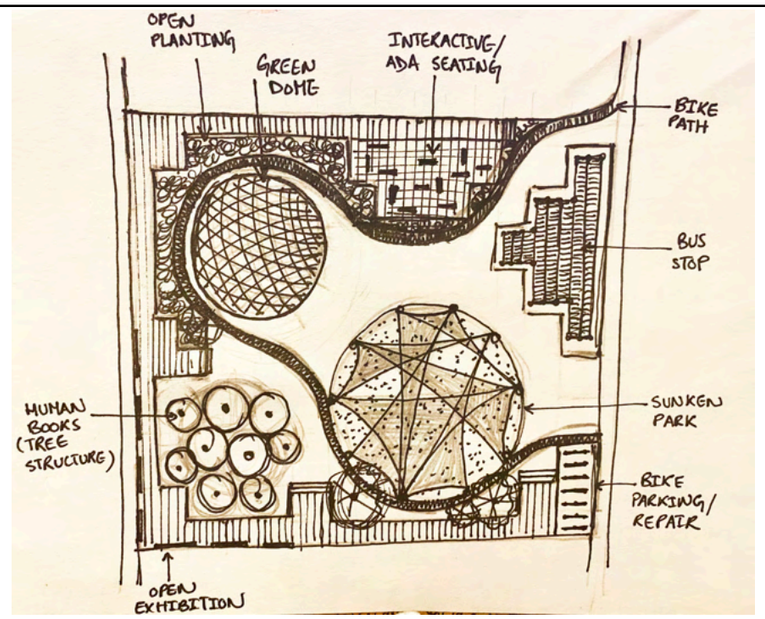


***Figure 84-*** *Site Plan of Alternative Three*

***Figure 85-*** *3D View of Alternative Three From Southwest Side*


***Figure 86-*** *Before & After 3D Visualization of Alternative Three*



This context map shows that we're designing our alternative to become embedded within the urban fabric but also the transit network of the area.
We lay out a continuous multi-use path to connect the CTA Forest Park Blue Line Station to Madison St. This multi-use path is two-way and comprises various colors denoting width. This allows room to include a runners lane, cyclists lane, a lane wide enough for wheelchairs and trikes, and a children's lane.

***Figure 87-*** *Alternative Three Site Context and Neighborhood Connection*


# VIII. Evaluating *and Planning*



## A. Alternatives Evaluation

We evaluated our three alternatives through applying each lens of our four principles - mobility and accessibility, green connectivity, flexibility, and inclusivity - to the individual elements. Through this evaluation process, it became clear that the proposal adhering most strongly to all of our principles was Alternative Three: Green Expanse.

The first two alternatives, Green Connectivity and Green Movement, included at least one element addressing each principle. The Green Expanse proved to be a more compelling proposal because it had at least two elements reflecting each of our four principles, with some elements even representing cross-principle overlap. For example, the Greenhouse dome - which we named the "CreateOSphere" - satisfied three of our four principles. As a multifunctional space with a cafe, community gathering area for various activities such as classes, concerts, and meetings, and interior plants forming a self-sustaining ecosystem, the CreateOSphere would be a green connected space that is also flexible and inclusive.

The Green Expanse, therefore, is the proposal most closely suited to our imagined reality for the Altenheim site.

***Table 14-*** *Evaluation Table*

| Alternative One: Green Connectivity | Alternative Two: Green Movement | Alternative Three: Green Expanse |
|---|---|---|
| Bike parking | Multi-functional bus stop | Interactive bus stop |
| Multi-functional bus stop | Bike lane with parking and repair station | Bike pavilion |
| Flexible public seating | Recreational mound | Multipurpose trail |
| Greenhouse cafe | Greenhouse dome | Open fountain |
| Urban farming | Human fountain | Fabric shading |
| Interactive Wall/Exhibit | Skate park | Greenhouse dome |
| Entrance pavilion | ADA-Accessible playground | Sunken park |
| | | Urban farming |
| | | Green hill |
| | | ADA-Accessible Playground |
| | | Human library |

Mobility & Accessibility · Green Connectivity · Flexibility · Inclusivity


# B. Goals and Strategies

We developed the goals and strategies with our vision in mind: to create a free civic space where people can gather around community and not consumption, where residents and visitors can engage with one another through creative and social activities for free, and where individuals do not have to fit a specific physical, financial, or cultural form in order to feel comfortable and become involved. Our goals are centered around our four principles: mobility and accessibility, green connectivity, flexibility, and inclusivity.

**Goal One**, to create an inclusive space for all ages and abilities, encompasses our belief in flexible spaces built for a diversity of uses and abilities. The flow of spaces will allow for experimental and creative use of various physical elements designed not only to meet ADA compliance, but to surpass it with innovative and unique elements.

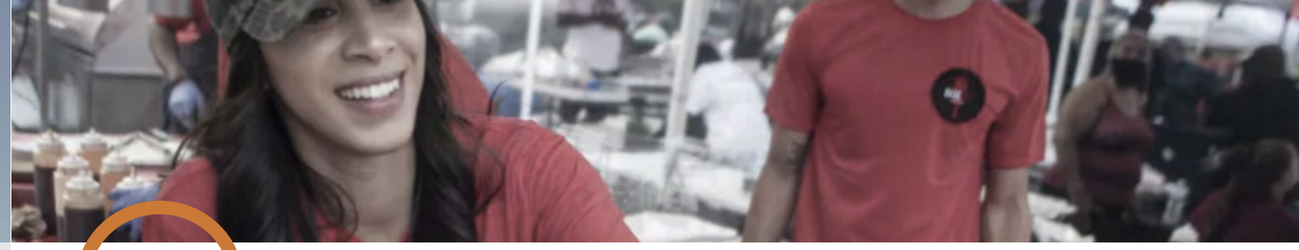
**Goal Two** reflects our desire to provide more communal green spaces for Forest Park residents and visitors to connect with one another in a safe, relaxing green environment. The addition of green space will allow for more recreation and outdoor exposure, both of which contribute to an individual's holistic well-being.

**Goal Three** is based on our principle of mobility and accessibility. To cultivate active mobility, we will focus on providing opportunities for micro-mobility and active transportation through new bike lanes, an interactive bus station, and new multi-use paths connecting key transportation and commercial corridors to green spaces.

***Table 15-*** *Goals and Strategies*

| Goals | Strategy 1 | Strategy 2 | Strategy 3 |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Goal 1:** Create an inclusive space for all ages and abilities | Design flexible spaces | Dedicate shared spaces for different groups | Provide a flow of spaces that doesn't limit people's interactions based on their abilities |
| **Goal 2:** Connect people to green spaces | Encourage community gardening and outdoor recreational activities | Develop more open green surfaces | Offer more spaces for developing community social enterprises |
| **Goal 3:** Cultivate active mobility | Provide an interactive bus shelter | Offer more space for micro-mobility solutions to reduce reliance on auto-mobile | Improve community connectivity through established multi-use paths that surpass ADA guidelines |





# B. Implementation

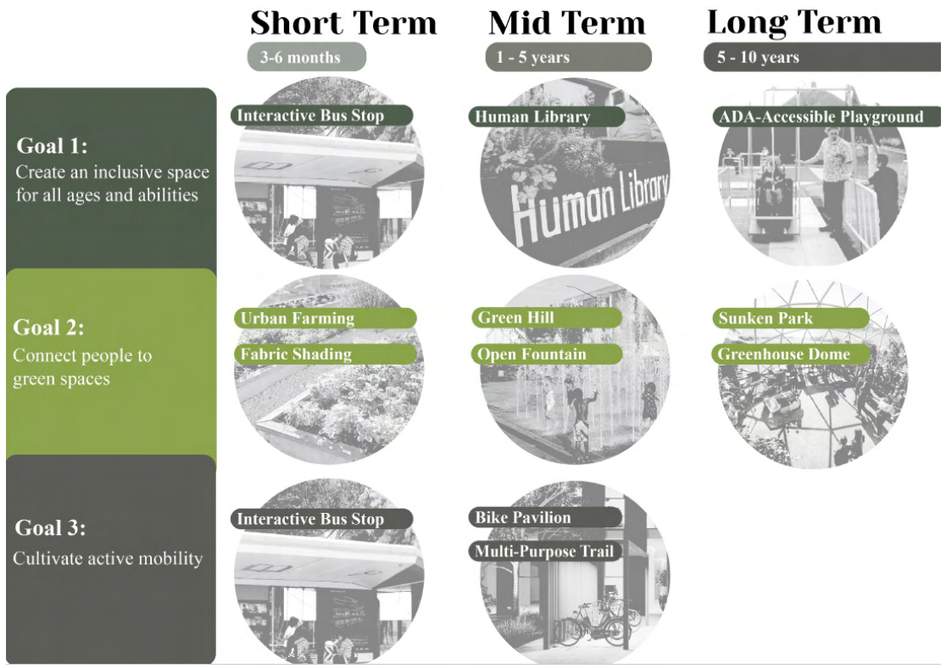
We developed the goals and strategies with our vision in mind: to create a free civic space where people can gather around community and not consumption, where residents and visitors can engage with one another through creative and social activities for free, and where individuals do not have to fit a specific physical, financial, or cultural form in order to feel comfortable and become involved. Our goals are centered around our four principles: mobility and accessibility, green connectivity, flexibility, and inclusivity.

**Goal One**, to create an inclusive space for all ages and abilities, encompasses our belief in flexible spaces built for a diversity of uses and abilities. The flow of spaces will allow for experimental and creative use of various physical elements designed not only to meet ADA compliance, but to surpass it with innovative and unique elements.

**Goal Two** reflects our desire to provide more communal green spaces for Forest Park residents and visitors to connect with one another in a safe, relaxing green environment. The addition of green space will allow for more recreation and outdoor exposure, both of which contribute to an individual's holistic well-being.

**Goal Three** is based on our principle of mobility and accessibility. To cultivate active mobility, we will focus on providing opportunities for micro-mobility and active transportation through new bike lanes, an interactive bus station, and new multi-use paths connecting key transportation and commercial corridors to green spaces.

***Table 16-*** *Implementation Matrix*



# Conclusion

Forest Park is uniquely situated within the greater Chicago region. As the last stop west of Chicago on the Blue Line, the Village is poised as both a quiet respite from noisy city life and an ideal location for appreciating the best of both small town charm and big city amenities.

With its five cemeteries comprising almost half the land, the Village is perhaps best known as a final resting place for many, but its passionate community members, active civic life, and long history reveal that it is a lively town in which to enjoy local restaurants, strolls along Madison Street, recreation in the Park District, and community festivals.

Our proposal relies upon empirical data revealing demographic trends of an aging population and a significant number of those differently-abled. We also rely upon community engagement both in person and virtually, along with an economic analysis, to form our recommendations.

The Green Expanse seeks to create a free civic space where people can gather around community and not consumption, able to engage with one another through creative and social activities without concern about fitting a specific physical, financial, or cultural form. Through principles of mobility and accessibility, green connectivity, flexibility, and inclusivity, we hope that the Green Expanse becomes a shared community space in which residents of Forest Park feel a sense of belonging and pride.

# List of Figures & Tables





# Figures & Tables, cont.

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