



City of Waukegan Washington Street Commercial Corridor Plan

October 2014



Acronyms

CDBG	Community Development Block Grant
CMAP	Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning
CMAQ	Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement Program
FHWA	Federal Highway Administration
FTA	Federal Transportation Administration
HACES	Hispanic American Community Education and Services
HUD	U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development
IDNR	Illinois Department of Natural Resources
IDOT	Illinois Department of Transportation
ITEP	Illinois Transportation Enhancement Program
LCDOT	Lake County Division of Transportation
LTA	Local Technical Assistance
MPO	Metropolitan Planning Organization
SLAP	Sign, Lighting, and Awning Program
SSA	Special Service Area
STP	Surface Transportation Program
TAP	Transportation Alternatives Program
WIC	Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children

Funding Acknowledgement

This project was supported through the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning's (CMAP) Local Technical Assistance (LTA) program, which is funded by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), Federal Transit Administration (FTA), U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT), and the Chicago Community Trust.

The City of Waukegan and CMAP would like to thank these funders for their support for this project.

CMAP is the region's official comprehensive planning organization. Its GO TO 2040 planning campaign is helping the region's seven counties and 284 communities to implement strategies that address transportation, housing, economic development, open space, the environment, and other quality of life issues. See www.cmap.illinois.gov for more information.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

The Washington Street corridor is home to a wide variety of small businesses, three nearby public schools, attractive residential neighborhoods, a major bike path, and other assets that suggest it is a high-potential site for future revitalization.

Washington Street needs a commercial corridor plan that builds upon existing assets, and identifies opportunities for economic development that are grounded in the real world and correspond with the needs of the people who live, work, and do business in the area.

Why Does Washington Street Need a Commercial Corridor Plan?

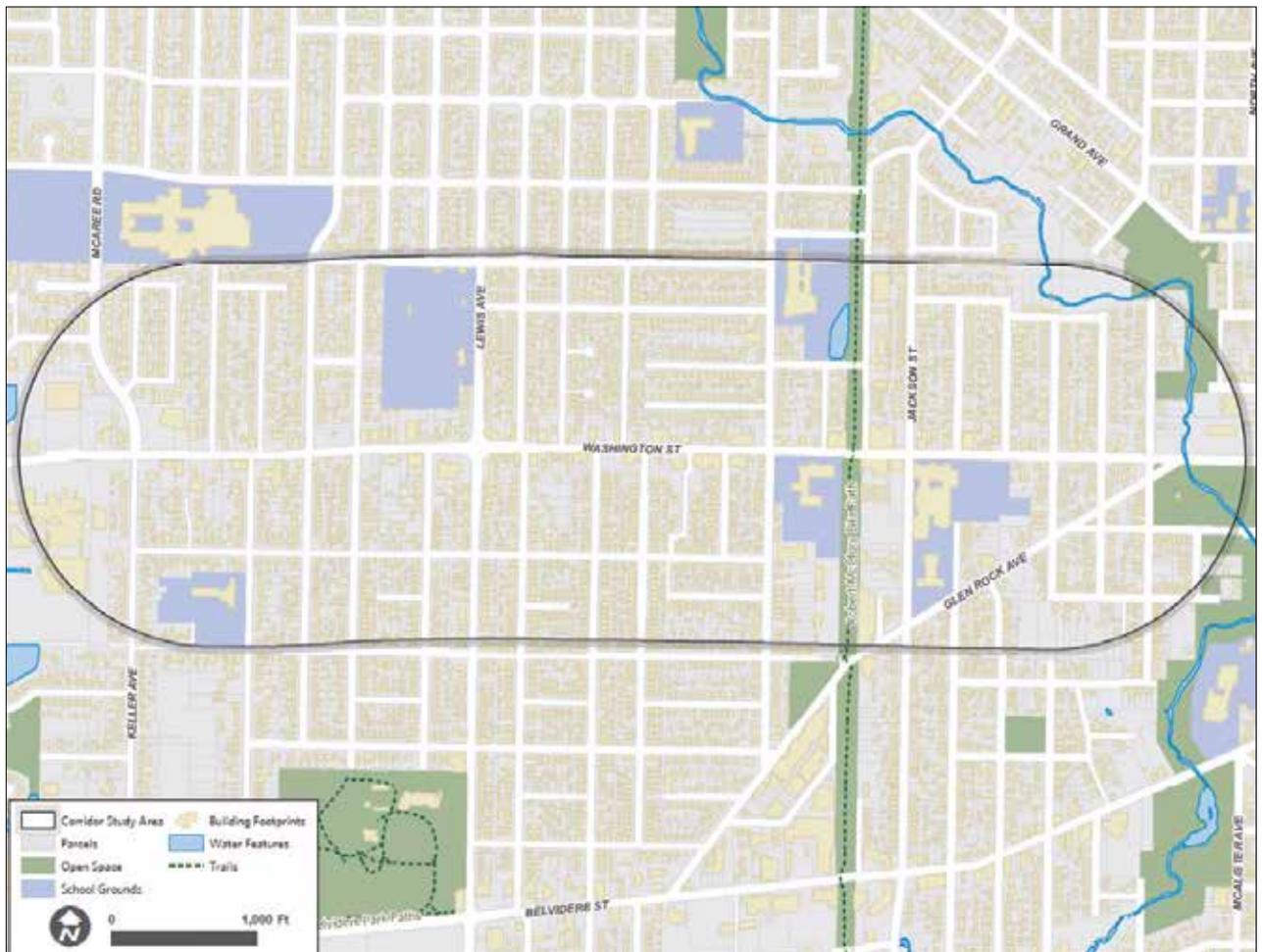
The decision to prepare a commercial corridor plan for Washington Street was the result of a thorough study of Waukegan's past, present, and future priorities. The findings of this study were presented to the City of Waukegan in a "planning priorities report" prepared by staff from the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP). It concluded that while Waukegan's downtown and lakefront were the City's greatest potential assets, significant time, attention, and money had already been devoted to this area, and additional planning would not advance the improvement of these areas.

Instead, the report recommended developing a plan for a commercial corridor that showed promise and had the potential to develop into an economically dynamic and successful area. Successful commercial corridors foster opportunities for business owners and other entrepreneurs, generating much-needed entry-level jobs, workforce training opportunities, and convenient access to goods and services for neighborhood residents — all of which are needed in the City of Waukegan.

Taking into consideration the comments of stakeholders interviewed for the planning priorities report, CMAP identified potential sites for the commercial corridor planning area. The sites were selected based upon a range of criteria, including:

- Business activity
- Traffic volume
- Commercial building stock
- Land use mix
- Transit access
- Number of residents and workers in the vicinity
- Proximity to open space
- Crime rates
- Accessibility to fresh food

Figure 1.1. Study area



Source: Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning, 2014.

Figure 1.2. Focus study area



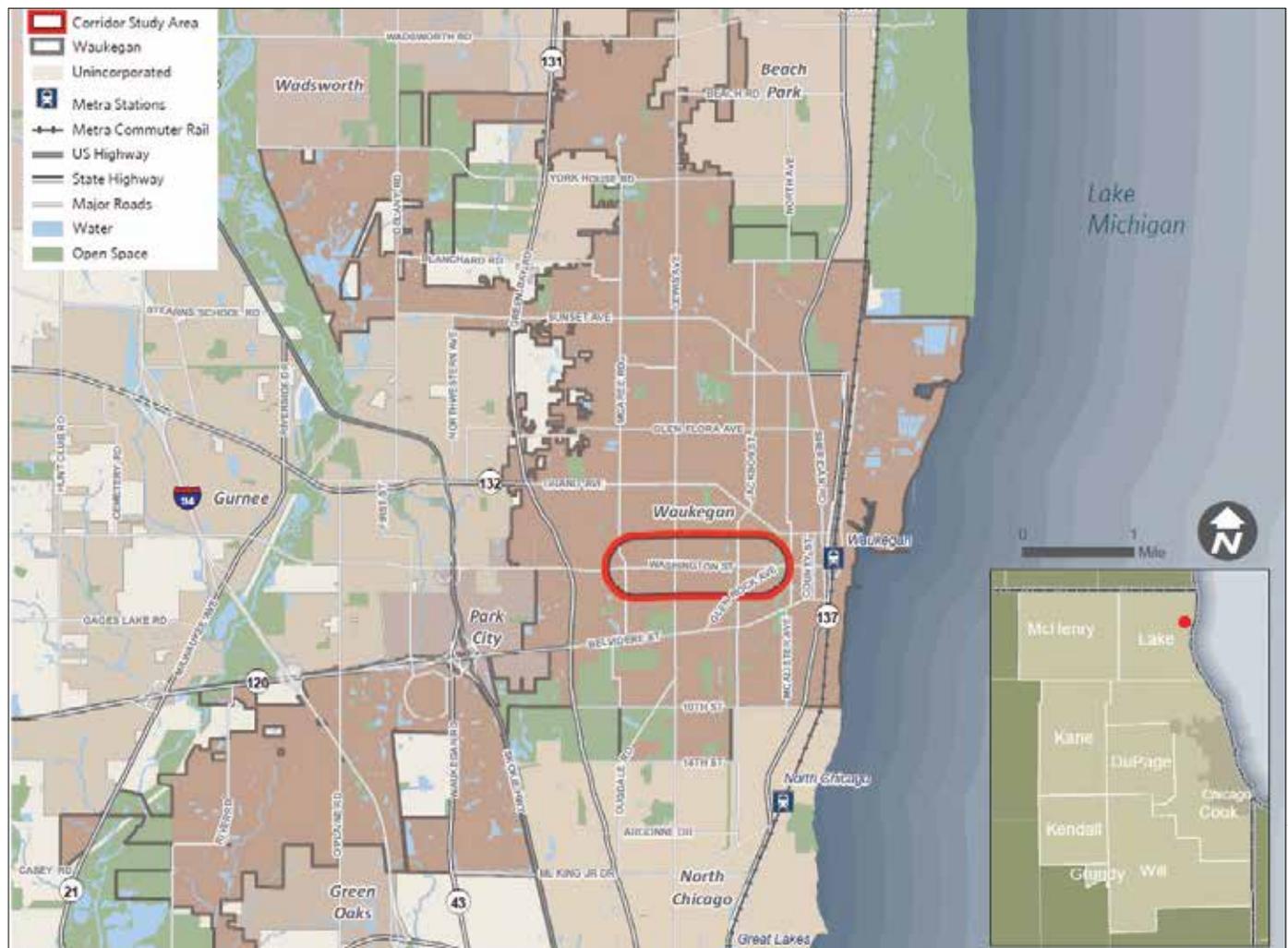
Source: Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning, 2014.

Of the sites considered, CMAP recommended the Washington Street commercial corridor, from Glen Rock Avenue (and the Waukegan River ravine) to Lewis Avenue, as a well-situated, high-potential site. The western boundary of the study area was later extended to Washington Street's intersection with McAre Road/Keller Avenue, but this plan's recommendations focus on Washington Street between Glen Rock Avenue and Lewis Avenue. This section of the corridor is home to a wide variety of small businesses, three nearby public schools, attractive residential neighborhoods, a major bike trail, and other assets that suggest it is a high-potential site for future revitalization.

The location of the corridor provides many advantages. Washington Street provides a straight route into Waukegan's downtown from areas and major roads located to the west of the study area. It is one of the most heavily traveled streets leading into Waukegan's downtown, serving large numbers of commuters in the morning and evening rush hours, as well as Lake County residents visiting county services and courts located in Waukegan's downtown. Three large public schools are all located within a few blocks of one another, on or very near two key commercial sections of the corridor and the 25 mile Robert McClory Bike Path, which bisects Washington Street.

Within the study area for this plan, the Washington Street corridor includes several well-defined, walkable commercial sections, with rows of stores and restaurants nestled up to the sidewalk. Other sections do not share these characteristics. According to many residents and some business owners, the overall image of the corridor is "a bit shabby," and in need of enhancement.

Figure 1.3. Regional content of study area



Source: Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning, 2014.

Very few public trees are located along Washington Street, providing minimal shade for pedestrians and doing little to muffle noise and soften the overall streetscape. In contrast, the adjoining residential areas to the north and south of Washington Street are relatively lush with trees, attractive, and well-kept.

Washington Street functions as the primary business corridor of Waukegan's expanding Latino community. The majority of Waukegan residents are Latino, and while the City's Latino population continues to grow, its White population continues to decline. These trends are especially pronounced in the Washington Street study area, which is now 73 percent Latino (compared to 53 percent for Waukegan overall), and saw a decline in the White population of over 40 percent between 2000 and 2010. However, the broader demographics of people living or working nearby remain diverse, and Latino-owned businesses in the corridor have an opportunity to expand their customer base dramatically by reaching out to non-Latino residents and commuters.

Among both Latinos and non-Latinos, many current and potential customers would like to see more variety among the stores and, especially, the restaurants of the corridor. However, many people are unfamiliar with what is already available on Washington Street.

Businesses along the corridor face other challenges that may compound these problems. There is little communication or coordination between businesses, and many business owners lack proper training necessary to improve and grow their business.

Several business owners within the corridor report feeling neglected — or, at least, not helped — by the City and would like to have more contact and receive more support, if possible.

Overall, Washington Street needs a commercial corridor plan that builds upon existing assets, however small, and identifies opportunities for economic development that are grounded in the real world and correspond with the needs of the people who live, work, and do business in the area.

Planning Process

The planning process to create the Washington Street Commercial Corridor Plan lasted approximately one and a half years and included multiple steps. The process was crafted with assistance from City staff and was designed to include resident and business owner input throughout.

- **Project initiation** (November - December 2012)
- **Existing conditions evaluation** (January - June 2013)
- **Draft commercial corridor plan** (July 2013 - June 2014)
- **Plan completion and adoption** (July - December 2014)



Public participation and community outreach

A plan is only as good as the commitment to implementing it by the public and their elected representatives. Therefore, it was crucial that public participation be a major component of plan development. CMAP worked with a local steering committee to develop a public outreach strategy that clearly stated the methods for engaging the public at each stage of the planning process. The steering committee was composed of representatives from the business community along Washington Street, as well as Waukegan residents and City staff.

- Delia De La Cruz, *Delia's Day Care*
- Yolanda Garces, *La Conchita Bakery*
- Myra Gaytan-Morales, *University Center of Lake County*
- Maria Elena Jonas, *Hispanic American Community Education and Services*
- Jorge Lagunas, *Taqueria Toluca Restaurant*
- Lydia M. Lewis, *Black Chamber of Commerce of Lake County*
- David Marion, *Building Commissioner, City of Waukegan*
- Carmen Patlan, *Waukegan Public Library*
- Raul Ventura Ortiz, *WPJX 1550 AM*
- Oscar Zepeda, *Puro Futbol Newspaper, ESPN Deportes 1220 AM*

Public participation was accomplished through public workshops, one-on-one interviews with community leaders and stakeholders, steering committee meetings, and on-going communication with Washington Street business owners and area residents. The goals of the participatory process were:

- Ensure that all issues, concerns, and needs are identified.
- Clearly define community values and priorities.
- Incorporate the community vision and appropriate policies into the plan.

The vision that ultimately guided the development of this plan came from the community-based public participation process of collaboration between Washington Street business owners, area residents, and other key stakeholders. In total, over 100 participants helped to shape this plan. In addition to the City of Waukegan, a number of other participants and organizations have been involved throughout the process, including the Black Chamber of Commerce of Lake County, Coalición Latinos Unidos de Lake County, Hispanic American Community Education and Services, Lake County Chamber of Commerce, College of Lake County, Lake County Division of Transportation, Pace Suburban Bus, Waukegan Community Unit School District 60, Waukegan Main Street, Waukegan Park District, Waukegan Public Library, and Waukegan Township.

Relationship with the GO TO 2040 Comprehensive Regional Plan

As part of the larger Chicago metropolitan area, the City of Waukegan both influences and is influenced by the region. CMAP is the official regional planning organization for the northeastern Illinois counties of Cook, DuPage, Kane, Kendall, Lake, McHenry, and Will. CMAP developed and now guides the implementation of GO TO 2040, metropolitan Chicago's first truly comprehensive regional plan in more than 100 years. To address anticipated population growth of more than 2 million new residents, GO TO 2040 establishes coordinated strategies that will help the region's 284 communities address transportation, housing, economic development, open space, the environment, and other quality-of-life issues. The plan contains four themes and 12 major recommendation areas.

Livable Communities

1. Achieve Greater Livability through Land Use and Housing
2. Manage and Conserve Water and Energy Resources
3. Expand and Improve Parks and Open Space
4. Promote Sustainable Local Food

Human Capital

5. Improve Education and Workforce Development
6. Support Economic Innovation

Efficient Governance

7. Reform State and Local Tax Policy
8. Improve Access to Information
9. Pursue Coordinated Investments

Regional Mobility

10. Invest Strategically in Transportation
11. Increase Commitment to Public Transit
12. Create a More Efficient Freight Network

The Livable Communities, Human Capital, and Regional Mobility chapters are most relevant to Waukegan's Washington Street, particularly those recommendations that relate to:

- Reinvesting in existing communities
- Encouraging the development of communities that are compact, mixed use, and walkable, with access to transit
- Design, aesthetics, and local character
- Supporting the needs of pedestrians and bicyclists
- Collaborative planning and interjurisdictional communication
- Enhancing open space and trails
- Increasing access to fresh and affordable foods

- Integrating education with workforce development

GO TO 2040 states, "municipalities are critical to the success of GO TO 2040 because of their responsibility for land use decisions, which create the built environment of the region and determine the livability of its communities. The most important thing that a municipality can do to implement GO TO 2040 is to take this responsibility very seriously." By undertaking a planning process to create a commercial corridor plan for Washington Street, Waukegan has taken responsibility for guiding its future and has demonstrated its commitment to helping shape the future of the region as well.

Organization of the Plan

Chapter 1: Introduction

This chapter provides an overview of the plan and planning process utilized to create the Washington Street Commercial Corridor Plan.

Chapter 2: Guiding Principles

This chapter provides a very brief overview of the principles that reflect the community's values and priorities as expressed through the planning process. The principles and policies are foundational statements that guided the creation of the plan and should be used to guide decision-making by Waukegan's elected and appointed officials, community organizations, business owners, and residents.

Chapter 3: Plan Recommendations

This chapter contains a series of recommendations and strategies for achieving the vision for Washington Street.

Chapter 4: Implementation

This chapter offers recommendations focused on creating a framework of collaboration that will need to be established to help generate new leadership that can assume responsibility for implementing the recommendations in this plan. It also includes an overview of priority strategies that the Waukegan community should focus on in the next two years. Information on potential funding sources and reference guides is also included.



MEXICAN

**Counseling
& Education**

- Substance Abuse
- Partner Abuse Intervention
- Anger Management
- Psychotherapy

R

- Substance Abuse
- Partner Abuse Intervention
- Anger Management
- Psychotherapy



Illustration of proposed changes - Washington Street Corridor, between Robert McClory Bike Path and Jackson Street.

Chapter 2

Guiding Principles

As a main gateway into downtown surrounded by attractive, stable residential areas, the Washington Street corridor has the potential to play a key role in the revitalization of the city. Designed to build on the existing assets of the corridor, the plan focuses on realistic opportunities for economic development that also correspond with the needs of the people who live, work, and do business in the area.

Based upon the key findings of the planning process, the following five guiding principles emerged as priority recommendation areas to be addressed by the plan:

1. Washington Street should feel welcoming to all visitors and residents.
2. Washington Street should be a lively, active place that provides a mix of retail, restaurants, services, and amenities.
3. Washington Street should be easy and comfortable to walk, bike, and drive along.
4. Youth living and going to school in the corridor are an asset and should have meaningful opportunities for after school activities and career development.
5. Businesses in the corridor should work together and with the City to strengthen the corridor.



Detailed illustration of proposed changes - Washington Street Corridor, between Robert McClory Bike Path and Jackson Street.

Chapter 3

Plan Recommendations

This chapter of the plan presents the recommended strategies for achieving the vision of Washington Street. The recommendations are organized into four main sections to achieve the first four principles of the plan.

These sections are:

1. Broaden the customer base.
2. Build on the corridor's identity.
3. Enhance the image of the corridor.
4. Engage youth and prepare them for the future.

The fifth principle, focused on creating a framework for collaboration and system of support, is addressed in Chapter 4: Implementation.

Broaden the Customer Base

Summary of existing conditions

While predominately a neighborhood commercial corridor, Washington Street is home to several successful businesses that draw people from across the City and nearby suburbs. There are currently 82 businesses within the study area and they are primarily small, locally-owned establishments. Several of these businesses provide basic goods and services for nearby residents, such as the local grocery stores, beauty salons and barber shops, laundromats, and dry cleaners. The main draws to the corridor from the rest of the city are the predominantly Latino-owned restaurants and bakeries. Additional assets of the corridor include strong nearby neighborhoods, high pedestrian traffic, and a considerable amount of vehicle travel along this main gateway to the city. Businesses along this corridor are highly visible to passersby and large sections of the street are lined with pedestrian-oriented buildings, which create a unique atmosphere compared to the other commercial corridors in the City.

Business owners recognize that they have the potential to attract more customers from the surrounding neighborhoods and from commuters using this main gateway into downtown Waukegan. During the planning process, several barriers were identified that may prevent people from thinking of or stopping along Washington Street to conduct daily activities. These include language and cultural barriers due to signage and window displays, gaps in the mix of goods and services that limit people's ability to address regular shopping needs along the corridor, and a range of access and parking issues as pedestrians, bicyclists, transit riders, and drivers travel along the corridor. The following strategies are designed to broaden the customer base and make it easier for people to visit Washington Street.

Break down language and cultural barriers

Like the city as a whole, the Latino population is growing in the Washington Street neighborhood and now represents 73 percent of the population. Washington Street is beginning to be seen as the "Main Street" for Waukegan's majority Latino community. The successful Latino-owned businesses along the street are a significant asset and draw customers from across the city and from nearby communities.



Nevertheless, even the corridor's most successful businesses would like to see more customers. As a major gateway into the downtown, Washington Street is a heavily traveled street with an average of 21,400 vehicles a day. Drawing in additional customers from this commuting population would be beneficial to the businesses along Washington Street. However, the commuting population is likely more diverse than the surrounding neighborhood and may not be aware of the goods and services available to them due to a lack of English signage and other cultural barriers, including an assumption that Latino-owned businesses sell items that are not part of their daily shopping and cooking habits.

To encourage them to stop and visit businesses, a number of strategies are identified to address the barriers that may keep commuters from considering Washington Street as a destination. As people discover new places to eat and shop, it is likely that they will become more open to exploring other businesses along the corridor.

Increase bilingual business signage. Several of the existing businesses along Washington Street currently lack signs that present their goods and services in English. The addition of English signage can help potential non-Spanish speaking customers understand the offerings available to them. Interviews with non-Latinos suggest that the language barrier can lead them to feel uncomfortable going in because they assume they will be unable to communicate with business owners. In addition, many said that they did not know what items or services were available at stores that lacked English signs. Adding English to the main business signage as well as associated marketing materials — such as sandwich boards or window signs — can help draw people into businesses and broaden the customer base of the district as a whole.

It is important to recognize the many reasons why current business owners have Spanish signage, ranging from a nuanced understanding of their existing customer base to the more basic need to prioritize the use of available resources. Signage in Spanish is important to the function and identity of the street and should be maintained. But the addition of bilingual signage facing the street — and, ideally, throughout the store or restaurant — can help make potential new customers feel welcome while also maintaining the existing clientele. In short, bilingual signage can make it easier and more enjoyable for everyone to patronize the street's shops and restaurants.

Expanding bilingual signage will depend on the participation of individual businesses, but an overall corridor initiative can help address any concerns or challenges businesses may have regarding the installation of bilingual signage. The goal of this effort should be to ensure that current and new businesses are appealing to the two prevalent languages spoken in the Waukegan area, instead of one or the other.

Determining the most effective approach to implement these changes will depend upon the priorities of businesses along the corridor. Given that many businesses appear to need to improve the appearance of their façades and awnings, a requirement for bilingual signage could be included among the conditions for any assistance or subsidization within an overall façade improvement program (discussed in Strategy 3.3). An alternative (or additional) strategy would be to begin conversations with businesses that are lacking bilingual signage about options for upgrading their signs. Last, when a sign permit is pulled, the City could encourage bilingual signage and connect the business owner to resources detailing best practices.

In addition, wayfinding signage and other marketing efforts, as detailed in Strategies 1.3 and 2.2, should adhere to similar principles of reaching out to both Spanish and English speakers.

Encourage transparency of front windows of businesses on the corridor. A store or restaurant's front windows serve as the initial bridge between what the business has to sell and what the customer needs. With an attractive window display, potential new customers can quickly grasp what is available at a given business. A cluttered or out-of-date window display can add uncertainty about what lies within, and this uncertainty can lead customers to patronize businesses that they already know instead of exploring new local options. In addition, recent studies have shown that there is often an inverse relationship between the perceived value of a store's merchandise and the visual complexity of its window display.¹

Currently, there are several establishments with windows that are mostly covered with low-quality paper or window decal signs (painted or vinyl transfer letters and numbers) advertisements, mostly in Spanish, often accompanied by other objects, such as boxes and merchandise.

1. Lidwell, William, *Universal Principles of Design*, Beverly: Rockport Publishers, 2010, p. 128-129.

2. Sign Ordinance, City of Waukegan, July 1, 2013



These items greatly reduce the transparency of the store and in some cases violate the City of Waukegan Sign Ordinance,² which states the following:

- No window sign shall have a total measured sign area in excess of twenty percent (20%) of the opening in which it is located... Such signage may not obscure entry areas or prevent the general public or public safety personnel from viewing interior or exterior activity at the location.”
- “Decal signs can be mounted within the transom and at the lower section of the storefront window area so as not to interfere with interior or exterior activity at the location. The decal sign area at the lower section of the window can occupy up to 10% of the glass area of a single pane. Decals mounted at the transom are restricted to 50% of the area of the transom. Decals located at the lower section of the main display area are to be limited to 6” in height unless they contain store operation hours, which are restricted to.”

Local businesses on Washington Street with cluttered or out-of-date windows are likely having a difficult time drawing in new customers from the neighborhood as well as the commuters using Washington Street. As Washington Street seeks to attract the attention of potential customers who are not currently patronizing the business of the corridor, it will be necessary to begin to upgrade the perceived value of the corridor. In the near term, it will be necessary to catch the eye of customers, indicating that improvements are underway and that there is something new for them to consider within the corridor.

Businesses should work to increase the transparency of their windows to improve the visibility and perception of their goods and services. Business owners clearly want to advertise what items or services they offer, especially when they are having a sale. There is a tendency to use most of the available window space for this purpose. Over time, the windows can become cluttered with information which can reduce the legibility of the individual messages the business owners are trying to communicate.

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The essential first step in addressing these problems is for the City to enforce its existing sign ordinance with respect to window advertisements. These regulations are appropriate and needed and once enforced will address the majority of the problem. It is essential that enforcement of the existing ordinance be uniformly applied to all businesses in the corridor; furthermore, it is vital that business owners understand that it is being applied uniformly and is part of a unified effort to improve the corridor for everyone.

Assist businesses with presentation. A common sentiment was that many businesses on Washington Street could use some guidance on how to visually present themselves. Often competing with chain stores that have marketing departments, thriving small business districts are typically characterized by businesses that understand the importance of street presentation. Some business owners along Washington Street have invested in enhancing the appearance of their stores and restaurants in the corridor, upgrading facades, windows, signage, and window displays. Unfortunately, several businesses have not done the same. It is likely that, in most cases, this is due to a lack of resources—most notably time (to focus on the appearance and presentation of the business) and money (to make physical improvements).

Strategy 3.3 discusses this plan's recommendation for an overall façade improvement program, but in many cases low or no cost improvements to window displays are possible. The key missing element is expertise. Through a non-profit organization such as Taproot, businesses could enlist the pro bono assistance of persons with expertise in effective marketing for a variety of small businesses.

Following advance outreach to businesses along Washington Street, representatives could walk the corridor with the professionals who are providing this pro bono assistance over the course of two or three days. At a minimum, the assisting professionals could view the exterior of each business and give their assessment and ideas for effective improvements to be used later during follow-up with the owners of each business. Preferably this free analysis would include brief discussion with business owners, who presumably would be excited at the opportunity for free, no-commitment guidance to improve the appearance of their businesses.

A more ambitious strategy could require a comprehensive assessment and sharing of ideas with businesses that signed up for the initiative, which would require a commitment from the business owner to implement suggested changes that were free or affordable. There are many different approaches that could work; resourcefulness and flexibility is key. Strategy 2.1 discusses the need for opportunities for business training, which could cover low-cost ways to improve the appearance of businesses.

Identify and fill gaps in goods and services

While many people are unaware of all that is currently available on Washington Street, it is important to acknowledge that the goods and services currently available on Washington Street are unlikely to fulfill all of the everyday needs of current customers and, especially, potential new customers. Based on community input gathered for this plan, there appears to be a need for some of the corridor's businesses to expand the goods or services they currently offer, beginning with the identification of gaps in desired goods and services that they can fill without difficulty. In addition, satisfying the wide variety of customer needs may require the addition of new businesses — preferably ones that fill a gap rather than compete with businesses already present on the corridor.

It will be important for Washington Street to set realistic goals for its future enhancement as a commercial corridor. Persons with access to automobiles are likely to continue traveling to stores and shopping centers that offer more variety for certain types of shopping, such as large purchases. Similarly, persons are likely to look elsewhere when seeking higher-end restaurants. Therefore, the primary objective for the Washington Street corridor in the near term should be to fulfill everyday shopping needs and more modest eating preferences.

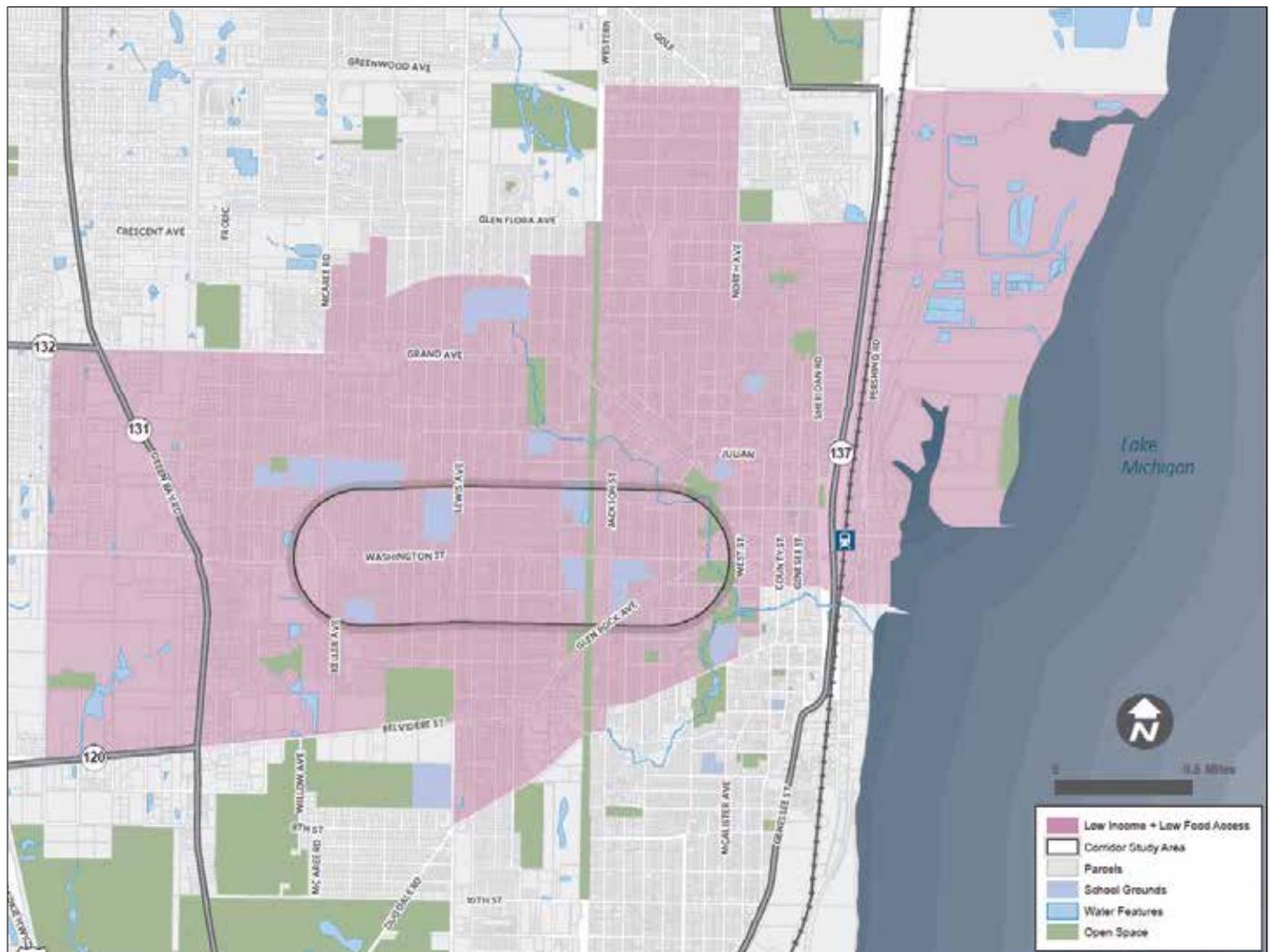
Initial community feedback on gaps in goods and services.

Interviews conducted during the community engagement phase of the planning process revealed some details as to what goods and services people think are missing from the corridor.

Everyday conveniences and groceries. In general, many people felt that the corridor is sorely lacking in stores that are good for basic everyday conveniences, especially within walking distance for persons without automobiles. The CVS store at the intersection of Washington and Lewis was a frequently-noted exception, but many persons wished the store — or another drugstore — was located farther to the east on Washington Street, closer to what many consider the heart of the corridor.

While it was common for persons with access to an automobile to report high satisfaction with the selection, prices, and service at larger grocery stores located within driving distance (such as Lewis Fresh Market), there seemed to be demand for an expanded range of produce in the study area, and some residents and restaurant owners thought the addition of a dedicated butcher shop in a central location, adjacent to other stores, would help make the corridor more useful and efficient for customers.

Figure 3.1. Low-income Census tracts where a significant number of residents live more than 1 mile away from nearest supermarket



Source: Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning, 2014.

Car owners indicated that an improved selection of fresh foods would be attractive for occasional small purchases when convenience was important, such as during the evening commute. Meanwhile, several community members highlighted the presence of nearby residents without access to automobiles who need access to fresh foods within walking distance.

Eating establishments. For eating establishments, residents and other stakeholders in the corridor are interested in sit-down restaurants and bars “that cater to an older crowd” and, in general, new restaurants that offer diverse food options that would help to bring in people who work downtown, while also appealing to residents already living nearby.

Needs of middle and high school students in the corridor.

The Washington Street corridor has a remarkable concentration of students nearby, due to one high school campus and two middle schools within a few blocks of each other. Yet students reported that there were few businesses that served their needs and fewer where they felt welcome. They mentioned frequenting Poppy’s, a small hot dog stand located several blocks from the three schools, as well as the Family Dollar store, located immediately adjacent to the Waukegan High School campus on Washington Street. As discussed at greater length in Strategy 4.1, students in the corridor have few activities available to them after school. They need more places to go and things to do. Increased opportunities for educational and recreational activities are what are most needed, but the large number of students and small number of businesses serving their needs represents a mismatch that, if improved, could be an important component of the corridor’s economic development.

Supplement initial feedback with surveys. While this initial feedback on missing goods and services provides some direction, it will be necessary to gather more detailed information to fully understand the wants and needs of Washington Street’s current and potential customers. To build upon the commercial corridor’s existing customer base, it will be vital to survey Washington Street’s current customers to learn where they are coming from and what their unmet needs are. At the same time, to expand the customer base, it will be essential to survey three key groups of potential customers, including:

- People who live in the residential areas located immediately adjacent to the corridor yet who don’t regularly shop or eat on Washington Street.
- People who do not shop or eat regularly on the corridor but who commute via Washington Street each weekday.
- People working, conducting official business, or studying in Waukegan’s downtown or other neighborhoods who may be interested in running errands or grabbing a bite to eat in the corridor. Examples include Lake County employees, lawyers conducting business at the soon-to-expand county courthouse, and students attending classes at the expanding Lakeshore Campus of the College of Lake County.

There are a variety of different survey approaches³ that can be employed, including:

Consumer Intercept Surveys. Using this technique, interviewers greet shoppers and diners in the corridor and administer a brief questionnaire. To get a diverse and representative sample, surveying should be done at different locations and at different times of the day and week. These surveys capture information about the existing consumer base and are particularly useful for assessing which types of additional goods and services consumers want and areas that need improvement in the district. Intercept surveys are also good tools for understanding more about the existing trade area, the demographics of the consumer base, and their means of transportation to the district. Intercept surveys provide a good opportunity to assess consumer perceptions about provision of parking or safety in the district as well.

Mailed Surveys. This technique also allows you to reach potential as well as existing consumers as surveys can be mailed to a sample of addresses in the market area. A benefit of this type of survey is that you can ask more questions because individuals will likely have more time to fill out the survey. However, the response rate for mail surveys will most likely be much lower than intercept surveys.

In-Store Surveys. Typically these are very short, multiple choice surveys that are left with merchants to distribute to their customers, aimed at collecting information such as residential location by zip code, basic demographics, or frequency of visits to the commercial corridor. However, merchants are often unwilling or unable to help with the surveying. Therefore, it might be wise to conduct an independent survey or limit this type of survey to one or two specific categories of businesses, such as grocery stores.

Zip Code Surveys. These surveys, conducted by merchants at the register, ask only a single question: What is your zip code? They are useful for determining your target area for market analysis.

Focus Groups. Focus groups are structured interviews of a small group of people (six to 10) at the same time lasting roughly one and a half hours. Focus groups could collect information about shopping habits, perceptions about the Washington Street commercial corridor, and wanted good and services. Focus group participants could be chosen to represent a sample of the target market, such as any of the three key groups of potential customers discussed earlier.

Support pedestrians, bicyclists, and transit riders

Unlike other neighborhood commercial corridors, like Grand or Lewis Avenues, Washington Street has many of the basic features that are necessary for creating a pedestrian-, bicycle-, and transit-friendly corridor. This is largely due to the existing building stock, especially where pedestrian-oriented buildings line the sidewalks with storefronts and a number of destinations are within close proximity. The sections of Washington Street that are generally the most pleasant to walk along are the blocks located between Victory Street and the Robert McClory Bike Path and between Butrick Street and Worack Place. A good bicycling and transit environment also depends on many of the same elements—a higher density development, mix of destinations, and human-scale building design.

3. Local Initiatives Support Corporation Center for Commercial Revitalization, *Commercial Revitalization Planning Guide: A Toolkit for Community Based Organizations*, 2009.

Washington Street could become a pedestrian-friendly shopping street with a unique identity. However, further improvements are needed so that people of all ages are comfortable walking, bicycling, and taking transit along the street. Improvements focused on making it easy for people within the surrounding neighborhoods and the rest of the city to access the goods and services available on Washington Street will set the stage for new activity along the corridor and broaden the customer base. The following strategies are designed to address gaps in the connections and amenities for pedestrians, bicyclists, and transit riders.

Add crosswalks and shorten crossing distances. Frequent pedestrian crossings allow residents and visitors to easily access different parts of a commercial corridor. With four signalized and two non-signalized crosswalks along the 1.5-mile corridor, the distance a pedestrian needs to travel to cross the street at a marked crosswalk can be lengthy. Figure 3.2 highlights locations for additional non-signalized crosswalks and crosswalk improvements to provide more frequent pedestrian connections along the corridor. The existing non-signalized crosswalks are marked with minimal treatments; further improvements will make pedestrians more visible to drivers. High-visibility ladder, zebra, and continental crosswalk markings are preferable to standard parallel or dashed pavement markings. The City should follow the high visibility crosswalk guidelines detailed in the 2009 Manual for Uniform Traffic Control Devices.⁴

In addition, new non-signalized crosswalks could be designed with curb extensions that extend the sidewalk and reduce the crossing distance for pedestrians wherever possible. Improvements that shorten the pedestrian crossing distance should also be made to the intersection of Lewis Avenue and Washington Street. Curb extensions also add a gateway feature that signals to drivers that this is an area where pedestrians are encouraged. These changes include:

Add a non-signalized crosswalk at Park Avenue. Centrally located between the signalized crossings at Jackson Street and West Street, an additional crosswalk placed at Park Avenue would provide residents and visitors an opportunity to cross the street within this half-mile stretch of the corridor. A new crossing, preferably including a “State Law: Stop for Pedestrians within Crosswalk” safety sign, will allow elderly residents of Lilac Ledge to cross without having to back track to West Street or travel out of their way to Victory Street or Jackson Street.

Update the Victory Street non-signalized crosswalk. The existing crosswalk at Victory Street provides access to the Waukegan High School Washington Street campus, yet it is minimally marked with two lines perpendicular to the movement of vehicles. Additional improvements are necessary to create a safe crossing for pedestrians, including higher visibility crosswalk markings and potential curb extensions.

Figure 3.2. Locations for additional non-signalized crosswalks and crosswalk improvements



Source: Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning, 2014.

4 U.S. Department of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration, *Manual for Uniform Traffic Control Devices*, 2009.

Update the Robert McClory Bike Path non-signalized

crosswalk. The existing crosswalk at the Robert McClory Bike Path is equipped with continental crosswalk markings, a pedestrian activated crossing beacon, and bicycle signage — all of which are important features for pedestrian and bicyclist safety. As further park improvements are implemented in the area of the trail adjacent to the street, as recommended in Strategy 3.5, this crossing could be used by more people and further upgrades may become necessary to allow drivers, bicyclists, and pedestrians to safely navigate the crosswalk. Given the potential for faster moving bicycles at this crossing, a wider crossing for the trail across Washington Street will allow pedestrians and cyclists to feel comfortable using the same space. In addition, the use of a curb extension could bring more prominence to this crossing and more attention to the regional bike trail.

Add a non-signalized crosswalk at Dorchester Court. Centrally located between Lewis Avenue and Buttrick Street, an additional crosswalk placed at Dorchester Court will provide residents and visitors with a crossing opportunity between the north and south sides of the corridor in an area with a number of destinations on both sides of the street, including a Pace Bus stop.

Upgrade the Lewis Avenue intersection. The current configuration of the Lewis Avenue and Washington Street intersection includes right turning lanes. The right turning lanes are designed with a larger curb return radius⁵ which allows drivers to take right turns at faster speeds. At crosswalk locations, however, faster speeds can lead to a significant decrease in pedestrian safety. This intersection, which is in close proximity to the Waukegan High School Brookfield Campus and several bus stops serving multiple bus routes, should be designed for pedestrians as well as vehicles. Over the long-term, the intersection should be designed with a shorter turn radius, which will increase the sidewalk space and shorten the crossing distances for pedestrians. These combined changes will encourage drivers to make right turns at safe speeds and help both drivers and pedestrians to safely navigate this space.

Potential funding sources. The Illinois Transportation Enhancement Program (ITEP) and Surface Transportation Program (STP) could potentially provide funding assistance with these proposed improvements.

In addition, the Illinois Safe Routes to School (SRTS) program, which supports projects that enable and encourage walking and bicycling to and from school, could be a potential funding source given the impact the pedestrian improvements could have on the three nearby schools. For improvements related to the Robert McClory Bike Path, the City should work with Lake County Division of Transportation (LCDOT) on funding efforts; the Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement Program (CMAQ) could potentially provide funding assistance as well.

Widen sidewalks. Wide sidewalks in commercial areas provide the space for pedestrian amenities that can create an inviting, pleasant environment. In order to foster a walkable street in a mixed-use commercial setting like Washington Street, the Institute of Transportation Engineers recommends that a sidewalk be at least nine feet wide but that it would be ideally be 16 feet wide to accommodate not only the movement of pedestrians but also the social space where people interact and walk together.⁶ Within a sidewalk that is nine feet or wider, street trees and other street furniture amenities, like trash receptacles (as recommended in Strategies 3.1 and 3.4), can be placed without blocking the movement of foot traffic.

Some areas of Washington Street already meet this standard, such as the blocks between the Robert McClory Bike Path and Park Avenue. However, the sidewalk between Burton Avenue and the Robert McClory Bike Path is only six feet wide (on average), which will limit the placement of street trees and other amenities. Ideally, this sidewalk should be widened by changing the dimensions of the travel lanes and moving the curb and utilities. Figure 3.3 shows how the public right-of-way could be rearranged to provide more space for the sidewalk, including reducing the width of the center turn lane to 10 feet, the travel lanes to 11 feet, and the on-street parking lane to seven feet.⁷

Moving the curb and utilities to provide for more sidewalk space is expensive and would be a long-term improvement. Therefore, in the shorter term, the City should also investigate options that would not require the relocation of utilities, such as adding curb extensions at regular intervals within the parking lane where trees can be planted (Figure 3.4).

While periodic curb extensions will not address the central issue of a narrow sidewalk throughout this area, it will provide more space for the amenities that help make a street more pedestrian-friendly. This strategy should be designed to maintain as much of the on-street parking as possible as well as in coordination with other parking strategies (Strategy 1.4).

5. Curb returns are the curved connection of curbs in the corners formed by the intersection of two streets. A curb return guides vehicles in turning corners and impacts the crossing distance for pedestrians. The radius of the curve varies; larger radii increase vehicular turning speeds and lengthen pedestrian crosswalks.

6. Institute of Transportation Engineers, *Designing Walkable Urban Thoroughfares: A Context Sensitive Approach*, Washington D.C., 2010.

7. These lane widths are supported by ITE.

Figure 3.3. Existing and proposed street cross section between Burton Avenue and Robert McClory Bike Path



Source: Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning, 2014, using Street Mix. <http://streetmix.net>.

Strengthen local bicycle facilities. With a well-connected street grid, nearby destinations, and the Robert McClory Bike Path, bicycling in and around the Washington Street corridor is a viable transportation option for everyday trips as well as recreational activities. Despite these conditions, bicyclists are infrequently seen in the area which is likely due to the lack of bicycle facilities. Nationally, bicycling for daily trips is growing in popularity as a transportation option that saves money and contributes to personal health. In addition, businesses can benefit from the addition of bicycle lanes on commercial corridors, as bicyclists can more easily see and visit the businesses available on a street.

The following strategies are designed to create a more hospitable environment for bicycling. Potential grant funding sources include the program, the Illinois Trails Grant Program, TAP, STP, and CMAQ; the most relevant potential funding sources are listed at the end of each strategy in parentheses.

Add a bicycle lane east of the Robert McClory Bike Path. As Waukegan works to implement a city-wide bicycle plan and expand the bicycle network, additional bicycle lanes with connections to the Robert McClory Bike Path will ensure that Washington Street plays an important role in this growing regional trend. Washington Street is designated as a recommended bike route from Lewis Ave to Sheridan Road by the Active Transportation Alliance, but it lacks local designation or infrastructure treatments.

The City should investigate adding bicycle lanes on portions of the corridor, namely the section east of the Robert McClory Bike Path, in order to provide the necessary infrastructure for residents and visitors to use this transportation option, see Figure 3.5. Bicycle lanes have been added to streets of similar size and daily traffic volumes throughout the region and the nation. The National Association of City Transportation Officials Urban Bikeway Design Guide⁸ should be used as a reference, and the addition of a new bicycle lane should work in concert with on-street parking (see Strategy 1.4). See Strategy 1.5 for more details on how a bike lane could be added in concert with other right-of-way improvements. (Potential funding sources: CMAQ, ITEP, STP, TAP)

Figure 3.4. Curb extension with trees

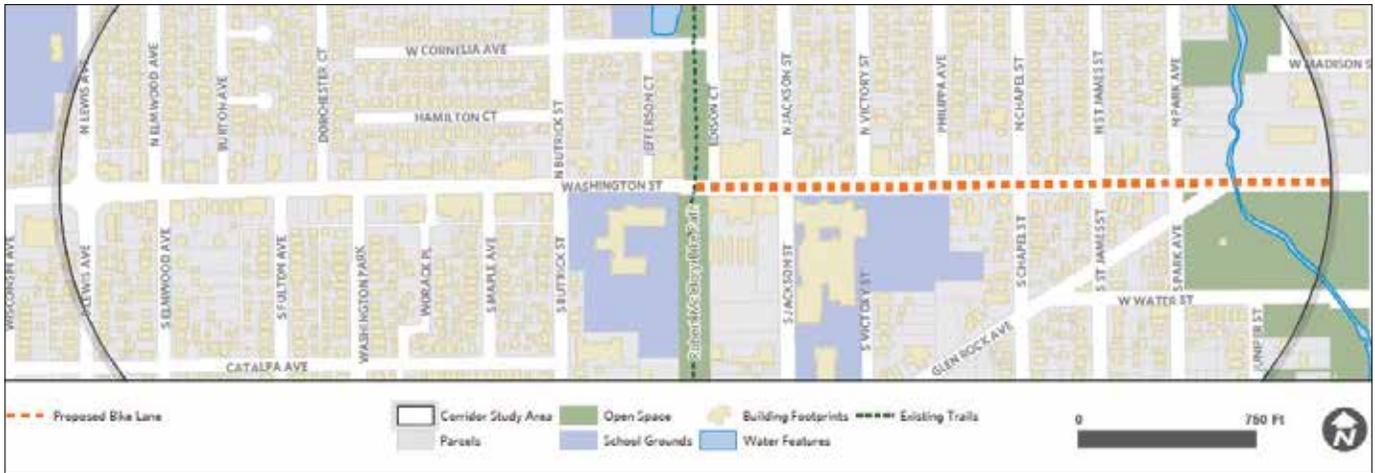


Photo Credit: National Geographic.

Add bicycle parking. The provision of adequate bicycle parking will help bicyclists visit commercial businesses along the corridor. Currently, bicycle parking is absent from Washington Street except for a few racks associated with the schools. The City should consider adding bicycle parking at potentially high use locations, such as the Robert McClory Bike Path and other sites along Washington Street found within the blocks between Burton Avenue and Victory Street. Low-cost parking options include the “inverted-U,” or functionally similar parking racks which allow a bicycle to be secured in two locations on the frame. Other communities have combined this design with simple branding techniques, such as painting the racks a color to identify the commercial areas. (Potential funding source: ITEP)

8. National Association of City Transportation Officials, *Urban Bikeway Design Guide, Second Edition*, 2014.

Figure 3.5. Proposed bike lane location



Source: Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning, 2014.

Add business wayfinding signage from the Robert McClory Bike Path. The Robert McClory Bike Path could become a significant asset to the Washington Street corridor. Well-designed and connected intra-city trails have been shown to not only improve local business sales but also increase adjacent property values.⁹ In addition to other improvements discussed in Strategy 3.5, adding directional signage at the intersection of the bike trail and Washington Street will help draw potential customers into the district and help support local businesses. The wayfinding signs could display business and other destinations, distances, and “riding time.” There are many different options that have been used in other communities. LCDOT, as owner of the trail, has previously pursued funding to install wayfinding signs along the bike trail; the City and community groups should support future LCDOT efforts to secure funding for these improvements by helping to identify funding opportunities and writing letters of support. The potential benefits of enhancing the surfacing of the bike trail, particularly near its intersection with Washington Street, should be considered as well. The Rails-to-Trails Conservancy’s Metropolitan Grants Program could be a potential source of funding for improvements.¹⁰ (Potential funding source: ITEP)

Promote walking and bicycling to Waukegan schools.

The three schools within the study area—Robert Abbott Middle School, Miguel Juarez Middle School, and Waukegan High School Washington Campus—bring many people to the corridor on a regular basis. Increasing the number of students who walk or bicycle to school has the potential of not only promoting healthy behaviors among young residents, it also could lead to more commercial activity along the corridor and reduce automobile congestion. In addition to the students themselves, parents who walk their children to and from school are likely to become more familiar with the amenities and businesses along the street. (Potential funding source: SRTS)

The Robert McClory Bike Path, which runs within close proximity to the three schools, could be used as a safe route to and from school given that it provides a trail separated from automobile traffic. However, the trail is not widely used by students. Some residents discussed real or perceived safety threats along the trail that may prevent students from using the trail. This could be partially due to the lack of entrances, windows, and general activity emanating from the adjacent buildings along the trail. Strategy 3.5 outlines a number of steps to activate the trail.

9. Pruetz, Rick. “Prosperity Comes in Cycles: Bicycle trails can pump up local economies,” *Planning*, November 2013.

10. Rails-to-Trails Conservancy, “Urban Pathways to Healthy Neighborhoods, Promoting Trail Use,” 2011.

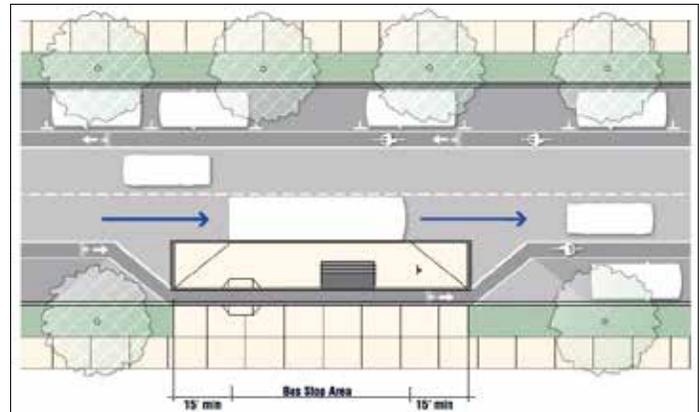
While the bike rack in front of the Waukegan High School Washington Campus is consistently occupied—indicating that there are a few students who are biking to school—residents reported that most students do not bike to school and that the real or perceived threat of bike theft is a contributing factor. The City should work with the Waukegan School District to increase security of bicycle parking at the three schools along Washington Street. Strategies could include a range of approaches, from educating students on how to properly lock bicycles to potential relocation of bicycle racks to higher visibility locations.

Overall, the City and community organizations should work with the three schools to identify opportunities to address parents' safety concerns and encourage more walking and bicycling to school. One potential source of funding is the Illinois SRTS program, which is designed to help communities create a safe environment for students to walk or bike to and from school. The program also provides support for education, encouragement, and enforcement activities in addition to infrastructure improvements near K-8 schools. Using this funding, the two eligible middle schools in the corridor could offer bicycle and pedestrian safety curricula, organize a regular schedule for Walk to School Day events, or even initiate a walking and biking mileage challenge between schools and grade levels. Illinois SRTS grant applications are assessed in part on the public input process of proposals. In addition to utilizing the relevant public input gathered during the development of this plan, students themselves could be engaged in conducting interviews and participating in walking and bicycling audits to help inform Waukegan's proposals while also learning about transportation safety.

Enhance Pace Bus service and stops. Several Pace bus routes serve all or portions of the Washington Street corridor, including Pace Routes 561, 562, 566, 568, 569, and 572. Bus ridership has increased over the past five years on almost all of the routes serving the study area. As a result, Pace changed several of the routes in December 2013, including increasing the frequency of Pace Route 572, which runs the length of Washington Street within the study area. Increasing the frequency of service is an integral step in building more effective transit along this corridor. In addition, Pace is extending the route of Pace Route 572 from its previous eastern terminus at Sheridan Road to include a stop at the Waukegan Metra station, which is located 0.2 miles away down a hill on the other side of the Amstutz Expressway. This will improve the transfer experience for people using the bus to connect to the commuter rail.

Using CMAQ funds, Lake County, Waukegan, and Pace worked together to add a transit signal priority system along Washington Street between Teske Boulevard and Sheridan Road. This signal system will allow Pace signal controllers to electronically hold or extend the green time on traffic signals to enhance bus movement along the corridor. As this system comes online, Pace bus service is anticipated to improve along Washington Street.

Figure 3.6. Bus bulb/extension



Source: Pace Suburban Bus, *Transit Supportive Guidelines for the Chicagoland Region*, 2013.

Further improvements to the bus stops along the corridor can assist residents and visitors using the bus. The addition of benches at specific locations can provide a resting spot for older residents and visitors, and covered shelters can help to protect all riders from the elements. Pace offers shelters (which include benches) through their Pace Ad Shelter program, and the City should work with Pace to strategically locate them along the corridor. While the final placement will depend on a variety of factors, shelters should serve the stops most heavily used. The bus stop serving Lilac Ledge is an excellent candidate for a shelter given the older age of the nearby residents. Pace’s *Transit Supportive Guidelines for the Chicagoland Region*¹¹ provides design guidelines that the City can reference when working with Pace to add transit amenities.

Bus bulbs, or extension of the sidewalk into the street, can improve bus service by allowing the bus to stop in the travel lane for boarding and eliminate the need for the bus to re-enter traffic flow, see Figure 3.6. Additionally, bus bulbs provide an option for incorporating bicycle lanes through the stop area, reducing potential bus-bike conflicts at stops. The City should work with Pace to identify potential locations and confirm design specifications for bus bulbs. Given the transit signal prioritization system, the bus bulbs should be located on the far side of intersections. In addition, better signage and bus schedule information should be added to stops with and without shelters. With six different routes along the corridor, yet only one that serves the entire length, the addition of route maps will provide riders with the necessary information to plan their trip.

Manage parking

On-street and off-street parking provides an essential service for visitors who are driving to the corridor. Currently, there are approximately 115 on-street parking spaces and over 2,500 off-street parking spaces associated with parcels immediately adjacent to Washington Street. On-street parking is a key ingredient of a neighborhood commercial corridor. Studies have shown that users of commercial areas consistently select on-street parking over off-street parking, even when an on-street parking space costs more or takes more time to find.¹² Visitors are more inclined to use on-street spaces because of their ease of use and the proximity to the front door of establishments. With many pedestrian-oriented buildings along Washington Street, this same phenomenon is likely true here as well, with existing on-street parking spaces providing a valuable service to businesses. On-street parking also provides a low-cost way to improve the pedestrian environment by creating a buffer between moving vehicle traffic and pedestrians along a sidewalk.

Off-street parking is also important, but the placement and amount of parking can have a dramatic impact on the feel and overall activity of a street. Too much parking, where off-street parking lots are left unused for good portions of the day, can lead to underutilized land that could have been used for other, more productive purposes. In addition, off-street parking lots located along the sidewalk can diminish the pedestrian-friendliness of a street due to the large gaps in active uses. However, too little parking can deter people from visiting the corridor, especially given the common expectation that parking should be an easy proposition.

Figure 3.7. Proposed changes to on-street parking, existing parking, and potential shared parking locations



Source: Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning, 2014.

11. Pace Suburban Bus, *Transit Supportive Guidelines for the Chicagoland Region*, 2013

12. Marshall et al., “Reassessing On-Street Parking,” *Transportation Research Record: Journal of the Transportation Research Board*, No. 2046, 2008, p. 45-52.

The following activities outline key steps to ensure a balance of parking so that visitors can easily park while ensuring that pedestrians have a pleasant experience walking along the corridor.

Extend on-street parking. While Washington Street has an abundance of parking spaces, on-street parking spaces are limited to just a few sections of the corridor, mainly between Burton Avenue and Jackson Street. Establishing consistent on-street parking east of Lewis Avenue all the way into downtown Waukegan will provide the benefits of on-street parking to additional retail and office spaces, see Figure 3.7. Time-restricted on-street parking in front of Robert Abbott Middle School can help alleviate the parking pressures facing the businesses just west of Buttrick while not interfering with the travel patterns associated with school hours. Adding on-street parking will work in concert with the recommended street width updates highlighted in Strategy 1.5.

Where on-street parking is currently allowed, spaces are striped with boxes implying that users need to park in specific areas instead of parking in a continuous manner based on vehicle sizes. As more of the street is designated for on-street parking, the City should refrain from using this striping so that the number of spaces can adapt to vehicle size, which often may be smaller than the standardized boxes. This will potentially allow more vehicles to use on-street parking.

Promote use of existing off-street parking. Many visitors to the corridor may be unaware of the existing municipal lot located on the northwestern corner of Buttrick Avenue and Washington Street. This free, off-street parking lot is conveniently located near a section of the corridor where many of the pedestrian-oriented buildings do not have off-street parking and which residents described as an area in short supply of parking during the evening. The parking lot currently lacks obvious signage indicating that it can be used by visitors free of charge, likely contributing to why it is underutilized during much of the day and evening. The City should make small improvements in signage to help customers and businesses take advantage of this existing asset. Further marketing of this well-located, free parking could also be included in materials developed by a business association as well as by individual businesses.

Promote shared parking. As new businesses fill vacant or underutilized storefronts along the corridor, the City and community organizations should look for shared parking opportunities on existing off-street parking lots located nearby. Shared parking allows new businesses to take advantage of existing infrastructure and avoid the potential construction and/or maintenance of new parking, which can add a substantial expense to an enterprise right as it is getting off the ground. As many of the existing off-street parking locations appear to be underutilized during portions of the day, shared parking agreements could also lead to the sharing of maintenance costs, lowering costs for existing businesses. The City should update municipal ordinances to allow and promote the use of shared parking.

CMAP's *Parking Strategies to Support Livable Communities* provides guidance on establishing shared parking ordinances.¹³ The City and business association should work to connect property owners and advise them on how to establish a shared parking agreement. If specific parking shortages are appearing along the street, the City should use a parking survey to make sure that decision making is based on observed parking behavior. CMAP's *Parking Strategies* guidebook includes resources for establishing such a survey.

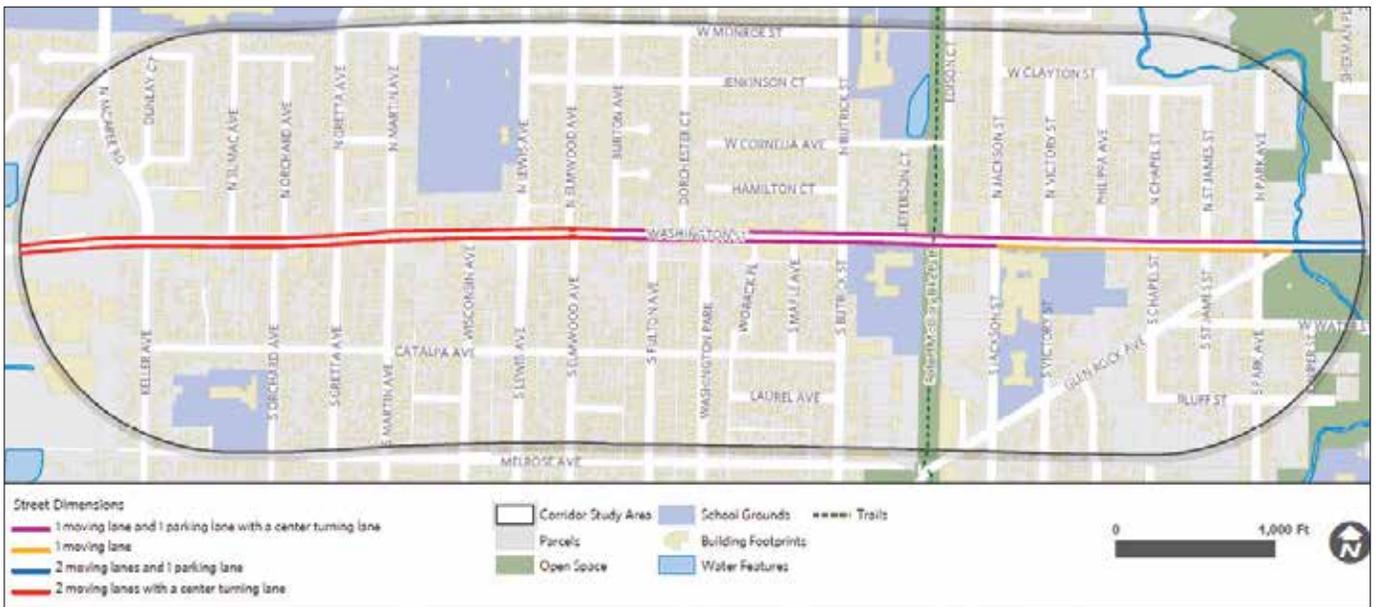
Update parking requirements. In the future, the City should also consider updating the existing parking requirements to create standards that are more compatible with the development pattern and vision of Washington Street. For example, the ordinance currently allows parking to be located within the front setback, does not exempt land uses with small building footprints, and sets high parking ratios — all of which are standards that are better suited for lower density development patterns. As a longer-term project, the City should consider updating the regulations so that future development builds on the existing assets and character of Washington Street. The ordinance should enforce building setbacks that match those that exist between Dorchester Court and Victory Street.

Figure 3.8. Existing lane structure



Source: Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning, 2014.

Figure 3.9. Proposed lane structure



Source: Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning, 2014.

The City should create parking requirement exemptions for buildings with a small footprint. For example, the City of Evanston requires no off-street parking for non-residential buildings with less than 3,000 sq. ft. of gross floor area. Ideally, parking requirements would be listed as maximums, not minimums; if that is not possible, the parking ratios should be lowered. Currently, a new restaurant is required to provide one space for every four seats, which would result in less space on the parcel devoted to the building than the space used for parking cars. Lowering this ratio, especially in concert with the changes recommended above, can allow developers to better utilize the site and develop in a way that matches the older building stock.

If new parking is created, the landscaping provisions should require trees and can encourage the use of green infrastructure practices, like bioswales and other natural drainage systems, in parking lots that meet a certain size threshold. In addition, the city should minimize the number and reduce the size of driveway curb cuts that intersect the sidewalk to access off-street parking locations. CMAP's *Parking Strategies* guidebook also includes recommendations and resources for updating parking requirements.

Establish a consistent lane structure

Washington Street currently oscillates between a four-lane and two-lane street along the length of the corridor, see Figure 3.8. Stakeholders discussed how the transitions between a four-lane and two-lane street can cause confusion among drivers as the outer lanes change from performing as a moving lane to a parking lane and back again. In addition, some sections of the corridor have a center turning lane and on-street parking while other sections do not feature these amenities.

When the opportunity arises, through regular street maintenance or resurfacing, the City should establish a more consistent treatment of the street. The existing lane structure of the street between Burton Avenue and Butrick Street—which features a center turning lane, one moving lane in each direction, and on-street parking—should be extended eastward all the way into downtown Waukegan. The addition of a turning lane to additional sections of the corridor will improve access to businesses and other parts of the neighborhood. Creating a consistent street profile east of Lewis Avenue will clarify the confusing traffic patterns. This roadway reconfiguration, commonly referred to as a “road diet,” will also calm traffic, as drivers have been found to drive more carefully on two-lane streets lined with on-street parking.¹⁴ Given that the street is already designed with this lane structure between Burton Avenue and Butrick Street, this change is not anticipated to impact the capacity of the street.¹⁵ Without changing the location of the curb, the lane structure can be restriped to also accommodate a bike lane, as recommended in Strategy 1.3. The proposed changes are described in more detail corresponding to the section of the street, see Figure 3.9.

Robert McClory Bike Path to Jackson Street

The block between the Robert McClory Bike Path and Jackson Street has two moving lanes in each direction as well as a parking lane on each side. This area should be restriped to include a center turning lane and bike lanes on each side. The center turning lane will better facilitate left turns onto Jackson Street as well as the new Family Dollar. The bike lane, as recommended in Strategy 1.3, will help bring users to and from the Robert McClory Bike Path. Figure 3.10 depicts the existing and proposed street cross-section for this block.

14. Dumbaugh et al., “Safe Urban Form: Revisiting the Relationship Between Community Design and Traffic Safety,” *Journal of the American Planning Association*, Vol. 75, No. 3, Summer 2009.

15. Under most average daily traffic (ADT) conditions tested, road diets have minimal effects on vehicle capacity, because left-turning vehicles are moved into a common two-way left-turn lane. U.S. Department of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration, *Summary Report: Evaluation of Lane Reduction “Road Diet” Measures and Their Effects on Crashes and Injuries*, 2004.

Figure 3.10. Existing and proposed street cross section, Robert McClory Bike Path to Jackson Street



Source: Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning, 2014, using Street Mix. <http://streetmix.net>.

Jackson Street to Park Avenue

Currently, Washington Street is a four-lane street between Jackson Street and Park Avenue with two moving lanes in each direction and no on-street parking. While this stretch of the corridor is more residential in nature, there are several retail and office uses that could benefit from the addition of on-street parking. Placing this parking on the north side of the street would provide additional parking options for commuters during the outbound evening commute, which could encourage them to patronize businesses along the corridor on their way home.

A center turning lane would also help drivers access the businesses and neighborhood streets in this section. Figure 3.11 illustrates the existing and proposed street cross-section for these five blocks.

Instead of widening the street to accommodate a bicycle lane, which would require moving curbs and street lighting, a portion of the parkway area could be utilized for a bicycle lane. Unlike other sections of Washington Street, this area features a wide parkway, or landscaped area between the sidewalk and the curb.

Figure 3.11. Existing and proposed street cross section, Jackson Street to Park Avenue



Source: Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning, 2014, using Street Mix. <http://streetmix.net>.

The bicycle lane could be designed following the same principles as a raised cycle track, where the lane would be at the same level of the sidewalk. At intersections, the raised cycle track can be dropped and merged onto the street or it can be maintained at sidewalk level, where bicyclists cross with pedestrians. Figure 3.12 depicts a bicycle lane on each side of the street, but it could also be designed as a two-way lane on one side of the street provided that it can meet up with the proposed bicycle lanes between the

Robert McClory Bike Path and Jackson Street. A raised cycle track, similar to protected bike lanes where bicyclists are separated from moving cars by a curb or parked cars, has been shown to improve safety. This technique has been tried on North Higgins Avenue in Missoula, Montana, Vassar Street West in Boston, Massachusetts, and multiple locations in Oregon. Street trees and the remainder of the landscaped parkway could be planted between the bicycle lane and the sidewalk.

While the restriping of the street would add minimal costs to the next resurfacing project, the addition of the bicycle lane would require additional funds. TAP, STP, and the CMAQ are possible sources of funding.

Figure 3.12. Alternate proposed street cross section, Jackson Street to Park Avenue



Source: Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning, 2014, using Street Mix. <http://streetmix.net>.

Build on the Corridor's Identity and Strengths

Summary of existing conditions

The corridor includes many small businesses that have especially close relationships with their customers, building loyalty through personalized service. While most business owners along the corridor are adept at selling their product, very few have formal business training and most could benefit from some help. They are said to be entrepreneurs at heart, typically people who learned the day-to-day operations of their current business through previous work for other business owners before venturing out on their own. Once they own their own businesses, they typically have little time or money to devote to engage in—much less seek out—training to learn new skills and grow their business.

In addition, business owners explained that they generally know each other but do not talk frequently with one another, much less collaborate. In the end, each is generally on his or her own. As a result, an owner may have a great idea for his or her business but not know how to execute it or who to ask for assistance. Existing organizations, such as local chambers of commerce, could help address this need, but it appears that they are either unknown by many business owners in the corridor or are seen as being unsuited to the needs and capacity of the typical “mom-and-pop” businesses located along Washington Street. Language can add an additional barrier, which points to one of the reasons for the success of the Hispanic Caucus (an affiliate of the Lake County Chamber of Commerce) in reaching some of the Latino business owners in the corridor.

These barriers, coupled with a persistent scarcity of free time, can foster isolation and squander opportunities for the growth of one's business and the corridor as a whole — whether it's obtaining enough capital for the expansion of a single business or working collaboratively to mount a coherent marketing for the corridor that benefits all.

The following strategies are intended to build upon the corridor's primary assets: its business owners and potential to become one of the leading suburban Latino commercial corridors in the Chicago region. The implementation section of this plan provides recommendations for the creation of new leadership structures to assume key responsibilities to implement these strategies, as part of a new, broader partnership with the City and partner organizations in Waukegan and Lake County.

Enhance business capacity to grow the corridor

Unlike other nearby commercial streets, a majority of the current businesses along Washington Street are locally-owned. With smaller lots and lower rents, the street has ideal components for small businesses just starting out. Supporting the expansion of existing businesses and helping new enterprises get off the ground will be integral to the revitalization of the corridor.

Provide practical training and information to help business owners grow their businesses. In order for the Washington Street commercial corridor to improve and evolve, as well as compete with other commercial areas, it will be necessary for the corridor's business owners to be given tools, training, and knowledge to ensure that they take advantage of all available opportunities to grow their businesses.

There is a need for a training program focused on the needs of businesses in the Washington Street corridor, particularly those that are Latino-owned. This program could serve as a prototype that could be later applied to similar commercial corridors throughout Waukegan and other parts of Lake County and the region.

Determine which training topics are most needed. It will be necessary to determine which specific training topics are most needed and most useful. This can be done by conducting a bilingual survey of business owners (a sample survey is provided in Appendices). Whatever survey is used, it will be important for it to explain potential training topics in language that any layperson can understand in order to maximize participation, as well as explain how each topic could potentially help the business owner.

In addition to getting feedback on a wide range of potential training topics, the survey should ask direct questions designed to reveal the primary challenges that business owners face, as well as what gaps may exist in their experience or training. Taken together, this information should provide a full picture of the needs and priorities of business owners, facilitating the creation of a comprehensive, effective program of training topics for business owners.

Examples of potential topics include how to:

- Navigate City permits and other processes related to business
- Create a business plan
- Effectively market your business to potential customers
- Improve the appearance of your business (storefront and inside)
- Obtain necessary capital to grow or start your business
- Locate and retain good employees (including connecting to apprenticeship programs, etc.)

Help businesses stay up-to-date with advances in their industry. While most training topics should apply to the wide variety of businesses on the corridor, it would be wise to occasionally offer opportunities for training and discussion that focus on a particular industry. During the community outreach phase of this plan, several business owners mentioned that they were particularly interested in training opportunities that would help them learn about and stay up-to-date with advances in their industry. While some advances are learned by business owners as an inherent part of doing business and staying competitive, many businesses on the corridor are operating with limited staff and very immediate concerns in mind and may not be aware of the full range of advances and new opportunities in their industry.

Bringing practical information, especially in Spanish, about industry advancements to these busy business owners would be an invaluable service, paying multiple dividends for the Washington Street corridor. In addition, industry-specific discussions could also be offered to potential business owners, particularly for types of businesses that are rare or not present on the corridor but which are highly desired by potential customers in the area.

Given the abundance of restaurants along Washington Street, it would be logical to focus on advances in the restaurant industry. Similarly, while grocery stores and other businesses selling fresh foods are relatively uncommon within the corridor, they are crucial to its future. Other industries also commonly found along Washington Street include insurance, accounting, medical or dental specializations, daycare, and auto-related services.

Locate expertise to address corridor's business education needs. Once there is a comprehensive understanding of what information and training needs exist among businesses in the corridor, it will be necessary to seek the assistance of partners who can offer required expertise. Lake County Chamber of Commerce, Waukegan Chamber of Commerce, and the College of Lake County are examples of organizations and institutions that are likely to have programs, initiatives, and other resources that can address most information and training needs in a cost effective manner. Professionals who are willing to provide pro-bono assistance to the community (through a program such as the Taproot Foundation) can be enlisted to help with topics that cannot be covered by existing resources and programs.

Provide opportunities for business owners to discuss shared challenges and lessons learned. In addition, often one of the most effective methods of learning is to have businesses share information about their own experience, especially lessons learned from challenging phases of starting or growing their business. Business owners in the corridor who were interviewed indicated that they have not participated in these discussions in the past, mainly due to a lack of organized opportunities suited to their concerns or work schedule.

Despite the wide variety of business types in the corridor, there are many topics in which the experience and wisdom of one business would be broadly applicable to the challenges faced by other, possibly very different businesses. Similarly, while some businesses may be in competition with each other (such as the corridor's many Mexican restaurants), there are plenty of topics for which they could safely share their experience while strengthening the corridor for all businesses, including their own. These opportunities to share lessons learned from other businesses on the corridor could be paired with more structured training provided by experts.

Take advantage of networking events. Opportunities for discussions among business owners or training opportunities could be paired with existing networking events, such as those targeted at Latino businesses sponsored by the Hispanic Chamber of Lake County. One important benefit of networking events is that a business may find that another business fulfills some need, resulting in a new collaboration that benefits both businesses. These networking events could be supplemented with condensed training topics, such as strategies to improve the appearance of the stores and restaurants, or guided discussion of specific topics, in which participants would be directly asked to identify challenges they face and lessons learned which have helped them to succeed.

Provide a forum for business owners to identify and discuss timely concerns. Some business owners indicated that they wanted a forum in which they could identify and discuss timely concerns or address recent events occurring on the Washington Street corridor. To serve this purpose, the last portion of training or networking events could be devoted to brief discussion of these concerns. For example, store or restaurant owners could inform others of recent problems they may have had with crime or damage to property. Other likely topics might include broken streetlights, severe potholes, or damaged sections of sidewalk. Event organizers could determine whether the topic requires further discussion at a future meeting or if appropriate contacts at the City, police department, Waukegan High School, the County, etc. need to be notified immediately. Regardless of whether follow-up action occurs, it would help to foster the sharing of knowledge among the business owners on the Washington Street corridor (something which may not be happening to a sufficient degree at present).

Alert businesses to new and time-sensitive opportunities for funding. A fundamental impediment for many businesses that wish to grow or improve their business is access to capital. In addition to trainings that inform businesses of the full range of their options, businesses need to be kept up-to-date on new or time-sensitive opportunities, whether from the private sector, government, or non-profit sectors. A prototype initiative could aim to provide a “one stop shop” for this information through quarterly information sessions supplemented by timely notifications by email whenever new or time-sensitive opportunities arise.

Notify businesses of available commercial properties.

Interviews with business owners and nearby residents revealed a prevalent concern about the detrimental effects of vacant commercial properties within the corridor. A 2013 inventory of vacant properties visible from the sidewalk suggested that the actual percentage was lower than popularly believed. However, vacant commercial properties were found on the corridor and were usually easy to spot due to their poor condition.

All business owners seek to acquire a suitable location and space for their business. There is a need to maintain an up-to-date inventory of parcels and commercial spaces, that are vacant. Specific information to gather for opportunity sites in addition to the inventory information includes:

- Property owner and contact information
- Broker (if applicable) and contact information
- Asking lease or purchase price
- Rehab construction needs, such as retrofitting, code requirements, etc.
- Site work needs, such as environmental remediation, grading, etc.
- Zoning constraints
- Time on the market
- Surrounding businesses

Although the market analysis conducted for this plan suggests that there is unlikely to be much demand for new development or redevelopment in the near future, it will be important to begin to identify potential opportunity sites in the corridor, especially any that are located at key nodes or corners along Washington Street. Vacant and underutilized parcels adjacent to each other may also provide an opportunity to assemble larger parcels for development, which are often more attractive to those considering new development.

Figure 3.13. Vacant and occupied buildings and lots along Washington Street



Source: Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning, 2014.

Going forward, when businesses along Washington Street are alerted to new or time-sensitive opportunities for funding, they should also be notified of any available properties within the corridor (including essential information on the property, who to contact, etc.). In addition to reaching potential owners and current business owners who may have a need for a larger — or smaller — commercial property for their business, this would likely help get the word out to others, especially since many business owners have friends or family in the area or the region who may have a need for commercial space. (For more discussion of marketing the Washington Street corridor to potential business tenants, please see Strategy 2.2)

Connect good employees and businesses on the corridor. Many businesses struggle to locate and retain good employees. This challenge can become more acute if owners wish to grow their business. A collaboration between various chambers, the City, service providers focused on employment and workforce development (such as the Lake County Job Center), and the Waukegan School District could support occasional, strategically-timed job fairs. This could be paired with information on workforce development programs that offer specialized vocational training opportunities for job seekers as well as trained graduates ready to work. An ideal time of year would be in the spring, as Waukegan High School students who do not plan to attend college consider their options for employment, vocational training, or both. (See Strategy 4.2 for more discussion of workforce development options.)

Figure 3.14. Little Village neighborhood in Chicago



Photo Credit: Fox News Latino.

Market Washington Street

Already possessing important assets, the Washington Street corridor has the potential to become much more. It needs a multifaceted, coherent marketing campaign — targeted to potential customers and new business tenants — that builds upon the corridor’s core strengths.

Complete a business inventory of the corridor. In order to be able to mount a successful marketing campaign, it will be essential to have a thorough understanding of the current composition of the corridor. A complete inventory of every business within the study area should be carried out, using the business inventory that was conducted for this plan in 2013 as a starting point.

A basic inventory could be prepared by volunteers walking the corridor, relying mostly on observation from the sidewalk (as to business type, etc.), but it would be worthwhile to engage and personally connect with business owners.

Not only would this likely yield information that is more accurate and comprehensive, it would serve to establish an association between the business owner and those conducting the inventory; even more, it could help enlist their support — and possibly their involvement — in organized efforts to improve the corridor. Additionally, it may be more efficient to combine this inventory with a broader business owner survey aimed at discovering challenges and potential training topics, as discussed in Strategy 2.1.

Build upon the corridor’s connection to the Latino community. As discussed in Strategy 1.1, Waukegan and the surrounding area remain diverse, and to significantly expand the customer base for the Washington Street commercial corridor, it would be advisable for its businesses to appeal to a wide variety of potential customers. At the same time, it would be unwise not to build upon one of the Washington Street corridor’s key strengths: its strong connection to the Latino community.

During the community outreach process, it was common for participants to indicate that they considered the corridor to be Waukegan's "Main Street" for the Latino community. Although Latino residents in Waukegan and nearby areas conduct their shopping in a wide variety of areas in and around Waukegan, Washington Street appears to be home to the greatest concentration of businesses catering to the Latino community. This role should be strengthened and enhanced.

Establish the corridor's competitive strengths within Waukegan and Lake County. As part of the full inventory of businesses discussed earlier, a more detailed inventory of businesses catering to the Latino community should be conducted in order to be able to market the strengths of the corridor, as well as determine specific business types that are missing or in short supply. Once complete, the inventory should be compared to other commercial corridors within Waukegan.

In addition, the inventory should be compared to other commercial corridors in Lake County that feature a high number of stores, restaurants, and services catering to the needs of the Latino community. These are likely to include commercial areas in municipalities such as Round Lake Heights and Mundelein. By doing this, the corridor can have a rough assessment of its competitive position. Advertising campaigns targeted to potential Latino customers living and working in the sub-region can be developed and disseminated through Spanish-language newspaper, radio, social media outlets, and a wide variety of other approaches, calling attention to the variety of businesses that are located in close proximity to one another.

Develop Washington Street into a key suburban expansion destination for Chicago's Latino businesses. A market analysis conducted on behalf of this plan (see Appendix B) compared the Washington Street corridor to the retail potential and demographics of the Little Village area of Chicago, a vibrant Latino shopping district around 26th Street located on the southwest side of the city. Little Village is considered Chicago's largest retail district targeted to Latino (primarily Mexican) shoppers. It attracts shoppers from outside of the neighborhood because of the large number and variety of stores. The commercial area in Little Village, centered on 26th Street, has a very large number of businesses and is far more diverse than Washington Street.

While quite different from Little Village, the Washington Street corridor possesses some advantages. For example, although Little Village has a much higher density of persons living within a five-minute drive of 26th Street, median household incomes are significantly higher near the Washington Street corridor, the median age is slightly older, and the average household size is lower than in Little Village. The market analysis noted that these are positive indicators that can be used in marketing the area for additional retail businesses. Similarly, while retail rents are considerably lower along Washington Street than along 26th Street in Little Village, reflecting the fact that the volume of business and overall retail potential is lower, Washington Street's lower rents could offer smaller entrepreneurs an attractive opportunity to open businesses along the corridor.

The market analysis concluded that while Washington Street is not likely to attract anywhere near the number of businesses in Little Village, there are opportunities to attract the same types of businesses. Clothing, miscellaneous retail, personal care, and a broader range of services would be candidates for Washington Street. Potential opportunities include additional ethnic and specialty food stores, convenience stores, independent restaurants including the possibility of a family restaurant, and service businesses primarily targeted to neighborhood residents. The students and staff of the two schools along the corridor can provide support for a convenience store, as well as fast food and quick serve restaurants (such as sandwich shops, pizzerias, etc.). While a full line grocery store is not likely along Washington Street due to shallow lot depths, building configurations, and competition, there is the potential for additional smaller food retailers.

Overall, the market analysis suggested that there is an opportunity to attract more stores to the Washington Street corridor through a concentrated outreach and recruitment effort on the part of the landlords, the business district, and Chambers of Commerce, as well as the City of Waukegan. Stores that are located in Little Village and other larger Latino neighborhoods of Chicago may be candidates to expand in Waukegan and specifically along Washington Street. Among its general economic development recommendations, the market analysis advised working closely with property owners to prepare an inventory of available space, showing the rent, size and configuration of the space, and contact information. Commercial brokers, especially those with experience in Latino areas, should be given a tour of this and other local business districts in the city to show where the opportunities are.

Develop a brand for the segment of the corridor with the most immediate potential.

While business assets are found along the entirety of the corridor, it would be wise to initially focus on drawing attention to the section of the Washington Street corridor located between Jackson Street on the east and Lewis Avenue on the west. This area has an existing concentration of businesses, two middle schools and one high school campus within walking distance of each other, the Robert McClory Bike Trail, and relative proximity to Waukegan’s downtown. Also, the built environment of this section has the greatest potential to foster a commercial district with an identity that is memorable to customers and where they can park once and then shop at multiple businesses. It is relatively walkable with an underused municipal parking lot at the intersection of Washington Street and Butrick Street that could efficiently serve a rise in customers, especially coming from outside the neighborhood.

To further strengthen its identity, local businesses could agree upon an unofficial name and/or slogan for this segment of the corridor, preferably after some visible improvements have occurred. This could help establish a brand for this sub-area (see “Branding the corridor” sidebar). With or without a name or slogan, a simple, memorable logo could be created as well. Any of these branding mechanisms could be used in a variety of ways, including on bilingual wayfinding signage proposed for this segment of the corridor (as explained in Strategy 1.3), as well as in print marketing campaigns advertising the stores, restaurants, services of the area, and special events.

Highlight the best of the Washington Street corridor.

Marketing campaigns should initially highlight businesses on Washington Street that distinguish this corridor from others, such as those that have an excellent selection of different products or that offer products or services that are especially popular. Later marketing campaigns can highlight businesses that are more specialized or which have more limited stock, but it will be important to first highlight and build upon the corridor’s strengths through a campaign that is clear, memorable, and helpful to potential customers. The top priority should be increasing the amount of customers doing business in the corridor, which will help to build an identity for the corridor in the minds of customers.

Branding the corridor

Many communities undertake branding initiatives which allow community stakeholders to work with marketing, design, or public relations professionals to develop a concise visual identity for the commercial district. District brands and marketing efforts help to generate the kind of excitement that will be necessary to bring about change. A brand is the relationship between the customer and the product, and function to help develop loyalty to a specific product, in this case a commercial district. For many urban commercial districts, branding serves not only to keep pace with the competition but also to counteract negative stereotypes. Effective brands should be relevant to the consumer and believable. Therefore, it is important to have a strong market-based vision and have made some progress to signal changes in the district before rolling out a brand initiative.

Often the process of developing these brand materials leads communities to further discuss and refine their vision. Different logo and tagline options can communicate very different ideas about the community. For this reason, it is generally helpful to generate a number of alternatives and engage community members in a process of discussing and refining them. While external marketing professionals can bring fresh ideas to the process and add value, community stakeholders must feel that the promotional identity truly reflects their vision. The result of a branding study might include some or all of the following:

- A logo
- A slogan or tagline for promotional material
- A new name for the district
- A rendering (architectural drawing) of the street “after” revitalization
- A related theme for a signature festival or community event

Comprehensive branding services can be expensive, so it is a good idea to try to access pro bono services, such as the Taproot Foundation, which may be able to help locate branding professionals who will develop a logo and tag line to effectively promote the vision of the commercial district.¹⁶

16. Local Initiatives Support Corporation Center for Commercial Revitalization, *Commercial Revitalization Planning Guide: A Toolkit for Community Based Organizations*, 2009.

Enhance the Image of the Corridor

Summary of existing conditions

As a main gateway into the city, the Washington Street corridor sets an impression of not only the neighborhood but the larger Waukegan community. As one travels along the corridor, the character of the street fluctuates between well-defined commercial areas, with rows of stores and restaurants nestled up to the sidewalk, to stretches where large parking lots and buildings set back from the street predominate, to still other areas where a wide variety of businesses are interspersed with single-family homes.

Many property owners work hard to keep up the appearance and condition of their properties along the corridor while others may not have the resources to do so. While most buildings are in fair to good condition, residents expressed concern that some of the more dated storefronts and vacant buildings have a detrimental effect on the image of the corridor as a whole. Like many commercial corridors in the region, very few street trees are located along Washington Street. There are no sidewalk trash receptacles and business owners and residents identified litter as a problem, particularly in areas frequented by students. While most residents describe the area as safe, there is broad agreement that perceptions about crime and safety in Waukegan have a real impact, including lowering patronage of stores and restaurants along the Washington Street corridor.

Residents and business owners see opportunities to improve the appearance of the street and commercial buildings. Creating a more inviting atmosphere along the street will help attract both nearby residents and visitors, as well as potential new businesses. Presenting a well-maintained street can send signals to passerby that this is a safe and cared for area, combatting perceptions about the City overall. The following strategies offer both short-term and long-term activities to enhance the image of Washington Street.

Increase street trees and landscaping

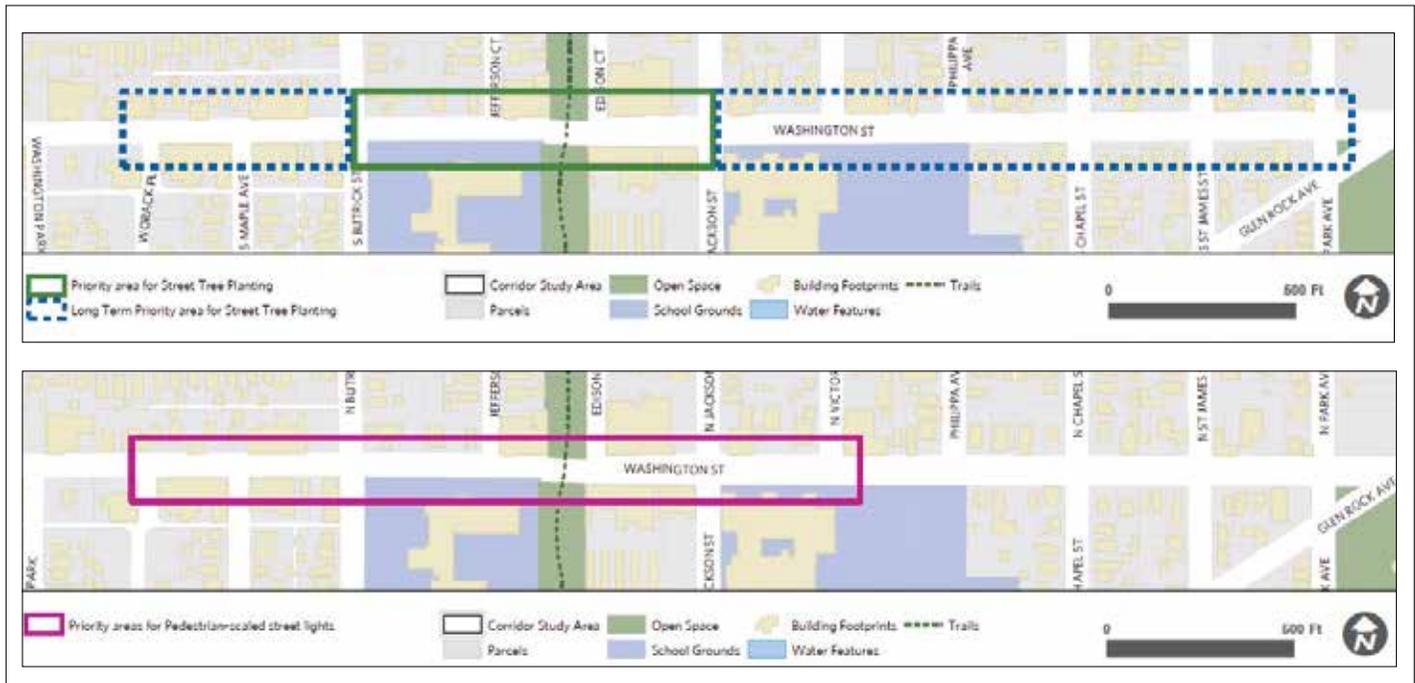
Attractive street trees can play a vital role in the atmosphere of a commercial corridor. In addition to helping manage stormwater and reducing the heat island effect, trees enhance the beauty of streets, which can help entice people to walk along them and spend more time in the area. Street trees have also been shown to increase property values and have been connected with increased retail sales. For example, research has shown that consumers have expressed a willingness to pay 9 percent more in small cities and 12 percent more in large cities for equivalent goods and services in business districts with an urban tree canopy.

In addition, specific initiatives can both focus attention on the corridor and facilitate the process of discovery by new customers. For example, since the corridor is home to a significant number of restaurant establishments, it could be helpful to create a practical guide to the different cuisines currently available along the corridor, making it easy for the uninitiated to try an establishment — and perhaps a cuisine — they had never tried before. Many people are willing to try something they've never eaten before, but they usually need some friendly guidance. This food guide could provide clear explanations of items that people are unfamiliar with and help new customers feel confident about what they are ordering. The annotated guide, made available at businesses along Washington Street as well as online, could highlight three particularly well done dishes or items at each establishment. Given the abundance of establishments serving Mexican food, this inventory could detail the variety of different regional cuisines and dishes that are available on the corridor.

La Conchita Bakery is a good example of a business that could be helped by the guide. Not only could this handy guide inform everyone that La Conchita has great cakes for birthdays and other special occasions (and perhaps one or two other items with universal appeal), the guide could highlight three “must try” bakery items of Mexican origin, with a simple but precise explanation of what each item is.

Host community events and festivals. Community events and festivals can bring neighborhood and city residents out to experience a portion of the city they may have not recently explored. Street festivals and promotional initiatives that publicize local vendors can expose new customers to the goods and services that are currently available on Washington Street. There is also potential for connecting businesses along the corridor with school events, music, and theater performances, as well as sporting events taking place at Weiss Field on Lewis Avenue. Events can also include fundraising efforts to pay for key enhancements along the corridor.

Figure 3.15. Priority areas for street trees and street lighting



Source: Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning, 2014.

This differential can be helpful for local businesses that are often competing with national chains. In fact, green landscaping along shopping corridors may be more important than the aesthetic quality of the commercial buildings. Image preference surveys have shown that depictions of high-quality buildings along shopping streets, once greenery was removed, received scores comparable to those recorded for low-quality physical settings lacking vegetation. In addition, there's growing evidence that increases in the urban tree canopy are associated with decreases in crime—even when controlling for socioeconomic factors like income and housing age. Overall, while street trees do represent an added maintenance expense, they are known to bring larger economic benefits to a commercial street and signal reinvestment.

Currently, large sections of Washington Street lack street trees and other landscaping. There are four mature street trees and three young street trees along this 1.5-mile corridor. While there are trees on private property that provide shade on the sidewalk, the existing conditions do not meet best practices.

Best practice recommends planting street trees on both sides of at least 60 percent of a given street, either at intervals averaging no more than 40 feet

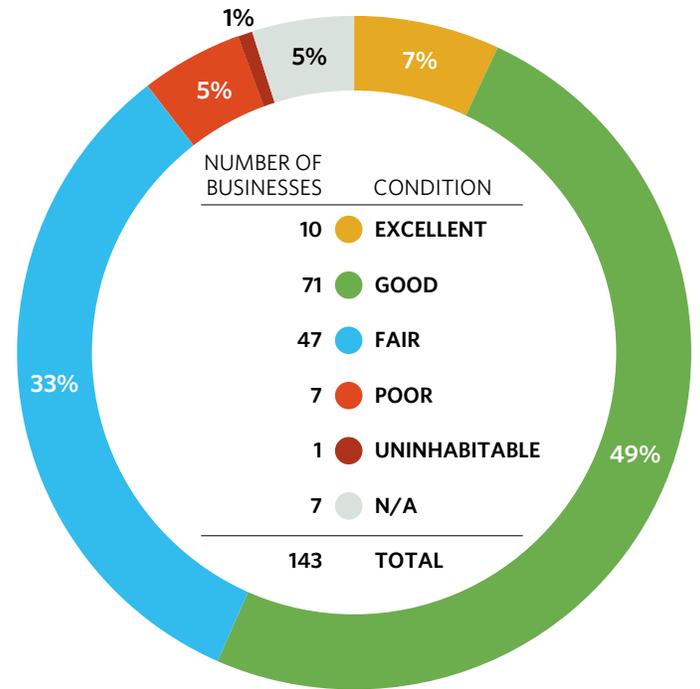
(excluding driveways) or so that street trees provide shade over at least 40 percent of the length of sidewalks. The City of Waukegan has established street tree planting guidelines that call for smaller spacing intervals for smaller trees. There are no sections along Washington Street that achieve either of these two standards. In addition, many areas lack tree wells, or adequate sidewalk space for a tree well, in which to locate a tree. Tree wells should be designed to allow for maximum tree growth, which can also reduce replacement costs over the long term. Costs can be lowered further by using native and adapted tree species, which can reduce the need for irrigation, chemical fertilizers, and chemical pesticides.

Given the upfront expense of adding tree wells and street trees, the City should prioritize the addition of street trees in specific areas along Washington Street and follow best practices for tree placement and planting. Figure 3.15 highlights priority areas for street tree planting due to higher levels of pedestrian traffic and pedestrian-friendly features already present. For example, due to the density of businesses and frequent storefronts in this area, the addition of a street tree can bring benefits to multiple adjacent properties. Street trees will continue to advance the walkability of this core area of the corridor, and over time, the City should expand tree planting efforts outward from this section.

To meet best practices, approximately 45 street trees and tree wells would need to be added to this 0.6-mile section between Washington Park and Jackson Street. Given that most of the sidewalks in the area are not wide enough to support street trees, this strategy should be done in coordination with other right-of-way improvements, as recommended in Strategy 1.3. The Illinois Department of Natural Resource (IDNR) Urban and Community Forestry Assistance Grant program provides financial assistance for the development of local urban and community forestry programs and could be a potential funding source for the City. The City of Waukegan would need to update its tree care and preservation ordinance in order to be eligible for this grant, which requires a 50 percent match and gives a maximum of \$15,000. Lake County Community Development Block Grants (CDBG) can be used for public infrastructure improvements, including planting street trees. To expand tree planting and maintenance efforts, the City may need to hire additional personnel to assist the Public Works Department in taking on further forestry tasks.

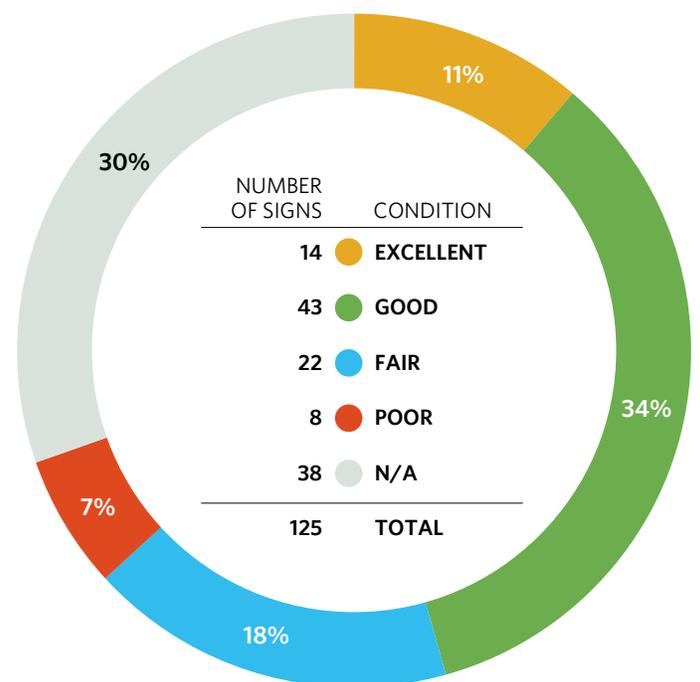
In the interim, the City should work with the Robert Abbott Middle School to plant trees between the sidewalk and the school’s bus-only driveway. This middle school is located directly in between the two main pedestrian-oriented areas of Washington Street — the node at the Jackson Street intersection and the area between Butrick Street and Washington Park. Currently the walk between the two areas is not pleasant; the school is set back from the street and the pedestrian is left feeling exposed. If a visitor is new to the area, especially if they are looking west from the bike trail, they may not realize that there are businesses west of Butrick Street. Street trees lining the sidewalk can help connect the two areas and create a more pedestrian-friendly atmosphere near the school. In addition, the tree planting could include the participation of students. Over the long-term, street trees should be located between the sidewalk and the street; but in the meantime, trees planted in the landscaped area between the sidewalk and the school driveway will make this area more pedestrian-friendly.

Figure 3.16. Building condition of businesses on Washington Street within study area, 2013



Source: Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning, 2013.

Figure 3.17. Sign quality of businesses on Washington Street within study area, 2013



Source: Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning, 2013.

Increase street lighting

Residents expressed concerns about the lack of lighting along particular sections of the corridor. The City should investigate lighting conditions on Washington Street to determine if there are darker sections of the corridor, particularly from the vantage point of a pedestrian on the sidewalk. The existing streetlights are standard cobra head lights and are placed approximately 160 feet apart. Recent signal and lighting improvements to the intersections of Washington Street with Buttrick Avenue and with Jackson Street provide a new design template that should be copied or complemented in future improvements, see Figure 3.25. In addition, the older street lights at Buttrick Avenue are still in place despite the addition of the new utilities/lights. The older lights could be moved to other locations on the corridor to help address areas with currently low levels of street lighting for pedestrians.

As opportunities arise to address locations with low levels of street lighting or as street lights need to be replaced, the City should consider using more pedestrian-scaled lighting to create an inviting atmosphere along the street. Pedestrian-scaled streetlights can provide more even levels of lighting for people using the sidewalk, add visual interest for both pedestrians and drivers, and be used to distinguish the Washington Street corridor from other areas of the city. Waukegan currently uses pedestrian-scaled lighting in the downtown and could use similar lighting fixtures along Washington Street.

Update building façades and signs

While a majority of the commercial buildings along Washington Street are in good condition and are well-maintained by their property owners, there are several buildings that could use façade and sign improvements to make the properties more appealing to potential tenants and customers as well as to improve the appearance of the street. As part of the planning study, the project team conducted an assessment of the condition of all commercial buildings and signs located along Washington Street, see Figures 3.16 and 3.17. As detailed in Strategy 1.1, residents and business owners would like to see the quality of business signs improved as well as more transparent and upgraded windows.

Establish a façade improvement matching grant program.

Maintaining high-quality building façades and business signage is a common problem facing many communities. Some property and business owners may not have the resources to cover the full cost of an upgrade that improves the appearance of a building. Yet visible investments in commercial properties not only improve perceptions of an area, they can also spur improvements to nearby businesses and attract new businesses. Many communities use façade improvement matching grants to leverage private investment in commercial properties and, in many instances, use these grant programs as a business recruitment tool.

The City should develop a façade and sign improvement matching grant program for Washington Street with the explicit goals of beautifying and revitalizing the commercial corridor through permanent improvements to buildings, attracting and retaining businesses, and enhancing the pedestrian-scale streetscape. Established as a rebate program that reimburses participants for a portion of approved activities, a matching grant program will provide an incentive for specific improvements that contribute to the revitalization of Washington Street. The program should designate eligible properties and improvements as well as establish clear design guidelines to ensure that the funded improvements directly improve the physical appearance and sidewalk appeal of the street. Waukegan Main Street runs a façade and sign improvement matching grant program, known as Sign, Lighting, and Awning Program.

Eligible properties could be limited to those with a primary entrance directly on Washington Street, are occupied by an operating business with leases of one year or more, free of liens and legal questions as to the ownership (exempting any mortgage liens), and must have proof of proper zoning and City permits for the improvements. In addition, eligible properties could be limited to those that are older, feature a mix of commercial and residential uses, or have at least two stories. Improvements should be limited to those that are visible from the street and sidewalk and have a positive and permanent impact on the building front appearance. Improvements could include signage, awnings, exterior lighting, window and door replacements, and tuck pointing and masonry repair. In addition, eligible activities could include removal of existing façade materials that detract from the appearance of the building, provided the historic integrity of the building is maintained. In addition, the City should promote the use of bilingual business signage, as recommended in Strategy 1.1.

Establishing a set of design guidelines can help clarify program expectations to property owners and ensure that the funded activities meet a quality threshold. In addition, design guidelines can outline a vision of the street frontage and be used as a reference tool for all business and property owners interested in making upgrades to their storefronts and buildings regardless of their participation in the program. Design guidelines often cover the following areas: storefronts and windows, awnings, signs, wall murals and graphics, sidewalk cafes, parking lots, and historic buildings. For example, the guidelines can emphasize that improvements should maintain or restore the size of the existing window openings, use clear glass, and avoid the use of window signage, graphics, or other materials that obstruct the transparency of the storefront. The design guidelines should be created in cooperation with the existing business owners and could be coordinated by a business association.

The amount of the rebate will depend on available funding. The City could use CDBG funds or partner with local banks to help finance the improvements. If limited funding is available, the City may need to initially focus efforts in strategic locations or limit improvements to signage upgrades only.

Update sign ordinance. At the same time, the City should review the existing sign ordinance to confirm that it is meeting the needs of the district. Signs are an integral part of the character of any commercial area and, to be effective, must call attention to the business and create an identity for the store. Business signs should help pedestrians, bicyclists, and drivers understand the different commercial opportunities that are available nearby along the corridor. They also contribute to the overall image of the street and should add variety and liveliness to both the building facades and the streetscape.

The existing ordinance currently prohibits projecting or swinging signs outside of Waukegan's downtown and lakefront area, yet these signs — when well-designed and attractive — can often provide pedestrians with key information of what is ahead along the sidewalk and create an inviting atmosphere. In addition, the current ordinance allows pole signs, which are more appropriate for auto-oriented development patterns and should not be allowed along this section of Washington Street.

Figure 3.18. Location of recommended enhancements to open space and recreational amenities within study area



Source: Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning, 2014.

Address litter and graffiti in high traffic areas

Business owners would like to see Washington Street cleaned of trash and debris on a more regular basis. While the City regularly sweeps the street of debris, this cannot capture litter on the sidewalks. Trash receptacles can help keep the sidewalk clean, particularly in areas with a high volume of pedestrians. Currently, Washington Street lacks trash receptacles and the City should install trash receptacles in problem areas, especially between Maple Avenue to Victory Street, the section of the corridor located in the immediate vicinity of two middle schools and one high school campus. Regular trash removal from installed trash receptacles could be a function of the existing City Public Works Department or a newly created business association (see Implementation). Once installed by the City, the City and business association could coordinate on trash pick-up. Trash receptacles should be installed without impeding pedestrian travel.

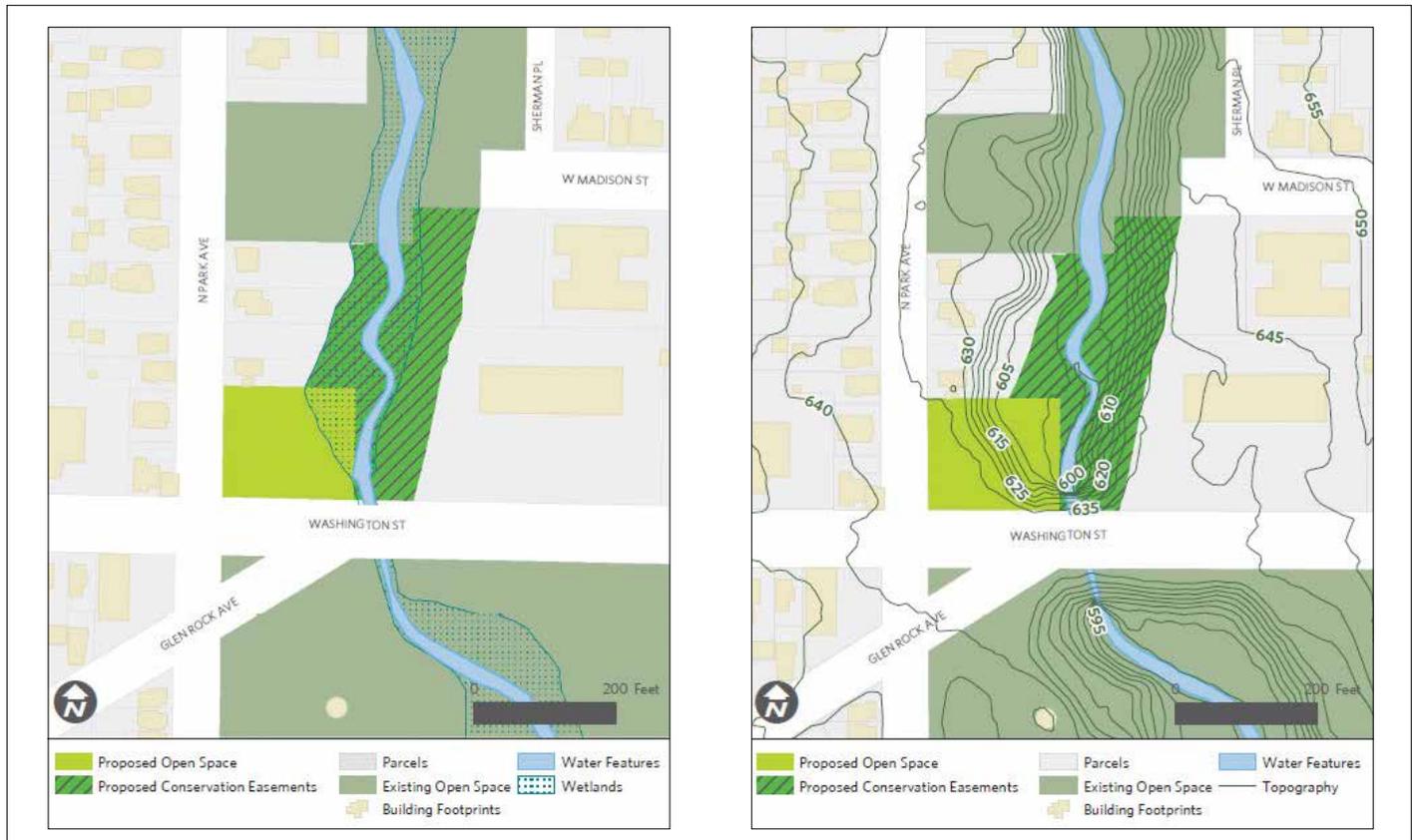
While tackling the issue of litter, the City and business association should also assess any problems with graffiti along the corridor and develop an appropriate strategy for addressing the issue.

Enhance open space and recreational amenities

There are very few public open spaces or gathering spots along Washington Street or within the surrounding neighborhoods. The Waukegan Park District’s 2008-13 Parks and Open Space Master Plan evaluated its existing park system against a best practice threshold of four acres of neighborhood park space per 1,000 residents and identified a need of an additional 45 acres in neighborhood park space for an area that roughly corresponds with the study area for this plan.

Meeting this target will be difficult given the existing residential and commercial land uses in this area. However, there are three opportunities for additional open space that could help the Waukegan Park District’s objective and also contribute to the revitalization of Washington Street. The Waukegan Park District Master Plan outlines a number of funding opportunities, including the IDNR Open Space Lands Acquisition & Development and Land & Water Conservation Program. In addition, the ComEd Green Region Program could be a potential source of funding for conservation, preservation, and improvements to local parks and recreation resources.

Figure 3.19. Proposed open space and conservation easements, wetlands, and topography for Waukegan River ravine at Washington Street and Park Avenue



Source: Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning, 2014.

Figure 3.18 indicates the locations of recommended enhancements to open space and recreational amenities, each of which is discussed in detail below.

Ravine Park at Park Avenue. The Waukegan Park District’s Master Plan recommends creating a unified greenway system along the Waukegan River by working with owners to acquire privately owned sites as they become available or by using conservation easements. This type of greenway system along the Waukegan River was also recommended in the Open Space Implementation Strategy for the Lakefront-Downtown Master Plan as well as the 2007 Waukegan River Watershed Plan.

The vacant parcel on the northeast corner of North Park Avenue and Washington Street should be transformed into a gateway point to this greenway system north of Washington Street. This park could include the restoration of the ravine and feature recreational park amenities such as playground equipment on the western portion of the site. Over the long term, the City and/or Waukegan Park District could pursue conservation easements for the wetland areas within the four residential properties between this corner parcel and Ray Bradbury Park to the north, see Figure 3.19.

While the Park District has established a minimum size of four acres for a neighborhood park, this proposed greenway park site is within close proximity to Washington Park and Ray Bradbury Park and could be connected to these larger parks via conservation easements. The Waukegan Park District’s Master Plan identifies a number of funding strategies, including the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative which has funded other restoration efforts within Waukegan.

Robert McClory Garden and Square. The Robert McClory Bike Path has the potential to be a significant asset along Washington Street, yet its current form results in infrequent use. As discussed in Strategy 1.3, residents discussed real or perceived safety threats along the trail that lead them to avoid using the trail. This could be partially due to the lack of entrances, windows, and general activity emanating from the adjacent buildings along the trail. The landscape of the trail right-of-of-way itself is barren with infrequent trees or plantings. Electrical utility lines function as its most prominent feature.

Figure 3.20. Existing conditions and proposed enhancements for Robert McClory Bike Path at Washington Street



Source: Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning, 2014.



Located at roughly the center of the study area, the Robert McClory Bike Path and its associated public space could be transformed into a central gathering point along Washington Street. By activating the portion of the trail right-of-way near Washington Street, Waukegan can create a node of activity and provide more usable park space for residents. Figure 3.20 provides a vision for how this area can be transformed with the following changes.

Promote community gardens. Community gardens could be a great way to bring people to the trail on a regular basis, which in turn can generate the sustained activity to combat real or perceived safety concerns regarding the Robert McClory Bike Path. A set of community gardens can also generate visual interest and a sense of place along this linear trail, making it more interesting for people opportunities.

Enhance park space. In addition to individual garden plots, a more open park-like setting should be created nearby so that people not actively engaged in gardening can utilize this space and enjoy the view of the gardens. These improvements could include playground equipment and park benches in addition to trees and landscaping. Improvements to this area should not interfere with the use of the trail itself, but instead should be designed to complement the bike trail and promote its use. The design of the park should also signal to users of the regional trail that they have entered a special spot when they arrive at Washington Street.

Create a parking plan along the trail. There are a number of areas currently being used for vehicle parking within the Robert McClory Bike Path right-of-way. LCDOT currently leases space for parking to private individuals; however, portions of the right-of-way are being used for parking without explicit permission, see diagram in Figure 3.20. This is likely due to the lack of a street curb along the western side of Edison Court.

Working with LCDOT, the City should discourage the use of this area for parking so that it can be used as a public open space. This could be done by not renewing the existing leases when they expire and enforcing no parking rules in areas without an active lease. The City should add a street curb to the western side of Edison Court and work with LCDOT on landscaping the former parking area. Strategy 1.4 outlines a number of ways to make better use of existing parking — specifically by increasing on-street parking and promoting shared parking — which will help accommodate people who are currently using this area to park. The diagram in Figure 3.20 illustrates how the parking areas should be reutilized.

Vista West Medical Center Conservation Area. The Waukegan Park District's Master Plan identified 15 acres of the Vista West Medical Center as a priority location for a conservation park, given the existing tree grove and wetland on the parcel, see Figure 3.21. The creation of new park space would help provide more open space for nearby residents on this side of the Washington Street corridor. Working in cooperation with the Vista West Medical Center, the Park District could acquire portions of this property or work out a conservation easement. Portions of the wetland have been altered over the years; ideally the wetland could be restored and expanded. Further investigation is needed to determine if this is feasible.

Figure 3.21. Proposed open space for Vista West Medical Center



Source: Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning, 2014.

Engage Youth and Prepare Them for the Future

Summary of existing conditions

The Washington Street study area is home to three schools: Robert Abbott Middle School, Miguel Juarez Middle School, and the Waukegan High School Washington Campus. The presence of almost 3,000 middle and high school students enlivens Washington Street and contributes to the economic activity of many businesses along the corridor. Both students and business owners recognize that there are not enough productive or recreational activities for students to engage in after school. Students identified a couple of businesses they frequent after school along Washington Street but generally feel there are few places to hang out with their friends. Most business owners reported that they like having the students in the area as they receive a fair amount of businesses from them on their way to and from school. However, business owners and residents have also observed vandalism and other disruptive activities by students and attribute this behavior to a lack of recreational activities as well as a lack of opportunities over the long term.

Residents and community leaders expressed concern over the quality of education received at the schools and the low percentage of students pursuing college degrees or skill training programs. All three schools are on the Academic Watch Status through the State of Illinois, and only 23.8 percent of Waukegan High School students are meeting and exceeding standards in reading and mathematics. Currently, 70.3 percent of Waukegan residents have obtained a high school diploma, and 17.3 percent go on to pursue a Bachelor's degree or higher levels of education. While these educational attainment levels have been increasing in Waukegan over recent years, they are still below levels seen for Lake County as a whole. In addition, Waukegan has an unemployment rate of 11.4 percent, which is higher than the corresponding figure for Lake County (8.8 percent) or for the Chicago region (10.5 percent). Among industry sectors, a large portion of Waukegan residents are employed in manufacturing, and this is particularly true of residents within the Washington Street study area.

Stakeholders identified a need for activities, training, and other opportunities so that students can gain work experience and build the skills needed for stable jobs. The following strategies outline steps for enhancing the educational opportunities outside of school and connecting young adults to workforce training programs.

Enhance educational opportunities outside of school

With the concentration of schools located nearby, there is both a need and an opportunity for more afterschool activities for middle and high school students in the Washington Street corridor.

YOUmedia / Learning Lab model. YOUmedia Chicago, an innovative learning center at the Harold Washington Library Center in downtown Chicago, attracts high school-aged teens who want a safe and welcoming place to hang out and socialize, as well as those with established or nascent interests in both digital and traditional media. With the guidance of staff mentors and the synergy of peer involvement, participants discover and pursue their interests through both collaborative and solitary activities, such as blogging, writing and sharing poetry, playing and reviewing electronic games, producing music and videos, and participating in book clubs. Special events open the door for youth to collaborate with and learn from recognized artists, authors, and experts.

The YOUmedia model is the result of comprehensive research, design, planning, and ongoing evaluation. The model, which can be adapted according to available resources and scope, has been replicated in 24 "learning laboratories" across the country in an initiative led by the Urban Libraries Council and the Association of Science-Technology Centers, with funding provided by the Institute of Museum and Library Services and the MacArthur Foundation. The initiative's "YOUmedia Network" website (<http://youmedia.org>) provides extensive resources for communities interested in creating a learning lab, including a toolkit that guides them through all steps:

- Getting Started
- Physical Space
- Online Space
- Programs
- Staffing
- Research
- Operations
- Documentation and Evaluation

There are vacant storefronts on the corridor that could accommodate such an activity center for teenage students from nearby Abbott and Juarez middle schools and the Waukegan High School Washington Campus. The creation of an activity center that successfully follows the YOUmedia model would require considerable resources but would likely have multiple benefits for the corridor. Not only would it fill a void for local students (many of whom are nearby residents as well), it would fill a vacant storefront that is probably an unattractive presence on the corridor, establishing a new center of community activity in its place.

Most “learning laboratories” have been created by libraries. The Waukegan Public Library, which has a distinguished record of service and innovation, would be well-suited to the challenge of developing one for the Washington Street corridor. The library was recognized for its innovation and dedication to the community in 2013 when it was one of only 10 institutions to receive the prestigious National Medal for Museum and Library Service from the Institute of Museum and Library Services.

While the Waukegan Public Library would appear to be ideally suited to develop a learning laboratory for the Washington Street corridor, there are other options. Discussions with individuals involved in the creation and expansion of the YOUmedia model stress that a wide range of sponsors and partners that may exist in the Waukegan area should be considered; examples in other communities include a wide range of community organizations such as the Boys and Girls Clubs, as well as school districts, park districts, local colleges and universities, museums, and even local corporations.

In addition to these potential sponsors and partners, this initiative would also appear to align with the grant making goals and priorities of the Lake County Community Foundation, an affiliate of the Chicago Community Trust, based in downtown Waukegan. (Information on the Foundation’s annual grant cycle is available at <http://www.lakecountycf.org/apply/home>.)

Figure 3.23. YOUmedia Chicago



Figure 3.22. YOUmedia Chicago



Other potential models. Other models could be pursued to provide young people with educational activities. For example:

Chicago’s West Town Bikes offers bicycle maintenance classes, teen internships, and earn-a-bike programs to participating students after school, with a focus on under-served populations in the Humboldt Park neighborhood. A similar initiative could be pursued in Waukegan, led by a local organization such as the Waukegan Bike Project, perhaps in collaboration with one or more of the schools in the vicinity. A currently vacant storefront located in the corridor could serve as a temporary space for the program’s bicycle maintenance classes and other activities. Such a program would provide young people with educational training, even professional skills, while also serving to draw attention to and encourage bicycling among the youth of the area.

Another model is the **Chicago Botanic Garden’s Green Youth Farm**, which is an agriculture-based youth development program that offers students the opportunity to learn all aspects of sustainable farming, from seed to market. Participants across the sites grow fresh produce, herbs and flowers, sell produce at community farm stands, and present healthy cooking demonstrations at Women Infants and Children offices, all as part of a motivated team dedicated to sustainable food systems and healthy eating. Students are paid a stipend to work on the farms from May through October, all the while learning valuable job skills, teamwork, growing a support system and discovering a new way to look at the food they eat. In addition to three sites in Chicago, Green Youth Farm currently has programming at a Junior Green Youth Farm located at the Roberti Community House in Waukegan, as well as a one-acre site in nearby North Chicago.

Access to local fresh food is limited within the Washington Street corridor. A program following this model could provide valuable training and education to young people while also increasing awareness of—and access to—fresh, healthy food for the entire community. In addition, a partnership could be developed with any of the relatively high number of restaurants located along the corridor or elsewhere in Waukegan.

There are several locations along or near Washington Street that could potentially support such activity during warm weather months or possibly year round using hydroponic methods. A program could also be coupled the community gardens located near the corridor’s intersection with the Robert McClory Bike Path, as proposed elsewhere in the plan.



Enhance workforce training opportunities for young adults

Too many young adults in Waukegan enter the workforce with little work experience and few marketable skills. Meanwhile, a wide variety of businesses and organizations exists along Washington Street, potentially offering a wide variety of internship, work study, and apprenticeship opportunities in fields such as healthcare, hospitality and culinary arts, early childhood education, social services, and automotive care. In addition, the College of Lake County will begin construction in 2015 on a major expansion and renovation of its Lakeshore campus in downtown Waukegan, which will support an expanded curriculum that is likely to focus on healthcare and hospitality/culinary arts.

Develop a partnership to help grow the next generation of workers and entrepreneurs. A partnership should be developed between Waukegan Community Unit School District #60, the College of Lake County, the Lake County Chamber of Commerce (particularly its members who are involved in the Hispanic Chamber), the Waukegan Chamber of Commerce, and businesses along the corridor to connect students and young adults with training and work opportunities with the objective of helping grow the next generation of workers and entrepreneurs. The immediate focus should be on identifying Waukegan High School students who would be well suited to career training opportunities at the expanded College of Lake County and other nearby locations.

This partnership should consider the model of Instituto del Progreso Latino, which has provided a bridge and a career pathway, providing lower skilled adults with the opportunity to attain crucial post-secondary education and family-sustaining levels of employment (see profile). Especially given the demographics of the corridor and Waukegan High School, the partnership should consult with Instituto to benefit from their experience and wisdom.

Ultimately, while the priority should be to connect Waukegan's young adults with training opportunities and the best internship, work study, or apprenticeship opportunities available (wherever they occur), this initiative also fits well within the goals and strategies for Washington Street contained in this plan. Maintaining a current inventory of businesses along the corridor will enable this partnership to identify potential opportunities for student placement.

In addition to providing good on-the-job training opportunities for students and trained individuals for businesses along the corridor, this initiative has the potential to increase the number of people in the corridor overall and strengthen connections between the corridor and the institutions of Waukegan's downtown.

Instituto del Progreso Latino

Instituto del Progreso Latino was founded in 1977 to help Latino immigrants learn English, find employment, and in general adjust to life and prosper in the Chicago region. Workforce development has been a focus of Instituto for decades. Early on, it observed both the demand for skilled positions in manufacturing and the concentrated participation of the local Latino population in lower-skilled manufacturing positions.

As a result of its ongoing focus on workforce development and industry analysis, Instituto discovered the ever-growing demand for licensed bilingual healthcare professionals, as well as the low participation of Latinos in these positions. Building upon its existing model, linking high schools and adult education with a community college offering needed post-secondary training, Instituto reached out to Wilbur Wright College, which was very interested in increasing local Latino participation in its health science programs. Together, representatives from Instituto, Wright College, and other key partners mapped out the primary career paths in the healthcare industry and then identified the roles of each member of a new partnership that would ultimately launch the Carreras en Salud program in 2005.

This bridge program offers English classes and a 16-week preparation course in language and math for the healthcare field and prepares students for admission to Wright College's rigorous Licensed Practical Nurse (LPN) program. Wright College reserves 35 spaces for Carreras students, offering additional mentoring as well as financial aid for students who may be forced to cut back working hours in order to be able to attend necessary classes. Since its implementation in 2005, over 350 have completed the program and attained their LPN, while over 400 other students have completed the training to become a Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA), and over 40 have completed and received their Registered Nurse (RN) degree.



Chapter 4

Implementation

This commercial corridor plan offers a new vision for Washington Street, aimed at creating a framework of collaboration and system of support for its businesses, improving its function, and increasing its appeal, especially to potential customers and new businesses. Its successful implementation will require not only new priorities but new leadership, which assumes responsibility for the completion of its recommendations. This will demand a concerted effort by the City of Waukegan, area partners, and the corridor's business owners.

Create a framework for collaboration and system of support

The fundamental challenge to the implementation of the recommendations in this plan is the current absence of City staff or an organization that can lead the effort. The City of Waukegan currently does not have an economic development coordinator on staff. In recent years and at present, the City of Waukegan has chosen to retain the services of economic development consultants, whose work has generally focused on Waukegan's downtown and lakefront areas. Waukegan Main Street is focused on the revitalization of Waukegan's downtown, where it is working to implement the Main Street approach, a four point strategy developed by the National Trust for Historic Preservation. The Waukegan Chamber of Commerce serves the entire city but currently has few members from the Washington Street corridor.

The following recommended steps are aimed at creating a framework for collaboration and a system of support that is needed to facilitate implementation of the other recommendations in this plan.

Enlist area partners to provide technical assistance for the Washington Street corridor

Taking advantage of existing resources will be essential given the limited capacity of busy small business owners and City staff. The implementation of recommendations for physical improvements will largely be carried out by the City, working with appropriate partners from local government, such as the Lake County Department of Transportation (LCDOT) or Waukegan Park District. To successfully implement the majority of this plan's recommendations, which are focused on the economic revitalization of the corridor, either an active Washington Street corridor business association will need to be formed or the City of Waukegan will need to hire an economic development coordinator who can lead the implementation process (ideally, both would occur). In the meantime, the assistance of area nonprofit partners will be vital to getting things started.

A number of area partners possess needed capabilities, such as technical expertise, links to a wider network of contacts, or connections to the community. For example, not only can the Lake County Chamber of Commerce help organize training opportunities for business owners, its affiliate Hispanic Chamber already has experience holding networking events for Latino business owners around Lake County. The College of Lake County has a bilingual small business development center that could be very effective in helping businesses in the corridor, most of which are owned by persons who speak little English. The Coalición Latinos Unidos de Lake County, also known as the Latino Coalition, was founded in 1994 by a group of Latino professionals and has as its mission to improve the quality of life of the Latino community through education, professional networking, and accessibility of services.

Convene a meeting of potential community partners. The planning process involved discussions with representatives of many organizations interested in helping with the revitalization of the Washington Street corridor. In preparation for the implementation phase of the plan, the Mayor should convene a meeting of potential area partners to explain plan objectives and identify existing resources that can be applied to the implementation of its recommendations. The primary goal of this meeting should be to secure the commitment of partners to play an active role in the implementation process, beginning with the creation of a Washington Street corridor business association.

Create a corridor business association

Formally engaging merchants and other business owners will be an essential first step in the commercial revitalization of the Washington Street corridor. This will entail strategic planning, outreach, and organizing efforts in the creation of a new corridor business association.

A corridor business association is needed to oversee the implementation of most of the recommendations in this plan, working in collaboration with the City of Waukegan and regional partners. Funding will be required to implement some of the recommendations in this plan, but for all, the essential resource is leadership. The City of Waukegan has very limited staff resources at present that can be dedicated to the implementation of the plan, which will likely require an intimate firsthand knowledge of the corridor and steady focus on implementing the variety of recommendations targeted at this specific commercial district.

For the corridor to improve, Washington Street's business owners will have to join in and work collaboratively to implement the plan's recommendations. In some commercial districts, business associations and similar organizations are able to hire staff to lead and manage operations and initiatives. While that might be possible for the Washington Street commercial corridor at some point in the future, it is unlikely to happen in the near term. Therefore, the activities and success of the new association are likely to be based on the voluntary involvement and leadership of its members.

Work with partners to explore options for forming a new association. At present, it is unlikely that a business owner — or small group of business owners — from the Washington Street corridor would be comfortable assuming responsibility for initiating and establishing a new business association on their own, although the Steering Committee for this plan included several key business owners from the corridor who may choose to assume leadership roles in the future.

The mayor, in partnership with the Waukegan Chamber of Commerce and the Lake County Chamber of Commerce, should initiate a meeting with the business owners who served on the plan Steering Committee. The leadership of the Hispanic Chamber, an affiliate of the Lake County Chamber of Commerce, should play a central role in the meeting. Other important participants could include Planning and Zoning Commission member Porfirio Garcia, City Collector Jorge Torres, and former Kenosha Mayor John Antaramian, who is currently serving as an economic development consultant for Waukegan.

The objective should be to form a working group that will review and prioritize the recommendations in the plan and develop a proposal for the creation and organization of the new corridor business association. This working group may want to invite a lead representative from another merchants association (preferably one that resembles what is achievable for the Washington Street corridor) to talk about their strategy, accomplishments, and lessons learned.

Establish the corridor business association. This working group should next report back to the larger group which, once consensus is reached on an initial strategy and next steps, should hold a meeting targeted at Washington Street's business owners but open to the community. In addition to explaining and discussing the initiative, this meeting should establish the leadership or steering committee for the corridor business association, define its fundamental mission and by laws, and plan its regular meeting schedule.

The first regular meeting of the new business association should revisit the working group's initial prioritization of the recommendations in the plan, map out a preliminary timeline, and identify next actions. In addition to implementation of the plan's recommendations, at later meetings the association may choose to refine its mission, bylaws, and strategic plan.

In line with many of the recommendations in this plan, the new corridor business association should develop a consistent means of communication with all businesses along Washington Street, as well as the Mayor's office, City departments (especially community development and police), and partners including the Waukegan Chamber of Commerce, Lake County Chamber of Commerce, and the Hispanic Chamber. Chamber meetings should always serve as an established forum for any business owner to identify and discuss timely concerns or address recent events occurring on the Washington Street corridor.

Hiring a staff person would expand the capacity of the corridor business association and likely accelerate implementation of this plan's recommendations. Given the limited resources of many of the corridor's small business owners, funding from the City or local philanthropic sources, which could support a staff person whose time is divided between the corridor business association and an allied organization in the area may be necessary.

Improve City economic development efforts

Nurturing local small businesses is an essential component of a city's economic development strategy. At present, the City of Waukegan does not have an economic development coordinator on staff.

If the City chooses to hire an economic development coordinator in the future, this individual could lead implementation of most recommendations in this plan. In recent years and at present, the City of Waukegan has chosen to retain the services of economic development consultants whose work has generally focused on Waukegan's downtown and lakefront areas. Therefore, this plan assumes that the proposed Washington Street corridor business association will need to be created — with assistance from the City and local organizations such as the Lake County Chamber of Commerce — to assume that leadership role.

The market analysis conducted for this plan (see Appendices) underscored the need for a staff person dedicated to coordinating economic development and business outreach on Washington Street and other key neighborhood commercial areas, providing support to existing businesses, and helping new enterprises navigate the City's policies and resources.

The market analysis suggested that this economic development coordinator could be funded jointly by the City, local business organizations, and banks. The analysis recommended the following as priorities to be addressed:

- Work with the Waukegan Chamber of Commerce, Lake County Chamber of Commerce, and other local business associations to target this area.
- Work with business and property owners along Washington Street to create a vacant storefront and building inventory, with comprehensive and up-to-date inventory of available space, showing the rent, size, and configuration of the spaces, along with contact information.
- Look at other retail areas such as the City of Chicago's Little Village neighborhood for opportunities to attract retailers to Waukegan.
- Involve commercial brokers especially those with experience in Latino areas. This outreach is one of the functions of an economic development staff person. Brokers should be given a tour of this and other local business districts in the city to see where the opportunities are. It is critical that local landlords are also involved in the effort to educate brokers about their properties.
- Involve local banks, especially with regard to financing improvements to buildings and financing for new businesses. Some communities have worked with banks to provide a low interest rate revolving loan pool for this purpose.
- Look at the possibility of façade and signage programs with funding through local banks and CDBG funds.
- Be proactive to identify properties in need of improvement and work with owners to upgrade or redevelop appropriate sites along the corridor.
- Update the City's website to include information on business development efforts and current contact names.

The economic development coordinator recommended by the market analysis could work closely with the new Washington Street corridor business association proposed in this plan. This initial focus on the Washington Street commercial corridor could serve as a pilot project that would help define the role of the City's economic development and outreach efforts in other key neighborhood commercial areas in the future.

Priority Strategies

Recommendation Area 1: Broaden the customer base
1.1 Break down language and cultural barriers
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Increase bilingual business signage by encouraging individual businesses to update signs. ▪ Encourage transparency of business front windows by enforcing the existing city ordinance and providing assistance to businesses in presentation techniques.
1.2 Identify and fill gaps in goods and services
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Conduct community surveys to understand the unmet needs of Washington Street’s current and potential customers.
1.3 Support pedestrians, bicyclists, and transit riders
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Add crosswalks and shorten crossing distances in key locations along the corridor. ▪ Widen sidewalks or add curb extensions between Burton Avenue and the Robert McClory Bike Path. ▪ Strengthen local bicycle facilities by adding a bicycle lane east of the Robert McClory Bike Path, bicycle parking, business wayfinding signage from the trail, and promoting walking and bicycling to Waukegan schools. ▪ Enhance Pace bus service and stops by adding benches, bus shelters, and bus bulbs in key locations.
1.4 Utilize existing parking
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Extend on-street parking to additional areas of the corridor. ▪ Promote the use of existing off-street parking by adding signage to the existing city lot. ▪ Promote shared parking to make the most efficient use of existing parking lots. ▪ Update parking requirements to reflect the mixed-use, pedestrian-oriented pattern of Washington Street
1.5 Establish a consistent lane structure
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ During regular street maintenance or resurfacing, re-stripe Washington Street to extend the center turning lane east and add on-street parking.

Recommendation Area 2: Build on the corridor’s identity and strengths
2.1 Enhance business capacity to grow the corridor
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Provide practical training and information to help business owners grow their businesses.
2.2 Market Washington Street
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Complete a business inventory of the corridor to develop a comprehensive list of Washington Street’s assets for future marketing. ▪ Build on the corridor’s connection to the Latino community to market the area to new customers from the sub-region and Latino businesses in Chicago wishing to expand to the suburbs. ▪ Develop a brand for the segment of the corridor with the most immediate potential. ▪ Highlight the best of the Washington Street corridor by creating useful printed and online guides for visitors. ▪ Host community events and festivals to bring residents out to experience Washington Street.

Recommendation Area 3: Enhance the image of the corridor
3.1 Increase street trees and landscaping
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Prioritize the addition of street trees in key areas along Washington Street.
3.2 Increase street lighting
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Investigate lighting conditions to determine if there are low-light areas and consider the addition of pedestrian-scaled streetlights in key locations.
3.3 Update building façades and signs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Establish a façade improvement matching grant program to assist businesses owners as they update their façades and signs.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Update sign ordinance to accommodate pedestrian-oriented signs.
3.4 Address litter in high traffic areas
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Add trash receptacles to address litter on sidewalks.
3.5 Enhance open space and recreational amenities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Extend open space along the Waukegan River by acquiring land and establishing easements near the ravine and Park Avenue.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Transform the entry to the Robert McClory Bike Path by establishing community gardens and enhancing existing park space.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Conserve tree grove and wetlands at the Vista West Medical Center.

Recommendation Area 4: Engage youth and prepare them for the future
4.1 Enhance educational opportunities outside of school
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Explore options for a new youth activity center located in an existing vacant storefront near the three schools.
4.2 Enhance workforce training opportunities for young adults
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Develop a partnership to help grow the next generation of workers and entrepreneurs.

Financing the Plan

Grants

The City of Waukegan and community organizations should look for these funding sources as they work to implement the plan. The following alphabetical list of grant programs could potentially fund many of the projects outlined in the plan.

Bike Path Grant Program, Illinois Department of Natural Resources. Provides grants for the creation of bike trails. The program also prioritizes projects that involve land acquisition, tie into a trail network, provide a linear trail connection, are identified in bikeway plans, provide quality bike facilities, have minimal adverse impact, are new facilities, are scenic, demonstrate maintenance capacity, and have not received other federal/state funding. The program's matching funds are not to exceed 50 percent of the required local match or \$200,000 per successful application. The applications for the funding cycle are due on March 1 of each year. Program information available at: <http://dnr.state.il.us/ocd/newbike2.htm>.

ComEd Green Regions Program, ComEd and Openlands. Supports municipal efforts to plan for, protect, and improve open land in ComEd's service area of northern Illinois. Grants up to \$10,000 can be used to support existing open space projects that focus on conservation, preservation, and improvements to local parks and recreation resources. Program information available at: <http://www.openlands.org/greenregion>.

Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Program. CMAQ is a biannual program administered by the CMAP that funds transportation facilities and programs. CMAP considers the implementation of GO TO 2040 in its program development process. Program information available at: www.cmap.illinois.gov/mobility/strategic-investment/cmaq.

Farmers' Market Promotion Program, U.S. Department of Agriculture. Offers grants to help improve and expand domestic farmers' markets, including marketing, signage, and vendor equipment. Local governments and nonprofit organizations are eligible. Program information available at: www.ams.usda.gov/AMSV1.0/FMPP.

Home Depot Community Impact Grants Program, Home Depot. Supports nonprofit organizations and public service agencies that are using volunteers to improve the physical health of their community. Grants up to \$5,000 are given in the form of gift cards for the purchase of tools, materials, or services. Program information available at: <http://homedepotfoundation.org/page/applying-for-a-grant>.

Illinois Green Infrastructure Grant Program for Stormwater Management, Illinois Environmental Protection Agency. Provides funding to local units of government and other organizations to implement green infrastructure best management practices to control stormwater runoff for water quality protection in Illinois. Projects must be located within a Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System or Combined Sewer Overflow area. Funds are limited to the implementation of projects to install best management practices. Under the Green Infrastructure Small Projects Category, projects require a local match of 25 percent. Program information available at: www.epa.state.il.us/water/financial-assistance/igig.html.

Illinois Clean Energy Community Foundation. Supports nonprofit organizations and local governments in their efforts to reduce energy consumption in buildings. In 2013, the foundation will continue to support lighting upgrades in Community Centers. Historic buildings prioritized. Program information available at: www.IllinoisCleanEnergy.org.

Lake County Community Foundation. The Lake County Community Foundation, an affiliate of the Chicago Community Trust, asserts that the quality of life of Lake County can be improved through an earnest effort to bring organizations, government, businesses, corporations and civic leaders together to establish a common vision, adopt a shared set of measurable goals and pursue evidence-based activities that reinforce one another's goals as a means of addressing the most pressing needs of our community. Program information available at: <http://www.lakecountycf.org/apply/home>.

The Foundation's grant making is a highly competitive process. With an emphasis on being both proactive to opportunities in the community that advance its mission and responsive to urgent needs, the Foundation will focus on making measurable impact on high priority issues with its limited available funding and additional resources.

The Foundation envisions a county-wide health and human services delivery system that is robust and thriving with a network of providers capable of achieving the greatest impact on the urgent needs of the most vulnerable residents of the county. With an emphasis on partnership and collaboration and using innovation and organizational strength as its compass, the system will foster transformational change in communities across the county.

Grant Priorities

Grant making in pursuit of the Foundation's mission and vision will encompass a new strategic focus on quality of life indicators as articulated in GO TO 2040, along with several program areas that have traditionally received funding. The Foundation seeks to advance four overarching priorities for Lake County:

- Livable Communities
- Human Capital
- Efficient Governance
- Regional Mobility

Our Town Grants, National Endowment for the Arts.

Organizations may apply for creative placemaking projects that contribute to the livability of communities and place the arts at their core. An organization may request a grant amount from \$25,000 to \$200,000. Program information available at: www.arts.gov/grants/apply/OurTown/index.html.

PNC Foundation Grant Program. The PNC Foundation's priority is to form partnerships with community-based nonprofit organizations within the markets PNC serves (which includes Waukegan). One of its two primary missions is to promote the growth of targeted communities through economic development initiatives. Economic development organizations, including those which enhance the quality of life through neighborhood revitalization, cultural enrichment, and human services, are given support. Priority is given to community development initiatives that strategically promote the growth of targeted low-and moderate-income communities and/or provide services to these communities.

Program information: http://www1.pnc.com/pncfoundation/foundation_overview.html

Community Development

Because small businesses are often critical components of community growth and help foster business development, the PNC Foundation provides support to nonprofit organizations that (i) offer technical assistance to, or loan programs for, small businesses located in low-and moderate-income areas or (ii) support small businesses that employ low-and moderate-income individuals.

Community Services

Support is given to social services organizations that benefit the health, education, quality of life or provide essential services for low-and moderate-income individuals and families. The PNC Foundation supports job training programs and organizations that provide essential services for their families. PNC provides support for early learning and educational enrichment programs for children in low-and moderate-income families as well as for the construction of community facilities that benefit low-and moderate-income communities.

Revitalization and Stabilization of Low-and Moderate-Income Areas

The PNC Foundation supports nonprofit organizations that serve low-and moderate-income neighborhoods by improving living and working conditions. Support is given to organizations that help stabilize communities, eliminate blight and attract and retain businesses and residents to the community.

Arts and Culture

Support is given for cultural enrichment programs benefitting the community.

Surface Transportation Program, Lake County Council of Mayors. Assists municipalities with local surface transportation improvements. Programmed annually, STP can be used for constructing pedestrian facilities, off-street multi-use trails, and bicycle parking, and typically funds up to 70 percent of the project costs. Program information: <http://www.lakecountyil.gov/transportation/Pages/default.aspx>.

Toolbox for Education, Lowe’s Charitable and Educational Foundation. Supports school improvements including facility upgrades that have included community gardens. Grants are typically \$2,000 to \$5,000, but critical need projects could be funded at a higher level. Program information: <http://responsibility.lowes.com/community-relations/lowes-grant-programs/?pageType=cr>

Transportation Alternatives Program. With the passage of Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century (MAP-21), Congress created the new Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) to support non-motorized transportation. TAP replaces the funding from several pre-MAP-21 programs including Transportation Enhancements, Safe Routes to Schools (SRTS) and Recreation Trails programs wrapping them into one. TAP also gave Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) with populations over 200,000 the responsibility to program part of each state’s apportionment under TAP. CMAP uses a competitive process to select projects to fund under this program. Illinois Department of Transportation will continue to program the state allocation of TAP funding through their established ITEP and SRTS programs and IDNR will still program the Recreational Trails program. Program information available at: CMAP TAP, <http://www.cmap.illinois.gov/mobility/strategic-investment/transportation-alternatives>, IDOT ITEP, <http://www.dot.state.il.us/opp/itep.html>, IDOT SRTS, <http://www.dot.gov/saferoutes/saferouteshome.aspx>, IDNR Recreational Trails, <https://dnr.state.il.us/ocd/newrtp2.htm>.

City contributions

Some of the plan’s strategies will depend on financial investments made by the City of Waukegan. Even when grant funding may be available, many grants will require a local match. As the City gains a better sense of the capital improvement costs of some of the major projects in the plan, specifically the addition of street trees and other street amenities, as well as maintenance, it may need to use general funds to accomplish these goals.

Special Service Area. The City may wish to consider creating a special service area (SSA). SSAs are used in business districts to provide funding for infrastructure, maintenance, programs, and other business-related activities. Within this plan, the SSA could fund projects such as a branding campaign, the façade and sign improvement grant program, planting street trees, improving sidewalk landscaping, upgrading street lights, and hosting community events. An SSA is an extra property tax on a defined set of properties (called the service area) that reinvests 100 percent of that tax revenue back into the service area. Typically, the SSA budget is administered by a local organization, such as the Chamber of Commerce, or by the City. This arrangement could give local businesses a larger voice in the implementation of the plan. Before adopting, further study and consultation with local businesses would be needed to determine whether an SSA is an appropriate and viable option for the Washington Street commercial corridor.

Reference Guides

Active Transportation Alliance: Complete Streets Policy
<http://activetransportationpolicy.org/complete-streets-policy>

Institute of Transportation Engineers, Congress for the New Urbanism: Designing Walkable Urban Thoroughfares: A Context Sensitive Approach
<http://www.ite.org/css/RP-036A-E.pdf>

Local Initiatives Support Corporation Center for Commercial Revitalization: Commercial Revitalization Planning Guide: A Toolkit for Community Based Organizations
http://www.lisc.org/files/6100_file_commercial_revitalization.pdf

Low Impact Development Center: Green Streets
<http://www.lowimpactdevelopment.org/greenstreets/>

National Association of City Transportation Officials: Urban Bikeway Design Guide
<http://nacto.org/cities-for-cycling/design-guide/>

National Center for Safe Routes to School
<http://www.saferoutesinfo.org>

Pace Suburban Bus: Transit Supportive Guidelines for the Chicagoland Region
http://www.pacebus.com/guidelines/Pace_Design_Guidelines.pdf

Smart Growth America: National Complete Streets Coalition
<http://www.smartgrowthamerica.org/complete-streets>

Streetsense (for DC Office of Planning): DC Vibrant - Retail Streets Toolkit
<https://www.downtowndevelopment.com/pdf/VibrantStreetsToolkitF.pdf>

U.S. Department of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration: Context Sensitive Solutions
<http://contextsensitivesolutions.org/content/reading/street-design/>

U.S. Green Building Council: LEED for Neighborhood Development (v2009)
<http://www.usgbc.org/resources/leed-neighborhood-development-v2009-current-version>

Appendices

Under separate cover available from the City of Waukegan.

Appendix A: Existing Conditions Report

Appendix B: Market Study completed by Valerie S. Kretchmer Associates, Inc.



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