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State, federal funds to transform Roosevelt Road redevelopment plans into reality

The goal of revitalizing Roosevelt Road from Harlem Avenue to Austin Boulevard moved from concept to reality with a written commitment from the Illinois Department of Transportation authorizing nearly \$7 million in state and federal funds for the project.

With IDOT's written commitment, efforts to create a more pedestrian-friendly, landscaped and vibrant commercial corridor along the busy Roosevelt Road thoroughfare shared by Oak Park, Berwyn and Cicero will begin by summer 2010, officials say.

"This commitment from the Illinois Department of Transportation is huge," said Oak Park Village President David Pope. "This commitment confirms the importance of all the work that our three communities have invested to enhance this critical and previously neglected border that we all share.

"After several years of collaboration by our three communities, and the tireless participation of the business owners, residents and municipal staff in collaboration with the Roosevelt Road Advisory Committee, we now have the money to begin what will be one of the most important economic development projects in the region."

The initial groundwork for the project first was laid in 2000, when the Berwyn Development Corporation, working with the City of Berwyn and the Village of Oak Park, received an *Illinois Tomorrow Grant* to develop general guidelines for improving the Roosevelt Road corridor. That plan, released in 2003, recommended that the three communities adopt a shared vision and unified regulations to make it possible.

The project took a dramatic step forward in 2006 when Berwyn and Oak Park, along with the Cicero, signed an intergovernmental agreement pledging to work together to revitalize their shared border.

"The adoption of the intergovernmental agreement among these three communities, and the consequent establishment of the jointly supported Roosevelt Road Advisory Committee, was a game changer," Pope said.

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Creation of specific design plans for streetscape improvements and new consistent, *form-based* zoning regulations for all three communities were authorized in 2007.

Streetscape design plans were adopted by all three communities in 2008, and the zoning regulations approved in 2009. The only remaining obstacle was to secure funding for the project, a hurdle swept away by a letter from IDOT received Tuesday.

"This \$7 million commitment is a testament to the importance of communities with shared borders working together for the benefit of all," Pope said. "Importantly, it also highlights a growing understanding by IDOT of the value of investing in infrastructure projects that can dramatically enhance quality of life for people where they live."

Included in the funding commitment is \$1.2 million that IDOT will allocate toward resurfacing Roosevelt Road. An additional \$1.8 million in state funds will go toward other corridor improvements. IDOT also committed \$3.95 million in federal funds for streetscape improvements and \$25,000 for bikeway signage along the corridor, money administered through the Illinois Transportation Enhancement Program (ITEP).

Implementation of the entire Roosevelt Road plan is estimated to cost about \$9 million. Since the work will cover multiple fiscal years and costs will be shared among the three communities, funding resources are available to ensure that the work will begin in July 2010.

Stressing the long-term benefits of the project, Pope added, "The importance of this project and the support by IDOT cannot be overstated. This project will help enhance the commercial vibrancy and aesthetics of the corridor, and improve quality of life not only for residents of Oak Park, Berwyn and Cicero, but for the entire region."

For more information on the Roosevelt Road project, including copies of the planning documents, visit www.rooseveltroad.com.

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