

The Super Block – Creating a beloved place for Oak Park



Are we up to the challenge?

September 20, 2005



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Our Vision for the Super Block



- **A vital, pedestrian-friendly shopping district that**
 - > **Preserves and enhances the historic fabric**
 - > **Integrates innovative new development with great care**
 - > **Provides an environment for a distinctive retail mix**
 - > **Creates a compelling reason to experience the shops, restaurants and cultural activities**
- **Available to Oak Parkers, our neighbors and the 150,000 tourists that visit Oak Park each year.**

Unique opportunity to create an enduring sense of place



- **Conserve:** Celebrate and preserve our history
- **Connect:** Tie together transportation resources
- **Converge:** Tightly integrate commerce, preservation and great design into one space

Conserve: Celebrate and preserve our history



- Restore and revitalize the structures of value on Lake, Marion, and Westgate
- Create a reason for residents and tourists to visit and shop downtown with affordable local merchant retail space
- Provide a new home for the Oak Park River Forest Historical Society in tandem with the Visitor's Center



Connect: Tie together transportation resources

- Leverage Oak Park's abundant transportation options to become a better source for shoppers and visitors for downtown Oak Park
- Create Oak Park's version of a transit oriented development site that moves the "state-of-the-art" to a new level
- Embrace Harlem Ave as the most important gateway to our Village
- Remember that the heart of any transit oriented site is the role of pedestrians and the ease of their movement

Converge: Integrate commerce, preservation and great design



- **Create a holistic view of the super block and its relationship to the surrounding areas**
- **Provide for a balance of retail space to enhance local retailers while attracting national retailers**
- **Add a residential component**
- **Restore building facades while allowing for adaptive reuse within the buildings**
- **Insist upon strong integrated design to create a sense of place throughout the downtown**

Getting downtown working again



- **Retail works when its around people, it dies when there is no store traffic**
 - > **325,000+ people reside within 3 miles of the Lake and Harlem intersection**
 - > **150,000+ heritage tourists a year visit Oak Park**
 - > **35,000+ cars a day pass Oak Park on Harlem**
 - > **28,500+ average week day riders on Union Pacific West Line**
 - > **3,100+ board the Green Line at Harlem on the average weekday**
 - > **1,500+ people transferring between lines at Harlem**
- **Downtown Oak Park has access to plenty of people on a daily basis**
- **What's missing is giving them a compelling reason to stop and explore**

Creating a great place



- **Most great places leverage something in the surrounding natural environment (e.g. river front, lake front, parks, etc.)**
- **Oak Park lacks natural environmental amenities**
- **Oak Park does have several core traditions**
 - > **Beautiful architecture**
 - > **Social activism**
 - > **Economic and racial diversity**
 - > **Abundant local retail establishments**
- **The super block can become our latest expression of those traditions**



Continue a bold experiment to integrate the new with the old



- Frank Lloyd Wright's brilliance was integrating the "new" (Prairie Style architecture) with the "old" (Victorian architecture)
- 100 years later, people are still viewing and studying it
- Today, the parameters are
 - > Historic mixed use buildings in harmony with new mixed use buildings
 - > New understanding of transit oriented development

Our 25 year vision

Short Term



- Restore and rehabilitate existing historical building stock
- Enhance Marion and Westgate with limited traffic through a pedestrian friendly design
- Create a downtown Oak Park Historic District with goal of protecting historically valuable structures on Lake, Marion, and Westgate
- Add a parking structure
- Enact a sign ordinance that returns the energy, excitement and competition for the shoppers attention

Our 25 year vision

Mid Term



- **Add premium streetscape enhancements as a unifying design element**
- **Increase connectivity with a new street that extends Maple Ave to Lake Street**
- **Build new retail, new residential, new commercial**
- **Integrate additional parking into the new structures**

Our 25 year vision Long Term



- **Harlem becomes a great street**
- **Neighboring communities choose compatible developments to create a regional solution for mutual benefit**
- **Prairie School / Arts & Crafts Design museum is built in the Village**
- **People traveling Metra see a vibrant statement of how a community can honor its past while welcoming new design**
- **Tourists want to spend time in downtown Oak Park and then take our ideas back to their communities**

Short Term

Restore, revitalize, reuse



- Restore and revitalize structures with retail rehab or “Main Street”
- Landmark all significant structures
- Promote adaptive reuse of internal space including residential use
- Create affordable retail space for local retailers to thrive
- A community committed to diversity needs affordable retail space as well as affordable housing
- Create space of OPRF Historical Center as well as Visitor Center

Short Term Limited Traffic — Pedestrians Rule



- Open Marion and Westgate to limited traffic
- Crandall Arambula recommendation for a European style street is an example
- Create ability to close streets for special occasions

Short term

Add parking structure



- Design challenge is a parking structure that doesn't look like a parking structure
- Use existing North Blvd. parking lot while shortening the depth of the Westgate buildings to maintain service access and enlarge the footprint for the parking structure
- Convenience retail on first level of parking structure for snack shop, dry cleaner, beauty salon etc.
- Tie parking structure to surrounding shops via an inviting pedestrian pass through similar to the current Oak Park Ave. garage

Short term Enact new sign ordinance



- Façade rehab includes incentives for retailers to add distinctive signs perpendicular to their buildings
- Consistent with retailing from the 1920s to the 1960s
- Requires innovative design review standards and code enforcement
- Brings energy back to the edges
- Makes retail more visible to pedestrians as well as autos

Mid Term Streetscape Enhancements



- **Agree with Crandall Arambula about the need to create a unified streetscape that excites the pedestrian and vehicular passenger**
- **Overall plan to be facilitated by the Village of Oak Park**
- **Opportunity to engage the public in the designing and choosing the solutions consistent with tradition of civic activism**

Mid Term

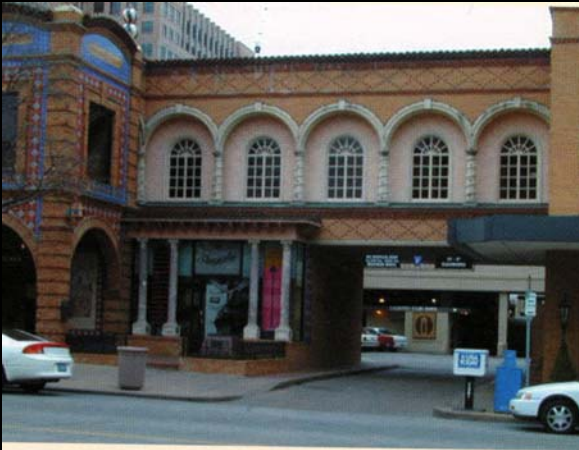
Add a new street



- **Extend Maple Street to Lake**
- **Add underpass below RR tracks**
- **Creates an edge between the “old” and the “new”**
- **Mainly for pedestrian circulation**
- **Open up retail opportunity on west side of Colt building**
- **Improved access to downtown and garage from South**

Mid Term

Begin Harlem Ave. transformation



- Private redevelopment of the Shops of Oak Park into a signature mixed use development
- This structure in combination with the Marshall Field's building become the “design anchors” for a unified urban design statement
- Ultimately, this urban design statement carries from Ontario Street to Pleasant Ave. along Harlem Ave.



Mid Term

Integrate Parking into the new

- **Build parking into basement level of new buildings**
- **May allow for new building heights of six or seven stories at major intersections**
- **Insist on design excellence**
- **Adding the new while not overwhelming the established historic architecture becomes one of those hard problems requiring great architectural solutions**

Long Term Neighboring Communities join in



- **Transforming Harlem Ave. requires cooperation from IDOT, River Forest, and Forest Park**
- **Oak Park's opportunity is to exert leadership and the cooperation of River Forest and Forest Park**
- **IDOT knows it's a problem**
- **Years ago we fixed Austin Blvd., now Harlem Avenue's time has come**

Long Term Prairie Design museum



- Now vacant Sawyer College lot could house a Prairie School / Arts & Crafts Design museum
- Goal is to create a place to exhibit and celebrate the long tradition of design excellence within Oak Park and America
- Provides a destination to bring visitors into the downtown
- Public/private partnership

Long Term

The energy of downtown is obvious



- The combination of honoring the past while celebrating the new creates excitement
- Heritage tourism rises as people explore, eat, shop, and take in the sights
- Local residents share in a variety of retail expressions of where and how to shop

The Super Block

The anchor to a revitalized downtown



- **Our best chance to tame Harlem Ave. and create a dynamic gateway for our downtown exists through how we use the super block**
- **It sets the standard for the rest of downtown as well as how Harlem Ave. evolves**
- **Our choice is to continue an opportunistic approach to development or embrace an integrated solution that furthers Oak Park's tradition of urban design excellence**
- **REDCOOP strongly recommends a view that honors our past while embracing the benefits of tightly integrated new development**
- **It will take generations for this opportunity to present itself, again**