

Village of Manteno Downtown Improvement Plan

Opportunity Analysis Summary

May 2010

A large, cylindrical water tower with a conical top, painted in a light color. The tower features the text 'VILLAGE OF MANTENO' in large, dark, sans-serif capital letters. The word 'VILLAGE' is at the top, 'OF' is in the middle, and 'MANTENO' is at the bottom. Two dark paw prints are positioned on either side of the word 'OF'. The tower is set against a clear sky, and some utility lines are visible in the foreground.

VILLAGE
OF
MANTENO

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in association with:
Business Districts, Inc.

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On the Cover

The grain elevator at the north end of Main Street

Executive Summary

Dear Community Leaders:

This Opportunity Analysis concludes the first of a three-phased Downtown Improvement Plan. In addition to this Executive Summary, it includes a summary of the project background, goal and objectives, marketplace, resources, and stakeholder interests. It concludes with a summary of preliminary opportunities and special challenges that you should explore in greater detail.

Based on your goal, to retain downtown Manteno as *the best small downtown in the region*, and on our analysis of the existing and forecasted marketplace, available resources and stakeholder interests, we recommend that you continue to explore these promising opportunities:

Focus on quality

Set, and promote high standards.

Strengthen partnerships

Engage the Chamber, property/business owners and community leaders in recruitment.

Recruit destination restaurants

Market-supported and under-represented.

Recruit family-oriented businesses

Market-supported, under-represented and image advancing.

Refine events programming

Reacquaint local and regional visitors with downtown on a regular basis.

Enhance the pedestrian rail crossing

Enhance an irreplaceable grade crossing to improve circulation.

Install wayfinding elements

Direct visitors from the I-57 and IL50 to downtown.

Reconfigure, then add public parking

Refine what you have and add more, when necessary.

Construct a family-oriented public space

Downtown needs a right-sized, well-located, well appointed public space.

Promote clustered medical uses

A market-supported theme between Route 50 and the railroad.

If authorized to complete the next phase of the engagement, Preferred Strategies, we will refine each of the most promising opportunities with increased emphasis, where appropriate, on character, potential costs and revenue sources, best practices, and implementation techniques. After completing the Preferred Strategies, if authorized, we can help you clearly communicate the refined strategies and implementation recommendations to your constituents and potential investors through the Final Master Plan.

We are excited about the potential of your downtown and look forward to advancing our work and our relationship with community leaders.

Sincerely,
Hitchcock Design Group



Richard G. Hitchcock,
President

Background

Manteno is a community whose residents value their family oriented lifestyles, their excellent schools, and their long history of quality commercial development that has served residents and the surrounding rural populace. Manteno recently experienced significant growth as the far south Chicago suburbs accelerated your transition from an independent, agriculturally oriented village into a more suburban community. Although the national collapse of the housing market has slowed development to a near halt (only one new home was built in Manteno in 2009) the combination of a larger population and new jobs offers an opportunity to enhance Downtown Manteno's appeal to growing markets.

In response, Village leadership invested significant TIF funding in many downtown improvements prior to the recession that made Main Street and Route 50 much more identifiable and comfortable. In particular, the new street trees, streetscape treatments, and lighting demonstrated to residents, visitors and potential investors that the Village is committed to the success of its downtown. Since the existing TIF is not scheduled to expire until 2022, we understand that you wish to consider additional investments and initiatives that will help downtown Manteno retain its distinction as *the best small downtown in the region*.

The study area is coincidental with the downtown TIF boundaries shown on the adjacent map. Based on the comprehensive plan, most of this area is planned for commercial or mixed use. Residential neighborhoods are located on the outer edges of the downtown and are planned to be part of mixed use structures. The Canadian National railroad bisects the downtown between Oak and Main Street and has vehicular crossings at 3rd Street and Division Street with a pedestrian crossing aligned with 1st Street. The grain elevators, a reminder of the community's agricultural heritage, are a dominate downtown landmark.

In December 2010, the Village retained Hitchcock Design Group and Business Districts, Inc (BDI) to complete the first of a three-phased Downtown Improvement Plan. After a kickoff meeting with the project Task Force, including elected and appointed Village officials, the consultant team reviewed and analyzed existing plans, demographic studies, current land uses, and market trends to gain an understanding of the existing conditions in the study area. Next, the team interviewed selected stakeholders in order to hear first hand opinions about the past, present, and future of downtown. The next day, the consultant team conducted a planning workshop at the Community Center in order to identify and review the preliminary opportunities identified in this memorandum with members of the project Task Force. The consultant team edited the plans following our review and prepared this summary memorandum.





Study Area Map



Goal and Objectives

Like a mission statement, a goal typically is an ambitious, long term, visionary statement that is supported by related, measurable objectives. Based on our analysis of current conditions and our discussions with community leaders, we recommend the following long term goal and objectives for downtown Manteno:

Downtown Manteno should retain its distinction as the best small downtown in the region.

Each of the following objectives support and will help Manteno leaders accomplish their downtown goal.

Increase sales in every business

Increased sales will raise the quality of each establishment so that it stays competitive. Sales can be increased through store cleanliness, better advertising and promotions, merchandise display, service, and event programming.

Improve the mix of destinations

A lack of destinations, in general, makes it difficult for downtowns to be successful in capturing a regional market share. In rural communities such as Manteno, it is particularly important to draw people from outside the community to add to the existing spending capacity of Manteno's residents. Destinations may include a popular restaurant, special events programming, and an active, attractive public open space. People tend to think of a destination as "The place to go for"

Improve pedestrian connectivity

Connectivity occurs both physically and visually, and both are important to the overall hospitality of the downtown. For instance, it is important to get motorists to the downtown, conveniently parked, properly oriented, and on their way along short walking loops in order to maximize the shopping experience.

Make public investments that promote increased private sector investment

Every public investment should benefit the downtown visitor and encourage additional, private sector investment in new or expanded business and redevelopment of downtown properties.

Maintain long term sustainability

Sustainable downtowns constantly balance functional, cultural and financial stability along with environmental improvements. Manteno should strive to retain its "best regional downtown" distinction for the life of the TIF, and beyond.

Marketplace

The market assessment supports the downtown goal by profiling the existing market and identifying the demand for development that would be both appropriate and financially feasible for downtown Manteno. It reports the facts and opinions of those who participated in the process and recommends near term strategies that support the market's long-term health. The consultant filtered the current situation through their experience in order to provide economic analysis that supports decision-making.

Because the trends driving development pressure in Manteno are national, BDI used current models for commercial development along with national demographic databases in order to understand the local market. BDI also visited Bradley's newly developed Northfield Square and the aging Bradley Square Shopping Center in order to determine the regional competitive environment. BDI met with store, restaurant, and property owners; and applied the same principles that high volume site selection specialists use in order to understand the area's economic vitality and potential. In addition, the consultant team interviewed 30 stakeholders to glean their confidential insights into Manteno's existing and potential economic development environment.



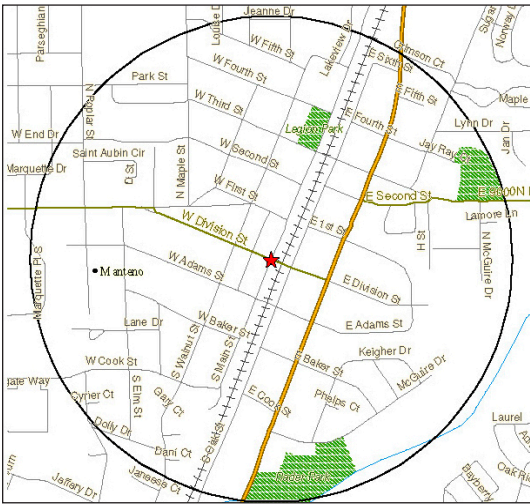
Core Retail Development Concepts

Tenants and developers rely on core concepts (or best practices) when determining whether to choose a specific retail location. These market conditions, physical factors, and co-tenancies, where they meet the criteria, support sales sufficient to sustain a business in the long-term. The following core concepts, and how they relate to Manteno, are identified below.

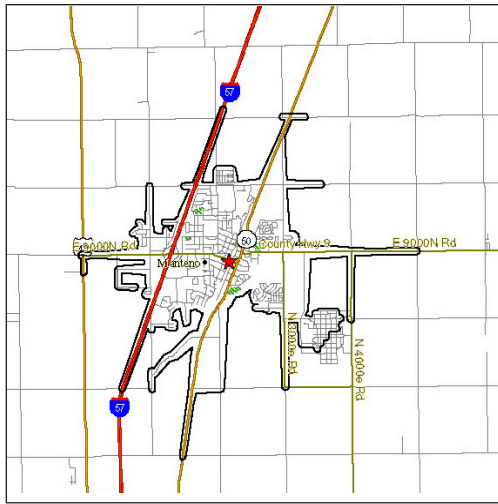
Retail Follows Other Markets.

The residential population must be large enough and close enough to support construction of store and restaurant space. Retail stores are usually segregated into convenience space that serves the day to day needs of consumers like groceries, and specialty space that offers items that consumers rely on in order to define their lifestyle, such as fashionable apparel and home décor. Downtowns generally focus on the specialty items that consume the smaller portion of spending. Commercial corridors often have large tracts of land that can accommodate the grocery stores and mass merchandisers that offer the convenience and commodity goods that satisfy consumers' everyday needs. Although office workers are another important market that can upgrade a marginally successful retail district into a very successful one, local residents are the backbone of each community's commercial areas. The significance of office space is its connection to a strong food and beverage offering. A significant concentration of offices adds a lunch seating and a "cocktail hour" that can increase restaurant business by up to 30%. Although the residents are reason that stores exist, office workers bring increased vitality and growth through reinvestment of profits.

Match to Downtown Manteno: To understand Downtown Manteno's potential, it is important to know the characteristics of the residents and employees within logical markets. Table 1 on the following page illustrates pedestrian and auto oriented residential and employee populations accessible to Downtown Manteno stores, restaurants and services. Maps 1 and 2 illustrate the the pedestrian ½ mile radii and the 5-minute drive time.



Map 1: Pedestrian 1/2 Mile Radius



Map 2: 5 Minute Drive Time

	Manteno	0.5 miles	5 minutes	15 minutes
Population	8,285	2,744	9,605	56,558
Total Population Median Age	36.2	35.8	36.0	33.5
Household Average Income	\$61,595	\$67,419	\$61,292	\$55,847
Median Household Income	\$61,610	\$64,413	\$61,186	\$57,416
Total Employees	2,496	1,177	3,666	27,582
Jobs per Household	0.8	1.0	1.0	1.3
Total Retail Expenditure	\$69,055,21	\$26,612,209	\$79,117,100	\$411,767,954
Eating and Drinking	\$6,707,061	\$2,593,193	\$7,682,022	\$39,851,931
Grocery Stores	\$18,628,745	\$7,173,064	\$21,342,995	\$111,149,895
Pharmacy and Drug Stores	\$4,107,422	\$1,583,074	\$4,705,176	\$24,383,808

Demographic data © 2009 by Experian/Applied Geographic Solutions.

Table 1

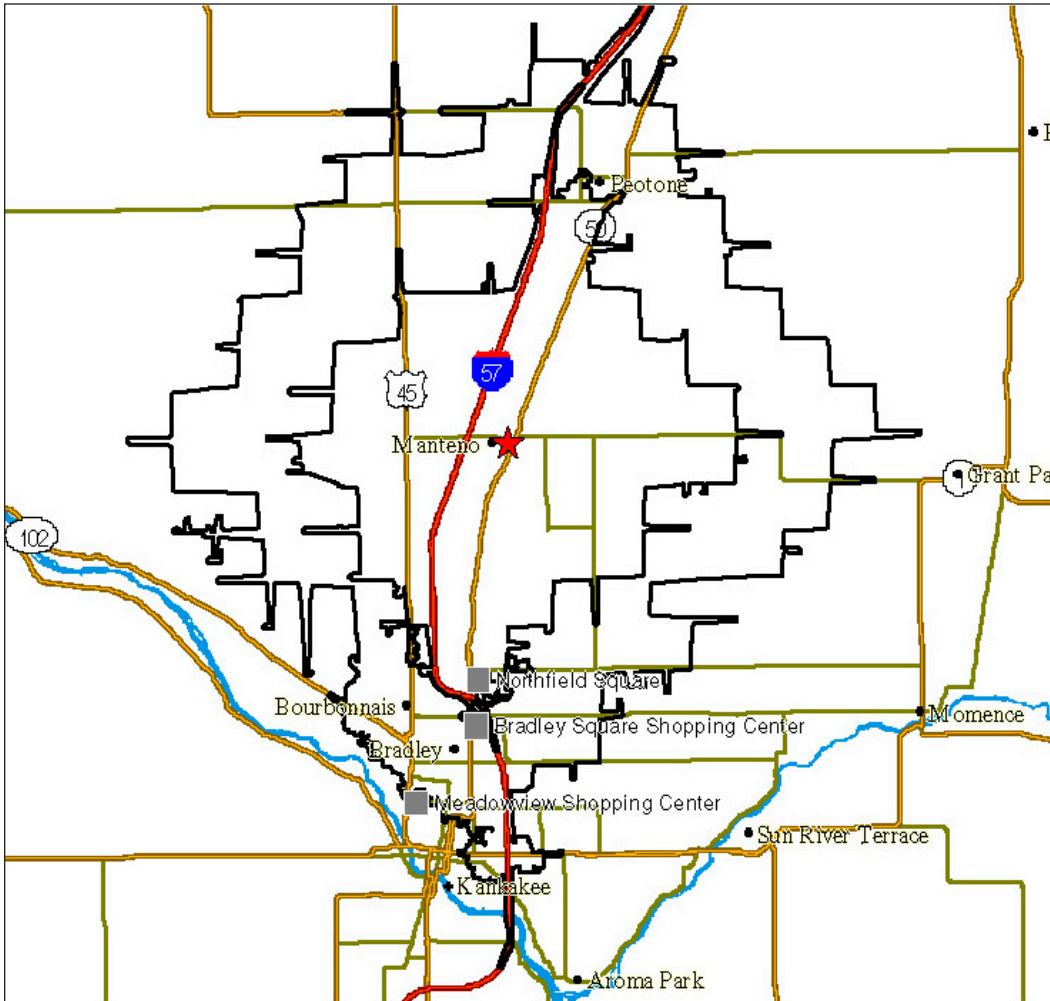
With total retail expenditure by Manteno residents of approximately \$70 million and national averages of retail spending estimated at \$300 per square foot, the residents of Manteno support approximately 230,000 square feet of stores and restaurants. Convenience needs that might be accommodated in the study area along Locust could account for about 75% of that demand, or about 175,000 square feet. Much of resident's convenience spending occurs at the recently developed WalMart in neighboring Bradley. By subtracting the square footage accommodating convenience shopping, the estimate for the square footage necessary to accommodate Manteno residents' specialty shopping is approximately 55,000 square feet. (230,000- 175,000) Downtown Manteno would do well to capture half of the spending supporting specialty stores as it competes with trips to regional malls and online merchants. Consequently, the demand by Manteno residents for store and restaurant space in Downtown is approximately 25,000 to 30,000 square feet. Information supplied by the Village documents 73,000 square feet of space on Main Street and the consultants estimate another 20,000 square feet along Oak street on the east side of the railroad tracks. This total of over 90,000 square feet in Downtown Manteno suggests that over 50% of the spending in Downtown must come from destination shoppers and diners because the current available space greatly exceeds the space necessary to satisfy the demand of local residents. Map 3 illustrates a 15-minute drive time that offers a market large enough to support 100,000 square feet of retail if Downtown Manteno were able to capture 7% of this area's total retail spending.

If the 1,200 employees within walking distance of Downtown Manteno averaged \$20 per week in expenditures, there is another \$1. 2 million in potential restaurant

spending to capture. With only .8 jobs per household, Manteno is significantly below the regional average of 1.4 jobs per household. Adding enough jobs near downtown that bring the community to regional jobs per household averages would nearly double the anticipated employee spending in downtown businesses.

Development is Tenant Driven.

There must be enough similar tenants to allow consumers to comparison shop. In the abstract, it makes sense that the ideal retail development is a broad mix of



Map 3: 15 Minute Drive Time

businesses satisfying the all needs of local residents. However, that concept defies the very term “shopping” because there never could be sufficient space to meet the volume and variety of business to meet the desires of all residents. Today’s auto oriented retailing assumes that customers will travel for selection. Consequently, while almost all successful shopping districts offer convenience shopping, for example a drug or dollar store, different shopping districts have evolved to satisfy varying niches for other items. Strong retailers like to cluster near competitors because they know that such an area gets a reputation as “the place to go to shop for....”

Match to Downtown Manteno: The Manteno study area contains approximately 40 businesses concentrated along Main, Oak, and Locust (Route 50). A business list supplied by the Village reveals the mix of uses along Main and Oak on the following page:

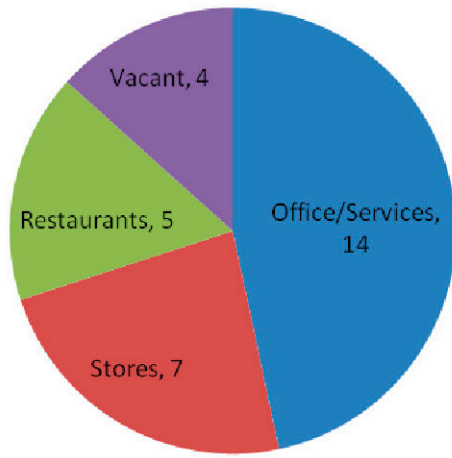
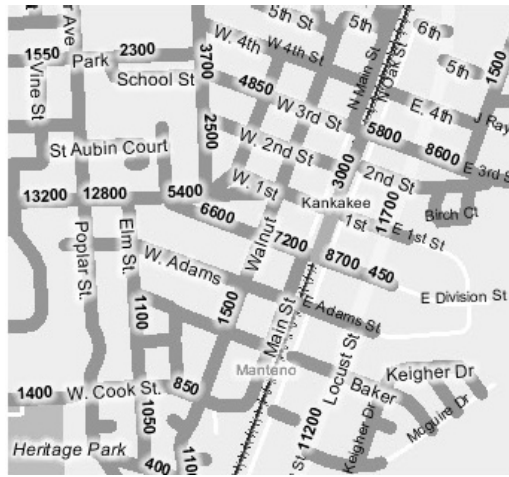


Table 2: Downtown Business Mix



Map 4: Traffic Counts

Interviews revealed interest in adding dining options and unique specialty stores. Since there are few vacancies in the properties built to accommodate stores and restaurants, careful consideration must be given to opportunities to build new retail spaces. New space should be located to provide access to the neighborhood and an optimal match to the core retail development concepts.

Visibility is critical.

Stores must be visible to a large enough pedestrian and/or “driver” population. Although repeat customers are the lifeblood of any business, there also must be a steady flow of new customers. Those customers are much easier to attract when a large population sees the business every day. Studies by national restaurateurs and retailers indicate that about 20,000 vehicles and/or pedestrians per day pass the most vital retail businesses.

Match to Downtown Manteno: The primary access points to Downtown Manteno from the east/west are 1st Street/ Division and Locust (IL 50) from the north/south. As this map illustrates, approximately 12,000 cars travel each access point in an average day. Although these numbers are short of the 20,000 expected by most national retailers, there are over 32,000 cars traveling on Interstate 57, a quick 4-minute drive away. There is some retail development near the Interstate; however it is experiencing high vacancies. Because the 1st Street/ Division pair is both an access to Interstate 57 and it fails to continue past Locust/IL 50, a higher percentage has Downtown Manteno as a destination than a typical through street. Much of the traffic is destination oriented as travelers visit downtown stores, restaurants and services like the health club. The volumes of traffic make pedestrian access acceptable and create a neighborhood friendly shopping experience.

Visual and physical access must be easy.

Signalized intersections allow traffic to easily enter and exit parking lots. They also stop pedestrians and automobiles, causing people to see signs and advertising. For those reasons, signalized intersections are the key location for high traffic retail centers.

Match to Downtown Manteno: Signalized intersections provide good access to Downtown Manteno.

Anchors hold the position.

Modern shopping centers attract consumers to a high volume business, the anchor, and the consumers then notice and purchase the offering of adjacent smaller stores. Recently, that pattern has been modified by the concept of Lifestyle Centers where a cluster of well-known smaller stores combines to fulfill the anchor function. When centers are anchorless, often due to the closing of a business, the property is less

stable because tenants are constantly seeking anchored locations where they can achieve higher sales from the customers of adjacent anchors.

Match to Downtown Manteno: As with many Downtowns, Village Hall and the Library are important anchors in Downtown Manteno. Additionally, Dollar General generates significant customer businesses and therefore acts like a minor anchor. The challenge in Manteno is creating a cluster that generates additional visit frequency and provides the specialty anchor. Interviews associated with this study suggest that like many downtown the priority cluster addition is family oriented dining.

Operating results trump development costs.

With rents, the ongoing measurement of a location’s development cost, typically targeted to be at most 10% of sales, other operating costs have more impact on a store or restaurant’s success. As the Table 3 below reveals, the operation of a retail business is extremely sensitive to sales variation.

A 20% decline in business, an impact that can occur from the closing of an anchor or a bad buying decision, results in a loss. A 20% sales increase, often the result of better co-tenants joining a center or smart buying, causes the return to more than double. The location change column shows that, if that sales increase results from relocating the business to a better district with 50% higher rent, there is a significant improvement in profitability. This analysis reveals the rationale for “moving boxes” when new development occurs. It also illustrates why it is so important for retail development to occur at superior locations.

Match to Downtown Manteno: Although it is likely that Downtown Manteno will always have vintage space at lower rents than new space that rent differential is not enough to make businesses more profitable and therefore more satisfied with a Downtown location than another location. It is important for events and community support to add sales volume by attracting customers.

	20% Sales Decline	Expected Sales	20% Sales Increase	Location Change
Sales	\$400,000	\$500,000	\$600,000	\$600,000
Merchandise Cost	\$200,000	\$250,000	\$300,000	\$300,000
Gross Margin	\$200,000	\$250,000	\$300,000	\$300,000
Rent	\$50,000	\$50,000	\$50,000	\$75,000
Salaries	\$100,000	\$100,000	\$100,000	\$100,000
Supplies	\$20,000	\$20,000	\$30,000	\$30,000
Reserve for repair	\$12,500	\$12,500	\$12,500	\$12,500
Advertising	\$25,000	\$25,000	\$25,000	\$25,000
ROI, Taxes & Profit	-\$7,500	\$37,500	\$82,500	\$57,500

Demographic data © 2009 by Experian/Applied Geographic Solutions.

Table 3: Operating results v. Development costs

Preliminary Market Conclusion

Although Downtowns like Manteno's often do not meet these modern site selection standards, successful stores and restaurants compensate for variations from these standards by undertaking marketing strategies and therefore compete effectively with centrally managed centers that do meet the standards.

Although Downtown Manteno market has growing purchasing power and traffic counts, which may eventually allow the businesses to focus primarily on local customers, today's businesses need destination shoppers to succeed. The nearby employee counts provide some support for food and beverage development but need to grow to significantly enhance the profitability of Downtown Manteno restaurants. Given Manteno's specialty, small format retailer focus, there is not so much competition that the success of its businesses could be undermined by adding new businesses. Other nearby shopping offers the sameness of large format, high volume stores and national chain restaurants and consequently does not compete directly with Downtown Manteno specialty businesses. Key issues will be the limited amount of "available" land and therefore a limited amount of potential for additional development projects that add employees and denser residential development. Public improvements with an emphasis on creating better pedestrian and neighborhood access as well as safe, attractive railroad crossings will be important to the success of Downtown. Finally, following consensus on a downtown vision, the ability to organize a public/private partnership with the Chamber representing the private sector in concert with the village will be the key.

In short, Manteno has multiple choices. These must be thoughtful choices that recognize the significant hard work remaining to implement the choices.

Resources

Analyzing existing resources identifies positive and negative conditions which may affect various opportunities. Every community has a series of typical resources centering around physical, financial and organizational elements that must be reviewed. However, because each community is unique, there are also a number of specific resources that warrant investigation because of their impact on the downtown.

Match to Manteno: In general, Manteno is in an excellent position and has wisely invested their capital resources, specifically TIF funds, in a series of improvements that have strengthened other resources. Village leaders have been actively supporting downtown initiatives and following the original TIF plan. For downtown, standard resources such as land uses, parking, capital, condition and appearance were analyzed as well as more specific resources related to open space, mobility, and parking.

Land Uses

Currently, the Village owns the parking and open space areas along the railroad rights-of-way as well as the Village Hall property and Community Center. The majority of the downtown properties are commercial uses, including drive to destinations along Route 50 and coming into downtown on Division Street. The majority of the mixed use commercial buildings are along Main Street and Oak Street with residential properties south and north of downtown as well as the areas one block off of Main and Oak. Unique uses include St. Joseph's Catholic Church on the far south end of downtown and the grain elevators on the north end. In the comprehensive plan, additional mixed use commercial/residential is identified on the east side of Oak Street to Route 50. A significant amount of façade restoration and a few key new commercial buildings have been constructed over the past few years.





Implications for downtown: The significant amount of public land along the railroad tracks gives the Village opportunities for additional uses beyond parking. The presence of newer construction and façade renovations indicates interest and pride in the downtown. The size of downtown, especially if additional mixed use is built to Route 50, may become an issue for walkability as well as create excess commercial space that may not be able to be leased.

Condition and Appearance

The Village has recently completed a series of improvements such as new lighting and streetscape improvements. In addition, façade grants have been provided for a significant number of existing structures downtown. Downtown streets are in good condition and consistent improvements to the utilities and infrastructure have provided the opportunity for a number of property owners to construct new buildings downtown.

Implications for downtown: The recent improvements have created an environment that attracts people downtown and makes them feel comfortable while visiting. The façade improvements have had an impact on various property owners' abilities to attract new tenants into recently unoccupied spaces and have made dramatic changes to buildings that were once thought to be obsolete.

Capital

The TIF is twelve years away from expiring and there are funds that need to be utilized for improvements within the downtown that will continue generating long term return on investment dollars after the TIF has expired. Past improvements have focused on aesthetic issues that have increased the exposure and raised the quality level of the downtown. Like any community in this economy, the Village leadership has been making difficult decisions based on lower revenue estimates stemming from slower growth and fewer new residents. The TIF, however, appears to have a strong foundation and capital that will allow it to continue improvements over the next 12 years.

Implications for downtown: In proportion to the overall life of the TIF, the remaining time is short and given the current economy, the Village understands that decisions about how to invest the remaining dollars needs to create a return on the investment and be planned to provide the biggest bang for the buck.

Parking

Generally, the perception of the downtown is that there is a surplus of public parking. The angled spaces along Main Street and Oak as well as the parking in the railroad rights-of-way along both Main and Oak make up the majority of the available parking in downtown. Issues were raised during the stakeholder interviews regarding the one-way circulation through the parking areas along the west side of the tracks.

Implications for downtown: Many downtowns oftentimes perceive a shortage of parking which creates immediate issues when additional development or open spaces are proposed. Manteno has the benefit of a larger quantity of parking than is currently demanded. This allows for the potential to increase commercial space or create public spaces to accommodate the activities currently occurring downtown and those planned in the future.

Open Space

The downtown is served by open spaces north and south of the central section of downtown between Division and 3rd Street. On the south end, the Farmer's Market is hosted in the recently constructed park area along the railroad tracks. On the north end, a large park exists. The north half of the park is owned by the adjacent granary and the south half is also privately held and includes a gazebo and walks.

Implications for downtown: The locations of the open spaces push events and activities to the edges of downtown and reduce the ability for attendees to shop at the businesses downtown. None of the space currently have elements that encourage active recreation, lessening the opportunity for those spaces to become destinations that attract people.

Mobility

Division Street is the main east/west arterial through downtown and connects I-57 with downtown and Route 50. West of downtown it attracts over 12,000 cars/day and in downtown, there are approximately 9,000. Route 50 serves as the major north/south connection along the eastern edge of downtown, bringing approximately 12,000 cars/day into downtown.

Implications for downtown: The proximity of I-57 is a significant advantage over other locations and the connection to the south suburbs of the Chicagoland area offers commuters ready access to the metropolitan Chicago area. Route 50 offers another advantage because of its north/south connections. Main Street and Oak Street offer easy access to both sides of the railroad for vehicles, however, the pedestrian connectivity is lacking.

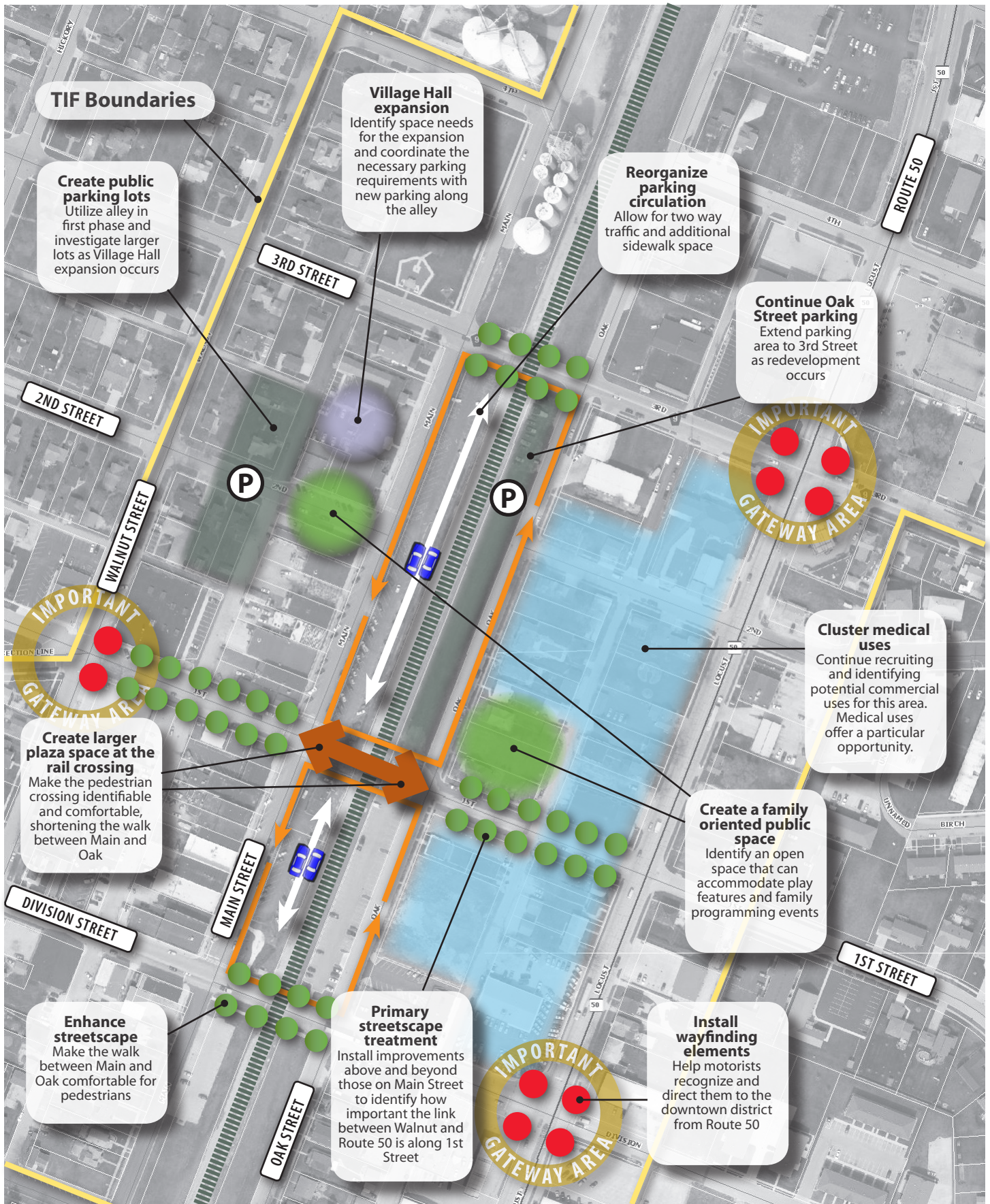
Stakeholders

Interviews and workshops are the opportunity to meet with a variety of stakeholders that have an intimate knowledge of the processes, plans, history, and policies that affect downtown. Typical candidates include property owners, tenants, public officials, organizations, and jurisdictional authorities as well as the general public during visioning sessions and public workshops. Individual interviews are held in confidence and the results are used to identify consistent themes that can be compared to results derived from the public sessions. The project will typically determine the most appropriate engagement process necessary to engage, create consensus, and develop cooperation.

Match to Manteno: A series of stakeholder interviews were conducted to identify specific issues in the downtown that could be remedied by public improvements or processes supported by the TIF district. There were a number of themes that emerged from the stakeholder interviews:

- Village leaders have had a positive impact on the downtown, made a series of good decisions, and there are a number of strong business/Village partnerships
- The current downtown events, specifically Oktoberfest and the Farmer's Market, are successful although additional programming would create better awareness of the downtown.
- The current size of the downtown is larger than the market can support and the lack of direct, comfortable connectivity between Oak and Main Streets exacerbates the situation.
- Maintenance of the downtown is excellent, especially along Main Street.
- There are a number of public and private open spaces in the downtown but none seem to be located in the right spot or cater to the family oriented atmosphere that the community has established.





TIF Boundaries

Create public parking lots

Utilize alley in first phase and investigate larger lots as Village Hall expansion occurs

Village Hall expansion

Identify space needs for the expansion and coordinate the necessary parking requirements with new parking along the alley

Reorganize parking circulation

Allow for two way traffic and additional sidewalk space

Continue Oak Street parking

Extend parking area to 3rd Street as redevelopment occurs

Cluster medical uses

Continue recruiting and identifying potential commercial uses for this area. Medical uses offer a particular opportunity.

Create larger plaza space at the rail crossing

Make the pedestrian crossing identifiable and comfortable, shortening the walk between Main and Oak

Create a family oriented public space

Identify an open space that can accommodate play features and family programming events

Enhance streetscape

Make the walk between Main and Oak comfortable for pedestrians

Primary streetscape treatment

Install improvements above and beyond those on Main Street to identify how important the link between Walnut and Route 50 is along 1st Street

Install wayfinding elements

Help motorists recognize and direct them to the downtown district from Route 50



Preliminary Opportunities

Based on everything that we have analyzed to date, we have identified the following 10 promising opportunities. These opportunities offer the best chance to achieve the objectives outlined previously and each is worth exploring further to evaluate its feasibility in greater detail.

Focus on quality

The size of downtown Manteno requires capturing additional spending from outside of the Village. Considering the goal, the City and Chamber should partner to work on active business recruitment, high quality infrastructure improvements and professional business assistance programs.

Strengthen partnerships

Coordinate events and activities in a forum where information can be shared. In addition, residents are oftentimes the best business recruiters. The Village, in coordination with the Chamber should prepare small information cards to hand out to interested citizens. When participants visit a restaurant or business in another community that they feel would be a good addition to the downtown, they can write down the information and turn it back in to the Chamber or Village staff. A follow up call to the business owner can then be made to discuss the opportunities available in the Village.

Recruit destination restaurants

The Village's food choices are weighted towards the typical fast food and convenience restaurants. The available number of sit down or destination restaurants that would draw visitors from a wider area is minimal compared to other places. The nearby employee counts provide some support for food and beverage development that matches downtown Manteno's specialty focus. A destination restaurant in Manteno would not necessarily need to be a "white tablecloth" restaurant, it could also be family oriented.

Recruit family oriented businesses

Establish high standards for cleanliness and friendliness that cater to family demands. Coordinate calls from Village staff and elected officials to targeted businesses following information gathered from either the developers or information cards advocated for in the previous recommendation.

Refine events programming

Program events around the strengths of the community such as car shows sponsored by Rad Rides or agriculture festivals highlighting the grain elevators.

Enhance the pedestrian rail crossing

The existing pedestrian crossing is difficult to see and navigate. The lack of visibility and use creates long circulation patterns between Oak Street and Main Street. In order to cut the circulation route in half and allow more people to utilize the crossing, it is important that the entry experience begins at the curb line of Main and Oak.

Install wayfinding elements

The gateways and entrances into downtown along Route 50 at Division and at 3rd Street are non-descript and do not point travelers to the downtown, only a block away but difficult to see. Also, at the key intersection of 1st and Walnut, there is a need to identify the border of downtown, creating a tangible edge and entrance along this direct route to Main Street. Lastly, directional signage is necessary at the intersection of Division and Interstate 57 to guide visitors into the downtown.

Reconfigure, then add public parking

The current configuration is confusing and leads to people utilizing the wrong entrances to access spaces. Remove the angled parking on the east side of the lot,

re-orient the west side parking to 90 degree and install a wide sidewalk along Main Street east of the street trees. This provides for two way traffic along the drive aisle.

In order to facilitate a future expansion of Village Hall, provide additional parking for the community center, and offset any loss in parking from the reconfiguration of the lots adjacent to the railroad tracks, purchase the three properties directly west of the alley and construct a parking lot with a capacity of approximately 85 spaces. Install wayfinding signage to direct motorists to the lots from 1st Street, 3rd Street, and Division Street. First phase improvements could consist of reconfiguring the alley to provide parking along the west edge in anticipation of the expansion of the parking lots.

Currently, parking has been constructed in the former railroad right-of-way from Division to 1st Street. Extend that parking all the way to 3rd Street as development continues along Oak Street. Determine if the two way aisle concept is appropriate along Oak.

Construct a family oriented public space

In order to support the family friendly environment that Manteno has crafted, a park with a playground and space for events will attract and keep families downtown as well as create a much needed focal point and activity generator. Preliminary locations include along Oak Street by 1st Street or by closing 2nd Street along Main and utilizing the new public parking facility advocated previously. The east side option would help the continued development of commercial and mixed use development along Oak Street, while the west side option could combine with the reconfigured parking areas to create a larger public space during events when the parking area is closed to vehicles.

Promote clustered medical uses

Based on initial market research, the presence of the VA facility and the general demographics of the community, there is an opportunity for medical uses ranging from the existing fitness facility to specialized physicians.

Special Considerations

The following items may become hindrances or delay moving some opportunities forward. Resolving some of these issues through improvements, policies, and partnerships will limit the effect they have on achieving the objectives.

High speed rail

The advent of high speed rail, when and if it happens, will affect downtown Manteno in ways that are currently unknown. Underpasses or overpasses may be necessary as well as other instruments designed to reduce the pedestrian/vehicular/rail conflict points. However, the uncertainty of high speed rail should not deter Village leaders from making decisions to energize the downtown in its current condition.

Limited land

The total amount of land that is available for redevelopment is limited, and therefore limits the potential for additional development projects that add employees and denser residential development. The character of Manteno, and the comprehensive plan recommendations do not promote significant increases in density or building height, nor would it be appropriate.

Public/Private coordination structure

Currently, the Village and Chamber work independently on their programming and activities. Without a formal structure that allows for coordination of efforts, the overall success of the downtown may be limited.

Distance between Main Street and Oak Street

Typical downtown businesses oftentimes thrive when two sided retailing is present and customers are easily able to walk down one side of a street and walk back on the other side in a short loop. In Manteno, the distance between Main and Oak Streets, including the railroad, removes the feeling of a two sided street and the walking loop is expanded because of the lack of clear and direct crossings.

Parcel size along Route 50

The typical property, for highway oriented development uses, is narrow and shallow, requiring new developers to either work with adjacent property owners to create parking areas large enough to meet development codes or directly purchase adjacent properties to expand the development footprint.

