# LAND USE AND AND DEVELOPMENT



# **REVIEW OF PAST PLANS AND STUDIES**

# **EXISTING PLAN SUMMARY**

# **2030 Comprehensive Plan**

The current 2030 Comprehensive Plan was adopted in 2011. This was the first comprehensive plan in the Village since its initial plan created in 1972. The 2030 plan sets a path for Niles towards improvement and development of key focus areas and corridors. The plan includes a multi-topic vision, guiding principles, goals and objectives, components, recommendations, and an implementation strategy. Most of the plan's implementation actions have been completed or are ongoing. The plan's primary topic areas are still relevant, and some strategies and implementation actions are also still relevant and will be brought forward where appropriate. Some development has occurred in the Village since 2011, and some of the sites and areas identified in the plan have been developed or improved.

The plan does reference four focus areas which are quite large and will remain a focus moving forward given their prominence and importance in the Village. The focus areas of the 2030 Plan are:

- Golf Road Corridor Plan Including an Urban Design and Transportation framework, identification of development opportunities, and a Golf/Milwaukee Development Concept.
- Dempster Street Corridor Plan Including an Urban Design and Transportation framework, identification of development opportunities, and an underpass mural concept.
- Touhy Avenue Corridor Plan Including an Urban Design and Transportation framework, identification of development opportunities.
- **Milwaukee Avenue Corridor Plan** Including an Urban Design and Transportation framework and Milwaukee widening plan.

# 2020 Strategic Plan

The Village recently adopted a Strategic Plan to guide the future of the Village from an organizational and administrative perspective. The strategic plan included a community engagement effort including focus groups and workshops. The process and plan resulted in the formulation of five key strategic priority areas highlighting activities and initiatives that the Village should focus on in both the short- and long-term. The five priority areas include:

- Financial Stability and Transparency
- Diversified Economic Development
- Infrastructure Planning and Funding
- Foster Community Identity
- Marketing and Communication

Although the strategic plan and comprehensive plan have different overall goals, the common objectives are consistent and can also help to support and implementation of each other.



Music Event hosted in Niles, Illinois

### 2017 Arts And Culture Master Plan

The 2017 Arts and Culture Plan includes a summary of current arts and culture facilities, needs and programs in Niles. It also includes a vision and five key priority areas. Each priority area then includes a set of strategies and initiatives to implement. This organization is very clear as the actions can be traced from Priority to Strategy to Initiative. Each priority also includes a case study example that illustrates a success story. The implementation guide lists the potential costs, responsible parties, timeline and priority. The implementation is organized by priority area, strategy and initiative. This provides a clear hierarchy and relates to the previous sections of the plan. The priorities include the following:

- Use Art and Culture to Enhance Community Identity.
- Celebrate Niles' Diversity and Leverage Local Assets.
- Enhance Conditions for Cultural Arts Activities.
- Employ Innovative Methods in Increasing Arts and Culture Participation.
- Seek New Financing Mechanisms and Partnerships with the Village as Lead Entity to Guide Development of Niles' Cultural Sector.

The Village has begun to implement the Arts and Culture Plan with many priorities and initiatives underway or complete.

# **2016 Touhy Triangle Plan**

The 2016 Touhy Triangle Master Plan provides a development framework and improvement recommendations for the industrial/commercial area commonly referred to as the Touhy Triangle. The vision for this area is to redevelop underutilized properties and reposition existing sites with new commercial, mixed-use or entertainment uses. The development framework divides the site into three smaller areas and provides development recommendations and potential open space acreage and development square footage for each. It also provides recommended alternative concepts for each including a residential TOD alternative. The TOD alternative is premised on a future Metra station directly adjacent to the site on the eastern boundary.

# **South Milwaukee Corridor Master Plan**

The plan includes a scenario planning approach for the overall improvement and development of the South Milwaukee Avenue corridor from Oakton/Monroe Avenue on the north to the Village boundary on the south. The plan also includes the following five guiding principles for reimaging Milwaukee Avenue:

- Create destination environments.
- Change the image of the corridor.
- Encourage public and private investment.
- Connect and protect adjacent neighborhoods.
- Reimage Milwaukee Avenue as a place to live, work, shop and play.

The first scenario (adaptation) addresses (1) parking reconfiguration, (2) building siting improvements, (3) access improvements, (4) façade improvements, and (5) new zoning with design standards. The second scenario (reorganization) recommends key improvements to specific sites along the corridor. The third scenario (transformation) recommends intersection improvements at three major intersections along the corridor: Milwaukee/Oakton, Milwaukee and Harlem/Howard, and Milwaukee and Touhy/Waukegan. The plan includes an implementation matrix which identifies priority and timing. New zoning and design regulations were adopted in 2016 related to implementation of this plan.

# 2014 Niles Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan

This plan provides a blueprint for improving bicycle and pedestrian connectivity throughout Niles. It is organized around four topic areas: Mobility, Access, Amenity and Culture. It also has a section for Milwaukee Avenue. Each topic area includes a set of recommendations. The recommendations are summarized into an implementation matrix that includes additional actions, timeline and resources. The Village is planning an update to this plan in 2021. A Pedestrian and Bicycle Advisory Group has been formed to help lead this effort.

### 2013 Environmental Action Plan

The Village's Environmental Action Plan provides the policy directive to encourage sustainability and move the Village towards a more sustainable and resilient future. The plan is organized by an introduction and community profile, and eight topic areas:

1) Land use and development, 2) Transportation and mobility,
3) Open Space, 4) Waste, 5) Water, 6) Energy, 7) Greenhouse Gases, and 8) Education. Each section is divided among existing conditions, goals, recommendations and an implementation approach. The recommendations are further divided between priority and other recommendations. The plan also includes a monitoring and reporting section similar to an implementation matrix. It includes a set of sustainability metrics that quantifies the baseline of different sustainable actions and provides measures to track progress. (i.e. Pace ridership, recycling rate, water consumption)

# **EXISTING PLAN REVIEW**

As evidenced by its past planning efforts, the Village has a robust set of policy guidance related to land use, development, transportation and mobility, urban design, arts and culture, and sustainability. Many of the policy directives, initiatives and implementation strategies remain relevant but will need prioritization as the Village moves forward.

The 2030 Comprehensive Plan has an extensive set of implementation actions, many of which have been completed or are ongoing. Some of these actions require monitoring, or in many cases just continued operation of the Village and the many programs and services it offers to its residents. These actions will continue to be reviewed, updated and prioritized through the comprehensive plan update process. Some significant achievements have also occurred including the operation of PACE Pulse BRT line along Milwaukee Avenue. This initiative was a key policy directive of multiple past planning efforts and now has come to fruition.

The Village's Arts and Culture Master Plan was recently completed and remains relevant. Its core principles and goals regarding the arts, arts programming, culture and cultural activities, and celebrating diversity remain strong and will be emphasized in the update process. A greater emphasis on culture and diversity is also possible as it has become one of Niles' strengths.

Milwaukee Avenue has been the primary focus of many past planning efforts and continues to remain a priority in the Village. The Village's "Design District" complements the South Milwaukee Corridor Plan to create a destination type of environment. The continued implementation of this plan as well as policies and guidance to improve and develop the Milwaukee Avenue corridor will remain a priority.

The Touhy Triangle area and its Master Plan also represent another geographic location in the Village where past planning and development efforts will continue towards implementation. The Master Plan has been successful in creating the zoning and development policy framework to allow the redevelopment and repositioning of properties in the Touhy Triangle to occur. The comprehensive plan update will continue to foster these policies while reviewing and updating the development framework and vision for the Touhy Triangle.

Implementation of the Village's 2014 Pedestrian and Bicycle Plan will also remain a priority. The plan has been successful in installing sidewalks and connections, completing sidewalk gaps, trail improvements, and overall pedestrian safety improvements. A focus on mobility options and making the pedestrian and bicycle environment a safe and pleasant experience is an interest of the Village as well as the community. These policies will be brought forward and updated in the comprehensive plan.

Similarly, a commitment to the environment and sustainability is emphasized in the Village's 2013 Environmental Action Plan. Although this plan is still generally relevant, an update is recommended given the change in dynamics and metrics of environmental regulations. However, a focus on the relevant environmental principles of this plan and thematic understanding of sustainability will be rooted in the comprehensive plan update.

# **EXISTING LAND USE**

The existing land use in Niles has been influenced by numerous factors. Some of these include its location in the region, past transportation and infrastructure improvements, large landowners, the Chicago River and the Forest Preserve. The location of Milwaukee Avenue provides a primary north/south corridor through Niles and bisects the entire length of the Village.

Land use in Niles is dominated by two primary categories, single-family residential and public uses. The public use category includes schools, cemeteries, Village Hall and facilities, parks and open space, and other public uses. Public land uses are significant in Niles and are typically exempt from paying property taxes.

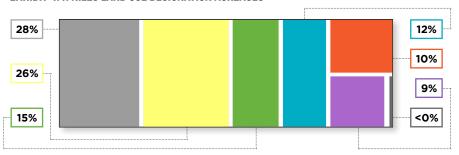
Commercial uses comprise the third largest category. These factors have helped establish a land use framework in Niles through its residential neighborhoods, commercial corridors and larger commercial districts.

Single-family residential neighborhoods are located throughout the Village. Commercial uses are generally located along the primary corridors and in two larger commercial districts: the Golf Mill Shopping Center and surrounding Milwaukee Avenue/Golf Road intersection; and the Touhy Triangle area. Industrial, manufacturing and employment generating uses are located, and limited to, the southwest portion of the Village near the Touhy Triangle surrounding Howard Avenue.

Multi-family uses are also located in various locations of the Village although not a significant land use. Most multi-family housing is located north of Dempster Street. Some senior housing and other multi-family housing types are concentrated along the Golf Road corridor, west of Milwaukee Avenue, where the Village boundary extends haphazardly to capture these properties.

Industrial land uses are concentrated in the southeast portion of the Village generally located along Touhy, Howard and Caldwell Avenues. The industrial area is well buffered from the rest of the Village by the North Branch of Chicago River, and the Forest Preserve.

### EXHIBIT 4.1: NILES LAND USE DESIGNATION ACREAGES\*



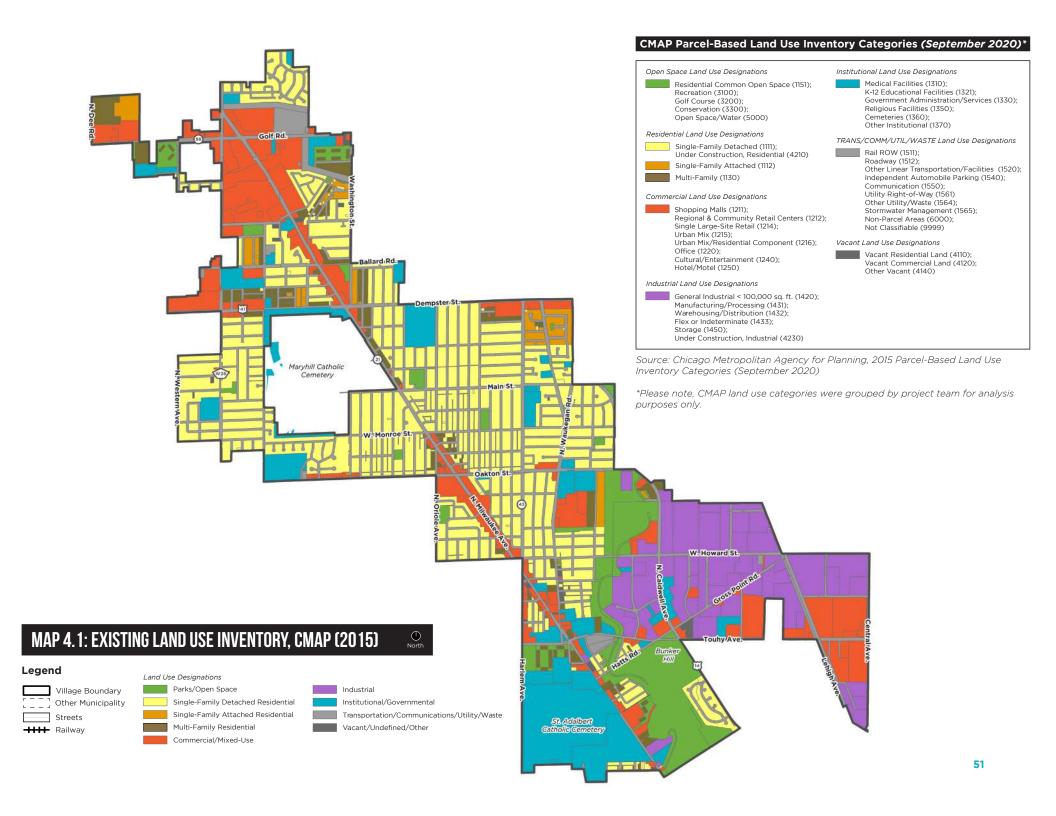
Source: Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning, 2015 Parcel-Based Land Use Inventory Categories (September 2020)

\*Note: Land Use acreages are gathered from CMAP GIS data (2015) based off of the categories established on the following page.

- Transportation/Communications/Utility/Waste (1,483 acres)
- Residential (All Types) (755 acres)
- Parks/Open Space (440 acres)
- Institutional/Governmental (420 acres)
- Commercial/Mixed-Use (380 acres)
- Industrial (352 acres)
- Vacant/Undefined/Other (15 acres)



Village of Niles Municipal Building, Institutional/Governmental Land Use Category Example



# **ZONING DISTRICTS**

# **ZONING ORDINANCE**

The Village's Zoning Ordinance was comprehensively updated in 2016. The purpose of the Zoning Ordinance is broad and includes many different objectives. However, the primary purpose is to promote and protect the public health, safety, and welfare of the community and regulate the use, compatibility, and intensity of land.

The zoning districts in the Village permit a wide range of uses and also include design guidance and standards. The Village has five residential districts, five commercial districts and one district each for entertainment and mixed-use (Touhy Triangle), manufacturing, office and research and public/institutional uses. A brief summary of each district is provided below.

## **Residential Districts**

Residential zoning districts are intended for residential uses of varying types and densities depending on the location throughout the Village. Single-family residential represents the largest land use and zoning district in the Village. Some compatible non-residential uses may be permitted in all residential zoning districts.

**R-1 Single-Family Residential District** - This district is intended for single-family residential neighborhoods with larger lot sizes. It has limited application in the Village and consists mostly of rectilinear lots along local streets in a traditional pattern of residential development. Most lots are rectilinear in shape and generally between 6,000-18,000 square feet in size.

**R-2 Single-Family Residential District** – This is the largest of all zoning districts in the Village and is made up of various single-family residential neighborhoods. Neighborhood consist of residential blocks and a grid street pattern with sidewalk and street trees. Most lots are rectilinear in shape and generally between 6,000-9,000 square feet in size.

**R-2-35 Single-Family Residential District** – This district has very limited application and is intended for small single-family residential lots, generally 35 feet in width. The R-2-35 district is divided into two subdistricts (R-2-35A and R-2-35B) based upon established front setbacks.

**R-3 Two-Family Residential District** – This district also has very limited application and provides for a transition zone of medium-density residential uses.

**R-4 Multi-Family Residential District** - This district includes a range of medium and higher density residential developments. It is intended to allow a range of housing types and may include multi-story residential buildings as well as small apartment complexes and multi-family dwellings. It is applied primarily in areas of the Village north of Dempster Street.

## **Commercial Districts**

Commercial zoning districts in the Village permit a wide range of retail, professional and personal services, and other commercial and offices uses. The districts are distributed geographically in the Village based on their intent and also provide a range of design guidance and character standards.

**C-1 Corridor Commercial District** - The purpose of this district is to promote commercial activity along Village corridors, oriented toward the local market. Mixed-use development is encouraged with residential dwelling units allowed above the ground floor. The majority of this district in the Village is located near Village Hall in a shopping center environment.

**C-2 General Commercial District** - This is the largest commercial district in the Village and includes the Golf Mill Shopping Center, Golf Milwaukee Plaza and the general area around the Milwaukee Avenue/Golf Road intersection. It is also applied to some other small areas of the Village. It's regional focus provides for large-scale development that generates traffic and parking demand.

**C-3 Milwaukee Avenue Form-Based District** - This district has specific applicability to the Milwaukee Avenue corridor generally south of Oakton to the Village boundary. It also includes the Village's "Design District". Its purpose is to provide for a high-quality mixed-use and pedestrian environment. It contains design standards related to building form, location, facades, parking, and architectural design.

**C-4 Milwaukee Avenue Mixed-Use District** - This district is only applied to a small area of the Village. Its purpose is to provide a mix of uses along the Milwaukee Avenue Corridor to help reinforce mixed-use and pedestrian oriented design standards.

**C-5 Urban Village District** - This district is currently not used but it does have relevance and could be applied to some areas of the Village in the future. Its intended as a redevelopment tool to convert larger single-purpose shopping centers into a mixed-use development with high-quality design standards, a high degree of pedestrian connectivity and urban design elements.

# Office, Industrial, Culture/Entertainment Districts

The Village has three districts related to a mix of light industrial, office, retail and entertainment uses. All of these districts are located in close proximity to each other in the southeastern portion of the Village between Touhy Avenue and Howard Street.

**OR Office-Research** - This district has limited application in the Village. It is currently applied to the Shure Corporation site and facility only. Its primary purpose is to accommodate research and development facilities and larger office structures or corporate headquarters that have no off-site impacts.

**M Limited Industrial District** - This district is applied to the southeast portion of the Village generally along Howard Street, Touhy Avenue, Caldwell Avenue, and Gross Point Road. Its purpose is to provide for a range of industrial, employment and office uses. Some standards also exist to limit off-site impacts.

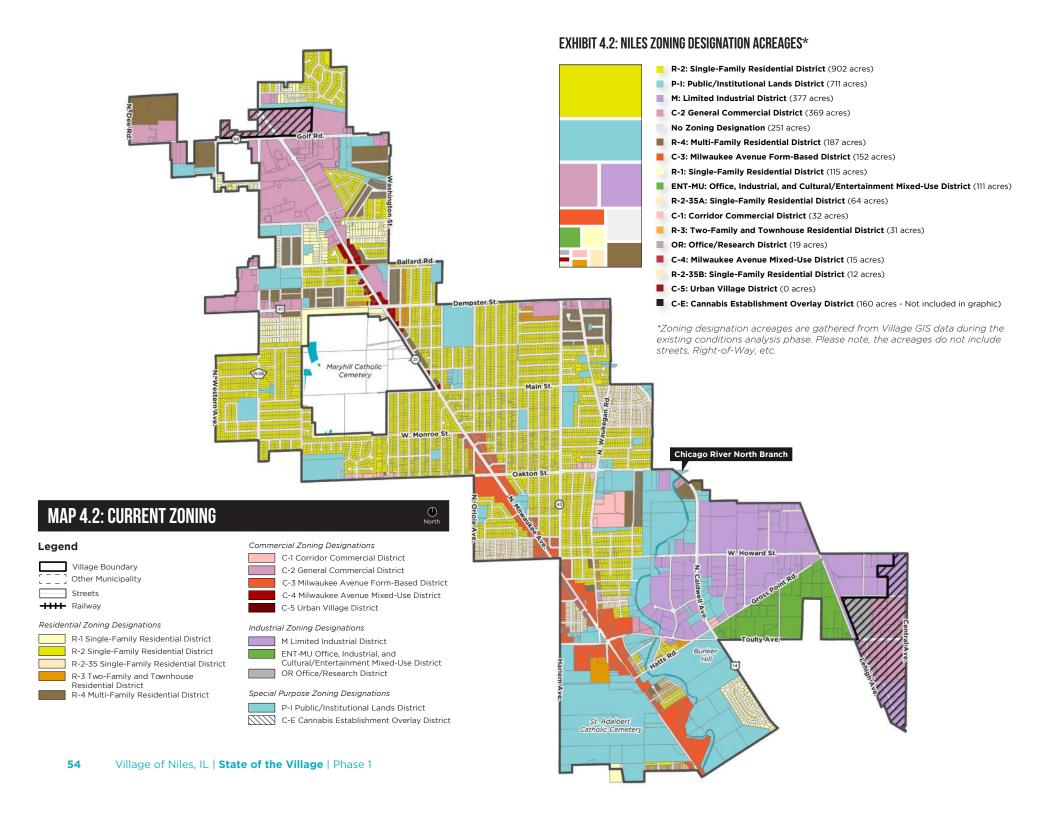
**ENT-MU Cultural/Entertainment-Mixed-Use District** - This district is applied to the area generally referred to as the Touhy Triangle. The purpose of this district is to provide for a mix of light industrial uses as well as recreational, entertainment and retail establishments consistent with the Village's plans for the Touhy Triangle cultural and entertainment district.

# **Special Purpose Districts**

Two special purpose districts also exist including an overlay district.

**P-I Public and Institutional** – This is the second largest zoning district in the Village. It accommodates a range public and quasipublic uses such as schools, library, religious facilities, Village Hall and other Village facilities, cemeteries, and other public uses. It also includes parks and open spaces which helps explain why it is the second largest in the Village.

**C-E Cannabis Establishment Overlay District** - This is an overlay district intended to regulate and establish standards for cannabis dispensing uses. This district was created in 2019 in response to the State of Illinois legalizing recreational marijuana use.



# **OPPORTUNITY AREAS**

There are a number of factors that point to potential opportunities for future growth within the Village, which extend beyond specific development sites. When examined comprehensively, the community's prevailing land use patterns, real estate market conditions, and regional transportation connections – among others – indicate areas of the Village that may offer broader strategic gains, requiring a coordinated approach between public policy and private sector investment.

While not an exhaustive summary of development sites or areas of opportunity within the Village, the map shown on page 57 provides a high-level overview of locations that may offer unique strategic value based on the conditions described below. In total, the opportunity areas identified in this assessment represent a substantial amount of land area that may be suitable for increased density and/or intensity of use – out of either opportunity or necessity. (Refer to Map 4.3)

# COMMUNITY CENTERS AND CORE DISTRICTS

Past plans have explored and encouraged the notion of creating a new 'downtown' or core area within the community featuring a dynamic mix of uses in a walkable, urban setting. This objective remains valid, however, considering the existence of multiple trade-areas within the Village, a multi-center approach may be worth exploring. Both Golf Mill Mall and the Touhy Triangle offer their own substantial advantages and are located far enough from each other in both location and market area, to be pursued as a two-track strategy.

# BUS RAPID TRANSIT AND ARTERIAL CORRIDORS

Until recently, public transportation options in Niles were limited to standard Pace Bus routes and the Village's free shuttle service, "The Free Bus". This constraint has now begun to change with the implementation of the Milwaukee Avenue Pulse express bus route and will reverse course dramatically as several other planned Pulse routes are brought online in the coming years. Niles will find itself in the unique position of not only being one of the first suburban communities to have express bus service, but to have numerous intersecting lines accessible by a substantial portion of the community. Future land use planning should consider the opportunities that new Pulse bus lines, as well as other potential modes of transit such as the envisioned Niles Metra Station, will provide and seek to leverage these regional-scale investments.

While the exact impact that the Pulse bus network will have on the local development market is unknown, the locations where multiple lines or modes of transportation intersect are likely to represent distinct target opportunities within the region and be attractive to the real estate development community. Accordingly, areas that are near major stations or benefit from overlapping transit access or coverage should be prioritized for transit-supportive land use and development policies. The zoning and land use policies for properties along the Village's major arterial corridors, which historically have been devalued due to the impacts associated with high traffic volumes, could also be revisited to determine if higher and better uses may emerge.

# SHOPPING CENTER REPOSITIONING

As identified in Section 3 of the report, Niles has a solid retail base with numerous shopping centers located at key locations throughout the Village. While these uses have been a substantial contributing factor to the Village's tax base in the past, they also represent potential liabilities as the retail sector continues to evolve. The challenges faced by the typical shopping center model - notably including an over reliance on personal automobile use and an oversupply of physical space - are overlapping and will likely persist for many years to come. The issue extends beyond the typical concern of vacant storefronts, which at 8.80 percent in October 2020 amounted to roughly 10.5 acres of built space, and into the physical attributes of the shopping center sites themselves. For example, most shopping centers in the Village fall within the C-2 General Commercial zoning district, encompassing nearly 370 acres of total land. However, only 26 percent (96 acres) of this land is actually covered by built, leasable space with much of the remaining site area being used for parking. While acceptance of lower parking ratios has been observed in recent years, the trend is likely to accelerate substantially as ride-share services become increasingly common and autonomous vehicle (AV) technology begins to emerge. The adoption of these technologies will have a dramatic impact on not only how people travel, but the size and circulation requirements of parking lots themselves. In assessing these factors as well as on-site conditions, it is possible that substantial portions of the Village's shopping centers could be infilled or redeveloped in the future.



**Golf Glen Mart Plaza**, 9000-9196 Golf Road, with excessive surface parking and a vacant retail anchor, large portions of the shopping center could be infilled with more diverse land uses.



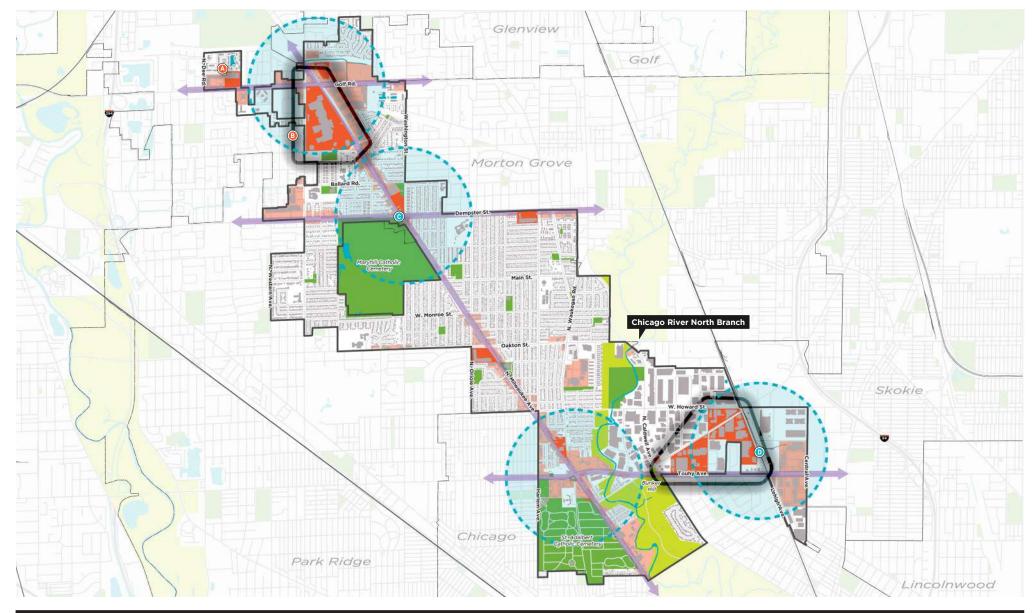
**Golf Mil Shopping Center**, 239 Golf Mill Center, large portions of the site could be repositioned if active commercial uses are consolidated along Golf Road/Milwaukee Avenue.



**Two major Pulse Express Bus routes** will eventually intersect at Milwaukee and Dempster. (Refer to page 77 - 78, Pace PULSE Arterial Bus Rapid Transit (ART) Service)



The potential introduction of a Pulse Express Bus route on Touhy Avenue and new Metra Station would be a transformational opportunity for the Touhy Triangle and surrounding area.



# MAP 4.3: FUTURE GROWTH OPPORTUNITIES





Village Boundary
Other Municipality
Water Bodies
Streets
Railway

Forest Preserve of Cook County
Parks, Open Space, and Cemeteries
Buildings
Commercial Zoning Designations
(C-1, C-2, C-3, C-4, C-5)

Major Community Center
Commercial Repositioning Opportunity
Potential TOD Priority Area
Primary Transit Corridors/Districts