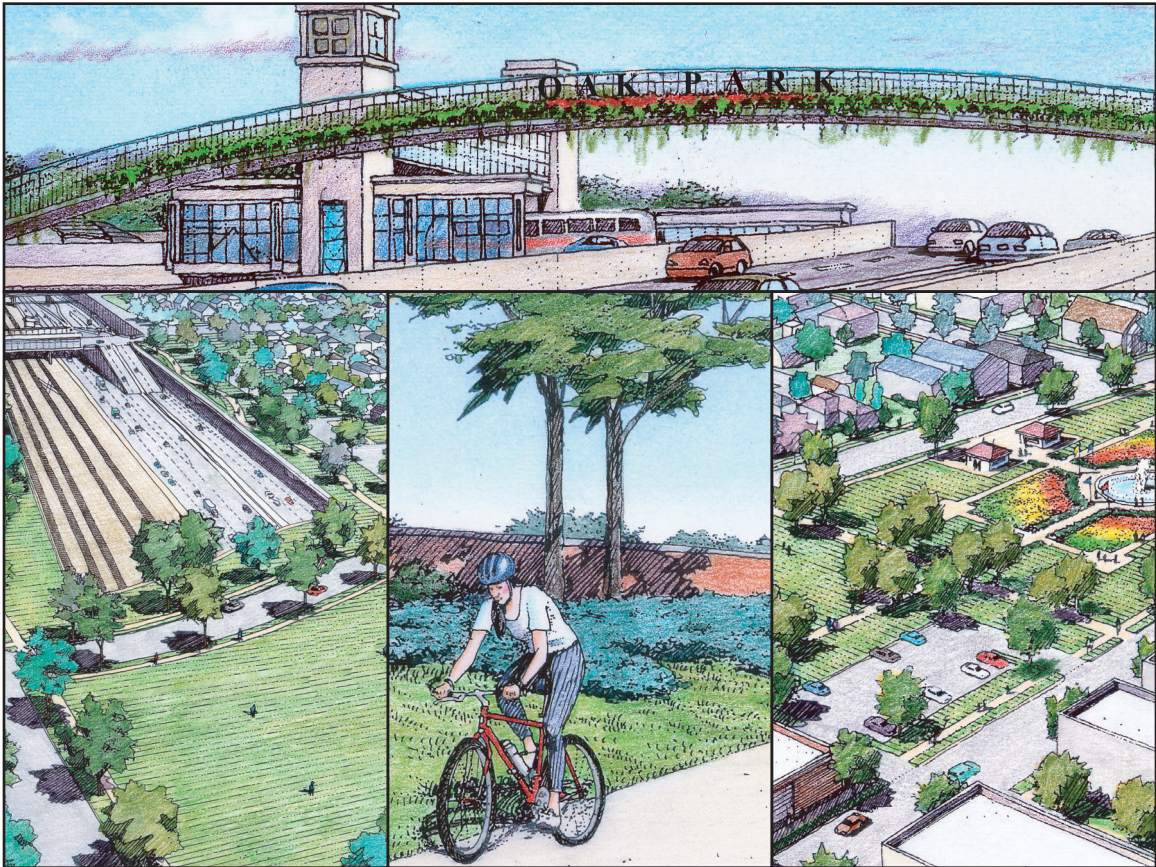


Cap the IKE Feasibility Study Final Report

March 8, 2005



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Table of Contents

<i>Table of Contents</i>	<i>i</i>
<i>Introduction</i>	<i>1</i>
Background.....	1
Purpose of the Study.....	2
Study Area.....	2
Conclusions of This Study	2
Next Steps	3
Contents of the Report.....	4
<i>Designed by Oak Park</i>	<i>8</i>
Stakeholder Advisory Committee.....	8
Key Stakeholder Interviews	9
Written Community Survey.....	9
Community Meetings / Workshops	9
Summary of Community Input.....	12
<i>The Community Preferred Concept Plan</i>	<i>15</i>
Flexibility for the Future	15
Variation One	18
Variation Two	23
Variation Three.....	25
Circulation and Access	28
Leveraging New Land: Market Opportunities.....	32
<i>Impact on the Community</i>	<i>35</i>
Noise Mitigation Features.....	35
Air Pollution Mitigation Features.....	37
Air Pollution Prevention Features	38
Green Building Principles.....	38
<i>Engineering and Construction</i>	<i>40</i>
Fire and Safety	40
Utilities Infrastructure.....	40
Stormwater Management.....	40
Construction.....	41

Comments on the Structural Feasibility of the Project	41
<i>Funding the Vision.....</i>	42
Cost Analysis	42
Potential Funding Sources.....	43
Case Studies.....	45
Comments on the Economic Feasibility of the Project.....	46
<i>Next Steps: Vision to Reality.....</i>	47
Challenges to Address.....	47
Next Phase Design and Engineering Activities.....	51
Timeline Estimates	53
<i>Support for Further Study.....</i>	54
The Stakeholder Advisory Committee – Citizen Appointees.....	54
The Stakeholder Advisory Committee – Ex-Officio Participants.....	56
Village of Oak Park Commissions	56
<i>Acknowledgements and Contacts.....</i>	64
<i>Table of Appendices.....</i>	65

Introduction

Background

The construction of the Eisenhower Expressway 50 years ago created a physical divide within the Village of Oak Park. Existing neighborhoods and the commercial areas along Oak Park Avenue and Harrison Street were separated by the new below-grade freeway. The Eisenhower literally cut through this established, inner-ring suburb, resulting in a diversity of development lining both sides of the expressway canyon: storefronts, single-family and multi-family homes, community buildings and parks.

While the Eisenhower, or “IKE”, enhanced automobile travel throughout the Chicago metropolitan region, its passage through Village left undesirable impacts on Oak Park. The quality and value of the housing stock near the expressway diminished relative to similar stock elsewhere in the Village, and the now fragmented commercial districts lost local customers and investment over time. The expressway’s current configuration also makes it difficult to enhance access to the CTA Blue Line El with park-and-ride lots and pedestrian and bicycle paths. Only six vehicular bridges were constructed over the expressway where a traditional grid pattern had previously tied the Village together on every other street. However, these bridges were designed to provide North-South circulation for automobiles and did not typically provide a welcoming, or even accessible, environment for pedestrians and bicyclists.

For years, residents of Oak Park searched for ways to bridge the physical and figurative divide from the Eisenhower and reestablish a vibrant and cohesive community that included businesses, homes, schools, and parks on both sides of the expressway. The results were a mix of big dreams and smaller, short-term steps. Local landowners, entrepreneurs and other community members began to fill storefronts or redevelop property with growing interest starting in the 1990s. The Harrison Street commercial district transformed into a thriving arts district, and investments were made in the Oak Park/IKE district, with the support and some assistance from the Village. In 1987, the Village, along with the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) conducted a study that looked at building over the Eisenhower expressway. A citizen committee published a report in December 2002 that identified concerns related to the long-standing and on-going impacts from the expressway on the community. In February 2003, a group of citizens published a report for the Village that provided research on cap projects that had been recently implemented in other parts of the United States. A collaborative planning project in 2003 with the University of Illinois at Chicago sought to unify commercial development and activity on both sides of the Eisenhower Expressway in the character plans produced, and encouraged Oak Park community stakeholders to become excited about the possibility of further breaking down the division and negative impacts that the Eisenhower created in Oak Park.

Purpose of the Study

The Illinois Department of Transportation's (IDOT) began planning for reconstruction of the Eisenhower Expressway and the bridges crossing it in 2002. This action prompted the Village of Oak Park to investigate the feasibility of capping the IKE to improve quality of life within the Village and re-link the north and south sides of the Village. Using a grant from the Illinois Tomorrow program, a *CAP the IKE* Project Team, including planning and engineering professionals from URS Corporation and Terra Engineering, along with other specialized consulting resources, was engaged to conduct a study to determine the feasibility of capping the IKE between Harlem Avenue and Austin. This Team benefited from significant and active participation from a Stakeholder Advisory Committee, members of the community, and Village staff.

The objective of the Feasibility Study was to help the Village determine what the scope, appearance and function of such a project, if any, would entail. This study is a first step in the process for designing and building a cap, and has produced a conceptual framework based on the inputs and preferences of the Oak Park community. Moving forward, as work on Oak Park's Cap proceeds through the more detailed design and engineering studies that are standard for every roadway construction project, particulars of the design components presented in this report may evolve to reflect future findings, but are anticipated to remain consistent with the character of the Community Preferred Concept Plan presented in this report.

Study Area

The Village of Oak Park is located just west of the City of Chicago. The Village's other neighbors include: Elmwood Park, River Forest, Forest Park, Berwyn, and Cicero. Oak Park is bounded by North Avenue on the north, Austin Boulevard on the east, Roosevelt Road on the south, and Harlem Avenue on the west.

The *CAP the IKE* Feasibility Study focused on the part of Oak Park surrounding the Eisenhower Expressway, roughly the southern third of the Village. The "Study Area" is bounded by Madison Street to the north, Austin Boulevard to the east, Roosevelt Road to the south, and Harlem Avenue to the west.

Conclusions of This Study

The *CAP the IKE* Feasibility Study examined several scenarios for addressing the negative environmental impacts from the expressway and weaving together the neighborhoods and business districts of Oak Park. The Community Preferred Concept evolved from a series of public meetings and workshops, as well as analysis of physical and economic conditions and technical considerations. The proposed design gives Oak Park what community members have dreamed of since the Eisenhower split their village in two: a system of buildings, open spaces, and multi-modal transit connections that

brings together the diverse residents, businesses, and community institutions that make Oak Park so unique.

In summary, the Community Preferred Concept Plan:

- Mitigates the negative environmental impacts generated by the Eisenhower Expressway by reducing expressway noise, improving air quality, encouraging use of alternative modes of transportation, and increasing green space and trees.
- Weaves Oak Park together by improving North-South and East-West connections for pedestrians, bicyclists, and automobiles; by reclaiming land over the expressway; and by creating new and expanded green spaces and parks.
- Encourages use of transit by improving CTA Blue Line Stations, enhancing commuter parking opportunities, planning mixed-used development near stations, and creating bicycle and pedestrian access amenities such as bike racks.

Illustrations of existing conditions in the Study Area and the proposed Community Preferred Concept Plan are located at the end of this section in the report.

The Community Preferred Concept Plan can truly be described as “Designed by Oak Park”, as it reflects a significant public participation process, and contains the amenities that were desired by project participants. Based on an analysis of the Plan from a technical, design, and financial perspective, *CAP the IKE* is a feasible plan, and merits further study.

Next Steps

This *CAP the IKE* Feasibility Study is the first step in a longer process to design and build a cap in Oak Park. The study identified challenges that will need further negotiation (e.g., the use of air rights) and next steps for further study (e.g., traffic impact analysis, detailed analysis and modeling of noise and air quality existing conditions and proposed impacts, review of IDOT Eisenhower reconstruction plans when available, and assessment of proposed air quality demonstration elements). These activities would be useful contributions to formal Phase I preliminary design, engineering, and environmental impact studies that are standard for every roadway construction project.

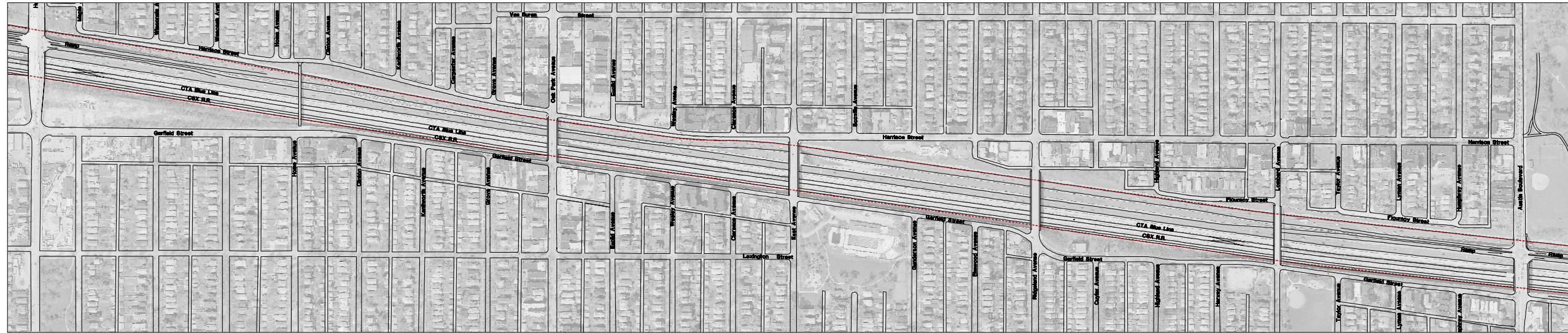
Pursuit of funding sources for construction of the Cap is another critical activity for the Village. Funding for the project is anticipated to be a mix of Federal, State and local sources, with the majority of funds coming from Federal transportation-related programs. The Village has already received a \$1 million allocation of funding to begin the next-step studies described above, and will continue to pursue other sources of funds to progress additional design and engineering activities.

Contents of the Report

The *CAP the IKE* Feasibility Study examined the needs, issues and opportunities that could be addressed through construction of a cap over some or all of the IKE's route through the Village of Oak Park. This report summarizes the results researched through the course of the Feasibility Study process:

- Project Background and Approach
- Community Vision for the Cap
- Concept Plans and Illustrations
- Cap Area Traffic and Circulation
- Engineering and Construction
- Cost Analysis and Funding Sources
- Implementation Techniques

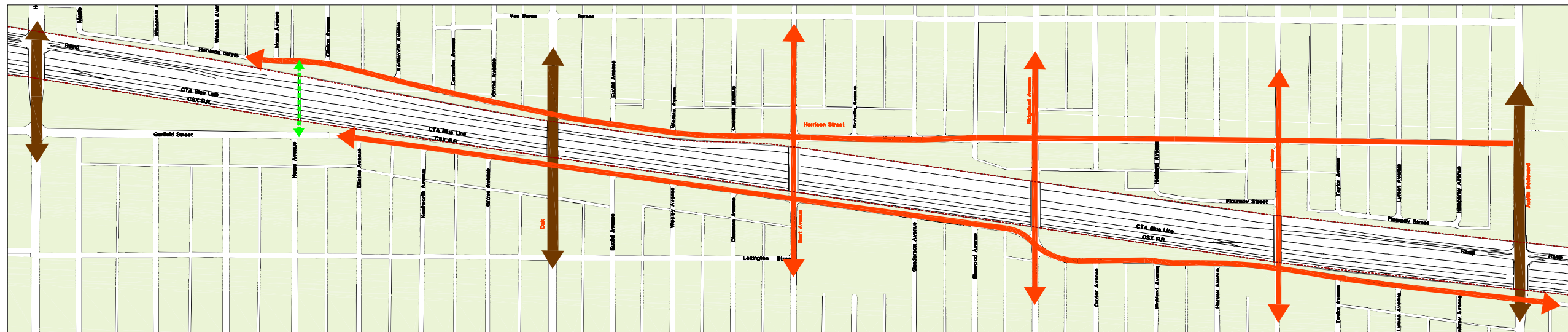
Aerial



CAP THE IKE

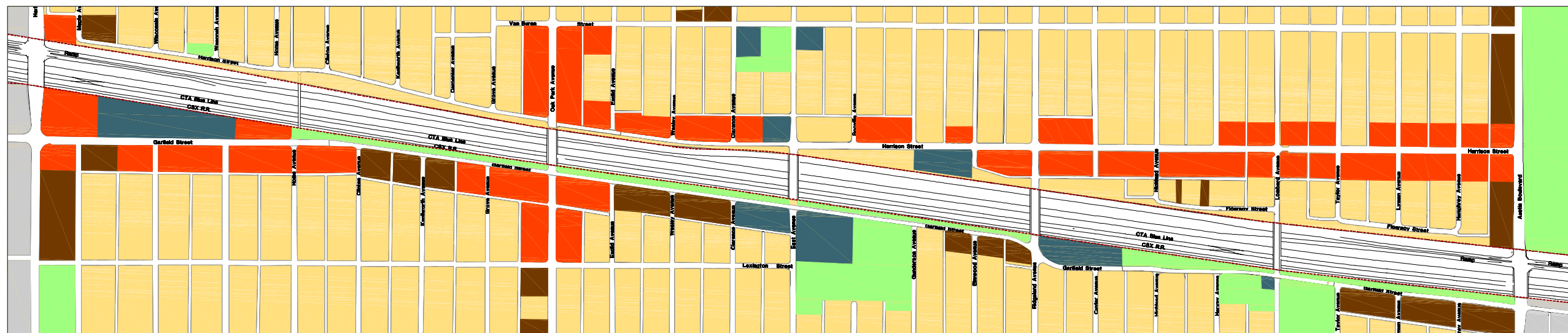
..... I-290 R.O.W.

Circulation



- Major Roads
- Minor Roads
- Pedestrian
- I-290 R.O.W.

Land Use



- Single Family
- Mixed Use
- Attached Residential
- Multi-family
- Public / Institution
- Passive Park
- Active Park
- I-290 R.O.W.

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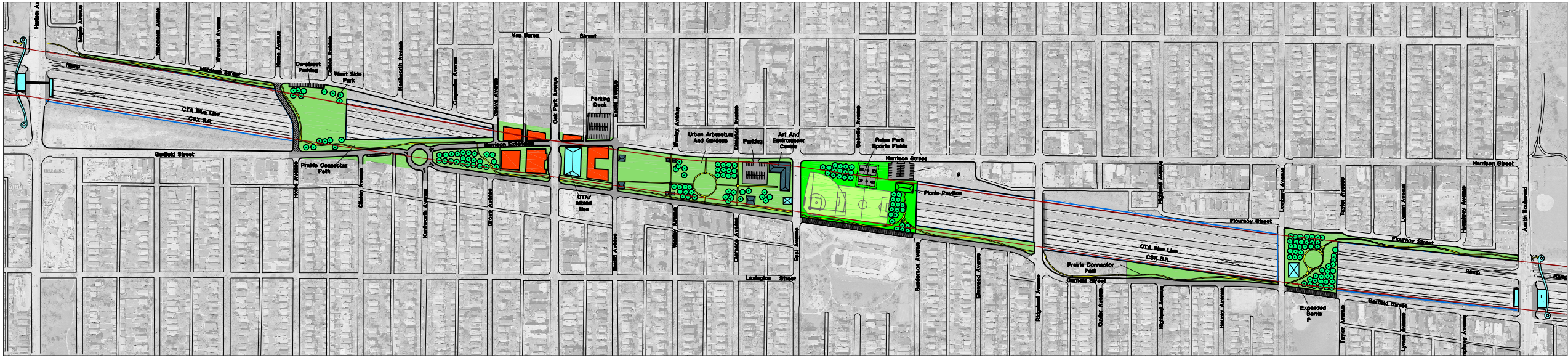
Community Preferred Concept

CAP THE IKE

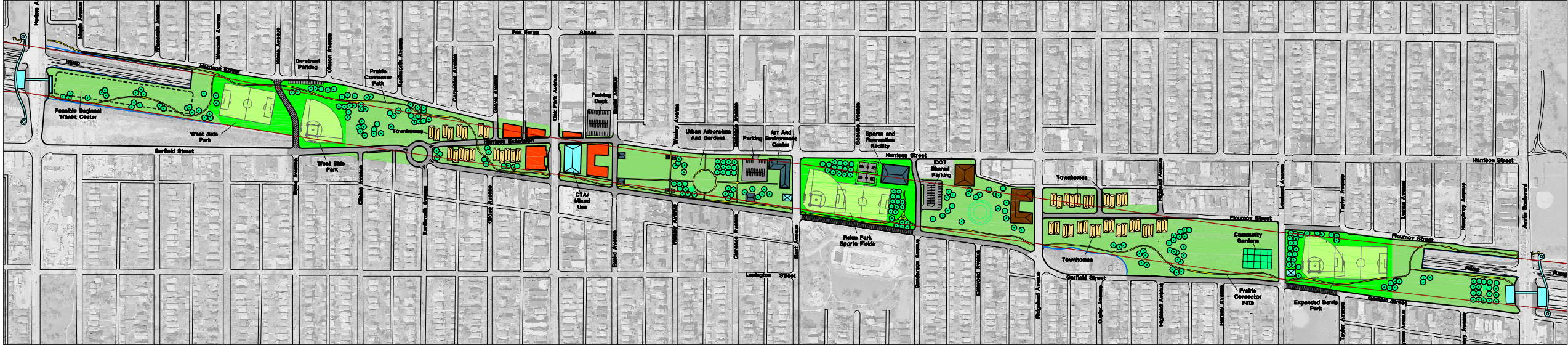
Variation 1



Variation 2



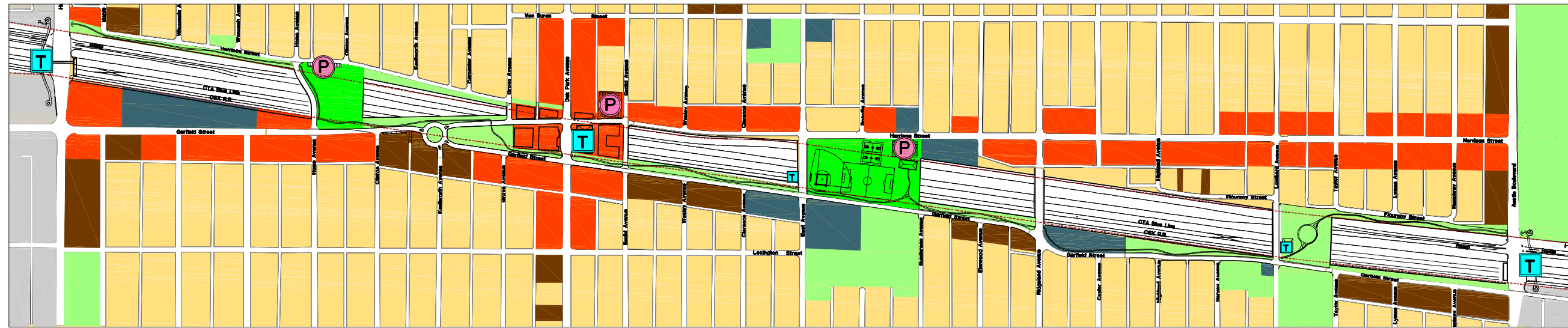
Variation 3



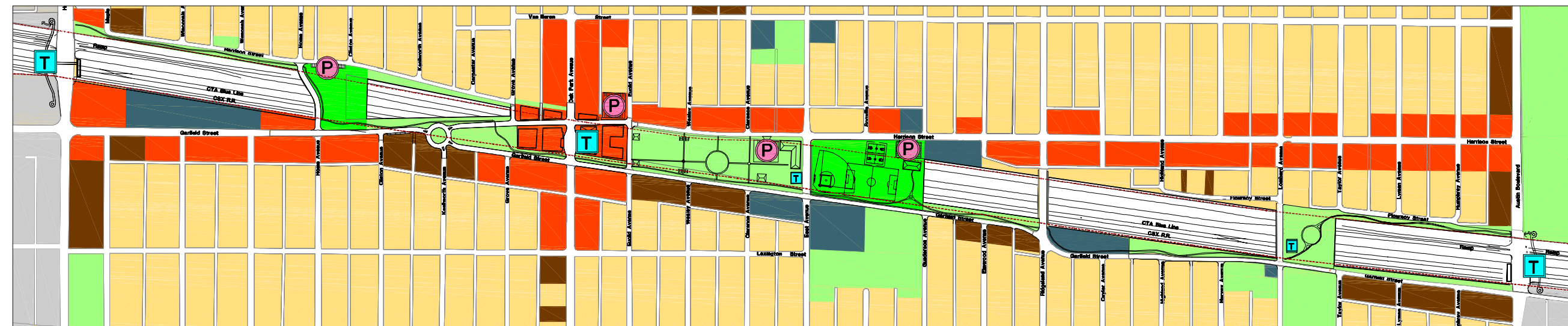
- Innovative Residential
- Multi Family
- Mixed Use
- Public / Institution
- Passive Parks
- Active Parks
- CTA
- New Street
- Special Paver
- I-290 R.O.W.
- Noise Barrier

CAP THE IKE

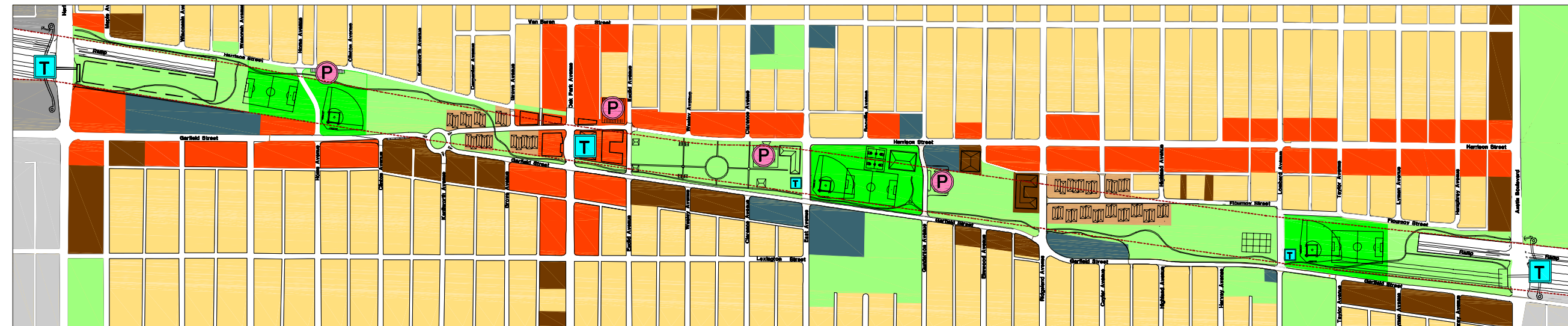
Variation 1



Variation 2



Variation 3



- Single Family
- Mixed Use
- Attached Residential
- Multi-family Residential
- Public / Institution
- Passive Park
- Active Park
- T CTA
- P Proposed Parking
- I-290 R.O.W.

Designed by Oak Park

Community input and participation were key elements of the *CAP the IKE* Feasibility Study. True to its historic patterns for active community involvement, over 300 residents, business owners, and other stakeholders within the Village were active participants in the study. The *CAP the IKE* Team engaged community stakeholders through five primary methods:

- Stakeholder Advisory Committee
- Stakeholder Interviews
- Community Survey
- Community Meetings/Workshops
- Website

The five categories of input varied in format and focus, but by using these inputs at different points in the planning process and from different members or groups within the community, the *CAP the IKE* Team was able to obtain a broad understanding of the community's wants and needs. The project website provided the community with opportunities to provide input and allowed residents to view information and results from the meetings and workshop throughout the planning process. A list of organizations and individuals who participated in the *CAP the IKE* Study through February 2005 is included in Appendix B. A timeline of community events graphically presenting participation is also included in the Appendix.

Stakeholder Advisory Committee

A Stakeholder Advisory Committee (SAC) of 18 community members appointed by the Village Board and representatives of 12 institutions were charged with providing detailed input and regular participation in the Feasibility Study. Members of the SAC are identified at the end of this report and in Appendix B. Formation of the SAC was useful in obtaining input and feedback from a broad constituency. The SAC met nine times throughout the course of the Study. Specific tasks performed by the SAC included:

- Conducting a visual survey to document positive and negative attributes of the Study Area and potential areas for improvement;
- Developing the written community survey;
- Identifying other project stakeholders to interview;
- Providing technical assistance and feedback to the Project Team;
- Reviewing and refining project deliverables in advance of the Community Meetings and Workshop to ensure that the public's vision and goals were appropriately incorporated;
and

- Reviewing the final conclusions of this Study.

Key Stakeholder Interviews

Between January and March of 2004, over 20 stakeholder organizations were interviewed individually about the Oak Park community, the impacts of the Eisenhower on the Study Area, and the *CAP the IKE* Project. These groups were selected to represent a diverse cross section of the community, and included educational institutions, community and neighborhood organizations, business groups, and government leaders. In February 2005, several institutions and government leaders were provided with the proposed community-preferred concept and given the opportunity to comment on its three variations. The participant list in Appendix B includes all interviewed stakeholders.

Written Community Survey

A written survey was developed and distributed to residents of Oak Park in February 2004. The survey was delivered to every household within two blocks of the Eisenhower Expressway on the north and south sides, and to a random sampling of 800 residents from throughout the Village. Over 1,300 responses were received; the response rate for the survey was 30%, which is above-average for this type of survey. The survey was also provided online through a website to allow for input from people who were not mailed a survey; an additional 60 survey responses were collected online. Survey participants were asked to share information and opinions related to current conditions in Oak Park and the Study Area, as well as potential changes to land use, services, or transportation available in the Study Area. The survey was designed to build on input that was gathered earlier from the SAC and at the November 2003 Community Meeting. A copy of the Survey instrument and a summary of responses were presented in the May 2004 *CAP the IKE* Feasibility Study Synthesis Report.

Community Meetings / Workshops

Five Community Meetings and one Workshop were conducted at key points during the Study to engage the participation of the general public and to obtain input and feedback.

Community Meeting #1 – November 2003

The first Community Meeting was conducted on November 20, 2003 at Village Hall. The meeting began with a description of the purpose and timeline of the feasibility study and examples of existing caps around the country. The participants listed and prioritized potential benefits and concerns associated with the capping the Eisenhower Expressway. This data was used as input in creation of conceptual designs of the Cap. A detailed discussion of the results of this meeting is presented in the *CAP the IKE* Feasibility Study Synthesis Report dated May 17, 2004 and prepared by URS Corporation.

Community Meeting #2 – April 2004

A second Community Meeting was held at Village Hall on April 28, 2004. The purpose of this meeting was to provide the community of Oak Park with the highlights of the synthesis report. The report aimed to serve as a “Foundation of Understanding” for the community prior to exploring specific cap concepts. The presentation summarized the results of the first several steps of the process including:

- Community Outreach
- Evaluation of existing land use, zoning, and community facilities
- Assessment of market and development potentials
- Preliminary analysis of infrastructure, environmental, and engineering considerations
- Case Studies of caps across the United States

The participants provided feedback on the synthesis report and asked questions regarding funding for the cap and how other caps have been funded. Comments from the April community meeting were used as input in creation of conceptual designs of the Cap.

Community Workshop #1 – May 2004

A Community Visioning Workshop was held for members of the Oak Park community on May 25, 2004 at Lincoln School. The purpose of the Workshop was to have community members create a “vision” for capping the Eisenhower through Oak Park by having them propose overall layouts, designs, organization of land uses and character for the IKE cap.

Workshop participants were divided into small groups. Each small group was given a large aerial of the study area and markers. For approximately one-hour, small group participants brainstormed ideas of how a cap could help achieve the community’s goals and objectives. A representative from each group presented their small group’s vision to the larger group. These same Visioning Workshop activities were also conducted with the SAC and Village Board on June 8, 2004. A summary of the “Big Ideas” presented by the Community and SAC Visioning Workshops’ small groups is provided in Appendix B.

Community Meeting #3 – July 2004

On July 20, 2004 residents of Oak Park participated in the third Community Meeting for the *CAP the IKE Feasibility Study*, held at Village Hall. The purpose of this meeting was to present six “Preliminary Design Concepts” that reflected the range of ideas gathered from the community and from technical research. These six Preliminary Concepts were developed based on feedback and participation from the SAC and community residents during the earlier Visioning Workshops and Community Meetings. Participants ranked the various components from the six Preliminary Concepts, according to preference and importance. Illustrations of the six Preliminary Design Concepts and the overall ranking of design

components are provided in Appendix B. The five design components with the most positive responses are listed below.

- Pollution Prevention (desired by 56% of participants)
- Commercial District at Oak Park Avenue (52%)
- New Park or Recreational Area (49%)
- East/ West bike and pedestrian pathway (43%)
- Expansion of Rehm Park (37%)

Community Meeting #4 – August 2004

On August 12, 2004 at Village Hall, residents of Oak Park participated in the fourth Community Meeting for the *CAP the IKE* Feasibility Study. The purpose of this meeting was to present three “Cap Concepts” for public review and discussion. The three Cap Concepts had been refined from the six Preliminary Concepts evaluated by the community in July. These three Cap Concepts were then presented at the August community meeting and through a display at Village Hall. The three Cap Concepts were:

1. “A Thousand Trees”
2. “Greenspace”
3. “Invisible IKE”

The community reviewed the three Cap Concepts, and provided feedback on the Concepts, as well as the individual design components contained in each. The ten highest rated design components are listed below:

- Prairie Path Connector (desired by 100% of participants)
- Improved transit center at Harlem Avenue (99%)
- Improved transit center at Austin Boulevard (99%)
- Urban arboretum & gardens near Conservatory (96%)
- West Side park (96%)
- Improved transit access at East Avenue (94%)
- Improved transit station at Oak Park Avenue (93%)
- Improved transit access at Lombard Avenue (92%)
- Rehm Park Youth Sports Center (90%)

- Mixed-use development at Oak Park Avenue (90%)

Illustrations of the three Cap Concepts are located in Appendix B, along with details of the community's overall ranking of the components from the three Cap Concepts. This feedback was used to develop the single Community Preferred Concept.

Community Meeting #5 – January 2005

The final Community Meeting of the *CAP the IKE* visioning process was held on January 19, 2005 to review the Community Preferred Concept, which represents the culmination of an intensive, year-long study, and the synthesis of elements or components desired by the community. A single Preferred Concept was presented with three variations based on cost, an approach intended to accommodate various levels of potential funding that may be available in the future. All three variations incorporate features found most appealing by the community as expressed throughout the study process.

Oak Park Residents were provided the opportunity to comment on the proposed concept through the following modes of communication:

- Handout at the Community Meeting
- Display area at Village Hall
- Website / email
- Mailed or hand-delivered letter

From the information received between January 19 and February 18, 2005, 85 % of the respondents indicated support and agreement for the proposed cap concept and 15% indicated opposition or disagreement. A summary of the community comments is provided in Appendix B.

Summary of Community Input

Overall, the input gathered from community members touched on the existing assets and weaknesses of the Oak Park community, the impact of the Eisenhower Expressway on the community and characteristics of the Study Area, desired and undesired land uses in the Study Area, and potential benefits and concerns related to the Cap. Some important common goals that have emerged from the community outreach activities are outlined below.

- **Serve as a national and regional environmental model** – This project would showcase Oak Park as model for similar projects. This project will not only meet all the appropriate air quality regulations for constructing a tunnel, but also would exceed requirements by being the first in the country to actually propose to clean the air in a vehicular tunnel, thus improving the air quality for adjacent communities.

The project would also be a national example of how to reclaim land over a multi-modal transportation corridor for community space and parkland, and how to make a community friendlier for improved and expanded public and alternative modes of transportation.

Construction of the cap, including structural elements as well as the developed components on the surface of the cap, should also strive to demonstrate environmental stewardship. Guidelines for Green Highway rating, LEED certification, and Energy-Star rankings should be incorporated into design and construction techniques where appropriate to promote sustainability.

- **Reduce impacts of pollution** - Noise and air pollution impact the properties immediately adjacent to the Eisenhower and pedestrians crossing the expressway. Respondents to the community survey who live within two blocks of the Eisenhower were asked if they would prefer a noise barrier adjacent to the expressway or a cap over the expressway at the end of their street. More than twice the number of respondents reported that they would prefer a cap, compared to the number of respondents who indicated they would prefer a noise barrier wall; there was little support for no action.
- **Reconnect the community** – The expressway creates a physical, social and symbolic barrier between neighborhoods and business districts south of the Eisenhower and those north of the Eisenhower. People frequently stated that the Eisenhower restricts access between the north and south sides of Oak Park, whether because of a real lack of crossing points for various modes of transportation, or because of a perceived separation and distance. Community survey results indicated respondents felt that additional safe and accessible crossings for bicycles, pedestrians, wheelchairs and strollers are needed.

Some community members noted that transporting students from neighborhoods on the north side of the expressway to elementary schools on the south side is a challenge associated with the location and condition of the expressway. District 97 provides bus service for students who must cross the Eisenhower to get to school. In many cases, these students travel a greater distance to get to a crossing point than if a direct route were available, putting them over the distance threshold for required bussing.

Residents expressed the sentiment that Oak Park neighborhoods south of the expressway seem separated from the rest of the community. Community members characterize the area south of the expressway as having smaller homes and lower incomes relative to other areas of Oak Park, which some residents feel contributes to the sense of division and lack of community cohesion. Some community participants also expressed an opinion that the Village government is less attentive or responsive to the residents south of the Eisenhower.

- **Improve mobility and access to public transit** – Community members noted that the CTA Blue Line is an asset to the Study Area and the Oak Park community. Seventy-two

percent of the community survey respondents indicated that they use the CTA Blue Line. However, the location of the El in the center of the Eisenhower makes use of the CTA Blue Line less convenient and desirable. Stations seem inaccessible, unsafe and unfriendly because passengers must cross part way over the expressway to a station entrance and then wait on open platforms in the middle of the expressway lanes.

The Community Preferred Concept Plan

The Community Preferred Concept Plan represents the culmination of a community-driven process. It was developed in response to public and SAC feedback, and represents the top ranking elements that were desired for the cap configuration and use.

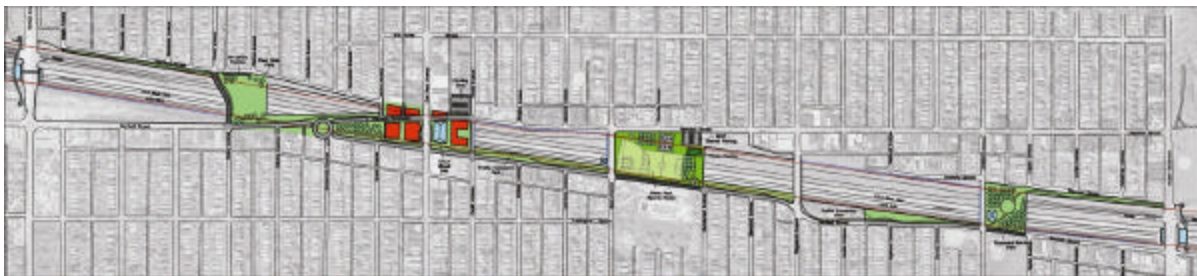
The Community Preferred Concept:

- Mitigates the negative environmental impacts generated by the Eisenhower Expressway by reducing expressway noise, improving air quality, encouraging use of alternative modes of transportation, and increasing green space and trees.
- Encourages use of transit by improving CTA Blue Line Stations, enhancing commuter parking opportunities, planning mixed-used development near stations, and creating bicycle and pedestrian access amenities such as bike racks.
- Promotes walking and bicycling as both a mode of transportation and as a leisure activity by providing new pedestrian and bicycle trails.
- Weaves Oak Park together by improving North-South and East-West connections for pedestrians, bicyc lists, and automobiles, by reclaiming land over the expressway, and by creating new and expanded green spaces and parks.

Flexibility for the Future

Based on the extensive public input process for the *CAP the IKE* Feasibility Study, the Oak Park community indicated overwhelming support for a cap configuration that fully covers the Eisenhower through its entire route through the Village, containing the features summarized above. However, to address current uncertainties about the fiscal conditions at the future point at which the Eisenhower is reconstructed, three variations of the Community Preferred Concept have been prepared. All variations contain the amenities most highly desired by the community.

Variation One of the Community Preferred Concept contains the amenities desired by the community, as generally described above.



Land Uses

- Total new land: 24 acres
- Open/park space – Active: 5 acres
- Open/park space – Passive: 12 acres
- Mixed-use development: 3 acres

Transportation Improvements

- North-South Street Connections: Home Avenue
- East-West Street Connections: Harrison street Extension
- Prairie Path Connector (bicycles and pedestrians): 1.7 miles
- Pedestrian and bicycle amenities

Parking

- On-street at Harrison Street, Home Avenue
- Parking structure at Euclid and Harrison (currently Lot 1)
- Shared parking lot at Gunderson Avenue IDOT office

Environmental Improvements

- Expressway noise mitigation
- Air pollution prevention through reduction of vehicle trips

Transit Improvements

- Improvements to CTA Blue Line El stations at Harlem Avenue, Oak Park Avenue, and Austin Boulevard, including main station entrances and auxiliary station entrances

Public Facilities

- West Side Park
- Rehm Park Expansion
- Barrie Park Expansion

Variation Two builds on the Variation One base, adding an arboretum and gardens, an Art/Environmental Center, passive recreational space, parking, and air pollution mitigation techniques.



Land Uses

- Total new land: 29 acres
- Open/park space – Active: 5 acres
- Open/park space – Passive: 16 acres
- Mixed-use development: 3 acres

Transportation Improvements

- New North-South Street Connections: Home Avenue, Euclid Avenue
- New East-West Street Connections: Harrison street Extension
- Prairie Path Connector (bicycles and pedestrians): 2.0 miles
- Pedestrian and bicycle amenities

Environmental Improvements

- Expressway noise mitigation
- Air pollution cleaning through bio-filtration pilot
- Air pollution prevention through reduction of vehicle trips

Transit Improvements

- Improvements to CTA Blue Line El stations at Harlem Avenue, Oak Park Avenue, and Austin Boulevard, including main station entrances and auxiliary station entrances

Parking

- On-street at Harrison Street, Home Avenue
- Parking structure at Euclid and Harrison (currently Lot 1)
- Shared parking lot at Gunderson Avenue IDOT office

Public Facilities

- West Side Park
- Rehm Park Expansion
- Barrie Park Expansion
- Arts or Environment/Nature Center
- Arboretum

Variation Three represents a full Harlem-to-Austin cover over the IKE, and adds significant open and green space to Variation Two, innovative air pollution mitigation technology, additional locations for low-density residential development opportunities, and potential for a regional transportation center. This variation was most preferred by the community.



Land Uses

- Total new land: 57 acres
- Open/park space – Active: 13 acres
- Open/park space – Passive: 29 acres
- Mixed-use development: 2.5 acres
- Residential development: 6 acres

Environmental Improvements

- Expressway noise mitigation
- Air pollution cleaning through air scrubbing system pilot
- Air pollution prevention through reduction of vehicle trips

Transportation Improvements

- North-South Street Connections: Home Avenue, Euclid Avenue, Gunderson Avenue
- East-West Street Connections: Harrison street Extension, Flounroy Street Extension
- Prairie Path Connector (bicycles and pedestrians)
- Pedestrian and bicycle amenities

Transit Improvements

- Improvements to CTA Blue Line El stations at Harlem Avenue, Oak Park Avenue, and Austin Boulevard, including main station entrances and auxiliary station entrances
- Potential Regional Transit Center at Harlem Avenue

Parking

- On-street at Harrison Street, Home Avenue
- Parking structure at Euclid and Harrison (currently Lot 1)
- Shared parking lot at Gunderson Avenue IDOT office

Public Facilities

- West Side Park
- Rehm Park Expansion
- Barrie Park Expansion
- Arts or Environment/Nature Center
- Arboretum
- Community Gardens
- Rehm Park Sports and Recreation Center

Variation One

Components of the “base” variation of the Community Preferred Concept include:

- **Prairie Path Connector** – The Illinois Prairie Path (IPP) is a 61-mile-long trail for biking, hiking, jogging and other activities which was established in 1965 in DuPage County along a former railroad right-of-way. Since its founding, the IPP has extended west into Kane County and east into Cook County. The path’s current eastern terminus is in Maywood, and, according to the IPP Corporation, plans are under consideration to extend it further to the Forest Park Transit Center. The Community Preferred Concept for capping the Eisenhower extends the path through the Village of Oak Park from its border with Forest Park into Columbus Park in the City of Chicago, where it will connect to an existing bicycle path. It is expected that the Prairie Path Connector would be actively used not just by residents of Oak Park, but also by avid cyclists from throughout the western suburbs.
- **Expressway Noise Mitigation** – Sound walls are proposed in locations where a cap or deck does not cover the expressway. These walls are recommended to be eight feet high, and can be attractively bermed and landscaped. The materials for the walls can be attractive. The sound walls also provide a safety feature, to prevent access to the expressway from the surface level.
- **Gateway Features** – Noteworthy architectural features are proposed at Harlem Avenue and Austin Boulevard indicating entry into Oak Park. Such features could reflect design and signage elements used elsewhere in the Village, as well as contain plants and decorative materials. At Harlem Avenue, the gateway feature could incorporate a pedestrian bridge to the Harlem Avenue CTA Blue Line Station.



Prairie Path Connector and Noise Wall

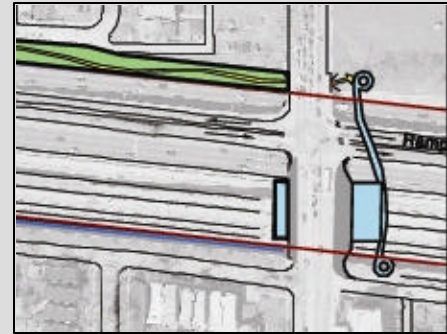


Gateway Feature

- **Improved Transit Stations** – Community input was highly favorable for renovations at the CTA Blue Line El stations at Harlem Avenue, Oak Park Avenue, and Austin Boulevard, as well as the secondary entrances to these stations at East Avenue and Lombard Avenue. These stations serve residents of Oak Park, as well as commuters from surrounding suburbs.

Project participants voiced concerns about safety, comfort, and ease-of-use at the current stations, all of which involve long, open ramps to train platforms located in the center of the expressway. Concepts to rebuild the stations to be more user-friendly, safety-conscious, and protected from the elements would encourage greater usage of the CTA trains among people with disabilities, pedestrians, bicyclists, and bus or carpool riders. Improvements to the Harlem Avenue, Oak Park Avenue, and Austin Boulevard CTA stations would include all station entrances, station amenities, platform access, and the platforms themselves. Additional general information on the proposed transit station improvements is included later in this report in the “Circulation and Access” section; station-specific improvements in each variation are discussed in this section.

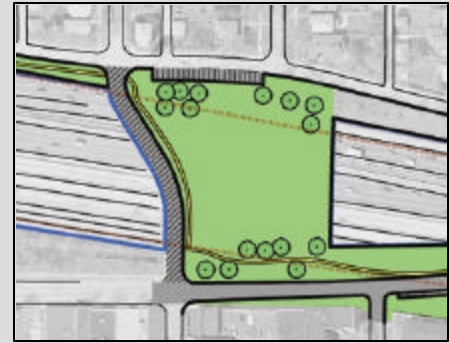
The Austin Boulevard station is served by a main station entrance and an auxiliary entrance, both of which are located at street level. Currently, the primary access point for the Austin station is on Austin Boulevard, with the auxiliary entrance on Lombard Avenue. In Variation One, the main station entrance shifts from Austin Boulevard to Lombard Avenue. This design provides safer pedestrian access to the station as fewer people will need to cross Austin Boulevard and the expressway ramps to access the main entrance. It also provides more convenient access from the Prairie Path to the station.



Prairie Path Connector, Gateway and CTA Station entrance at Austin Boulevard

- **Expansion of Home Avenue Bridge** – A new vehicular crossing at Home Avenue is proposed in response to project participants’ support for additional North-South points of access across the expressway and to provide access to the new West Side Park. The existing Home Avenue crossing is only a pedestrian crossing.
- **New West Side Park** – East of the new Home Avenue bridge, a three-acre deck is proposed to contain a new park for residents of the western parts of Oak Park. The park would be large enough to provide space for active recreation (such as a youth soccer field) as well as for passive recreation (like picnicking). The northern edge of the park will accommodate on-street angled parking for park visitors, and will replace spaces lost due to the addition of the Prairie Path Connector on Harrison Street between Harlem Avenue and Home Avenue.
- **Creation of Harrison Street Extension** – In addition to more North-South access, the community supported a more efficient East-West connector near the IKE that creates a new central focal point at the Oak Park / IKE business district with a new, safer intersection over the IKE. In addition, some locations of Harrison Street and Garfield Street were narrowed to substandard design during the IKE construction, and are heavily congested.

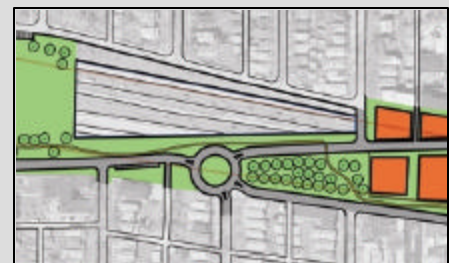
The proposed Harrison Street Extension creates a new segment of roadway connecting Harrison Street on the east at Oak Park Avenue with Garfield Street on the west at Kenilworth Avenue. A four-legged roundabout using modern design is suggested at the intersection of the Harrison Street Extension, Kenilworth Avenue, and Garfield Street to manage traffic flow and to serve as a traffic-calming device to minimize high-speed thru-traffic. A partial cap between Kenilworth and Euclid Avenue supports the Harrison Street Extension. This East-West Connector will help strengthen the Oak Park



Home Avenue Extension and West Side Park



Home Avenue Extension and West Side Park, looking west



Harrison Street Extension

Avenue and Harrison Street business districts by improving access to these two areas and by improving the safety and performance of the current Harrison Street and Garfield Street intersections at Oak Park Avenue.

- Commercial Connection of Oak Park Avenue** – The community recognized that a cap provided an opportunity to bridge the current divide between the north and south legs of the South Oak Park Avenue business district. The current bridge’s semi-arched structure and openness to the elements provide a disincentive for shoppers to visit the establishments located on both sides of the expressway, which weakens the strength and unity of the business district. The Community Preferred Concept proposes a deck between Kenilworth (as discussed above) east to Euclid Avenue, including a new North-South connection across the IKE on Euclid.

The Variation One concept illustrations show four buildings on the west side of Oak Park Avenue on the cap, and one new building on the east side of Oak Park Avenue, behind a new CTA station. The new buildings should be developed in an architectural style that is respectful of adjacent existing buildings with historic and architectural significance for the community, and in a manner that permits access and loading for existing businesses. The effect of this build-out across the cap is a continuous streetscape, in contrast to today’s chasm. Market-based opportunities for private or public development at Oak Park Avenue are discussed later in this report.

A new parking structure is proposed at the northwest corner of Harrison and Euclid on the site of Lot 1, to alleviate the parking shortages experienced in this neighborhood and commercial district.

- Expansion of Rehm Park** – In response to the desire for increased park space, the Community Preferred Concept contains a northern expansion of



Commercial Connection of Oak Park Avenue, looking south



Commercial Connection of Oak Park Avenue



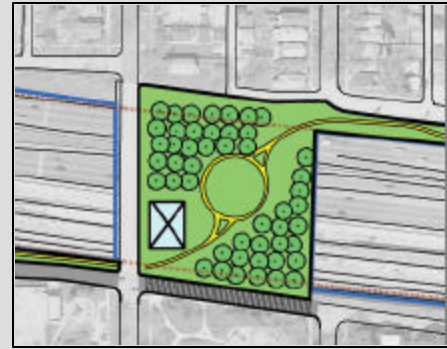
Rehm Park Expansion



Rehm Park Expansion, looking north over the existing park

Rehm Park on a partial cap between the East Avenue bridge and Gunderson Avenue. The existing park, while currently large, requires additional space to accommodate the variety of activities and programs desired by park district users and to create a center of activity to support the Rehm pool facility. Potential amenities in the expansion could include new sports fields and a picnic facility or pavilion. Additional parking for the park will be available in an adjacent lot shared with the IDOT office.

- **Expansion of Barrie Park** – Likewise, Barrie Park is proposed for expansion in response to high interest for park space. The park will expand north from the current boundaries on a partial cap between the Lombard Avenue bridge and Taylor Avenue. This park is envisioned as passive green space to complement the actively programmed spaces planned in the renovated Barrie Park and Barrie Center. It will be bisected by the Prairie Path Connector as it moves from the north side of the IKE to the south. The park will also contain an updated and expanded main entrance on Lombard Avenue to the CTA Blue Line Austin station.



Barrie Park Expansion

Variation Two

Variation Two of the Community Preferred Concept expands Variation One's partial caps at the center of the Village, covering the airspace between Euclid Avenue and East Avenue. This space adds the following components to those elements included in Variation One:

- **Air Quality** – Increased portions of the below-grade expressway will be capped in Variation Two, resulting in greater necessity and greater opportunity to employ innovative air pollution cleaning systems. A bio-filtration system will be piloted in this variation, removing both noxious gas and particulate matter generated by automobile traffic on the expressway. This technology is presented in greater detail later in the report.
- **Expressway Noise Mitigation** – Sound walls are proposed in locations where a cap or deck does not cover the expressway. These walls are recommended to be eight feet high, and can be attractively bermed and landscaped. The materials for the walls can be attractive. The sound walls also provide a safety feature, to prevent access to the expressway from the surface level.
- **Arboretum and Gardens** – The Oak Park Conservatory is a well-liked, highly-valued and much-visited community amenity. Increased park space allows for the construction of an arboretum and garden facility on the cap as well as a focal point to the design and central public meeting area.
- **Art and Environment Center** – A center for art and/or environment and nature is proposed to host cultural, educational and interpretive events and displays, located at the southwest corner of East Avenue and Harrison Street.
- **Open space** – The Concept contains additional passive recreation space, surrounding the Arboretum and Art and Environment Center. An updated auxiliary entrance to the Oak Park Avenue CTA Blue Line station would be located in this park space at East Avenue.



Example noise wall

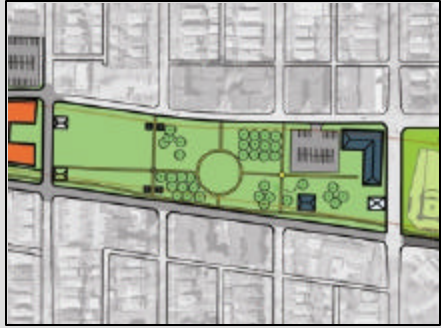


Cap between Euclid Avenue and East Avenue, looking southwest



Cap between Euclid Avenue and East Avenue, looking northwest

- **Parking** – Automobile and bicycle parking for the additional recreational and entertain amenities proposed in this variation could be accommodated with a new lot adjacent to the Art and Environment Center, accessible from Harrison Street.
- **Improved Transit Stations** – Renovations to the CTA Blue Line El stations at Harlem Avenue, Oak Park Avenue, and Austin Boulevard (including the secondary entrances to these stations at East Avenue and Lombard Avenue) would follow the designs proposed for Variation One.



Cap between Euclid and East

Variation Three

The full-cap version of the Community Preferred Concept:

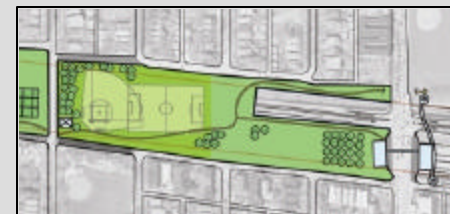
- Maximizes potential for full use of cap by building continuously from Harlem to Austin;
- Provides greatest potential for environmental impact, both within Oak Park and as an example in other communities;
- Weaves Oak Park together where previously divided by expressway through new North/South and East/ West connections and reclaimed land over the expressway;
- Provides evenly distributed green space for both active and passive recreation;
- Improves housing opportunities, parking, transit, and mixed-use opportunities;
- Provides community-based cultural activities such as an arts/environment center, community gardens and an urban arboretum; and
- Creates a destination for both Oak Park residents and visitors, and a potential site for a Regional Transit Center.

This variation of the Community Preferred Concept was most popular among community participants, and expands the components proposed in Variations One and Two, adding:

- **Open Space** – The full cap creates additional passive and active recreation space at the far west and east ends of the cap. The West Side Park proposed in Variations One and Two is expanded westward approximately to Wenonah Avenue for additional active recreation space for sports fields. Passive green space is envisioned for the area between Harlem Avenue and Wenonah Avenue.

At the east end of the Village, Variation Three adds a cap between Gunderson Avenue and Austin Boulevard, much of which is earmarked for green space. The zone between Harvey Avenue and Lombard Avenue could be designated for Community Gardens, where local residents could cultivate fruits, vegetables and flowers. Barrie Park is expanded eastward, to accommodate additional sports fields or other programmable space.

Passive space would surround the CTA station at Austin Boulevard and the IKE access ramps,



Barrie Park Expansion, Gateway, and CTA Stations between Lombard and Austin



Rehm Park Expansion with Recreation Center

providing an element of tranquility to temper the busy-ness of the Austin / IKE intersection. In this variation, the primary entrance to the Austin Boulevard station platform remains on Austin. The gateway feature at Austin could incorporate a pedestrian bridge connection to the station entrance.

- Rehm Park Recreation Center** – With additional space to the east of the Rehm Park Expansion, the community would have sufficient room to relocate the parking lot serving the IDOT office located at Harrison and Elmwood onto the cap. This movement would create a space for a new recreation center building in the Rehm Park Expansion. Together with the park expansions proposed in Variations One and Two, this new recreation center would enable the Park District to provide new and varied indoor programs to residents.
- Community Gardens** – Community gardens are envisioned in the open space just west of Lombard Avenue. This area will give residents a space to garden, and involve residents as active participants in the care of the Cap.
- Residential Development** – The community could choose to use part of the newly created space to develop residential housing. Targeted locations in Variation Three include the area east of Kenilworth, behind the new mixed-use developments along Oak Park Avenue, and between Ridgeland and Highland. Multi-unit low-density housing styles such as townhomes, condominiums or apartments of no more than three stories are envisioned for this space. The development of housing and the continuation of the street grid over the Cap further blend the former boundary of the expressway into the existing fabric of the community.
- New Connections** – Creation of cap space permits the establishment of two additional connection points for pedestrians, bicyclists, and autos onto and across the expressway space. Flournoy Street,



Parking for Rehm Park, IDOT and low-density, multi-family residential



Community Gardens at Lombard



Example townhome development



Townhomes between Kenilworth Avenue and Oak Park Avenue

which runs parallel to the expressway on its northern boundary, currently terminates at Highland Avenue due to the expressway's slightly angled orientation. In Variation Three, Flournoy would be extended westward to Ridgeland Avenue, providing a longer East-West side street connection for residents in the immediate area. To improve street access for residents of the proposed townhomes near Ridgeland, Cuyler Avenue could be extended one block south from Harrison to Flournoy. This Variation also proposes creating a crossing through the cap at Gunderson Avenue. This extension would provide improved access to Rehm Park and to the relocated IDOT parking facility (which could be best utilized as a shared parking lot.)

- **Regional Transit Center** – Subsequent analyses of the cap's political and economic feasibility may prompt the community to consider developing an intermodal transportation center at Harlem Avenue, which would offer both local and regional benefits. This center could serve as a park-and-ride or bus transfer point for residents of Oak Park as well as commuters from farther western suburbs. This feature has not been analyzed in detail during this study, but may merit further review. Consequently, a placeholder space has been designated in Variation Three in the open space area between Harlem Avenue and Wenonah Avenue.



Townhomes along Flournoy Street extension, near Ridgeland Avenue



Harlem Avenue Gateway

Circulation and Access

Improved Roadway Connections

The existing transportation system in the Village of Oak Park is a firmly established network consisting of highway access, arterial, collector, and local streets. Within the Study Area, the roadway system carries high automobile traffic volumes and provides two full access points to and from the expressway at Harlem Avenue and Austin Boulevard. Lombard Avenue, Oak Park Avenue, East Avenue and Ridgeland Avenue currently cross the IKE without providing access to or from the freeway.

Changes proposed in the Community Preferred Concept are intended to provide additional North-South and East-West access points that are currently unavailable due to the IKE's current configuration. These connectors provide access for bicycles and pedestrians, in addition to automobiles. The proposed roadway improvements are:

North-South Connectors

- Home Avenue extension across the IKE
- Gunderson Avenue extension across the IKE (Variation Three only)
- Euclid Avenue extension across the IKE
- Gunderson Avenue extension extension across the IKE (Variation Three only)

East-West Connectors

- Harrison Street Extension from Oak Park Avenue to intersection of Garfield Street and Kenilworth Avenue
- Flournoy Street extension (Variation Three only)

Other Minor Extensions

- Grove Avenue extension to Harrison Street Extension
- Cuyler Avenue extension to Flournoy (Variation Three only)

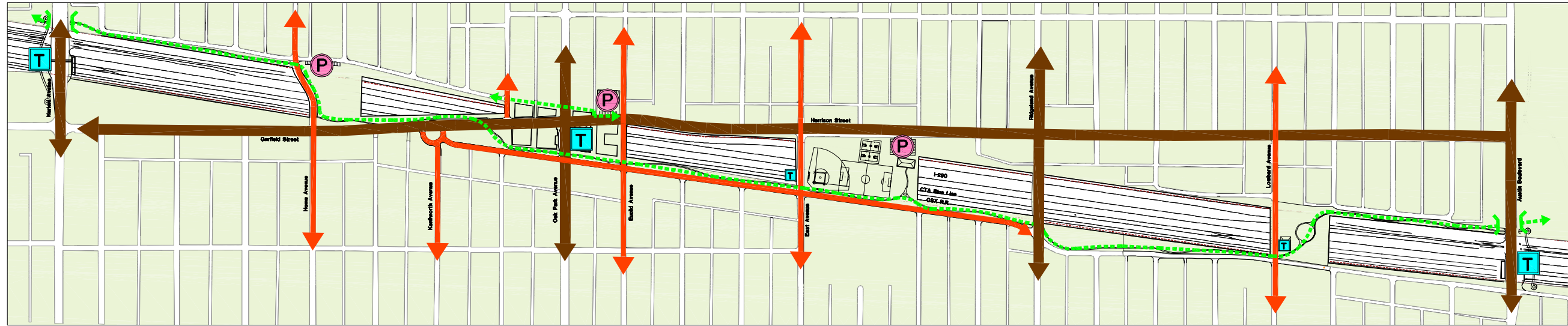
Traffic and Circulation Impacts

The purpose behind making new connections is to:

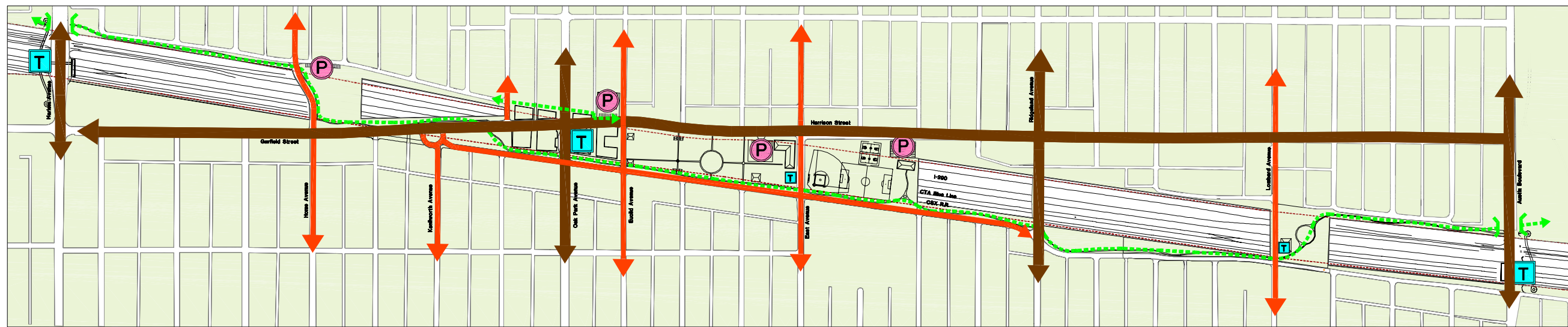
- Increase pedestrian and vehicular safety by widening existing roads that are very narrow for two-way traffic;
- Enable more efficient travel within the Village for pedestrians, bicyclists and cars;
- Reduce unnecessary travel miles within Oak Park by creating connections closer to the points of trip origin and destination;

CAP THE IKE

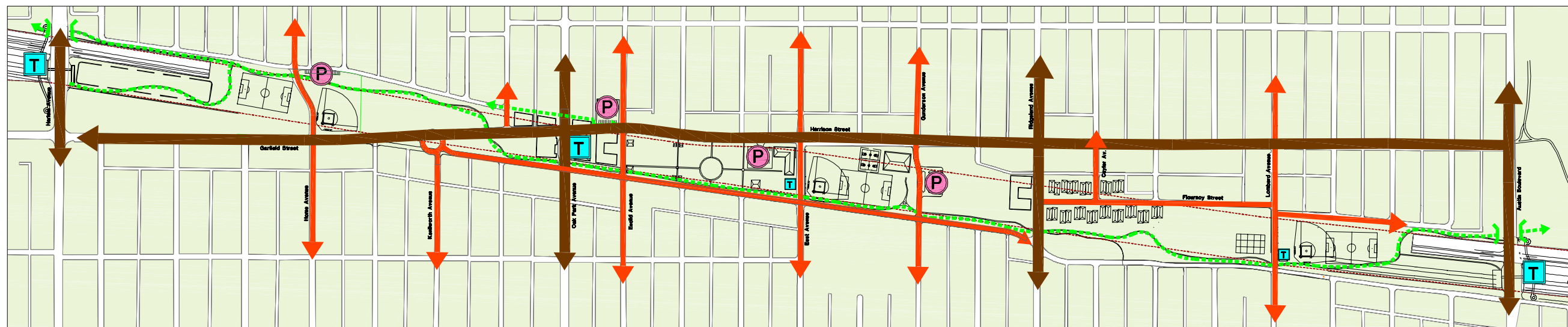
Variation 1



Variation 2



Variation 3



- Major Roads With Improved Pedestrian Access
- Minor Roads With Improved Pedestrian Access
- Pedestrian / Bicycle
- CTA
- Proposed Parking
- I-290 R.O.W.

- Create access to the new land reclaimed by the Cap and provide access to the features on it.

It is anticipated that traffic will increase somewhat on streets expanded with the new cross-IKE connectors described above, while some traffic on the existing North-South connectors will decrease proportionately, as alternate crossings would be available. However, it is not expected that there would be an overall increase in total traffic, and that the redistribution of traffic would be contained largely to residential traffic.

In the next phase, a traffic impact study will need to be conducted. This traffic study will count existing traffic in the study area, create a traffic model and tune the model to actual conditions. Then the new model can add in the new connectors and predict traffic volumes based on that model. The goal is not to turn neighborhood streets into arterials or collector streets, which is not expected to occur. If the traffic impact analysis the model predicts inappropriate levels of new traffic on neighborhood streets, these conditions could be addressed in several ways:

- Add traffic calming features to the plan; or
- Modify the plan to eliminate proposed connector street(s); or
- Add different connectors to further disperse traffic.

Pedestrian and Bicycle Access

The number-one component that the community wanted to see incorporated into the cap concept design is the Prairie Path Connector. The Prairie Path Connector will link the communities adjacent to Oak Park by connecting the Columbus Park Trail in Chicago into Forest Park, on the west side of the Village. The trail will also offer an opportunity for pedestrians and cyclists to traverse the Village from Austin to Harlem along a designated route. At its western boundary, the Prairie Path Connector will cut underneath Harlem Avenue into Forest Park; at its eastern boundary, the Path will pass underneath Austin Boulevard to provide a safe entry point into Chicago's Columbus Park. The Chicago Park District, the City of Chicago's Department of Planning and Development, the Village of Forest Park, and the Chicagoland Bicycle Federation are all in support of the Prairie Path Connector, and will work with Oak Park to create the connection.

A pathway system is also designed to help pedestrians and cyclists navigate through the new parks and open space created on the cap. Traffic calming street design techniques, including special pavement treatments for crosswalks and pedestrian zones, are planned for the areas where active parks are bisected by Harrison Street and Garfield Street. The goal of these devices is to promote automobile and pedestrian safety in these areas, while still maintaining easy foot access to the parks and convenient through traffic on the streets.

New connectors and existing bridges to be reconstructed will offer sufficient space to accommodate pedestrian and bicycle crossings safely.

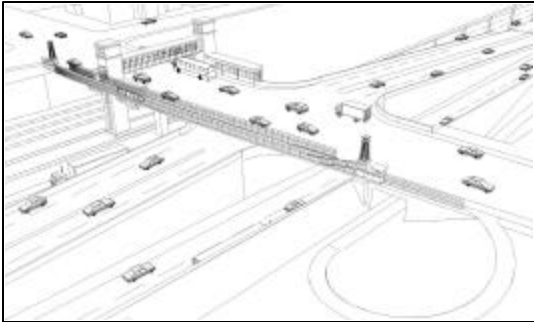
Transit Improvements

The CTA Blue Line El currently runs along the center of the IKE, connecting Downtown Chicago and Forest Park. The El tracks and platforms are at the same grade as the expressway, while the station entrances are at grade with the streets in Oak Park. There are three El stations currently within the Study Area:

- Harlem Avenue,
- Oak Park Avenue, with an auxiliary entrance/exit at East Avenue, and
- Austin Boulevard, with an auxiliary entrance/exit at Lombard Avenue.

The CTA Bus Route 91 runs on Austin Boulevard, and four Pace routes operate on Harlem Avenue, Oak Park Avenue, Ridgeland Avenue, and Austin Boulevard. All buses cross the IKE. The Oak Park Shuttle Service stops near CTA station entrances at Oak Park Avenue, East Avenue, and Lombard Avenue.

Public input during this Feasibility Study indicated support for redesign or redevelopment of the transit stations and stops in the Study Area for a variety of reasons: difficult and unsafe crossings to reach station entrances on busy streets with heavy vehicular traffic; inconvenient access to the CTA train platforms from the stations, exposure to the weather on the platforms, and a perceived lack of security and comfort in the stations and on the platforms.



Example CTA Station concept at Austin Boulevard, looking southwest

The Community Preferred Concept Plan proposes improvements to the CTA stations that would address citizen concerns, improve ridership, reduce traffic congestion, and contribute to an attractive cap landscape. These design concepts are consistent with the CTA’s goals for increasing the use of the Blue Line. The City of Chicago’s Department of Planning and Development and the Village of Forest Park also like the idea of reconstructing the Austin Boulevard and Harlem Avenue CTA stations. They feel that they can benefit from the opportunity to redesign all of the CTA stations serving Oak Park, since reconstruction of the stations will provide better and more secure access to the transit stations for residents of Chicago and Forest Park, also.

Improvements to the CTA Blue Line El stations at Harlem Avenue, Oak Park Avenue, and Austin Boulevard are anticipated to include features that will help create a more positive

experience, such as safety enhancements, shelter from the weather, and more convenient access:

- Rebuilt or renovated stations and entrances (main and auxiliary);
- Drop-off bays for buses and cars;
- Safer pedestrian crossings;
- ADA-compliant access; and
- Bicycle parking facilities.

Gateways to the IKE

The renovated transit stations at Austin Boulevard and Harlem Avenue provide the boundaries to the Cap, and define Oak Park’s edges. Attractive architectural features are proposed at Harlem Avenue and Austin Boulevard indicating entry into Oak Park, and should instill pride in Oak Park residents, excitement among visitors, and interest among commuters who pass through the Village daily. Such features should reflect design and signage themes used elsewhere in the Village, and reflect the historic architecture associated with the community. The gateways could be accented by plants, lighting and decorative materials.

Leveraging New Land: Market Opportunities

As a land-locked community, capping the IKE presents an opportunity for the Village of Oak Park to strengthen and diversify its land use and economic base. In each variation of the Community Preferred Concept Plan, there are locations designated for flexible development of built space. The strong market opportunities within Oak Park and the near West Suburbs indicate that the community can select from several options for potential uses in these locations, if it desires. This Study has indicated that the community supports the following market-feasible opportunities for development on and around the Cap, including:

Community Facilities

A Cap could provide opportunities for location of new or expanded community facilities, such as institutional or civic buildings, parks, arts & entertainment and other public uses.

Residential

Residential development thrives in Oak Park. Removing the psychological and physical divide of the Eisenhower would improve quality of life in the Study Area, and would likely enhance home values on both sides of the Eisenhower. There is market demand for products such as townhomes, condominiums, and apartments to accommodate the Village’s increasing population of empty-nesters and small households with various incomes. Innovative residential developments could also include artist live-work units or affordable housing. Community preferences favor lower density residential developments in the Cap area.

Retail

Favorable conditions exist in Oak Park for retailers, including densely populated neighborhoods, mid-to-high household incomes, regional access via the IKEA and the CTA Blue Line train, and heavy traffic along Austin Boulevard, Oak Park Avenue, and Harlem Avenue. Potential targets for the Oak Park Avenue development locations might include neighborhood-oriented retail shops and national retailers. Any new buildings should be developed in an architectural style that is respectful of adjacent existing buildings with historic and architectural significance for the community.

Tourism and Recreation

Due to its proximity to Chicago and an established base of tourist and recreational activities, the opportunity exists to add more recreational and entertainment/cultural facilities, geared both to residents of Oak Park as well as visitors. These types of components proposed in the Community Preferred Concept include new athletic fields, the Arboretum and the Art / Environment Center.

Office

The targeted development locations in the Community Preferred Concept could contain office space in mixed-use buildings along Oak Park Avenue, for small business, neighborhood professionals, and medical office tenants. Due to inconsistent local demand trends and uncompetitive economics for properties in Oak Park compared to DuPage County, further analysis of potential development deals would be required to determine the financial viability of this development option.

Parking

Feedback during *CAP the IKE* Feasibility Study indicated that there is a shortage of parking at peak hours within the Study Area, particularly in the Oak Park / IKE and Harrison Street business districts and the residential neighborhoods surrounding them. Parking from businesses often overflows into residential neighborhoods. Both residents and commercial customers often need to park several blocks from their destination to find parking. New parking developed on or near the cap can be structured to serve three demand segments: residents, retail employees and customers, visitors to new amenities on the Cap (such as the West Side Park or the Rehm Park recreation center) and CTA Blue Line commuters. While residents and business owners indicated a desire to protect the parking needs of Village residents and customers of local businesses, development of new parking facilities on the Cap (along with the Transit Station improvements) could be shared to support transit users.

Constraints

One of the next steps in moving *CAP the IKE* from vision to reality is the resolution of current challenges related to the use of air rights, which are discussed in further detail later in this report and in Appendix F. Current State of Illinois regulations contain limitations on the types of uses that can exist on or over highway rights-of-way, and on the terms of leases of

the air space to other users. Capping the IKE would provide a public benefit to Oak Park and the Chicago region by strengthening existing business districts, linking a physically and socially divided village, and improving the quality of life. However, if changes to the governing legislation are unsuccessful, the placeholders for commercial and residential development on the Cap would need to be rearranged to be located over the railroad right-of-way, or replaced with other public uses not subject to these restrictions.

Impact on the Community

Public health, safety and environmental impacts are concerns for communities like the Village of Oak Park that border a major expressway and experience exacerbated levels of noise and pollution generated by the high concentration of vehicles that travel the IKE. In 2002, the Village convened a citizens committee to work with the Village residents and government on Eisenhower Expressway issues. In December 2002, this committee issued a report that outlines the kind of long-standing and ongoing negative impacts from the Eisenhower Expressway. Many of these issues are unique to Oak Park, given the land use patterns at the time when the highway was configured to cut through this fully-developed community. Concerns outlined in that report included:

- Potential adverse public health and safety impacts, including significant increases in the exposure of Village residents to ozone, nitrogen oxides, carbon monoxide, particulate matter, hydrocarbons, noise pollution, diesel emissions and other carcinogenic substances contained in particles or other emissions from mobile sources or road dust;
- Building and materials damage, in a community that contains over 300 historically or architecturally-significant buildings, including a national historic district and landmarks adjacent to the expressway; and
- Impacts on sensitive areas adjacent to the expressway including numerous parks, a library, two business districts, and existing buildings, many of which are multi-story multi-family residential. These areas became situated right at the edge of the highway when it cut through the community in the 1950's.

Noise Mitigation Features

The Community Preferred Concept contains features that are expected to mitigate the noise coming from the expressway, for the portions of Oak Park currently within several blocks of the expressway. Expressway noise has several sources:

- Constant drone of vehicular traffic on the expressway;
- Periodic noise from emergency vehicles traveling along the expressway;
- Periodic noise from freight trains traveling through the Village or idling; and
- Periodic noise from the CTA Blue Line trains traveling through the Village and informational announcements.

Environmental noise is measured in units of “dBAs”. The dBA, or A-weighted decibel, refers to a scale of noise measurement that approximates the range of sensitivity of the human ear to sounds of different frequencies. On this scale, the normal range of human hearing extends from about 0 dBA to about 140 dBA. Typical sound levels that occur in common noise

environments are listed in the table below. A ten dBA increase in the level of a continuous noise represents a perceived doubling of loudness; a five dBA increase is a readily noticeable change, while a three dBA increase is barely noticeable to most people. A table describing noise decibel levels is included in Appendix C.

Existing noise levels from the Eisenhower freeway alone, at a distance of approximately 150 feet, are in the range of 70-75 decibels.

In all variations, sound walls are proposed in locations where a cap or deck does not cover the expressway. These walls are recommended to be eight feet high, and can be attractively bermed and landscaped. The materials for the walls can be attractive. The sound walls also provide a safety feature, to prevent access to the expressway from the surface level. These noise walls are estimated to reduce expressway noise by six decibels, which is a noticeable drop in noise.

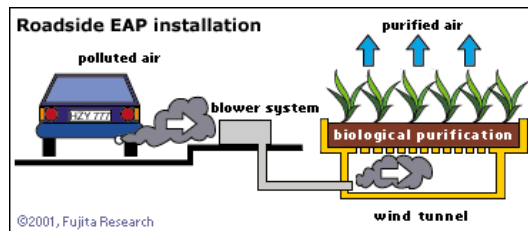
In Variation Three, a deck will cover the expressway spanning the width of the Village, from Harlem Avenue to Austin Boulevard. The Cap in this variation, as well as the partial caps in Variations One and Two, is estimated to eliminate expressway noise and reduce neighborhood noise levels by ten decibels. Persons on the surface will perceive that expressway noise is cut in half, according to research in sound engineering. Noise exiting the end of the Cap at the Austin or Harlem gateways is not expected to be a significant contributor to noise levels in the area. Noise at the end of the cap would behave as a “point” source, which decrease rapidly with distance, rather than a “line” source that travels.

These elements built as part of a cap or as part of the Eisenhower reconstruction are expected to reduce noise coming from the IKE as described above. These features will not mitigate the surface noise from grade-level street traffic and commercial activity that the Village currently experiences. Results of two studies measuring noise throughout the Village as part of the O’Hare Airport Noise Mitigation Program are summarized here for comparison. Noise at two “receptor locations” (or, places that are particularly sensitive to noise, such as homes, churches, schools, etc.) was measured using portable noise monitors. During a two-week test period in June 1998, a portable noise monitor documented noise levels of 61.5 decibels on the 900 block of North East Avenue for the period. During a one-month test period in September 2000, a portable noise monitor documented noise levels of 61.6 decibels on the 1100 block of North Linden. Both of these areas, which are single-family residential neighborhoods on side streets, can be considered among the quieter areas of the Village.

Air Pollution Mitigation Features

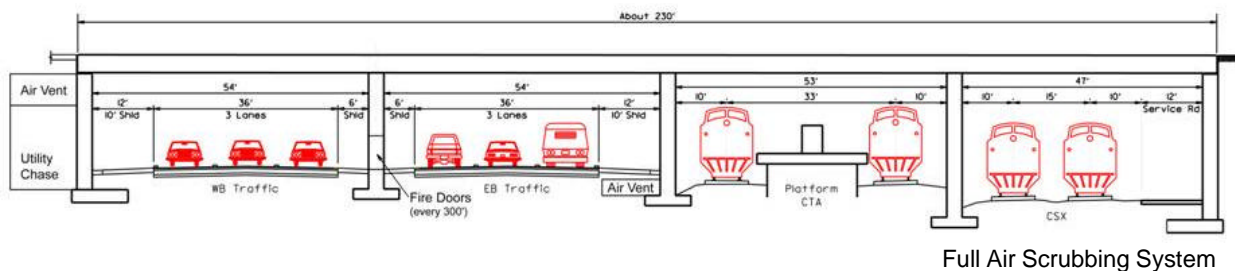
A frequently-articulated comment by project participants was a desire for a cap to improve the environmental quality in the areas surrounding the expressway; Village residents are concerned about the side effects from air pollution emanating from traffic in the IKE canyon. The Community Preferred Concept, in its more extensive Variations 2 and 3, present options for active pollution reduction features. In addition to the benefits achieved from mitigating air pollution, these features will identify Oak Park and Illinois as environmental leaders in clean highway construction, and potentially attract additional environmental or innovative funding sources.

In Variation Two, an air scrubbing system using plants is proposed. This bio-filtration technology has been used successfully in Japan. This technology could be incorporated into the cap as a pilot or demonstration program.



Air Scrubbing System Using Plants

In Variation Three, the length of the cap permits construction of a more comprehensive pollution-management system. A scrubbing system would use negative air pressure within a tunnel to vacuum polluted air into filtration chambers, which remove toxic gases and fine particulate matter generated by automobiles on the IKE. This system, according to its specifications, has the potential to clean 8,200 pounds of gases per day, and to remove approximately 200 pounds of fine particulates per day. Cleaned air is vented back into the atmosphere at the ends of the tunnel. The particulate waste is stored in the filtration chambers for periodic removal. This type of system is being used in Norway and Australia.



Due to the short lengths of the tunnels or caps proposed in Variation One, the Cap will meet air quality standards for tunnels with ventilation only.

Air Pollution Prevention Features

In addition to the active pollution-mitigation measures described above, the Community Preferred Concept features several amenities that will assist in pollution prevention. Based on community input, features encouraging or supporting the use of alternative modes of transportation, such as public transportation, bicycles and walking, were important to Oak Park residents. It is expected that these features will make the use of alternative modes of transportation easier and more pleasant, and will encourage residents, visitors, and stakeholders to reduce the number of trips using a car in favor of less-polluting modes.

Design concepts include:

- Expanded pedestrian and bicycle routes and crossings, such as the Prairie Path;
- Safety enhancements for pedestrians, bicyclists, and transit users;
- Bicycle facilities; and
- Transit station improvements.

Improvements to the CTA transit stations and entrances at Harlem Avenue, Oak Park Avenue, East Avenue, Lombard Avenue, and Austin Boulevard are anticipated to include features that will help create a more positive experience, such as safety enhancements, shelter from the weather, and more convenient access:

- Rebuilt or renovated stations and entrances;
- Drop-off bays for buses and cars;
- Safer pedestrian crossings;
- ADA-compliant access; and
- Bicycle parking facilities.

These improvements are conservatively estimated to increase CTA ridership by 500 trips per day. Assuming that these trips were formerly made by car, the station improvements will attract new El riders, and prevent the production of 300 pounds of noxious gases and ten pounds of fine particulates per day that would have been generated by their cars.

Green Building Principles

In addition to the pollution mitigation and prevention techniques discussed above, the Oak Park Cap presents other opportunities for showcasing environmental and sustainable design: through “green” building and construction. Four nationally-recognized systems should provide guidance to the construction of the Cap and development of amenities on its surface:

- LEED Rating System
- Energy Star Designation
- EPA Performance Track Program
- Green Highway Certification

The **Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED)** rating system is a voluntary national standard for developing environmentally sustainable buildings, developed by members of the U.S. Green Building Council with broad input from different groups within the building industry. Building types that are eligible to participate in the LEED rating system include: commercial new construction, renovation, interiors and operations; residential; core and shell projects; and neighborhood development. To achieve LEED certification, a project must satisfy documented standards; a tiered LEED rating level is based on earning a certain number of points for meeting environmental or sustainable design guidelines. The buildings developed on the surface of the Cap can demonstrate Oak Park's environmental leadership by pursuing a Silver rating level. More information on the LEED program is available http://www.usgbc.org/LEED/LEED_main.asp

Energy Star is a U.S. EPA program to recognize buildings, building systems, and appliances for superior energy performance. Eligible building types include residential; offices; hospitals; hotels; schools; supermarkets; and garages and parking lots. Buildings that meet the program's current indoor environment standards and have been professionally verified can apply for the Energy Star. More information on the Energy Star program is available at: <http://www.energystar.gov>

National Environmental Performance Track is a public/private partnership involving U.S. EPA to recognize environmental performance among participating public and private U.S. facilities of all types, sizes, and complexity. Performance criteria are related to energy use, water use, discharges to water, air emissions, waste generation, conservation or preservation, and product performance over certain periods of time, which vary by facility type. More information on the Performance Track program is available at: <http://www.epa.gov/performance-track/index.htm>

The **Green Highway** certification is a proposed national certification program that defines criteria and provides recognition for sustainable and environmentally sound highway planning, design, construction and maintenance processes. The Green Highways program is supported by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO), and the U.S. EPA.

Engineering and Construction

Fire and Safety

When an air-right structure encloses both sides of a roadway, it is considered a “road tunnel” for fire protection purposes. The fire protection and safety requirements for tunnels increase commensurate with the length of the tunnel:

- Caps greater than 300’ require some ventilation & some fire safety features (i.e., Variation Two)
- Caps greater than 800’ require full ventilation systems and fire safety features (i.e., Variation Three)

Considering additional concerns related to national security and pollution, a cap could contain three separate cells for highway, light rail/transit and freight networks, with crash and fire rated walls between each. A cross-section diagram illustrating these separated chambers was presented earlier on Page 37 in the discussion of air scrubbing technology proposed in Variation Three.

Utilities Infrastructure

Water mains and combined sewer mains currently run parallel and under the IKE. Water mains exist along both the north and south sides of the IKE, on Harrison Street and Garfield Street. Sewer mains also exist along both the north and the south sides of the IKE, on Harrison Street and Garfield Street. Both water mains and combined sewer mains cross the IKE at multiple locations. These utilities would need to be upgraded at the same time as highway reconstruction.

Several of the facilities planned for the surface of the cap require water and sewer service. Generally the depth of the cap will be thick enough to run new utilities on top of the concrete cap or just under it. If constructed under the cap, lines would have to be insulated or otherwise protected from freezing.

Stormwater Management

Stormwater runoff from the expressway area will decrease after a cap is constructed. Currently, rain and snow fall directly on the expressway pavement and hard surfaces in the transportation trench. The water runs off quickly and is collected and carried away in sewers. With a cap in place, the vegetated surfaces will retain water longer and will result in less runoff into sewers. Plants will use the available water; other innovative stormwater management practices will further reduce runoff.

Since snow will fall on the Cap rather than the expressway, fewer deicing salts and chemicals will need to be applied to the expressway to maintain safe operating conditions during winter storms.

Construction

The Cap must be constructed at the same time the Eisenhower Expressway is reconstructed to minimize the disruptive nature of major expressway reconstruction projects. Careful planning can help reduce traffic control costs and minimize disruption to the commuters and surrounding neighborhoods – a single project is much less disruptive than two separate projects.

The existing retaining walls along the expressway were designed and constructed to retain earth and the structures behind them. In their current condition, they were not designed to serve as structural abutments for a bridge or cap structure. The existing walls would have to be reconstructed to carry the weight of a cap. In addition, solid wall piers would need to be constructed in the Eisenhower medians and next to the CTA and freight railroad tracks. Reconstruction of the retaining walls would likely need to occur under any expressway reconstruction scenario.

Comments on the Structural Feasibility of the Project

This study concludes that a cap can be designed that is feasible from an engineering and structural perspective, based on an assessment of existing conditions in the Eisenhower right-of-way as it passes through Oak Park. There are no elements in the Community Preferred Concept, as presented in this study, that are considered infeasible. None of the elements presented in the Community Preferred Concept require the lowering of the expressway. On the west end of the Study Area near Harlem Avenue west of Home Avenue, the cap will not be level with the surrounding property on the south side of the IKE due to an existing grade difference. As with the proposed noise walls, the walls supporting the Cap could be attractively landscaped and bermed to mitigate the appearance of the exposed support structures.

The next phase of work preparing for a cap – Phase I design and engineering studies – will need to examine the Community Preferred Concept in more detail from an engineering and environmental perspective.

Funding the Vision

Cost Analysis

Costs related to the construction of the Preferred Concept Plan can be organized into two categories. **Construction costs** represent the hard and soft costs related to building the cap infrastructure, such as the concrete deck, piers, foundations, four-foot earth fill and grass, utilities, ventilation and air cleaning systems, and safety features. The construction program includes design engineering, construction engineering, construction, and contingency.

Maintenance and operations costs include the hard and soft costs that arise from maintaining the structural elements of the cap to an acceptable level of repair or integrity.

Construction Program Costs

Approximate order-of-magnitude program costs for construction of the three variations of the Preferred Concept Plan are estimated to be: (in millions)

Variation One:		Variation Two:		Variation Three:	
Construction	\$285	Construction	\$430	Construction	\$965
Design/const. Eng	\$72	Design/const. Eng	\$108	Design/const. Eng	\$242
Contingency	\$107	Contingency	\$161	Contingency	\$362
TOTAL	\$464	TOTAL	\$699	TOTAL	\$1,569

These figures represent costs in 2005 dollars. These figures do include the costs of implementing the improvements to the CTA Blue Line El stations at Austin Boulevard, Oak Park Avenue, and Harlem Avenue, which are estimated in total at \$50 million, based on per-square-foot costs of other recent CTA station renovation efforts. The reconstruction of existing bridges over the IKE is not included in these estimates, as these expenses would need to be incurred irrespective of the rebuild option that IDOT might choose to pursue.

Costs to develop the features on the surface of the cap are not included in the estimates above, since they do not represent critical-path elements in the construction of the cap. These design components include, but are not limited to, recreational elements, buildings, parks and gardens (in addition to the basic earth fill and grass), public art, bikeways, parking lots. Surface amenities may be developed in a phased manner over time, as funding becomes available for specific elements.

More details on the cost estimates are included in Appendix D.

Maintenance and Operations Costs

Operating and maintenance costs associated with the ventilation and air scrubbing systems proposed in Variation Three could approach \$3 million annually. Very few of these systems are in operation in the world, and even fewer operate at the scale of the Oak Park Cap.

The fire monitoring and suppressions systems also have ongoing costs. The tunnels will need continuous monitoring and active incident management. The costs for these systems

operation, maintenance, inspection and servicing are estimated at approximately \$1 million per year.

There are considerable variables at this time regarding the active air pollution cleaning systems that may be installed with the Cap, as numerous components in the Community Preferred Concept Plan are pilot technologies; it is recommended that further assessments of these technologies and their associated costs be undertaken in the next phases of study.

Potential Funding Sources

A critical component to the feasibility of capping the IKE is identifying funding sources for the development project. Based on similar capping projects across the nation, it is anticipated that a significant portion of the funding will come from Federal transportation sources; other Federal grants, state funds, local tools, and private funding will be required to provide the balance of funds. This section of the report presents a synopsis of tools that could be used to fund a cap, should the community wish to pursue this project. It does not represent an all-inclusive list of funding sources or commitments, but rather, a toolkit of relevant or typical sources that could be explored at the future time when the community would proceed with additional engineering, construction and development activities. The funding sources documented relate to the structure and amenities contained in the final Community Preferred Concept.

The construction of a cap over the IKE in Oak Park would likely take place in conjunction with any expressway reconstruction project that IDOT may choose to undertake. Based on current state and regional highway construction priorities, it is anticipated that any such reconstruction project would probably commence in seven to ten years. The length of this “interim” period of time is longer than the typical lead time for securing most types of government funding commitments, and indeed, only permits an estimation of types of potential funding sources that might be applied to *CAP the IKE*, as programs may or may not exist in their current state at the future time when Cap funding might be pursued. The IKE reconstruction is not currently in IDOT’s seven-year plan.

Relevant potential programs are summarized below, with greater details on specific programs that may potentially be available in Appendix E.

Sources for Construction Expenses

Sources of funding that may be used for funding capital construction costs might include:

- Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) construction funds
- FHWA technical demonstration programs
- IDOT funds
- Federal Transit Administration (FTA) funds for CTA station improvements

- Illinois Transit Ridership and Economic Development (TRED) Pilot Project Program
- Federal Railroad Administration programs
- Homeland Security programs
- Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) program
- United States and State of Illinois Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) pollution prevention demonstration programs
- Illinois Clean Energy Community Foundation
- Public involvement and private fundraising

Sources for Development and Operational Expenses

Sources of funding that may be used for funding surface development and operation/maintenance of the cap might include:

- Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) construction funds
- IDOT funds
- Transportation Enhancement Programs (TEP)
- Village of Oak Park capital improvement funds
- Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) allocations
- Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) programs for parks, open space, bicycle trails
- National Park Service programs for urban parks
- Park District user fees related to new programs at new parks
- Parking revenues from new parking facilities
- Tax Increment Financing (TIF)
- Special Service Area (SSA) levies
- Sales tax revenues
- Transfers of air rights
- Public involvement and private fundraising

The actual combination of funding sources will be uncertain until the point in time when finalized engineering and design plans are completed, and a development program for elements on the surface of the cap has been finalized. Many grant programs are only eligible for specific types of uses (such as for bicycle paths or park lighting), and funds cannot be redirected to other uses in the development program in whole or part.

Case Studies

Numerous cap or deck projects have been undertaken over the last several decades in other cities across the country. The mix of funding sources for each project has been as individual as the project itself. However, a commonality among all of these is that federal and state funding has played a significant role in building nearly all of the projects. A summary of case studies was presented in the May 2004 *CAP the IKE* Synthesis Report; a selection of key examples is presented below.

Duluth, Minnesota

The construction of the Interstate 35 Extension through Duluth completed in 1992 included construction of decks and green space over four cut-and-cover tunnels. The project's costs to construct the decks and surface park space totaled \$220 million. 90% of these costs were funded by the Federal government, with the remaining 10% paid by Minnesota State funds. Surface amenities included two parks: Leif Erickson Park and Lake Place Park. Benefits from the cap identified by the community include: improved air quality, redevelopment of adjacent properties and appreciation of property values; reclaimed land; reconnection of downtown neighborhoods and Lake Superior; and increased tourism.

Mercer Island, Washington

The project to reconstruct a segment of Interstate 90 in Washington included construction of two landscaped caps providing approximately 28 acres of park. The seven-mile cap cost approximately \$1.6 billion (1985 dollars), 90% of which was paid by Federal funds. The parks are reported to have reconnected neighborhoods which were divided during the expressway's initial construction.

Oak Park, Michigan

The project to extend Interstate 696 through Oak Park, a suburb of Detroit, took place in the 1980s. Due to the high frequency of pedestrian activity in this community, an extensive construction mitigation effort was undertaken to address the potentially disconnecting effects of the freeway extension. Two decks were built over the below-grade expressway to maintain pedestrian access across the freeway, serve as a noise barrier, and increase recreation space. Significant construction funding partners for this project included FHWA and the Michigan Department of Transportation.

Phoenix, Arizona

The I-90 Papago Freeway reconstruction project included construction of a cut-and cover tunnel consisting of 19 side-by-side bridges that form the foundation for the Hance Deck. 98% of the \$100 million cost of the deck was paid by FHWA funds, with the remainder financed by the State of Arizona. Benefits noted by the community included use of “showcase” construction techniques; increased park space; and revitalization of adjacent commercial and residential neighborhoods. The project was completed in 1992.

Seattle, Washington

The City of Seattle and the Washington Department of Transportation are proceeding with environmental impact studies for a reconstruction of the Alaska Way Viaduct in downtown Seattle, a project that is expected to cost \$4 billion. The project is in response to a 2001 earthquake that damaged the current arterial; the tunnel option was selected as providing the greatest external benefits, in the form of increased park space and opportunities for economic development. The project will be funded mainly by WSDOT and FHWA, and may begin construction in 2009.

Comments on the Economic Feasibility of the Project

The approach to propose one Community Preferred Concept with three variations allows Oak Park to accommodate its desire for a cap in the context of unknown future fiscal conditions. The three variations are intended to allow for cost feasibility under a range of potential economic and political climates. This study concludes that a cap can be financially feasible, based on successful implementation of caps of various cost scales in the past and present in other cities across the country, and based on a potential toolbox containing a variety of funding sources providing a variety of levels of funding for the construction and development proposed in the Community Preferred Concept.

Next Steps: Vision to Reality

Challenges to Address

Development of Air Rights¹

This study has identified potential legal issues involving the acquisition and conveyance of air rights necessary for approval and construction of a cap over the Eisenhower. “Air rights” are defined as a property owner’s rights to use the open space or vertical plane above his or her property. Initial conclusions with respect to specific components of the Community Preferred Concept are summarized below, and will require further review. A more detailed discussion of applicable or relevant federal and state legal requirements is available in Appendix F.

Possession of Air Rights

A prerequisite for construction of all cap components is possession of a legal right to develop the airspace involved by the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT). This may be a complex question with respect to the Oak Park Cap. In addition to IDOT’s rights in the I-290 right of way, others who may hold rights include the CSX railroad company, the Chicago Transit Authority (CTA), and Cook County. These issues need to be investigated further, and a plan developed for IDOT’s acquisition of the necessary rights. The following discussion assumes that IDOT has possession of the air rights required for construction and operation of the preferred cap components.

Bicycle and Pedestrian Facilities

It appears that IDOT can construct bicycle and pedestrian facilities on the cap without federal air rights review, and can receive federal funding to do so, if the facilities meet applicable requirements under federal and state law. The basic requirements are:

- Bicycle projects must be principally for transportation rather than recreational use.
- IDOT must support the project as a safety enhancement.
- IDOT, the Village Government or some other public agency must accept responsibility for operation and maintenance.
- The cost must be consistent with anticipated benefits, and applicable design criteria must be satisfied.

IDOT appears to have legal authority to assist the Village with respect to these facilities under state statutes governing transportation planning, safety, bike paths and utilization of services, among others. If the cap and/or associated bicycle or pedestrian facilities are determined to be necessary measures for mitigation of adverse effects from the highway,

¹ This section includes analysis by O’Connor & Hannan, L.L.P., Attorneys at Law.

IDOT's legal authority may be enhanced. The Village may wish to investigate inclusion of this component, and the other transportation-related components discussed below, in the IDOT master transportation plan that is presented to the Governor and Illinois General Assembly every two years.

Public Transportation Facilities

It appears that public transportation facilities on the cap can be constructed by IDOT or others without federal air rights review, and federal funding can be obtained to do so. Under federal law, IDOT could transfer the air rights without charge to a *public or private* organization to construct and operate the facility, provided there is no adverse effect on automotive safety. Fees may not exceed operation and maintenance costs.

Under state law, IDOT appears to have legal authority to sell or lease the rights to *public or private* entities, and to transfer them to *public* entities.

- If they are leased, it appears that state law would limit the term of the lease to 5 years or, at most, 25 years.
- If they are transferred to another agency, it appears they can be transferred without charge, as allowed by federal law, provided the Governor approves the transfer as advantageous to the state.
- If they are sold (the least likely scenario), it appears that IDOT would need to determine that they are no longer necessary for highway purposes, and would need to obtain the Governor's approval and then fair market value for the rights.

IDOT appears to have legal authority to assist the Village with respect to these facilities under state statutes governing public transportation, intercity rail service, public shelters and utilization of services, among others. If the cap and/or associated public transportation facilities are determined to be necessary measures for mitigation of adverse effects from the highway, IDOT's legal authority may be enhanced and additional flexibility under state air rights law may be available.

Parking Facilities

It appears that IDOT use or conveyance of air space rights to construct or operate parking facilities on the Cap would be subject to review by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA). Under the federal rules for approval of parking facilities, the facility must be consistent with the local transportation improvement plan and must be located and designed in conjunction with existing or planned public transportation facilities. Parking fees are limited to the amount required for maintenance and operation. Federal funding is available for facilities that meet these requirements.

State law reflects the federal requirements, and specifies that federal aid projects under this authority may be constructed pursuant to cost sharing agreements among the federal, state

and local governments. If necessary, IDOT appears to have authority under state law to transfer the necessary air rights to other *public* entities.

Transfer of the rights to *private* entities appears more problematic under state law:

- If they are leased, it appears that state law would limit the term of the lease to 5 years or, at most, 25 years.
- If they are sold (the less likely scenario), it appears that IDOT would need to determine that they are no longer necessary for highway purposes, and would need to obtain the Governor's approval and fair market value for the rights.

IDOT appears to have legal authority to assist the Village with respect to these facilities under state statutes governing public transportation and utilization of services, among others. If the cap and/or associated parking facilities are determined to be a necessary measure for mitigation of adverse effects from the highway, IDOT's legal authority may be enhanced and additional flexibility under state air rights law may be available.

Parks and Recreation Areas

It appears that IDOT conveyance of air space rights to construct and operate parks and recreation facilities on the cap would be subject to FHWA review. The general criteria for approval would be:

1. IDOT has possession of a sufficient legal interest in the right of way to permit use for non-highway purposes; and
2. It can be demonstrated that the airspace is not required for the safe and efficient operation of the highway.

Subject to applicable state law, the federal airspace regulations and guidelines expressly allow leasing of available airspace for interim uses such as:

- Green strips
- Small parks
- Play areas
- Parking, or
- Public or quasi-public use which would integrate the highway into the local environment and enhance other publicly supported programs.

Private or public entities may lease airspace from IDOT for such purposes upon FHWA approval.

Differences between federal and state air rights law sets parameters for construction and operation of parks and recreation areas on the cap:

- While the federal air rights regulations appear to allow IDOT either to lease or sell air rights for this purpose, the federal air rights guidelines express a clear preference for leasing arrangements.
- It appears that state law would limit the terms of any such lease, entered by IDOT, to 5 years or, at most, 25 years.
- Alternatively, state law appears to allow IDOT to transfer the rights to another *public* entity if the Governor approves the transfer as advantageous to the State. If that entity has the necessary authority, it may be able to construct and operate the facilities itself, or possibly enter into leasing arrangements with other public or private parties to do so, as the lease restrictions mentioned above appear to apply only to IDOT. FHWA approval of such an arrangement may be possible if it is otherwise consistent with the federal air rights regulations and guidelines discussed in Appendix F.
- Transfer of air rights directly from IDOT to *private* parties to construct or operate parks or recreational facilities on the cap appears more problematic. State law appears to impose the 5-25 year leasing restrictions discussed above. While state law also appears to permit IDOT to sell the rights, IDOT would need to determine that they are no longer necessary for highway purposes, to obtain the Governor's approval, and to achieve fair market value for the rights. In addition, FHWA would need to be convinced that sale of the rights, as opposed to leasing, is consistent with the federal regulations and guidelines.

Commercial or Private Development

The most problematic category of potential cap components with respect to air rights issues deals with private development. FHWA would be required to approve the development as consistent with use and maintenance of the highway, and with the other requirements of the federal air rights regulations and guidelines. The leasing and sale restrictions under state law also would apply. If the rights are leased, as contemplated under the federal guidelines, the leases apparently would be restricted by the term limitations imposed under state law. If the rights are sold:

1. IDOT would be required to determine that they are no longer necessary for highway purposes and to obtain the Governor's approval, and then a fair market value; and
2. FHWA would need to be convinced that sale, rather than lease, is consistent with the federal regulations and guidelines.

If the leasing restrictions under state law prove to be an insurmountable barrier to commercial or private development on the Cap, the Village may wish to investigate a specific exemption or other legislative remedy for the Oak Park Cap.

Comments on the Use of Air Rights

A significant benefit for use of air space for public and private development is an effective utilization of land from both a planning and economic viewpoint. Given that Oak Park has very limited land available for development and the Village is strategically located along the I-290 corridor and in close proximity to downtown Chicago, market demand for land over the Cap could be strong enough to address and overcome air rights issues.

Determination of ownership and appraised values for the easements and rights-of-way will require the cooperation of many agencies. However, as the location is strategic and market demand continues to be strong, air rights issues should not prevent development for commercial and residential purposes proposed in the Community Preferred Concept, as demonstrated by numerous existing cap projects across the country that have development on them. There are a number of cap projects in other cities that have successfully addressed air rights issues to develop a mix of uses, including office, retail, residential, entertainment, and recreational uses.

One technique for handling the complexities of transferring and using air rights might be the creation of a separate governmental or quasi-governmental agency to manage the development and operation of structural and/or surface components of the Cap. The Metropolitan Pier and Exposition Authority (MPEA), which operates Chicago's McCormick Place Convention Center, has such authorities (among others) to deal with the Convention Center's location relative to Lake Shore Drive and the Stevenson Expressway (I-55). Logistical arrangements establishing ownership and usage terms and authorities will be determined later during subsequent negotiations between interested parties.

Next Phase Design and Engineering Activities

Adopt the CAP the IKE Community Preferred Concept Plan

In order for the Plan created during the *CAP the IKE* Feasibility Study to be meaningful and truly serve as a guide for future construction and development, the plan described by this Study and presented here should be adopted by the Village Board as a long-term goal for the Village consistent with its Comprehensive Plan, and incorporated as a sub-area or corridor component of the Comprehensive Plan when it is revised in 2005. This action establishes a common understanding of the vision for the area and an administrative foundation for enforceable development decisions. It also serves to convey a consistent planning basis from which to make applications for grants and other sources of funding.

Transmit the CAP the IKE Community Preferred Concept Plan to IDOT

Once approved by the Village Board, the Village should transmit the *CAP the IKE* Community Preferred Concept Plan to IDOT for consideration as part of the Eisenhower reconstruction plan.

Establish Milestones with Key Stakeholders

A Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) serves as the regional clearing-house and decision-making body for investment of scarce public resources in an efficient and effective manner, according to regional transportation goals and needs. The Chicago Area Transportation Study (CATS) is the MPO for northeastern Illinois. Major transportation projects for the Chicago metropolitan planning area for the 2004 – 2009 time period have been identified and included in the region's Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP), which are formulated through consensus among regional governments, transportation providers, and the public. The *CAP the IKE* Feasibility study is a first step in moving toward implementation of a cap, should the Oak Park community wish to pursue such an option. It is critical to begin or continue discussions with government officials, State and Federal legislative representatives, transportation providers, and the CATS MPO to include the Cap project in future revisions of the Chicago Area's Regional Transportation Plan and in the TIP with other high-priority regional transportation projects. (Representatives from CATS, IDOT, RTA, CTA, PACE and other public and private agencies are members of the Stakeholders Advisory Committee for the *CAP the IKE* Feasibility Study.)

Commence Other Studies

The Federal Omnibus Appropriations Act for Fiscal Year 2005 allocated \$1 million to Oak Park to conduct further study of a cap over the IKE. These funds will enable evaluation of the Community Preferred Concept in greater detail from a preliminary engineering and environmental standpoint. This appropriation does not require a local match. This grant will assure that the *CAP the IKE* Feasibility Study can move to what is determined to be the most appropriate and immediate next stage of preliminary engineering and environmental studies. Potential next steps are recommended to include:

- Conduct a detailed traffic impact study of the Community Preferred Concept Plan to model trips generated, estimated average daily traffic on existing and expanded roadways in the Study Area, and street and intersection performance.
- Conduct more detailed analyses of the noise and air quality impacts of existing and proposed conditions, including various options that may arise out of IDOT's Phase I studies.
- Conduct detailed assessments of the air quality demonstration elements proposed in the Community Preferred Concept Variations Two and Three. These air quality improvement technologies are new and have not been used in the United States. More detailed study is needed to refine the estimated construction costs, operation and maintenance costs, and the expected benefits of these systems.
- Review IDOT Eisenhower Reconstruction Phase I engineering proposed alignments, geometrics and other options relative to the Community Preferred Concept Plan. The

Village should work to ensure that the concepts in the Preferred Concept Plan are incorporated into IDOT's Phase I project conclusions.

The 2005 allocation of \$1 million will enable the Village to proceed with additional studies, such as the ones noted above. The Village should also seek other funds to being design and engineering work related to components of the Cap. Potential funding sources were summarized above, and are discussed in more detail in Appendix E. These analyses are recommended to involve (but are not limited to) preliminary design and engineering of the CTA Blue Line El station improvements.

Timeline Estimates

The construction of a cap over the IKE in Oak Park would likely take place in conjunction with any expressway reconstruction project that IDOT may choose to undertake. Based on current state and regional highway construction priorities, it is anticipated that any such reconstruction project would probably commence in seven to ten years.

IDOT's Phase I design and engineering evaluation of the reconstruction of the Eisenhower is currently on hold to allow other, transit-related studies to complete. The Regional Transportation Authority (RTA) is conducting examination of alternate transit options in this corridor.

Once the Phase I studies are completed and approved, Federal transportation funding for construction can be pursued. (It is unlikely that Federal construction funds would be committed until the reconstruction project has completed Phase I studies, and is documented to be a constructible project with no pending environmental approval hurdles.) However, it is not necessary (nor is it standard practice) to wait for construction funding to be available to start the design of the construction documents. Design of construction documents can proceed as soon as the Phase I documents are approved.

Design for a project of this magnitude can be expected to take at least two years. Once funding is secured for construction, IDOT could begin construction. In the Chicago region, transportation agencies have mandated that large reconstruction projects like the Eisenhower reconstruction be accomplished in no more than two years.

Support for Further Study

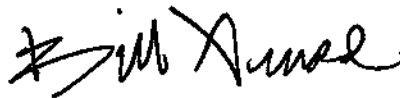
The Stakeholder Advisory Committee – Citizen Appointees

The *CAP the IKE* Feasibility Study examined several scenarios for addressing the negative environmental impacts from the expressway and weaving together the neighborhoods and business districts of Oak Park. The Community Preferred Concept Plan can truly be described as “Designed by Oak Park”, as it reflects a significant public participation process, and contains the amenities that were desired by project participants. The Plan evolved through a series of public meetings and workshops, as well as analysis of physical and economic conditions and technical considerations. The proposed design gives Oak Park what community members have dreamed of since the Eisenhower split their village in two: an improved environment and a physical, civic and social reconnection of this unique community. Based on an analysis of the Plan from a technical, design, and financial perspective, the Stakeholder Advisory Committee for the *CAP the IKE* Feasibility Study believes that the Community Preferred Concept Plan is feasible and merits further study.

Signed on Monday, February 28, 2005



Fred Brandstrader,
SAC Chair



Bill Arnold, Resident



Josephine Bellata,
Community Design Commission



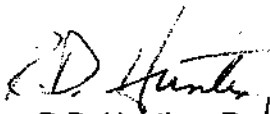
Pete Dowd, Resident



David King,
Harrison Street Business District



Lou Garapolo, Resident



R.D. Hunting, Resident



Nick Kalogeris,
Historic Preservation Commission

Sandra Kupelian,
IKE Committee

Collette Lueck,
Plan Commission

Kurt Mackey, Resident

Gail Moran,
Design Commission

Barbara Otto, Resident

John H. Paige, Resident

John Schiess,
Metropolis Architects & Builders

Adam Szetela,
Oak Park / IKE Business District

Frank Vozak,
Parking and Traffic Commission

Craig Williams,
Parking and Traffic Commission

The Stakeholder Advisory Committee – Ex-Officio Participants

Representatives of numerous stakeholder agencies and institutions participated in the Stakeholder Advisory Committee as ex-officio technical consultants to the planning process.

Joanne Trapani,
Village President

Adekunle Onayemi,
School District 97

Tom Phillion,
Park District

Jack Burke,
Canadian National Railroad

Peter Fahrenwald,
Chicago Transit Authority

David Fronczak,
Chicago Transit Authority

Tom Livingston,
CSX Railroad

Joe Moriarity, Regional
Transportation Authority

Paul Oppenheim,
Metra

Pat Pechnick,
Illinois Department of
Transportation

Joy Schaad, Chicago Area
Transportation Study

Lorraine Snorden,
PACE

Village of Oak Park Commissions

Six Village Commissions reviewed the *CAP the IKE* Feasibility Study Final Report and the Community Preferred Concept Plan, and submitted their comments and support for further study:

- Village of Oak Park Plan Commission
- Eisenhower Expressway Citizens Advisory Commission
- Village of Oak Park Parking and Traffic Commission
- Village of Oak Park Community Design Commission
- Village of Oak Park Historic Preservation Commission
- Village of Oak Park Environment and Energy Commission

Letters are included on the following pages.

Colette Lueck, Chair
Village of Oak Park Plan Commission
February 15, 2005

Fred Brandstader, Chair
Cap the Ike Stakeholder Committee

Dear Mr. Brandstader:

As Chair of the Plan Commission, I have been a member of the Cap the Ike Stakeholder Committee. In this capacity, I have had opportunity to have input into the Cap the Ike preferred proposal. I have updated the Plan Commission on a regular basis regarding your committee's planning process. In addition, on February 11th the Plan Commission met and reviewed the current draft proposal. Finally, Plan Commissioners have accessed the web site for additional opportunities to review the proposal.

The Commission responded very favorably to the proposal. Commissioners wanted to commend the Board of Trustees for their foresight regarding this issue and felt that the development of a proposal for a potential cap for the Ike is a priority for the village. They also appreciated the extent to which the public has been involved in the development of the current draft proposal.

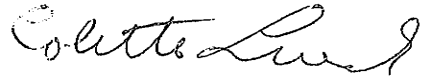
Several elements of the current draft received very positive comments. All Commissioners agreed that the enhanced connectivity between both south and north and east and west Oak Park were strong components of the plan. They also agreed with the need for enhanced green space, which included both active and passive recreational opportunities. Finally, they felt that re-design of the transit stations would provide a strong incentive for increased ridership of public transportation.

The Commission felt that the proposal would further enhance opportunities for achieving the goals of the Comprehensive Plan. In particular, the proposal would: provide additional opportunity for housing along Harrison street and at the Oak Park Avenue intersection; provide for additional cross town thoroughfares which would reduce current congestion and allow for safer pedestrian access over the Eisenhower; create ample parking for the new recreational areas; increase use of public transit; support additional economic development through the creation of new housing stock, create additional public gathering opportunities and easier access to transit.

The Plan Commission wishes to commend the stakeholder group for the spirit and hard work it brought to this task. The Plan Commission urges the Board of Trustees to adopt

the Community Preferred Plan to Cap the Eisenhower and move on to the next step in this exploratory phase of development.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Colette Lueck".

Colette Lueck, Chair
Oak Park Plan Commission

February 15, 2005

Eisenhower Expressway Citizens Advisory Commission Memorandum
Regarding the Cap the IKE Concept

The IKE Committee appreciates the formal invitation of the Cap the IKE Stakeholders Advisory Committee to comment on the proposed Cap the IKE Concept released public on January 19, 2005. Committee members have been involved in the Cap the IKE feasibility study process throughout, and a member of this Committee serves on the Cap the IKE Stakeholder Advisory Committee and has kept us apprised. The IKE Committee reviewed the proposed concept at its February 15 meeting and offers the following:

The IKE Committee applauds the work of the Cap the Ike Study Team. The intensive community involvement process utilizing multiple means and mechanisms and opportunities for input was exemplary and helped to build a solid consensus of the most desirable elements to incorporate into cap concept.

The Cap the IKE concept represents a bold and positive improvement for the Eisenhower corridor that would benefit the whole community. As documented in a December 2002 report issued by this committee, the Eisenhower Expressway has had a long-standing and ongoing negative impact on the community. We recognize and appreciate that the cap concept would seek to address noise and air quality problems, and seek to heal the divide created by the IKE chasm by reclaiming land lost to the highway. At the same time, the concept incorporates other high priority community needs for open space, parks and trails. In particular, the Committee supports the commitment to enhance the use of alternative means of transportation, and promote the use of the CTA Blue Line through significant access and facility improvements to the stations serving Oak Parkers.

The Committee recognizes that the cap concept is at an early stage of development. We agree that this concept is feasible, and should proceed to further stages of investigation and review. There are a number of issues involving the right of way underneath the cap regarding the freight, passenger rail, and highway reconstruction that remain under review by other studies. Those studies may affect the ultimate design of a cap as it undergoes more detailed engineering, environmental analysis and traffic modeling. With its responsibility to advise the Village Board regarding all Eisenhower related issues, the Ike Committee expresses the need to continue to work closely on cap related issues as further studies progress to ensure that the Village continues to have a coordinated and comprehensive approach to Eisenhower corridor issues.

The Committee also notes that there seems to be a view that the Village of Oak Park would assume the entire cost responsibility for constructing the cap. It is our understanding that the model of funding for this concept is to seek to obtain federal transportation funds and other grants and outside funding for construction of the cap to the greatest extent possible, as has been done in other cases documented across the country. We agree with this approach and suggest that materials, descriptions and information about the project make it clear that is, in fact, the objective. Documenting the benefits of the plan to those outside Oak Park, particularly regional benefits of transit enhancements and air quality measures, is also suggested.

In summary, the Committee heartily supports the Cap the IKE Concept, and urges its adoption as a goal by the Village, and that the next stages of study and pursuit of funding sources commence. This project would have great benefits to the community and the Committee supports efforts to achieve this exciting vision.

15 February, 2005

Cap the Ike Comments Parking and Traffic Commission

The following represents a summary of the commissioner's comments:

The Parking and Traffic Commission:

- Applauds the Village for their efforts in devoting staff and energy to pursue the feasibility of Capping the Ike.
- Recognizes that Oak Park was severely impacted by the original Eisenhower construction. That Oak Park continues to suffer, 40 years later, the negative impacts of the divided community, and the construction of either a partial or full cap would help mitigate the damage the community has endured.
- Supported moving forward with Option 3 (full cap)
- Recognizes that the extraordinary cost of Option 3 and that the resulting cost/benefit analysis will be a factor when negotiating with IDOT and when seeking the additional funding necessary for either Option 1, 2 or 3. This analysis may coerce an acceptance of one of the partial cap options.
- Recognizes the appeal, benefits but also the challenges associated with the inclusion of commercial development on public space and the ability for private development contributions to reduce the overall public cost of the Cap project. The Commission recommends the pursuit of private development to the extent that it does not jeopardize the overall goal of implementing the Cap.
- Recognizes that the study does not address (and cannot address because the impacts are unknown at this time) any further infringement of the Eisenhower as a result of the proposed widening.
- Appreciates the significant transportation benefits to walking, bicycling as well as driving offered by the various Cap options.
- Appreciates the Team's efforts to incorporate innovative solutions to difficult transportation problems, such as the roundabout at Kenilworth and the inclusion of the continuous bike path along the length of Oak Park.
- Recommends that under ANY scenario, including a NO CAP option, improvements be included to improve the dismal pedestrian and bicycle access to and from the Blue Line and connecting busses.

Overall, we think it's important to look back at the original premise of this study: Largely to look at the feasibility of covering over the Eisenhower during re-construction, and to gauge public sentiment on the plan. We think the study does show that Capping the Ike is feasible (at a cost) and that it does have very significant levels of public support.

From: Gail R Moran [gail_moran@sbcglobal.net]
Sent: Monday, February 14, 2005 11:00 PM
To: Dame, Pete; flbrandstrader@comcast.net
Cc: Bob Tucker; Clements, Bob
Subject: CDC Input - Cap the Ike Variations

Pete and Fred:

I stood in today for Josephine Bellata, who could not attend the Community Design Commission meeting. On behalf of the Commission, we offer the following comments:

There was a consensus of the Commission that widening of the Eisenhower Expressway was undesirable both at present and in the future. Therefore, if "capping" the Eisenhower could avoid a widening of the highway - or perhaps even a double-decking of the highway - a cap of some nature was very desirable. In fact, widening or expansion of the expressway was likened to 'stopping obesity by buying bigger pants'. While there was concern expressed about cost and feasibility, the consensus of the Commission was that a cap of any nature was environmentally sound, and preferable to any rebuilding that might encourage increased traffic congestion and pollution.

There was support expressed for extending the Blue Line 'el, albeit at some cost. And it was determined that even if designing right-hand exits at Austin and Harlem was necessary, that was worth the trade off of expanding land mass and re-uniting Oak Park.

As to the three variations, each was acceptable. However, the Commission consensus was that a full cap was the most preferred of the alternatives if cost issues could be resolved. There was some concern expressed about the proliferation of north-south connectors that might interfere with enjoyment of added green space, the density that may occur due to added residential capacity, and the addition of too much "active" recreation space, such as ball fields. Also discussed was the economic sustainability of the Cap, and questions as to who would ultimately be fiscally responsible for the space. On balance, however, the Commission fully supported the Cap concepts. (There was some clarification requested about the "live work" areas in Variation 3 which require further explanation).

If you have additional questions, please do not hesitate to ask.

Best regards,

Gail

2/16/2005



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TTY 708.383.0048
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Date: February 16, 2005

To: Cap the Ike Stakeholders Advisory Committee

From: Historic Preservation Commission

CC: Craig Failor, Village Planner
Doug Kaarre, Urban Planner
Pete Dame, Deputy Village Manager

Re: **Cap the IKE Study – Three Variations of the Final Design**

The Historic Preservation Commission reviewed the three variations of the final version of the proposed cap at their meeting on February 10, 2005.

The HPC has the following comments:

- They support moving forward with the three variations without a clear preference for one over another. Obviously #3 provides the most new open space and air quality protection, but also costs the most.
- The proposal to close off the old Harrison Street at Oak Park Avenue for a new, straighter, street makes sense. However, it takes away street access from 812-818 Harrison Street (*Odd Fellows Hall*), which is an Oak Park Landmark. While it is facing a green area, street access is vital to keep the uses in the building active. The HPC recommends providing some type of street access to this building.

Memorandum

Date: February 11, 2005

To: Pete Dame, Deputy Village Manager
Fred Brandstrader, Chair, Cap the Ike Stakeholders Advisory Committee

From: Oak Park Environment and Energy Commission

Re: Cap the IKE Study Concepts

Thank you for requesting comments from the EEAC in reviewing the three designs recently released for public comment. Commission members have stated that they are in favor of this initiative and prefer the 2nd and 3rd options of the designs currently being reviewed. We believe that this project offers a unique opportunity for the Village of Oak Park to demonstrate leadership in the field of energy efficient initiatives and promoting sustainability in our community.

Recommendation:

The Environment and Energy Commission wishes to offer the following recommendations for consideration as the process continues.

- We wish to encourage the Village to require achievement of a LEED (Leadership in Energy & Environmental Design) Silver rating or better (Gold or Platinum) in all public buildings included in the final plan.
- We wish to encourage the Village to incorporate achievement of a LEED Silver rating or better (Gold or Platinum) for any applicant as an additional type of "*Compensating Benefit*" warranting additional favorable consideration by the Village in its evaluation of future applications for other buildings proposed in the final plan.
- We consider that new technologies for improving air quality, i.e. air scrubbers or a bio-filtration system would be an important aspect of the project and should be included in the final design

We are including here some of the most salient information that underlies this recommendation.

Background:

The LEED Rating System was developed for the U.S. Department of Energy, and published in 2001 by the U.S. Green Building Council (the foremost coalition of leaders from across the building industry working to promote buildings that are environmentally responsible, profitable, and healthy places to live and work). The LEED system represents the Council's effort to develop a standard that improves the environmental and economic performance of public and commercial buildings using established and/or advanced industry principles, practices, materials, and standards.

The Village's review process provides an important opportunity to stimulate the use of such environmentally sustainable practices in a way that is consistent with the Village's objective of encouraging appropriate and profitable development. In this way, Oak Park would join the growing list of federal, state, and local governmental units making use of LEED standards to guide the types of development to be encouraged within their boundaries.

Acknowledgements and Contacts

The Village of Oak Park wishes to thank the many active participants in this Study, including the Stakeholder Advisory Committee and the numerous individuals who attended the Public Meetings and Workshops.

For additional information on the project, please contact:

Pete Dame
Deputy Village Manager
The Village of Oak Park
Village Hall
123 Madison Street
Oak Park, Illinois 60302-4272
708.358.5778

Or log on to the project website at <http://www.captheikestudy.com>

Table of Appendices

Appendix A: Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

Appendix B: Community Outreach

Appendix C: Noise and Air Quality Research

Appendix D: Engineering Research

Appendix E: Potential Funding Sources

Appendix F: Air Rights and Related Development Issues