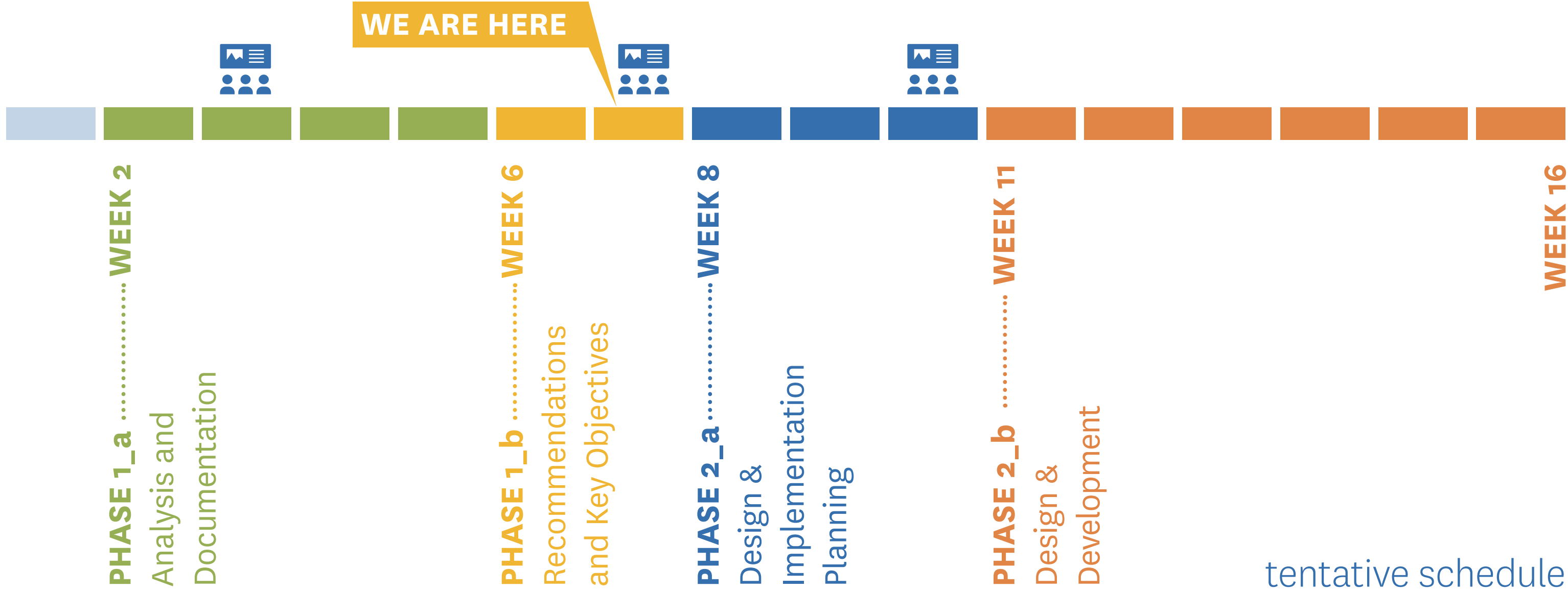


**THE VILLAGE OF
OAK PARK
MUNICIPAL
WAYFINDING**

PHASE 1 ANALYSIS

THE PROCESS



tentative schedule

THE GOALS

- to document Phase I: Discovery
- to develop a common vocabulary, visual and editorial
- serve as a “launchpad” for next phase

WHAT'S IN THE REPORT

- Process overview
- Inventory summary
- Document summary
- MyOakPark summary
- Hypotheses
- Moodboards

NOT GOALS FOR THIS REPORT

- to make specific recommendations
- to address ancillary issues such as housing, parking, streetscape improvements, etc.
- to suggest design strategy (that comes later!)
- to make value judgments

HOW DID WE GET HERE

Discovery was based on a mix of quantitative and qualitative inputs. Together, these inputs give us textured view of the needs of the community. They also enable us to make evidence-based decisions in programming and design strategy.

- Full GIS signage inventory
(walking around with iPads, “driving” on Google earth, spot-checking)
- Precedent studies
- 300 survey respondents
- Intercept interviews
- Community events

HOW DID WE GET HERE

Focus groups with:

- District representatives
- Business owners
- Arts and culture organizations
- Representatives of attractions and tourism and visitation experts
- Multi-unit housing owners

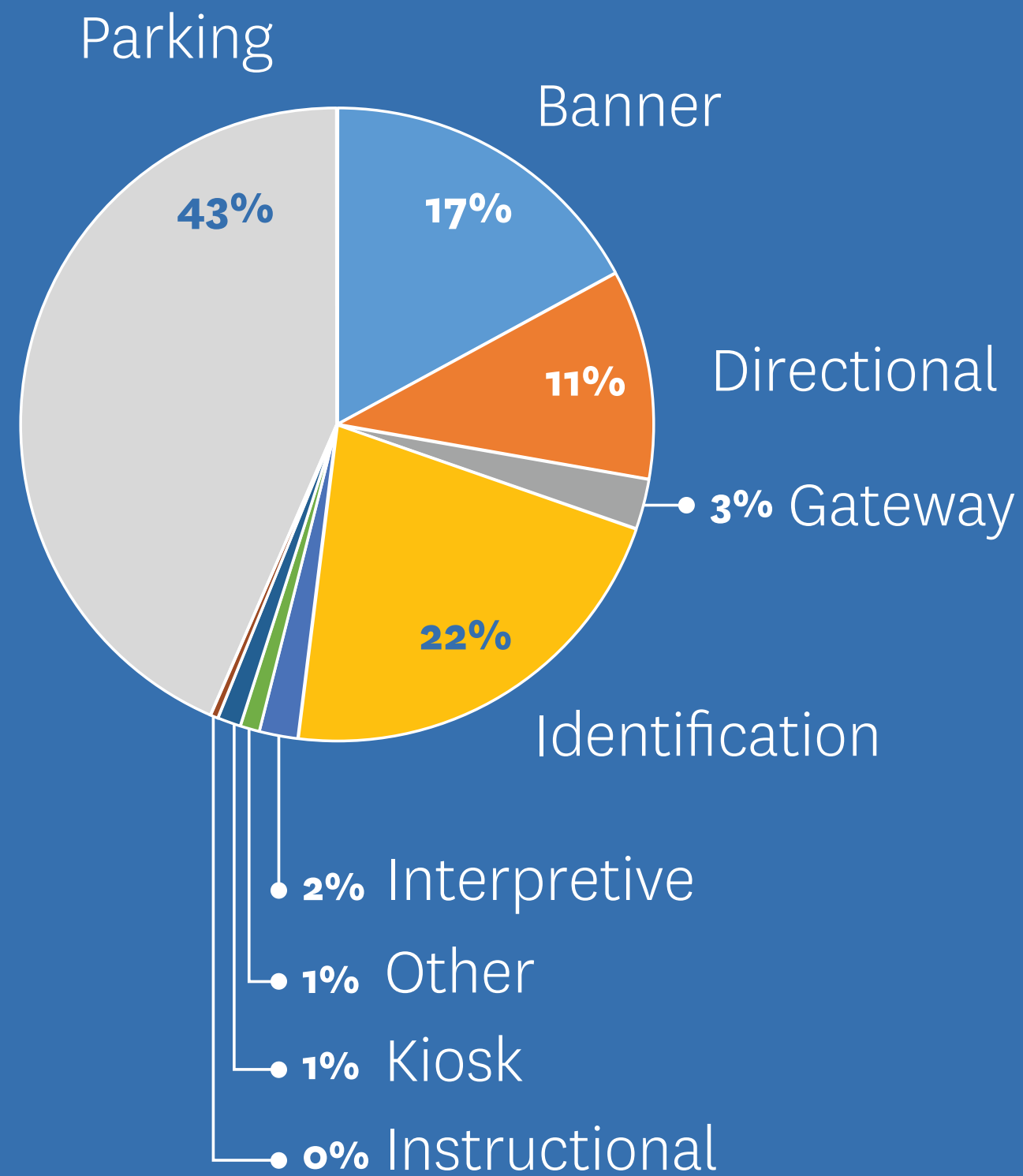
HOW DID WE GET HERE

- Work session with the
Community Design Commission

THE INVENTORY: FINDINGS

- Sign faces are in overall good condition
- Majority of the deterioration found at interpretive and directory signs near attractions
- Smaller, decorative elements appear to be failing throughout the system
- Overall messaging is clear
- Messaging starts failing in heavy clustering and where ad-hoc additions were made

THE INVENTORY: TYPES





DIRECTIONAL

Signage indicating direction to specific destinations.



INTERPRETIVE

Signage interpreting historic or village legacy content.



IDENTIFICATION

Informs visitors about where they are and what is in immediate surroundings.



KIOSK

Freestanding signage typically including postings, or village maps.



GATEWAY

Large beacons announcing arrival to Oak Park, or various districts.



INSTRUCTIONAL

Signs that encourage and prohibit certain activities.



COMMUNITY POSTING

Typically found incorporated within the Kiosks.



REGULATORY

Not included in the inventory.



BANNER

Hardware or Hardware and Banner applications from the previous sign program.



PARKING

Signage identifying parking lots, or parking permit regulatory information.



OTHERS

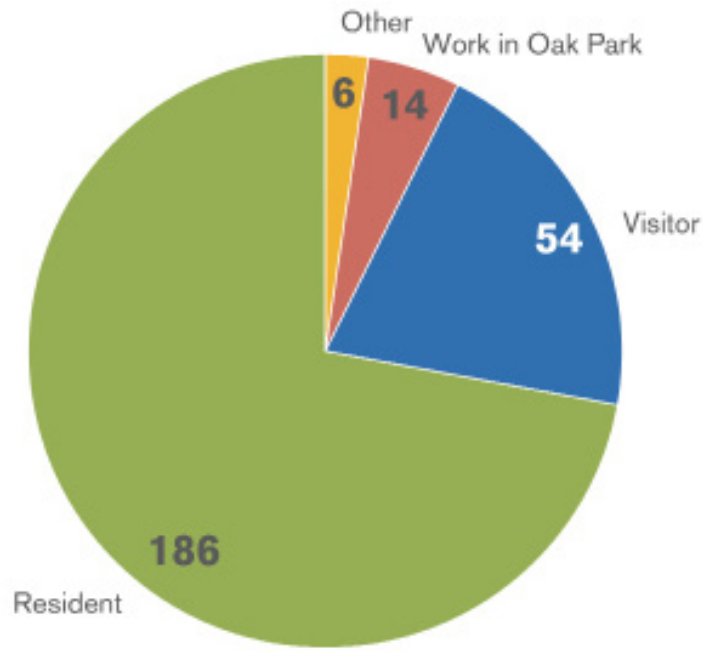
Signs or branding unique to the place are not included in the inventory but help to provide a sense of place.

MYOAKPARK SURVEYS

- Driving is not the dominant mode of getting around
- Green line elevated tracks are not a significant obstacle for pedestrians (your interventions are working. Yay!)
- Dining and open space are top priorities for users – consistent with a generational shift towards active use of the public realm

MY OAK PARK FINDINGS

The My Oak Park online survey received 215 responses over a three week period from July 21, 2016 to August 14, 2016. The Village of Oak Park supplemented the online survey with a paper survey to increase survey participation within the visitor and tourism population. The paper survey was distributed to Visit Oak Park and the Frank Lloyd Wright Trust and garnered 45 responses. The chart at left breaks down the number of survey takers by audience.

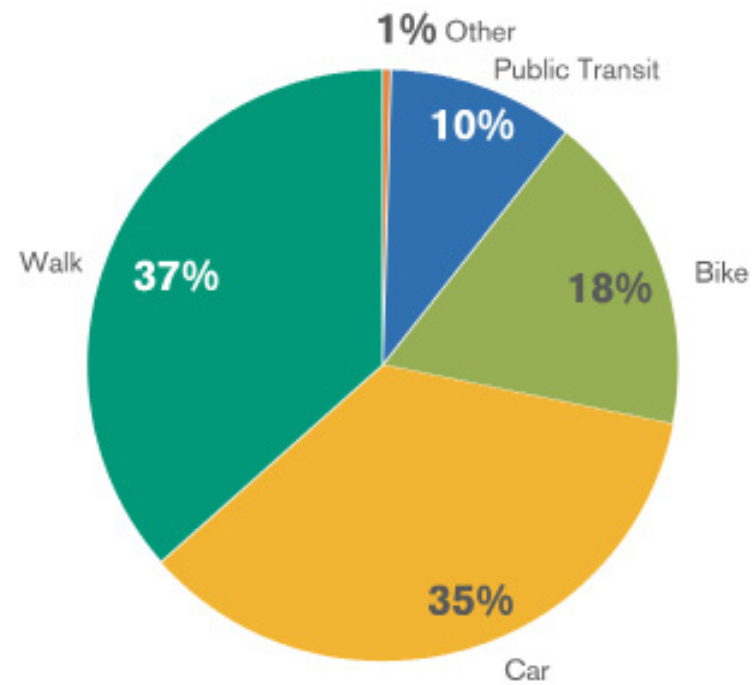


MY OAK PARK SURVEY RESULTS ARE YOU...

This chapter summarizes community engagement and identifies connections between feedback from the public and the recommendations in this phase of work.

GETTING AROUND OAK PARK

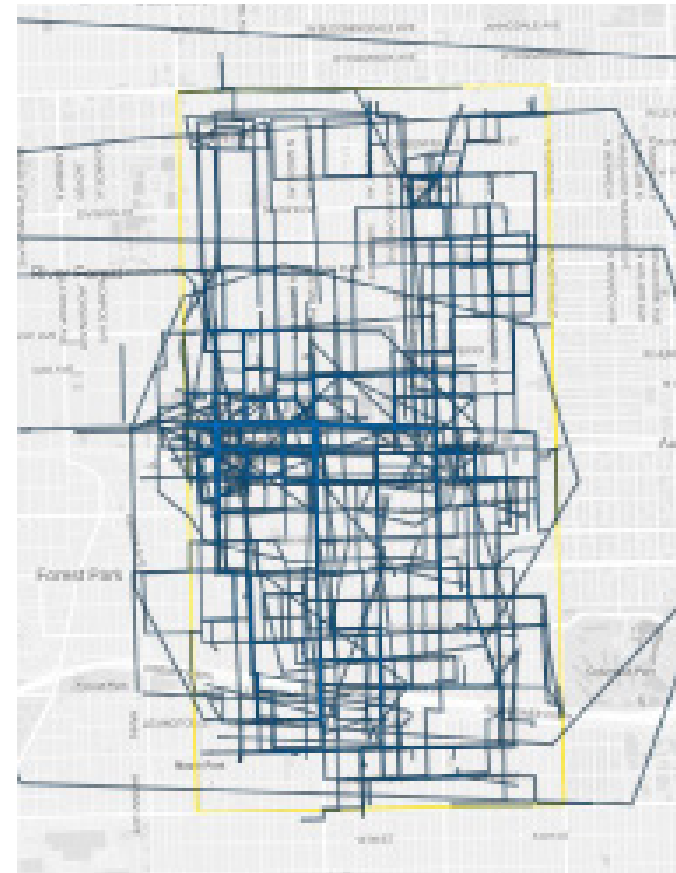
While a large percentage the survey respondents drive to get around Oak Park, the majority of people walk, bike or take public transit which reduces the need for parking in many of the cultural and retail attractions around Oak Park.



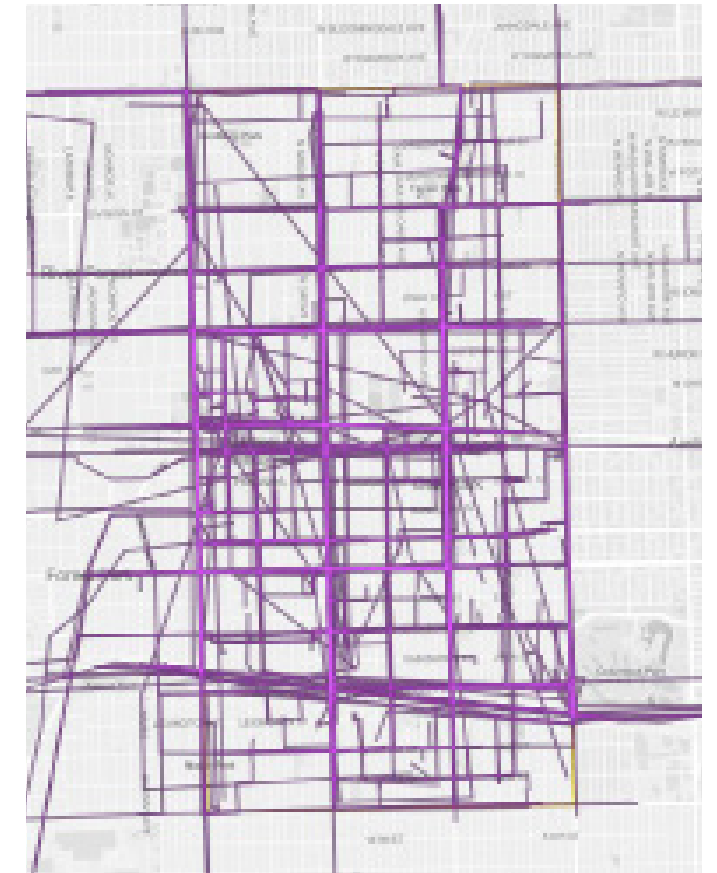
MY OAK PARK SURVEY RESULTS HOW DO YOU GET AROUND OAK PARK?

The trip patterns for each method of transit clearly delineate major arteries for each audience type. For example, those who drive to get around Oak Park, primarily use Ridgeland Avenue and Oak Park Avenue as north-south connectors, while those who bike avoid those streets and instead use East Avenue, which is characterized by sharrows and quieter neighborhood streets.

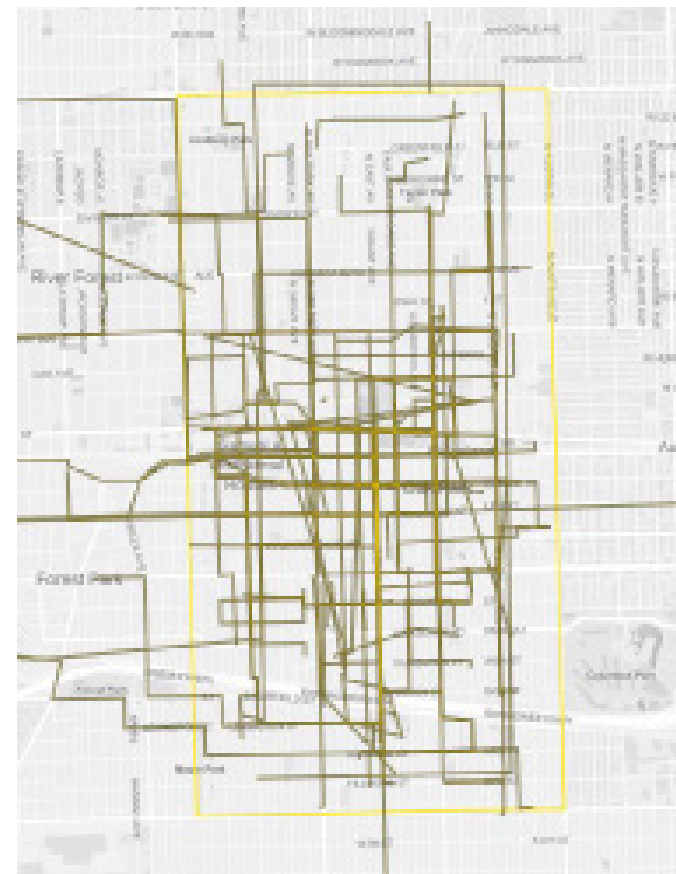
Walking patterns are focused in a few key areas including the Downtown Oak Park District and the Hemingway District. Walking patterns reflect resident pathways and areas of interest—the Frank Lloyd Wright Home and Studio and the Ernest Hemingway birthplace, while not heavily trafficked, are well identified within the responses from the written survey.



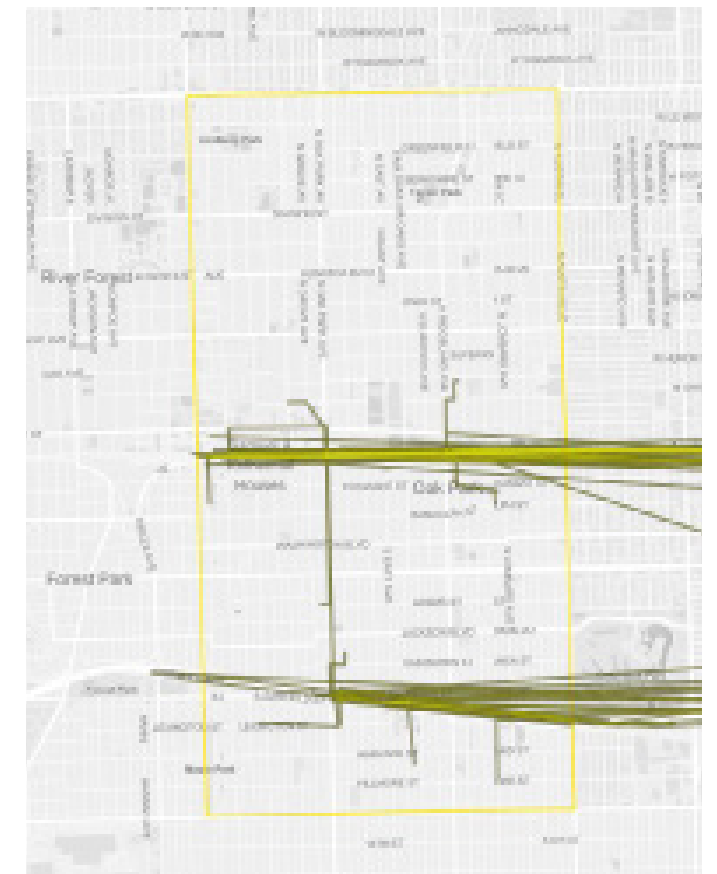
MY OAK PARK SURVEY RESULTS WALKING PATTERNS



MY OAK PARK SURVEY RESULTS DRIVING PATTERNS



MY OAK PARK SURVEY RESULTS BIKING PATTERNS



MY OAK PARK SURVEY RESULTS RAIL PATTERNS

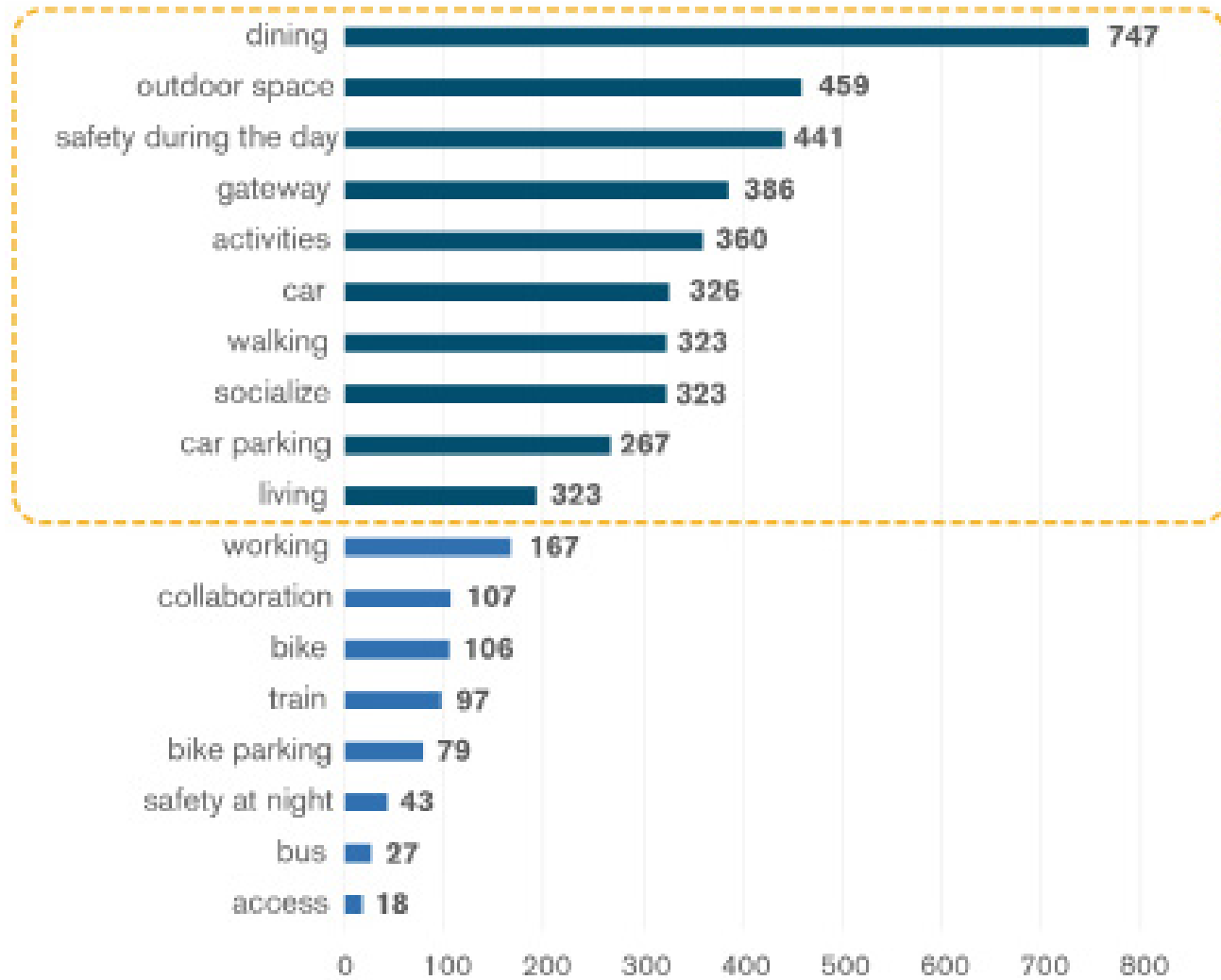
DESTINATIONS AND PRIORITIES

Survey respondents collectively placed almost 4,500 icons and paths around the Village as they identified where they go to work, their daily route, have a night on the town, or relax. Dining was the most place icon, followed by outdoor space, safety during the day, and gateways. Prioritizing the placement of icons reflects points of interest and nodes for further study related to wayfinding opportunities. While dining was the most mapped amenity, it also was focused in key areas within the community—residents and visitors overlap dining preferences often. Outdoor space had similar results—there are key areas people access for open space within the Village. The popularity of

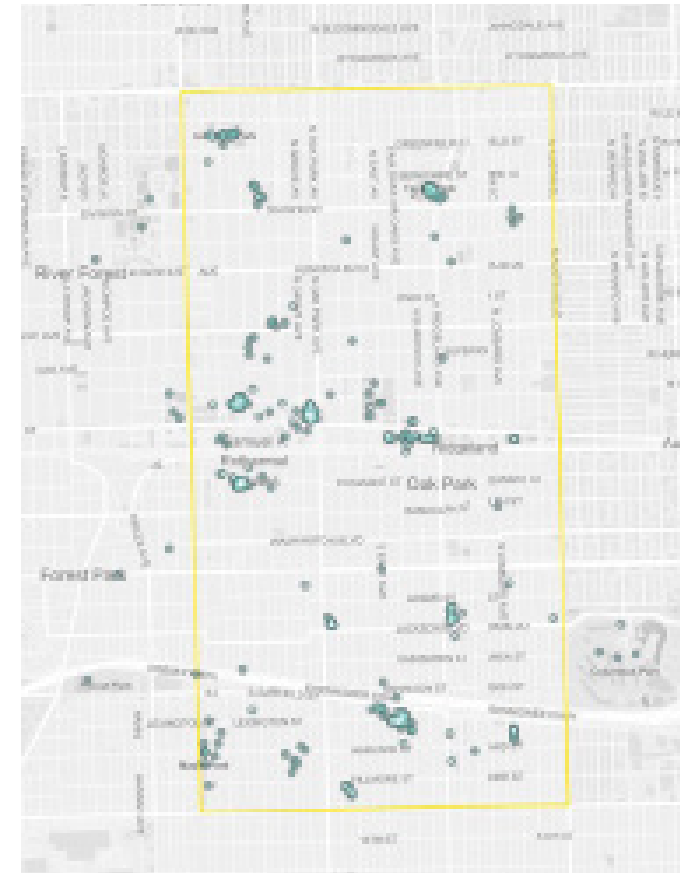
those spaces have an opportunity to be leveraged as wayfinding is reconsidered as part of this study.

The diagram on the top right overlays where people identify the gateways to Oak Park and driving patterns. Community feedback related to their perception of the entry points into the Village will have significant influence over the placement of gateway signs within the new system.

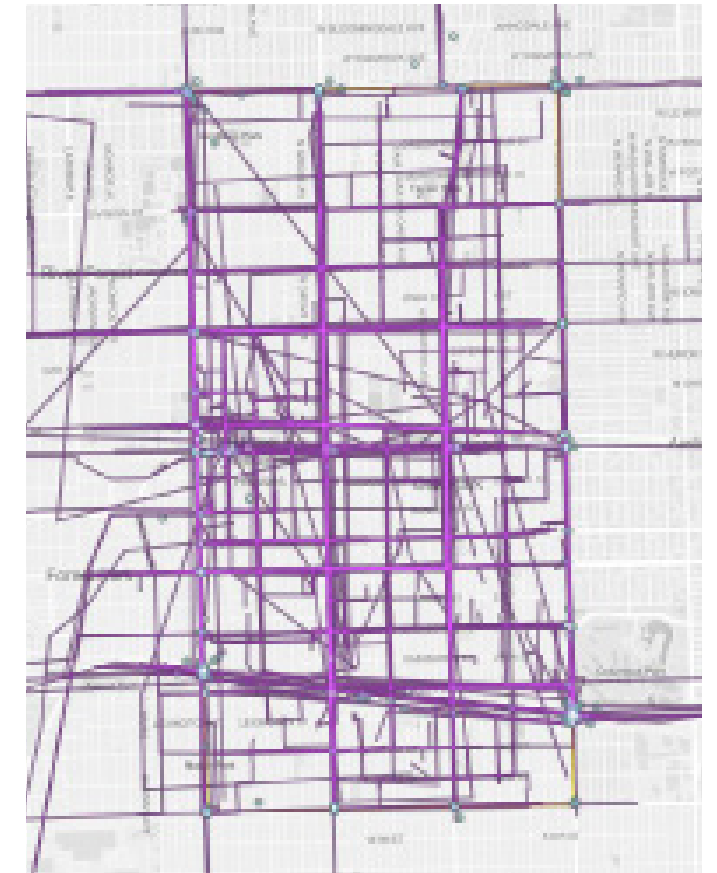
While parking comments well outweighed most other aspects of the existing wayfinding system—it was identified less by survey takers.



MY OAK PARK SURVEY RESULTS OVERALL RESPONSE RATE BY AMENITY AND ACTIVITY



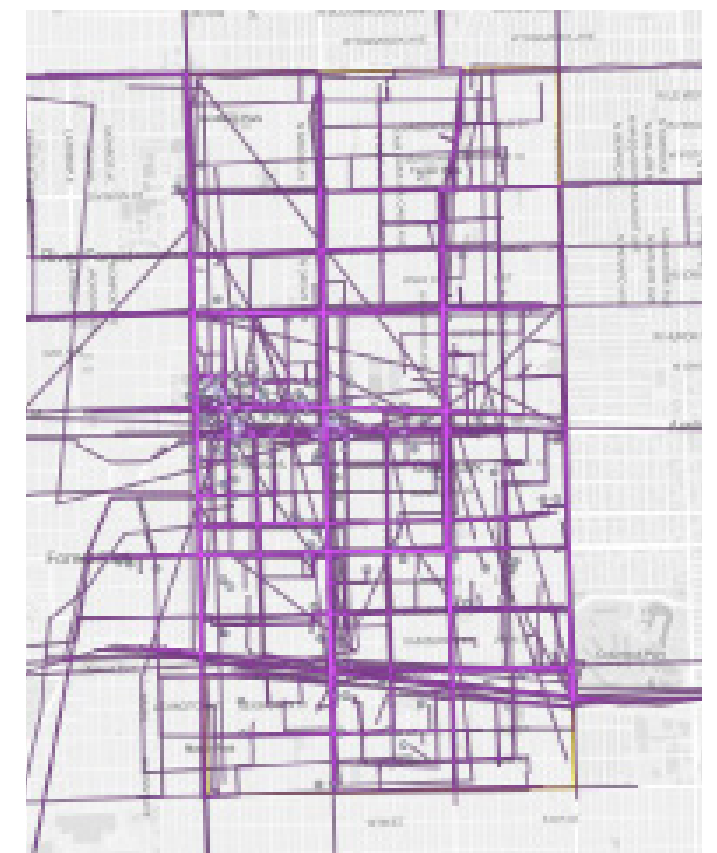
MY OAK PARK SURVEY RESULTS OUTDOOR SPACE



MY OAK PARK SURVEY RESULTS DRIVING PATTERNS AND GATEWAYS



MY OAK PARK SURVEY RESULTS DINING



MY OAK PARK SURVEY RESULTS DRIVING AND PARKING

SURVEY COMMENTS

- “First impression was that Oak Park is shabby, based on the route GPS directed.”

SURVEY COMMENTS

- “Information about sites and other general information at the train station would be helpful.”

SURVEY COMMENTS

- “Oak Park is truly one of the best communities in the world - welcoming, creative, progressive, and beautiful.”

DOCUMENT REVIEW

- Original wayfinding plan appears to have specified more pedestrian-level signage
- Wayfinding identified as priority in Comprehensive Master Plan
- Wayfinding supports tourism goals
- Wayfinding supports complete streets goals

DOCUMENT REVIEW SUMMARY

Oak Park Signage Plan, 2001

The provided documentation of the original sign plan is consistent with typical Design Intent-level drawings for civic sign programs. We also reviewed various fabrication shop drawings from M-K Signs of Chicago which, we believe, implemented the Historic District ID Signage, and Andco of North Carolina, which implemented the majority of the system. We found drawings indicating Phases 1 and 3, and assume that there was a second phase, which included the interior signage for Village Hall, as these drawings were not provided. Our understanding is that the majority of the Phase 1 and 3 programs were completed between the years of 2000 and 2001.

Phase 1 included vehicular (2 heights) directional, parking directionals on a simplified post, Parking identification at garages, attraction identification, primary directories, various applications of logos at the fire station tower and public works, as well as directional and identity signage at Village Hall. The Banner “bracket” and attachment were also done during this time, and were indicated by the consultant as gateways. The review of these documents, in concert with our on site observations, indicated that a few large identification signs (Fire Headquarters, Main Pumping Station, and North Fire Station) have either been removed or never installed as they were not present during the survey.

More importantly, we have discovered that there was an [initial round of pedestrian directional signs that were removed from the program](#). This discovery is in perfect alignment with our observations that there is a lack of pedestrian level information through the Village.

Phase 3 of the work included a secondary directory, a large downtown Oak Park pylon, and an “adopt-a-station” map kiosk which we discovered within both the blue and green transit stops.

The historic identification (indicated as regulatory signage in the original design intent) was also completed during a subsequent phase of work as the documentation was dated mid-2002. These signs were located at the Gunderson Historic District, Ridgeland Oak Park Historic District, FLW Prairie School of Architecture Historic District. Also during this time a “service sign” was implemented, for indications of the Rotary Club, Lions Club etc.

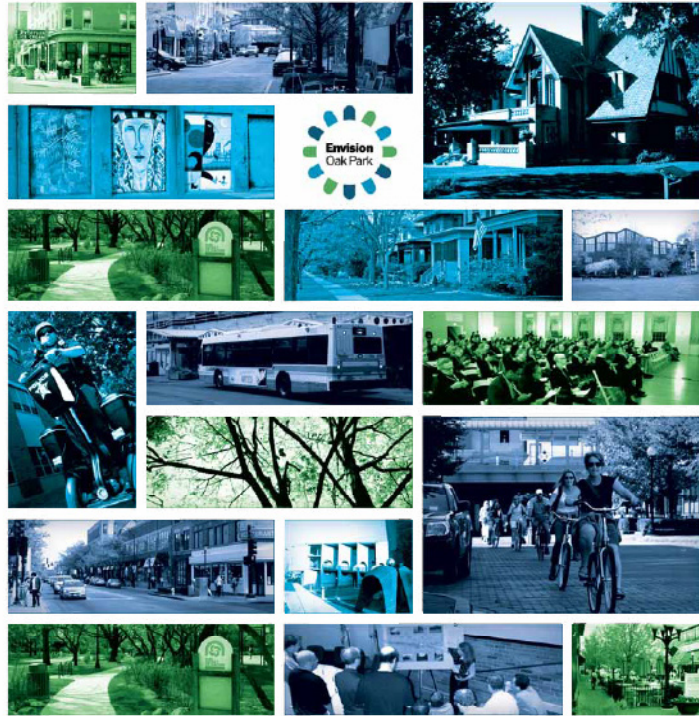
In review of the fabrication details we noticed that the majority of the post components throughout the phases were secured with chemical adhesives, vs metal welding, or mechanical fasteners. Also the level of detailing in the shop drawings does not provide adequate detail for replacement of fasteners.

While the messaging on the majority of the program (die-cut vinyl graphics) is still current, the kiosks indicated digitally printed vinyl, which at the time was the most current technology, but has been updated, and replaced by various new printing techniques. Further the attraction identification signage appeared to be produced using a porcelain enamel product, which was one of the most durable products of the time. This material seems to have been value engineered, as it is also costly, to a vinyl film, whose longevity is drastically shorter, especially in high traffic environments, again reinforcing our evaluations of the signage conditions at the Unity Temple, and Frank Lloyd Wright Home and Studio.



OAK PARK SIGNAGE AND WAYFINDING PLAN DIRECTIONAL SIGN NEAR THE DOWNTOWN DISTRICT.

The previous plan was quite thorough, in sign types and design thinking for the time. However modern technology, digital mapping via smart phones, and immediate access to digital content was not prevalent during the time and should be reviewed as the program develops.



Envision Oak Park

A Comprehensive Plan for the Oak Park Community

Adopted September 15, 2014



ENVISION OAK PARK THE 2014 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

Unified Design of Downtown Streets Master Plan, 2015

The success of the Marion Street redesign and streetscape character foregrounded a new study around all downtown streets, meant to consider insights into the remaining Downtown streets as those streetscapes near the end of their useful lives. The master plan establishes an approach to the design of those new streetscapes and contemplates implementation strategies for potential developments already underway through out Oak Park.

Envision Oak Park: Comprehensive Plan, 2014

The Envision Oak Park Comprehensive Plan guides land use decision-making over the next 15 to 20 years. It identifies five guiding principles — diversity, urban sustainability, respect for history and legacy, collaboration and cooperation, and thriving neighborhoods.

The comprehensive plan evolved out of two years of work which included an active public process, thorough inventory of existing and potential issues and opportunities, and resources and partners for collaboration to accomplish the goals of the plan. The purpose of the comprehensive plan is to guide decisions related to development regulations, capital improvement projects and other policies or civic actions. Studies and plans over the next 15 to 20 years, similar to the Oak Park Signage and Wayfinding Plan should set out to accomplish the goals and objectives of the comprehensive plan.

Tourism—Signage was identified as one of a few elements that need to be improved to leverage the tourism industry in the Village.

Historic Character—Within the comprehensive plan residents identified several “specific barriers to sharing [historic and significant] assets with regional and national audiences, including the need for greater marketing, hotel and lodging options, and enhanced local signage and wayfinding.”

The following objectives taken directly from the comprehensive plan identify some of the key roles signage should play in Oak Park -

Cycling to Art Objective 5.3.4. Create a self-guided bicycle tour for all existing public art located in the village. Bicycling is one of the best ways to see the sites of the village. Oak Park has a network of bike-friendly streets that can be used to create a route that traverses through the village, connecting public art and architecturally significant sites. A self-guided bicycle tour would allow visitors and residents the opportunity to experience public art at an individualized pace. Village government could work with local bicycle advocates to create a self-guided tour route and wayfinding signage that explores the public art of Oak Park and safely accommodates riders of all abilities. Such a route should be coordinated with the Bicycle Plan to ensure that investment in infrastructure and signage helps achieve this objective.

Accessing Cultural Destinations Objective 5.4.5. Make access to and between existing and emerging cultural destinations a consideration of future transportation improvements. In order to experience the art and culture Oak Park has to offer, residents and visitors require safe and efficient transportation to these sites. Village government can work with Public Works Department, IDOT, Pace, CTA, Metra, and other partners to prioritize transportation and transit improvements along routes between and through cultural and art destinations. Areas around CTA and Metra train stations should include easy-to-follow wayfinding and locational signage to direct visitors to culturally significant sites.

Oak Park Brand Identity Guide

The presentation considers how the Village might manage its reputation through branding. The branding study identified six key insights into how Oak Park is unique: individuality, discovery, perspective, unity, purpose, and simplicity. The study identifies a potential branding message and scheme for implementation. A sample campaign presented in the guide emphasizes the messaging of “stepping out of line,” a theme of a progressive, iconoclastic attitude that the wayfinding system can reinforce.

Oak Park Bicycle Plan, 2008

The Oak Park Bicycle Plan has very simple and straightforward goals—to increase bike use and make the Village more friendly to bicycles. The plan identifies multiple opportunities for the new wayfinding system to support the goals of the plan and create a safer experience for bicycles, pedestrians, and vehicles.

Greater Downtown Master Plan, 2005

The Downtown Oak Park is the vibrant economic and historic hub of the community. The plan leveraged new growth in the district to implement a plan focused on preserving the historic and attractive nature of the place that seeks to alleviate issues like a lack of convenient parking and inconsistent wayfinding.

A Plan for the Redevelopment of Roosevelt Road, 2005

A cooperative development strategy between Berwyn and Oak Park to strengthen the Roosevelt Road commercial corridor. The study anticipates redevelopment of the corridor through non-traditional means and incorporate urban design guidelines and form-based zoning to enhance and attract new business and visitors to the district.

One of the key objectives that influences this plan is the need for a variety of scales to complement a mix of user types and speeds (e.g. vehicular, bike and pedestrian). This urban design objective establishes a consistent streetscape that includes the use of banners on lamp posts and buffers between vehicular traffic and pedestrian traffic to enhance the corridor experience for all users.

Oak Park Zoning Ordinance, 2002

The 2002 Zoning Ordinance serves as the official rules and regulations that guide development in the Village. The standards for development are broken down by land use and by district, but are reviewed to ensure projects align with the recommendations of the Comprehensive Plan and other policies. The zoning ordinance identifies two historic districts in Oak Park—Frank Lloyd Wright Historic District and the Ridgeland-Oak Park Historic District, and the Gunderson Historic District. There are also six overlay districts in Oak Park, identified below:

- × Perimeter Overlay District
- × Transit Retail Related Overlay District
- × Downtown Lake Street Building Height and Massing Overlay District
- × Marion Street Overlay District
- × Madison Street Overlay District
- × Roosevelt Road Form Based Overlay District

HYPOTHESIS 1

PLAINSPEAK

Twelve business districts, each with its own identity. Three downtown districts, including downtown proper. Historic districts that overlap commercial districts. Districts that include two other municipalities.

Rather than disorienting visitors with designations that align with internal interests, speak to them in plain language with universal appeal: dining, entertainment, shopping, landmarks. Use district nomenclature insofar as it is useful – Arts, Downtown, Hemingway – but only when it lends clarity and requires no explanation.

SAYING EVERYTHING IS SAYING NOTHING

There's a great deal of visual clutter in the public realm. This isn't just the fault of the wayfinding system, but a cumulative effect of signage posted by municipal, state, local, and private entities. A single intersection may contain all of these sign types, and more.

Clean up and consolidate redundant and conflicting signs, replacing them with a single, hierarchical solution.

ATTRACTING, NOT DISTRACTING

The current signage system draws attention to itself. Its physical bulk, the flourish of its design, the historical references that it embodies: these attributes make the system visible as an object. But in a place where architecture, landscape, and cultural landmarks predominate, signage need not be an attraction in itself. An unintended consequence is that existing signage, in its historical allusions, blends too well in some places — becoming camouflaged by its Prairie-style ornament.

Combine a straightforward, minimal armature with a visual language that uses universal pictographs.

PARK AND STRIDE

Frustrated drivers circle Oak Park's commercial districts and cultural attractions seeking a convenient parking spot. Yet nearby parking garages offer plenty of capacity. A paradigm shift is needed — and is already underway — in directing motorists not to their final destination, but to quick and convenient parking. Thereafter, they'll be free to enjoy and explore on foot.

Prioritize parking on vehicular-level wayfinding and use trailblazers to direct traffic to parking garages rather than to attractions. Create a coherent identity for all structured parking, lots, and valet. Add pedestrian-level orientation at pedestrian exits from parking structures.

LINGER LONGER

Cultural destinations represent decision points for consumers. In a split second, users are deciding whether they will remain in the area to dine, shop, and explore — or get back to a downtown Chicago hotel. It is critical to divert visitors to nearby attractions, entertainment options, or retailers.

In key decision points, implement 5-minute walk maps that familiarize users with the immediate environment to compel them to stay in the area.

THE SPACE BETWEEN

Oak Park boasts plenty of attractions in a relatively small physical footprint. Yet perceived barriers — train trestles, change in building stock, lack in continuity of visual cues — prevent people from exploring just beyond visual range. Crossing from one neighborhood into another can feel surprisingly intimidating.

To encourage people to explore more of the Village, use a combination of distance markers that preview travel time, and granular “breadcrumbs” that assure pedestrians and pedallers that they haven’t strayed from the path.

THE OTHER HALF

Oak Park is part of a vibrant metropolitan region. Residents are exposed to abundant options for dining, shopping, playing — living the good life. The transit lines that make the Village so appealing to a younger, educated commuter demographic are the same lines that convey new Oak Parkers out of Oak Park. Residents of multi-unit housing are mobile and adventurous; they represent potential patrons of Oak Park’s businesses and institutions.

Strengthen identity at major gateways and consolidate multiple destinations into top-level items, such as “dining,” “attractions,” “downtown.” Draw multi-unit housing residents deeper into the Village with pedestrian directories.

LOWERING THE CENTER OF GRAVITY

The days when most people experienced Oak Park at 30 miles per hour are numbered. As infrastructure projects calm traffic, and as a new generation of residents elects to travel by foot or bike, directional signs must meet people at their level. With more users slowing down, eye-level signage can create moments for people to encounter directions, interpretation, and beauty closer to the ground.

Aside from vehicular-specific signage, engage people at eye-level. Use infrastructure, ground plane, and moments of discovery to engage a pedestrian and cycling audience.

THE TRIP BEFORE THE TRIP

Mobile mapping has transformed the way in which most people plan their itineraries and proceed along their journeys. In addition to print maps, the power of online route planning has rendered much wayfinding redundant. But this is good news: the burden of route planning no longer rests exclusively on the shoulders of wayfinding systems.

Consider the role of online planning, using physical systems to reinforce or calibrate user itineraries in person.

THE PACE OF PROGRESS

Oak Park is a progressive place. It sets trends, leading other communities in design, culture, and policy. And now, it is poised for a new reality: as Oak Park welcomes people of all backgrounds, ages, abilities, and interests, it must recognize that there is no single pace — no one size that fits every user. Some hurry through on the way to a destination. Others are open to the serendipitous joys of discovery. Still others are curious participants in the authentic life of place.

To keep up with progress, wayfinding must also move at different speeds.

THANK

YOU

Onward to moodboards!