

The Village of Elmwood Park Station Area contains mature and well-maintained residential neighborhoods, strong civic and public amenities such as Conti Parkway and Central Park, and an auto-oriented commercial district along Grand Avenue. The community's vision describes a desired outcome for the station area over the next 10 years. The following planning principles describe the general guidelines to ensure that new development supports the overall vision.

### **Vision for the Elmwood Park Station Area**

The Elmwood Park Station Area will encompass a strong downtown, new commercial and residential uses, and distinctive bungalow-style residential neighborhoods. The Village of Elmwood Park envisions a vibrant, unified downtown from Grand and Harlem Avenues to Conti Parkway, with strong pedestrian and transit connections to the Elmwood Park Station. The Village will encourage new mixed-use development on Grand Avenue and Conti Parkway that provides modern retailing and residential opportunities. The Village will also encourage residential in-fill development and redevelopment, where appropriate, to support station use. Ultimately, the Village will work proactively with the public and private sectors to implement this vision for the Elmwood Park Station Area.

### **Planning Principles for the Elmwood Park Station Area**

To revitalize the Elmwood Park Station Area with a vibrant downtown connected to the Elmwood Park Station, adjacent civic uses, and surrounding neighborhoods, the Village supports and promotes the following planning principles to guide future public and private investment. The conceptual plans and strategies for the Elmwood Park Station Area will build directly upon these planning principles.

#### **PLANNING PRINCIPLE 1:**

Create a downtown identity along Grand Avenue from Harlem Avenue to Conti Parkway

A successful downtown typically contains a high-quality environment that is distinct, memorable, and inviting for people. Grand Avenue is currently auto-oriented, meaning the street is designed almost exclusively for cars, from its median turning lane, to the extensive curb cuts, and many surface parking lots. The Village of Elmwood Park could create a downtown identity by re-designing Grand Avenue to also accommodate pedestrians, with new multi-use buildings, parking lots



located behind buildings, attractive sidewalk amenities, and public and private landscaping. The Village could unify Grand Avenue and Conti Parkway as the downtown with a streetscape improvement program.

**PLANNING PRINCIPLE 2:**

Create a unified downtown atmosphere through a streetscape improvement program and a façade improvement program supported by design guidelines

A community's downtown is inherently related to its streetscape – the street and everything fronting the street. In particular, the buildings, parking lots, sidewalks, and the street pavement should be well maintained and distinctive. The Village already has a façade improvement program with financial incentives that encourages property owners to improve their building façades with new doors and windows, new paint and tuck-pointing, and new signs and awnings. However, the Village could create a more unified downtown atmosphere by promoting the use of design guidelines for existing buildings, as well as new construction. These design guidelines would provide design direction for property owners that request assistance through the façade enhancement program. Likewise, the Village could implement a streetscape improvement program for sidewalk amenities, such as street trees, benches, pedestrian lighting, and banners. Ultimately, street and façade improvements would help visually unify and create a downtown atmosphere, which in turn helps spur new development and continued investment in existing properties.

**PLANNING PRINCIPLE 3:**

Improve the public spaces along Grand Avenue, particularly the connections with the Elmwood Park Station and Conti Parkway

Pedestrians should feel comfortable and safe walking through a community's public spaces. The Village of Elmwood Park has quality public spaces in its residential neighborhoods, with well-maintained buildings, streets, sidewalks, lighting, trees and landscaping. The Village could create new public spaces along Grand Avenue by encouraging more intensive development on under-utilized lots that create outdoor "rooms" such as pocket parks, plazas, and/or sidewalk dining areas; and, and providing distinct connections with community assets such as Elmwood Park Station and Conti Parkway.



**PLANNING PRINCIPLE 4:**

Create a balanced transportation network in the station area that caters to pedestrians, bikes, transit, and cars

Commuter rail stations that are highly utilized by a community typically have a strong multi-modal transportation network, which means balanced access for pedestrians, bikes, transit, and cars. The Village contains quality residential streets that provide pleasant and safe walking environments to the station, as well as a low-traffic street network for local car access. The Village could improve its access to the Elmwood Park Station by “calming traffic” (i.e. slowing traffic speeds) and improving the pedestrian realm along Grand Avenue. It could also install kiosks and bus shelters for transit users on Grand Avenue and designate bike routes between the station and adjacent residential neighborhoods.

**PLANNING PRINCIPLE 5:**

Encourage new development at key activity centers in the Elmwood Park Station Area

Successful development will build upon existing community strengths and assets at key activity centers – the Elmwood Park Station and the Grand and Harlem Avenue crossroads. When new development is sited near a community asset, a synergy occurs among developments, which in turn can attract additional development and reinvestment. For example, the Village recently constructed Central Park near Elmwood Park Station, and subsequently a developer built 38 new town homes across the street. In addition, Metra has re-built the Elmwood Park Station with new shelters, platforms, and landscaping. This is likely to serve as a catalyst for new development in the station area. As such, continuing to focus redevelopment efforts near 75th and Grand Avenues will help attract future development west and east of the Station along Grand Avenue. Another example of focused, proactive redevelopment efforts was the Village’s creation of a Tax Increment Finance (TIF) district at Grand and Harlem Avenues in 1983, which helped attract Circuit City. The Village should continue with this redevelopment focus at Grand and Harlem Avenues. Eventually, these key activity centers – 75th and Grand Avenues and Grand and Harlem Avenues – could become the impetus to enliven the entire stretch of Grand Avenue and create a vibrant downtown within the station area.

