

DEVELOPER DISCUSSION PANEL

Summary Report: April 2014



Regional
Transportation
Authority



Urban Land
Institute

Introduction

The Regional Transportation Authority (RTA) has invested over \$4 million of its own funds and leveraged over \$6 million of local and Federal funds during the past 15 years to complete approximately 90 transit-oriented development (TOD) planning studies through the RTA's [Community Planning](#) program. This program funds TOD planning studies that promote walkable, mixed-income, mixed-use development co-located and/or well-connected to retail and business uses in transit station areas while also increasing overall access to transit. The RTA also offers implementation technical assistance through the Community Planning program. From the RTA's perspective, pursuing and achieving implementation of these plans can result in more efficient transit operations, improved access to transit services and a potential for increased ridership for all three of our Service Boards (Metra, Pace and CTA). Implementation efforts can also increase private investment in TOD areas while promoting the principles of sustainability and livability.

As part of these increased efforts, the RTA is working with the Urban Land Institute (ULI) in Chicago to facilitate discussions between individual communities and development experts to shed light on the future of TODs and how this relates to the changing market and economy.



University Park Metra Station. Photo Credit: Wikipedia

Discussion Participants

Urban Land Institute & Regional Transportation Authority

Tony Manno, Project Manager, RTA

Shawn Temple, Development Manager, Weston Solutions

Greg Terwilliger, Business Development Manager, Ledcor Group

Art Zwemke, Manager, Robert Arthur Land Company

Village of University Park

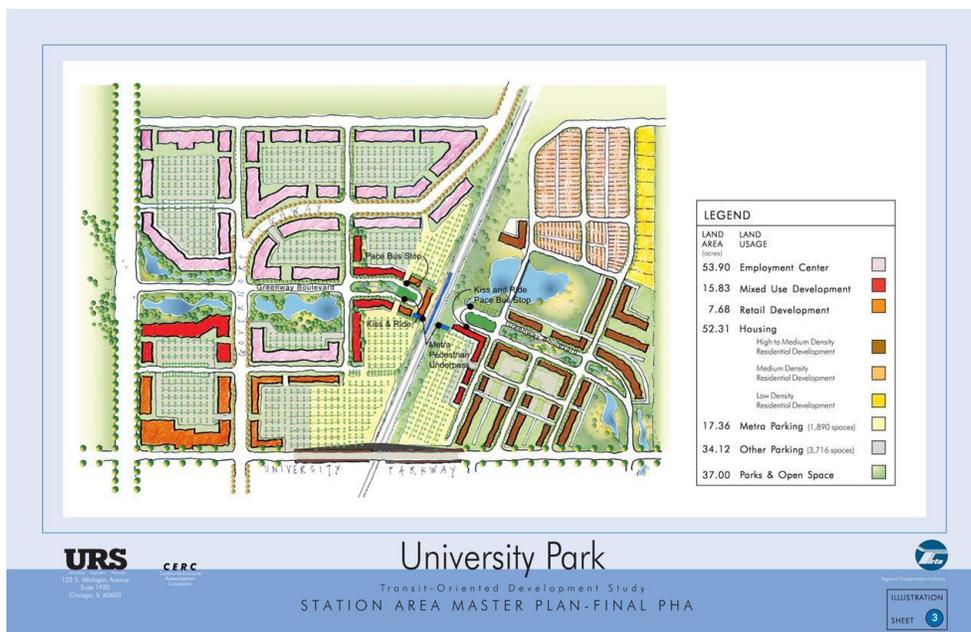
Vivian Covington, Mayor

Rawle Belgrave, Inspector

Ernest Roberts III, PE, Robinson Engineering

Val Williams, Robinson Engineering

Lakeshia Wright, South Suburban Mayors and Managers Association (SSMMA)



University Park TOD Planning Study Station Area

Background

The Village of University Park is a growing community in the Chicago metropolitan area, located in eastern Will County just 35 miles south of downtown Chicago. [The University Park Transit-Oriented Development Planning Study](#) was completed in September 2002 and recommends the establishment of mixed-use development in the station area that would connect the east and west sides of the Village with Governors State University (GSU) and the Metra station. The University Park Station area identified in the study is bounded by Cicero Avenue to the west, Stuenkel Road to the south, University Golf Club to the east, and an east-west line at the northern boundary of the Golf Club.

With the assistance of Robinson Engineering, the Village's engineering firm, various road improvement projects will be commencing in 2014 including the improvement of Stuenkel Road with new pavement and a 10' multi-use path connecting GSU to Metra. IDOT is also proposing to construct a new interchange at I-57 and Stuenkel Road which will improve road access to GSU and the Village. Governors State University is transitioning to a 4-year college in the Fall of 2014, which will bring an additional 8,000 students to campus for a total of 12,000 students to the area. A 3-phase, 10-building student housing project called Prairie Place is currently being constructed on campus to provide on-site housing. With this new housing comes the anticipated need for retail/commercial food opportunities.

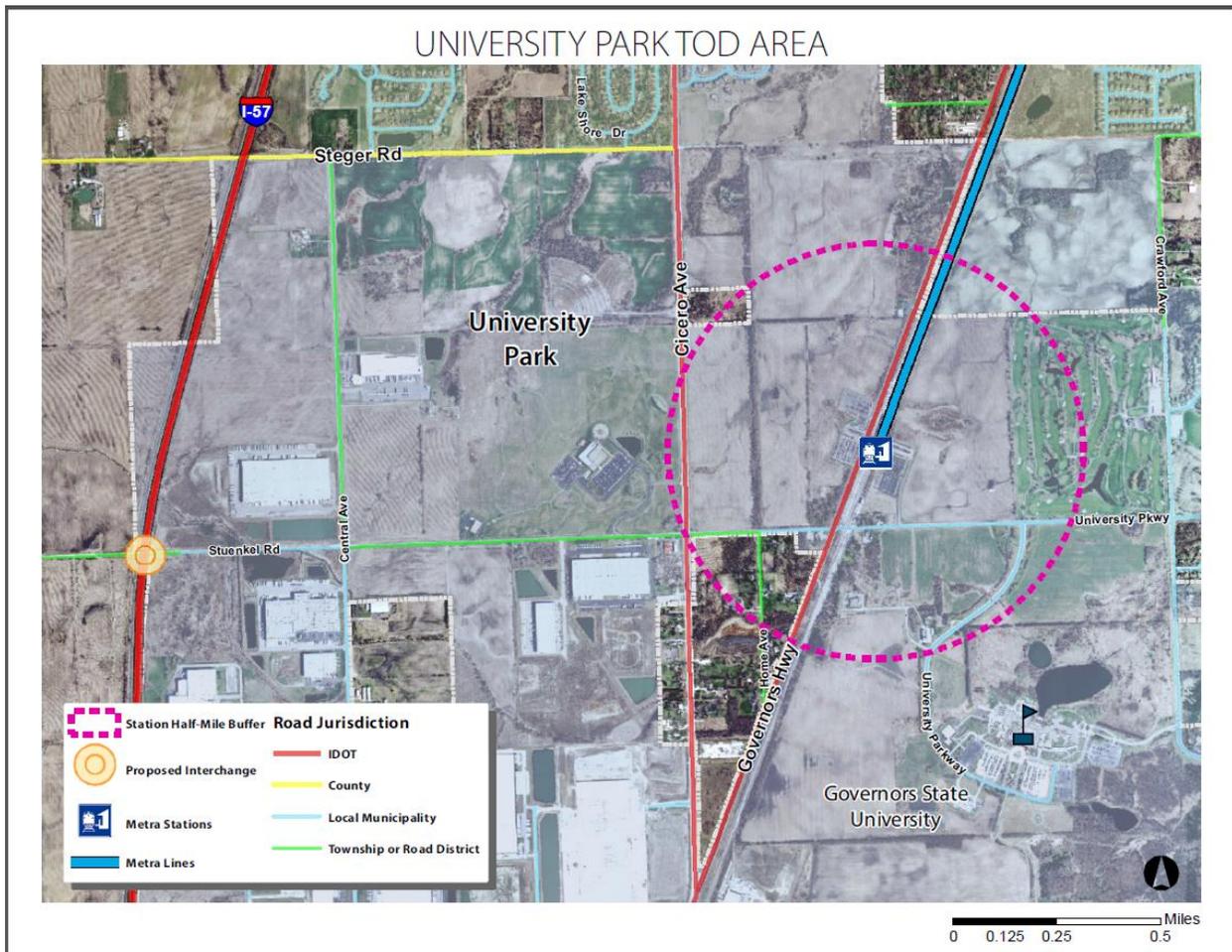
The Village was chosen as part of the RTA's 2013 Community Planning program to participate in a RTA/ULI Developer Discussion Panel to solicit guidance and advice on ways to attract investment in the TOD area and near campus.

A Developer Discussion Panel was held in University Park on March 21, 2014 and this report summarizes the discussion and the panel's recommendations and suggested strategies.



Phase I of Prairie Place is currently under construction with occupancy plans for Fall 2014. Photo Credit: RTA

Study Area



Location of the Study Area as shown in the RTA-Funded TOD Plan (2002)

Key Recommendations

Short-Term Recommendations

- **Road Improvements**
 - Continue to work with IDOT to ensure that all planned & funded road improvements along Stuenkel Road are completed;
- **Governors State University**
 - Strengthen relationship with GSU to work together to advertise GSU's new four-year programs, affordability and access from Metra and Pace;
 - Continue to work with Pace to increase Village-funded bus service between the Metra station and Governors State University;
- **Town Center**
 - Beautify area by adding more grass on unused/unneeded portions of parking lot, a gazebo, park and recreational equipment, etc.;
- **Industrial**
 - Work with the South Suburban Mayors and Managers Association (SSMMA) to continue to promote the incentives for industrial development in the Village;

Mid-Term Recommendations

- **Governors State University**
 - Focus on developing/improving the Governors State University area and support the University in all on-campus student housing efforts;
 - Food, grocery and entertainment amenities should be explored on campus to serve the incoming student housing residents;
- **Town Center**
 - Explore adaptive reuse opportunities at the Town Center, including
 - Relocate all municipal services to vacant space;
 - Demolish the vacant grocery portion of the building;
 - Connect with surrounding communities to identify local/neighborhood retailers that may be interested in expanding their business to University Park.

Long-Term Recommendations

- TOD opportunities near Metra are long-range; however future development may be possible once the GSU area is adequately redeveloped to serve the influx of new students.