

The principles that guide the streetscape plan for the East Side Character District are similar to those of the West Side Streetscape District. The difference can be seen in their likelihood of being implemented due to the constraints of the selected areas. The existing curb-to-curb dimension along Higgins Road, east of Prospect Avenue, limits the possibility of either a planted median or “dedicated” bike lanes. At its narrowest dimension the roadway is measured at forty-two feet. The drastic changes needed to widen the roadway or to eliminate a lane of traffic to allow for bike lanes are not feasible.

Table 3: East Side Streetscape District	
Impacts on Existing Infrastructure	Streetscape Elements
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain existing curb-to-curb • Reduce travel lane widths • Expand the parkway dimension by requiring a property line easement through site plan review on those lots where the existing parkway does not meet the minimum depth requirement* 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Street trees where the parkway meets the minimum depth requirement* • Planted median • Crosswalks safety improvements at signalized intersections • Crosswalks at non-signalized, mid-block locations in combination with enhanced median • Decorative lighting

* Shade trees cannot be planted if the parkway dimension is less than five (5) feet in depth as measured from the edge of sidewalk to back of curb.

The north side of Higgins Road, between Cumberland Ave. and Prospect Ave., does not have the parkway depth needed for planting street trees as identified on [Figure 9: Overall Streetscape Plan](#). The existing parkway is only five feet deep. The City of Park Ridge would need to establish a property easement setback to create the additional six feet of depth in order to plant street trees and accommodate a sidewalk. The minimum depth of a parkway should be eleven feet as illustrated in [Figure 14: Design Parkway Cross Section](#). This dimension allows for a five-foot planting strip, a five-foot sidewalk and a one-foot separation between the sidewalk and right-of-way or property easement line. In order to deal with this restricted space problem, the City of Park Ridge should require property owners to provide a six-foot easement or right-of-way dedication when redevelopment proposals come forth in future years. Over time this will allow a streetscape to emerge similar to that shown in [Figure 6: Design Parkway Cross Section](#).

Any improvements to Higgins Road must assure all around safety while maintaining acceptable traffic carrying capacity. Clearly, further engineering and studies will need to be done to validate and refine these streetscape concepts. However, IDOT is committed to Context Sensitive Solutions (<http://www.dot.state.il.us/css/home.html>) in its management, maintenance and improvements of its roadways. This plan by the City of Park Ridge establishes the context that will allow Higgins Road to be a balanced facility for automobile travel, access to businesses, pedestrian use, safe passage for transit riders and bicycle travel whether for biking for commuting purposes, recreation through connection to the Cook County Forest Preserve trail system or simply mobility to frequent business establishments.

To make progress in this streetscape concept plan, much work needs to be done to gain the cooperation of the City of Chicago which of course, controls the south side of the Higgins Road Corridor. If the two municipalities can find a joint position with regard to the comprehensive streetscape improvement of the corridor, they will together be in a stronger position to gain agreement from IDOT.

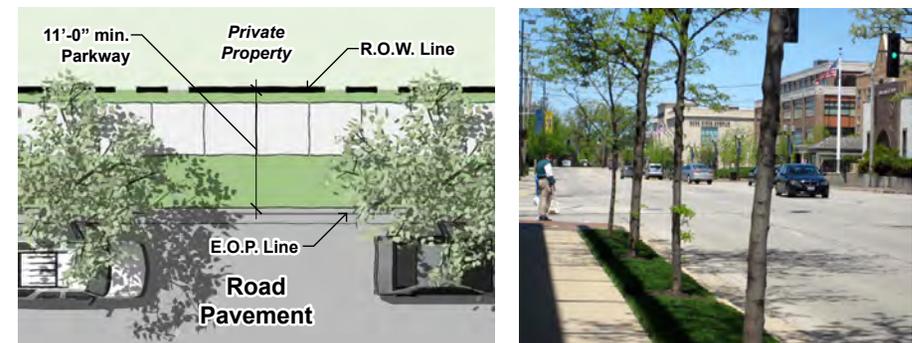


Figure 14: Design Parkway Cross Section

Because the Higgins Road Corridor is the southern gateway to the City of Park Ridge, the City will have to take the lead in promoting these streetscape improvements to Higgins Road Corridor. Having a plan that sets forth the goals and policies to guide these types of improvements will serve the City well as the improvements to the Higgins Road Corridor will be a long term program responding to the pace of redevelopment and the programming and priority of IDOT roadway improvements.

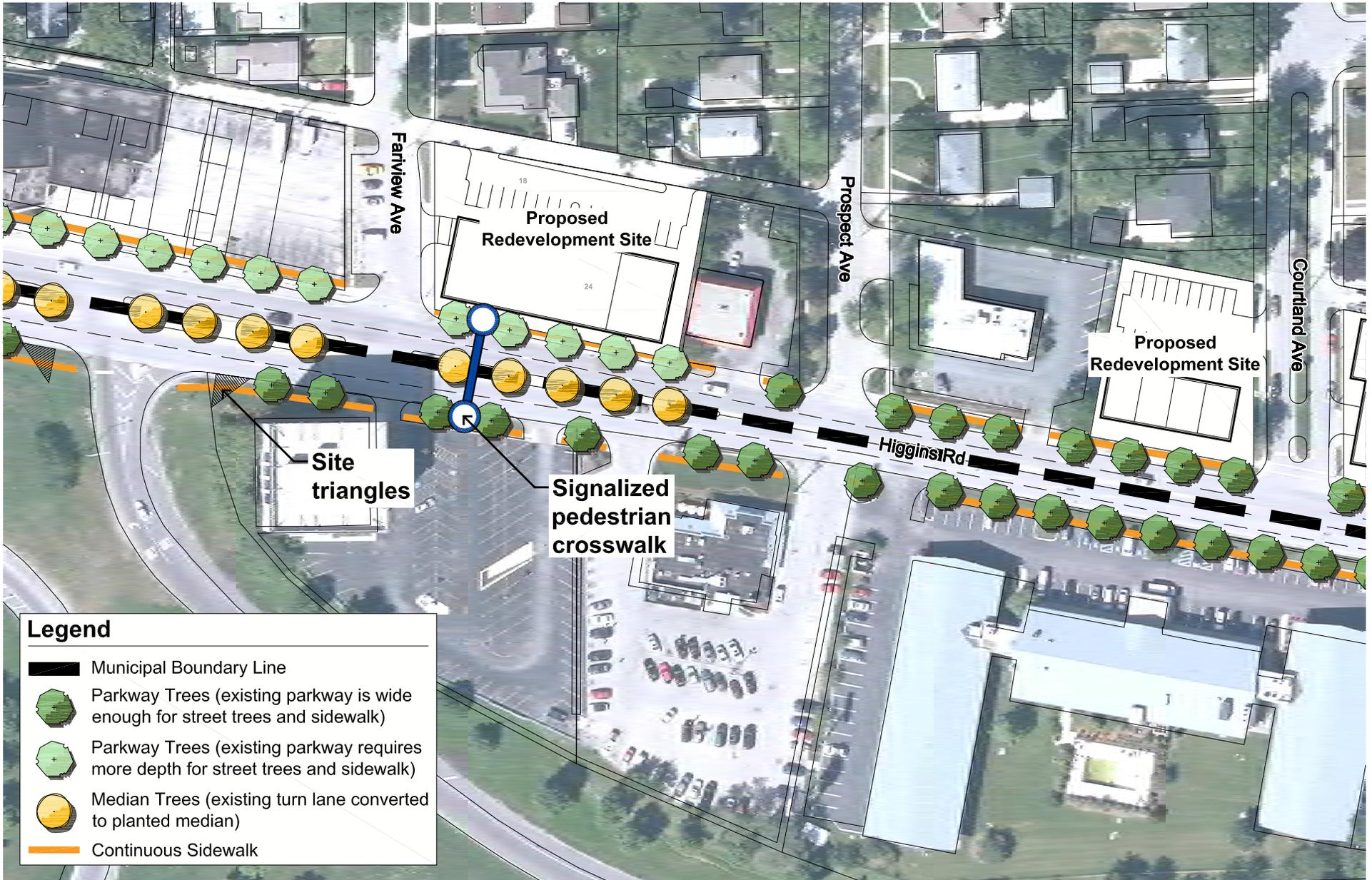


Figure 13: Streetscape Enlargement - Location C

Sustainability

As redevelopment happens in the future, the City should encourage the application of the principles of sustainability to all aspects of each redevelopment project. This should be an important policy of the redevelopment plan for the Higgins Road Corridor. New buildings and structures should be encouraged to use sustainable design and architecture, such as the use of green roofs, high albedo roofs, bio-swales, solar panels, wind turbines, new building technologies, and other energy efficient design concepts. Developments should incorporate the principles established by Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) or other, LEED-equivalent standards, aimed at improving performance across various metrics: energy savings, water efficiency, CO2 emissions reduction, the preservation of historic buildings through adaptive reuse, improved indoor environmental quality, and stewardship of resources and sensitivity to their impacts.

Landscaping

Landscaping serves two important functions within the corridor: beautification and buffering. In particular, landscaping on private property along the front and side façades of buildings will enhance the appearance of the corridor. However, landscaping requirements cannot be equally applied between the two character districts. Because of the restrictive lot sizes in the East Side Character District, very little landscaping currently exists. The sites do not provide room to install rear transition yards, especially because those structures with rear parking areas are accessed from an alley.

Where front yards exist, some landscaping is generally provided, such as smaller shrubs along the foundation of buildings. With future redevelopment, landscaping requirements in the Zoning Ordinance will apply as new development requires more extensive landscaping.

The large lots of the West Side Character District can accommodate more landscaping on the private portions of the yards which surround the principal buildings. This will both beautify the developments viewed along Higgins Road and buffer the single-family neighborhood located to the north of Higgins Road. The Overall Streetscape Plan, included as

part of this plan, shows how the front edge landscaping can be improved as redevelopment takes place. The new zoning district, especially those areas covered by an overlay zone, will have landscape requirements built into the district and the overlay that can augment the landscape requirements that now exist in the City of Park Ridge Zoning Ordinance. The City should work to coordinating the planting requirements and character along Higgins Road in the West Side Character District so that a unified corridor landscaping design can be achieved.

The unified corridor landscaping design could be implemented through the new zoning districts by the inclusion of a landscape yard requirement. This requirement should include a series of plant unit standards that are comprised of different groupings of shrubs, trees, ornamental grasses and perennials, all taken from the same general palette. While the number of plant units required would be determined by the length of the landscape yard, plantings could spaced at various intervals and/or clustered based on specific site requirements and the unified design scheme.



Additional landscaping requirements along Higgins Road will improve the appearance of the corridor.

Signs

Signs, coordinated between lots and appropriately scaled to address the street, can greatly improve the appearance of the corridor and enhance

building facades. In order to present a positive image of the corridor and the City, sign design must take into consideration adjacent storefronts and flanking buildings, particularly if those structures are similar in style, comparable in height, and compatible in scale. In addition, where a building has more than one tenant and more than one wall sign, all signs are required by the Zoning Ordinance to be compatible with each other in terms of materials, color, lettering style and logo usage.

Ground pole signs should not be allowed in the corridor, with ground monument signs being the preferred type of freestanding sign along Higgins Road. Monument signs are especially appropriate in the West Side Character District, where there are larger front yards. Within the East Side Character District, wall, awning and window signs are more appropriate because the desire is to bring buildings closer to the street to create a defined street wall. Certain users, such as the Jiffy Lube, Parkway Bank and the 7-Eleven convenience store and gas station have existing pole signs, which would be considered legal nonconforming.

Sign design standards should be adopted to ensure that signs within the corridor present a coordinated and attractive appearance. While all signs must comply with the Zoning Ordinance, these regulations can be supplemented by the following additional sign design guidelines for the Higgins Road Corridor and included in the new base zoning districts:

Type

- Pole type signs should not be allowed along the corridor.

Scale

- The scale of a sign should be appropriate for the building on which it is installed and proportional to the scale of the structure. For example, small storefronts will have smaller signs than larger storefronts.
- The proportion of the lettered and graphic area should be designed relative to the overall size of the sign background. The text and graphic elements should not appear to occupy more than two-thirds (2/3) of the sign panel area.

Lettering and Colors



Monument signs are most appropriate along the corridor.

- A limited number of lettering styles will increase legibility

Façade Improvements

Significant redevelopment of the Higgins Road Corridor will be, by necessity, a long-term proposition. Many of the existing buildings within the corridor are older and, while the buildings themselves may be functional, the exteriors are in need of improvement. Encouraging participation in the City's façade improvement program could upgrade the visual appeal and continuity of the corridor, especially in the East Side Character District.

The City currently has a façade improvement program in place that provides a 50 percent match for façade improvements to commercial uses, though it is not funded for this area at this time. This program should be reinstated for the Higgins Road Corridor. Possible funding mechanisms can include the creation of a Business Improvement District (BID) or a Special Services Area (SSA).

A Business Improvement District (BID) is a public-private partnership is established by the businesses in a defined area – in this case, the East Side Character District of the Higgins Road Corridor – to pay an additional

tax to fund improvements. A Special Services Area (SSA) is similar; it is another type of taxing mechanism used to fund additional services or physical improvements for a specified geographic area.

The design standards proposed in this Plan can also be written into the proposed new zoning districts that will control segments of the corridor. By the use of the hybrid coding, as described earlier, the design standards can be made an integral part of zoning regulations and would then be required when any improvements are made along the corridor, whether there is a façade improvement program in place or not.

Gateway Features

Gateways can be described as entrances that define a city's or a neighborhood's boundary. Communities have entry points but not all reflect the quality message that the community would like to project. A positive gateway should provide a sense of identity and arrival. A gateway can entail a specific point demarcated by a monument, a landscaped or plaza area, the high quality design of a site layout or an architecturally significant building or the unique design of a public road or intersection. For example, prominent gateway locations include Higgins Road and Cumberland Avenue intersection, and the northbound exit off I-90 at Cumberland.

The redevelopment of 742 Higgins Road – the site directly across from the westbound I-90 exit ramp's intersection with Higgins Road into a multiple-tenant commercial building presents a positive visual impression and is a significant first step to improving the appearance of the corridor, especially at this important entryway.

Incorporation of a gateway element into the site design would further assist in distinguishing the north side of Higgins Road as Park Ridge. Façade improvements to the buildings west of Brophy Avenue and some commonality of design is also important to reinforce the development of a positive gateway. The Appearance Commission should work toward this policy as it reviews individual projects that come before it in the future. All aspects of site layout and improvements including façades sign landscaping treatment, the use of similar awnings, and foundation planting would do a great deal to further enhance the gateway area.

The gateway at the intersection of Higgins Road and Cumberland Avenue is occupied by an automotive service station at the northeast corner and a Dominick's store at the northwest corner. Both of these commercial uses are used regularly by Park Ridge residents and others traveling the corridor, and will remain for the foreseeable future. Since they frame one dimension of the southern gateway, their presentation to both roadways



Cabinet Box Wall Sign – Discouraged



Cabinet box wall signs are discouraged because of issues with maintenance and appearance.



Contoured Wall Sign – Encouraged

(Higgins Road and Cumberland Avenue) is particularly important. The City should work with these two property owners to enhance site boundary landscaping and sign design.

The City should consider placement of a gateway feature to mark the entrance into Park Ridge, such as a monument appropriately scaled and designed to reflect the Park Ridge image. Use of red brick, a building material that predominates in the area, could be used for this purpose. The design might be a brick column on each side of Cumberland Avenue. This feature would signal entry into Park Ridge and help define the southern boundary of the City. The sketch that follows on page 58 illustrates one example of such a monument.

In conclusion, creating a gateway features should consist of four levels of improvement to highlight the corridor as a positive southern entryway into the City. The first of these four levels is the quality redevelopment of the parcel known located at 742 Higgins, which has been recently completed. Second, the smaller stores between that site and the automotive service

station at Cumberland Avenue could contribute more positively to the gateway enhancement if the façades and site areas were improved.

The third level of improvement would be the maintenance and enhancement of uses on the northeast and northwest corners of Higgins Road and Cumberland Avenue. Finally, the City may want to add a gateway feature to this intersection. More open space, even a small plaza area, which includes the monument may be designed to enhance the gateway location and provide pedestrians with safe staging areas to cross these two busy streets.

The Park Ridge Arts Commission can play a key role in creating an attractive gateway to the City at this location. The Arts Commission can assist in the creation of the recommended gateway monuments as well as the incorporation of public art to improve the appearance of the corridor and create a unique identity for Park Ridge.



Existing Facade



Proposed Facade Improvement



Monument Location Map
 Gateway monuments should be located along Cumberland Avenue.



Proposed Monument
 Gateway monuments that evoke the red brick of structures in Uptown and the art deco architecture of the Pickwick Theater can help signal entry into Park Ridge.

Transportation

Transportation improvements along the corridor will be one of the more difficult tasks to accomplish as the redevelopment of the corridor proceeds. Higgins Road is under the jurisdiction of IDOT, which has some improvement plans in place for the corridor but significant improvement is not expected until 2013. These include improvements to the Cumberland Avenue bridge and evaluation of the resurfacing of Higgins Road. However, there are other transportation-related issues that Park Ridge can address more immediately.

Peterson Avenue

Peterson Avenue is the first street north of Higgins Road at the west end of corridor. Peterson narrows from two-lanes to one-lane – essentially a half street. The half street begins approximately mid-block between Greenwood Avenue and Western Avenue, and the missing half is currently part of the zoning lot for Mr. K’s Garden Center. When Mr. K’s is redeveloped, the City should seek to acquire an additional 33 feet to widen the road to two lanes. The planned development process could be a useful mechanism to assist in the acquisition of additional right-of-way.

Safe transportation and circulation patterns developed along the corridor include careful consideration of the adjacent residential neighborhoods north of Higgins Road. When asked at a public meeting carried out as part of the planning process, residents voiced concerns regarding the impacts of future development within the corridor on their local streets. Safety and character of local streets that traverse their neighborhood were the main concerns.

Behind the West Side Character District, residents are relatively insulated because there is no access from Peterson Avenue to Higgins Road. Residents from the neighborhood expressed a strong desire that this be maintained. However, many residents are displeased by the traffic pattern that has developed on Greenwood Avenue. It is being used at the high traffic volume periods of the day as an alternative north-south route to Cumberland Avenue. Motorists turn left from Cumberland Avenue onto Peterson Avenue and proceed westbound to Greenwood, then turn right and proceed north. Greenwood Avenue was not designed to be



With the redevelopment of the Mr. K's site, Peterson Ave. can be expanded to two lanes.

used in this fashion. Installation of speed bumps or speed humps along Greenwood Avenue could reduce this traffic, which is more appropriate along Cumberland Avenue – a more continuous arterial roadway serving more than one community.

The local streets in the East Side Character District have direct access to Higgins Road. When Cumberland is congested some northbound traffic use these local streets as cut-through routes. This additional non-local traffic is of great concern to the neighbors who worry about safety. In addition, parking is not permitted along most of Higgins Road (on-street parking is only available for two blocks at the very east end of the corridor) and because the small parcels on the east side provide limited opportunity for off-street parking lots, parking spills over onto these local streets.

Neighbors are concerned that redevelopment of the sites into more intensive uses will require more parking. They fear that increased parking demand will result in more non-residential parking on their local streets. Restricted access should be considered for some of the north-south local streets. A plan for different types of restrictions should be considered and discussed with the residents of the neighborhood, such as closing certain streets with cul-de-sacs.

Accommodating on-site parking in the East Side Character District will be difficult. Excessive requirements for parking can also serve as a deterrent to new development because of the need for variances. Certain flexibilities, such as variances for smaller infill development, should be considered in the new zoning district called for in this plan for the East Side Character District.

Shared parking lots and parking lot access should also be encouraged so that sites that can accommodate parking are able to do so. The creation of a public parking lot can also ease some of the parking pressures within the East Side Character District. One way the City can help facilitate such a parking lot is by instituting a fee-in-lieu of parking provision. This provision allows new development to “buy out” of their required parking (a fee is assessed per space). The fees collected are then used by the City to construct a parking lot in the area.

Multiple-Jurisdictional Coordination

The multiple jurisdictions that have control over the Higgins Road Corridor make it difficult to make the kind of improvements that will be harmonious on both sides and to implement some of the pedestrian safety recommendations of this plan. The north side of Higgins Road is under the jurisdiction of the City of Park Ridge, while the south side of the corridor is controlled by the City of Chicago. The roadway itself is under the control of IDOT. Coordination of efforts between these different governmental bodies would benefit the policies of the two cities.

Chicago has policies of attracting development of more significant density than the Park Ridge side, especially within the East Side Character District. Chicago’s policies are appropriate because the south side of Higgins Road does not have single-family residential development behind; the south side backs onto the I-90 expressway and thus is suited for 13 to 15 story buildings that promote economic development initiatives.

Park Ridge, on the other hand, needs to be cognizant of the single-family homes to the rear of the lots fronting the corridor and keep in scale with the residential structures it abuts. Buildings up to six or seven stories are possible at select locations as indicated previously in this plan. Those areas will be designated with overlay zoning districts to identify those

select areas and to establish the Form-based design principles that will help them fit into the context on the Park Ridge side of the corridor.

Coordination between the two cities given mutual acceptance of these development realities could lead to a program that visually joins the corridor into a single unit. It will be important for each jurisdiction to share information on redevelopment projects that occur within the corridor.

Harmonious streetscape elements are the most practical way to integrate the visual appeal of the whole of the Higgins Road Corridor thence the inclusion of the Overall Streetscape Plan as part of this Higgins Road Corridor Plan. Complementary economic development would be beneficial for both cities as well. Efforts should continue to plan jointly with the Chicago planning staff and the alderman responsible for this section of the corridor. If possible, the two cities ought to enter into joint planning using this plan as a point of departure for their deliberations.

IDOT controls the right-of-way of Higgins Road and the Cumberland Avenue intersection just north of I-90. Cooperation with IDOT is necessary to implement the safety recommendations in this plan to protect pedestrian movement to and from the CTA Blue Line station on the south side of Higgins Road as well as the pedestrian crossing at Cumberland Avenue. IDOT has been increasingly cooperative with municipalities that their highways traverse and have come to appreciate the land use and development policies that such communities are trying to implement. The federal transportation program, Context Sensitive Solutions, establishes a set of principles that encourage state transportation departments to give real consideration to multiple objectives when designing and making road improvements. No longer is it sufficient to design with the sole objective to move more traffic along a roadway or through an intersection. These remain important objective but now must be balanced with other equally important objectives involving pedestrian presence and movement, bicycle and transit considerations, land use function and the visual design of corridors such as Higgins Road.

Park Ridge should continue to discuss elements of this plan with IDOT and to lobby for improved pedestrian safety, a reduction in automobile/pedestrian conflicts at the Higgins Road and Cumberland Avenue intersection, and a reduction in haphazard mid-block crossings including

the study of possible signalized pedestrian crossings. Initial contact with IDOT concerning this issue and the possibility of such crossings indicated that IDOT was willing to listen to the issues involved and consider the solutions detailed in this plan and others that may exist. Park Ridge will work closely with IDOT on the upcoming redesign and improvements to the I-90 westbound exit ramp and the Cumberland Higgins Road intersection with the aim of including elements of the Overall Streetscape Plan and other elements of this plan into the state's design for the improvements they will be making in future years.