

COMMERCIAL CORRIDOR PLAN FOR HOWARD STREET & MORSE AVENUE



DEVELOPED BY:

DEVCORP NORTH

WITH ASSISTANCE FROM:

THE UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS AT CHICAGO'S CITY DESIGN CENTER

THE UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS AT CHICAGO'S VORHEES CENTER

NORTHEASTERN ILLINOIS PLANNING COMMISSION

DECEMBER, 2006

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In September, 2004, DevCorp North, the business, community and economic development organization of Rogers Park, engaged the University of Illinois' City Design Center to collaboratively develop commercial district plans for Howard Street and Morse Avenue. Despite recent growth in the neighborhood's residential real estate market, two of the community's primary shopping districts remain underdeveloped and suffer from a deteriorated appearance. Both streets had suffered from decades of commercial disinvestment and clear strategies were needed to revitalize and renew them. Before the planning process began, DevCorp North reviewed and analyzed approximately 14 previous studies conducted in Rogers Park by various outside and local entities in the past 18 years and assessed their findings and shortcomings. From this review, DevCorp North committed to a course of action that addressed the plans' shortcomings by creating a planning process that was broad and inclusive with specific measurable outcomes and implementable recommendations.

A twenty-member community steering committee composed of non-DevCorp North directors and members helped lead and develop the planning process. Facilitation and meeting design assistance was provided by the Northeastern Illinois Planning Commission, one of the project funders through the Full Circle grant. Three community meetings were held in a nine month period. Customer intercept surveys, business owner surveys and land use maps were used to determine a baseline of customer interest in new retail and service opportunities, gauge the level of sophistication and profitability of existing businesses and understand current land use patterns.

The process reflected the philosophy advocated by Northwestern University's Asset Based Community Development Institute, in which communities reflect on assets, including physical,

social and institutional assets. To that end, this planning process was intended to build on assets rather than focus on deficits.

Based on surveys, community meetings, steering committee work and community mapping of assets and areas of opportunity, final plan recommendations are grouped in five categories with accompanying vision statements intended to direct activities:

1. Shopping Mix - Celebrate the diversity of Rogers Park through a broad mix of businesses and services, varying in size and type and catering to a range of incomes, races and ethnicities.
2. Public Safety - Enhance the safety of the streets for everyone at all hours of the day and night through preventative and responsive measures that reduce the opportunity for criminal activity in order to create a welcoming feel in the area.
3. Design and Appearance - Improve the appearance of the streets and buildings to cultivate a distinct district identity and encourage more pedestrian activity through better signs, greater cleanliness and physical improvements.
4. Community Development - Foster a healthy foundation of commerce, culture, education and community service that focuses on organizing and mobilizing all parts of the community to improve the Morse Avenue and Howard Street commercial districts.
5. Transportation - Capitalize on Rogers Park's transportation and parking to promote stronger connections to adjacent districts and enhance the accessibility of neighborhood destinations to attract shoppers from the larger region.

Specific detailed recommendations were developed for each category and can be found in the Revitalization Strategies section of this plan.

It is hoped that this plan will function as a blueprint for revitalization that is balanced in approach, serving residents from various income levels, races, ethnicities, sexual orientations and other groups that make Rogers Park the wonderfully diverse community that it is. As with all plans, changes and modifications will need to be made as time goes on and the landscape of Rogers Park and potential for development changes. This plan and the associated Revitalization Strategies should be reviewed on a regular basis and updated as needed. DevCorp North holds an annual organizational strategic planning retreat; it is expected that this plan will guide the work of DevCorp North and impact future workplans for the Morse Avenue and Howard Street Special Service Areas. This plan is not intended to address issues outside of the 5 recommendation areas; it is not a comprehensive plan for Rogers Park and does not address other important issues such as affordable housing, residential development, development in commercial districts such as Sheridan Road and Jarvis Square, nor does it address issues such as quality of education, recreation facilities and programs, social service agencies, health needs, etc. While important, those issues are outside the purview of DevCorp North as the Rogers Park business, community and economic development organization. Other organizations and entities that serve or address those areas are welcome to develop plans that address concerns outside of this plan.

PROJECT OVERVIEW

For nearly 30 years, the community of Rogers Park had suffered from commercial corridor and residential disinvestment. In the past 10 years, there has been new market interest in the residential sector, yet that has failed to include and positively impact the majority of the commercial sector. Streets that were once vibrant shopping, service and entertainment districts now suffer from abandoned and unkempt storefronts. Absentee and disinterested property owners are holding properties, waiting for the day to “cash in” on the sale. Vacant, abandoned storefronts, gang loitering, lack of positive pedestrian presence, and an overabundance of dollar stores, nail salons and storefront churches negatively impact the retail districts.

Residents with discretionary income often spend money outside of Rogers Park because there are few restaurants, services or retail stores that target middle or upper income people. Crime (real and perceived) continues to deter customers and potential business owners. The vast majority of residents are neither organized nor participate in local block clubs. The community is divided into factions; thus, there is no clear consensus in the community for future community development activities and there is no clear vision and road map for renewal. It is into this environment that DevCorp North undertook a new planning process and study, designed from the beginning to be different from previous planning efforts in scope, purpose and guiding philosophy. More specifically, this process was intended to be broad and inclusive, be conducted within the framework of asset-based community development and result in implementable and measurable recommendations specific to DevCorp North.

PLANNING PARTNERS

DevCorp North

DevCorp North is the business, community and economic development corporation in Rogers Park. DevCorp North was created in 1993 as the result of the merger of three small

organizations in Rogers Park. Its mission is to improve the business and economic climate of Rogers Park through business, community and economic development. DevCorp North values the diversity of Rogers Park and diligently works to enhance it through balanced growth. Since its inception, the organization has worked on plans, projects and initiatives to improve the community. The nonprofit business, community and economic development organization is governed by a volunteer board of directors and currently has a staff of 6 full-time and 4 part-time employees; DevCorp North contracts with the State of Illinois for an additional 25 employees to provide maintenance service in several business districts. DevCorp North is a delegate agency of Chicago's Dept. of Planning and Development; operates a bi-lingual computer lab and technology center for residents, entrepreneurs and business owners; provides business assistance for new and existing businesses; recruits and attracts new businesses to the community; provides networking opportunities for residents, customers and business owners; markets and promotes Rogers Park and member businesses; engages in data collection and analysis; provides opportunities for community participation in neighborhood development; and administers two Special Service Areas within the neighborhood. Additionally, DevCorp North assists new and emerging businesses with technical assistance on a variety of topics, including permits, licensing, business planning and accessing credit and capital. DevCorp North also engages in planning and analysis, and it is in this area that the Commercial Corridor planning process focused.

DevCorp North's vision is to lead the way in showing the City of Chicago and the nation that balanced development is possible. DevCorp North believes that Rogers Park can be a model for an advanced and sophisticated form of community development that values diversity and achieves development projects that serve all constituencies. DevCorp North believes that

Rogers Park will be a destination for people who seek a harmoniously diverse neighborhood, rich in arts and culture, in which to live, work, play and raise a family.

Northeastern Illinois Planning Commission (NIPC)

The Northeastern Illinois Planning Commission is the official comprehensive planning agency for six counties – Cook, DuPage, Kane, Lake, McHenry and Will – that form the greater Chicago metropolitan area. NIPC works with local governments and others to promote sensible growth. The Commission was formed by act of the Illinois General Assembly in 1957, with a mandate to provide the region with comprehensive planning and forecasts of population, employment, and other socio-economic indicators. Some of NIPC's services include Data Research and Forecasting Services, such as analysis of Census information; preparation of population and employment estimates and forecasts; Geographic Information System (GIS) mapping, analysis, and user training; Administrative and Technical Support, such as assistance with corridor planning; and Publications, including regional policy plans, aerial photographs, bicycle paths and regional base maps. In 2002, NIPC secured a three-year \$300,000 grant from the US Department of Commerce to support neighborhood mapping and planning projects in 6 Chicago communities and the City of Aurora, called "Full Circle." The Full Circle project has three key objectives: to represent local concerns within the planning process, to use technology tools for asset mapping and community visioning, and building ongoing relationships between communities and regional planners. For more information, go to www.chicagoareaplanning.org/.

DevCorp North and Rogers Park were among the first organizations and communities selected, based on the organization's capacity for collecting and documenting neighborhood assets, hosting public planning forums, offering technology training to neighborhood residents and

administering the Full Circle project long-term. As a recipient of funds and a selected partner in the Full Circle project, DevCorp North was equipped with NIPC's innovative web-based mapping tool, Parcel Pointer, to collect and post real-time data for a defined neighborhood. In addition, NIPC's Common Ground visioning tool, Paint the Region, was used to promote the participation of local resident and stakeholders in planning the future of their neighborhood.

Other organizations selected include:

- Albany Park Community Center
- Bethel New Life, Inc. (West Garfield Park)
- Centers for New Horizons (Bronzeville)
- Little Village Environmental Justice Organization (South Lawndale)
- Southeast Environmental Task Force (Lake Calumet Region)

Note: NIPC and the Chicago Area Transportation Study (CATS) recently merged to form a new entity known as Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP). The website remains the same at www.chicagoareaplanning.org

University of Illinois at Chicago's City Design Center (CDC)

The City Design Center was founded in 1995 as a multi-disciplinary research, education, and service program in the College of Architecture and the Arts at the University of Illinois at Chicago. The Center's mission is the study and practice of design in the public interest. The Center's work is founded on the idea that the quality of the built urban environment – from the fixtures, furnishings, and buildings that house them, to the streets, plazas and parks that surround them, to the resulting spatial form of the overall community – is intrinsic to the vitality and diversity of the city's cultural, economic, and political life. To meet this challenge, the Center develops and advocates for innovative and effective design research and practices by providing information to improve the quality of design decisions.

The Center's work is accomplished through cross-disciplinary collaborations among faculty and students in architecture and urban design, urban planning, history and culture of cities, public and community art, environmental graphic design, industrial design, historic preservation, and

other relevant design disciplines and professions. The Center emphasizes applying research and educational programs to design ideas and practices, and prototypic and demonstration projects to explore design innovation in support of its social agenda.

The Center aims to provide opportunities for students to learn and gain hands-on experience through work on actual projects with community clients. Through these projects, students from various design disciplines make linkages among theory, practice, and social interests while learning about each others' professions.

THE ROGERS PARK COMMUNITY

Rogers Park is a far north Chicago neighborhood located on Lake Michigan bordering the city of Evanston. The community is one of the most diverse in the nation and is significantly denser than most neighborhoods in Chicago, with a 2000 US Census population of nearly 65,000 people.

According to the Census data, Rogers Park's population has a lower median income than that of the city of Chicago and a higher poverty rate. Rogers Park is also more highly educated, probably due to the close proximity of two universities, Loyola University Chicago and Northwestern University. Rogers Park is racially and ethnically diverse, with a population mix that is approximately 30% African American, 30% Latino, 30% Anglo and 10% Other, of which 6% is Asian. The community also enjoys a diversity of incomes, languages, religions and sexual orientations.

Rogers Park has excellent transportation connecting it to downtown Chicago and the northern suburbs of Evanston and Skokie. The community is serviced by the Metra train line, the CTA's Red, Yellow and Purple lines, and approximately 10 buses. Specifically, the el station at

Howard Street is the terminus for the Red line and connects with the Purple Line and Yellow Skokie Swift. There is also a major transportation hub at the Gateway Centre on Howard Street for bus service that connects with O'Hare airport and other main public transit connections and terminals. Lake Shore Drive, the main commuter road, is at the southern edge of the neighborhood.

Its lakefront property, well-maintained housing stock and wealth of transportation access promise to make Rogers Park one of Chicago's premier communities. However, Rogers Park faces a number of challenges. It is located between several of the region's largest retail destinations, such as downtown Evanston, Old Orchard Shopping Center, Lincolnwood Town Center and Lincoln Village, making it difficult to attract new retail amenities, especially national retailers such as bookstores and upmarket grocery stores. The community has suffered from a long-lasting stigma as an unsafe place to visit. While condominium conversions are bringing new residents to the community they are also threatening to diminish Rogers Park's affordability.

OVERVIEW OF PLANNING PROCESS

The planning grant, awarded by NIPC in 2004, allowed DevCorp North to participate in NIPC's Full Circle Project with five other Chicago neighborhood organizations. DevCorp North focused research on two commercial corridors, Morse Avenue and Howard Street, which have not experienced significant investment or commercial activity in many years. In the 1940s and 1950s, both streets were vibrant commercial districts, offering shoppers a wide variety of clothing and shoe stores, restaurants, delis, entertainment, home and auto products and personal and professional services. When the neighborhood experienced a decline in population in the 1960s and 1970s, the commercial districts began to lose many of the stores

that catered to people with disposable income. Today, in spite of renewed interest and energy in the residential housing market and significant condominium conversions, there is still a lack of investment in the commercial districts.

DevCorp North envisioned a community planning process that was broad and inclusive, utilized the latest technology and generated an assessment of current conditions and plan of action for revitalizing the Howard Street and Morse Avenue commercial corridors.

To prepare for the commercial corridor study, an intern, Dan Butt, was hired in July, 2004 to review the plans that had been done in Rogers Park by various consultants, community organizations, universities, developers, etc. The full results of that analysis can be found in the appendix of this document. In summary, the studies had three common shortfalls:

1. They were often anecdotal, lacking factual information and/or basis for conclusions.
2. They started from the question “What’s wrong with Rogers Park?” and therefore failed to recognize and capitalize on assets and resources; and,
3. The studies lacked a comprehensive implementation strategy. Too often, a select group of people participated in the project, and either devoted the majority of the final document to describing problems with no concrete solutions or developed solutions without identifying the individuals or organizations responsible for implementation.

Additionally, the plans addressed issues and created recommendations without directly involving the agencies or organizations specifically working on those issues identified.

For example, a plan might have recommendations about park facilities, services or programs without having included or involved the Chicago Park District in the planning process.

DevCorp North designed this community process with a goal of involving the broader community, focusing on assets, and limiting plan recommendations to areas that relate to DevCorp North's mission, programs and services. Therefore, an asset-based community development was the overriding philosophy and methodology implemented in the planning project. Broad and inclusive community outreach was attempted for every community meeting. Meetings were held at public locations accessible to all. An independent Steering Committee was responsible for overseeing the community process, working with the consultants from the City Design Center and NIPC, and committee members made the presentations to the community at public meetings. The Steering Committee met regularly to discuss the process, generate community involvement and make decisions regarding plan priorities and logistics. Committee members underwent extensive communication and facilitation training in order to effectively communicate key findings and facilitate small group discussions.

Three community meetings were held in Rogers Park during the project in October 2004, January 2005 and April 2005, and were designed to elicit community ideas about assets and areas of opportunity in the community, react to proposed recommendations and create consensus around a shared vision for what the two commercial corridors could and should become. In the later stages of the planning process, representatives from the Northeastern Illinois Planning Commission also provided assistance with the facilitation and organization of community meetings.

The University of Illinois' CDC project team researched the Rogers Park retail corridors using a variety of sources, including:

- Retail district inventories
- Historical research

- Demographic and market data for the neighborhood
- Retail market analysis using commercial databases

The goal of this research was to provide an up-to-date, comprehensive assessment of existing conditions for the Howard Street and Morse-Glenwood retail corridors in Rogers Park.

PROJECT TIMELINE AND METHODOLOGY

Public participation and input were major components of the Rogers Park retail planning process. Input from the residents of Rogers Park and community stakeholders took a variety of forms, including:

- Three large community meetings with a combined attendance of nearly 200 residents and other stakeholders
- Frequent advisory sessions with the community Steering Committee
- Custom-designed survey work resulting in 41 retail business surveys and 117 customer and resident surveys
- Interviews with key stakeholders and Special Service Area commissioners

This community input formed an important foundation for creating both guiding principles and recommendations for new development and neighborhood revitalization.

Three Part Meeting Process

A three-part community planning process formed the foundation of the public participation component. The purpose of these three meetings was to listen to the community's concerns and interests at multiple points in the planning process and to transparently transform those ideas into planning recommendations. The three community meetings were designed as a sequence, with each meeting building on the data and insights collected from the previous one and reinforcing corresponding research efforts. The participatory community process sought to create a public, collaborative and comprehensive approach to revitalization.

During the first meeting on October 14, 2004, participants were asked to identify assets and opportunities along each retail corridor and discuss areas that showed clusters. The discussion was organized around the issue of appearance, retail shopping mix and public safety. The results of these small-group exercises during the meeting created a baseline inventory of assets and opportunities that allowed the planning team to assess critical issues in the commercial districts.

The goal of the second meeting, on January 6, 2005, was to generate critical issue “headlines” that described the most important planning and design issues for the two neighborhood shopping districts while incorporating appropriate opportunities and assets identified in the first public meeting. This meeting helped DevCorp North, the Steering Committee and other project partners develop guiding principles to direct the plan recommendations. The team then examined how these guiding principles could be developed and created recommendations building on these principles.

At the final meeting on April 4, 2005, the Steering Committee shared these preliminary recommendations with the community. The discussion also covered issues of community development and transportation in response to ideas expressed during the second meeting. Using electronic and graphic systems of voting and discussion, participants discussed in depth the issues that concerned them most while amending or adding to all of the guiding principles and recommendations. The ideas expressed at this last meeting were incorporated into the July, 2006 final study report created by UIC’s City Design Center, which is considered a technical report. DevCorp North then undertook another process to translate the technical report into a blueprint for revitalization of the Howard Street and Morse Avenue commercial

districts. Specific attention was paid to the resources, capacities, and authority of DevCorp North to implement plan recommendations. Recommendations were prioritized and clarified in conjunction with the Steering Committee and approved by the DevCorp North Board of Directors at its annual strategic planning meeting in October, 2006. Top priorities were then operationalized by DevCorp North and will serve as the organization's workplan in 2007. While the plan was being developed, some of the recommendations were put into action by DevCorp North, such as instituting a Business Attraction Campaign, the Rogers Park Shoppers Rebate program, the Business Improvement program and two new neighborhood festivals. Accordingly, they may or may not be included in the Operational Plan and Timeline.

In summary, the five areas identified are listed below, along with visions for each category and specific goals for each commercial district:

1. SHOPPING MIX:

Celebrate the diversity of Rogers Park through a broad mix of businesses and services, varying in size and type and catering to a range of incomes, races and ethnicities.

Morse Avenue: Morse Avenue will have a retail mix of outdoor cafes, small stores and services that meet the needs of all economic groups at a pedestrian scale.

Howard Street: Howard Street will become a "cultural destination" through efforts that support art centers and emphasize local diversity.

2. PUBLIC SAFETY:

Enhance the safety of the streets for everyone at all hours of the day through preventative and responsive measures that reduce the opportunity for criminal activity in order to create a welcoming feel in the area.

Morse Avenue: Morse Avenue will have a "cultural, community feeling that includes a visual and uniform appeal throughout all the businesses." The efforts on Morse Avenue will emphasize the completion of the Morse Avenue streetscape project and the becoming of a small, walkable "town center" area for gathering.

Howard Street: The efforts on Howard Street will emphasize enforcing building codes, installing seasonal decorations and unique street identifiers, hosting festivals and completing the Howard Street streetscape.

3. DESIGN AND APPEARANCE:

Improve the appearance of the streets and buildings to cultivate a distinct district identity and encourage more pedestrian activity through better signs, greater cleanliness and physical improvements.

Morse Avenue: New development will be encouraged, creating consistency and uniformity in facades of buildings. Transit-oriented development should be encouraged, allowing higher density mixed-use developments.

Howard Street: The efforts on Howard Street will emphasize historic preservation and the reduction of commercial vacancies.

4. COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT:

Foster a healthy foundation of commerce, culture, education and community service that focuses on organizing and mobilizing community residents to improve their commercial districts.

Morse Avenue: The efforts on Morse Avenue will emphasize diverse opportunities for youth and adults in collaboration with local merchants.

Howard Street: The efforts on Howard Street will emphasize the completion of the new Chicago Park District Fieldhouse (the Gale Community Center) and ensure that programs are appropriate for youth and adult recreation and development.

5. TRANSPORTATION:

Capitalize on Rogers Park's transportation and parking to promote stronger connections to adjacent districts and enhance the accessibility of neighborhood destinations to attract shoppers from the larger region.

Morse Avenue: The efforts on Morse Avenue will emphasize the Morse El station, identifying commercial district parking and encouraging "better use of existing parking options."

Howard Street: The efforts on Howard Street will emphasize the connection with and access to Lake Michigan, the Howard El station and the bus terminal.

NEXT STEPS

DevCorp North expanded on the recommendations provided by the City Design Center and Steering Committee to create a document that acts as a blueprint for economic revitalization in Rogers Park on Morse Avenue and Howard Street. The Steering Committee will continue to be active in the prioritization and implementation of recommendations, and is actively engaged in the business recruitment strategy and process. The Revitalization Strategies found in this

document are the roadmap for economic renewal of the two commercial districts. It is anticipated that these strategies will form the foundation of DevCorp North's work for several years to come. DevCorp North will operationalize the plan recommendations and make the plan, its recommendations and the operational timeline available to the public and will update/revise the plan components as needed.

**REVITALIZATION STRATEGIES
FOR MORSE AVENUE AND HOWARD STREET**
(the following recommendations are not in order of importance)

The community and Steering Committee developed recommendations for each commercial district. Recommendations below should be implemented within the specific framework articulated for each street.

SHOPPING MIX:

Celebrate the diversity of Rogers Park through a broad mix of businesses and services, varying in size and type and catering to a range of incomes, races and ethnicities.

Morse Avenue: Morse Avenue will have a retail mix of outdoor cafes, small stores and services that meet the needs of all economic groups at a pedestrian scale.

Howard Street: Howard Street will become a "cultural destination" through efforts that support art centers and emphasize local diversity.

- 1. Encourage the growth of new retail stores and services to fill storefront vacancies in both districts**
 - a. Host minimum of 4 Business Attraction seminars/workshops per year, targeting specific entrepreneurs, developers and commercial brokers based on results from customer intercept surveys and assessments of community need
 - b. Continually update vacancy list for available properties and make available on online
 - c. Develop and maintain a detailed, block-by-block analysis of building conditions, vacancies, inventory of businesses, clusters of businesses, what buildings are equipped for and the relationship to community needs
 - d. Continue to conduct community surveys on a regular basis to gauge the support for different business sectors and balance community demand
 - e. Encourage complementary businesses that are currently missing from the community and serve the community and local businesses (copy/print shop, etc)

- 2. Work with the niche opportunities in both districts to tackle shared retail problems and build on existing strengths**
 - a. Target festivals and promotions toward customers that each district currently attracts and find ways to build area identities. For example, Lost Eras is known throughout the city for its costumes and every October it becomes a major destination store for thousands of people in the Chicagoland area. An October

event could be planned around the Halloween theme involving decorating of Howard Street stores in Halloween designs. Tractor pulls, hay rides, pumpkin patches could be featured in Gale Park across the street from the store. Discounts could be offered by nearby businesses on the day of the event and window designs would be judged in a contest. This idea is similar to one used by Egg Harbor in Door County, WI and is a huge tourist attraction for the area. The Lakeview Chamber sponsors "Lighting Up Lakeview" (<http://www.lakeviewchamber.com/ssaprograms.html>), a contest in which area businesses decorate their storefronts and then are judged by a panel. The top three storefronts are awarded a prize and publicized on the Lakeview Chamber's website.

- b. Take advantage of opportunities to collaborate between SSA #19 and SSA #24 on promotional activities in order to strengthen the positive image of Rogers Park as a whole versus focusing on only promoting a single commercial district in the community
- c. Create a more cohesive arts district along Glenwood Avenue, including Morse Avenue at the el station, building on and continuing to support the successful Glenwood Avenue Arts Festival and the new separate Open Studio walk. Specific examples include joint marketing by arts and entertainment-oriented businesses, hosting, coordinating and/or sponsoring workshops that support artists, banners and other signage announcing the Arts District, new murals and other street art in and around the area, coordinated gallery openings and development of a strong connection between existing arts-related enterprises in the district to foster collaboration.

3. Encourage businesses to develop positive night-time activities and draw shoppers to the districts at night

- a. Sponsor, promote and/or coordinate evening activities such as First Friday, an event in which area businesses agree to extend Friday evening hours and entertainment, giveaways, refreshments are provided to store patrons
- b. Extend festivals from daytime only events into evening events. Link local entertainment venues with each other, such as coordinating cross-promotions between restaurants, theaters and clubs.

For example, the SSAs could sponsor dining discounts at area restaurants for patrons of local theaters. Restaurants would be responsible for collecting and submitting theater stubs to DevCorp North for a reimbursement, much like a store does with coupons.

4. Align the efforts of landlords, realtors, business owners and the community to strengthen business development efforts

- a. Jointly host development meetings with the alderman's office for developers who currently control property and have expressed interest in redevelopment on Howard Street and Morse Avenue. Clarify timelines, proposed developments and intended occupancies to avoid redundancies, create cohesive design elements in buildings, reiterate basic community expectations around parking, density and affordable housing units and build trust between developers that leads to a shared vision and shorter development horizons. Several developers currently hold property that they intend to redevelop yet none of them want to be "first" and thus take all the risk.

- b. Implement other strategies to encourage property owners to improve their buildings. Two communities, Baltimore, MD and Wayne County, MI (Detroit) have aggressive programs that target absentee landlords and/or building owners who continue to let property deteriorate and contribute to the decline of the neighborhood. The programs involve the eventual taking of property if owners refuse to make improvements through a receivership process. Properties are then put back on tax rolls and become positively contributing assets in the neighborhood. For specific program information, see “Best Practices” in the Appendix.

5. Support existing businesses and entrepreneurs in achieving maximum retail success

- a. Join and actively support campaigns to shop locally, advocate for local spending and demonstrate impact on community’s financial health
- b. Create a Rogers Park shopping rebate program within both Special Service Areas
- c. Organize and expand DevCorp North workshops and trainings for business owners and entrepreneurs
 - i. Collaborate with other organizations such as the Small Business Development Centers in Uptown and Evanston and the Women’s Business Development Center in Chicago and the City of Chicago’s Speakers bureau for presenters
 - ii. Offer computer trainings on topics such as accounting, website development, and business planning
 - iii. Work with area banks on issues such as the W-7 to enable people without social security numbers to open bank accounts
 - iv. Assist small businesses and entrepreneurs with understanding their credit rating and how it is computed
 - v. Provide links to tax assistance for small businesses, entrepreneurs and residents in order to capture as much local revenue as possible
 - vi. Host seminars and workshops that explain available City/State services and provide an opportunity for businesses to access them
 - vii. Consider partnering with other organizations and/or supporting race relations/sensitivity training/diversity training to assist with racial and ethnic and other diversity tensions that may occur in the community
- d. Create and disseminate a Rogers Park Welcome Packet
 - i. Packet would be sent to new residents identified through MLS or via local realtors who provide a “Welcome to Rogers Park” packet at closings
 - ii. Information could include community directory, map of Rogers Park, calendar of annual events and organizational information plus coupons, promotions and materials from sponsors
 - iii. Look into partnerships with organizations such as [Welcome Wagon](#) for implementation
- e. Coordinate a co-operative marketing campaign for participating retailers in Rogers Park through local media (Pioneer Press, Rogers Park 2000 Winter edition) as well as regional news such as the Chicago Reader, Windy City Times, Free Press, etc.

- f. Use GIS to improve the local business climate
 - i. Create a map of assets and commercial districts
 - ii. Explore ways small businesses could benefit from GIS, such as identifying target markets
- g. Provide more opportunities for business development and provide courses in partnership with Loyola in entrepreneurship <http://startupchicago.org/outline/>

PUBLIC SAFETY:

Enhance the safety of the streets for everyone at all hours of the day through preventative and responsive measures that reduce the opportunity for criminal activity in order to create a welcoming feel in the area.

Morse Avenue: Efforts on Morse Avenue should support improved pedestrian traffic and pedestrian atmosphere. This includes a visible police presence and added opportunities for local youth.

Howard Street: Efforts on Howard Street should encourage pedestrian activity and target bad buildings that create a negative atmosphere in the area by reducing vacancies and improving facades. Activities for local youth should also be supported.

- 1. Strengthen community policing efforts with the support of municipal and neighborhood agencies**
 - a. Support efforts to implement evening/after hours events in commercial districts, parks, etc
 - b. Encourage regular attendance at CAPS beat meetings and District Advisory Committee meetings
 - c. Encourage CAPS sponsored and funded events that meet CAPS funding guidelines to create a positive presence in the commercial areas
 - d. Strengthen the relationship between residents and business owners by communicating each group's concerns through various mediums

- 2. Develop an approach that enforces accountability and involves a holistic team to deal with buildings where criminal activity is a problem**
 - a. When a nuisance building is identified, create a holistic team to develop strategies. The team should be composed of one or more community members, a representative from the Alderman's office, a liaison from the Rogers Park Builders Group, the Rogers Park Community Council's Housing Director and a DevCorp North staff member.
 - i. Strategies can include aspects of programs mentioned earlier as well as community meetings, marches and electronic and print media such as websites, emails, fliers and posters
 - ii. When possible, the local community (via block club, if possible) should be notified and work should be done collaboratively

- 3. Track crime statistics to identify hot spots and disseminate resources accordingly**
 - a. Using ICAM statistics, analyze crime activity quarterly and annually
Analyze data to:
 - i. determine trends, if any,
 - ii. influence resource deployment of DevCorp North staff and projects,
 - iii. impact deployment of city services and policing patterns,
 - iv. negate perceptions of Rogers Park as a "dangerous" community

- 4. Pursue security measures such as: cameras, increased police presence, and lighting in the commercial districts**
 - a. Install lighting in "hot spots" and other needed areas

- b. Advocate for deployment of police foot patrols and other resources to address hot spots and safety concerns
 - c. Implement other strategies such as security cameras, bike patrols, etc as needed and appropriate
- 5. Generate positive press to counter negative perceptions and press about Rogers Park.**
- a. Regularly promote positive stories about Rogers Park through local and regional publications
 - b. Develop relationships with local media
 - c. Pursue pro-bono PR/marketing expertise
 - d. Collaborate with other organizations and Rogerspark.com on PR strategies
- 6. Provide more opportunities for local youth, strengthening existing programs and addressing missing needs**
- a. Identify geographic or other gaps in youth programs
 - b. Support existing programs and/or encourage new programs as needed

DESIGN AND APPEARANCE:

Improve the appearance of the streets and buildings to cultivate a distinct district identity and encourage more pedestrian activity through better signs, greater cleanliness and physical improvements.

Morse Avenue: The efforts on Morse Avenue will emphasize the completion of the Morse Avenue streetscape project and the becoming of a small, walkable “town center” area for gathering. New development will be encouraged, creating consistency in facades of buildings. Transit-oriented development should also be encouraged, allowing higher density mixed-use developments.

Howard Street: The efforts on Howard Street will emphasize enforcing building codes, installing seasonal decorations and unique street identifiers, hosting festivals and completing the Howard Street streetscape. Historic preservation and the reduction of commercial vacancies should also be emphasized.

- 1. Develop a Building Improvement Program to support a walkable and visually appealing community**
- a. Develop and administer a Building Improvement Program which provides some funding to local property owners to improve facades, remove metal gates, etc. Initial data collection should cover:
 - i. Mapping current condition of facades, determine common issues/problems, such as gates, blocked windows, poor merchandising, illegal signs, faded awnings, building inconsistencies, outdated signage, deterioration, etc to track improvements and identify the areas most in need
 - ii. Convening focus groups with business/property owners to understand their concerns
 - b. Analyze the commercial districts from the vantage point of the CTA stations to identify key locations to improve

- 2. Develop a Handbook for Developers in Rogers Park**
 - a. As there are currently no guidelines for new development in Rogers Park, DevCorp North should work closely with the Alderman's office and the 49th Ward Zoning and Land Use Advisory Committee to assemble a task force to develop a Development Handbook. Guidelines would include recommendations for general design and appearance (e.g. be context appropriate/sensitive, avoid block construction, vinyl siding, Dryvit/stucco)
 - b. Highlight and encourage Green technology with specific information on grants, funding and resources
 - c. Encourage, where possible, additional parking on site beyond the "1 parking space for 1 unit" parking requirement that current zoning specifies
 - d. Attempt to standardize affordable housing requirements (e.g. all developments should utilize Chicago's Chicago Partnership for Affordable Neighborhoods (CPAN) program or its equivalent and make 10% of units affordable)

- 3. Make specific recommendations regarding commercial zoning while incorporating community/public participation into the process for decision-making**
 - a. Promote new residential, mixed-use development throughout the commercial districts as appropriate, especially on the west end of Howard Street
 - b. Support mixed-use, residential development near the El stations with an emphasis on mixed income or affordable unit development
 - c. Use zoning to consolidate/protect the retail districts and promote new uses for non-viable commercial spaces, including Paulina Avenue north of Howard Street and the west end of the retail district on Morse Avenue

- 4. Market retail districts in the areas by using wayfinding signs, especially near the CTA stations of Loyola, Morse, Lunt, Jarvis and Howard and other community gateways**
 - a. Announce directions to the Glenwood Avenue Arts District
 - b. Promote the Caribbean corridor on Howard Street
 - c. Add directional signage from major thoroughfares and CTA stations to destination businesses such as Heartland Café, Lost Eras, Morseland, etc. and other local assets such as local beaches and parks

- 5. Redesign Glenwood to provide a visual path to the Arts District with lighting improvements, banners and landscaping/improving the CTA berm**
 - a. Integrate lighting into current Morse Avenue Streetscape plan, which is scheduled to be implemented in 2008
 - b. Hold a contest to design a new Glenwood Avenue Arts District banner for production and installation. Promote locally with artists in Rogers Park as well as more broadly via DevCorp North website
(For CTA berm, see Transportation recommendation #4)

- 6. Develop a vibrant appearance for the commercial districts that distinguishes them as a part of a unique and lakeside community that is announced at community entry points**

- a. Expand and maintain existing landscaping efforts with elements such as additional planters and flower boxes to develop a unique and vibrant identity for each commercial area
- b. Coordinate streetscaping, landscaping and banners to brand the commercial areas, especially at Sheridan Road, to reinforce gateways to shopping districts
- c. Develop marketing materials that connect the shopping districts with lakeside amenities, recreational opportunities and unique features of Rogers Park

7. Develop a pedestrian friendly environment through art and public amenities that reflects local cultures

- a. Partner with a design school or local designers to improve the window and storefront displays of local businesses
- b. Utilize the CTA's art program for art installations in the new Howard Street El station and the Morse Avenue El Station
- c. Identify opportunities in all districts for local art, such as murals, painted street furniture, and sculptures. Work should be done by local artists as much as possible
- d. Coordinate a local school art contest for storefront art installations in vacant storefronts

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT:

Foster a healthy foundation of commerce, culture, education and community service that focuses on organizing and mobilizing community residents to improve their commercial districts.

Morse Avenue: The efforts on Morse Avenue will emphasize diverse opportunities for youth and adults in collaboration with local merchants.

Howard Street: The efforts on Howard Street will emphasize the completion of the new Chicago Park District Fieldhouse (the Gale Community Center) and ensure that programs are appropriate for youth and adult recreation and development.

1. Encourage genuinely diverse collaboration among community groups and residents to confront shared issues

- a. Continue to approach meeting design with emphasis on small groups, shared and facilitated discussions, consensus building and limits on specific agendas and pre-set outcomes
- b. Convene regular meetings between local groups to share information/concerns and encourage collaboration on common issues

2. The Howard and Morse-Glenwood Commercial Districts should include healthy and active pursuits to enhance the quality of life in balance with the commercial activity

- a. Pursue retail and service stores that emphasize health and fitness, such as running stores and yoga
- b. Encourage existing nonprofit organizations located in the commercial districts to offer classes, workshops and other opportunities to residents for learning, growth and discovery. This includes expanding the Rogers Park Computer Lab and Technology Center programs for local youth and/or parents.

Opportunities to sponsor local youth, so they can participate, should be examined

- c. Existing arts organizations should be encouraged to, and supported in, expanding their outreach efforts and local impact (e.g. Eidelon Art Studio, Lifeline Theatre, No Exit Theater, Wisdom Bridge Arts Project, Skylight Wellness, etc)
- d. Mammogram mobile/Book mobile – services such as these offered by the city of Chicago and other organizations/institutions should be tied into local events and festivals

3. Create opportunities for volunteerism in and around the commercial districts

- a. Recruit volunteers to assist with landscaping and beautification in and around the commercial districts, including CTA and ward-wide cleanups (also see Transportation recommendation #2)
- b. Institute an Ambassador program within the Special Service Areas based on programs run by NYC Business Improvement Districts (BID) and other districts nationally, targeting high traffic and commuter areas
- c. Expand partnerships with local public schools, creating opportunities for volunteers in the classrooms including implementing an Adopt-A-Homeroom program in which local businesses and organizations adopt a classroom for an academic year and agree to meet monthly to teach students curricula concepts tied to specific practical examples or experiences
- d. Encourage Loyola University Chicago to undertake next Community Service Day at a Rogers Park school

4. Support affordable and artist housing

- a. Actively pursue specific activities to support artist housing and co-operative housing
- b. Work with local housing organizations to promote affordable housing and CPAN units. Encourage developers to provide affordable housing set asides, through trade offs for requested zoning changes or other opportunities

TRANSPORTATION:

Capitalize on Rogers Park's transportation and parking to promote stronger connections to adjacent districts and enhance the accessibility of neighborhood destinations to attract shoppers from the larger region.

Morse Avenue: The efforts on Morse Avenue will emphasize the Morse El station, identifying commercial district parking and encouraging “better use of existing parking options.”

Howard Street: The efforts on Howard Street will emphasize the connection with and access to Lake Michigan, the Howard El station and the bus terminal.

1. Make existing parking opportunities more accessible to the public for shopping in both districts

- a. Perform a parking study to measure local on and off-street parking usage and work with the Alderman and property owners to allow public/shared parking in underutilized sites

- b. Survey business owners to determine amount of parking needed for business customers, employees and owners on a daily basis (broken out by day, time and duration). Estimate how much on-street parking is utilized by customers versus employees and owners. Work with employers to find off-street parking for their employees and encourage use of public transportation for local employees.
 - c. Inventory parking meters and report all broken or malfunctioning meters to 311 for repair
 - d. Install prominent signage to direct customers to free local parking
 - e. Increase local usage of I-Go Car sharing and improve local access
- 2. Continue working with public officials to provide rehabilitation, upkeep and maintenance to the train stations**
- a. Include CTA stations in bi-annual 49th Ward “Clean and Green” events held every spring and fall
 - b. Research and potentially duplicate the successful Edgewater CTA blitz at Thorndale El station spearheaded by the Edgewater Community Council
 - c. Incorporate ongoing maintenance and improvements into CTA duties and responsibilities
- 3. Clean up and landscape CTA berms**
- a. Advocate for the regular landscaping and cleaning of the CTA berm on Morse Avenue
 - b. Identify local sources of landscaping materials and landscape designers interested and willing to work on the berms
- 4. Conduct regular outreach to El and Metra riders by handing out information at El stations during rush hours**
- a. Hand out information at El stations during rush hours about local community events, businesses and organizations, including upcoming special events and/or more enduring information such as DevCorp North’s Community Directory and/or Ramblin’ Around, the guide geared to Loyola students and/or residents in the vicinity of the university
- 5. Encourage bicycle ridership**
- a. Survey residents to identify ideal bike rack locations
 - b. Encourage CDOT to add bike lanes that connect Rogers Park to the region and improve bike connections within the community to parks and the lake