

The Village of Homewood

Downtown Transit-Oriented Development Plan

Existing Conditions Memo
August 2023

Downtown Homewood... Ready... Set... Grow!

Table of Contents

- 03** Why Now?
- 04** Transit
- 06** Bike and Pedestrian
- 08** Driving and Parking
- 10** Business Support
- 12** Open Space
- 14** Zoning
- 16** Housing
- 18** Development Opportunities



Why Now?

New Investments

The Village of Homewood's downtown is ready for investment to create new destinations for residents and visitors. Homewood's rich history and neighborhood charm provide a perfect setting for investment, some already underway. A new train station to serve Metra riders is expected to open in May of 2025. The Hartford Building and Homewood Brewing Company are under construction and slated to open in 2024.



Fig. 1 Homewood Metra Station Renderings



Building on Existing Plans

Homewood has pursued new insights to improve its downtown through creating strategic plans to guide its future. Most recently the 2023 Zoning Code encourages mixed use development that retains the existing Homewood character while adding new uses such as the Artisan Manufacturing and Assembly District, which allows a small live/work residential unit. Homewood's 2020 Strategic Plan identifies many desired community assets and values this downtown plan strives to reflect. The 2016 Housing Study identified important benchmarks to understand the opportunities to create in-demand rental housing, while the 2005 Downtown Plan crafted foundational guidance that laid the groundwork for Homewood's bike routes and streetscape recommendations.

Planning Together

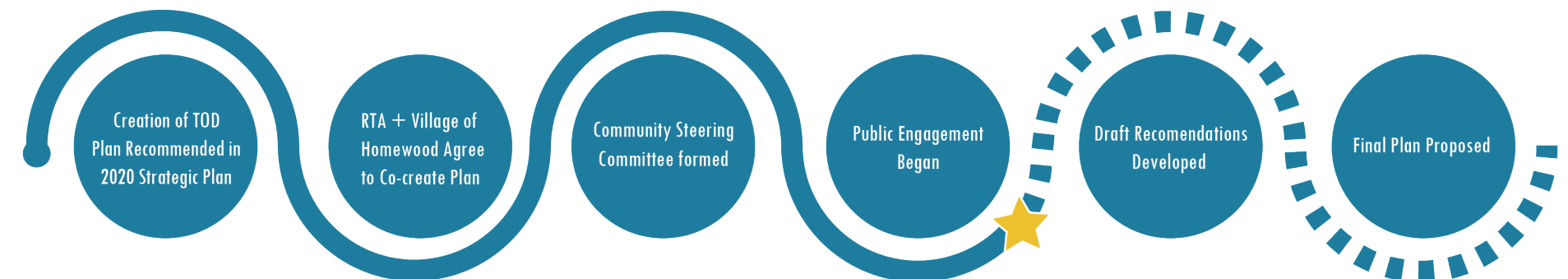


Fig. 2. Planning Process

Transit

Ready...

As a vital connector to the City of Chicago and the surrounding region, the Homewood Metra and Amtrak stations are at the heart of downtown Homewood. These stations serve the Metra Electric line, Amtrak's City of New Orleans and Illini/Saluki lines, and connects to Pace lines 356 and 359.

Through the Metra, residents can conveniently commute to the Loop in under an hour at \$6.75 for a one-way ticket or \$10 for a round-trip ticket on the Metra Electric line. However, and until at least 2024, the Metra Electric line is currently part of the Fair Transit South Cook pilot.

Over the past 20 years, Metra ridership at the Homewood Station has been on the decline. Between 2002 and 2018, boardings at the station dropped by 20%. It is likely that ridership has continued to decrease, as public transit use plummeted during the COVID-19 pandemic and is slowly recovering. The two Pace bus routes serving the Homewood Metra and Amtrak stations have experienced a significant decline in ridership since 2020.

Set...

Continued investment in regional transit is critical to promoting ridership at the Homewood Station. The new Metra station will help continue to rebuild ridership through its modern and attractive design that will provide easier platform access. Ridership in June 2023 was the highest on Metra since the beginning of the pandemic. Metra estimates that 346,000 riders took Metra Electric in June 2023, an increase of over 75,000 compared to June 2022. While ridership on Metra Electric was 57% of June 2019 levels on weekdays, it was 129% and 126% of June 2019 levels on Saturdays and



Fig. 4. Richard Haas Trompe-l'oeil mural

Sundays, suggesting that more people are using Metra for non-work trips.



Fig. 3. Pace Route 359 Stop at Homewood Station

Grow!

Homewood's new transit station will serve as a catalyst for new downtown development, spurring new restaurants, cafés and other destinations.

- Homewood is poised to take advantage of the new trends in transit travel behavior/patterns, perhaps appealing to people who want a quiet, less expensive downtown living but with access to Chicago. Creating easy connections to the train station will be critical and should include low-stress bike and pedestrian routes
- The Wind Creek Casino may have a shuttle at the Homewood Train Station. This opportunity for additional visitors should be capitalized on by creating adjacent destinations along Harwood Avenue

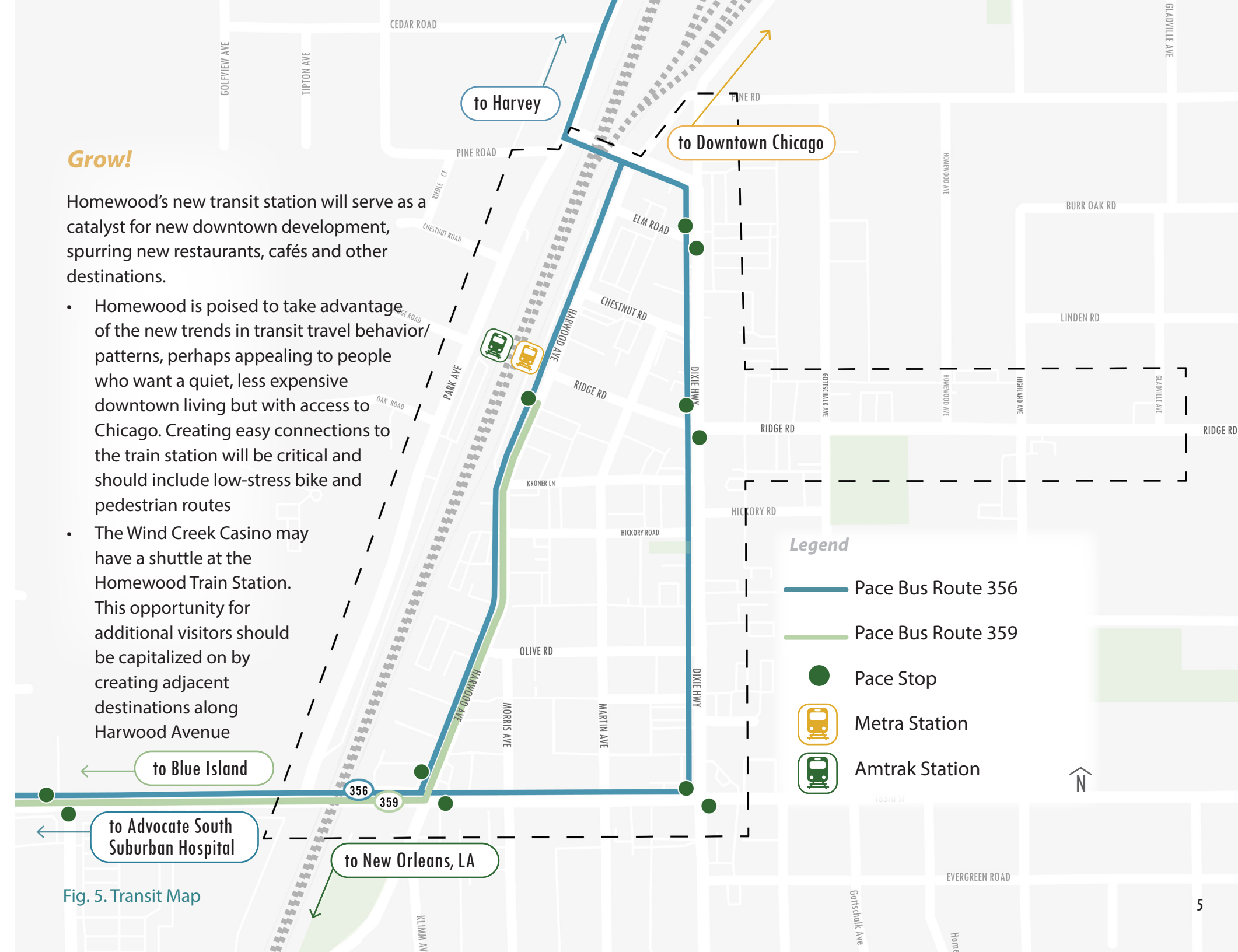


Fig. 5. Transit Map

Bike and Pedestrian

Ready...

Several different types of bike and pedestrian facilities with varying comfort levels exist within downtown Homewood:

Bike Lanes: Dixie Highway and Park Avenue have designated bike lanes on the roadway providing striped travel lanes for bicyclists and vehicular traffic.

Marked Shared Lanes (with signage): Harwood Avenue and Ridge Road have sharrows symbols striped on the roadway. Since bicyclist's ride on-street in a shared lane with vehicles, sharrows symbols reinforce the legitimacy of bicycle travel on a street while indicating to drivers to be cautious and to share the road.

Bike Routes (signage only): Several roadways bordering or connecting to Downtown Homewood do not have any physical bicycle pavement markings but are designated as a bike route with signage to reinforce this designation for bicyclists. Bike route roadways include: part of 183rd Street west of Harwood Avenue and Harwood Avenue and Dixie Highway south of 183rd. These roadways are generally lower volume, residential streets.

Set...

The majority of injury producing crash hot spots occurred at major intersections: 183rd Street/Park Avenue, 183rd Street/Harwood Avenue, 183rd Street/Dixie Highway, and along Dixie Highway from Ridge Road to Hickory Road. The results were based on a cluster analysis performed in GIS on the full set of 103 injury-involved crashes across all modes (vehicular, pedestrian, and bicycle) over a 5-year period from 2017-2021. Several pedestrian and bicycle injuries occurred along the busier roadways (183rd Street, Dixie Highway, Park Avenue).

There is broad support for bike and pedestrian infrastructure and furthering sustainability goals. Bike commuting in Homewood is generally low, though it is higher in downtown Homewood. 4.3% of people in downtown bike to work whereas .5% of people in Homewood bike to work.



Fig. 6. Bike Route Signage under Viaduct



Fig. 7. Steering Committee Walking on 183rd St.

Grow!

There are many opportunities to improve biking and pedestrian infrastructure in the area:

- Viaduct improvements:
 - 183rd Viaduct is dangerous for bicycling and walking
 - Dixie Viaduct is long and uninviting with difficult location for marked shared lanes
- Relocate light poles and other obstructions block the sidewalk
- Install curb bumpouts at locations with frequent pedestrian crossing
- Install bike safety and protection improvements on Dixie Highway and Hickory Road
- Improve pedestrian scale lighting
- Move away from sharrows as a bike facility type and prioritize the installation of concrete-protected lanes that could be at sidewalk-level



Fig. 7. Bike Infrastructure and Injury Crash Map

Driving and Parking

Ready...

Homewood is well-connected with highways and a local road network. There is significant land dedicated to downtown parking, however much of the parking is fragmented. The Village has six public parking lots in downtown, with three paid lots available for Metra commuters. On-street parking spaces and parking lots are utilized with heavier usage closer to the heart of downtown near Ridge Road and Dixie Highway.

Homewood's 2018 parking study analyzed all parking including public lots, street parking and private parking lots in downtown. The study identified many on-street parking segments had 30% occupancy. The general target for on-street occupancy is 85% to ensure that some spaces are available consistently.

Set...

According to the U.S. 2017-2021 5-year American Community Survey (ACS) census data, the majority of commuters (69%) drive alone to work, while 10% use public transportation. 92% of downtown residents own a vehicle. Many streets in Homewood are under the authority of Homewood or privately maintained except for several IDOT roadways— Dixie Highway, Harwood Avenue, and Ridge Road. Village owned 183rd Street has the highest traffic volumes (over 20,000 average annual vehicles per day). The Village received state grant funds in 2023 to complete a road diet project on 183rd Street which will reduce the number of travel lanes from four to two, create a center dual-left turn lane, and add striped bike lanes on both sides of the street between Dixie Hwy and Halsted St.

Most of the intersections in downtown are controlled via stop signs (generally one- or two-way), with only several of the major intersections having traffic signals (Harwood/183rd, Dixie/183rd, Dixie/Ridge).



Fig. 8. Aerial View of Downtown Parking Lots



Fig. 9. Local Businesses and Street Parking

Grow!

There are many opportunities to improve driving in the area:

- Consider relocating obstructions (such as electrical boxes) that block visibility for turning vehicles such as on Dixie Highway and Harwood Avenue
- Realign entrances and curb cuts to reduce turning conflicts with cars such as at the library entrance at Elm Road and Dixie Highway
- Concentrate and consolidate parking in centralized areas and improve wayfinding/parking signage to help clarify to visitors where to park
- The periphery of downtown provides opportunities for additional vehicular parking while still maintaining walkability within the center district
- Consider installing parking meters on the most occupied segments to ensure space turnover while also adding a new revenue stream

Fig. 10. Roadway and Parking Map



Business Support

Ready...

Downtown Homewood has a strong retail base of long-standing businesses such as Aurelio's Pizza and Van Sipma Jewelers. Homewood Brewing and EmpanadUS are new businesses that show there is support for more growth and diversity of destinations. Qualitative feedback from this planning process identified the desire for new retail & dining options. Diverse restaurants, grab-and-go meals, and sit-down cafes were popular responses during focus groups and in-person engagement events. Residents and visitors in Homewood want to support local businesses and are eager for family-friendly and teen-oriented activities.



Fig. 11. The Ceiling Tavern

Set...

Homewood's multi-million-dollar public and private investments indicate the opportunity for businesses in downtown Homewood. Residents have consistently supported investment in downtown Homewood and want to see more variety of businesses in downtown Homewood. Local businesses benefit from hometown love from downtown residents and visitors, who are ready to see more opportunities that new investment could bring.

The Village of Homewood has numerous tools in place to incentivize development in downtown Homewood including several incentives for business recruitment and retention.

- Façade and Property Improvement Program:** Eligible businesses can receive up to \$25,000 for improvement, maintenance, demolition, or design of commercial and mixed-use buildings.
- Retail Enhancement Program:** Reimburses 50% of qualified expenditures up to \$10,000 for targeted retail attraction and existing retail expansion.

- Go Green Reward Program:** Property owners can get 50% of qualified expenditures, up to \$5,000, to make their buildings more sustainable.
- TIF Increment Financing Incentive Program:** 58% of parcels in the Plan Area are inside a TIF district. Village Board decides how much assistance each project gets. Incentives are usually based on acquisition cost, but can be based on improvement costs up to 50%. Payments are made over 5 years: 35% upon completion, 20% each year after that.

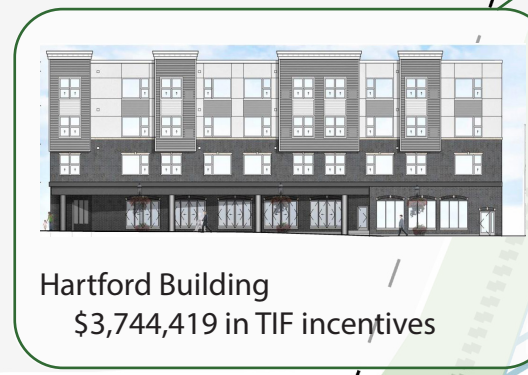


Fig. 12. Grady's Snack n' Dine

Grow!

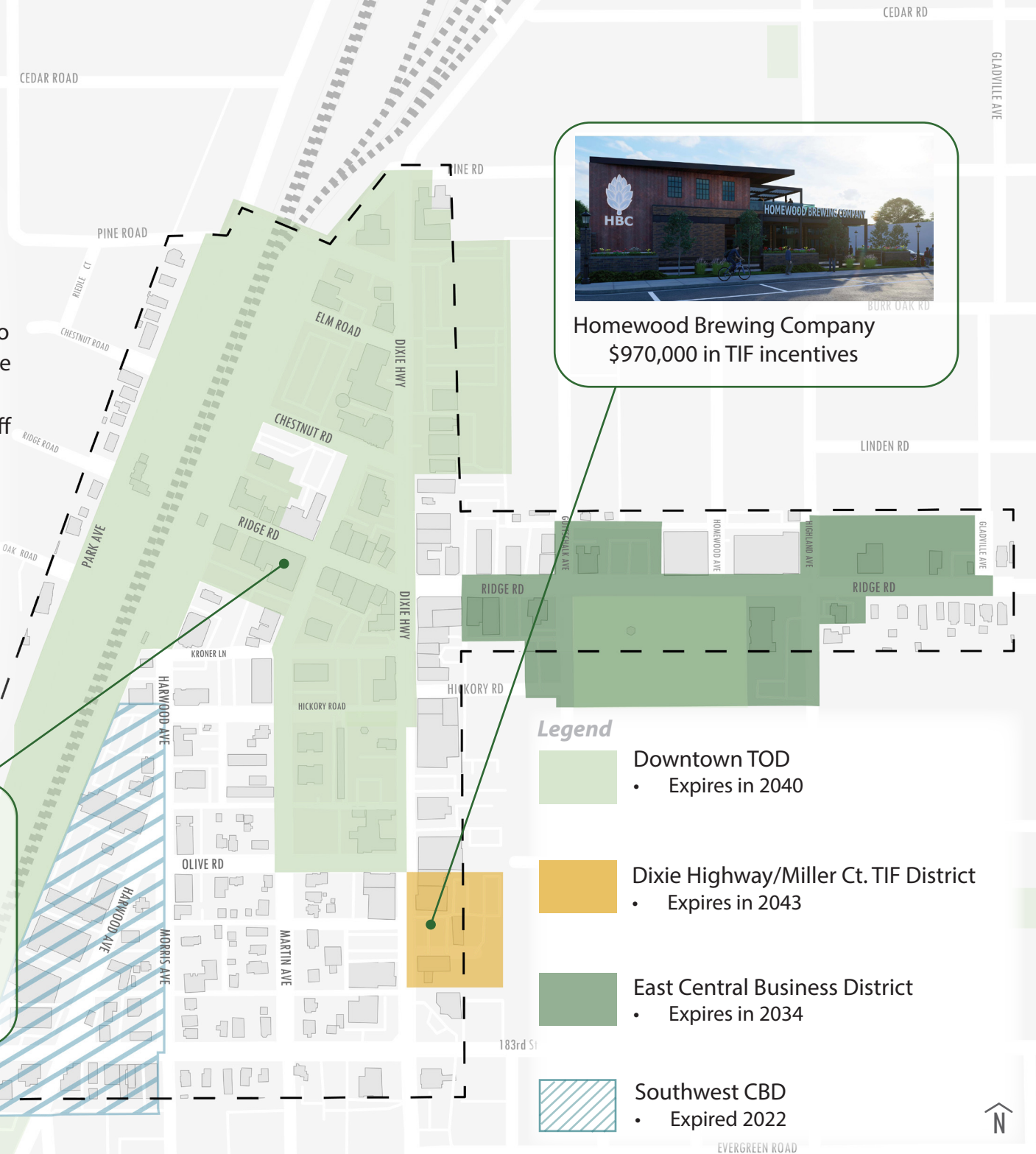
There are opportunities to strengthen support for local businesses through:

- Develop a Chamber of Commerce to provide a broader business presence that can offer technical assistance, host events and have dedicated staff
- Create pop-up seasonal programs such as Holiday Window Contest or Downtown business week
- Small business fundraising, partnerships with schools and local organizations such as art groups and family associations
- Build out a pop-up retail space to incubate new businesses



Hartford Building
\$3,744,419 in TIF incentives

Fig. 13. TIF Districts Map



Open Space

Ready...

Officially recognized as a Tree City USA, Homewood's commitment toward management of the urban forest continues to grow. Homewood has been awarded a Level 1 Accreditation by The ArbNet Arboretum Accreditation Program and The Morton Arboretum, for achieving particular standards of professional practices deemed important for arboreta and botanic gardens. Homewood is home to the world's largest collection of Richard Haas Trompe-l'oeil murals and a variety of other public art enriching public spaces across the Village.

Set...

Residents are enthusiastic about new concepts downtown, including more outdoor gathering places, new public art, and placemaking to enhance wayfinding. Calls for intergenerational destinations that appeal to families and teens have been consistently identified by stakeholders to make downtown welcome to all.

Residents and visitors are enjoying Homewood's existing open spaces— areas with benches, fire pits, landscaping or outdoor lighting— as places of gathering.



Fig. 14. Martin Square

Homewood shares a park district with Flossmoor. The parks in downtown Homewood includes:

Independence Park: a small pocket park in the TOD area at the corner of Dixie Highway and Hickory Road.

Irwin Park & Community Center: a six-acre park is just outside the Eastern edge of the TOD area at 18120 S. Highland Avenue. The park has a playground, gazebo, plaza area, fountain, ballfield, playfield, and picnic area.

Orchard Park: a three-acre park on the Eastern edge of the TOD area at 1701 Olive Road. The park has playground, tennis courts, ballfield, and playfield.

Additionally, the Village of Homewood owns the Veterans Memorial public space located at the corner of Harwood and Olive Road. It is a small passive memorial with grass, monuments, flag poles, and a cannon.

Grow!

Through this plan's public engagement, we heard demand for more open space, unique outdoor gathering places, and intergenerational recreational opportunities. There is a strong desire to grow public art throughout the downtown area and build off existing unique assets such as the murals and vintage facades.

- Martin Square creates a unique public hub along Ridge Road, which can be replicated in style and form throughout downtown. Adding additional Tivoli lighting and providing shared outdoor seating can offer community gathering space and expand the capacity of local businesses and restaurants
- Identify locations for pocket parks/parklets
- Create a unique streetscape to connect downtown to Irwin Park through lighting, art and signage
- Create a downtown street tree campaign to remove invasive trees such as the Bradford Pear trees and replace with native trees; pair with native shrubs & plants
- Re-imagine and update Memorial Park to keep the commemorative significance intact but lightly activated to allow visitors

Fig. 15. Outdoor Public Spaces Map



Legend

- Existing Outdoor Public Spaces
- Homewood-Flossmoor Park District Park
- Village of Homewood Park
- Opportunities for Outdoor Activation



Zoning

Ready...

The Village of Homewood updated its Zoning Code in January 2023 and is currently updating their Appearance Plan. The Economic Development Department has targeted four specific sites downtown for redevelopment that will build off the existing downtown assets, described in detail on pages 18-22. The goal is to achieve the residents' vision for a vibrant, family-friendly destination through infill development while retaining the unique village character.

Homewood's B-1 Downtown Core zoning district is six blocks that focus on creating destinations for retail, dining, and entertainment in the Village and benefits from being adjacent to the new train station. The district is intended to have a pedestrian-oriented environment and accommodate development at all scales.

The B-2 Downtown Transition District allows a variety of residential and nonresidential uses around the Downtown Core. This zoning designation supports adaptive reuse of existing buildings for a

mix of residential and non-residential uses as well as infill development in a pedestrian-oriented environment that supports the vibrancy of the Downtown Core. Unique to the B-2 district is the former manufacturing and warehouse buildings along Harwood Avenue and the train tracks. Once a local center of warehousing and distribution for brands like Spornette Brushes, the buildings reflect Homewood's past and offer an opportunity for adaptive reuse to businesses compatible with the downtown location. The new zoning ordinance introduces a land use called "Artisan Manufacturing and Assembly" that allows for craft maker spaces in the B-2 zoning district.

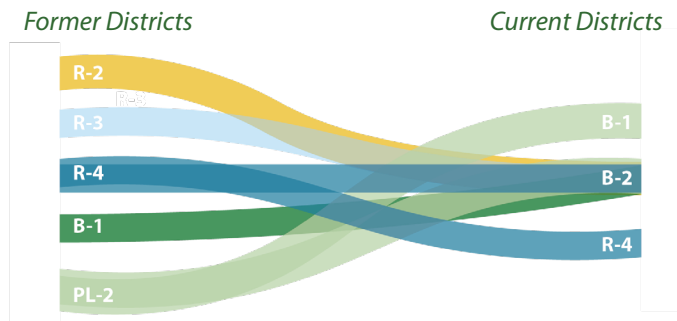


Fig. 16. Zoning District Consolidation in Downtown Homewood

Set...

With the introduction of the new zoning ordinance, Homewood has set clear expectations for the community's vision of downtown development. Developers and real estate professionals can enhance the experience for downtown by taking advantage of the mix of uses, existing buildings, and new development requirements outlined in the amended zoning code. For example, the B-1 and B-2 zoning districts have the least restrictive bulk minimums, and existing buildings targeted for adaptive reuse have looser minimum parking requirements than new developments. Additionally, off-street parking in the B-1 and B-2 zoning districts may be located off-site or otherwise shared with other uses, allowing for denser and taller development close to the new station. Coupled with new bicycle parking requirements, sidewalk and walkway standards, and planned development procedures, Downtown Homewood is primed to promote an active, safe, and pedestrian-friendly urban center.

Grow!

- Work to minimize the sprawl effect of surface parking lots downtown by encouraging shared parking agreements, permeable pavement, and flex spaces for more programming
- Maintain the charming character of Downtown Homewood by deploying adaptive reuse methods of development
- Encourage a diverse mix of retail, services, and restaurants to activate the ground floor and build a downtown that visitors can experience

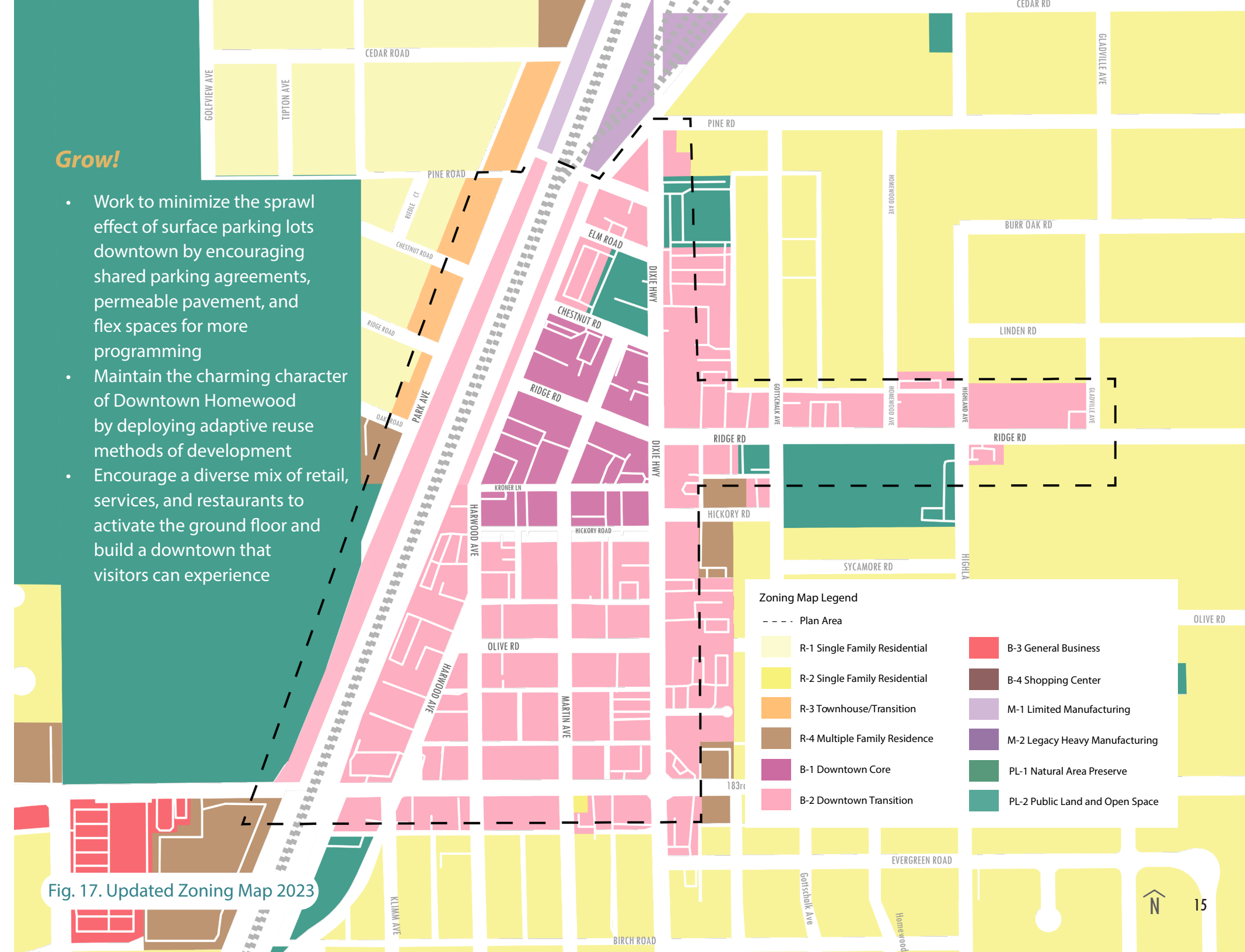


Fig. 17. Updated Zoning Map 2023

Housing

Ready...

Since 2010, Downtown Homewood has seen a slight population increase of 5% (674 residents in 2023) while the rest of Homewood and the 15-minute driveshed has declined for the past decade and stagnated in recent years. Much like Homewood, the population downtown skews older than the 15-minute driveshed, with empty nesters and young seniors (55-74 years) comprising the largest population change (an increase of 70%) since 2010. Residents in Downtown Homewood have only a slightly higher median household income than Homewood Village residents (~\$84,000 versus ~\$79,000, or a 6 percent difference), while downtown median home values are 18% higher than the Village as a whole (\$243,750 downtown versus \$206,659 in Homewood). Coupled with a larger renter population and lower vacancy rates, this suggests a smaller abundance of affordable housing located downtown.

Downtown Homewood skews older, more white-collar, and more educated than the rest of the village, leading to high workforce participation but low workforce

diversity. Service workers downtown have the smallest share of employment, with only 8% of jobs downtown represented in this sector. This is largely overshadowed by 67% of white-collar workers, mostly in sales and management sectors. These discrepancies may be addressed with the introduction of “Artisan Manufacturing and Assembly” uses in the B-2 zoning designation, especially to introduce craft maker spaces that can double as additional housing in former industrial buildings. With new opportunities for mixed-use typologies, Homewood has a unique readiness to diversify and densify with room to grow.



Fig. 18. Example of Housing Type

Set...

Downtown Homewood owes much of its charm to the mix of urban character, with older 20th century buildings and newer 21st century development often existing on the same block, as seen on stretches of Harwood Avenue and Ridge Road. This stylistic mix is representative of Homewood’s history: the first white settlers came to the Homewood area in the 1830s and 1840s, and Hartford, today’s present-day Homewood downtown district, was platted in 1853. Homewood was incorporated in 1893. The Illinois Central Railroad contributed additional attention and prosperity to Homewood, resulting in an influx of residents and development in the early 1900s, resulting in buildings such as the Gottschalk House and Dorband Howe House. Given the presence of some of the original building stock from Homewood’s 1920 development boom, the downtown character has a notably vintage and traditional feel. Post-WWII development was also significant, resulting in the subsequent three different eras of building style and structure seen in Homewood today.

Grow!

Population density is lower downtown than the village (3,370 people/mi² versus 3,689 people/mi²), which suggests there are plenty of opportunities for infill, densification, and upzoning, particularly next to the train station.

Despite the post-war boom and historic growth, the housing market downtown has not added much new housing to support the new or aging residents. In fact, only 11% of the housing stock downtown was built post-2000, and none since 2010. The Village of Homewood currently owns properties ripe for redevelopment or reuse:

1. Village Hall Parking Lot
2. Matrix Building
3. Savoia’s
4. 2124 W. 183rd Street

Fig. 19. Village Owned Properties



Development Opportunities

1. Village Hall Parking Lot

Location: Northeast corner of Harwood Avenue & Chestnut Road

Size: 1.32 acres, rectangular in shape, level in topography

Distance from Metra: Less than one block

Tenancy: Public Parking Lot

Ownership: Village

Incentives: Downtown TOD TIF district, Cal Sag Enterprise Zone, Cook County property tax incentives

Zoning: B 1 CBD Downtown Core, centrally located within downtown Homewood

Site Information: Village Services are located directly east of this site, consisting of Village Hall, Auditorium, and Police and Fire Stations. West of the property is a large parking lot owned by the Village and available for public parking in the evenings and weekends. The Village will entertain proposals that consider incorporating contiguous parcels directly into this site. The site has convenient vehicular linkages with easy connections to the major roadways in the Village of Homewood. The site is served by the Metra Electric District rail line as well as PACE public bus route (Route 356) along Dixie Highway.

Proposed use: Mixed use building. Grocery store with 3-4 stories above. The Village has an LOI for a proposal for a 59 unit five story residential building with no commercial space.



Fig. 20. Aerial View of Site



Fig. 21. Site from the Northwest

2. Matrix Building

Location: Northeast corner of Harwood Avenue & Chestnut Road

Size: 1.32 acres, rectangular in shape, level in topography

Distance from Metra: Less than one block

Tenancy: Vacant Commercial Building

Ownership: Village

Incentives: Downtown TOD TIF district, Cal Sag Enterprise Zone, Cook County property tax incentives

Zoning: B 1 CBD Downtown Core, centrally located within downtown Homewood

Site Information: The site has convenient vehicular linkages with easy connections to the major roadways in the Village of Homewood. The site is served by the Metra Electric District rail line as well as PACE public bus route (Route 356) along Dixie Highway.

Short Term Use: Proposed incubator for new businesses;

Long Term Use: identified as a mixed-use building with retail on the ground floor, and 30 residential units in the Downtown Master Plan



Fig. 22. Aerial View of Site



Fig. 23. Site from the Southwest

3. Savoia's

Location: 18136 Dixie Highway, southwest corner of the intersection of Hickory Rd & Dixie Hwy

Size: 0.58 acres

Distance from Metra: 0.3 miles

Tenancy: Vacant land/public parking lot and pocket park

Ownership: Village of Homewood

Incentives: Downtown TOD TIF district, Cal Sag Enterprise Zone

Zoning: B 2 Downtown Transition

Site Information: Adjacent to Independence Park

Short Term Use: this site as a possibility for expanding park, adding food truck pad or temp stage.

Long Term Use: mixed use 4 story building with 9,000 square feet retail on the ground floor, 24 residential units and 50 interior parking spaces



Fig. 24. Aerial View of Site



Fig. 25. Site's view to the East

4. 2124 W 183rd Street

Location: Commercial redevelopment opportunity. Vacant Building. Gateway to downtown Homewood.

Size: 0.46 acres

Distance from Metra: 0.5 mile

Tenancy: Vacant

Ownership: Village of Homewood

Incentives:

Zoning: B 2 Downtown Transition

Site Information: This former one story commercial building has great access to 183rd while being adjacent to downtown

Proposed Use: Quick Service restaurant with outdoor seating

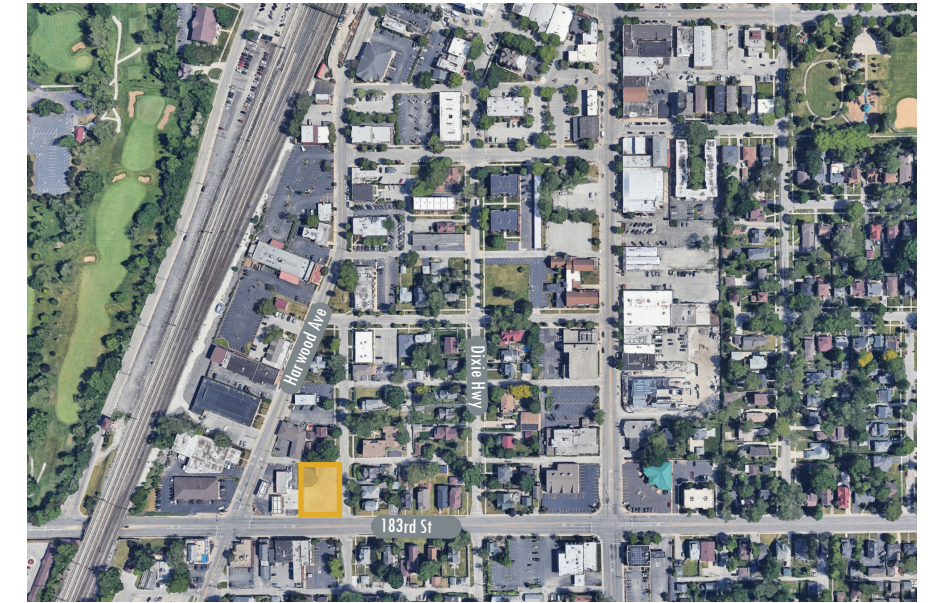


Fig. 26. Aerial View of Site



Fig. 27. Site from the Southwest

