



4. STRATEGIC CONCLUSIONS

CORRIDOR FRAMEWORK

Harlem Avenue is a major commercial corridor through the South-west suburbs and it is destined to retain this function in the future, serving the commercial, employment and recreational needs of the surrounding communities and region. And even as certain sites or portions could be better utilized or provide more value to the local communities, the Corridor remains a highly active and viable location for businesses, with numerous strategic advantages to build from.

A general economic development strategy for the Corridor Communities, particularly as the economy struggles to recover in recent years, is to focus on retaining and strengthening existing economic activities, while improving the developability of individual sites that have the potential to become new activity centers or nodes for the future. This strategy falls in line with existing economic development activity seen by many of the Corridor Communities, and also blends well with plans to better serve this Corridor with public transportation.

As a result, this chapter focuses on the major opportunity sites along the Corridor, areas which provide the most fruitful opportunities for continuing Harlem Avenue Corridor's role as a major business corridor.

Table 4-1 provides a summary of the potential opportunities and considerations for the opportunity sites identified earlier in this report. Options and economic development strategies for each of these sites can be found on the pages that follow.

Table 4-1. Opportunity Sites Conclusions

Site	Community	Zoning	Approx. Size	Harlem Frontage	Community Vision	Potential Opportunities & Considerations
Toyota Park site	Bridgeview	I-2	115 ac	2,700'	Hotel, restaurant, and entertainment uses attractive to visitors of the stadium. Previous development plans included movie theater, waterpark.	Entertainment, restaurant and some retail uses could establish a campus/district feel on the site. Urban design will be key to integrating parking with other uses. Hotels may be more challenging based on location relative to expressways.
Stadium district	Bridgeview	C-3	20 ac	3,000'	Hotel, restaurant and entertainment uses attractive to visitors of the stadium as well as general commercial.	Small-site commercial properties and convenience retail, with potential long-term opportunities for entertainment or tourism uses.
Bridgeview Courts shopping center	Bridgeview	C-3	35 ac	1,500'	Village has selected a development team to redevelop into a retail/entertainment center with a new 12-screen movie theater.	Site does not have great visibility from 79 th or Harlem. Buildings require investment. Site competes with Ford City Mall/Cicero Corridor to the east.
95 th Street interchange	Oak Lawn Bridgeview	R-1 R-3	30 ac	1,000'	Communities are open to the potential for reconfiguration of transportation infrastructure to allow for development.	Highway commercial development or other industrial/office uses that take advantage of highway access.
Former Yellow Freight site	Chicago Ridge	M-1	60 ac	1,500'	Commercial, retail or other revenue generating use that takes advantage of high-traffic location.	Retail/commercial fronting on Harlem Avenue with auto lots or industrial behind.
Worth Metra Station area	Worth	B-1	13 ac	750'	No defined plan for area.	Higher-density residential and commercial development that takes advantage of adjacent train station.
Palos Heights gateway site	Palos Heights	B PUD	12 ac	600'	Commercial and office development with possibility for some adjoining residential.	Retail/residential mixed use taking advantage of access to waterway and trail assets.
Downtown Palos Heights (multiple sites)	Palos Heights	B	17 ac	1,300'	Small retail and restaurant focused downtown area.	Revitalization of small sites, incorporation of residential behind commercial frontages.
Former car dealership	Orland Park	BIZ	10 ac	800'	Retail along Harlem Avenue linked to residential development.	Retail/residential mixed use.
Former Continental shopping center	Orland Park	BIZ	7 ac	600'	Retail along Harlem Avenue linked to residential development.	Retail/residential mixed use.
Tinley Park Mental Health Center	Tinley Park	n/a	250 ac	4,500'	Master-planned residential community, with 250 acre site acquired by Village and a master developer solicited.	Residential neighborhood that incorporates commercial and employment based uses.

TOYOTA PARK SITE



STRENGTHS

- Major new sports and entertainment venue attracts thousands of visitors per year.
- Existing TIF District on site could help to finance cost of preparing site for additional development.
- Large open areas available for development as a complete campus.

WEAKNESSES

- Roadway access to site can be difficult during high-traffic periods or when rail crossing are blocked.
- Public transportation access requires transfer from rapid transit lines.
- Site treatments and parking lots not completed.

OPPORTUNITIES

- Plans for on-site Pace transfer center.
- Good linkages to nearby roadway assets (I-55).
- Capture travellers and visitors to Chicago Midway Airport.

THREATS

- Lack of complementary uses surrounding the site.
- Existing hotel concentration south of Midway Airport (three miles away) already contains many national flags.

POTENTIAL USES & OPPORTUNITIES

- Long-term opportunities exist for complementary entertainment and tourism uses on lots fronting along Harlem and 71st, but may require numerous years before site is built out with these uses.
- Hotel demand will be negatively impacted by major concentration adjacent to Midway Airport. New hotel investment will likely need to coincide with other amenities on site or nearby.
- In the short-term, revenue-producing opportunities that require low maintenance or infrastructure investment for the Village may include farmer's market, open-air flea market, or an RV park.

POTENTIAL STRATEGIC ACTION ITEMS

- 1 Prepare outlots for commercial or entertainment development types
- 2 Improve Intersection at Harlem Avenue and 71st Street to accommodate heavy traffic from trucks heading east on 71st Street as well as special event traffic flow.

STADIUM GATEWAY DISTRICT



STRENGTHS

- High traffic counts along Harlem Avenue attractive for commercial development.
- Existing TIF District on site could help to finance cost of preparing sites for additional development.
- New sidewalk improvements provide improved pedestrian access.

WEAKNESSES

- Roadway access to sites can be impacted by traffic or trucking congestion.
- Lack of highly active anchor uses along this portion of the Corridor.
- High number of vacant buildings and sites leads to potentially unattractive area for investment.

OPPORTUNITIES

- Better linkages to nearby stadium and its visitors.
- Linkages to large base on employment to the north and east in Bedford Park.

THREATS

- Large base of surrounding retail and commercial development serves many of the local needs for goods and services.

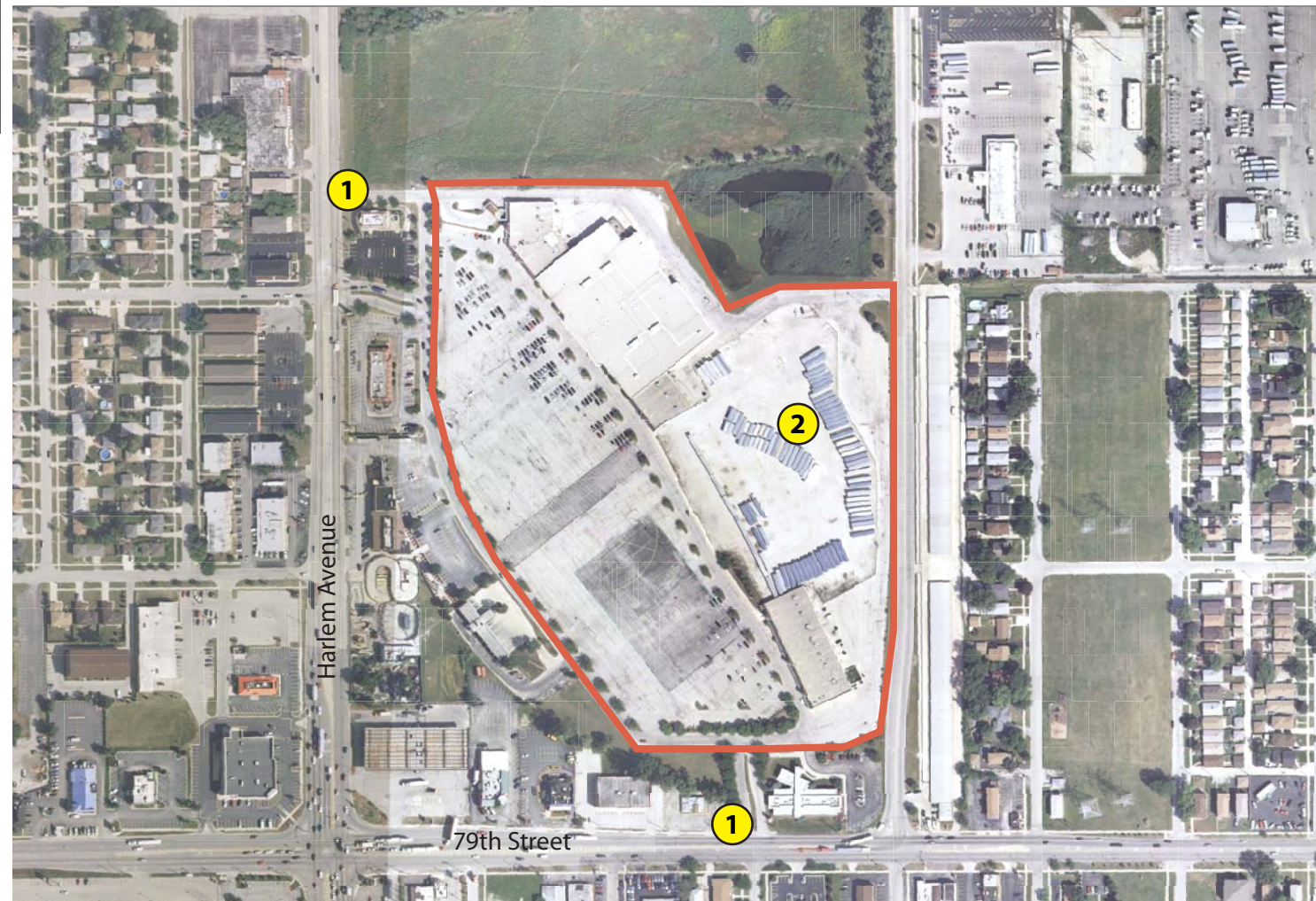
POTENTIAL USES & OPPORTUNITIES

- Short-term opportunities exist for individual commercial properties, including convenience restaurants, gas stations, drug stores and small retail strip centers.
- Longer-term opportunities may exist for entertainment and tourism uses (restaurants, lodging, recreational uses) that target visitors to Toyota Park.

POTENTIAL STRATEGIC ACTION ITEMS

- 1 Additional streetscape investments that improve the value of the adjacent development sites.
- 2 Assemble vacant properties to provide larger, more attractive commercial development sites.

BRIDGEVIEW COURTS



STRENGTHS

- Existing TIF District on site could help to finance cost of preparing site for additional development.
- Large open areas available for development as a complete campus.

WEAKNESSES

- Poor visibility of site from Harlem Avenue and 79th Street due to developed out-parcels and limited access points.
- Poor conditions of parking lots and other site treatments.
- Long-term lease held by Northwestern Business College may impede ability to redevelop site around this use.

OPPORTUNITIES

- East end of site is well connected to the transportation- and employment concentration located east of this area.
- Development concepts could link with other development scenarios along Harlem Avenue north to Toyota Park.
- Surrounding shopping centers are aged, site may offer an opportunity for new retailers looking to invest in the area.

THREATS

- Lack of complementary uses surrounding the site.
- Presence of large concentration of retail development along Cicero Avenue east of this area.

POTENTIAL USES & OPPORTUNITIES

- Village of Bridgeview has selected a development team to create a commercial-based development at this site including a potential multi-screen cinema.
- Existing business college is located near the middle of the site and currently provides the most active site use, but may limit development opportunities for other uses.
- May consider using rear portions of the site for office/warehouse and logistics uses that connect with the adjacent intermodal yard and trucking facilities accessible via Sayre.

POTENTIAL STRATEGIC ACTION ITEMS

- 1 Improve access and visibility from Harlem Avenue and 71st Street.
- 2 Divide site into uses that take advantage of access to Sayre (potential for logistics or service uses) as well as to Harlem and 79th (retail/commercial uses)

95TH STREET INTERCHANGE AREA



STRENGTHS

- Very high traffic area at the intersection of three major roadways: I-294, 95th Street and Harlem Avenue.
- Public control of sites and access points.

WEAKNESSES

- Presence of Indiana Harbor Belt R.R. line presents numerous cross-overs and grade shifts.
- Industrial properties west of Harlem exhibit outdated construction types, building sizes and access features.

OPPORTUNITIES

- Attract uses that link to I-294 Tollway.

THREATS

- High costs associated with reconfiguring transportation access.

POTENTIAL USES & OPPORTUNITIES

- Long-term opportunities exist to reconfigure transportation access to improve the developability of the area for commercial, industrial or office property.
- Reconfiguration of roadway access may be an expensive option that would need to also better respond to transportation and trucking needs in the area.

POTENTIAL STRATEGIC ACTION ITEMS

- 1 Reconfiguration of Harlem Avenue interchange with 95th Street may open up opportunities for additional commercial development fronting on both streets.
- 2 Site assembly and reconfiguration of transportation access south of 95th Interchange along I-294 may improve development prospects for aged industrial properties.

FORMER YELLOW FREIGHT SITE



STRENGTHS

- Large site with frontage area along high-traffic portion of Harlem Avenue.
- Excellent visibility from I-294.
- Direct route to enter I-294 travelling west along 103rd Street then north along Roberts Road.

WEAKNESSES

- Poor access from I-294.
- Potential environmental contamination from historic uses.

OPPORTUNITIES

- Adjacent Wal-Mart (west side of Harlem Avenue) provides traffic and shoppers.
- Opportunity to provide better linkages to adjacent tollway.

THREATS

- Presence of large nearby retail and commercial concentration in and around Chicago Ridge Mall.

POTENTIAL USES & OPPORTUNITIES

- Retail shopping center uses may be feasible along Harlem Avenue due to excellent traffic counts and presence of nearby shopping centers. At the same time, new retail may take away from sales at nearby community shopping areas.
- Large open space may lend itself to development of an outdoor commercial use such as a large auto mall.

POTENTIAL STRATEGIC ACTION ITEMS

- 1 Investigate and remediate potential environmental concerns, and develop end-use oriented remediation plan (site reuse will depend on further characterization of the site to factor in cost, complexity and timeframe of remediation relative to potential return on investment).
- 2 Rearrange access from southbound I-294 into site.

WORTH METRA STATION AREA



STRENGTHS

- Access to Metra station along the SouthWest Service line, which has upgraded its service offerings in recent years.
- Municipally-controlled properties including surface parking lots allow for easier site assembly and redevelopment planning.

WEAKNESSES

- Site features grade changes and numerous small parcels.
- Potentially difficult access from Harlem Avenue.

OPPORTUNITIES

- Recent developments (proposed and built) in nearby communities of Orland Park and Chicago Ridge provide template for new development type (transit-oriented development).
- Opportunity to create new “village center” type development around adjacent municipal facilities.

THREATS

- TOD and higher density development are relatively new models in Worth and surrounding communities.

POTENTIAL USES & OPPORTUNITIES

- Transit-oriented development, as has been successful throughout Chicago region, may offer opportunities to attract new residents and businesses interested in locating near a transit station.
- Residential and retail mixed-use is most common form of development, often at higher densities than surrounding area.
- Success may require significant planning and site assembly activities by the Village of Worth.

POTENTIAL STRATEGIC ACTION ITEMS

- 1 Develop combined parking facility/lot south of train station to free up additional land for development opportunities.
- 2 Improve signage and access to Metra station, reinforcing its status as a major node in the community.

PALOS HEIGHTS GATEWAY SITE



STRENGTHS

- Site abuts the Cal-Sag Canal and planned recreational trail network.
- Existing TIF District on site could help to finance cost of preparing site for additional development.
- Site is assembled, vacant and prepared for development.
- Frontage along high-traffic portion of Harlem Avenue.

WEAKNESSES

- Access into site may require additional traffic controls or signals.

OPPORTUNITIES

- Development of Cal-Sag Trail.
- Connections to Lake Katherine natural area.

THREATS

- Previous development proposals have been rejected by community.

POTENTIAL USES & OPPORTUNITIES

- Site has excellent amenities for residential development opportunities with access to recreational facilities and nearby downtown.
- Corner of Harlem Avenue and Route 83 may also provide opportunities for retail development.
- Existing development proposals for site demonstrate interest as a valuable development site.

POTENTIAL STRATEGIC ACTION ITEMS

- 1 Develop municipal plan for site that describes allowable uses and preferred development types.

DOWNTOWN PALOS HEIGHTS



STRENGTHS

- Number of existing local businesses with history in the City.
- Existing recognition of zone as “downtown” Palos Heights.
- Existing facade improvement program.
- High traffic counts along Harlem Avenue.

WEAKNESSES

- Many properties exhibit signs of aging.
- Transportation and parking access make for difficult pedestrian experience.
- Numerous small, shallow parcels may present challenges for site assembly for “master planning.”

OPPORTUNITIES

- Unique shopping and restaurant district within the Harlem Avenue Corridor.
- New development anchoring the area including First Midwest Bank building.

THREATS

- Larger communities to the south attempting to capitalize on limited market for “downtown” redevelopment.

POTENTIAL USES & OPPORTUNITIES

- Existing planning documents call for revitalization of this stretch of Harlem as a traditional retail district. May be beneficial to focus on improvements to central area of the district to concentrate creation of a walkable, active environment.
- Higher-density residential uses may also be enticed to locate along or adjacent to this area over the longer term.

POTENTIAL STRATEGIC ACTION ITEMS

- 1 Develop municipal parking garage that allows for reduction in surface parking needs for the district.
- 2 Reconfigure streetscape and access to create a more pedestrian-friendly retail district.

FORMER AUTO DEALERSHIP SITE



STRENGTHS

- High traffic counts along Harlem Avenue.
- Site is currently clear and available for redevelopment.
- Planning for the site offers a clear expectation regarding use and design.

WEAKNESSES

- Not located at major intersection.
- Adjacent uses to the east are largely industrial or service-related.

OPPORTUNITIES

- Orland Crossings development provides example of preferred retail/residential mixed use concept from the Village.

THREATS

- High concentration of existing retail uses may limit types of retailers interested in locating at this site.

POTENTIAL USES & OPPORTUNITIES

- Residential and retail mixed-use offers potential on site, with commercial fronting on Harlem Avenue and possible linked residential behind.

POTENTIAL STRATEGIC ACTION ITEMS

- 1 Create site plan for the area that emphasizes preferred site design standards from the Village.

FORMER CONTINENTAL SHOPPING CENTER



STRENGTHS

- High traffic counts along Harlem Avenue.
- Site is currently clear and available for redevelopment.
- Planning for the site offers a clear expectation regarding use and design.

WEAKNESSES

- Not located at major intersection.

OPPORTUNITIES

- Nearby Coopers Hawk Winery and new Meijer across Harlem Avenue provide examples of reinvestment and upscale redevelopment.
- Orland Crossings development provides example of preferred retail/residential mixed use concept from the Village.

THREATS

- High concentration of existing retail uses may limit types of retailers interested in locating at this site.

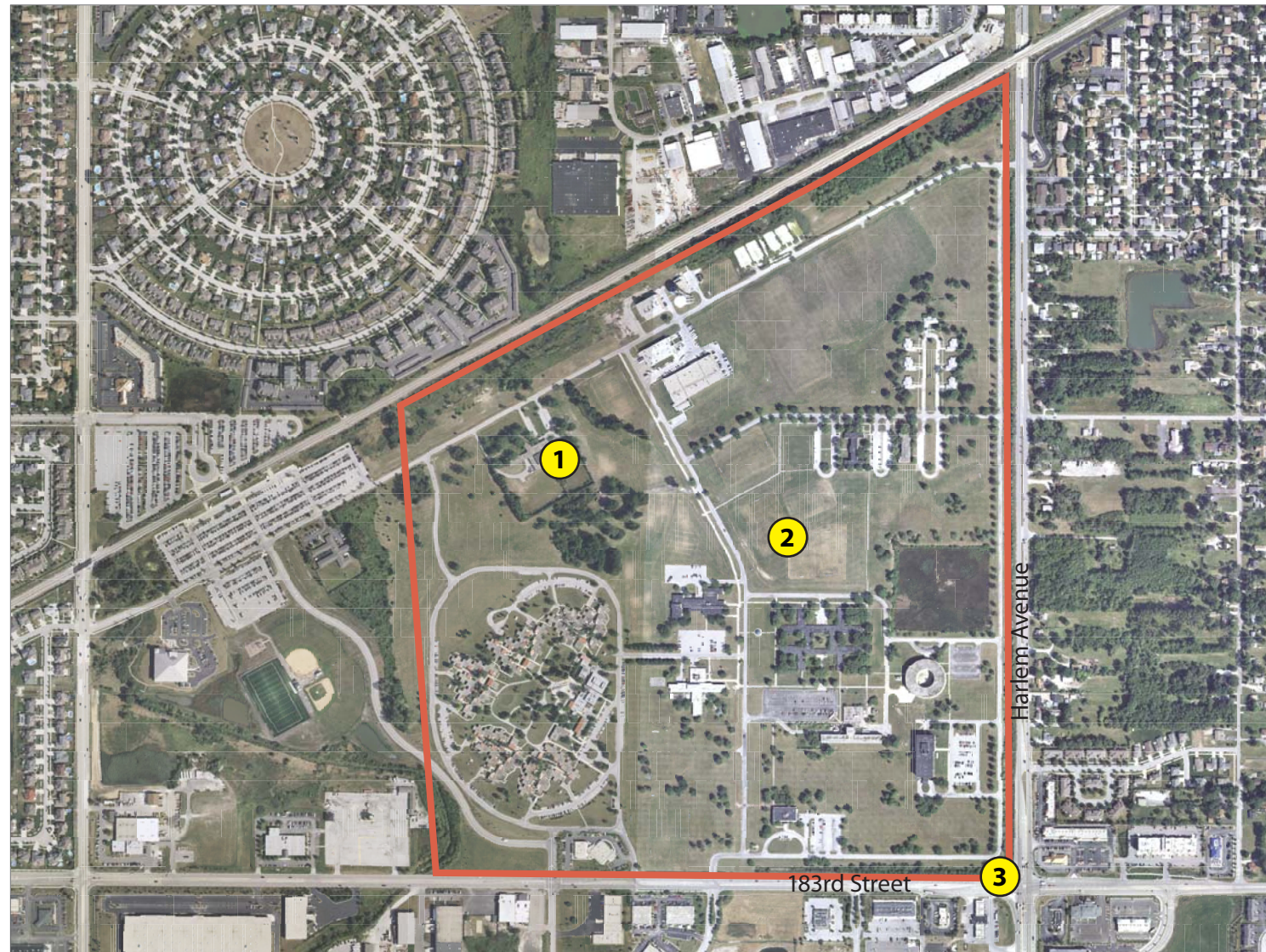
POTENTIAL USES & OPPORTUNITIES

- Residential and retail mixed-use offers potential on site, with commercial fronting on Harlem Avenue and possible linked residential behind.

POTENTIAL STRATEGIC ACTION ITEMS

- 1 Create site plan for the area that emphasizes preferred site design standards from the Village.

TINLEY PARK MENTAL HEALTH CENTER



STRENGTHS

- Very large open area available for development as a campus
- Access to Tinley Park (80th Ave.) Metra station on western edge of site.
- Site controlled by State and eventually to be purchased by Village.

WEAKNESSES

- Numerous existing buildings unlikely to be reusable.
- Potential environmental remediation needed due to historic uses.

OPPORTUNITIES

- High-growth area of the Chicago region.
- Access to I-80.

THREATS

- Lower Will County property tax rates in effect just to the south.
- State has not moved forward on plans to shut down the site.
- Ongoing economic downturn has hurt the ability to accomplish large master-planned communities.

POTENTIAL USES & OPPORTUNITIES

- Long-term opportunities exist for a major master-planned residential and commercial development on this site.
- Access from I-80 and nearby convention center development may allow for large commercial and retail uses along the edges of the site at Harlem Avenue and 183rd Street.

POTENTIAL STRATEGIC ACTION ITEMS

- 1 Investigate potential environmental concerns and prepare end-use oriented remediation plan. Pursue investigation and remediation grants and loans through IEPA and USEPA.
- 2 Work with State of Illinois to gain control of property.
- 3 Improve pedestrian access to businesses and convention center adjacent to site.