

Portage Park

Strategic Economic Development Plan
(including 2004 revisions)

Prepared by:

Portage Park Neighborhood Association
Economic Development Committee

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Portage Park: Vision 2010

In 2010, Portage Park is a vibrant, thriving community. All aspects of daily life – transportation, work, dining, shopping, entertainment, recreation, etc. – are within easy walking distance. Residential and commercial districts are well-maintained and known for their friendly atmosphere. Diverse business districts consist of a healthy mix of local, homegrown companies and national chains that actively support the community they serve.

Economic vitality is the foundation for continued community progress and livability. A master development plan regulates the commercial corridors' development and appearance to ensure that each aspect of the business district complements the entire district, in terms of both the goods and services they provide as well as the visual impression the area makes on local community members and visitors alike. Strong cooperation between residents, business owners, government officials and other stakeholders ensures that the development plan continues to be carefully implemented and maintained.

Portage Park Strategic Economic Development Plan

Definition

The Portage Park Strategic Economic Development Plan (the Plan) provides an organized approach to attaining the community's vision for the Portage Park neighborhood as described in *Portage Park: Vision 2010*. The Plan identifies the main problems that hinder economic progress in the community and outlines prioritized key vision ideas and associated strategies that will be used to turn those problems into opportunities.

Purpose

The Plan strives to integrate the needs and desires of residents, business owners, institutional operators and public officials into a strategy for managing the neighborhood's commercial and economic future.

Goals

Although personal visions of what Portage Park should be like in the future may vary, they share common qualities that serve as the goals of the Plan:

We all aspire to:

- Plan for the economic growth and development of the Portage Park community;
- Maintain, preserve, and promote the area's unique identity, historic character, and quality of life;
- Enhance our quality of life and maintain the current environment where people choose to remain in the community on a long-term basis;
- Support the growth of the commercial base needed to fully support the community;
- Preserve the strong block-by-block "neighborly" atmosphere of our residential streets;
- Improve the overall quality and appearance of our community's commercial corridors.

Portage Park Strategic Economic Development Plan

Plan History

On September 9, 2002, the Portage Park Neighborhood Association (PPNA) Economic Development Committee (EDC) sponsored the Portage Park Neighborhood Visioning Workshop. All members of the community were invited to participate. Participants included residents, business owners, workers, representatives from schools and other institutions, aldermen, and members of the Chicago Department of Planning and Development.

In preparation for the workshop, the PPNA EDC identified and analyzed the strengths, weaknesses and opportunities present in the community. From this analysis, four problem statements were written to identify the top four challenges/opportunities facing the community. These four problem statements were presented at the Visioning Workshop where the problem statements were validated by the workshop participants. The workshop participants created key vision ideas to successfully meet the challenges and seize the opportunities identified in each problem statement. The EDC then developed this document in order to provide an organized plan for achieving *Portage Park: Vision 2010*.

Problem Statements and Key Vision Ideas

The following problem statements summarize the top four challenges that could prevent the realization of *Portage Park: Vision 2010*.

Problem Statement #1 – Lack of Support for Master Development Plan:

The development of the Portage Park commercial corridors does not adhere to a comprehensive redevelopment plan and development occurs on a site-by-site basis as no master plan has been developed and adopted to guide development.

The lack of a comprehensive master plan results in conflicting land-uses and non-strategic spending of public tax dollars.

The introduction of auto-oriented development (i.e. strip-malls, drive-thru facilities, private surface parking, etc) within a dense pedestrian-oriented commercial corridor results in the interruption of pedestrian flow by removing people from the sidewalk. Public funds are then spent to support this non-conforming use in modifications to infrastructure (water, sewer, roadways, sidewalks, lighting, etc.) that negate the advancement of the Plan.

Problem Statements and Key Vision Ideas (continued)

Problem Statement #2 - Public Inaccessibility to Community Development

Policy Making: Lack of input from community members regarding key development issues leads to ill-advised or unsuccessful redevelopment projects that may actually deter further investment in the Portage Park business community.

Community members do not support projects/businesses that do not meet their needs and instead patronize businesses outside of the neighborhood.

Developers and local business owners observe the lack of support from the community and curtail future business investment in the neighborhood.

Problem Statement #3 - Lack of Pedestrian Improvements: The commercial corridors of Portage Park are not pedestrian-friendly, and in several locations the streetscape, signage, and facades detract from the visual character of the neighborhood, discouraging pedestrian traffic and associated business.

Because many community members view the business districts as unattractive, they avoid the area and business declines in those districts, making it hard for business owners to justify the added expense of additional improvements to their buildings and store fronts.

Problem Statement #4 - Lack of Restaurants, Entertainment, and Cultural

Venues: The Portage Park neighborhood is underserved by restaurants, entertainment and cultural (REC) venues.

There is little reason to visit the business districts after hours, which effectively eliminates pedestrian traffic through the districts that could lead to higher sales during the day. Strategically-located venues that attract large groups of people could draw people to the area after the standard 9-to-5 business day.

The chart on the next page lists the key vision ideas developed by the workshop participants in the order of their priority. By bringing about the changes described in the key vision ideas, the community will seek to turn challenges into opportunities, thereby achieving *Portage Park: Vision 2010*.

Portage Park Strategic Economic Development Plan

PS	Key Vision Idea	'02	'03	'04	'05	'06	'07	'08	'09	'10
1	Categorize business and commercial areas into appropriate pedestrian- and auto-oriented districts and advocate for the corresponding zoning.	X	X	X						
2	Build a rapport with aldermen and planners from the City's Department of Planning and Development; suggest quarterly meetings with representatives.	X	X	X						
3	Increase pedestrian safety in the commercial corridors, especially the Six Corners Business District, by examining key safety issues for pedestrians, and then identifying and implementing methods to improve pedestrian safety with the intent of increasing the amount of pedestrian foot traffic at Six Corners. Advocate for sidewalk, lighting and other streetscaping improvements, and reducing vehicular speeds in pedestrian-oriented commercial districts.	X	X	X	X	X				
2	Publish all Portage Park plans on the Internet for community access and comment.			X						
1	Review, revise, expand and adopt the Camiros Plan as the Master Redevelopment Plan for Portage Park.				X	X				
2	Arrange presentations by relevant professional groups (i.e. AIA, Main Street, Preservation Chicago, Neighborhood Capital Budget Group) to offer additional insight into community and urban development.				X	X				
3	Establish a design review process that ensures the Main Street Design Guidelines are followed for new commercial and multi-family development within the neighborhood.				X	X				
3	Improve physical components of the area by working together with the Six Corners Association to create a comprehensive incentive program to encourage the improvement of facades for existing buildings.				X	X				
2	Create a citizen/government TIF Advisory Council that guides any redevelopment activities that use TIF taxpayer money.					X	X			
1	Develop and implement zoning review policies, including required written notification to community groups of all proposed zoning changes.						X	X		
1	Establish local Community Development Corporation to monitor and implement the master redevelopment plan.						X	X		
4	Actively recruit desired REC businesses to the commercial corridors and assist and promote REC businesses already operating in the neighborhood.						X	X	X	X
1	Chose two key redevelopment sites and work with the Alderman and property owners to implement desired development.							X	X	X

Plan Review and Updating

The Plan will be reviewed and updated on an annual basis to ensure that land use categories, goals, and implementation measures reflect current conditions and that the Plan is achieving its stated goals. The review should assess the successes and challenges of implementing the Plan, and any changes in public needs or opinion.

This Plan review process should include:

- Development of detailed action plans with an associated implementation timeline for the key vision ideas that will be actively pursued in the following year.
- Development and tracking of implementation goals. A yearly strategic planning session can be used to identify available resources and opportunities to work on strategies as identified in the Plan, as well as, identify new initiatives that work towards achieving the Plan's goals and objectives.
- A yearly progress report on Plan implementation presented by the PPNA EDC at the Annual PPNA public meeting to which aldermen, DPD, and neighboring community organizations are invited.

Key Success Factors

The ultimate success of the Plan is contingent on implementation driven by the community members and the leadership of Portage Park. Key success factors include: publicizing the plan vision and goals and successful implementation of the action plans. The PPNA EDC is responsible for tracking the progress of the Plan and coordinating efforts to achieve *Portage Park: Vision 2010*.