



MEMO

Date: October 5, 2020
To: Sonya Abt, AICP, Community Development Director
From: Todd Vanadilok, AICP, Principal Planner
Subject: Summary Memo of Key Findings from Existing Codes, Plans, and Studies

As part of Task 2 of the planning process, the consultant conducted a thorough review of the Village of Riverside's current Zoning Code and Sign Code, as well as any relevant plans, studies, and other materials that provide insight into the Village's vision and goals for the Central Business District (CBD) and Harlem Avenue Corridor. This review focused on advancing transit-oriented development (TOD) principles in the CBD and along Harlem Avenue to help create a more pedestrian-friendly environment and support transit around the Riverside Metra Station and along Harlem Avenue, which Pace has identified as one of its high priority corridors for its Pulse bus rapid transit program.

ZONING CODE

Since the Zoning Code is the primary focus of this project, the consultant's review of the Zoning Code is thorough to understand how the current zoning standards regulate the use and development of property within the zoning districts that comprise the Central Business District (primarily B2, with three parcels zoned B1) and Harlem Avenue Corridor (primarily a mix of B1, R3, and R4, with a few parcels zoned R1). In addition, the review starts to identify zoning standards that could be amended to help make the CBD and Harlem Avenue more pedestrian-friendly and transit-supportive. Since Task 6 of the planning process will go more in-depth with recommendations for proposed zoning code amendments, the summary below provides high-level key takeaways from the Zoning Code review.



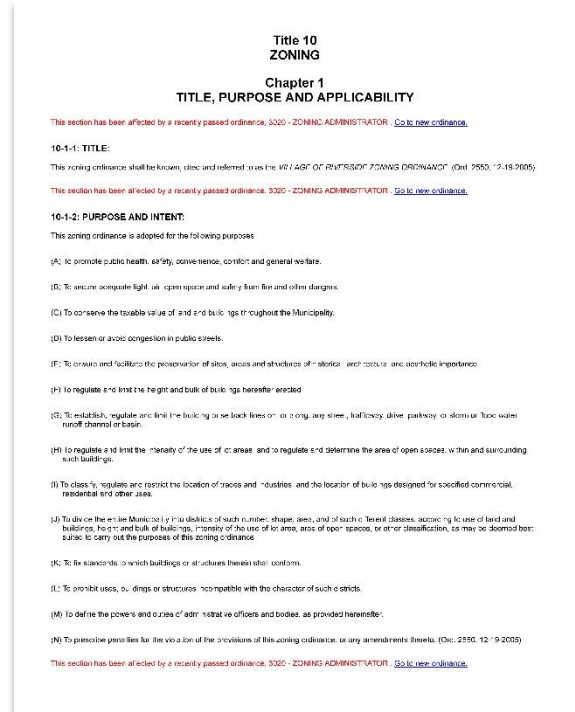
LINK: [PDF Document](#)

KEY TAKEAWAYS:

- **Current Code:** The current Zoning Code provides standards and language that help to create a transit-supportive environment. A few examples include:
 - Section 10-5-5(C): Building placement at one of the interior side lot lines to maintain street wall continuity



- Section 10-5-6: B1 District building scale and design standards that generally conform to design guidelines established in Pace’s Transit Supportive Guidelines
- Section 10-5-7: B2 District building scale and design standards that generally conform to design guidelines established in Pace’s Transit Supportive Guidelines
- Section 10-7-3(A): Provisions for side- and rear-loaded garages
- Section 10-8-4(E): Parking facilities for alternative modes of transportation
- Section 10-8-8(A): Shared parking shall be encouraged in the B2 district, including cross access easements between adjacent properties
- **Additional Standards:** Potential to incorporate additional language that promotes safe and convenient access to pedestrian, bicycle, and transit facilities, particularly to:
 - Make zoning district purpose statements more transit-supportive
 - Strengthen regulations to provide greater consideration of a multimodal environment
- **Process Streamlining:** Opportunities to streamline the various review processes regarding variations, special uses, and site plan review; this may include the potential to integrate Pace’s voluntary Design Review Assistance for Transit (Draft) Program intended to promote the incorporation of public transportation features in suburban developments (see last page of memo for more details)
- **Zoning Standard Amendments:** Below is a list of potential zoning standard amendments to consider to make the Zoning Code more transit-supportive [NOTE: THIS IS NOT AN EXHAUSTIVE LIST]:
 - Providing for greater concentration of resident and employment-generating uses to increase population and employment densities close to transit
 - Considering increased maximum building height to support greater densities
 - Reducing parking ratios to encourage more walking, biking, and taking transit
 - Allowing for lower minimum front yard setbacks to encourage bringing buildings closer to the street to form a more solid pedestrian-oriented street wall
 - Listing multiple-family dwellings and townhouses as a permitted use, or at least a special use, in B1-C, particularly to provide the option for such uses as part of a mixed use development; townhouses may also be considered in the B2 Mixed Use Periphery





- Adding a driveway separation requirement for B1-C to help promote a more walkable environment along Harlem Avenue
- Strengthening off-street parking provisions for changes in intensity of use
- Integrating more explicit standards for permeable pavers to help reduce impervious surfaces and create a diversity of surface materials that add to a pedestrian-oriented environment
- Considering home business occupations that would be allowable along Harlem Avenue, as well as related sign implications
- Strengthening outdoor seating regulations, which may also include how to codify curbside pickup and contactless customer service tables/kiosks outside a storefront
- Evaluating the potential reduction of the current 20% max occupancy of offices on the ground floor, particularly given concerns about offices occupying too much street-level space that could be devoted to shops and restaurants that typically generate greater foot traffic; this reduction could be applied to specific blocks rather than across the whole Village so as to not inhibit economic development, particularly if creative office uses like coworking spaces could fill vacant spaces, bring life to storefronts, and provide for employment-generating uses close to transit (with employees who can frequent shops and restaurants)
- Considering the potential for floor area ratio (FAR) bonuses to permit buildings to cover more of the site at ground level and then step back from the street at upper levels
- **Schools & Churches:** Opportunity to add bulk standards and other regulations for non-residential uses like schools, churches, etc. in residential zones, which are more intensive in terms of parking, building footprint, lighting, etc.
- **Lighting:** Potential to amend or provide additional lighting standards for B1 and B2 districts, which may be necessary to accommodate greater intensity of uses in the CBD and Harlem Avenue while also minimizing spillover impacts on adjacent residential areas
- **Accessory Structures:** Possibility for additional performance standards for accessory structures in business districts, such as outdoor storage
- **Zoning Map:** to update the Zoning Map, including:
 - Bringing the legend into consistency with the district names identified in the Zoning Code
 - Accurately depicting the three B2 subdistricts (the legend seems to show four subdistricts)
- **Zoning Graphics:** to update the zoning graphics to improve clarity and note any changes
- **Emerging Trends:** Potential to integrate emerging community planning and societal trends such as:
 - Accessory dwelling units (ADUs)
 - Missing Middle housing (e.g., duplex, triplexes, and quadplexes)
 - Coworking spaces
 - Live/work spaces
 - Curbside pickup and contactless customer service
 - Urban agriculture



SIGN CODE

Since the Village has already updated Sign Code regulations regarding the B2 Zoning District (i.e., Central Business District), the Sign Code review for this project focuses on sections that relate to zoning districts located along Harlem Avenue, including the following:

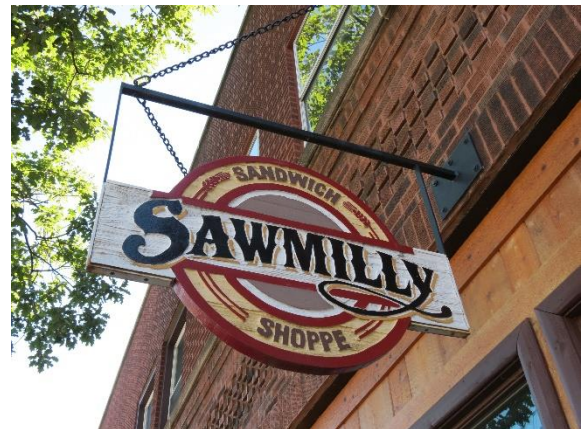
- Section 4-3-8: Sign Controls for the Residential Districts
- Section 4-3-9: General Standards and Construction Requirements
- Section 4-3-14: Sign Controls in the B1 District
- Section 4-3-15: Electronic Reader Board Signs

Below are key takeaways regarding potential Sign Code revisions that would help make Harlem Avenue more pedestrian-friendly and transit-supportive.

LINK: [PDF Document](#)

KEY TAKEAWAYS:

- **Transit Signage:** Potential addition of standards for transit-related signage, including bus stop signs, route maps, route schedules, general route information, etc., particularly in the B1 District
- **Unlimited Signs:** Evaluation of whether the current allowance of an unlimited number of signs (wall, window, awning, and canopy) in the B1 District poses any issues, particularly in terms of visual clutter, excessive advertising, etc., which can have an impact on creating a pedestrian friendly environment
- **Sign Height:** Potential reduction of the maximum height standards for ground and pole signs in the B1-C Subdistrict would help to create a more pedestrian scale along Harlem Avenue; perhaps lowering from 20' to 6' (like in the B1-TC Subdistrict), or no greater than 10' to 12'
- **Wall Signs on Multi-Story Buildings:** Potential adjustments to standards regarding the positioning of wall signs in the B1 District to account for buildings that may be greater than two stories
- **Encroachment of Projecting Signs:** Evaluation of whether encroachment regulations for projecting signs in the B1 District may need to be adjusted to account for structures that could be built right up to the property line (e.g., the current 2' max encroachment would be inconsistent with the 4' allowable projection from the wall of a building)
- **Box Signs:** Potential elimination of box signs along Harlem Avenue to encourage the use of ground, wall, and projecting signs as a means to enhance quality site design with signage





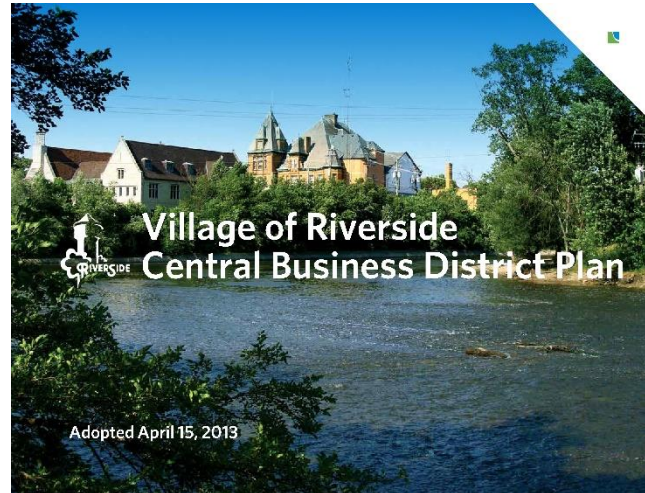
CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT PLAN

Riverside's 2013 Central Business District (CBD) Plan outlines a set of guiding principles, framework plan, and strategies to enhance the viability and quality of life in the CBD. The six principles guiding the CBD Plan are listed on the right. In terms of enhancing the pedestrian-friendly and transit-supportive qualities of the CBD, key takeaways from the review of this plan are summarized below.

LINK: [PDF Document](#)

KEY TAKEAWAYS:

- **Current Zoning Code:** The plan states that the *"zoning ordinance, which was recently updated in 2009, provides the main framework for the future land use vision"*
- **Mixed Use:** Steps to advance a mixed use environment, which is a defining feature of transit-oriented development (TOD):
 - Transition from a series of single-use properties to a more compact mix of uses
 - Convert vacant spaces and service businesses at ground level to retail and restaurants that generate greater foot traffic
 - Create an accessible downtown for pedestrians, bicyclists, train commuters, and motorists
 - Provide for a higher downtown population via mixed use buildings with residential components and standalone multi-family residential uses that provide the 24-hour population to support downtown shops, services, and restaurants
 - Attract Millennials, seniors, and urban dwellers by providing a mixed use environment in a compact walkable form with multimodal access, including transit
- **Height:** Height precedence in the CBD is currently established by the two- to three-story height of many historic buildings and four-story height of certain multi-family residential buildings
- **Quality Design:** Site design guidelines and standards that encourage conscientious property maintenance are important to create an attractive area of high quality design
- **Curb Appeal:** Zoning standards relating to landscaping, parking lot design, street frontage, lighting, signage, etc. influence the curb appeal of a downtown streetscape at a more pedestrian scale



- 1. Diversify Riverside's CBD**
- 2. Increase the Visibility of Riverside's CBD**
- 3. Enhance Street Appeal**
- 4. Build Connections to the Riverfront**
- 5. Preserve and Promote Riverside's Legacy**
- 6. Make the CBD Easy to Visit**



- **Pedestrian Environment:** Yard, setback, and on-street parking requirements influence how the pedestrian environment may be formed, including space for sidewalks, links to transit facilities, shortened crossing distances, complete tree canopy
- **Process Streamlining:** Recommendation to streamline the Village's development review process
- **COVID-19 Impacts:** COVID-19 impacts how zoning standards may influence:
 - Parking, temporary signs, outdoor displays, etc. of businesses and special events like the Farmers Market that offer curbside pickup and contactless service
 - Mix of uses, including existing businesses and the potential to attract new businesses, residents, and development in general
 - Amount of office space sought by employers and entrepreneurs

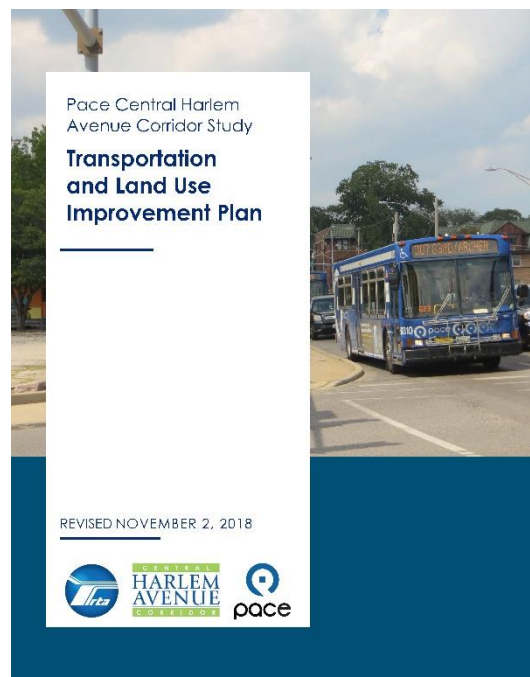
CENTRAL HARLEM AVENUE CORRIDOR STUDY

The 2018 Central Harlem Avenue Corridor Study describes Pace's emerging Pulse bus rapid transit service, with Harlem Avenue identified as one of the next corridors in the region to carry Pulse service. The study summarizes the detailed process that was conducted to identify potential Pulse station areas along Harlem Avenue. Three station areas would be located in Riverside: (1) 26th Street Station Area; (2) Metra BNSF Line Station Area; and (3) Ogden Avenue Station Area. The key takeaways summarized below focus on the proposed Riverside station areas and the role of zoning in molding the Harlem Avenue Corridor into a pedestrian-friendly and transit-supportive environment.

LINK: [PDF Document](#)

KEY TAKEAWAYS:

- Stations should be placed in areas with strong transit demand and distributed in a manner that ensures adequate access to existing riders and destinations
- Riverside's three potential station areas scored moderate to high in various measures: Transit Competitiveness Score under different scenarios; Population + Employment (within 1/8 and 1/4-mile walksheds); and Share of Daily Riders (within 1/8 and 1/4-mile walksheds)
- Pace ranks the 26th Street Station Area as a Medium Priority, and the Metra BNSF Line and Ogden Avenue Station Areas as High Priority
- The study describes transit implications (e.g., transit demand; demographic profile of transit users; reuse of former office or other vacant sites; more pedestrian-friendly neighborhood commercial; etc.)





on various land uses that would be viable along the Harlem Avenue Corridor including: residential; retail/commercial; office; institutional/recreation/entertainment

- Each station area is assigned a typology, which is defined by its own set of zoning benefits as summarized below and in the graphics on the right:

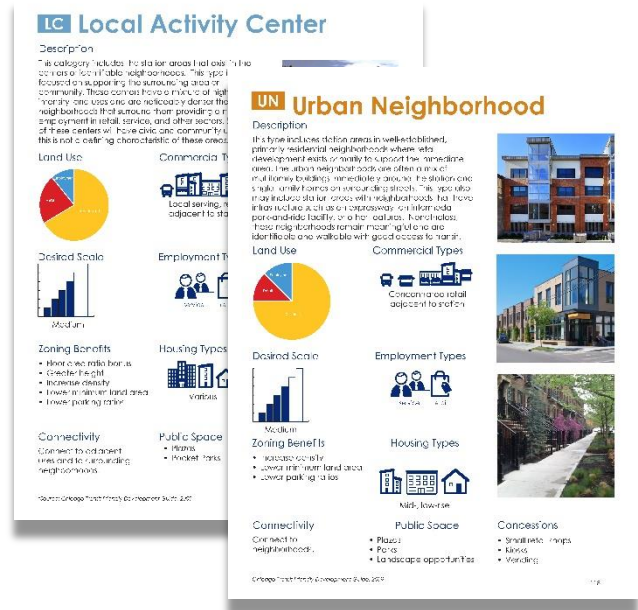
26th Street Station Area

Ogden Avenue Station Area

- Typology: Urban Neighborhood
- Zoning Benefits: Increased density; lower minimum land area; lower parking ratios

Metra BNSF Line Station Area

- Typology: Local Activity Center
- Zoning Benefits: FAR bonus; greater height; increased density; lower minimum land area; lower parking ratios



- The graphic on the right summarizes approaches to improve access to transit while balancing the needs of all users, with the study providing greater detail on each approach
- Some of the approaches outlined on the right have components that can be addressed through zoning, either by applying existing zoning regulations or amending certain standards regarding yards, setbacks, landscaping, parking areas, etc. to provide for a more transit-supportive corridor



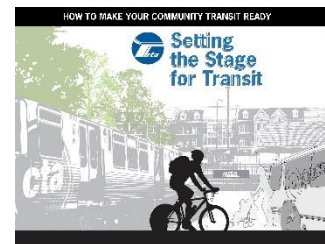


RTA DOCUMENTS

The RTA is playing a critical role for this project, including serving as the grant provider and providing technical assistance to the community. One aspect of this technical assistance is a series of guides and reports relating to transit oriented development (TOD). In particular, most of these documents provide insights into how communities can advance core TOD principles through zoning and other policies that impact development. Below is a brief summary of each pertinent RTA document, including the key takeaways with most relevance to advancing TOD and greater walkability in Riverside's Central Business District and the Harlem Avenue Corridor.

SETTING THE STAGE FOR TRANSIT

SUMMARY: This "how to" design manual serves as a guidebook for communities to provide the policies and physical conditions that advance transit supportive development for both commuter rail stations. In particular, the guidebook provides graphics that outline the transit and design principles that should be integrated into three transit supportive design scenarios: (1) Corridors; (2) Station Areas; and (3) Urban Infill. Financing tools, funding sources, and other resources are also provided. With regards to zoning, the guidebook indicates that the most basic elements that may require modification to be more transit-supportive include: land use (i.e., permitted and special use lists); density and setbacks (i.e., bulk standards); and parking. There is also support to create unique zoning districts or overlays for mixed use TOD areas.



PROJECT RELEVANCE: The transit and design principles for the three transit supportive design scenarios are highly applicable to Riverside's CBD and Harlem Avenue. The factors regarding "What do you need to support BRT/ART and Metra Commuter Rail?" also serve Riverside well to guide zoning decisions for this project.

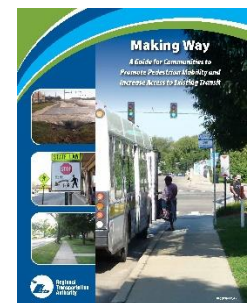
LINK: [PDF Document](#)

MAKING WAY: A GUIDE TO PROMOTE MOBILITY & TRANSIT

SUMMARY: This guide outlines general steps communities can take to enhance mobility for pedestrians, which in turn would help to increase access to transit.

PROJECT RELEVANCE: Some of the suggested improvements (e.g., sidewalk width, connections to bus shelters, signage, etc.), may have implications on zoning standards, particularly regarding setbacks, yards, and other lot standards to provide adequate space for pedestrian facilities and connectivity.

LINK: [PDF Document](#)



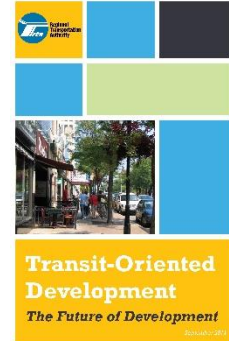


TOD: THE FUTURE OF DEVELOPMENT

SUMMARY: This pamphlet provides a general overview of TOD, target demographics, typical land uses, and steps to capture the TOD market.

PROJECT RELEVANCE: Although this pamphlet is general in nature, the most relevant aspect is the land use descriptions, particularly how employment-generating uses like offices play a vital role in creating daytime population and filling units above the ground floor. TODs also provide employers with greater access to a larger workforce pool, including those who tend to take a bus or train to commute.

LINK: [PDF Document](#)



TRANSIT WORKS: THE BENEFITS OF TOD

SUMMARY: This pamphlet summarizes the four principles of TOD: (1) Transit; (2) Density; (3) Walkability; and (4) Mixed Use. The benefits of TOD are also highlighted through infographics.

PROJECT RELEVANCE: All four TOD principles are critical to the success of achieving viable TOD in Riverside's CBD and along Harlem Avenue. Zoning amendments, in particular, may help to advance all four principles, including support to establish Pace's Pulse bus rapid transit service.

LINK: [PDF Document](#)

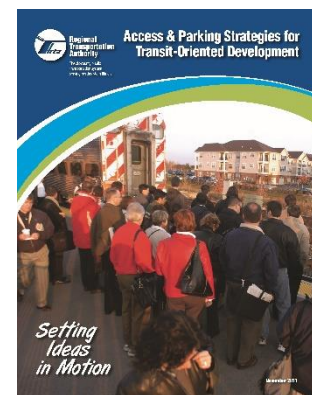


ACCESS AND PARKING STRATEGIES FOR TOD

SUMMARY: While this guide (and the RTA in general) prioritizes access for pedestrians, bicyclists, and transit riders first and foremost, this guide provides a variety of parking strategies, including addressing parking demand, reducing parking requirements, providing commuter parking, balancing on- and off-street parking, encouraging car sharing and shared parking, integrating green standards, and pursuing funding sources to finance parking facilities.

PROJECT RELEVANCE: All of the parking strategies have some relevance to transit-related parking, whether in the CBD or along Harlem Avenue. In particular, the potential integration of green strategies (e.g., permeable pavers, bioswales, etc.) may have an impact on current zoning standards. ADA compliance and universal design are also of utmost importance to optimize equitable access. Parking requirements may taken parking maximums into account, where appropriate. Changes to overnight on-street parking standards may also be considered, particularly in areas with significant multi-family developments with little to no on-site parking.

LINK: [PDF Document](#)



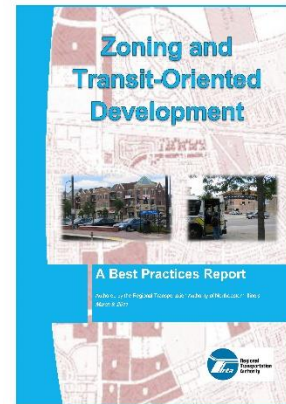


ZONING AND TOD: A BEST PRACTICES REPORT

SUMMARY: This report highlights the general purpose and types of zoning (e.g., Euclidean, Performance, Incentive-Based, Form Based, and Hybrid), as well as its role in advancing TOD. In particular, an overlay zone is described as a potential approach to applying unique standards that advance TOD principles in a given area.

PROJECT RELEVANCE: While this project does not intend to completely overhaul the Village’s current type of zoning, the use of a TOD overlay district in the CBD and Harlem Avenue may help to advance TOD principles in these areas without impacting Riverside’s other areas, mainly the residential neighborhoods and historic properties.

LINK: [PDF Document](#)

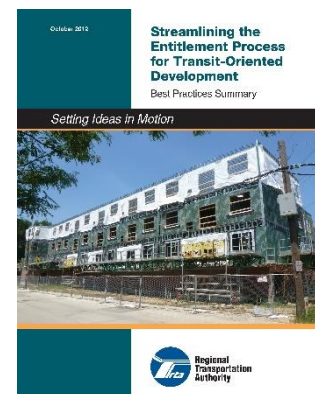


STREAMLINING THE ENTITLEMENT PROCESS: A BEST PRACTICES REPORT

SUMMARY: This report summarizes common barriers to implementing TOD, benefits of a streamlined entitlement process, tools to assist with the streamlining process, developer incentives, and examples of a streamlined process. One streamlining tool is amendments to zoning standards that may be at the root of certain barriers.

PROJECT RELEVANCE: Riverside may find value in assessing the local examples of streamlined entitlement processes from Blue Island, Wood Dale, and Manhattan, which are all within the RTA transit network. The Village may also relate to the common barriers to TOD implementation, including restrictive standards relating to height, density, and setbacks. The potential for a zoning overlay district and “as of right” zoning regulations may be intriguing approaches to pursue for the CBD and Harlem Avenue. Developer incentives like parking reductions, density bonuses, and permit fee reductions may also be options to consider.

LINK: [PDF Document](#)





PACE DOCUMENTS

Pace has a significant presence along Harlem Avenue, with three existing bus lines serving the corridor. In addition, Pace has plans to expand its bus rapid transit network onto a total of seven corridors in the near term, with Harlem Avenue being one of the corridors under study right now. Major bus corridors like Harlem Avenue hold the potential to advance TOD principles with a mix of uses in a compact, walkable environment that promotes transportation choice. Pace’s Transit Supportive Guidelines is a detailed how to document that communities can use to create transit supportive environments. Pace also provides technical assistance, including its Design Review Assistance for Transit (Draft) Program. Both resources are described below.

PACE TRANSIT SUPPORTIVE GUIDELINES

SUMMARY: This document provides a comprehensive set of guidelines to provide for Pace bus infrastructure and facilities and advance transit supportive development in public right-of-way and on private property. To support this end, the guidelines outline the transportation, physical, and character elements that define what a transit supportive place looks like, which provides the framework upon which these guidelines are built.

PROJECT RELEVANCE: In order to adapt the transit supportive guidelines into municipal policies, the Village may need to amend certain zoning standards regarding setbacks, parking, building mass and scale, signage, and permitted and special use lists.

LINK: [PDF Document](#)



Transit Supportive Guidelines
For The Chicago Area
MARCH 2014

DESIGN REVIEW ASSISTANCE FOR TRANSIT (DRAFT) PROGRAM

SUMMARY: DRAFT is Pace’s complementary in-house technical review program, which is available to developers and designers on a voluntary participation basis to submit their proposed developments for review by Pace’s Transportation Engineer to help promote the incorporation of public transportation features in suburban developments. This program is encouraged for any project that might impact Pace services and infrastructure. The review process can take about 2 to 4 weeks to complete upon initial submittal.

PROJECT RELEVANCE: Although the DRAFT process is conducted by Pace, communities like Riverside may consider the potential integration of DRAFT into the Village’s own development review processes. Since the DRAFT process would run concurrently with the Village’s review processes (see sample graphic on the right), integration of DRAFT into Riverside’s review process would not prevent the Village from potentially streamlining its own development review processes.

LINK: [Pace Website](#)

