



# MADISON STREET CORRIDOR FRAMEWORK REPORT

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This Framework Report outlines a proposed approach for the Madison Street corridor in Oak Park, focusing on zoning recommendations for the corridor. Currently, Madison Street lacks a cohesive identity in both built form and land use along the corridor. Further, the current regulatory structure presents difficulties in how different uses are allowed, and there are additional lotting pattern and traffic challenges that impact how development can occur along the corridor.

In its current configuration, Madison Street is home to predominantly auto-oriented retail uses that do not create a pedestrian friendly environment, due to an overabundance of curb cuts and surface parking. Numerous surface parking lots front the corridor, and buildings are frequently set back or otherwise fail to acknowledge Madison Street, turning their focus inward with windows and entrances directed toward parking lots instead of out onto the street. Good examples of this inward focus include some of the larger auto-oriented uses such as Jewel and CVS, as well as a number of other heavy commercial/auto uses which even include loading bays fronting on the Madison Street corridor. Guided by previous planning efforts including the 2006 Madison Street Corridor Plan and the "Envision Oak Park" Comprehensive Plan, the intent of creating a new zoning district for Madison Street is to refocus its orientation to create an aesthetically appealing, vibrant mixed-use business district that is pedestrian friendly for all residents of and visitors to the community.

The corridor presents a number of physical challenges that must be addressed within the district regulations. One key challenge to redevelopment is that the lots along Madison Street are often shallow. This means that any type of large-scale, significant redevelopment will likely require lot assembly. The other is the proximity of residential neighborhoods to the corridor, and the potential impacts with different land uses directly abut. Madison Street backs up to predominantly single-family neighborhoods on the south, and multi-family neighborhoods on the north. The area between Washington and Madison is made up of stable, well designed multi-family of significant density and therefore creates an easier transition than to the south, where Madison abuts single-family neighborhoods where the transition is a bit more jarring. Alleys can often serve as a buffer, but are unfortunately not consistent along length of corridor. Where there is no alley, there is little room for a significant buffer, as commercial uses are located very close to the sidewalls of residences.

This Framework Report outlines the proposed approach to the new Madison Street Zoning District. Approaches are highlighted for each major component of the anticipated district:

- General Approach
- Use
- Dimensional Standards
- Building and Site Design Standards
- Parking

## GENERAL APPROACH

The creation of a Madison Street Zoning District is intended to simplify the regulations for the corridor to create an environment friendly to new development and redevelopment, and to make administration easier for Village staff. Currently there are three base districts in the corridor (C, B-1/B-2, and H Districts) as well as two overlays -

the Madison Street Overlay District and a Perimeter Overlay District. This creates a confusing web of regulations that can lead to inconsistencies and discourage new development. The Madison Street Zoning District will be a single base district that covers the length of the corridor from Harlem to Austin. The two exceptions are the area located between Maple and Wisconsin on the south side, which will remain as the H District, and the mapping of an institutional district around Village Hall and Park District offices, where other governmental uses will cluster and should be zoned institutional. The institutional district will be created as part of the larger Zoning Ordinance update and rezoned as part of that project; when the Madison Street District is adopted, such area will be mapped as the Madison Street District. If certain design or dimensional standards are needed for this area, they will be integrated into those district regulations.

## USE

There are a number of issues related to use permissions within the corridor. By creating a base district, the dual use structure – those uses allowed in the base district and the additional uses permitted or restricted by the overlays – will be eliminated. However, certain issues that have been addressed by the overlay will need to be resolved in the base district, in addition to those stemming from existing and desired future use patterns.

In order to create a true mixed-use environment, a variety of uses should be allowed. What makes a mixed-use environment attractive is that in addition to shopping and dining opportunities, residents who live within the area are also able to take care of everyday tasks, which include uses like dry cleaning and hair salons, and recreational uses such as fitness centers and arts studios. However, there is concern about maintaining the Village's sales tax base, particularly related to the mix of retail uses versus service uses within the commercial districts, including Madison Street. Because of the corridor's length – approximately three miles – it is recommended that only select areas include use restrictions that require retail on the ground floor (office, residential, and other non-residential uses would be permitted above the ground floor). Initial feedback indicates that the area of the corridor between Home Avenue and East Avenue should be reserved for ground floor retail. Additional corners or nodes can also be identified along the corridor for such restrictions, in order to cluster sales tax generating uses. This area would function as a sort of "secondary Downtown" and therefore should include some additional use restrictions:

- There are a number of auto uses along the corridor, such as repair shops, vehicle rental uses, and gas stations, which do not positively contribute to a pedestrian friendly environment. We would recommend prohibiting such uses within the retail core described above, but allow them as special uses in other areas.
- Drive-through facilities are currently a special use. Again, similar to auto uses, we would recommend prohibiting drive-through facilities in the retail core in order to enhance the pedestrian environment.

Another issue is whether to allow exclusively residential development in the corridor. Currently, residential uses on the ground floor are prohibited along Madison Street. The Village's Comprehensive Plan recommends allowing residential uses on the ground floor, and we agree. The Village should consider allowing higher density housing (townhouse and multi-family) along the corridor except within the retail core. There are two reasons for this. First, this would increase the residential density within the corridor, which in turn attracts additional non-residential uses. Second, the Village has significant land area zoned non-residential throughout the Village, which may be more than the market in the area can support.

Finally, the current use structure requires hair salons to be spaced 500 feet apart. This has created issues with current property owners not being able to rent structures, which therefore remain vacant. Further, the spacing measurement creates administration issues, including determining permissions and reviewing requests for variances. We recommend elimination of this restriction. This will be a point of discussion both in this assignment and in the larger Zoning Ordinance update project.

In addition, because the proposed zoning district is intended to be self-contained, the use permissions would also address temporary uses. Certain temporary uses are already regulated by the current Ordinance, such as temporary buildings for construction and temporary contractor's maintenance yards, and would be cross-referenced. Additional temporary uses, such as temporary outdoor retail sales and temporary mobile food sales, should also be incorporated. The regulations would be drafted only for those temporary uses that occur on private property.

Accessory structures and uses that are part of higher intensity development would also be part of the district



regulations. This includes sustainable structures, such as solar panels and building-mounted wind turbines, as well as other common structures and uses, such as outdoor storage areas and refuse containers.

## DIMENSIONAL STANDARDS

Dimensional standards concentrate primarily on lot area/residential density, lot coverage, setbacks, and height. The Madison Street Overlay District imposes special setback standards; other bulk regulations come from the base districts. With different standards in place, bulk and volume controls cannot be properly coordinated. With the creation of a base district, this can be rectified.

Recommendations for dimensional standards are summarized in the following table.

| Dimensional Standard         | Current Standard   |             | Recommendation   |
|------------------------------|--|-------------|--|
|                              | B-1/B-2 District   | C District  |  |
| <b>Lot Area/<br/>Density</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Non-Residential: None</li> <li>Mixed-Use: 3,000sf + 700sf/du for 3 or more du</li> <li>Hotel: 7,000sf or 360sf/room, whichever is greater</li> <li>Residential Care: 7,000sf or 400sf/bed, whichever is greater</li> </ul>                                      |             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No lot area/density maximums for non-residential and mixed-use (residential and non-residential mixes)</li> <li>Include density standard for multi-family and townhouse (square feet of lot area required per dwelling unit)</li> </ul> |
| <b>Lot Coverage</b>          | 25%  |             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Eliminate lot coverage restriction; setbacks and landscape regulations would create the appropriate open space</li> </ul>   |
| <b>Building Height</b>       | Max. of 45'  | Max. of 50' | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Maximum of 50'</li> <li>Minimum of 20'</li> <li>(Building height would be measured to top of façade)</li> </ul>   |
| <b>Street Setback</b>        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Austin to Oak Park: Build to zone of 0' to 5'</li> <li>Harlem to Oak Park: Build to zone of 3' to 5'</li> <li>North-South Harlem, Oak Park, Ridgeland, Austin: Build to zone of 5' to 15'</li> <li>All Other North-South: Build to zone of 0' to 15'</li> </ul> |             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Maintain existing build-to zone approach; further analysis to verify exact dimensions</li> <li>Variation in build-to zone dimension may relate to those areas targeted for required ground floor retail</li> </ul>                      |
| <b>Interior Side Setback</b> | Build-to line of 0'  |             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Maintain build-to line of 0' for non-residential and mixed-use</li> <li>Multi-Family: No setback required</li> <li>Townhouse: 5'</li> </ul>   |
| <b>Rear Setback</b>          | 25'  |             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reduce to 20'</li> <li>Maintain measurement methodology that measures rear yard from adjacent lot line</li> </ul>   |

## BUILDING AND SITE DESIGN STANDARDS

To ensure cohesive appearance along the corridor, basic design standards for new structures should be included. Where appropriate, these standards will be based upon the "Development Guidelines" included in the Village's 2006 Madison Street Corridor Plan. The intent is not to control the architecture of new development but rather to address basic building design: façade articulation, fenestration/transparency, public entrance location and design, prohibited building materials, and similar. Design standards would also include the range of permitted encroachments for architectural features and attached accessory structures, such as eaves and balconies. Standards should be written so that they are more objective in nature than subjective, for easy review and administration.



There are a number of planned unit developments (PUD) already built along the corridor. The design standards in these PUDs provide better screening of parking areas, higher quality of building materials, and increased transparency. The successes of these PUDs can provide guidance for new design standards that can be integrated into the new base district for the corridor.

Design standards should be tailored to the type of structure, which is an element of form-based coding that can be incorporated into the district. The following building types are anticipated:

- Commercial single-story
- Commercial multi-story
- Mixed-use development
- Multi-family development
- Townhouse development

In addition to building design, how the structure sits on the lot – building siting – is also important. The elements that create the most impact are the required setbacks (as described above). The use of build-to lines and build-to zones provide the most direction as to where the principal structure must be sited. However, the permitted location of parking areas and required buffering when adjacent to residential is also critical.

For each of the building types described above, permitted parking location and access points would be regulated, similar to the standards in place now, but more refined. As is the case now, the desire is to prevent parking areas from dominating visually or physically along Madison Street, as well as along select prioritized north-south cross streets. Where parking lots are visible, specific landscape screening requirements should be in place, to both screen automobiles and continue the streetwall along Madison Street.

Finally, because of the abutting residential on both sides of the corridor, buffer yards should be required. First, even though alleys are not continuous, where they are in place they can serve as buffers. In such cases, additional buffering should not be required. Where there are no alleys, and a non-residential use abuts a residential use, buffers are needed. These will need to be tailored to lot size, dependent on both lot area and lot depth. On smaller lots that are more shallow and narrow in shape, buffers may need to be limited to fencing in order to allow a standard building envelope. Larger lots, those that have more lot depth or where assembly occurs and they are wider in nature, would be able to accommodate plantings.

## **PARKING**

Parking ratios may need a slight adjustment. Most non-residential uses anticipated for the corridor require one space for every 500 square feet of floor area, which is a reasonable standard. Residential uses should be simplified to a straightforward number of spaces per dwelling unit, rather than a series of standards based on number of bedrooms.

Because of transit-oriented development goals, it is recommended to include a parking reduction for developments within one-half mile of a transit stop. Similar to current flexibilities, non-residential development should be permitted a straight reduction of 25% of required parking. For residential development, the requirement for developments located within that pedestrian shed should be no more than one space per dwelling unit.

Because of small, shallow lots, providing off-street parking on Madison Street can be difficult. In order to prevent a situation that requires new development to obtain variances because there is insufficient room on-site for parking, parking flexibilities in the corridor will be needed. Current Ordinance flexibilities, such as allowing the Zoning Administrator to permit a 25% reduction in required parking, should be maintained. Additional flexibilities such as exempting smaller developments (2,500sf to 3,000sf of gross floor area) from parking requirements should also be considered.

## **NEXT STEPS...**

This report serves as the preliminary outline for the components of the Madison Street Zoning District. The intent is to obtain general consensus on the approaches presented herein. The details of specific regulations will be determined in subsequent drafts of the district.

