



# **CITY OF OAK FOREST**

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**Community Development Department**

## **REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS**

### **TRANSIT-ORIENTED DEVELOPMENT OF THE GATEWAY**

**RFP Issued: April 18, 2014**

**Submission Due: May 31, 2014**

# The Oak Forest Gateway T.O.D.

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## **I. INTRODUCTION**

The City of Oak Forest, Illinois is seeking a developer to purchase and redevelop a multi-family residential/mixed use parcel and commercial parcel at the intersection of 159th Street and Cicero Avenue, immediately adjacent to the Oak Forest Metra station, commonly referred as the Gateway Corridor. The parcel consists of 4.9 acres and is planned and zoned for medium – high density apartment/condos with the opportunity of first floor commercial units. The City is seeking a mixed use, destination-oriented project that must include residential components and parking, and may also include retail and accessory parking.

For complete site and project description, see Gateway Development Background.

This request is intended to invite proposals that shall include design concepts and development plans for the site that advance the goals and concepts identified in the Gateway Redevelopment Plan, highlights of which are attached hereto. The City acknowledges that the ultimate design project is a collaborative effort and the City will work with the selected developer in a timely manner relative to any proposed public/private partnership. This report and other relative information about the City can be viewed at [www.oak-forest.org](http://www.oak-forest.org).

To be considered, interested parties should submit a response to this request to the City, in accordance with the submittal requirements set out in Section 3 hereof.

### ***The Gateway, a transit-oriented development Oak Forest, Illinois***

#### ***Luxury Apartments***

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## **II. BACKGROUND**

The City of Oak Forest seeks a public/private partnership to develop the Gateway, a mixed-use residential and retail transit-oriented development (the “Project”). The proposed development is desired by the City in order to set an example for the standard of future commercial and residential development in the 159th Street and Cicero Avenue area, as well as supplement the Gateway area with a new demographic that’s both younger with a higher level of median household income. The location of the site is a gateway to Oak Forest, sitting at the intersection of the city’s major commercial and transportation corridors.

The Gateway Corridor is located at the intersections of 159th Street and Cicero Avenue, approximately 22 miles southwest of Chicago’s Loop. The Project is at the location of the east entrance to the City of Oak Forest and the commuter train station that serves approximately 1,600 weekday commuters on Metra’s Rock Island District Line, which runs between Joliet and Downtown Chicago.

The mixed-use, transit-oriented project envisions using the Metra Station as the focal point of the development, which required the Station’s relocation to the north so that it is centered within the site. The new retail and residential buildings are strategically placed to emphasize the importance of the station. Significant public/private funding has been invested with the intention that the uses and upscale nature of the project will provide a catalyst for new development and contribute to the general redevelopment of the neighborhood. During weekends and holidays, the site will be transformed into city center where the City of Oak Forest and the Oak Forest Park District will host events and public gatherings, such as farmer’s markets and community gatherings.

As part of the Gateway marketing, the city envisions catering to the young, working professional who will utilize all the different amenities this project has to offer, i.e. transit, residential development, recreation, proximity to entertainment and shopping. Another major amenity that will be available is the 1 gigabit broadband that is currently being implemented. The city believes this T.O.D. project should take full advantage of the 1 gigabit broadband access that will be available on the site to attract the young professional that can utilize this amenity for remote work, business start-up or for entertainment purposes.

The mixed-use, transit-oriented development is being developed in two phases:

### **Phase 1**

Phase 1 of the Project is complete and involved the purchase of an obsolete school on the south side of 159th Street and directly across the street from the existing Metra Station and parking lot. The school was demolished and a new 450 car Metra parking lot was created. An antenna tower that was located within the existing Metra parking lot was relocated, and the existing parking lot was demolished. This work also included the preservation of the designated wetland, the

installation of a storm trap system capable of storing up to an acre-foot of storm water, the underground utilities required for the balance of the development, including the preparation of three outlot retail pads, on-grade retail parking for 248 cars, a kiss- and-ride turnabout for the new Metra station, and landscaping throughout the site. This Phase also included the relocation, repaving and construction of an increased number of handicapped parking spaces along the west side of the site and directly adjacent to the Metra Station. This Phase required a total investment of \$10.7 million.

Two of the pads were developed with a bank and a CVS Drugstore. The remaining retail outlot has space for a 12,000 square foot building and is planned for restaurant and service retail.

## Phase 2

Phase 2 of the development is planned for 128 market rate luxury apartment units in 2 adjacent 5-story buildings. Each building is designed with 64 apartments. The first floor of each building will contain approximately 3,700 square feet of retail space with the balance of the space dedicated to parking for the apartment units. The project contains on-grade retail parking for 248 cars.

The residential apartment buildings are located to the west of the site near the Metra station at the corner of 159 Street and Cicero Avenue providing extraordinary visibility to the 34,000+ cars in all four directions.

The residential buildings are designed as two 5 story buildings with retail and parking on the first level and second floor with market rate residential units on floors 3 thru 5.

The site work in place includes all utility requirements, storm water detention, and some site landscaping. There are no environmental issues on the site.

## Metra Station Design

The new Metra Station was situated to provide a catalyst for the redevelopment of the neighborhood. It is expected that during weekends and holidays, the Metra Station will be transformed into a type of city center where Oak Forest will host events and public activities, such as farmer's markets and community gatherings.

The new station was completed in 2013 and is now fully functional. The elevations below show the placement of the Station within the Gateway development and illustrate its significant architectural details and elongated canopies with prominent columns and integrated landscaping. A warming shelter is also in place to the south of the Station.

### **III. COMMUNITY, MARKET, SITE**

The City of Oak Forest is a community with a strategic location in the south suburban Chicago area. (Exhibit 1). Situated just 22 miles southwest of Chicago's downtown loop, 35 minutes from O'Hare International Airport and Chicago's Midway Airport, and surrounded by major transportation routes, Oak Forest is perfectly located for business and residential users within the Chicagoland area. Two I-57 interchanges are accessible within 1.9 miles from the Gateway corridor that offers immediate access within minutes to I-80 and I-294. Over 1,600 commuters per weekday utilize the convenient and frequent Metra Rock Island train that provides transit to Chicago within less than 40 minutes from the Oak Forest station.

Oak Forest is the home to many amenities that separate this city from other communities in the local area. With its above average school districts and 6,000 acres of connected forest preserve and 20+ miles of looped trails, Oak Forest can provide for strong education from grammar school to high school with opportunities of higher education, while also providing an escape from the average city/suburban life into nature all in the Oak Forest citizen's backyard. The city continues to work with the Cook County Forest Preserve to provide for different programs, such as sculling and ziplining that will make the many passive recreation areas more of an active environment.

The amenities of education and recreation are a great blend to what the future holds for Oak Forest's commercial districts. The Gateway acts as the central pivot point for two commercial corridors along 159<sup>th</sup> Street and Cicero Ave. The 159<sup>th</sup> commercial corridor offers medium to high density multi-family developments near the Metra station with general commercial business stretching west down the corridor.

The Cicero Avenue commercial district acts as the central business district of the city providing for entertainment and shopping. The city continues to take an aggressive approach revitalizing these commercial corridors. Two TIF districts have been established allowing the city to provide incentives and infrastructure improvements, such as the Cicero Ave streetscape project.

#### **Demographics**

- Total Population: Approximately 28,000
- Median Household Income: \$68,595
- Median Age: 35.3

Other Oak Forest attributes include a well-established park district with over ten parks in the city, a private catholic school, a library, an award winning George W. Dunne National public golf course and over 500 commercial, professional and industrial businesses.

## **IV. PROJECT SITE DESCRIPTION**

### **a. Site Profile**

The Gateway Corridor is located at the NW corner of the Cicero Avenue and 159<sup>th</sup> Street intersection. This property anchors both the 159<sup>th</sup> Street commercial district and the heavily commercial Cicero Avenue corridor with city plans to supplement this correlation between the Gateway and these commercial corridors. The site has excellent frontage along both thoroughfares and is centrally located with proximity to retail, office, and the Metra Rock Island station (Exhibit 2).

The subject property is surrounded by a blend of commercial, residential and open space. The west consists of medium-high density apartment complexes and the 159<sup>th</sup> St. commercial corridor. Across 159<sup>th</sup> Street to the south will be a blend of commercial businesses, Metra parking, and future low-density multi-family housing on city-owned property. The Cook County Forest Preserve owns the bulk of the land to the east with the Oak Forest Hospital at the SE corner of the intersection. The north of the subject property is a blend of housing and the Cicero Ave. business district. The Wille Brothers concrete plant is currently in the process of proposing some alternatives for their exit from the train station area. The City is working closely with the Wille to provide certainty to the future redevelopment of the site.

The project site is build-ready with roadway and utility infrastructure in place and two multi-family building pads ready for development. The site will also have access to 1 gigabit broadband that is part of the I-57 broadband project. The total project area is approximately 4.9 acres in area with 840' of frontage along 159<sup>th</sup> Street and 910' of frontage along Cicero Avenue. The two multi-family area building pads are split with a kiss-and-ride commuter drop-off area between and adjacent waiting spaces.

### **b. Tax Increment Financing District**

The development site is in the City of Oak Forest Tax Increment Financing District 3. This TIF District was initiated in 2003 and will extend to 2026. Funds from this TIF are available to assist with short term reinvestment in the proposed Gateway project, as well as for enhancing the current surrounding properties, streetscapes and the like. The sale of city-owned property and any companion Development Agreements which are aided by TIF funds must be in conformity with the TIF statute, where applicable.

The City will work with the selected developer to assist as possible with the proposed development. Assistance may include an attractive site purchase price, TIF assistance as warranted and allowed by statute, neighborhood improvements, and required site or area infrastructure improvements. Types and amounts of assistance available are negotiable, based on long term benefit of the development to the City.

### c. Zoning

The underlying zoning for this site is C-3 Central Business District and is governed by this district as well as the overlay zoning district, the Gateway Sub-Area district. Permitted uses for first floor commercial units shall be limited to the uses listed in Appendix A of the zoning ordinance. However, the site is presently regulated in accordance with a Planned Unit Development ordinance and Development Agreement enacted specifically for the Gateway project as presently envisioned. Changes in that plan would require an amendment to the existing P.U.D. and Development Agreement.

Should the selected developer seek to change the existing plan, any new plan would be subject to a P.U.D. agreement with the City. Such agreement would require Site Development Plan Review for all phases of the project. Special permits are required for parking decks and first floor residential uses. It will be the Applicant's responsibility to finance and secure any and all variations, special permits, site development plan approval, and all other approvals that may be required.

The P.U.D. general requirements would not mandate building or parking setbacks for the subject property, but does require the following minimum bulk standards for new development:

The Village's Zoning Ordinance mandates the following parking requirements: Multi-family @ 2.5 parking spaces per unit; Eating and drinking places @ 1 per 2 employees, PLUS 1 per 3 persons of design capacity; Retail & Office @ 1 space per 250 SF of net floor area.

It should be noted that parking and bulk standards can be deviated from through the P.U.D. process that provides the development with flexibility. This flexibility, however, can only be utilized when the developer has displayed a creative approach to the overall development by promoting unique use of the land/development, architectural features and functions.

Please refer to Section 8-101 of the City of Oak Forest Zoning Ordinance for additional information regarding the Gateway Redevelopment Sub-Area. A copy of the City of Oak Forest Zoning Ordinance is available online at [www.oak-forest.org](http://www.oak-forest.org).

## **V. CITY DEVELOPMENT OBJECTIVES & REQUIREMENTS**

As shown in the attached drawings, and Gateway Executive Summary, the site has previously been planned for the development of two sixty-four unit apartment buildings, three commercial parcels and access and drop-off areas for the adjacent Metra station. Two of the commercial parcels have been developed with a CVS drug store, and a branch bank. The City was an active partner in the design of the plan and would like the development completed as presently planned. However, changes in the specific design of the proposed buildings may be acceptable so long as the overall density and theme of the development do not stray substantially from the attached

plan. The following themes are an integral part of the Village's plan for redevelopment of the subject property.

#### A. Mixed-Use Development/Commercial Lot

Understanding the market place will dictate the type of development (condo vs. apartment) that will be successful in this area; the city is looking for a developer that will think outside of the box creating a unique mixed-use, transit-oriented development that separates itself from the typical suburbia condo/apartment development. The first step in the right direction would be to utilize the amenities of the area, such as the bike trails and gigabit broadband access.

Through these amenities, a developer could provide a live/work complex that could provide the gigabit access along with amenities such as meeting rooms that can be digitally scheduled by the residents and have the same functions as a typical office space, i.e. projector screen and equipment, conference calling availability - and/or providing work or office space area that allows residents to hardline into the gigabit broadband to complete their work in the form of a business incubator type setting.

The Forest Preserve trails, as well as the city bike routing, is one of the best amenities Oak Forest has to offer. The Gateway development should capitalize on this by creating a bike-share program of some kind that allows residents of the facility to rent or sign out a bike, or work with the city to attract a bike shop and supplement the shop to allow residents of the complex discounting on rentals, repairs or purchases.

Sustainability is a key element to the Gateway Corridor. The city has attained a technical assistance grant through Global Green who will provide the city this summer with a sustainability plan for this area. The city's ultimate goal is to eventual attain a LEED Neighborhood Certification. While the architecture will be important in this endeavor, the function of the development will be just as important. On top of the bike share program, the city would like to work with the developer of the Gateway to provide an I-GO/Zipcar program. City staff has already initiated talks with a provider of such a program who has shown interest to create a partnership in the southland.

As stated previously in this document, the end result is to engage the young professional that wants the ability to hike/bike through open space, work from home in a manner many cannot in the Chicago area, and has commercial/retail opportunities right outside their door. The Community Development Department of the city has continued to seek a gastropub-type restaurant that gives commuters and residents of not only the complex, but the city, a great eating experience that again is unique to the area and matches the character of the of the mixed-use development as a whole.

## B. Quality Architecture

Architecture and urban design are especially important at this location. The project design must be characterized with visual interest by high quality design, materials, and site amenities. One aspect to encompass this visual interest is the incorporation of green features. These types of features will correlate the architecture with the community's forest preserves and open space, while adding to the overall sustainability of the design. Such green elements could include rain gardens, green roofs, and planting bed balconies.

Creativity is essential and key to this development as a whole. The uniqueness of the functionality should be matched by its physical presence. A visual compatibility with the train station should be achieved on some level, but the development should hold its own distinct character.

## C. Engineering

The City supports efforts to incorporate environmentally sensitive and sustainable components into the development plans. The City has planned this area as part of a mass transit oriented development with local parking and walkways focused on the adjacent Metra station. Any selected plan/developer must include these sustainable elements.

## D. Pedestrian and Open Space

Central Oak Forest is a transportation-oriented environment. The development plan must take into consideration the auto, bicycle and pedestrian experience as it relates to, but not limited to, accessing mass transit via streetscapes, signage, greenways, landscaping and other tangible elements.

The development plan can address the opportunity for an interactive, high quality residential and commercial area. Incorporating interactive public open space which encourages social networking, civic engagements and outdoor enjoyment that creates a civic or passive use space for the surrounding area is desired. The Village anticipates that the planned improvements of existing plazas and the additional public open space for this development will be visible, inviting and will produce viable options for pedestrians to visit, gather and interact with others, and are to include seating and lighting. These concepts will be addressed by the municipality with regard to the surrounding neighborhood, and should be tied to the Gateway project by the selected developer.

Public art is also encouraged around the Metra station and would be a welcome component of the development plan. The City supports any artistic expression that would enliven the public space/development and bring people together. It is expected that any public art installation

would provide unique character to the area and could brand the area as a gathering place. Public art could be in the form of sculpture, monuments, fountains, and murals.

#### E. Consistency with Municipal Plan and Codes

The development shall comply with all applicable City of Oak Forest codes and ordinances, including, but not limited to: zoning (unless zoning relief is granted), stormwater regulations, building and life safety.

Oak Forest codes can be found on the City's website at [www.oak-forest.org](http://www.oak-forest.org).

### **V. CITY OF OAK FOREST PARTICIPATION**

The redevelopment of this property is an essential part of the community's efforts to not only beautify the area with new development, but to bring development as a whole to a new level in Oak Forest both commercially and residentially. The Gateway will act as a catalyst to this necessary endeavor and the city will continue to supplement this movement. Oak Forest has continued to demonstrate its willingness to partner in the redevelopment of this corridor by purchasing infill redevelopment residences, implementing improvements of the city streetscape and creating city owned and maintained public parking lots. The city continues to pursue control of other parcels needing to be repositioned within the Oak Forest marketplace. Those who provide proposals to the city are invited to investigate the City's plans for other surrounding properties.

### **SUBMITTAL REQUIREMENTS**

The following information, to be delivered in a sealed packet marked "Gateway RFP," must be included in the submittal response:

- A. A letter of introduction signed by the principal(s) of respondent firm(s).
- B. Statement of understanding and presentation of project concept: Discuss the significance of the project's site and the project itself, the firm's willingness to negotiate a potential private/public partnership with the City; and the respondent's view of the responsibility of the parties in the potential public-private partnership. In addition, to the extent that the proposed development differs from the plans previously approved for Gateway, respondents must submit illustrations of their development concepts with concept-level site plans and sketches, accompanied by a detailed redevelopment concept statement to include proposed uses, square footages and/or unit count, potential phasing and a preliminary financial pro forma. This presentation of project concept is not binding on the specifics of eventual proposal submittals. Rather, it is intended to demonstrate the respondent's initial concepts and/or programmatic response to the City's Gateway development vision.
- C. Preliminary Estimate of Public Participation Requested: Each respondent must include a preliminary estimate of the amount of public participation requested and how that

participation fits within the overall preliminary pro forma of the project. In addition, the respondent must indicate which development components the requested public participation would help to finance.

- D. Estimate of Economic Impacts: A preliminary estimate of both direct and indirect economic impacts from the project should be provided. Direct impacts would include projected commercial and service sales and jobs, as well as the property, sales, utility and real estate excise taxes arising from them. Indirect impacts include estimates of induced development and/or induced commercial activity as a result of the project.
- E. Respondent's information: Name, addresses, and phone numbers of firm(s) responding (include contact information for each member if the development team includes a partnership of multiple firms developer and each member firm of the consultant team); Description of form of organization (corporation, partnership, etc.); statement of years the firm has been in business under current name and a list of other names under which the firm has operated.
- F. Résumés of firm(s) principals and officers and consultant principals to be involved.
- G. Description of relevant experience of the respondent firm.
- H. Project Examples: List and briefly describe relevant, successfully completed, mixed-use and/or urban projects that demonstrate strong integration of uses and/or with the surroundings, quality of design, attention to detail, integration into existing community fabric, and public-private partnering. Project examples may be from individual experience of the principals or from firm projects. At a minimum, include examples of projects from the respondent.
- I. References: For each firm, submit a minimum of three (3) references from public agencies, private companies, or individuals with whom respondent has had relevant experience.
- J. Include contact names, addresses and telephone numbers.

### **SUBMITTAL DEADLINE**

RFP responses must be received by the City of Oak Forest at the office set out below no later than 5:00 pm on May 31, 2014, unless the deadline is extended by the City.

Respondents are asked to submit 12 copies of all proposal materials, along with one copy in digital/electronic format (PDF), via e-mail, to the person/address listed below.

Submit all materials to:

Name: Adam E. Dotson

Title: Community Development Director

Agency: City of Oak Forest, Illinois

Address (mail or deliveries): City of Oak Forest, 15440 S. Central Avenue, Oak Forest, IL 60452

Inquiries regarding all aspects of this RFP should be directed to:

Adam Dotson, Community Development Director

City of Oak Forest, 15440 S. Central Avenue, Oak Forest, IL 60452

Phone: (708) 687-4050 ext.1007

Email: adotson@oak-forest.org

#### Pre-Submittal Meeting

A pre-submittal meeting may be called by the City depending on the number of inquiries and/or requests for the information prior to the RFP submittal deadline.

#### City Discretion and Authority (Terms and Conditions)

- A. The City may accept such responses as it deems to be in the public interest and furtherance of the purposes of the City of Oak Forest, or it may proceed with additional selection processes.
- B. The City reserves the right to reject any and all RFP respondents at any time, to waive minor irregularities and to terminate any negotiations implied in this RFP or initiated subsequent to it.
- C. The City reserves the right to request clarification of information submitted, and to request additional information from any respondent.
- D. The City reserves the right to revise this RFP, including the submittal deadline and the RFP evaluation process. Such revisions will be announced in writing to all RFP respondents.
- E. The issuance of the RFP and the receipt and evaluation of submissions do not obligate the City to select a developer and/or enter into project-specific negotiations.
- F. The City will not be responsible for costs incurred in responding to this RFC.
- G. The City may cancel this process or the subsequent project-related processes at any time prior to the selection of any respondent without liability.

## Exhibit List

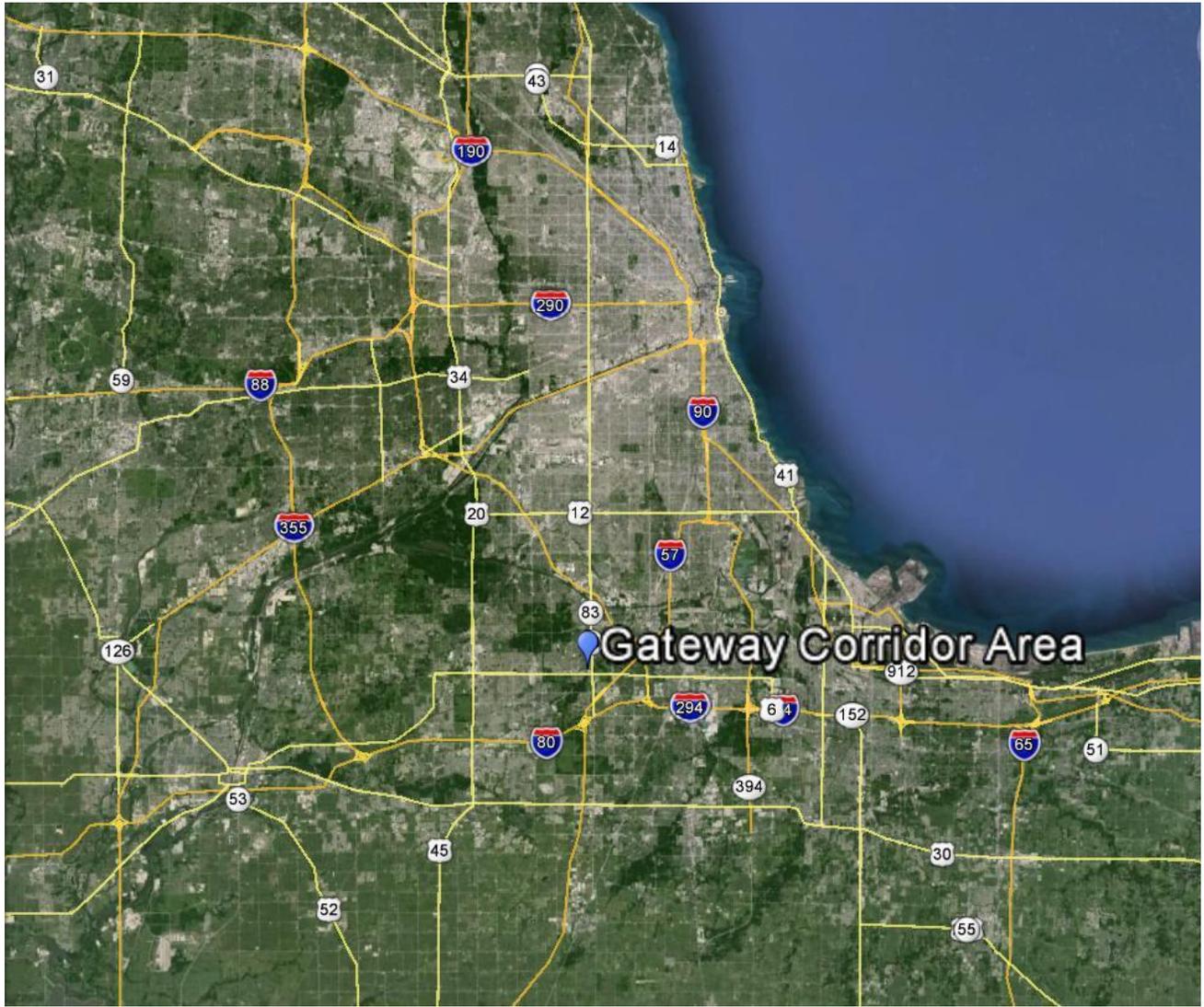
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**Exhibit 1**

***The Gateway T.O.D. – Oak Forest, IL***

**Regional Map**





**Exhibit 3**

***The Gateway, a transit-oriented development  
in Oak Forest, Illinois***

***Development Plan***



Exhibit 4

Various Perspectives



**Exhibit 5**  
***Housing Study***