

COMMUNITY WORKSHOP #2 SUMMARY

COMMUNITY WORKSHOP #2 HELD ON MARCH 19, 2026

March 31, 2026

INTRODUCTION

After months of collaboration, community engagement, and plan development, the Village hosted the second community workshop for the Dempster Corridor Plan on March 19, 2026, at the Morton Grove Civic Center. Over 85 community members attended the workshop to learn about the plan and provide feedback.

The workshop featured a presentation summarizing the draft goals and objectives for the plan and a series of interactive exhibit boards focusing on transportation, corridor design, and opportunity site concepts. Comment cards were available for attendees to share their ideas. Input gathered during the workshop will help refine the plan's vision and recommendations, guiding improvements to Morton Grove's primary commercial corridor as a safer, more vibrant destination and community hub.

This summary provides an overview of the event and community feedback collected.



PRESENTATION

The workshop began with a welcoming introduction by Mayor Janine Witko, who thanked the Steering Committee, staff and community members for their participation in the process. The project team outlined the draft corridor vision, summarized key community input received to date, introduced goals related to land use, transportation, and economic development, and introduced draft corridor recommendations. To view the full presentation, please [visit this link](#).



COMMENT CARDS

Overall Takeaway: Community feedback reflects a strong desire to thoughtfully guide growth in a way that enhances quality of life and preserves Morton Grove’s unique character while modernizing the corridor by attracting new businesses into vacant spaces. Residents are supportive of new investment and amenities, particularly those that bring vibrant public spaces, local retail, and arts and cultural opportunities. Comments emphasize the importance of balancing development with infrastructure capacity, especially traffic, parking, and mobility. There is clear enthusiasm for placemaking strategies such as greening, outdoor dining, and creative uses of key sites, alongside a desire to strengthen the Village’s identity as a distinctive destination. Overall, residents are eager to see growth that is well-planned, community-oriented, and supported by transparent engagement and communication.

1. Traffic, Parking & Mobility

- Residents are supportive of enhanced multimodal options, including safer pedestrian crossings, improved transit access, and expanded bicycle infrastructure, provided these improvements are thoughtfully integrated.
- Residents emphasized the importance of managing traffic impacts alongside new development. There is a clear desire to ensure that future growth does not compromise everyday mobility.
- Parking remains a critical issue, especially in relation to new mixed-use or residential development.

2. Development Intensity & Community Character

- Feedback reflects a balanced approach to growth, with residents seeking reassurance that new development will be appropriately scaled and beneficial to existing community members.
- There is concern that new development could strain infrastructure and alter the Village's character, particularly if not paired with clear community benefits.
- Residents expressed interest in shaping Morton Grove into a distinctive and memorable destination, rather than a typical suburban corridor.

3. Land Use & Public Space

- A strong theme throughout the comments is the importance of preserving and expanding public spaces on key redevelopment sites.
- Residents value opportunities to create community-oriented destinations, such as parks, plazas, and civic spaces that support everyday use and social interaction.
- There is also interest in creative reuse of existing sites, including transforming underutilized buildings into arts, cultural, or community-focused spaces.

4. Economic Development

- Residents expressed a clear interest in attracting new retail and dining options, particularly grocery stores and unique food offerings. There is interest in ensuring that any use of public incentives is transparent and supports equitable investment across businesses.
- Feedback points to an opportunity to cultivate a vibrant, destination-oriented corridor with a mix of local and regional attractions.

5. Aesthetics & Placemaking

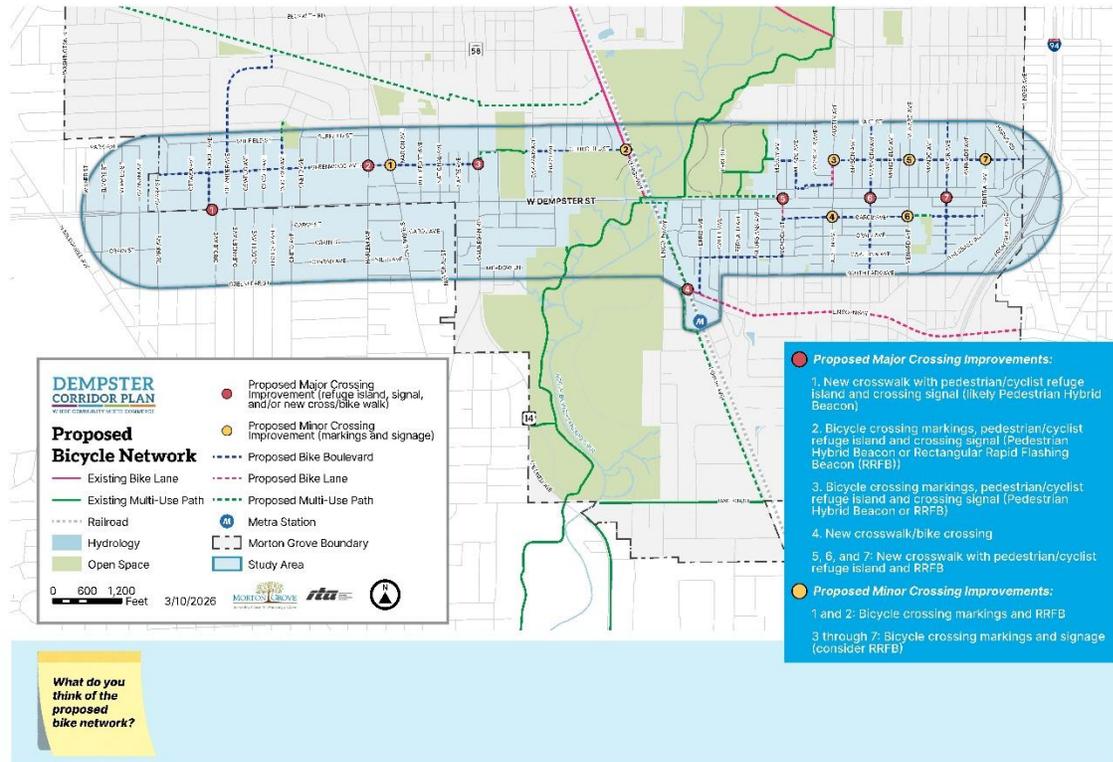
- Residents are supportive of efforts to enhance the corridor through greening, public art, and cohesive design elements, all of which are seen as key to improving the Village's identity.
- There is particular interest in creating high-quality, pedestrian-friendly environments, including outdoor seating areas, though their placement should consider comfort and environmental factors such as traffic, safety, and noise.
- Overall, the community values design that is both visually appealing and functionally appropriate.

6. Community Engagement and Transparent Communication

- Residents expressed interest in having more opportunities for meaningful dialogue, including public comment throughout planning and implementation.

TRANSPORTATION BOARDS

Bicycle Network: Proposed Routes & Crossings



Bicycle Network: Proposed Routes and Crossings

- There is general support for proposed bike improvements.
- Concern was raised about availability of commuter parking at the Metra station.

Medians & Pedestrian Crossings

Grab a sticky note and add your comments on the exhibits!

Why plan for new medians along Dempster Street?

- Medians provide opportunities for enhanced landscaping and can have traffic calming benefits
- Adding medians would likely require at least some left turn restrictions, although these restrictions may also offer safety benefits
- Medians may be installed either along with new crossings and pedestrian refuge islands or on their own
- Beautification and safety benefits will need to be considered against potential access limitations

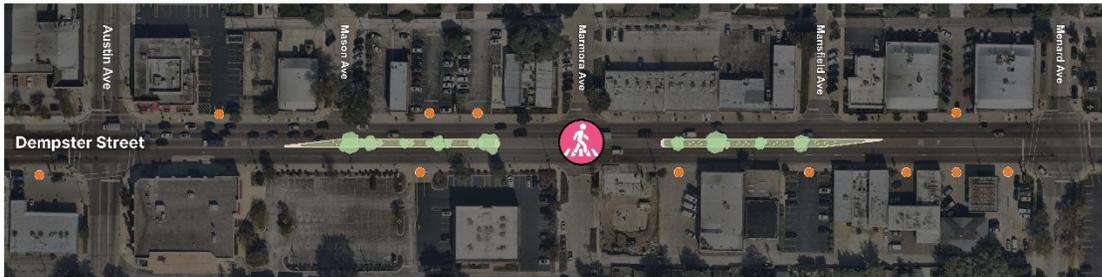
KEY

- Existing Driveway
- Proposed Pedestrian Crossing

Central Avenue to Menard Avenue



Menard Avenue to Austin Avenue



Austin Avenue to Georgiana Avenue



Georgiana Avenue to Lincoln Avenue



Medians and Pedestrian Crossings

- There is strong support for the use of medians as traffic calming and beautification tools.
- Concerns were raised about pedestrian safety near drive-thru curb cuts.
- There is interest in additional traffic safety measures (e.g., speed cameras).

Dempster & Lehigh Intersection Improvements

- This important and heavily-utilized intersection was mentioned many times during engagement as an area of safety concerns
- Opportunities for improving safety include: traffic signal adjustments, crossing visibility improvements (e.g. advance warning signage), trail wayfinding signage, and intersection geometry improvements (pictured below)
- A rail and vehicle overpass is likely prohibitively complex and costly. A trail overpass may be more feasible and less expensive, but still likely more costly than the typical trail overpass due to the complexities of the site.

Intersection Geometry Improvements



Existing Conditions



Wayfinding Signage Examples

What do you think of the proposed improvements?

Dempster & Lehigh Intersection Improvements

- There is general support for wayfinding and intersection enhancements.
- Comments show concerns about rail crossing signal timing and safety:
 - Gates activating without train movement (e.g., when trains are stopped at the station).
 - Repeated gate up/down cycles creating confusion and potential danger.
- Additional feedback indicated broader signal and safety concerns at the intersection.

CORRIDOR RECOMMENDATION BOARDS

Draft Corridor Recommendations

Residential Corridor District · Ozark Avenue → Oketo Avenue

The western gateway into Morton Grove is primarily residential, with Notre Dame High School on the Niles side of Dempster. The focus here is about welcoming passersby into the community and enhancing pedestrian safety for the residents and students crossing Dempster each day.

Grab a sticky note and add your comments on the map!



Residential Corridor District (Ozark Ave. to Oketo Ave.)

- Feedback reflects a desire to carefully manage the mix of uses, with some residents expressing fatigue over repetitive or less desirable commercial tenants.
- Streetscape improvements, particularly landscaped medians, generated mixed reactions. While many see them as enhancing aesthetics and slowing traffic, others are concerned about safety, visibility, and reduced roadway capacity.
- Overall, residents are supportive of greener, more attractive corridors, but want design elements that balance beauty with functionality.

Draft Corridor Recommendations

Commercial Corridor District · Odell Avenue → Waukegan Road

The focus for this segment is making an auto-centric corridor more hospitable for pedestrians, expanding the east-west parallel bike network, adding new development to attract visitors and vibrancy, and enhancing the look and feel of the corridor with areas for outdoor gathering/dining, landscaping, improved lighting, and public art.

Grab a sticky note and add your comments on the map!



Commercial Corridor District (Odell Ave. to Waukegan Rd.)

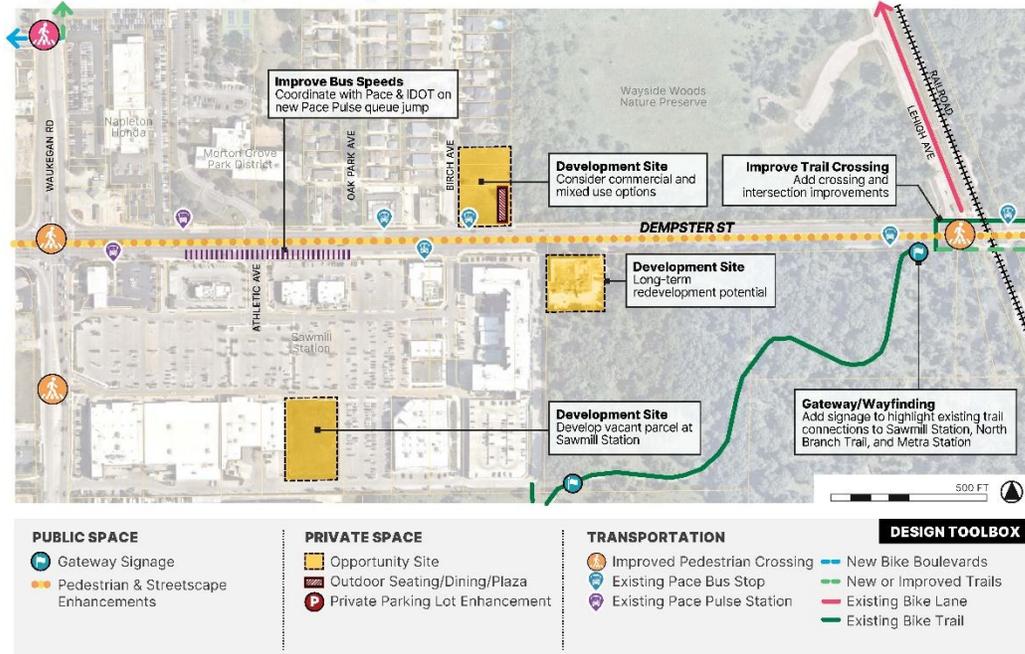
- Comments suggest an openness to new civic or service-oriented uses, indicating a desire for convenient, everyday amenities within the corridor.

Draft Corridor Recommendations

Commercial Corridor District · Waukegan Road → Railroad

Key recommendations for this segment include development on vacant land, a Pace Bus queue jump to improve bus speeds and operations near Sawmill Station, new bicycle connections, and several improvements to the Dempster and Lehigh intersection to enhance safety at the trail crossing.

Grab a sticky note and add your comments on the map!



Commercial Corridor District (Waukegan Rd. to Railroad)

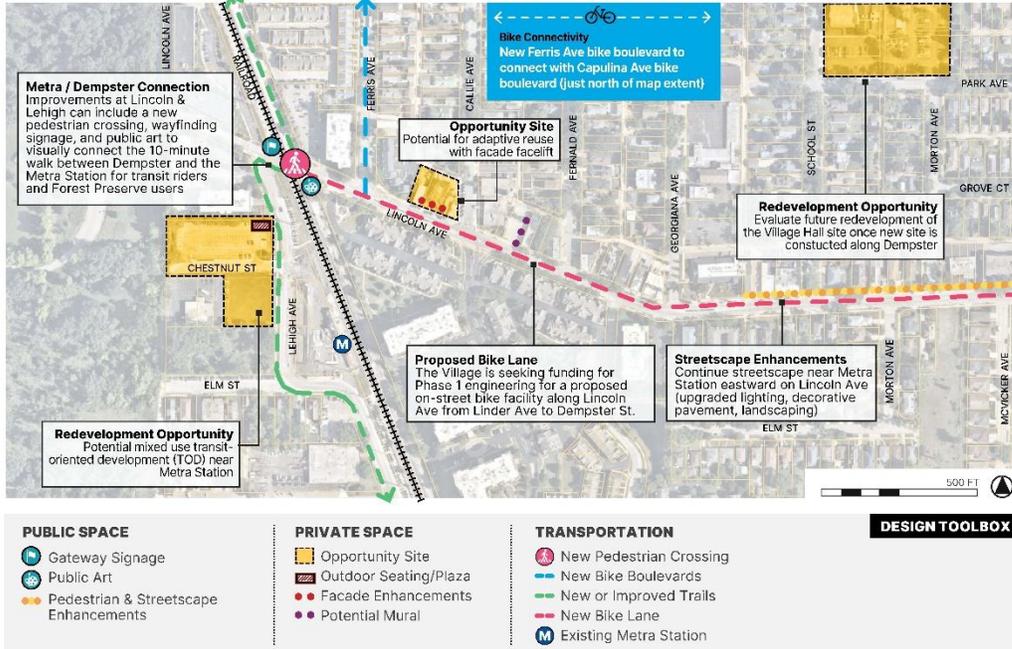
- The closure of the Amazon Fresh grocery store at Sawmill Station has left a noticeable gap, and residents clearly want to attract a new grocery anchor to serve daily needs.
- There is also an emphasis on ensuring that key redevelopment sites are used in ways that benefit the broader community to include new public open space elements.

Draft Corridor Recommendations

Metra TOD District · Capulina Avenue → Main Street

As the historic core of Morton Grove, this area is ripe for improved pedestrian and bike connections for easier access between Metra and Dempster's Pace bus routes. Development opportunities near Metra and at the former Village Hall site will bring new foot traffic and customers for businesses on Lincoln Ave and Dempster.

Grab a sticky note and add your comments on the map!



Metra TOD District (Capulina Ave. to Main St.)

- A strong theme emerged around preserving strategically located sites for public use, including civic or community-serving purposes.
- There is interest in leveraging the area’s location to create a more connected, walkable, and transit-supportive environment, including trail connections and improved bike access.
- Residents are cautious about increased density and traffic impacts, emphasizing the need for adequate parking, safer street conditions, and thoughtful transitions.
- Some comments point to the potential for a small-scale, mixed-use “downtown” character, particularly along Lincoln Avenue, if designed intentionally.

Draft Corridor Recommendations

Corridor Activity Hub “Main Street” District · Railroad → Austin Avenue

This segment serves as a key activity hub for the corridor, with the future Village Hall, Harrer Park, Linne Woods, and Metra station just south of Dempster. Recommendations focus on improving walkability with pedestrian and bike connections and transforming the corner at Austin with two new developments, outdoor spaces, public art, and an activated alleyway.

Grab a sticky note and add your comments on the map!



Corridor Activity Hub “Main Street” District (Railroad to Austin Ave.)

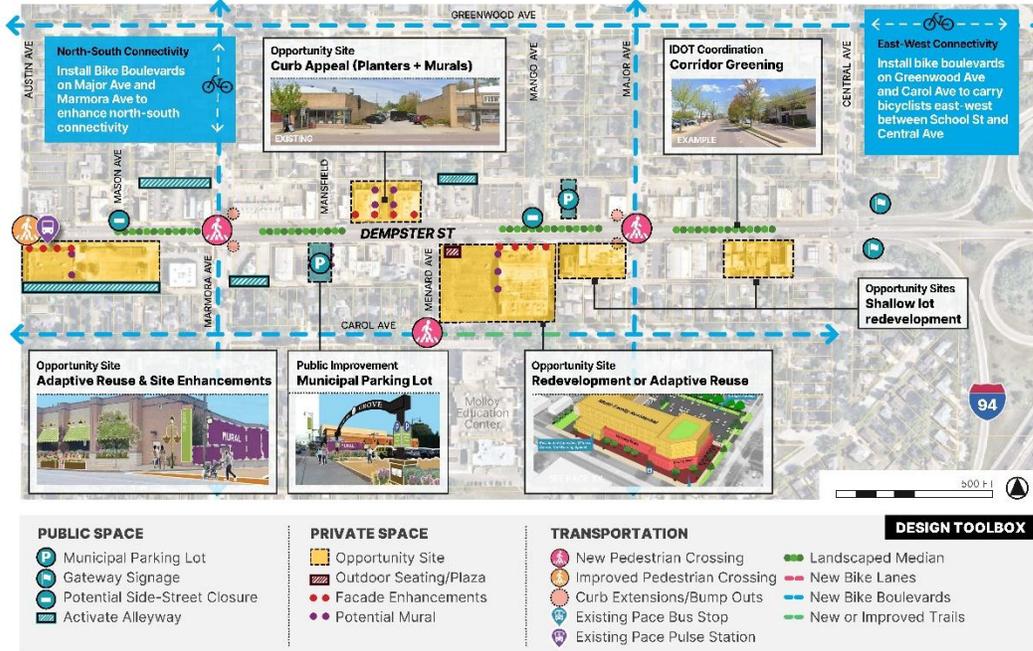
- Residents see this area as a key opportunity to create a vibrant, people-oriented destination, but that development should include public realm space and improve safety.
- There is strong enthusiasm for placemaking elements, including public art and murals, that can give the area a distinct identity.
- Safety remains a priority, particularly around pedestrian crossings near schools and civic sites.
- Community-oriented uses such as gardens, arts programming, and activated alleys are viewed as valuable ways to bring life to the district.
- Aging civic infrastructure is also noted, with interest in modernizing or repurposing existing facilities to better serve current needs.

Draft Corridor Recommendations

East Gateway "Main Street" District · Austin Avenue → Interstate 94

The Eastern Gateway will serve as an energetic, welcoming front door to Morton Grove. Improvements to pedestrian crossings and public parking will make it easy to park once and explore multiple Dempster destinations on foot, creating a more connected, Main Street style experience.

Grab a sticky note and add your comments on the map!



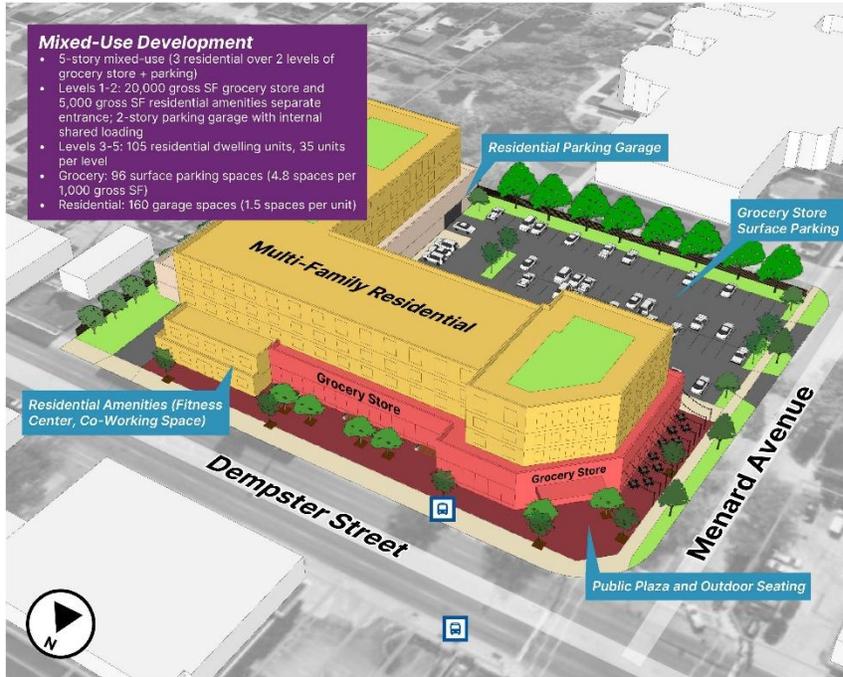
East Gateway "Main Street" District (Austin Ave. to I-94)

- Residents are generally supportive of efforts to enhance the visual identity of Dempster Street, including medians, landscaping, public art, and lighting.
- There is a clear preference for creating comfortable, high-quality gathering spaces that are buffered from traffic, rather than placing plazas directly along busy roadways.
- Feedback highlights the importance of design quality and maintenance, with calls for professionally designed landscaping and cohesive branding.
- There is also interest in making this corridor more of a destination, with inspiration drawn from other communities, while still expanding access to green space.

OPPORTUNITY SITE CONCEPT PLAN BOARDS

Opportunity Site Concept Plan 1

This concept plan is for illustrative, long-range planning and visioning purposes only and does not represent any current development proposals.



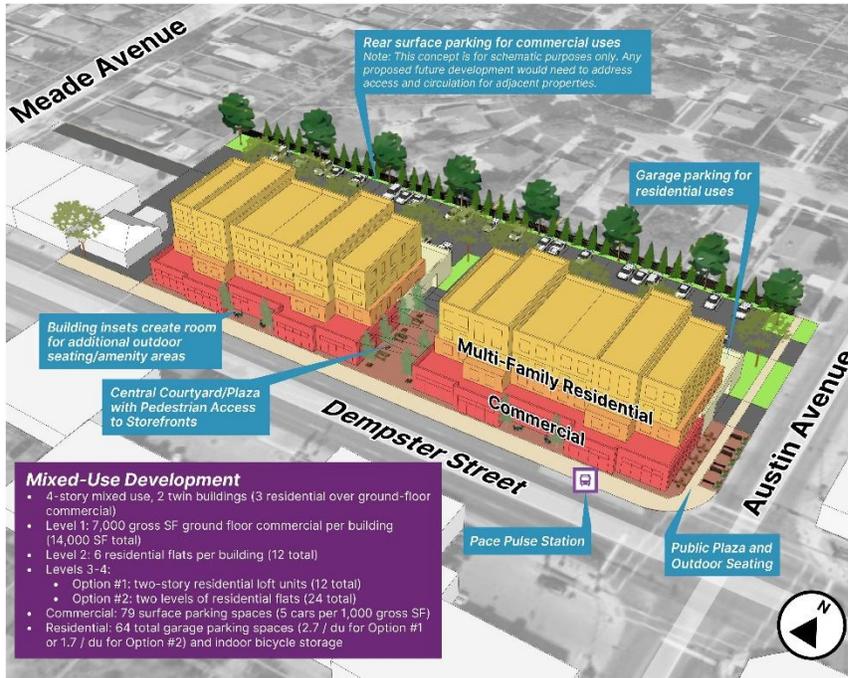
Share your thoughts on this development concept below.

Concept Plan 1 (Dempster St. and Menard Ave.)

- Residents are enthusiastic about introducing destination retail and community-serving uses, particularly grocery stores and casual gathering spaces like cafés or dessert spots.
- While there is support for ownership options and senior housing, some residents want to consider impacts on public school capacity.
- The concept of incorporating flexible workspaces and artist-oriented uses is well received, reflecting evolving work patterns and interest in creative amenities.
- Concerns were raised about implementation, including potential land acquisition and the need for more infrastructure such as EV charging.

Opportunity Site Concept Plan 2

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Share your thoughts on this development concept below.

Mixed-Use Development

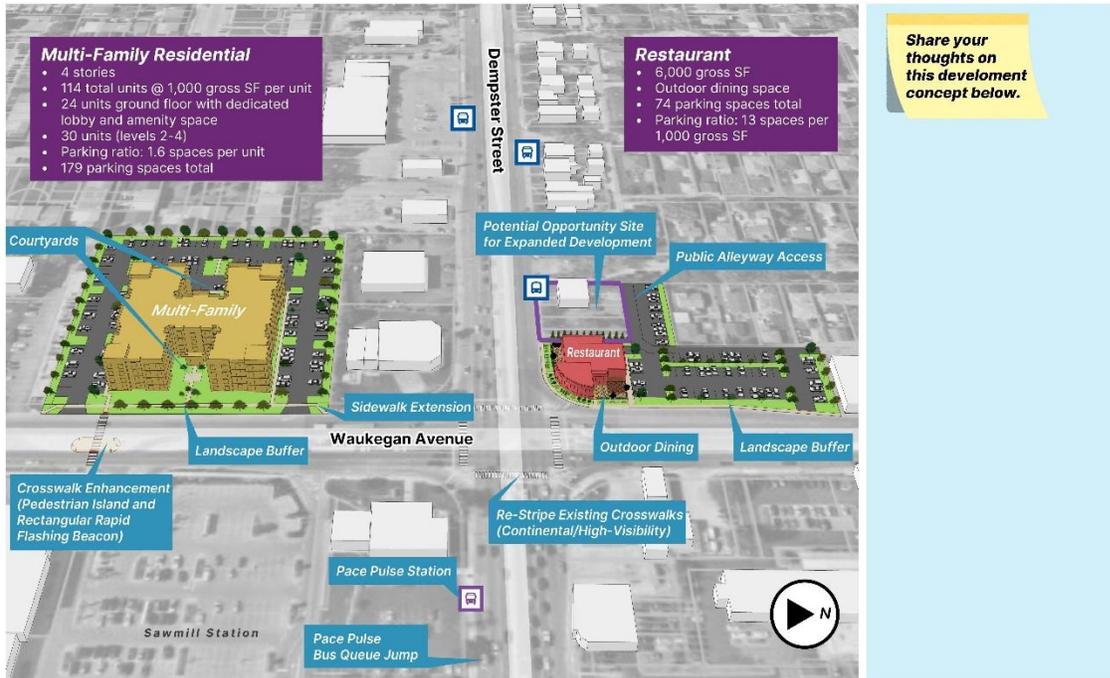
- 4-story mixed use, 2 twin buildings (3 residential over ground-floor commercial)
- Level 1: 7,000 gross SF ground floor commercial per building (14,000 SF total)
- Level 2: 6 residential flats per building (12 total)
- Levels 3-4:
 - Option #1: two-story residential loft units (12 total)
 - Option #2: two levels of residential flats (24 total)
- Commercial: 79 surface parking spaces (5 cars per 1,000 gross SF)
- Residential: 64 total garage parking spaces (2.7 / du for Option #1 or 1.7 / du for Option #2) and indoor bicycle storage

Concept Plan 2 (Dempster St. and Austin Ave.)

- This concept is seen as an opportunity to create a more social, community-centered environment, with strong support for outdoor seating, plazas, and spaces for remote work or informal gathering.
- Residents emphasize that these spaces should be safe and well-designed, particularly buffering from traffic.
- There is also interest in attracting nonprofit and arts-related uses to add diversity and vibrancy.
- At the same time, concerns remain about traffic impacts and housing mix as well as ensuring the area is welcoming to a range of users, including families.

Opportunity Site Concept Plan 3

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Concept Plan 3 (Dempster St. and Waukegan Ave.)

- Feedback highlights the importance of integrating family-friendly amenities, such as play areas, pet spaces, and accessible green space, into new development.
- There is continued interest in expanding public open space, including converting certain sites into parks that serve new and existing residents.
- Residents are also looking for more entertainment and activity-based destinations, such as a movie theater, to broaden local offerings.
- Immediate safety improvements, particularly at crossings, are seen as a priority regardless of long-term plans.
- Support for existing local businesses underscores the importance of economic stability alongside redevelopment.

NEXT STEPS

All are encouraged to submit additional comments on the Dempster Corridor Plan draft recommendations online using the feedback form at PlanDempster.org before April 10, 2026. The planning team will then incorporate input and prepare a draft Dempster Corridor Plan document to be presented to the public in Summer 2026.