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Many towns with train stations in their downtown areas have creatively developed a pedestrian friendly mix of shopping, living and open space. Take a look at Tinley Park, La Grange and Downers Grove, for example.

Lincoln-Way area municipalities are exploring similar ideas.

New Lenox approved preliminary plans two years ago for the Village Station at Cedar and Laraway roads adjacent to its second Metra station, but no final plans have been submitted yet. Months ago, Mokena created a tax increment financing district in its downtown, and is working with the RTA to attract developers to revitalize the area as a transit-oriented development.

And now it's Manhattan's turn. Last week, the village unveiled plans to transform 100 acres of privately owned land into a transit-oriented development and invited the public to offer opinions.

"You have to think big," Mayor Bill Borgo said. Even though it likely won't be developed for a few years, village officials know the importance of taking advantage of vacant land and planning for it appropriately.

The plans call for a village center with a village hall, library, park office and post office. There's high density housing near the train tracks and commercial development at the corners of Sweedler and Gougar roads and Sweedler and State Street leading into the existing downtown.

"We want to be able to shop and walk," Trustee Pat Lucas said. Realistically, they won't break ground for a few years, given the current economic climate, and Lucas pointed out, "We have to consider how to pay for it first."

Borgo hopes to get the 15 acres donated for the village center. He stresses the plan's cohesiveness of the architecture and streetscape, its positive impact on current businesses and its realistic approach, one they can take to developers and market.

"The main thing is that this (plan) sets the framework for the greenways and the roadways," planning consultant Pericles Georgopoulos said. "Its specific uses will be determined by the market."

Nicole Nutter, of the RTA, which funded the planning project, helped many towns create transit-oriented plans. "Manhattan is very unique because there is so much open space," she said. "It's exciting that they are planning for it."