

CITY OF WARRENVILLE

MEMORANDUM

TO: Mayor Johnson, City Council, and City Administrator White
FROM: Amy Emery, Director of Community and Economic Development *ACEW*
SUBJECT: FY 2026 COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT WORK PLAN
DATE: November 6, 2025

This memo has been prepared to consider a potential amendment to the FY 2026 Community Development Work Plan.

Background Information

As the City's Strategic Plan was being prepared, Cantera was facing many concerning conditions including the closure of McDonalds, Honey Berry Café, and potential closing of Cinemark Theater. Notable commercial vacancies at the time included the tenant spaces once occupied by California Pizza Kitchen, Skippy's, and Bank of America. Hotel operators were reporting performance measures lagging still from Covid impacts. Staff received steady inquiries from real estate brokers trying to market vacant office buildings and struggling to find interested tenants. In addition, building managers were reaching out to express concern that while they still had many areas under lease, the tenants were not actually using the spaces since many staff were working remotely. As such, they expected significant increases in vacancies going forward. Drafted in this environment, the Warrenville Strategic Plan and adopted FY 2026 work plan includes the following:

“Develop and release an RFP/RFQ to solicit consultant services to facilitate update to the Cantera Subarea Plan and Zoning Regulations. “

The Strategic Plan also lists corresponding Work Plan Items in FY 2027 and FY 2028 to complete the updated Cantra Subarea Plan update and develop the corresponding Zoning Regulations. This represents a very significant project expected to take considerable staff resources, consulting services, and community engagement.

Current Conditions

Much has changed since the Strategic Plan was approved in Cantera. The level of activity demonstrates that some things have changed since adoption of the Strategic Plan. Notable activities include:

- Opening of new dining choices - Simply South, Fusion Social, Madurai Kitchen, and Sankalp
- Phoenix Cinemas took over operations from Cinemark
- Northwestern Medical construction of a cancer center addition and parking garage
- Zoning approvals for new residential – Riverview West and Cantera Point
- Opening of Green Veterinary Clinic
- Hotel performance returning to pre-covid levels with focus on recreational travel and events
- Permitting for Orion Stem School – an innovative facility for middle- and high-school education

- Relocation of OSI Group Global Headquarters to 27201 Bella Vista Parkway
- Increasing demand for in-person office work (vs. remote) creating opportunities for leasing
- Steady inquiries to Community Development for reuse of the former McDonalds site, US Bank, and vacant office buildings.

FY 2026 Community Development Work Plan Considerations

Staff has identified two options to consider with respect to the FY 2026 Community Development Work Plan considering existing development conditions.

- 1) Proceed with the adopted and approved FY 2026 Community Development Work Plan. Staff can proceed with preparation of the RFP/RFQ and FY 2027 Budget Decision Packages for associated consulting services. Cantera is a critical economic activity hub for Warrenville. Much has changed in the development pattern, market conditions, and community need. A planning effort is still valuable, even though the need may be less urgent.
- 2) Amend the FY 2026 Community Development Work Plan to delay the Cantera Project and replace it with another item. If there is interest in an amendment, staff has identified the following options for discussion. Committee feedback is requested for staff to prepare an updated FY 2026 Community Development Work Plan to present as part of the 6-Month Strategic Plan Update scheduled for the November 24, 2025 Committee Meeting.
 - Planning for Opportunity Sites (focused primarily on public properties) to appreciate market opportunities, community priorities (e.g., affordable housing), and, in some cases, facilitate sales of surplus sites.
 - IL Route 59 Corridor Plan. A significant amount of development has occurred with TIF #4, but market conditions continue to challenge investment. A corridor plan would update land use assumptions, evaluate market conditions, identify strategies and tools to revitalize and connect newer and established commercial areas to enhance the overall corridor appearance and promote continued investment and commercial occupancy.
 - Based on the results of the Homes for a Changing Region Plan, develop accessory dwelling unit regulations. This is an approved Strategic Plan Priority for FY 2028 and could be initiated in FY 2026 instead of Cantera Point. The project would extend through FY 2027.
 - Sign Code Rewrite. There is a need to update the Warrenville Sign Code to address, among other items, content neutrality restrictions established by the Supreme Court. The scope of this work is beyond a typical text amendment and will require communication, education, and collaboration with local businesses. Given the technical nature of the amendments, consulting services will likely be required to provide necessary visuals and regulatory tools.

Recommendation

To gauge interest in amending the FY 2026 Community Development Work Plan and four alternative options. Based on feedback received, staff will evaluate the resource allocations required to provide a recommendation for the November 24, 2025 Committee of the Whole Meeting.
