

ITEM REP 2015-6046

**VILLAGE OF DOWNERS GROVE**  
**Report for the Village Council Meeting**  
**2/3/2015**

<b>SUBJECT:</b>	<b>SUBMITTED BY:</b>
Discussion of Historic Preservation Ordinance	Stanley J. Popovich, AICP Planning Manager

**SYNOPSIS**

This item is a discussion of potential amendments to the Historic Preservation Ordinance beginning with a discussion of the process and thresholds for creating a historic district.

A discussion of Certificates of Appropriateness and design regulations will take place at a Council meeting in March, 2015.

The desired outcome is a list of potential amendments to the Historic Preservation Ordinance for consideration by the Architectural Design Review Board (ADRB) and formal consideration by the Village Council at a later date (April, 2015).

**STRATEGIC PLAN ALIGNMENT**

The goals for 2011-2018 include *Exceptional Municipal Services* and *Strong, Diverse Local Economy*.

**FISCAL IMPACT**

n/a

**RECOMMENDATION**

Action at the discretion of the Village Council.

**BACKGROUND**

After voting on the Special Use for a multi-family residence at 936-942 Maple Avenue, the Council directed staff to prepare for a Council discussion of potential amendments to the Historic Preservation Ordinance (Ordinance). The Council established the scope and schedule for the amendment discussion at their January 21, 2015 meeting. (<http://www.downers.us/public/docs/agendas/2015/01-20-15/REP2015-6045DiscussionZoningOrdinanceHistoric%20Preservation.pdf> )

Existing Historic Preservation Ordinance

The existing Historic Preservation Ordinance ([http://www.downers.us/public/docs/agendas/2007/06-26-2007/Active\\_a.pdf](http://www.downers.us/public/docs/agendas/2007/06-26-2007/Active_a.pdf)) was adopted on June 26, 2007. The purpose of the Ordinance is to:

- Identify and preserve the historic and architectural characteristics of the Village which represent the Village's cultural, social, economic, political and architectural history;

- Promote civic pride in the beauty and noble accomplishments of the past;
- Stabilize and improve the economic vitality and value of Downers Grove’s landmarks and historic areas;
- Protect and enhance the attractiveness of the Village to home buyers, visitors and shoppers which in turn will support business, commerce, industry, and provide economic benefit to the Village;
- Foster and encourage preservation and restoration of structures, areas, and neighborhoods and thereby prevent future urban blight.

The ordinance has three major components (Historic Landmarks, Historic Districts and Certificates of Appropriateness) that work together to preserve the character of their property. The discussion below highlights the process and thresholds to create a historic landmark and a historic district.

Historic District

A historic district is a clearly defined geographic area containing two or more contiguous properties that possess historic character. Currently, there are no Village designated historic districts. The application and designation process for a district is shown in the table below:

**Historic District Review & Approval Process**

Action Step	Notes
Application Submitted	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Any party may submit the application</li> <li>• Application must include:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Names and addresses of all properties</li> <li>o Consent from at least 51% of property owners</li> <li>o Photographs of the proposed district</li> <li>o Written statement describing the proposed district</li> <li>o District map</li> <li>o A building survey</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
Preliminary Public Hearing by ADRB	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Notice requirements for preliminary public hearing                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Publication in newspaper</li> <li>o Mailed to all property owners in district</li> <li>o Mailed to all property owners within 250 feet of district</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Purpose of hearing is for ADRB to make a preliminary determination of whether the application qualifies as an historic district</li> <li>• Criteria for designating a district is found in Section 12.600</li> </ul>
Notice of ADRB Preliminary Findings Sent to Property Owners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Notification of preliminary determination sent via certified mail to all property owners within proposed district</li> <li>• Notice informs potentially affected owners of the date and time of the public hearing</li> </ul>
Public Hearing by ADRB	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Notice requirements for public hearing                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Publication in newspaper</li> <li>o Mailed to all property owners in district</li> <li>o Mailed to all property owners within 250 feet of district</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Criteria for designating a district is found in Section 12.600</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ADRB makes a final determination / recommendation as to whether application qualifies as an historic district</li> </ul>
Consideration by the Village Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Simple majority vote required for approval of a district</li> <li>• Designation is recorded with Recorder of Deeds</li> <li>• Designation is placed on Zoning Map</li> <li>• Council decision, approve or deny, is sent via certified mail to all property owners within proposed district</li> <li>• If Council denies application, district may not be subject of an application for 2 years</li> </ul>

The criteria for designating a district are found in Section 12.600 (<http://www.downers.us/public/docs/code/Chapter12.pdf>) and are shown below:

- Proposed district must contain two or more contiguous properties within a defined geographic boundary
- Properties within the proposed district do not have to be designated a landmark
- Significant number of structures within the proposed district must meet the landmark designation criteria
- Properties within the proposed district must contribute to the visual characteristics of the proposed district
- Proposed district must establish a sense of time and place unique to the Village and / or exemplify the cultural, social, economic, political or architectural history of the Village, state or country
- Proposed district must have clear and distinct boundaries

Historic Landmarks

A landmark is a single property that is recognized as having individual significance on its own merits. Currently, the Village has two landmarks (5256 Carpenter Street and 4943 Highland Avenue). The 5256 Carpenter Street property was designated in 2008 ([http://www.downers.us/public/docs/agendas/2008/10-21-2008/RES\\_00-03533.pdf](http://www.downers.us/public/docs/agendas/2008/10-21-2008/RES_00-03533.pdf)). The nomination was prepared by a friend of the property owner who gave her consent to the nomination. The 4943 Highland Avenue was designated in 2009 by the property owner ([http://www.downers.us/public/docs/agendas/2009/04-14-2009/Active\\_a.pdf](http://www.downers.us/public/docs/agendas/2009/04-14-2009/Active_a.pdf)).

The application and designation process for a landmark is shown in the table below:

**Historic Landmark Review & Approval Process**

Action Step	Notes
Application Submitted	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Any party may submit the application</li> <li>• Application must include:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Owner consent if owner is not applicant</li> <li>o Legal description of the property</li> <li>o Written statement describing the property</li> <li>o List of significant architectural features</li> <li>o Site plan and photographs of the property</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
Public Hearing by ADRB	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Notice requirements for public hearing</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Publication in newspaper</li> <li>o Mailed to property owner</li> <li>o Mailed to all property owners within 250 feet of proposed landmark</li> <li>• Criteria for designating a district is found in Section 12.400</li> <li>• ADRB, by simple majority, makes a recommendation as to whether application qualifies as an historic landmark</li> </ul>
<p>Consideration by the Village Council</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Simple majority vote required for approval of a landmark</li> <li>• Designation is recorded with Recorder of Deeds</li> <li>• Designation is placed on the Zoning Map</li> <li>• Council decision, approve or deny, is sent via certified mail to the property owner</li> <li>• If Council denies application, the property may not be subject of an application for 2 years</li> </ul>

The criteria for designating a landmark are found in Section 12.400 (<http://www.downers.us/public/docs/code/Chapter12.pdf>) and are shown below:

- Significant value as part of the historic, heritage or cultural characteristics of the village, county, State or Nation;
- Identification with a person or persons who significantly contributed to the development of the village, county, State or Nation;
- Representative of the distinguishing characteristics of architecture inherently valuable for the study of a period, type, method of construction or use of indigenous materials;
- Notable work of a master builder, designer, architect or artist whose individual work has influenced the development of the village, county, State or Nation;
- Unique location or singular physical characteristics that make it an established or familiar visual feature;
- Character as a particularly fine or unique example of a utilitarian structure, including but not limited to farmhouses, gas stations, or other commercial structures, with a high level of integrity or architectural significance;
- Archaeological area that has yielded or may be likely to yield, information important in history or prehistory.
- A source of civic pride or identity for the community.

Comprehensive Plan

The Comprehensive Plan identifies historic preservation as an important part of the Village in various locations throughout the document. Attached to this memo, are excerpts of the Comprehensive Plan which identify principles of historic preservation, including preserving neighborhood character and identifying and preserving significant Village historic resources.

Potential Amendments to the Historic Preservation Ordinance

The Village has examined historic preservation ordinances from other local communities which are also Certified Local Governments. The examination of these ordinances found:

	Downers Grove	Aurora	Elgin	Geneva	Highland Park	Naperville
Number of Local Landmarks	2	48	21	5	132	3
Number of Local Districts	0	4	4	1	3	1
Number of Properties within the Local Districts	0	1,112	1,700	600	57	320
Landmark - Owner Consent Required for Nomination and Designation	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	No
District - % Owner Consent Required for Nomination	51%	51%	51%	0%	25%	10%
District - % Owner Consent Required for Designation	51%	51%	51%	0%	51%	51%
Process to Remove Designation Status	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No

In comparing other local ordinances and the Village's ordinance, staff recommends the following modifications to the existing ordinance for the process and threshold requirements to create an historic landmark or an historic district:

1. Add a reference to the Comprehensive Plan in the purpose section of the Ordinance, Section 12.100.
2. Update public notification requirements in Sections 12.300, 12.500 and 12.702 to match the Zoning Ordinance notification requirements
  - Include provisions for notification signs to be placed on the proposed landmark property and within any proposed historic district
  - Consider requiring a neighborhood meeting for an historic district prior to the preliminary public hearing
3. Update application requirements (applicant must be owner, Downers Grove resident, or authorized owner representative) and remove administrative type requirements in Sections 12.300 and 12.500.
  - Include suspension of work on exterior improvements to properties that are subject to a historic landmark or historic district nomination.
4. Revise designation criteria in Section 12.400 and 12.600.
  - Criteria should be easier to understand
  - Any property listed in the National Register of Historic Places can be locally landmarked through any expedited process
  - All landmarks must be at least 50 years old and meet one of the remaining eight criteria
  - At least 50% of properties within a proposed district must be 50 years old and meet one of the remaining five criteria.

**ATTACHMENTS**

Discussion of Historic Preservation in the Comprehensive Plan

## Comprehensive Plan Attachment

Concepts related to the Historic Preservation Ordinance that appear in the Comprehensive Plan are highlighted by a red box.



## Purpose of the Comprehensive Plan

As the Village looks towards its future, the Comprehensive Plan will guide development decisions and help ensure quality of life remains high. The Comprehensive Plan accomplishes this by directing the use of land; the movement of vehicles and pedestrians; the protection of open spaces and environmental resources; the revitalization of the Village's key commercial areas; and the provision of parks, schools, and other public facilities. It addresses residential neighborhoods, commercial and business development, public and institutional lands, and the public rights-of-way. The Comprehensive Plan promotes the Village of Downers Grove's unique assets and should be used to achieve the collective vision of the Village while attracting new families and development.

The Comprehensive Plan provides numerous recommendations that are designed to help the Village achieve its overall vision. These recommendations do not take into account fiscal or other constraints. The recommendations also do not account for future best practices or technological advancements. As such, the Village will need to re-evaluate the recommendations at regular intervals to keep the Plan current and in tune with the aspirations of the community and adapt it to changing conditions.

The Comprehensive Plan is the official, adopted guide for future development and conservation within the Village of Downers Grove. The Plan sets forth goals, policies and objectives based on community desires and a thorough analysis of existing conditions and trends. The Comprehensive Plan illustrates a vision for

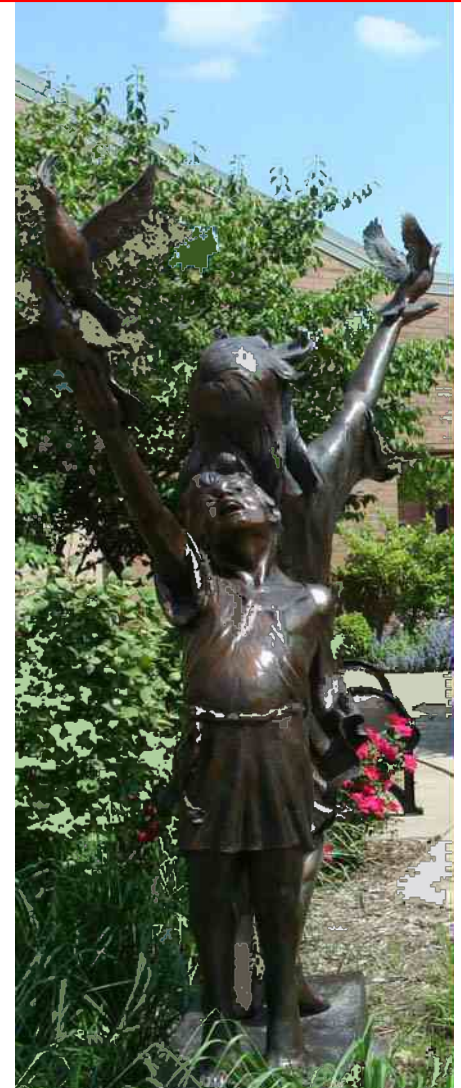
the physical, and economic characteristics of the Village for the next 15 to 20 years. Additionally, it outlines policies and guidelines recommended to implement that vision for the long-range future of the community. The Comprehensive Plan helps preserve and protect important existing features and resources, coordinate new growth and development, and establish a strong, positive community identity.

The Comprehensive Plan considers the Village's regional setting and adjacent areas and influences by examining all areas of the Village and the adjacent unincorporated areas that fall within the Village's planning jurisdiction based on existing boundary agreements with neighboring municipalities including Darien, Westmont, Oak Brook, Lombard, Glen Ellyn, Lisle and Woodridge.

### State Planning Acts

Several Illinois statutes contain general descriptions of what a comprehensive plan is, and what it should contain. The Illinois Municipal Code (65 ILCS 5/11-12-5(1)) dictates that a city or village plan commission must prepare and recommend a comprehensive plan to serve as a tool for guiding future development or redevelopment within the municipality. These plans cover the entire incorporated area of the municipality and can extend to land up to one and a half miles beyond its corporate limits. Elected bodies (i.e. village and city councils) charge their appointed planning or zoning commission with the task of preparing a plan and once it is complete, they vote on its adoption as a guiding document for the municipality.

The Illinois Local Planning Technical Assistance Act (Public Act 92-0768, Sec. 5) provides additional guidance as to what elements a comprehensive plan should address, including land use, natural resources and the environment, transportation, economic development and housing/residential development. In addition to these essentials it is suggested that a comprehensive plan consider additional elements, adjusting to suit unique community issues, including: parks and open space, historic preservation, urban design, subareas/key focus areas, agriculture and forestry, and technology.







Continued reinvestment in its residential neighborhoods has succeeded in enhancing and maintaining their distinctive character. The housing stock appeals to a broad spectrum of residents who enjoy the friendly nature of the community and the many opportunities to shop, work and play. Many houses have been updated. Others have provided a nod to the community's deep-rooted past, working to preserve historically significant structures. The urban forest flourishes, recognized by residents as adding value and uniqueness to the community.

Highly diverse and sustainable economic opportunities were created, providing even more jobs and shopping opportunities to those both within and outside the community. The Downtown continues as the community's heart—well-designed and attractive, with ample parking and a friendly pedestrian orientation. Ogden Avenue has become a place to shop and visit, not just pass through, with a visual rhythm and interest created by the nodes of retail and service activity now apparent to drivers along the route.

Both Butterfield Road and 75th Street boast strong, unique and sustainable economic opportunities. The office areas are notable for their strength, regional access and appeal for numerous corporate headquarters. Ellsworth Technology Park succeeded in growing beyond the more traditional industrial uses found in other similar communities. Its attractive buildings and setting, along with easy expressway access and in-demand jobs, assures its value to the region for decades.



# RESIDENTIAL AREAS PLAN

The Village’s housing stock is diverse in age, architecture, and design and its residential neighborhoods are some of the most significant contributors to Downers Grove’s unique character and identity. The Residential Areas Plan builds on the three categories established in the Land Use Plan: single-family detached residential, single-family attached residential and multi-family residential and further defines the type and locations of each type of residential land use. The location of each residential land use is illustrated in the *Residential Areas Plan* on page 34.

The Residential Areas Plan identifies policies that apply to the community as a whole although the issues these policies address are not necessarily present in every single one of the Village’s residential neighborhoods. As such, the application of Village-wide policies should be tailored to the needs and conditions of Downers Grove’s various neighborhoods.

The Policies identified in the Residential Areas Plan are intended to:

- Maintain Downers Grove’s character and identity
- Ensure quality housing stock remains a staple of the community
- Maintain the optimal balance of housing types within the community
- Ensure compatibility between new and existing residential development
- Ensure adequate buffering between residential and commercial uses
- Encourage a diversity of housing types, sizes and prices

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The Village’s residential neighborhoods are some of the most significant contributors to Downers Grove’s unique character and identity

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## Single-family Detached Residential

Of the residential units in Downers Grove, nearly 80% are single-family and owner-occupied. The single-family detached residential neighborhoods are one of the Village's most cherished attributes and one of its most defining characteristics, and single-family residential development should continue to predominate.

Historically, as residential development occurred near downtown, the traditional street grid was continued. Newer residential subdivisions, on the other hand, on the northern and southern areas of the Village have introduced more contemporary development features including curvilinear streets and cul-de-sacs.

Single-family detached residential areas make up the single largest land use in the Village of Downers Grove. Much of the Village's character is derived from these neighborhoods and these distinguishing features should be preserved and enhanced.

Single-family residential areas must remain flexible and consider context. There may be situations where single-family attached and multi-family uses may be appropriate within single-family detached areas. For example, street frontage, lot depth, and the presence of neighboring non-residential uses should be considered on a case-by-case basis for other types of compatible residential development.

The *Residential Areas Plan* depicts the single-family residential areas of the Village and divides them into four categories based on lot size, density, access and built form.

### Estate

This category is characterized by large lots that may have developed as part of a formal subdivision or independently in unincorporated DuPage County prior to annexation. These areas are typically located on the periphery of the Village and have characteristics of estate properties such as the absence of sidewalks and street trees and open swale drainage systems as opposed to curb and gutter.

### Traditional Grid

The Village's oldest residential areas were developed based on a traditional grid which provides a uniform layout (due to standard street and lot widths) as well as pedestrian and vehicular connectivity. Within the traditional grid's areas, sidewalks are typically present on both sides of the street and mature trees (both street trees and concentrations of wooded areas) contribute significantly to their character.

Homes in these areas may face significant development pressure when combining their age and lack of contemporary interior amenities with the attractiveness of a tight knit, walkable neighborhood that is close to amenities such as Downtown and schools.

### Modified Grid

Historically, as development radiated out from Downtown, residential subdivisions moved from the traditional grid to a modified grid. This combined the function and connectivity of a grid with the appeal of a more formalized subdivision within the Downers Grove community.

As a second wave of growth in the Village, the modified grid allows for a greater range of lot sizes than the traditional grid. The modified grid provides a transition between the traditional grid and the subdivision/curvilinear development type. Similar to the traditional grid category, sidewalks and street trees are a defining characteristic of modified grid areas.

The use of curved streets sometimes results in pockets of common area open space with additional trees and landscaping, which is another defining characteristic. Redevelopment with new home construction is occurring in these areas but they are less common than in traditional grid areas.

### Suburban/Curvilinear

Predominantly found on the north and south ends of the Village, the cul-de-sac is a defining characteristic of this residential category.

Contributing to this defining character are varying lot sizes and a range in the age of trees (depending on the time of construction of an individual subdivision or development). On the whole, street trees are younger than in traditional and modified grid areas and the tree canopy is less dense. Sidewalks are often present on one or both sides of the streets within these areas; however, a lack of connectivity for both pedestrians and automobiles is an issue in the presence of cul-de-sacs and dead-end streets.

## New Development & Reinvestment

It is important that new development be sensitive to local context. Regardless of the location or housing type, residential development or redevelopment should be carefully regulated to ensure compatibility with the scale and character of surrounding and adjacent residential neighborhoods. New infill development and alterations to existing development should maintain a setback, height, bulk, and orientation similar to that of neighboring development. The existing tree canopy is important and should be complemented with additional tree plantings when development occurs.

## Modernization

Residential, commercial, industrial and institutional properties all require modernization from time to time in order to remain competitive in the marketplace and to avoid becoming functionally obsolete. Modernization helps to achieve a balance between the past and the future by providing incremental improvements to existing properties, including both sites and structures.

There are four levels of residential modernization:

- **Upkeep** which includes the basic maintenance and repair of existing structures (e.g., new exterior paint or roof)
- **Renovation** which includes small-scale projects to update portions of existing structures (e.g., kitchen or bathroom renovation)
- **Expansion** which includes adding onto an existing structure (e.g., a rear or side addition)
- **Redevelopment** which includes demolition of an existing structure to construct a new one (e.g., a residential teardown)

Residential modernization is intended to replenish, rejuvenate and spur reinvestment in the Village's housing stock and should not conflict with the promotion and protection of the Village's distinguishing character and historic resources.

## Neighborhood Character

The Comprehensive Plan recognizes the value and importance of Downers Grove's existing housing stock in terms of image, character, and stability. While the replacement of some aging or obsolete homes may be both natural and desirable, the Village should establish a tool, such as design guidelines or workbook, to preserve and enhance neighborhood character. A tool such as this helps to promote new development or redevelopment is sensitive to, and respectful of, existing Village character and architectural diversity.

## Expansion and Redevelopment

As a mature community, the Village of Downers Grove's residential districts are largely developed, leaving the Village with limited undeveloped land for new, larger residential subdivisions. As is the case, most of the new residential development within the community will come in the form of alterations and additions to the Village's existing housing stock, or by way of teardown development, where older homes are replaced by new construction.

Regardless of the type of residential improvements that occur, changes within the established residential areas will have the potential to impact the character of the existing neighborhoods. To this end, it is important that additions and alterations to existing homes and new residential construction be consistent with the existing or desired neighborhood character. To provide assistance to home owners, developers and builders, the Village of Downers Grove should consider using specific tools such as guidelines to foster desired residential improvements and development.

## Residential Policy Recommendations

*Note: Policies and recommendations are not listed in order of importance.*

1. Residential areas should provide for a variety of housing and dwelling unit types and densities, generally organized by dwelling types, lot-sizes, etc. as identified in the Land Use Plan.
2. Senior housing, which includes multi-family residential and assisted- and extended- care facilities, should be provided in convenient locations to accommodate the needs of senior citizens within Downers Grove. This allows Downers Grove residents to age in place and remain in the community.
3. Future multi-family development should be located near significant activity centers and along major roadways as well as a component of mixed-use development within Downtown Downers Grove. The zoning ordinance should be revised to allow for additional multi-family development as identified in the Land Use Plan.

In determining the future location of multi-family housing, its ability to function as an important transitional land use should be considered.

4. Where appropriate, the use of buffering, screening, transitioning density and intensity, and other separation requirements and techniques should be considered where non-residential uses are adjacent to residential areas to minimize land-use conflicts that may arise.
5. A guide or tool should be created to encourage and promote expansion and redevelopment that is a desirable scale and character.
6. As new development or redevelopment occurs, sidewalks should be provided on all streets where they currently exist in order to maintain continuity.
7. Continue to require properties to be maintained in manner that is compliant with the Village's adopted property maintenance standards.
8. Consider a building registration and inspection program for unoccupied/ vacant properties to prevent foreclosed or neglected properties from having a detrimental impact on surrounding properties.
9. Consider developing a property maintenance program to assist qualifying residents, particularly seniors, with affordable lawn cutting, snow removal, and other appropriate services.
10. Consider voluntary and regulatory protections for the Village's notable historic homes, including its collection of Sears homes.
11. The permitting process should accommodate residential renovation and redevelopment through a consistent, expedient, and thorough process.
12. Continue to expand sidewalk network to provide better connections between residential neighborhoods, parks, and schools, while being cognizant of the character of individual neighborhoods.
13. Encourage sustainable energy production and green building initiatives in residential areas in a manner that respects the character, scale, and style of the neighborhoods.

## Development and Redevelopment

The Village should continue to promote development and redevelopment of commercial properties within areas that provide convenient and general commercial needs of the surrounding community.

To promote continued high-quality neighborhood commercial development, the following policies should be adopted:

- All parking and loading areas should be screened with landscaped berms and/or a combination of landscaping and hardscape materials;
- New and redeveloped commercial properties should be encouraged to provide 360 degree architecture; and
- Dumpster enclosures should be provided.

## Stormwater Management

The continued use of the County’s stormwater management practices should be encouraged, promoting the use of native plantings, swales, and pervious pavers to improve stormwater management within commercial and off-street parking areas. These techniques are effective stormwater management practices and generally less expensive to install and maintain than traditional curb-and-gutter and landscaping.

## Façade Improvement Program

The Village should maintain a Façade Improvement Program to assist businesses and property owners with improvements to signage, façade improvements, landscaping, parking areas, and the modernization of aging structures and facilities.

## Modernization

Residential, commercial, industrial and institutional properties all require modernization from time to time in order to remain competitive in the marketplace and to avoid becoming functionally

obsolete. Modernization helps to achieve a balance between the past and the future by providing incremental improvements to existing buildings, properties, parking lots and public rights-of-way.

For commercial properties, there are four levels of modernization:

- **Upkeep** which includes the basic maintenance and repair of existing structures (e.g., new exterior paint or roof)
- **Renovation** which includes small-scale projects to update portions of existing structures (e.g., façade or sign improvements)
- **Expansion** which includes adding onto an existing structure (e.g., business addition)
- **Redevelopment** which includes partial or full demolition of an existing structure to construct a new one (e.g., demolition and new construction)

Commercial modernization is intended to replenish, rejuvenate and spur reinvestment in the Village’s business sector and should not conflict with the promotion and protection of the Village’s distinguishing character.

## Aging Shopping Centers

Many of the Village’s regional commercial areas are faced with the uncertainty of aging or outdated shopping centers.

Dealing with obsolete centers can be troublesome for many reasons. Frequently, they are owned by trusts, pension funds or pools of multiple owners who are more likely to be absentee owners. Additionally, the mortgage is long paid off which means that existing tenants, however marginal, are usually sufficient for these types of owners. Based on these and other factors, the need to remain competitive is not compelling.

The large land area and high visibility of shopping centers makes their maintenance and potential deterioration an important issue for the Village to address. The Village should require that commercial properties be maintained to an adopted standard to prevent their neglect and deterioration. Neglect and deterioration have environmental, fiscal, economic and aesthetic impacts on the Village as a whole.

Aging shopping centers can be modernized through several mechanisms:

- Signage
- Landscaping
- Improved access and circulation
- Modern tenant spaces/layouts
- Building orientation and visibility
- Outlots
- Parking lot maintenance





BELMONT/ELLSWORTH



DOWNTOWN



BUTTERFIELD



OGDEN



FAIRVIEW

## The Key Focus Areas include:

- **Belmont/Ellsworth**, which is bounded by I-355 on the west, the BNSF railroad tracks on the north and areas that are predominantly residential to the south and east. This subarea is comprised of two main components: Belmont Road and the Belmont Metra Train Station area (including Chase Court) and the Ellsworth Industrial Park, the Village's largest concentration of industrial land.
- **Downtown**, which is generally comprised of commercial, residential, office and civic uses and is notable for its historic buildings including the Tivoli Theatre and the Masonic Temple. Downtown is the symbolic heart of the community and has traditionally been the focus of commercial, social, and civic life as well as an important connection to the regional transportation network.
- **Butterfi** which is comprised of shopping centers, stand-alone restaurants and office development of varying heights. Its proximity to I-88 and I-355 provides unparalleled access and visibility and is a key gateway into the Village of Downers Grove.
- **Ogden**, which is firmly established as an auto-oriented corridor in terms of its traffic volume, design, development pattern, scale and land use. Ogden is a major east-west arterial with a range of uses that serve the community and the surrounding region.
- **Fairview**, which is made up of the area surrounding the Fairview Metra station. This area is comprised of multi-family residential, industrial, office and retail uses. This Key Focus Area extends to the eastern boundary of the Village.

# KEY FOCUS AREAS

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*Downers Grove's Downtown is generally comprised of commercial, residential, office and civic uses and is notable for its historic buildings including the Tivoli Theatre and the Masonic Temple. The boundaries of Downtown are clearly demarcated with little room to expand beyond its current area. While no longer the primary economic engine for Downers Grove, Downtown continues to play an important junction for the Village. Downtown is the symbolic heart of the community and has traditionally been the focus of commercial, social, and civic life as well as an important connection to the regional transportation network.*

*Downtown is bisected by the BNSF railroad tracks and adjacent commuter parking lots. Main Street is the central business corridor in Downtown and has a coordinated streetscape from Franklin Street to Maple Avenue. In recent years, several new developments have occurred in Downtown providing new housing, parking and retail opportunities. Recommendations in this subarea plan take into consideration both the history of Downtown as well as these recent developments.*

## Key Concepts

- The Downtown wayfinding system should be enhanced and expanded to include key destinations, public parking facilities, Village Hall, parks and recreation facilities, and Metra.
- Opportunities to expand the boundaries of downtown are limited, including significant east-west expansion. The priority for downtown should be on infill development and redevelopment of key sites in order to maximize downtown's potential while strategically evaluating opportunities to expand the boundaries.
- Infill development and redevelopment should be pedestrian-oriented in order to complement the historic building pattern of Downtown. Retail shops with attractive display windows and restaurants with sidewalk cafes maintain visual interest and generate foot traffic.
- Prohibit new and redevelopment existing, non-pedestrian-oriented businesses including the strip commercial center on north Main Street and auto-oriented businesses, including drive-thru uses which should be relocated outside of Downtown. Office uses should be encouraged to occupy space above the ground floor.

- To maintain Downtown's unique identity and character, the Village should consider policies, programs and tools to identify and facilitate the protection of historic buildings and sites and encourage adaptive reuse of historic structures.
- The Village should maintain a commitment to quality architecture through the development of tools and guides for Downtown properties.
- As key properties redevelop, a sense of enclosure should be maintained to provide comfort to pedestrians. A sense of enclosure is attained through the combination of street widths and building height in proportion to the historic building pattern of Downtown.
- The importance of public uses (churches, Village Hall, parks, library, post office, and social services) cannot be overstated for the continued success of Downtown. Preserving key streets as commercial corridors (e.g. Main Street) while also providing areas for public uses encourages visitors to make several stops during a trip to Downtown and encourages them to stay longer.
- Consider dedication of surface parking for shoppers and parking deck use for commuters.





## KEY FOCUS AREAS

## Downtown Catalyst Sites

**8** Gilbert & Forest

This site presents an opportunity to create a pedestrian-oriented, rather than automobile-oriented, development on a parcel that is highly visible given its proximity to the railroad tracks.

Redeveloping this site into a more transit-oriented development (TOD) that is sensitive to nearby residential areas would be an optimum use. By fronting new development on this site towards Forest Street, uses will have an orientation towards Downtown and would provide a terminating vista on Burlington Avenue from the east. The size and location of this site provides an opportunity to use part of the site for expansion or reconfiguration of commuter parking Lot D.

**9** Main & Warren

This site presents an opportunity to redevelop an auto-oriented strip center and a one-story building into a multi-story, mixed-use development. Complementing this development, this site could accommodate a parking structure catering to Downtown employees, shoppers and commuters along Forest Avenue.

**10** Washington & Warren

This area provides an important transition from residential areas to the north to Downtown. Complementing recent multi-family residential development along Warren, this site provides an opportunity to provide additional multi-family, office, mixed-use or parking.

**11** 5122 Main Street

This one-story building is outdated in terms of aesthetics and function. The majority of the leasable space is below grade and is only accessible from inside the building. Since the construction of the Downtown parking garage, this building's most distinguishing feature (the arcade connection from Main Street to the rear) no longer serves any practical purpose. An ideal redevelopment scenario for this site would be the construction of a two- to three-story building with storefronts accessible from Main Street. The fact that this building is under Village control removes a significant barrier to redevelopment.

**12** Post Office Operations

The post office provides an important civic function and a vital traffic-generator for Downtown. Consideration should be given to splitting the retail and service functions from the delivery operations in order to minimize truck traffic Downtown. Removing the truck operations/parking would also create a potential redevelopment site on the west side of the post office site. The retail function of the post office should remain Downtown.

**13** Curtiss & Washington

Parcels on the northeast corner of Curtiss Street and Washington Street could be assembled to create a 1.5 acre redevelopment site. Proximity to the train station makes this site an ideal location for a mixed-use TOD with residential above ground floor retail.

**14** Mochel & Curtiss

Redevelopment of this site would serve to complete the transformation of Mochel Drive by complementing recent construction projects, and replicating the height, bulk and density of neighboring buildings. Such a development could reinforce the entrance to the parking garage.

**15** Grove & Main

An underutilized, one-story building and the neighboring surface parking lot provides a redevelopment opportunity for a stronger relationship to the historic building pattern of Downtown. A multi-story building oriented towards Main Street maintains the streetwall and provides a sense of enclosure. Parking could be provided in the rear of the building where access presently exists, with a pedestrian arcade or alley providing access to Main Street. A building with a high-quality of architecture would provide a terminating vista for Grove Street.

**16** Maple & Main

This intersection is the southern gateway into Downtown. Except for the historic building on the southwest corner, the condition, setback and/or orientation of the buildings surrounding this intersection do not contribute to creating a true gateway. The Village-owned surface parking lot on the northeast corner is a key site for infill development which would create a strong presence as a gateway into Downtown. The recently-constructed parking garage likely offsets any lost public parking resulting from development of the surface lot.

### Use the Plan on a Day-to-Day Basis

The Comprehensive Plan is the Village’s official policy guide for improvement and development. It is essential that the Plan be supported by the Village Council and used on a regular basis by Village staff, boards and commissions to review and evaluate all proposals for improvement and development within the community in the years ahead.

#### The Village should:

1. Make copies of the Plan document available for public review and purchase;
2. Provide assistance to the public in explaining the Plan and its relationship to private and public development projects and other proposals, as appropriate;
3. Assist the Village Council, boards and commissions in the day-to-day administration, interpretation, and application of the Plan;
4. Consider possible amendments, issues or needs which may be a subject of change, addition or deletion from the Comprehensive Plan; and,
5. Coordinate with, and assist the Plan Commission and Village Council in the Plan amendment process.

### Review of Zoning Ordinance

The Comprehensive Plan sets forth policies regarding the use of land within the Village and establishes guidelines for the quality, character and intensity of future development. The Plan’s policies and guidelines should inform the revision of or drafting of zoning and development regulations to ensure consistency.

Zoning is an important tool in implementing planning policy. It establishes the types of uses allowed on specific properties, and prescribes the overall character and intensity of development to be permitted.

It is essential that all of the Village’s development controls be consistent with and complement the updated Comprehensive Plan. Adoption of the Comprehensive Plan should be followed by a review and update of the Village’s various development controls including zoning, subdivision regulations, and other related codes and ordinances.

### Community Investment Program (CIP)

Another tool for implementing the Comprehensive Plan is the Village’s Community Investment Program (CIP). It establishes schedules and priorities for all public improvement projects within a five-year period.

The CIP typically should be used to schedule the implementation of specific projects related to the Comprehensive Plan, particularly the restoration and upgrading of existing infrastructure, utilities, and Village facilities. The expansion or improvement of the existing Village Hall or Police Department facilities is also included in the Community Investment Program.

As financial resources in Downers Grove will always be limited and public dollars must be spent wisely, the Village should continue to use the CIP to provide the most desirable public improvements and stay within budget constraints.

10: IMPLEMENTATION



## Residential Areas

### Goal

Maintain the Village’s image and desirability as a great place to live by preserving and enhancing the quality, character, safety and appeal of residential neighborhoods, developments and subdivisions, and providing diversity in its housing stock and unit types.

### Objectives

1. Promote residential development and redevelopment of a variety of housing and dwelling unit types and densities in accordance with the Land Use Plan, and ensure the Zoning Ordinance and other regulatory tools are updated appropriately.
2. Accommodate residential renovation and redevelopment through a consistent, expedient and thorough permitting process.
3. Consistently administer and enforce residential development regulations, including compliance with setbacks, maximum height, parkway tree preservation, stormwater, bulk, density and other development regulations.
4. Consistently administer and enforce residential construction regulations, including construction hours, fencing, trash and debris, parking, and other construction related activities that can impact nearby properties.

5. Consider the development of a guide or tool to ensure that new residential construction (including infill and teardown construction) and additions are of an appropriate scale and character.
6. Continue to inventory and enhance regulatory protections for the Village’s notable historic homes including its collection of Sears homes.
7. Examine alternative solutions to sidewalk construction in certain challenging areas of the Village.
8. Improve public outreach and input programs for capital and infrastructure improvement projects.
9. Explore the creation of a property maintenance program to assist residents, particularly seniors, with affordable lawn cutting and snow removal services.
10. Preserve sound existing housing through regular, active code enforcement and preventative maintenance programs.
11. Explore the creation of a vacant building registration and inspection program to prevent foreclosed and/or neglected properties from having a detrimental impact on surrounding properties.
12. Work with home owners associations and property management companies to enforce property maintenance requirements in private residential developments, particularly with regard to vacant units.
13. Prevent the encroachment of incompatible development on residential areas through implementation of the Land Use Plan and buffering, screening, and separation requirements where necessary and provide areas of transitioning density and intensity of use between residential and commercial land uses where appropriate.
14. Strictly enforce buffering, landscaping, screening and lighting requirements of adjacent commercial areas to minimize the negative impacts of commercial development on residential uses.
15. Discourage “cut through” commercial traffic in residential areas through signage, enforcement, traffic calming and other measures particularly at the time of reconstruction.
16. Promote the economic importance, and support the provision of, a variety of housing types and choices within the Village including single family, multi-family, senior housing and others including both owner-occupied and rental properties.
17. Encourage the maintenance and preservation of parkway trees as an important component of the Village’s tree canopy.



## Commercial and Office Areas

### Goal 1

Develop aesthetically pleasing and functionally well-designed retail and commercial shopping areas that are market supportable, maintain a diversified tax base, and serve the needs of the Village’s residents and in some areas, a larger regional market.

### Objectives

1. Maintain a range of retail and service commercial activities throughout the Village.
2. Define and designate more specific functional roles for the various commercial areas within the Village distinguished by local-, community-, and regional-serving developments.
3. Ensure that new commercial development and redevelopment is designed in scale with, and complementary to, existing adjacent development.
4. Ensure that all new and improved commercial development, and encourage existing commercial development are effectively screened and buffered from adjacent residential uses.
5. Support and encourage all retail, office, and service commercial activities to be organized by use and concentrated within or near areas of complementary uses.
6. Recognize, support and encourage the catalytic role of new campuses and buildings of higher education in appropriate locations within the Village.

7. Recognize, support and encourage the catalytic role of medical services in appropriate locations within the Village.
8. Where applicable, require the design of new commercial developments to incorporate public amenities such as parks, plazas, arcades and connections to existing or proposed trails.
9. New or expanded parking structures should be designed to complement the architecture and urban form of the surrounding area.
10. Establish a program to assist businesses and property owners with façade improvements, landscaping, parking improvements, and modernization of aging structures and facilities.
11. Continue to utilize and consider additional incentives such as sales tax rebates, TIF, SSA, and business district funds to initiate redevelopment of key opportunity sites.
12. Initiate programs to incentivize the improvement and rehabilitation of older commercial buildings and areas which are, or are becoming, functionally obsolete including improvements to facades, signage, streetscaping, landscaping, and parking areas.
13. Implement a more systematic and proactive property maintenance and code enforcement process in commercial areas of the Village.
14. Conduct a comprehensive review of commercial uses in the zoning ordinance to ensure they are up-to-date and serving the Village well.



**Goal 3**

Continue to revitalize Downtown as the symbolic “heart” of the community and enhance its role as the Village’s primary mixed-use pedestrian environment.

**Objectives**

1. Continue to revitalize Downtown with a mixture of uses including commercial, office, restaurant, and residential.
2. Follow Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) principles (embodied by a pedestrian orientation, incorporation of density and a focus on the transit infrastructure) when considering new development and improvements in the Downtown.
3. Maintain Downtown as pedestrian-oriented area and a walkable shopping area that is unlike any other commercial area in the community.
4. Promote new infill development in the Downtown area and encourage the consolidation of smaller development parcels where possible to foster larger, more coordinated commercial development opportunities.
5. Building on the Downtown Pattern Book, establish Design & Development Guidelines to better guide redevelopment in Downtown.
6. Establish a regulatory framework, such as form-based codes, to work in conjunction with the Design and Development Guidelines to foster a desired and predictable built form in the Downtown.
7. Zoning for the Downtown should be analyzed and amended if necessary to adequately accommodate appropriate new development and establish the desirable physical form of the Downtown.
8. Ensure parking adequately supports businesses by conducting a circulation and parking needs assessment for Downtown and develop a plan for the continued provision of adequate parking in Downtown.
9. Require development and redevelopment projects within the Downtown to provide detailed parking and traffic studies which plan for current and future parking demand, access and circulation.
10. Promote and encourage shared parking arrangements and facilities wherever feasible to minimize the land area within Downtown dedicated to parking.
11. Require Downtown development to be compatible with the scale and uses of the surrounding area and minimize and mitigate any negative impacts on adjacent land uses.
12. Conduct a Downtown traffic study in order to assess issues and identify a solution for improving traffic flow.



Appendix: GOALS & OBJECTIVES



## Community Facilities

### Goal

Ensure the provision of high-quality public facilities, including municipal and educational facilities, for all residents of the Village of Downers Grove.

### Objectives

1. Work with the school districts to review the existing parking facilities, buildings, drop-off/pick-up areas, and bus parking, including ingress and egress to ensure they are adequate and if not, identify opportunities for improvement.
2. Work with the school districts to ensure proper buffering surrounding school facilities and safe and adequate access to school sites.
3. Ensure the Village continues to benefit from an adequate level of fire and police protection throughout the Village.
4. Enhance the physical relationship between school facilities and surrounding neighborhoods.
5. Continue to support the operation of other important community service providers, including Midwestern University, Good Samaritan Hospital, and others and maintain positive and mutually beneficial relationships with each organization.
6. Work with others to seek appropriate locations for specialized facilities and services for senior citizens, youth and disadvantaged populations.
7. Work with other public agencies to maintain adequate and appropriate sites and facilities for the provision of public services.

8. Work with the U.S. Post Office to relocate the operations and truck traffic to a more appropriate site in the Village outside of Downtown.
9. Continue to conduct a comprehensive life cycle assessment for Village buildings, equipment, vehicles, facilities, and properties and develop/revise a multi-year maintenance plan and on-going maintenance program.
10. Identify funding sources such as grants to pay for the construction of new Village facilities.
11. Consider pursuing LEED, or similar, certification for new or renovated Village facilities.
12. Increase efforts to identify alternative sources of funds such as grants to fund a wide range of public projects including, but not limited to village facilities, parks and recreation enhancements, transportation improvements, economic development related projects, and social services.

13. Using various design and signage tools, reinforce community landmarks such as Village Hall, the Public Library, 1846 Blodgett House, Pierce Downer’s Burial Place, Downers Grove Historical Society, schools, religious institutions, and parks as important focal points and resources for the community.

