

VILLAGE OF DOWNERS GROVE

Report for the Village

10/22/2024

SUBJECT:	SUBMITTED BY:
Guiding DG: Comprehensive Plan and Related Projects - Comprehensive Plan Goals, Recommendations and Future Land Use Review	Stan Popovich, AICP Director of Community Development

SYNOPSIS

The Village's Guiding DG consultant, Houseal Lavigne (HL), will be presenting the Comprehensive Plan's draft goals and key recommendations, preliminary land use framework and a preliminary future land use map.

STRATEGIC PLAN ALIGNMENT

The Village Council has identified the Comprehensive Plan and related projects as Priority Action Items for 2023-2025

FISCAL IMPACT

N/A

RECOMMENDATION

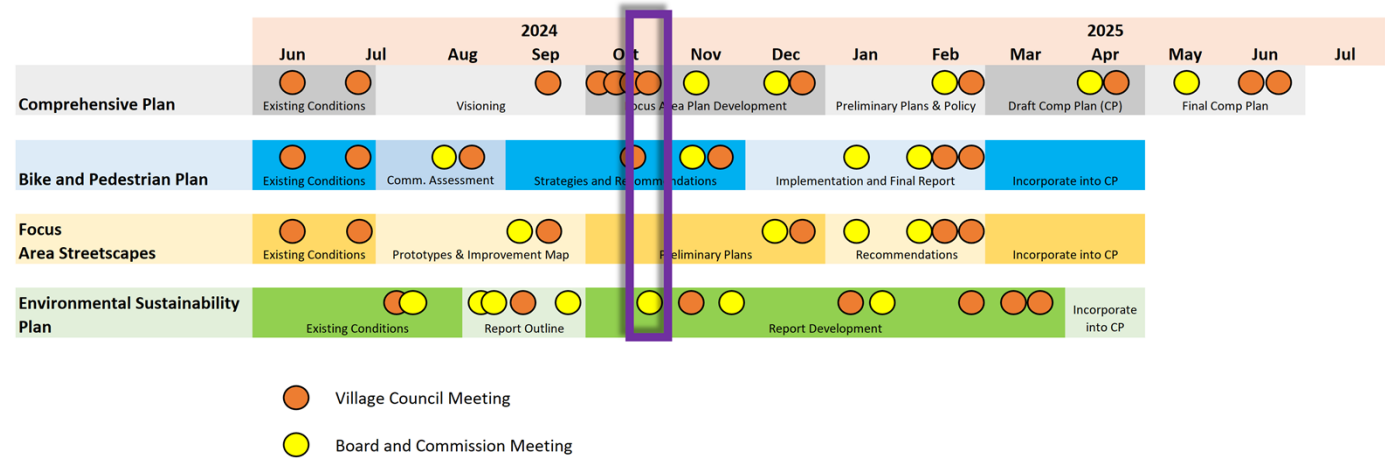
The Council should discuss the Comprehensive Plan’s draft goals and key recommendations, preliminary land use framework and preliminary future land use map and provide commentary to HL. This commentary will allow HL to further refine these items for the Comprehensive Plan.

BACKGROUND

On September 17th, HL presented these items to the Village Council. Based on Council discussion since that date regarding the Comprehensive Plan’s vision and some initial feedback, HL has updated the draft goals and key recommendations. The goals, key recommendations, future land use framework and map, when combined with the approved vision, will direct place-based recommendations, will serve as the cornerstone for consensus-building process and will provide focus and direction for upcoming planning activities.

The purpose of this presentation and Council discussion is to reach an agreement on the goals, key recommendations and preliminary land use recommendations that will provide guidance to HL and allow them to move forward with the development of the Comprehensive Plan.

Schedule



ATTACHMENTS

Draft Goals, Key Recommendations and Preliminary Future Land Use Recommendations

Goals and Key Recommendations

For each goal, several key recommendations have been drafted. Key recommendations offer insight into how the Plan will address issues identified during the community engagement process and existing conditions analysis. These recommendations are still preliminary and may become more detailed as the Plan is developed. Key recommendations are based on community engagement, existing conditions analysis, and discussion with Village staff and Village Council throughout the first phases of the project. Additionally, key recommendations that are still relevant were carried forward from the 2017 Update of the Comprehensive Plan, these will be marked with an asterisk (*).

As the Plan is developed, the structure can be modified as needed to better address and organize planning issues and recommendations. The final Comprehensive Plan will be populated with maps, graphics, and photos to better communicate recommendations and concepts.

Land Use, Growth, and Development

Under the guidance of the Future Land Use Map, approach land use decisions in a way that fosters strategic and context-sensitive growth, and promotes attractive development.

Key Recommendations:

- Promote safe and efficient connections between neighborhoods and destinations
- Support multiple transportation options including vehicles, walking, bicycling, and public transit (trains, buses, on-demand, and similar).
- Facilitate redevelopment opportunities to meet housing and economic development needs.
- Protect the environment through the inclusion of green infrastructure and native plantings.
- Facilitate the creation and enhancement of mixed-use areas that include housing, offices, commercial and retail space, and other community amenities.
- Encourage infill development to efficiently use vacant or underutilized land for both residential and commercial uses.
- Promote the preservation of historic buildings and neighborhoods and their adaptive reuse.

Housing and Neighborhoods

Encourage and facilitate high-quality housing and neighborhoods for residents in all stages of life and all incomes, maintaining and expanding the Downers Grove reputation as an attractive place to live.

Key Recommendations:

- Promote residential development and redevelopment of a variety of housing and dwelling unit types and densities in accordance with the Future Land Use Plan. *
- Ensure residential new construction, additions, and renovations complement the established character and scale of the Village's established neighborhoods.
- Maintain the integrity of sound existing housing through continued regular, active code enforcement and preventative maintenance programs, supporting the preservation of historical features and the distinct character of the community's neighborhoods. *
- Consider establishing or expanding regulations, policies and programs that directly address housing attainability for all incomes and ages.
- Continue to promote green building practices, including the use of sustainable materials, energy-efficient appliances, and renewable energy sources in residential construction.
- Consider regulatory requirements or incentives for housing developments that incorporate green and sustainable materials or design.
- Explore opportunities to increase tree preservation efforts and maintain the urban tree canopy. *

- Encourage developments to adhere to the International Dark Sky Initiative, utilize bird-friendly glass, and continue to incorporate sustainable stormwater management practices.

Economic Development

Support local businesses, commercial centers, major employers, and industries to strengthen the Village's diverse tax base. Continue to work with the Downers Grove Economic Development Corporation (EDC) to implement the following key recommendations.

Key Recommendations:

- Continue to market available commercial and industrial development, programs and incentives, events, and tourism.
- Continue to market available residential, mixed-use, or redevelopment sites in addition to commercial, industrial, and area-specific sites.
- Continue to support businesses by directing business owners to state or federal resources and establish connections to the larger business community (mentor programs, networking sessions, partnership opportunities).
- Consider establishing a program to assist businesses and property owners with façade improvements, landscaping, parking improvements, and modernization of aging structures and facilities, allowing businesses to remain successful while maintaining standards that contribute to the identity of Downers Grove.
- Promote and encourage the improvement and rehabilitation of older buildings and areas which are, or are becoming, functionally obsolete or undesirable.
- Continue to build upon the community's reputation for special events and tourism by expanding cultural, arts, recreation, and regional draw activities.

Transportation and Mobility

Partner with other governmental entities, organizations and authorities to work toward a seamless, efficient transportation system that offers good connectivity, improves safety and mobility for people using all modes (walking, biking, transit, and driving), and enhances the character of the community

Key Recommendations:

- Continue to participate in the Safe Routes to School program.
- Prioritize pedestrians, bicycles, and micro-mobility devices through the provision of a network of accessible, connected, safe, and equitable active transportation (bicycle, pedestrian, and transit) facilities.
- Consider traffic calming and other measures to slow traffic in conjunction with surface reconstruction projects. *
- Continue to require new development/redevelopment to include connections and amenities for pedestrians, bicyclists, and commuters.
- Expand the Village's network of sidewalks to provide better connections between residential neighborhoods, parks, schools, Downtown, and commercial destinations. *
- Continue to work with public transit providers to ensure that levels of public transit service support the ridership needs of the community, including the continued operation of the schedules of all three of the Metra train stations. *

Community Services, Facilities, and Infrastructure

Support the delivery of community services, maintain the Village's facilities, provide community gathering spaces, and invest in its critical infrastructure to continue to ensure a resilient, sustainable, and high quality of life for the whole community.

Key Recommendations:

- Develop and maintain functional yet innovative streetscapes and public spaces that provide public access and encourage community interaction.
- Partner with other governmental agencies to continue to identify areas for community gathering spaces like plazas and seating areas.

- Partner with other governmental agencies to explore the feasibility of creating new spaces for various sized community events.
- Encourage and facilitate expanded year-round cultural and community events and activities, including pop-ups and seasonal installations, temporary art installations or shops in vacant storefronts, and heritage celebrations.
- Explore opportunities to incorporate public art.
- Work with service providers, developers, and community partners to identify appropriate locations for specialized facilities and services for senior citizens, youth, and disadvantaged populations.
- Continue to coordinate with community partners on facility needs and siting to ensure provision of community services and infrastructure.
- Continue to provide exceptional public safety services.

Sustainability, Parks, Recreation, and Open Space

Promote sustainability in all developments to ensure community resilience. Meet the recreational and environmental needs of the community by fostering partnerships to maintain a complete system of parks and open spaces within walking and biking distances of existing neighborhoods.

Key Recommendations:

- Evaluate incentive programs for private landowners to participate in sustainability efforts.
- Work with the Park District to implement their Comprehensive Master Plan.
- Expand public electric vehicle (EV) charging stations and encourage or require new developments/redevelopments to incorporate EV infrastructure.
- Partner with private property owners, Park District, School Districts and businesses to expand the Village’s urban canopy.
- Steward existing natural areas and new green spaces to increase biodiversity.
- Implement climate resilience strategies to prioritize environmental protection, reduce flooding, upgrade aging infrastructure, reduce impermeable surfaces, and positively change the urban heat island effect.
- Consider expanding recycling and composting options for residents and businesses.
- Continue to participate and maintain a high rating in the Federal Emergency Management Agency’s Community Rating System.

Land Use Influences and Constraints

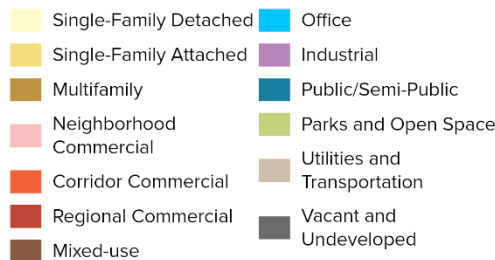
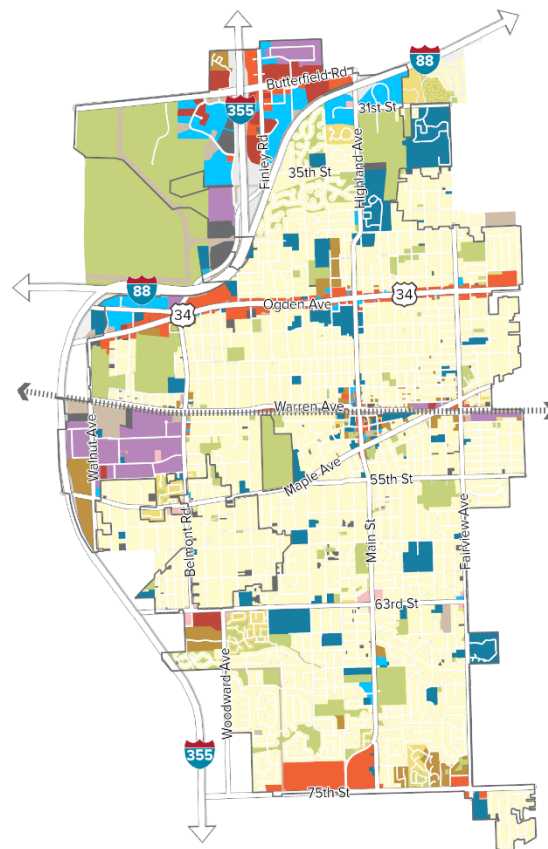
Land use and development are influenced and constrained by factors including: 1) existing land use, 2) limited available land for new development, and 3) its significant regional transit stations. This section of the Land Use Framework examines these factors to provide context for future growth and development.

Existing Land Use

In the existing conditions phase of the process, all parcels within Downers Grove and its planning area were categorized into 13 existing land uses, identifying development patterns and analyzing the existing land use composition.

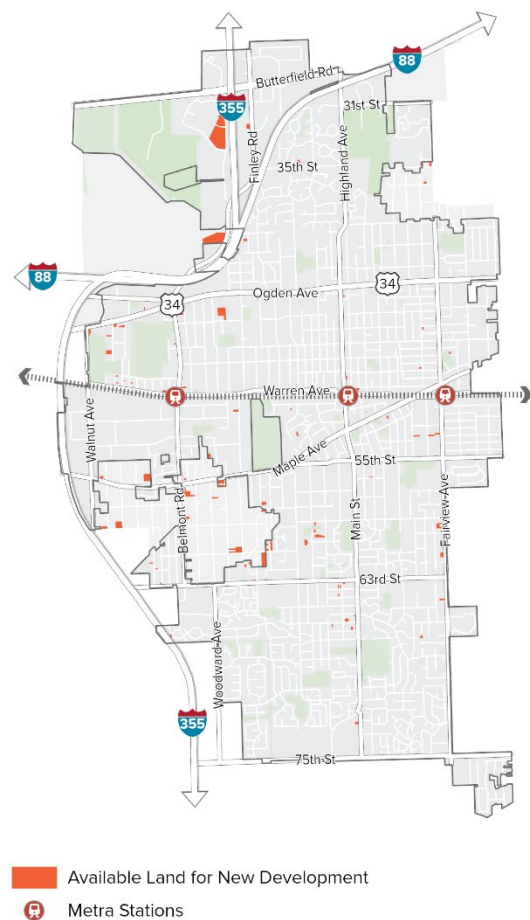
The map illustrates these established patterns, including residential neighborhoods, commercial districts, and industrial areas, which can limit the flexibility to introduce new types of development or higher densities, especially in single-family neighborhoods and industrial parks surrounding the three Metra stations.

Downers Grove is built out, and as such, the current distribution of land is the primary influence on a framework that guides future development.



Limited Available Land for New Development

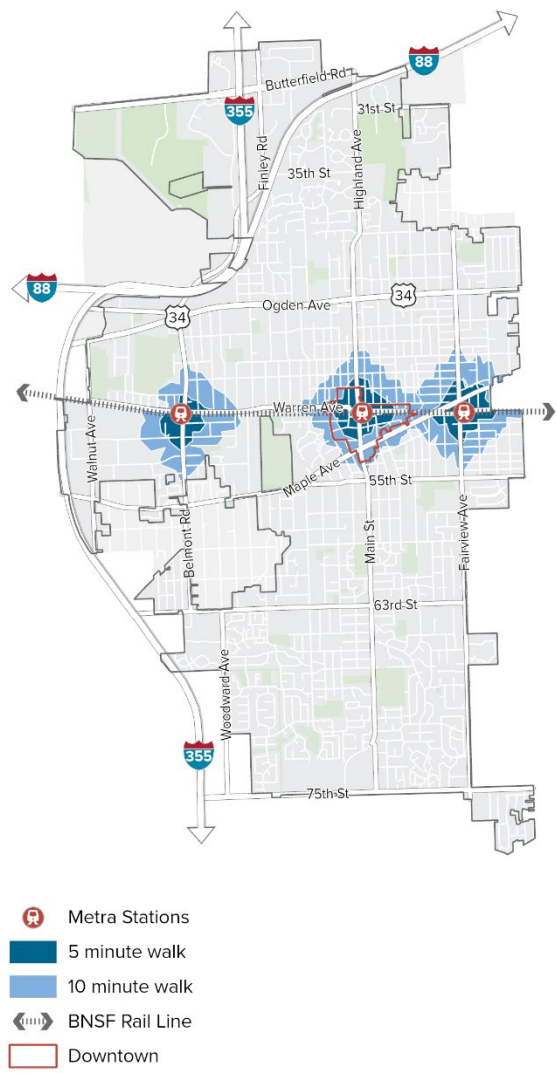
Downers Grove is a landlocked community with very little greenfield land available, placing greater emphasis on ensuring that redevelopment is carefully planned and aligns with the long-term vision.



Regional Rail – Metra BNSF Railway Stations

Downers Grove is serviced by three Metra rail stations (Fairview Avenue, Downers Grove Main Street, and Belmont), with the Main Street Station located in the Downtown area. The BNSF Railway service runs from Chicago Union Station to Downtown Aurora, connecting Downers Grove to Naperville, Lisle, Westmont, and other communities along Ogden Avenue. This accessibility not only supports the daily commute of residents but also positions Downtown as an attractive destination within the region, underscoring the need for targeted growth to attract more people to Downtown businesses and enhance economic vitality. The map depicts 5- and 10-minute walksheds around each Metra station based on existing streets. These areas are reachable on foot for the average person and are logical for the promotion of compact, walkable, pedestrian-oriented, and transit-oriented development. However, preserving the character of established residential neighborhoods is key, such as the single-family homes near Maple Avenue and Downtown, which are highly valued by the community. Any new development or infill in these areas must carefully balance growth with respect for the existing neighborhood character.

While Downtown continues to thrive as a regional hub, there is an opportunity to enhance the areas around the Fairview and Belmont area, transforming them into attractive hubs for future development. Strategic redevelopment near these stations can leverage transit infrastructure, reduce reliance on cars, and contribute to a more sustainable urban environment while addressing community concerns about overexpansion around the Main Street station.



Preliminary Future Land Use Framework

The Future Land Use Plan is intended to guide the future growth and development of Downers Grove and its Planning Area. The Future Land Use Plan aims to maintain the character and quality of the community’s residential neighborhoods, enhance its commercial and employment areas, and support a balanced approach to development. The following section outlines the land use classifications that will guide the growth and development of the community over the next 20 years.

NOTE: The following land uses correspond to the Future Land Use Map.

Single-Family Detached Residential

Single-family residential areas should consist of a detached single household per lot, organized into neighborhoods or subdivisions based on a unifying development pattern. Downers Grove has developed as a residential community, approximately 80% of which is single-family and owner-occupied. It is anticipated that over the coming decades, single-family residential will continue to be a predominant land use. These areas should allow for Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs, or “granny flats”) which are typically less than 800 square feet and allow for context-sensitive infill on smaller lots, such as by placing an accessory structure behind the primary residence or through a home expansion.

Single-Family Attached Residential

Single-family attached residential uses are single-family dwellings that share a sidewall with an adjacent single-family dwelling. Examples include townhouses, row houses and duplexes which are present throughout Downers Grove. Single-family attached residential developments are commonly found along arterial streets and should be used as a transitional land use between single-family detached and multi-family development.

Multi-Family Residential

Multi-family residential development consists of more than one unit or household per lot. This may take the form of standalone buildings of condominiums or apartments, as part of a mixed-use development or as specialized senior housing. Multi-family residential developments are currently present throughout Downers Grove. The Comprehensive Plan identifies the redevelopment of some existing multi-family areas that are compatible with adjacent uses and establishes new areas for multi-family residential land uses based on proximity to the transportation network and to maximize their function as a transitional land use between single-family residential and commercial land uses.

Mixed Residential Consideration

The previous Comprehensive Plan (2017) encouraged Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) principles when considering new development and improvements in Downtown. The intent of the Mixed Residential Consideration area is to extend this approach around Downers Grove’s other two Metra stations (Fairview Avenue and Belmont).

Based on the 5- and 10-minute network walkshed around the stations, the area promotes pedestrian-friendly development and a focus on access to transit as redevelopment and infill occur. Over time, mixed residential areas should allow for more flexibility to build denser residential development within the context of Downers Grove’s established neighborhood patterns. Areas designated for mixed residential should easily accommodate a variety of denser dwelling types, including senior, workforce, and attainable/affordable housing.

Note: Mixed Residential will be explored further within the Housing and Neighborhoods chapter of the Comprehensive Plan.

Mixed-Use

Mixed-use combines distinct functions, such as offices, shops, and homes, within a single development or within a geographic area. Mixed-use buildings often have retail stores, restaurants, and entertainment uses on the ground floor to create an active and engaging pedestrian environment, with residential or other service-based activities above. Mixed-use developments should be targeted in the Downtown, Esplanade, and 75th Street. Mixed-use as part of transit-oriented development should be targeted near all train stations.

Downtown

Downtown Downers Grove is characterized by a mix of commercial service, commercial retail, office, entertainment, civic, multi-family residential, institutional and related public facilities (including parking) in a pedestrian-oriented atmosphere.

To maintain its vibrancy and importance to the community, Downtown should continue to contain a mix of land uses that reinforce its unique character. The type and location of land uses within Downtown and in mixed-use areas are recommended to maintain a pedestrian-orientation while also allowing for biking and automobile access.

Neighborhood Commercial

Neighborhood commercial areas function to provide residents with convenient, day-to-day goods and services within a short walk or drive from their homes. Neighborhood commercial areas should be comprised of a mix of retail, service, and office uses that cater to a local population.

These areas may be anchored by a grocery store accompanied by a variety of other smaller retailers such as gas stations, dry cleaners, convenience stores, banks, and restaurants. Providing these daily goods and services close to home is an amenity to nearby residents and serves to reduce automobile trips. Small nodes of neighborhood commercial development should be throughout Downers Grove at the intersection of primary roadways (arterials and collectors) to serve nearby residential areas.

Corridor Commercial

Corridor commercial land uses are typically organized in a linear fashion and include a blend of neighborhood-oriented commercial retail, offices, auto dealerships, smaller regional commercial retail, service uses, and multi-family uses.

Commercial uses with a regional draw are appropriate in areas of a corridor where they will benefit from access and visibility without significantly contributing to traffic along the corridor or impact on nearby residential areas. In other areas of the corridor, commercial uses are of a neighborhood scale and are oriented towards nearby residential areas.

Regional Commercial

Regional Commercial comprises commercial uses that provide goods and services that draw patrons from within, and beyond, Downers Grove. Appropriate regional commercial uses include large shopping centers, “big box” retail, auto dealerships, restaurants, hotels, and entertainment uses.

Office

Office uses include large-scale office buildings and complexes, office parks, and small individual offices. Office uses can be compatible with adjacent residential uses given appropriate buffering and screening. Multifamily development may also occur in and around these areas to promote workforce housing, live-work housing and/or hotel and lodging buildings. Additional small-scale commercial uses are also allowed to support the predominant office uses.

Light Industrial and Business Park

Light industrial and business park uses include those dedicated to the design, assembly, processing, packaging, storage and transportation of products, and light industrial which may or may not have an accessory retail component. These uses should continue to be in areas where they can capitalize on proximity to regional transportation networks while minimizing negative impacts on residential neighborhoods. This includes areas near interstates, existing industrial parks, and along the BNSF railroad.

Parks and Open Space

Downers Grove is well-served by the parks and open space located throughout the community and beyond. These parks and open spaces range in terms of size and use to include small, neighborhood “pocket” parks to large tracts of forest preserve and other natural areas, most owned and managed by the Downers Grove Park District or the Forest Preserve District of DuPage County. The largest open spaces in Downers Grove include Lyman Woods, the Maple Grove Forest Preserve, Belmont Prairie and neighboring Morton Arboretum.

Institutional/Public

Institutional/Public land uses include public and semi-public areas occupied by government facilities, community service providers, schools, and other institutional users. This land use also contains areas used by both private and public utility providers. The distribution of institutional/public land uses requires adequate and comprehensive service delivery to residents and businesses in Downers Grove, which determines their location.

Transportation/Utilities

Utilities and transportation uses support local infrastructure and provide rights-of-way or easements for the transmission of gas, electric, water, and sewer.

Future Land Use

