

**VILLAGE OF DOWNERS GROVE
PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION**

VILLAGE OF DOWNERS GROVE CIVIC CENTER
850 CURTISS AVENUE

December 16, 2024
7:00 P.M.

AGENDA

- 1. Roll Call**
- 2. Guiding DG Comprehensive Plan – Draft Vision and Preliminary Land Use Framework**
- 3. Public Comment**
- 4. Adjournment**



VILLAGE OF DOWNERS GROVE MEMO

To: Planning and Zoning Commission
From: Stan Popovich, AICP – Community Development Director
 Jason Zawila, AICP – Planning Manager
Re: Guiding DG Comprehensive Plan - Comprehensive Plan Draft Vision and Preliminary Land Use Framework
Date: December 16th, 2024

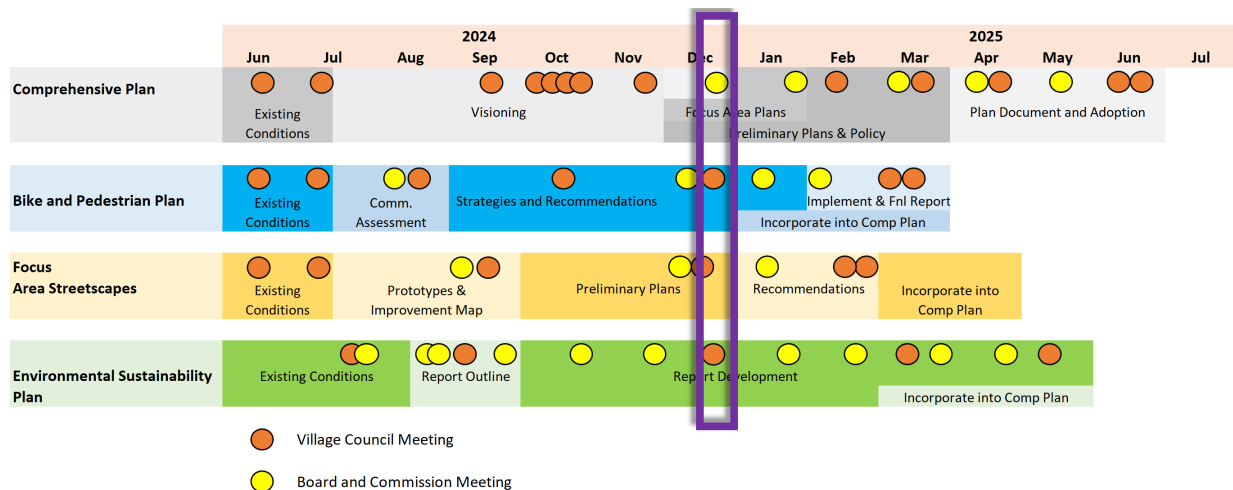
On December 16th, 2024, the Village’s Guiding DG Consultant, Houseal Lavigne (HL) will present an update to the Comprehensive Plan's draft vision, goals and key recommendations and preliminary land use framework.

This follows the [existing conditions memorandum](#) that was finalized in August and workshops that occurred with the Village Council from September through November. As the steering committee, the Village Council approved the vision statement, goals and recommendations that should be used in review of the remaining Comprehensive Plan components.

The purpose of this presentation and Planning and Zoning Commission discussion is to provide input on the preliminary land use recommendations that will provide guidance to the Village Council and HL and allow them to move forward with the development of the Comprehensive Plan. Staff is seeking PZC input on the entire preliminary future land use map, specifically including these three areas:

- Northwest corner of Saratoga Avenue and Warren Avenue
- Northeast corner of Cumnor Road and 39th Street
- The area near the intersection of Walnut Avenue and Maple Avenue

Schedule



ATTACHMENTS

Comprehensive Plan Draft Vision and Preliminary Land Use Framework



MEMORANDUM

CHICAGO

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Chicago, IL 60601
312-372-1008

LOS ANGELES

360 E 2nd Street Suite 800
Los Angeles, CA 90012
213-259-1008

HELENA

317 Cruise Ave Suite 202
Helena, MT 59601
406-431-1588

SEATTLE

999 3rd Ave Suite 700
Seattle, WA 98104
206-828-1008

Date: December 10, 2024

SENT VIA EMAIL

To: Village of Downers Grove
Stan Popovich, AICP, Director of Community Development
Jason Zawila, AICP, Planning Manager

From: Houseal Lavigne Associates
Josh Koonce, AICP, Practice Lead

Re: Guiding DG Comprehensive Plan – Draft Vision, Goals, and Key Recommendations
For Planning and Zoning Commission review at the December 16, 2024 meeting

This memorandum includes Vision, Goals, and Key Recommendations paired with a Preliminary Land Use Framework for the **Village of Downers Grove Guiding DG Comprehensive Plan**. The memorandum has been developed based on the existing conditions assessment and input received through outreach efforts conducted in support of the project so far. These components of the plan are intended to provide Downers Grove with a sense of direction and priorities to be addressed in the Plan, before detailed core elements, policies, and recommended actions are drafted in the coming months.

This is an interim deliverable for discussion with staff and the Village Council acting in its role for the project as Steering Committee, and will serve as the foundation for subsequent plan deliverables. The following sections are organized under topical headings that reflect the chapter structure currently being considered for the Plan.

Vision Statement: The vision statement is an aspirational description of what Downers Grove will accomplish in the long term, following the direction of the Comprehensive Plan. The statement is meant to serve as a foundation for future decision-making. It introduces the content of chapters that will eventually be discussed in the Plan.

Four plans, cohesive vision: Guiding DG is a combined planning effort that includes the Comprehensive Plan, the Bike and Pedestrian Plan, the Environmental Sustainability Plan, and the Downtown and Fairview Focus Area Streetscape Plan. The Community Vision Statement for the Comprehensive Plan establishes a cohesive framework for all projects under the unified foundation of Guiding DG. It provides a shared direction to ensure that these individual plans work together to create a more sustainable, resilient, equitable, well-connected community. In the final plan document, our project team anticipates incorporating a concise version of each of the supporting plan documents' vision statements alongside the broader Comprehensive Plan vision statement, using the layout and design of the document to clearly articulate the relationship between the four studies.

Goals: The goals support the vision and further define what the community is aiming to achieve in the future. They represent broad categories that will help the community realize its vision.

Key Recommendations: Key recommendations are based on planning best practices, still-relevant direction from Downers Grove's past plans and studies, and community engagement key themes and takeaways. These support the goals and provide an indication of policy direction to be included in the forthcoming Comprehensive Plan – our project team will use these key recommendations to build out more detailed chapter outlines for the subsequent core elements of the Plan.

Preliminary Land Use Framework: The primary function of the Comprehensive Plan is to provide policy and direction for future land use and development over the next 20 years. To support this directive, the Preliminary Land Use Framework (composed of the Future Land Use Plan, and including land use influences and definitions) and Future Land Use Map section of this memo identifies high-level policy to guide the type and location for land uses and long-range investment. The Preliminary Land Use Framework builds upon existing uses and patterns of development within the community to establish a sustainable, compatible, and desirable mix of uses to meet the needs of current and future residents and community stakeholders.

NOTE: *This memorandum has been revised based on preliminary input from the full Guiding DG consultant team, Village staff, and Village Council Meetings held in September – November 2024.*

For the purposes of the Guiding DG plans, “the Village” or “the Village of Downers Grove” refer to the Village as a corporate, municipal authority. Elsewhere in the planning documents, “Downers Grove” will refer to the geographic boundaries, while “Community” will refer to people and institutions.

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Community Vision Statement

The Vision Statement paints a picture of what Downers Grove can achieve following the adoption of the Guiding DG Comprehensive Plan. The Vision Statement is the foundation for the Plan's goals, recommendations, and actions.

Community Vision Statement for the Comprehensive Plan

Downers Grove will become a model community with a population of over 50,000 people of all ages, races, backgrounds and incomes. Over the coming decades, it will be renowned for its strong sense of place, cultural diversity and the human connection among its residents. It will continue to celebrate its tradition of excellence, safe, distinctive and well-maintained neighborhoods, premier regional and local commercial choices, a lively, vibrant Downtown, commitment to sustainability, accessible and attractive open spaces, safe connectivity for all road users, and an array of quality local government services and amenities.

Downers Grove will be a vibrant and inclusive place with high quality, diverse housing options that support residents throughout their lives and foster a sense of belonging. The rich housing history will be preserved and a variety of residential architectural styles, housing types and multipurpose development will be embraced. Residential areas will be walkable, welcoming, and reflective of their unique neighborhood character.

The business-friendly environment will continue to attract businesses and investment. Commercial areas will continue to improve, thrive, and grow as regionally recognized destinations and notable activity centers. The Village will support new entrepreneurs and existing businesses of all sizes, both in the Downtown and throughout Downers Grove. Major employers that create a variety of employment opportunities will be drawn to the local economy.

Downtown Downers Grove will continue to be the heart of the community – a place where neighbors and visitors gather, and businesses thrive. The success of Downtown will be expanded via strategic connectivity with the Fairview focus area. The Downtown and the Fairview focus area will have innovative and sustainable streetscapes, art displays and public spaces resulting in an inviting, visually appealing, and culturally rich destination that attracts residents, visitors, and commuters alike. The Belmont focus area will be transformed into a third commuter rail-anchored node – a place for innovation, commerce, and residential amenities. Strategically positioned, the area will see sustainable and context-sensitive development. Similarly, other key locations in Downers Grove will be transformed to create distinctive gateway and destination nodes, unique in character and purpose, but aligned with the community's vision to provide diverse residential, commercial, cultural, resource, recreational, and natural amenities.

Downers Grove will consist of permanently preserved open spaces, native landscaping and a green stormwater management system. Natural resources will be respected by a more sustainable and livable community. There will be an abundance of natural recreation areas, walking paths, trails and trees. The community will be resilient in the face of intensifying climatological events and sustainability efforts will be embraced.

There will be a high quality, aesthetically pleasing, safe and accessible transportation system for all users with priority given to pedestrians, bicycles, and micro-mobility devices. Neighborhoods, commercial corridors, and local amenities will be connected through an extensive mobility network, providing the opportunity to comfortably walk, bike, drive, or take public transportation.

Residents, workers, students and visitors will continue to be welcomed in Downers Grove. The community will be a hub for inclusiveness, acceptance, mutual respect and cultural excellence, fostering a strong relationship among local institutions to promote an excellent quality of life and sense of pride.

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
- Encourage 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 development of open space, 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.
- Facilitate the preservation of historic buildings and neighborhoods and the adaptive reuse of existing structures.

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. *
- Encourage 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, ages, and abilities.
- 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 implement environmental friendly best practices, such as the International Dark Sky Initiative and bird-friendly glass.

Economic Development

In partnership with the Downers Grove Economic Development Corporation (EDC), support local businesses, commercial centers, major employers, and industries to strengthen the Village’s diverse tax base.

Key Recommendations:

- Continue to promote available commercial and industrial development, programs and incentives, events, and tourism.
- Continue to promote 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).
- Encourage the diversity of the economy by attracting and retaining minority owned businesses.
- 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

Provide a seamless, efficient transportation system that offers good connectivity, improves safety and mobility for people using all modes (walking, biking, transit, and driving), reduces traffic and emissions, and enhances the character of the community.

Key Recommendations:

- 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. *
- Continue to participate in the Safe Routes to School program.

Community Services, Facilities, and Infrastructure

Continue to provide high quality Village services, maintain and invest in Village facilities and critical infrastructure, and support the delivery of community services to ensure a resilient, sustainable, and high quality of life for the whole community.

Key Recommendations:

- Continue to provide exceptional public safety services.
- 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.
- Facilitate collaborations with governmental agencies and not-for-profits to provide services for senior citizens, youth, and disadvantaged populations.

- 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.
- Continue to coordinate with community partners on facility needs and siting to ensure provision of community services and infrastructure.

Sustainability, Parks, Recreation, and Open Space

Promote sustainability to ensure community resilience and to protect natural spaces. 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 and promote incentive programs for private landowners to participate in sustainability efforts, including the preservation and adaptive reuse of existing structures.
- 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 preserve and expand the Village's urban canopy.
- Steward existing natural areas and new green spaces to increase biodiversity.
- Promote climate resilience strategies to prioritize environmental protection.
- 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

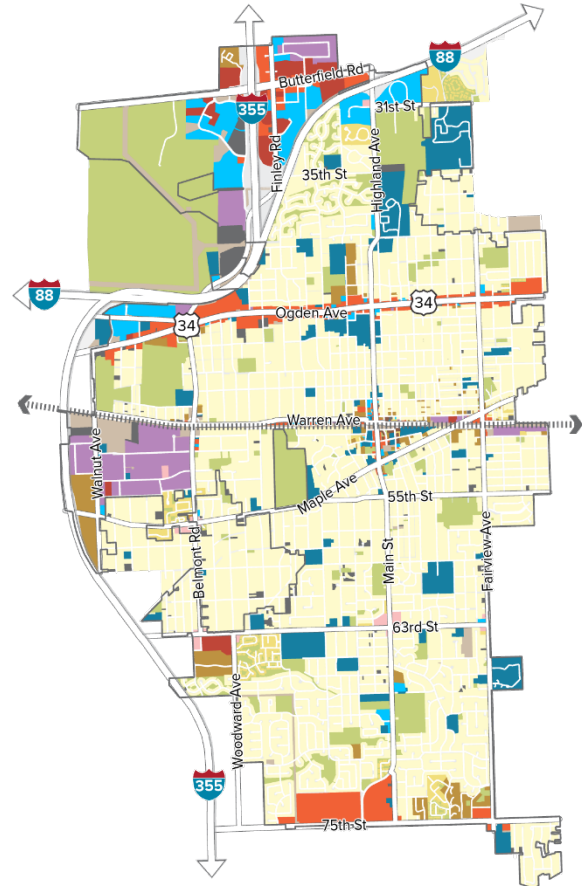
Land use and development are influenced and constrained by factors including: 1) existing land use, 2) limited available land for new development, and 3) its significant regional transit stations. This section of the Land Use Framework examines these factors to provide context for future growth and development.

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.

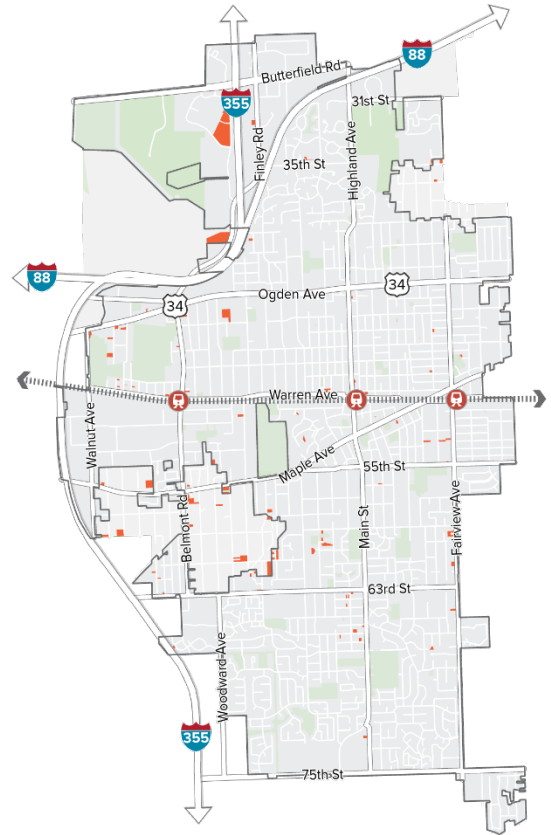
Downers Grove is built out, and as such, the current distribution of land is the primary influence on a framework that guides future development.



 Single-Family Detached	 Office
 Single-Family Attached	 Industrial
 Multifamily	 Public/Semi-Public
 Neighborhood Commercial	 Parks and Open Space
 Corridor Commercial	 Utilities and Transportation
 Regional Commercial	 Vacant and Undeveloped
 Mixed-use	

Limited Available Land for New Development

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



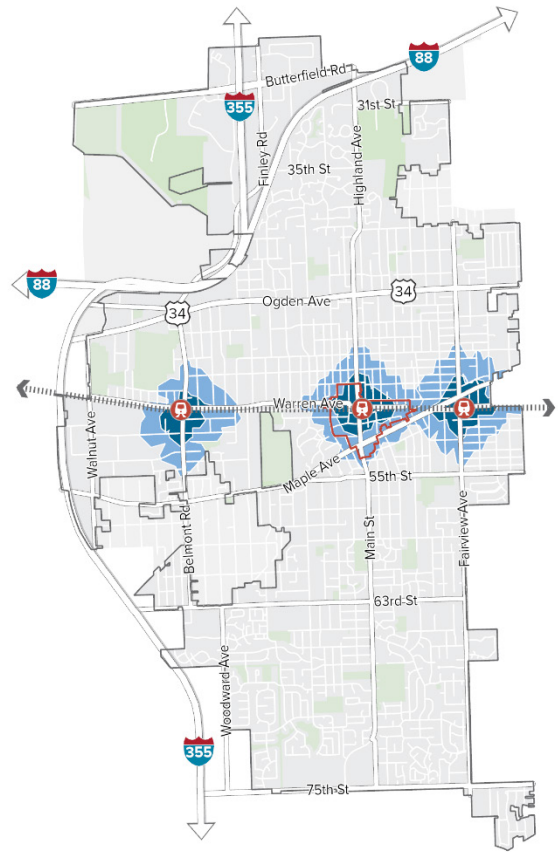
Available Land for New Development






Metra Stations

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.



-  Metra Stations
-  5 minute walk
-  10 minute walk
-  BNSF Rail Line
-  Downtown

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 improve 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 within Downers Grove. 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 attainable and 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

