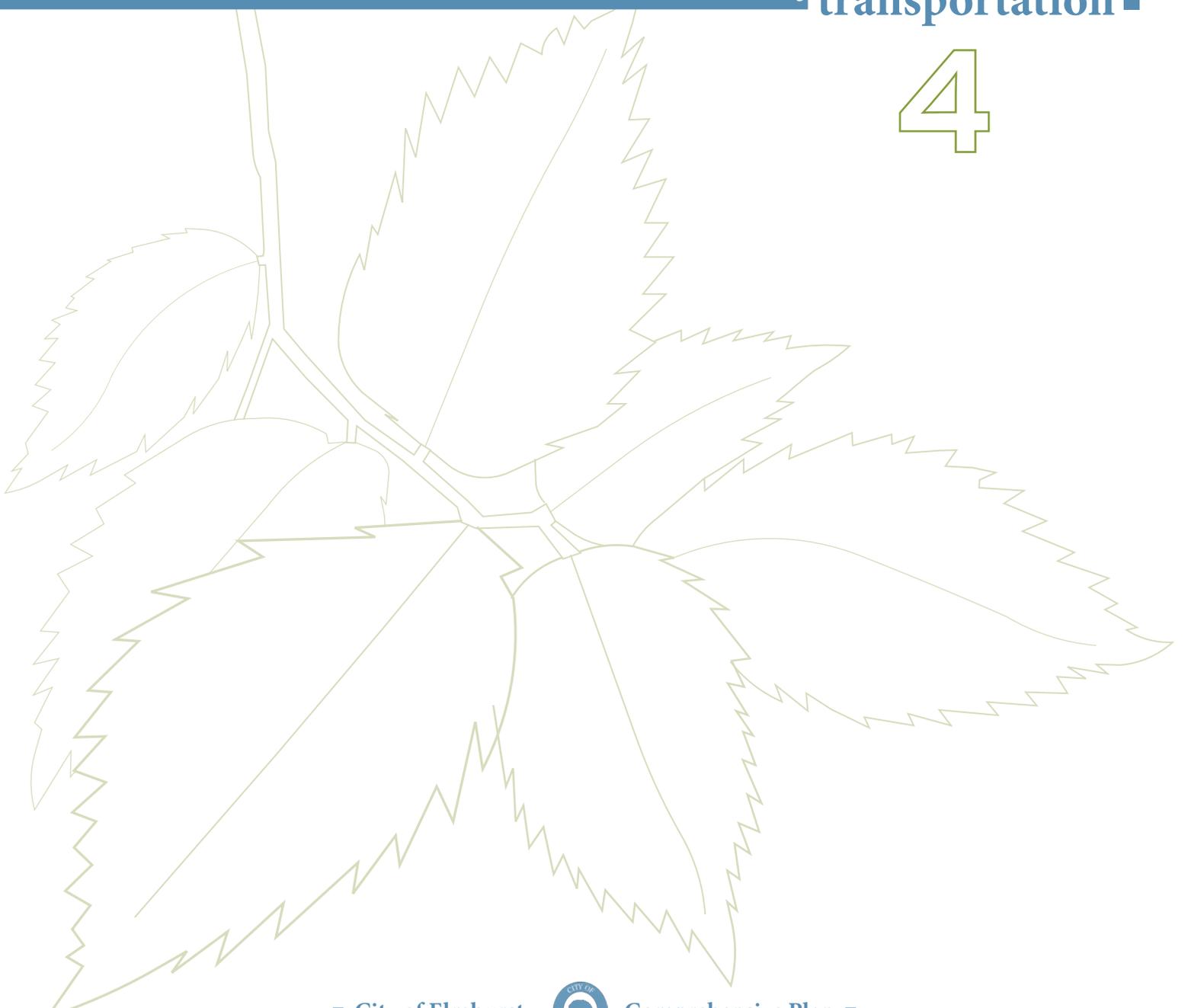


Transportation
■ transportation ■

4





TRANSPORTATION

Elmhurst's transportation system consists of an extensive roadway network, including direct access to Interstate Highways I-290, I-294, and I-88, an extensive commuter rail and bus transit system, as well as a well-connected pedestrian and bike network. This transportation network allows for easy and accessible travel within the City and excellent connections to the surrounding metropolitan area. Elmhurst's interstate highway and commuter rail access are among its strongest assets, making it a very desirable community for living and conducting business. Therefore, maintaining a well-functioning and efficient transportation system is critical to sustaining the high quality-of-life in the community. A review of existing conditions, including average daily traffic and transit ridership history, formed the basis for the development of the transportation framework and functional street classification. Through this analysis, priority improvement areas were identified, as well as general improvements or suggestions to manage population and employment growth, relative to a functional and efficient transportation system. This section provides an overview of the transportation network in Elmhurst and offers some recommendations to sustain and strengthen community mobility.



GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Goal 1: Continue to enhance mobility within the City by effectively managing local traffic issues and anticipating the impact of future development on current traffic patterns.

Objectives:

1. Minimize regional (non-local) and commercial traffic through single-family residential neighborhoods in Elmhurst.
2. Manage traffic growth on streets functionally classified as local or collector, and on sensitive arterials (narrow right-of-way and fronting residential uses) through traffic calming measures.
3. Utilize the City's Functional Classification Map of City streets for Elmhurst as the basis for traffic control and regulatory signing, land use and access control and overall street design.
4. Ensure adequate road surface conditions to accommodate required traffic volumes.
5. Ensure adequate capacity and safe design of street intersections and interchanges.
6. Continue to provide adequate street lighting in order to minimize potential traffic conflicts.
7. Ensure adequate resources for the improvement and maintenance of streets and public rights-of-way in the city.



Commuter and freight rail tracks

8. Improve wayfinding signage throughout the city to aid pedestrians, bicyclists and motorists in locating and accessing key community facilities.

Goal 2: Maintain and determine adequate parking facilities to serve land uses throughout the city.

Objectives:

1. Actively monitor, manage and address on-street and off-street parking needs within the city to ensure adequate and conveniently located parking to serve all current and future land uses.
2. Pursue opportunities for the reconfiguration of off-street parking lots, structures and the establishment of shared parking agreements to meet parking demands within neighborhood commercial areas in a coordinated and efficient manner.

Goal 3: Leverage existing mass transit systems (Metra and Pace) to encourage transit-oriented development and inter-modal connections.

Objectives:

1. Implement the Downtown Plan (2006), which recommends a transit-supportive development program around Elmhurst's Metra commuter station.
2. Implement infrastructure improvements, such as landscaping, street furniture, and bus stop enclosures, in order to encourage transit usage throughout the city.
3. Explore Pace bus routing improvements to more completely serve residents and commuters using the Metra station, as well as improve routing of Pace bus service between major economic activity areas within and surrounding Elmhurst.



4. Encourage the development of the bicycle and pedestrian systems in a manner which complements and supports public transportation access.
5. Work cooperatively with Pace, Metra, and other agencies to assess and respond to evolving transit user needs in the city.

Goal 4: Provide safe and convenient transportation alternatives.

Objectives:

1. Encourage and provide alternatives to the single-occupant automobile, including carpooling, walking and biking throughout the city.
2. Provide parking incentives for carpooling or utilizing alternate fuel vehicles.
3. Provide a continuous network of sidewalks and safe crosswalks throughout the city to improve pedestrian safety and encourage walking.
4. Seek to create a well-connected network of on-street/off-street bicycle paths to improve bicycle access throughout the city, including provision for bicycle parking.
5. Pursue opportunities with neighboring communities and agencies to create pedestrian and bicycle connections to nearby trails and recreational areas.
6. Seek to improve pedestrian comfort and safety along major thoroughfares and at busy intersections, in particular near schools, parks and commercial areas.

Policies

The following policies provide a framework for guiding the creation and implementation of transportation strategies.

1. Maintain the street grid network and improve and develop bicycle and pedestrian access throughout Elmhurst.
2. Provide the opportunity to upgrade and improve local substandard streets to a minimum standard, including curb, gutter and drainage infrastructure.
3. Seek to maximize the contributions by state, federal and other agencies toward the costs of major roadway improvements in the city, including the CREATE (Chicago Region Environmental and Transportation Efficiency) program to assist in funding railroad traffic mitigation measures and START (Solutions To Area Rail Traffic) to address regional rail congestion measures.
4. Anticipate measures likely needed to reduce traffic congestion through Elmhurst due to the proposed O'Hare Western Access.
5. The design of the overall street system should continue to discourage cut-through traffic in residential areas,



A network of interstate highways surround Elmhurst

- including new traffic calming measures if necessary.
6. The design of the overall street system should continue to encourage the development of complete streets.
7. Encourage increased Metra ridership through parking accommodation, access management and transit-oriented development surrounding the station.
8. Encourage the continuation and expansion of Pace bus service in the city.
9. Provide options for alternative modes of transportation in the city, including bicycles, pedestrians and transit, as well as incentives for carpooling and alternative fuel vehicle usage.
10. Consolidate access in large parking areas, including cross-easements in shopping centers and reduced curb cuts to major arterial roadways.



FUNCTIONAL STREET CLASSIFICATION

Functional classification of all City streets is a necessary step in determining the needs of future improvements to existing streets and appropriate land uses. Functional classification identifies the purpose of the street, such as whether it is to provide local access in residential neighborhoods or to move traffic through the community to other parts of the community. A functional classification of the roadways within and around Elmhurst is presented in *Table 1: Functional Street Classification System* and graphically illustrated in *Figure 14: Functional Street Classification System*.



Table 1: Functional Street Classification System

MAP KEY	FUNCTIONAL STREET CLASSIFICATION	ROADWAY	JURISDICTION
	Expressways: Expressways are limited access facilities serving intra-regional and interstate trips. Access is provided generally through interchanges however, some facilities might also have at-grade intersections. Speed limits can vary from 55 to 65 miles per hour; the Average Daily Traffic volume (ADT) is over 40,000 vehicles.	Interstate 290 Interstate 294 Interstate 88	IDOT Illinois Tollway Illinois Tollway IDOT IDOT
	Principal Arterials: Principal arterials serve mainly intra-regional trips. While these facilities are meant to carry through traffic, they can also provide access to major developments. A high level of access control should be applied for these roadways. Speed limits are typically in the 40-55 miles/hour range but in more intensely developed areas, could be 35 miles/hour or less.	Lake Street (US 20) North Avenue (IL 64) Kingery Highway (IL 83) Roosevelt Road (IL 38)	IDOT IDOT
	Minor Arterials: Minor arterials are intended primarily for trips between neighboring communities and within the community. These roadways are also primarily through traffic carriers but provide a much greater local access function than primary arterials. Speed limits can vary from 35-45 miles/hour or lower in more developed areas.	Grand Avenue York Street St. Charles Road Butterfield Road (IL 56)	County County City IDOT
	Community Collectors: Community collectors serve trips within the community and to a lesser extent between adjacent communities. Their primary function is to collect trips from the minor collector and local roadways and provide access to the arterial streets. Access control should be low to moderate.	West Avenue Spring Road Poplar Avenue Vallette Street Michigan Street County Line Road	City City City City City City
	Subdivision Collectors: These roadways are used to access different neighborhoods within the community. There is typically a low level of access control.	(Illustrated in Figure14)	City
	Local Streets: Local streets collect trips from abutting land development and feed them to higher classification streets. There is typically no access control.	(Illustrated in Figure14)	City



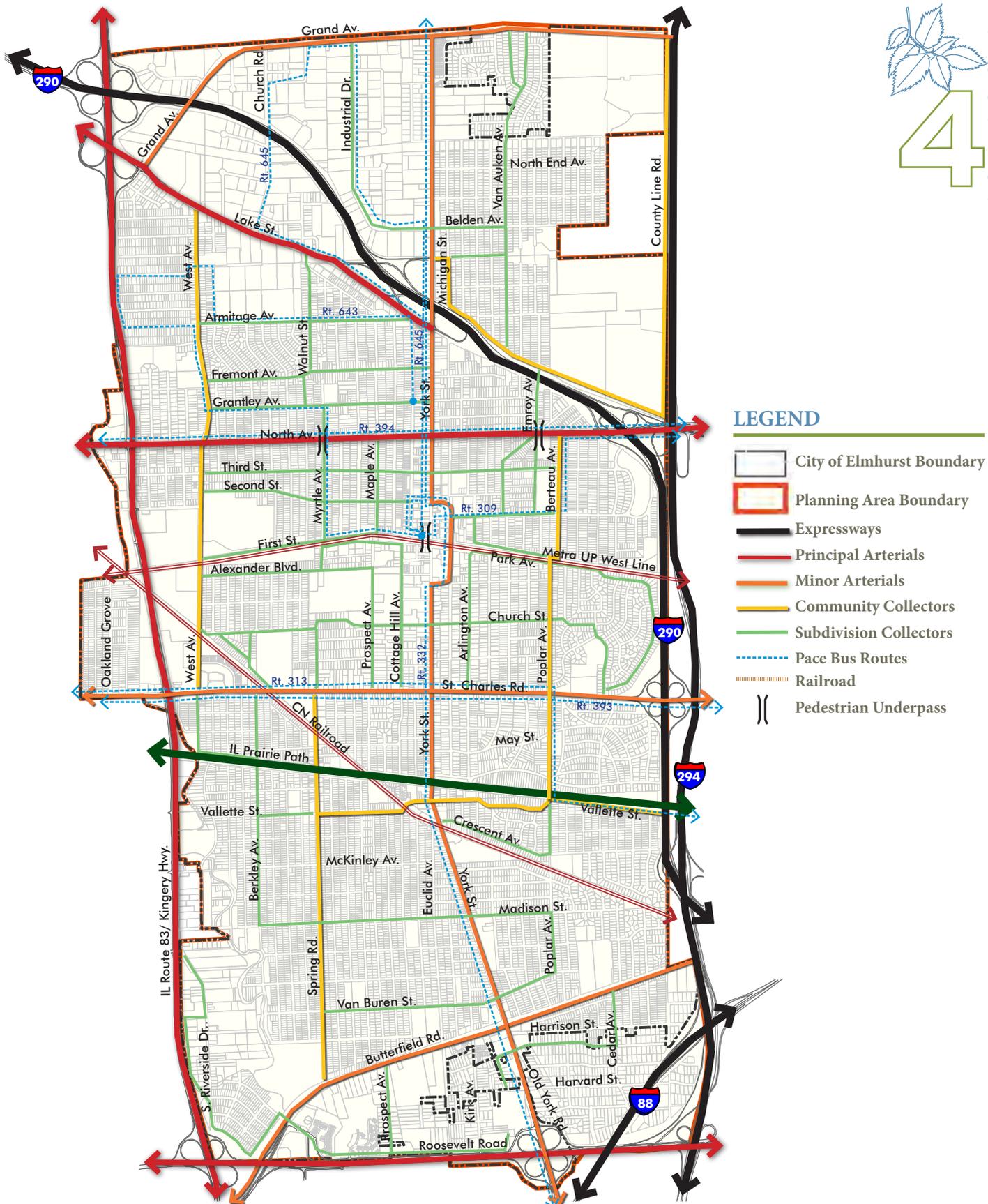


FIGURE 14: FUNCTIONAL STREET CLASSIFICATION SYSTEM

Scale: 1" = .50 miles

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FUTURE TRANSPORTATION FRAMEWORK

Elmhurst’s existing transportation system offers residents and visitors good access and circulation opportunities through a variety of different modes, including automobile, train, bus and bicycle. There are, however, a number of opportunities for the City to improve connections between modes and to provide input to IDOT as it works to improve important interchanges on both ends of the City. *Figure 15: Future Vehicular Transportation Framework* graphically depicts the existing road networks, railroad, and mass transit service, and identifies priority areas for transportation improvements. A discussion of these priority improvement areas is included in the following section.

Roadway System

Elmhurst is a well-developed and mature community with an organized street hierarchy and interconnected system of roadways. As noted on the Future Transportation Network, four priority areas in which the City should continue active planning participation have been identified:

- **Railroad Crossing:** In addition to accommodating regular Metra passenger service, the main function of the Metra UP West Line rail line is to transport freight regionally. Too often, freight train delays cause commuter train back-ups which results in traffic congestion on major arterials crossing the tracks, specifically York Street through the downtown area. While a below-grade roadway exists along Robert Palmer Drive to the east of York Street, traffic still backs up on area streets. While the governance of the railroad falls outside of the City’s jurisdiction, the Chicago Regional Environmental and Transportation Efficiency Program (CREATE) is assisting in improvements to help alleviate freight and passenger train congestion. The City should work to leverage assistance from the CREATE program. In addition, membership in the regional START program (Solutions To Area Rail Traffic) provides another opportunity for Elmhurst to participate in regional railway planning, in this case Canadian National Railway’s proposed acquisition of the Elgin, Joliet and Eastern Railway (EJ&E). This acquisition is a viable solution for reducing freight rail congestion in the near Chicago suburbs, including Elmhurst, by allowing a decrease in the amount of freight traffic being transported through the central city. This traffic reduction would result in fewer freight train delays and back-ups during peak vehicular congestion periods.
- **I-290/York Street Interchange:** The City should continue coordinating with IDOT on planning for the reconfiguration of the York and Lake Streets/I-290 ‘scissor’ interchange to ensure that the new roadway alignments improve overall accessibility in the area,



Elmhurst Metra Station

- in particular, to the commercial parcels along Lake Street.
- **York Street and Roosevelt Road Interchange:** The City of Elmhurst is working with Elmhurst Memorial Hospital and IDOT to improve the York/Roosevelt interchange to allow traffic from both directions on York Street and eastbound Brush Hill Road to proceed westbound on Roosevelt Road. The City should continue to collaborate with the hospital to understand potential traffic impact and implement roadway improvements as necessary.
- **I-294/North Avenue Interchange:** The City should continue to coordinate with IDOT and ISHTA on planning for the reconfiguration of the I-294 interchange at North Avenue to ensure that an access point connects southbound I-294 to eastbound North Avenue to minimize the impact of highway traffic in the surrounding residential areas.

Complete Streets

Complete Streets is a new program administered by the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT). The program is designed to broaden the focus of the thoroughfare beyond that of accommodating the automobile, and instead focus on enabling safe access for all types of street users, including pedestrians, bicyclists, motorists and transit riders of all ages and abilities. Complete Streets have been documented to improve safety for pedestrians and motorists alike, they encourage more walking and bicycling, ease congestion through mode sharing, and improve air quality by reducing carbon dioxide emissions from cars. While Elmhurst currently offers a well-connected network of pedestrian-friendly streets and bikeways, a recent change in Illinois law provides the opportunity for the City to leverage state funding to build on this strong foundation.





FIGURE 15: FUTURE VEHICULAR TRANSPORTATION FRAMEWORK ROADWAY SYSTEM

Scale: 1" = .50 miles

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Senate Bill 314 was adopted by the Illinois State Legislature on October 10, 2007, and requires that IDOT immediately begin to utilize Complete Streets design principles for project planning and is required for road construction beginning in August 2008. The Illinois Complete Streets mandate requires IDOT to include safe bicycling and walking facilities (appropriate to local context and needs) for all road projects constructed in urbanized areas, a designation which includes Elmhurst. Right-of-ways under IDOT's jurisdiction that may be eligible for state funding under the new Complete Streets legislation are depicted on both the Future Vehicular Transportation Framework and Pedestrian and Bicycle Framework maps.

O'Hare Western Access

The potential Western Access to Chicago O'Hare International Airport could significantly affect travel patterns and volumes in Elmhurst. Western access to the airport would be provided by extending the Elgin-O'Hare Expressway from its present eastern terminus at Interstate Highway 290 and Thorndale Avenue to the airport, and also through the construction of a north-south highway on the airport's western boundary that would connect Interstate Highway 90 and the Tri-State Tollway. This could potentially be routed along York Road through Bensenville, carrying additional traffic into Elmhurst, or along an access road further east within the airport's boundary. In either case, Elmhurst should work closely with IDOT, DuPage County and neighboring communities to coordinate regional traffic management strategies that will mitigate the potential traffic volume increase that will be created by this project.

Because York Street functions as a commercial corridor, a preliminary traffic congestion mitigation strategy could include the following:

- Regulate driveway spacing, corner clearance, and sight distance.
- Restrict the number of driveways per lot, consolidating access wherever possible.
- Require internal connections, unified circulation and parking plans between adjacent properties.
- Treat properties under the same ownership and those developed as a unified project as one property for the purpose of access control.
- Reduce commercial strip zoning and promote mixed-use and flexible zoning.
- Construct medians to control the location and reduce the number of left-hand turn points.
- Move access points away from signalized intersections and expressway ramps.



Commercial strip zoning

Traffic Calming

The grid network of streets in Elmhurst functions to reduce the pressure of traffic volumes on major arterial roadways, such as Lake Street, North Avenue, York Street, and Roosevelt Road by dispersing trips throughout secondary streets. When traffic congestion does occur on these major arterials, however, drivers that are familiar with the local street network sometimes choose to use secondary residential streets to avoid the traffic. This pattern has resulted in community concerns about increased residential street traffic and higher rates of speeding through neighborhoods.

Existing traffic patterns can be effectively altered to relieve congestion through the implementation of new regulations and design solutions.

Regulatory Solutions

Community concerns regarding cut-through traffic in residential neighborhoods could be mitigated through turn restrictions from main arterials at peak travel hours. Targeted implementation of this strategy at key problem intersections could discourage cut-through traffic while allowing some local traffic access. These restrictions could be in place during rush hours only, the times when cut-throughs most frequently occur, while allowing full access in the off-peak periods, a time when most residents would be making local trips. The City has already employed this measure at a number of key locations throughout Elmhurst, including North Avenue and Robert Palmer Drive.

Another regulatory option would be to designate affected neighborhood streets as one-way turns, which would effectively maintain the residential street as two-way, but route accessing traffic as though it were a one-way street. In oth-



er words, cars could only make right turns onto the neighborhood street from a main arterial and drivers turning onto the main arterial from the neighborhood street could only make right turns. This traffic pattern could reduce the number of through drivers in residential areas by restricting some access. Some locations in Elmhurst, including the intersections of Michigan and Addison Streets with North Avenue, already employ this pattern.

In order to support these regulatory efforts, the City may want to consider increasing police patrols to engage in targeted enforcement, as it has done at select locations throughout the City. Motorists are more likely to abide by new regulations when non-compliance consistently results in a police citation.

Design Solutions

While new regulations and enforcement initiatives would help to minimize traffic impacts in neighborhoods and minimize the need for capital investment, design solutions may be necessary to permanently alter traffic flow in certain problem areas.

- **Street and lane narrowing:** Motorists tend to drive at speeds they consider safe and reasonable and tend to drive more slowly on narrower roads and traffic lanes. Reducing road widths by widening boulevards or sidewalks intermittently, introducing medians, or striping bike lanes can reduce traffic speeds. On-street parking placement (protected by curbs and made more visible by landscaping) can achieve the same effect. Road narrowings have the added advantage of reducing the expanse of road to be crossed by pedestrians, thus reducing pedestrian crossing time.
- **Cul-de-sacs:** The creation of cul-de-sacs on through streets effectively closes that street to all but local traffic. These dead-ends, however, could negatively impact the long-term circulation pattern for the City. It could also raise concerns among the City's emergency response personnel because of reduced accessibility, which results in increased travel times for emergency calls.
- **Raised crosswalks or road humps:** Raised crosswalks or road humps can reduce vehicle speeds on local streets and provide improved visibility and safety for pedestrians, however they can equally increase emergency response times and slow emergency vehicles and buses, have potential drainage problems, increase noise, and increase maintenance costs. Additionally, they can actually increase speeding problems by causing drivers to speed up between road humps to make up for lost time slowing down to drive over them.



Traffic-calming techniques include 'curb bump-outs'

- **Curb bump-outs:** Curb bump-outs are extensions at intersections that reduce curb-to-curb roadway travel lane widths. They are used to make pedestrian crossings shorter and reduce the visual width of long, straight streets. Where they are constructed by widening the landscaped planting strip, they can have a positive effect on the visual appearance of the neighborhood. They can be used at intersections to create a street gateway effect, visually announcing an entrance to a neighborhood. Bulb-outs must be designed to accommodate emergency response vehicles.
- **Chicanes/curved alignments:** Chicanes are a form of curb bump-outs which alternate from one side of the street to the other. The road is in effect narrowed first from one side then the other and finally from the first side again in relatively short succession. Chicanes break up the typically long sight lines along streets and thus combine physical and psychological techniques to reduce speeds. Chicanes must be designed to accommodate emergency response vehicles.

These regulatory and design decisions would need to be studied in areas of specific concern on a case-by-case basis. The City first needs to decide if this approach is appropriate from a policy point of view. Note that it is difficult to determine what tools and techniques would work best in advance of experience with traffic operations resulting from the new terminal. Equally important will be resultant



attitudes and practices towards the various solutions. Thus, the City should continue to monitor plans through the design process to roadway opening to manage impacts as best as possible.

Driveway Access

While discussed in separate sub-area plans in *Chapter 3: Land Use and Development*, it is important to mention again the significance of controlled access. In any new design guidelines or regulations for commercial developments, access management should be stressed. This includes consolidating access points and curb cuts to large parking lots, which can be achieved through forming cross-easements in parking lots, or, more simply, consolidating parking needs and sharing space between users. Additionally, curb cuts and driveways on both sides of the street should be aligned as much as possible, minimizing potential conflict points along a corridor.

Wayfinding

The concept of wayfinding, or the ability of a person to find his or her way to a given destination, will be discussed further in *Chapter 10: Urban Design*, but should be touched upon here relative to transportation. The construction of wayfinding elements can be in the form of simple signage, or the orientation of a building to its larger site. As Elmhurst is located between several major expressway system interchanges with multiple ramps and transition points, it can sometimes be confusing to understand where the appropriate exit or entrance point is. This is specifically true with access to Highway 294 off of North Avenue. It is extremely important to have signage that helps residents and visitors find their destinations, and Elmhurst should work with IDOT to identify and improve confusing access points, such as the Hwy 294/North Avenue interchange identified above.

Bicycle and Pedestrian Access

Elmhurst offers a well-connected street network characterized by tree-lined streets and continuous sidewalks that are laid out in a traditional grid pattern. Sidewalks are present throughout most of the city. The Illinois Prairie Path, a regional hiking and biking trail, provides a convenient and continuous east-west pedestrian connection through the city. Other trails along Salt Creek are under construction, and, when complete, will form a strong north-south bike path connection to existing regional trails, including the Great Western Trail, which is located to the northwest of the city.

Although Elmhurst generally can be defined as “pedestrian-friendly”, several areas within the city

“Pedestrian-friendly” can be defined as a built environment that is friendly to the presence of people living, shopping, visiting, enjoying or spending time in an area. These corridors typically offer elements such as sidewalks, crosswalks, pedestrian amenities, an interconnected street network, access to mass transit, vehicular buffers, landscape plantings and street furniture.

are not conducive for walking. Most of the commercial and employment areas outside the downtown (except for the Spring Road business district) are auto-oriented. These areas are characterized by buildings placed behind large surface parking lots greatly reducing accessibility from the sidewalk. Additionally, Elmhurst does not have dedicated bike lanes on its roadways. The pedestrian network in the city is interrupted by arterial roadways such as North Avenue, Lake Street, York Street and Butterfield Road, and related auto-oriented development. The high vehicular speed and high traffic volumes act as a barrier making it difficult for pedestrians to cross these roadways. To improve access and safety, pedestrian underpasses have been provided at two locations on North Avenue. These underpasses provide a safe crossing option for pedestrians, including school students, as well as enhance connectivity to the Illinois Prairie Path and other bicycle/walking trails.

While the existing bicycle and pedestrian networks are good, the completion of planned bikeway projects and the construction of additional sidewalks could ensure that all residents of Elmhurst can choose to walk or ride a bike to any destination in the city. Planning for right-of-way should consider needs based on multimodal network performance measures that seek to balance community character and capacity enhancement or congestion relief. *Figure 16: Future Pedestrian and Bicycle Framework* graphically depicts the following opportunities:

- **Bikeway connections:** A number of local bikeways that would significantly increase bike accessibility are in the planning stages. Two extensions of these planned bikeways would function to complete the system and provide even more options for connectivity.
- **Sidewalk network improvements:** While the City’s network for sidewalks is strong, a few areas still lack consistent sidewalks. The construction of sidewalks in these remaining areas would complete the City’s network and provide continuous pedestrian access.





FIGURE 16: FUTURE PEDESTRIAN AND BICYCLE FRAMEWORK

Scale: 1" = .50 miles





- **Secure bike parking:** The provision of secure bicycle parking facilities would remove an obstacle to bike usage and bicycling to the Metra station, the downtown area, and the York/Vallette and Spring Road business districts.

Additional opportunities to improve the bicycle and pedestrian framework include:

- **Urban design features:** Bicycle lanes should have unique signage and uniform striping throughout the city to signalize the alternative use of these pathways and signalize the presence of non-vehicular traffic.
- **Funding:** One source of funding for the completion of the bicycle and pedestrian network is the IDOT Complete Streets program, discussed earlier in this chapter.
- **Regional connections:** Planning efforts to complete the system should especially pay attention to providing connections outside of Elmhurst. Regional trails, such as the Illinois Prairie Path and Salt Creek Greenway, should be maintained within the city.
- **Municipal coordination:** Bicycle lanes on through-streets should be continued across municipal boundaries. Coordination with surrounding communities is critical to fostering a regional non-vehicular travel network.
- **Pedestrian Safety:** Visual features to signify drivers of pedestrian activity should be implemented within the city. Further study is required to determine the best course of action. Options could potentially include special crosswalk treatment (i.e. special markings, alternative paving, raised crosswalks/speed tables), subtle flashing lights at key intersections that lack other traffic calming devices, pedestrian refuges in the median of wide intersections, pedestrian bridges over high capacity roadways, and curb bump-outs on local streets.

Public Transportation System

Elmhurst has a number of mass transit options, including a well-designed and used Metra station in the downtown area, and seven Pace suburban bus routes. An overview of these modes and recommendations for improvement follow. Specific recommendations relative to the downtown, including the downtown Elmhurst Metra Station, can be found under separate cover in the Downtown Plan (2006).

Metra

The commuter rail serves Elmhurst frequently on weekdays (and slightly less frequently on weekends) on Metra's Union Pacific West Line, which connects to the



Elmhurst's Metra station is convenient to Downtown shops

Ogilvie Transportation Center in Downtown Chicago. The city's downtown Metra train station is easily accessible to vehicular, pedestrian, and bike traffic, and is the busiest station on the entire Metra Union Pacific West Line.

The Metra station is a significant asset for Elmhurst providing its residents convenient access to Downtown Chicago and other suburban communities along the train-line. It increases the desirability of Elmhurst for people who want to live close to transit and contributes to the vitality of downtown Elmhurst by attracting an increasing number of residents.

Implementation of the Downtown Plan (2006) will foster continued integration of increased densities of residential development and commercial services downtown, resulting in a transit-oriented community, decreasing excess vehicular traffic through transit usage.

Pace

Pace provides bus service within Elmhurst. Seven fixed Pace bus routes pass through or circulate within the city, providing access to destinations within Elmhurst and in neighboring communities. Several of the Pace routes connect the Elmhurst Metra Station to major employment destinations within the city, enhancing accessibility options for employees.

In addition to the fixed route services, Pace also provides paratransit services for the disabled in compliance with the American with Disabilities Act (ADA). It is a curb-to-curb service operating within three-quarters of a mile of Pace's regular fixed routes during the same hours and days as the fixed route service.



Elmhurst Memorial Hospital is in the process of planning the construction of a new facility roughly bound by Roosevelt Road, York Street, Harvard Street, and Euclid Avenue. The City should consider partnering with the hospital and Pace to evaluate whether a shuttle service between the Metra and hospital campus would mitigate the traffic impact of the hospital's new location on York Street, and provide an alternate accessibility option for patients and staff. Alternatively, the City could partner with Pace to evaluate whether any existing bus routes could be altered to incorporate a route between the Metra Station and the hospital, as well as between Elmhurst neighborhoods and the new medical campus.

The Elmhurst Employment District sub-area (*Chapter 3: Land Use and Development Pattern*), is especially affected by transportation network accessibility because of the intensity of movement of goods, services, and personnel into and throughout the site. The area is served by a Pace bus route providing rush hour service from the Metra commuter rail station in downtown Elmhurst. Convenient transit access makes it easier for businesses to attract and retain a wider range of employees enhancing their competitiveness. Bus service to the district should be maintained in the future, and enhanced as needs arise in cooperation with business owners. Bus service should be additionally provided as warranted to other major commercial centers for employee and visitor transportation.

Parking near Transit

Convenient parking is essential to the continued success of downtown Elmhurst and its transit services. The Downtown Plan (2006) provides a comprehensive understanding of the existing conditions and recommendations for future improvements. As that Plan states, parking provision is a land-intensive use. To continue downtown redevelopment efforts, surface parking lots should be acquired and consolidated into shared lots and/or vertical parking structures. Parking structures can blend seamlessly into the downtown character through careful design and integration above, below or behind commercial/office/residential buildings. To maximize prime parking for retail uses, employee and commuter parking should be consolidated in key locations, making available on-street and temporary parking areas closer to retailers. Further elaboration on parking downtown and its role within the larger community transit framework is included in the Downtown Plan (2006).



IMPLEMENTATION

The City of Elmhurst should consider pursuing the follow-



Commuter parking adjacent to the Metra station

ing strategies to achieve successful implementation of desired transportation improvements. Policy numbers at the end of each implementation action correspond with the policies stated at the outset of the chapter.

Congestion Management

Increased population and employment growth in and around Elmhurst have the potential increase traffic congestion through the community. As volumes increase, the City should commission further studies to address traffic issues. The intent of congestion management strategies – local traffic calming and regional access management – should be made clear in the study and relevant strategies suggested. [Policies 4, 5]

Alternative Modes

Elmhurst has a well-designed and comprehensive street network. The City should leverage this by encouraging multi-modal transportation options, “completing the street” by using each corridor to its fullest capacity and reducing vehicles miles traveled (VMT). With gas prices and commuting times equally rising, residents are looking to utilize all available options. Priority should be given to completing the urban sidewalk network and creating a city-wide bicycle system. The first phase of this may be through



street signage designating safe bicycle routes, with physical bike lanes and vehicular separation as a later phase.

Continued development of residences downtown allows multiple commuting options – walk, bike, bus or train. Incentives should be given to carpoolers and those utilizing alternative fuel vehicles, such as priority parking spaces in lots or reduced parking fees. [Policies 6, 9]

Transit Expansion

As transit becomes a more popular mode of transportation, Elmhurst should work with Pace and Metra to expand services in the community. Additional bus routes should be explored to connect the community business districts with nearby neighborhoods and the downtown Metra station. Higher-density residential development should be encouraged around transit access points to promote this alternative mode. [Policies 7, 8]

Bicycle and Pedestrian Linkages

Stronger bike and pedestrian linkages should be established between the residential neighborhoods surrounding the business districts. The City should seek funding to implement improvements and require new development/redevelopment to comprehensively plan for and accommodate bicycle and pedestrian activity. The following features should be planned and implemented:

- Streetscape improvements, further elaborated in *Chapter 10: Urban Design*.
- Use of mid-block pedestrian linkages could also be considered to further enhance pedestrian access.
- Strong linkages should be made between neighborhood activities, such as to the downtown, hospital, Cultural Campus and business districts.
- Most streets in the unincorporated residential area east of York Street are without sidewalks, curbs, or gutters, which gives the neighborhood a rural appearance. If residents request annexation into the City, sidewalks could be considered in the area in the future.
- The Forest Preserve District is constructing a Greenway Trail with an underpass beneath Roosevelt Road to link the bike path along the Salt Creek Greenway to York Woods and the regional bikeway along South York Street. A strategic pedestrian/bikeway connection that links to the Greenway Trail and York Woods bike paths should be pursued at the intersection of Roosevelt and York Roads, improving overall access to both of these amenities from the southern part of Elmhurst (see *Chapter 8: Natural Resources*). [Policies 1, 9]

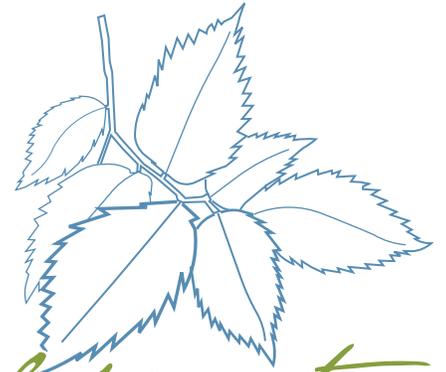


Mid-Block pedestrian passageway

Capital Needs

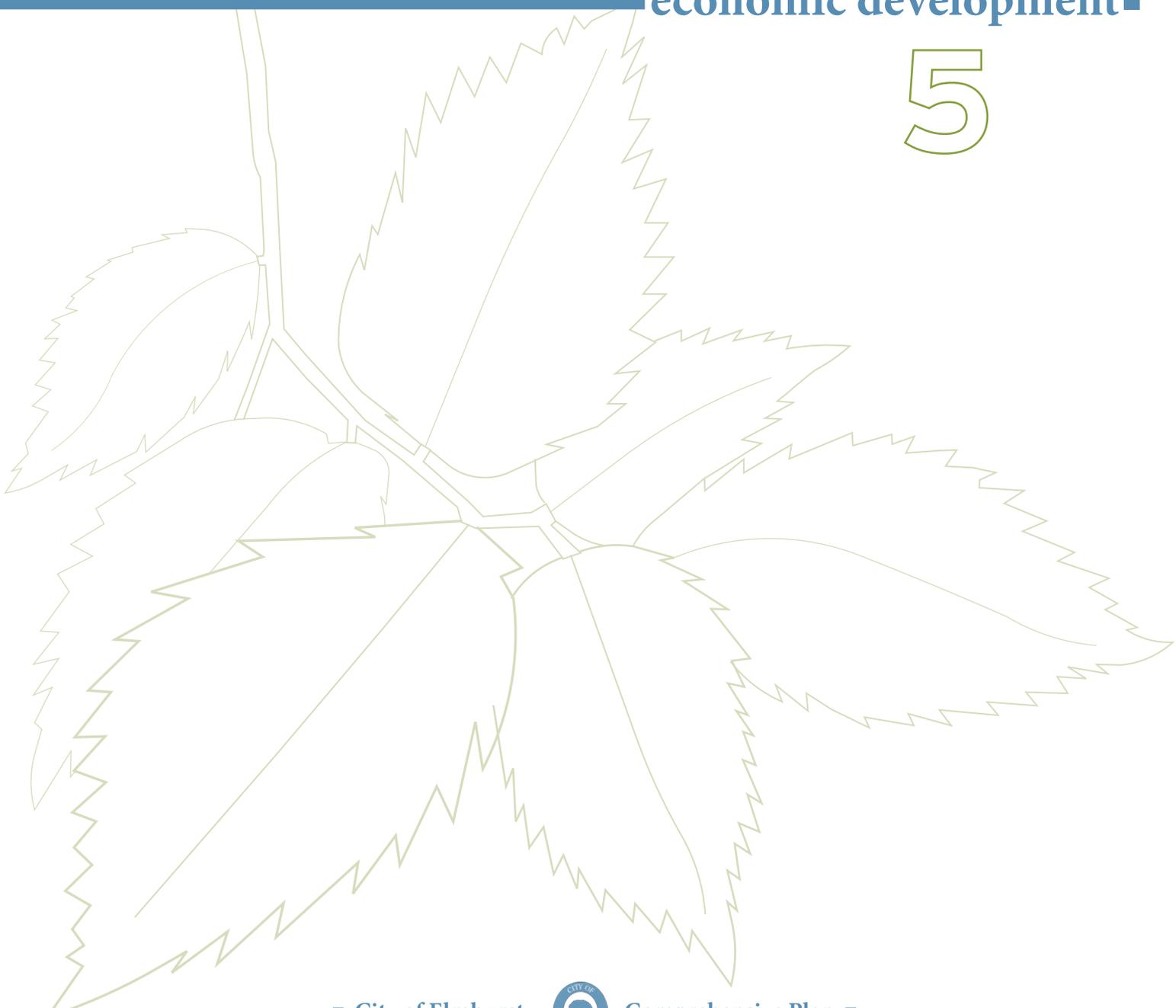
A number of the recommendations outlined above would require local capital project funding sources in order to be implemented, including the connection or expansion of bicycle and pedestrian networks, roadway improvements, and the construction of downtown parking facilities. Some recommendations could be potentially funded with state or federal money, but others, specifically related to City-owned streets, would require City funding. The City should prioritize capital needs specified in this chapter and integrate them into the next Capital Improvement Plan. The City should also seek outside funding where available, including through IDOT's Complete Streets program or the state's CREATE funding program. [Policies 2, 3]





Economic Development
economic development ■

5





ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Elmhurst is a mature community with a number of assets, including a strong business community, stable residential sector, excellent school system, and exceptional cultural amenities. Providing a strong economic base within the community is essential for the continued provision of strong community facilities and services. The challenge facing Elmhurst is to craft an economic development strategy that effectively balances these existing assets while guiding development opportunities within a spatially-constrained environment. Single-family residential homes made up 56 percent of the land use in 2007, while all industrial, commercial, and office space combined for a total of less than 20 percent of the land uses. Developmental assistance resources, then, must be prioritized: maximum impact must be leveraged from comparatively limited non-residential developmental opportunities. In order to assist in this process, Goodman Williams Group conducted a market assessment that was released in April 2007 to evaluate the existing development environment and what types of development would be supported by projected growth trends. These trends, which will be discussed in detail in this chapter, will provide guidance as the City makes decisions regarding the types of development it targets for recruitment and retention and the use of incentives.



GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Goal 1: Encourage residential and business investment through the creation of a supportive regulatory and policy environment.

Objectives:

1. Target retail business incentives to the business districts outside of the downtown, including the York and Vallette, and Spring Road business districts.
2. Review regulatory requirements for residential development and assess feasibility of streamlining the existing process.
3. Analyze feasibility of creating additional tax-increment finance (TIF) or business improvement district (BID) districts to support infill and redevelopment at targeted commercial sites.
4. Create a stable investment environment through a consistent pattern of code enforcement and regulatory review.
5. Create a mechanism to ensure consistent communication between Elmhurst's business community and City government.

Goal 2: Improve Elmhurst's ability to attract and retain high quality employers.

Objectives:

1. Survey existing businesses on an annual basis to gauge their rates of satisfaction with Elmhurst's business environment.
2. Undertake targeted marketing strategies to attract businesses which support existing industry clusters, including car dealerships and institutions which make up the Cultural Campus.
3. Create regulatory policies and incentives that are tailored to the needs of the industry clusters which Elmhurst seeks to attract.

Goal 3: Increase tax revenues for the City through the expansion of the tax base rather than through raising current tax rates.

Objectives:

1. Expand the tax base and alleviate reliance on residential property tax through the attraction of commercial, industrial, and employment development.
2. When City financial resources are used to support economic development activities, ensure that these funds are leveraged to maximize economic benefits for the City.
3. Ensure that new development is financially responsible for the proportionate share of City-funded services and infrastructure investments that are required as a result of the new development.

Goal 4: Maintain Elmhurst's high quality of infrastructure to support existing business and residential uses and encourage reinvestment.

Objectives:

1. Continue investing in basic infrastructure elements, including sidewalks, sewer systems and roadways to ensure that essential infrastructure standards are met.
2. Ensure continued adherence to high urban design standards within the public way, including landscaping, streetscaping, median maintenance, and lighting.
3. Evaluate installation of city-wide fiber optic network to support equitable access to technology.
4. Integrate "green" technology into infrastructure upgrades, including the use of permeable pavement for roadways and alleys.
5. Encourage the design of new residential and commercial development that facilitates a system of bicycle and pedestrian access.

Goal 5: Continue Elmhurst's tradition of high quality public education for its children, and expand workforce training opportunities for adult residents.



Objectives:

1. Pursue aggressive teacher recruitment activities to ensure that the highest quality candidates are considered when positions become available.
2. Increase funding for Elmhurst Public Schools.
3. Partner with public sector agencies, including the State of Illinois' Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity, and local private sector businesses to develop workforce training programs.

Policies

The following policies provide a framework for guiding the creation and implementation of economic development strategies.

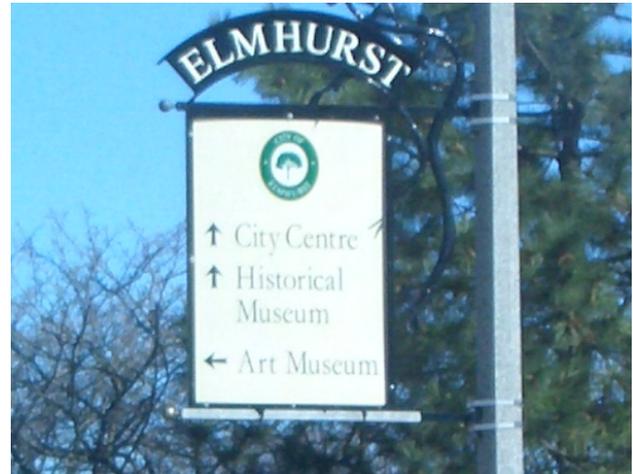
1. Planning and economic development activities should be coordinated to provide regular opportunities for communication between the business community and the City.
2. The retention and expansion of existing businesses should be encouraged, including the strategic mobilization of a skilled workforce in Elmhurst.
3. City financial incentives should be targeted for usage by industry clusters which meet a set of predetermined criteria to ensure the efficient use of financial resources.
4. TIFs and special service areas (SSAs) should continue to be utilized as a mechanism for funding infrastructure improvements.
5. Infrastructure investments should be prioritized to leverage the highest degree of economic development.
6. Transit-oriented development land use patterns should be encouraged within a half-mile of the existing Metra station through the use of supportive public policies.
7. Visitors to the Elmhurst Cultural Campus should be leveraged to generate patronage of nearby shops and entertainment options.



EXISTING RESOURCES

The City's Economic Development Office is part of the Department of Planning, Zoning, and Economic Development and, in conjunction with the following organizations, provides assistance to business owners and developers:

- **Elmhurst Chamber of Commerce and Industry:** Membership organization providing services and assistances to businesses throughout the City, including networking/referral, business education, business promotion, government action and business leadership.
- **Elmhurst City Centre:** Non-profit corporation organized and supported by the downtown business



The Elmhurst Cultural Campus can generate entertainment and retail choices for visitors and residents alike.

community which engages in placemaking through marketing and special events, physical standards and improvements and business recruitment and retention.

- **Tax Increment Financing:** Financing tool which enables the City to capture increases in tax revenue that result from public infrastructure investments in order to finance continued redevelopment activity. The City currently has three TIF districts.
- **Special Service Areas:** Additional property taxes self-levied to fund "special services" within a geographically-defined area. As of September 2008, Elmhurst has seven functioning SSAs.
- **Spring Road Business Association:** Non-profit membership organization that supports and promotes businesses located within the Spring Road business district.
- **York and Vallette Business Association:** Non-profit membership organization that supports and promotes businesses located within the York and Vallette business district
- **Central Business District Retail Business Grant Program:** Uses funds from the Central Business District TIF to attract and expand targeted retail businesses that grants of up to \$10,000.
- **Facade Improvement Program:** Grant funding mech-



anism to support upgrades and renovations of building exteriors through the Downtown TIF district.

The City maintains a number of revenue sources which help to financially support economic development initiatives, but the majority of monies are collected through general purpose property taxes. Additional sources include the motor fuel tax, public utility taxes, retailer’s occupational tax, state income tax rebates, and other City fees.

Commercial Tax Base

As the Goodman Williams Group report notes, the City has effectively attracted over 220 retail and service offerings in the downtown area. While new restaurants and specialty retailers serve the downtown area, the City should continue to target business recruitment and assistance to the York and Vallette, and Spring Road business districts. While the market assessment notes that Elmhurst currently has a retail market surplus of nearly \$235 million, there is still market support for up to 200,000 square feet of additional retail, restaurant, and service uses projected for the next ten years. In addition to smaller-scale, community-serving commercial, Elmhurst could support additional large-format retailers, including electronics and discount department stores. Proximity to regional shopping destinations like Oakbrook Center and Yorktown Shopping Center, however, may dissuade large-scale retailers from locating in Elmhurst. The City should work with these potential retailers to provide site selection and targeted development assistance. The market report also notes the importance of the industry cluster of automobile dealerships to the overall performance of the retail sector. Automobile dealers should remain concentrated in the northern part of the City. The land uses in this area, as well as the Yorkfield area to the south, would be conducive to supporting large-format retailers.

Employment Centers

The Lake and Grand industrial area supports a cluster of businesses, including small manufacturing, distribution, and service companies, which draw employees into Elmhurst and heavily contributes to the tax base. The market assessment projects that demand for space within this area will remain high for the foreseeable future. Professional and service businesses are located throughout the city, with some clustering occurring within the downtown City Centre area. Elmhurst Memorial Hospital, whose main campus is consolidating at the southern edge of the City, and Elmhurst College, in the Cultural Campus, are also major employment centers that attract employees from other municipalities. The market assessment finds a significant increase in the demand for office space in Elmhurst unlikely in the next ten years.

Business Diversification

Elmhurst currently supports a variety of business types, including the service industry, such as medical and financial services, the retail industry, including gifts, specialty goods, and clothing, and the cultural and entertainment industries, including restaurants. While there are industry clusters which provide long-term stability to the employment and tax base, including the medical/dental services and auto dealerships, it is important that Elmhurst remain a community with a high degree of business diversification to insulate the economy from instability in various market sectors. Diversity within the business community will also create a demand for a variety of professional skills and attract a dynamic, skilled workforce.

Cultural Campus

Elmhurst’s Cultural Campus is a concentrated area within the downtown that supports a mixture of primarily public, institutional, and quasi-public uses west of Cottage Hill Avenue and south of Park Avenue. Elmhurst College, Wilder Park, Elmhurst Art Museum, and the Elmhurst Public Library are among the institutions which are sited within the district. The Elmhurst Cultural Campus Collaborative, a partnership of individual stakeholder agencies, was created to steer future planning activities within the campus. These efforts culminated in the creation of the Cultural Campus Plan, adopted by City Council in 2004, which provides a planning framework to coordinate future planning and development activities within this area in an effort to protect and preserve it as a unique community asset. Rather than a single plan or strategy, the activities of the Collaborative were meant to provide ideas and opportunities for future improvements to the Cultural Campus area. The Downtown Plan, adopted by City Council in 2006, identifies the Cultural Campus as a planning sub-area and recommends a number of principles for the area, including:

- Prepare a concept framework plan for the Cultural Campus,
- Relate the Cultural Campus to downtown Elmhurst,
- Protect and enhance Wilder Park open space,
- Develop a “system” of off-street parking to meet campus needs,
- Enhance bicycle and pedestrian connections within and around the Campus,
- Establish a unique wayfinding system for the campus, and
- Provide for coordination of implementation activities.

The mechanisms and plans are already in place to support the coordinated growth and development of the Cultural Campus.





IMPLEMENTATION

The City of Elmhurst should consider pursuing the following strategies to achieve the successful implementation of economic development improvements. Policy numbers at the end of each implementation action correspond with the policies stated at the outset of the chapter.

Collaboration

Through a collaborative effort with relevant stakeholders, districts for which retail business growth and expansion is targeted should be identified and mapped. Appropriate incentives to encourage retail business within these districts should also be developed and implemented. City staff should work with these targeted retailers, including large-format retailers, to assist with parcel identification and assembly activity, if necessary.

Coordinated marketing and branding activities should be undertaken by the City, Chamber of Commerce and Industry, and other relevant stakeholders to encourage the attraction of commercial, industrial and office space users. An expanded tax base will reduce reliance on residential property tax as the main revenue stream.

The City should encourage open lines of communication with the business community through the use of surveys, the identification of key City staff as business liaisons, and the creation of industry roundtables. [Policy 1]

Regulatory Actions

City staff should conduct an internal audit to determine whether the existing regulatory requirements for residential developments are creating unnecessary procedural bottlenecks. The City should also determine whether the existing development and zoning code supports the creation of mixed-use development at targeted locations throughout the city, including the area surrounding the Metra station.

Workforce Development

The City should pursue strategic partnerships with the state and local employers to design workforce development programs that target existing and growth industries within Elmhurst.

Elmhurst should continue its tradition of excellent public education through the provision of adequate financial resources and the aggressive recruitment of top teaching talent for its school system. A strong public school system is an attraction for employers and employees, and will produce an educated and skilled workforce for the future. [Policy 2]

Funding

The City should assess the need for additional TIF or SSA districts throughout Elmhurst. Developmental regulations should require that new developments bear a proportionate cost of their public infrastructure and service requirements. [Policies 3, 4]

Infrastructure

“Green” technology should be systemically incorporated into future public infrastructure improvements as a means to improve sustainability and reduce operating and maintenance costs.

Infrastructure upgrades should be designed to improve the accessibility and mobility of all Elmhurst residents, whether through the installation of a city-wide fiber optic network or the incorporation of bicycle and pedestrian amenities into new commercial and residential development. [Policies 5, 6]

The City should implement a comprehensive streetscape and signage program within the downtown area to attract and direct visitors between the central business district and Cultural Campus. Both areas should functionally complement each other, providing patrons to local businesses and cultural institutes. [Policy 7]



Incorporate “green” infrastructure into public improvements, such as reflective roofs.

