



Overview & Summary

City of Elmhurst Comprehensive Plan



Introduction and Summary

Elmhurst’s Comprehensive Plan is an important tool for guiding and facilitating growth and redevelopment within the community, as well as planning for the delivery of public services in a timely and efficient manner. A Comprehensive Plan is a long-range planning document that applies to the entire Elmhurst community and is used for day-to-day growth and redevelopment decision making. This Plan was prepared through the intensive efforts of City residents and leaders. The Comprehensive Plan represents Elmhurst’s official statement of physical, socioeconomic and community facility and services priorities, articulates a future vision for Elmhurst, and describes the actions that City decision makers can take to turn this vision into reality. These actions include capital improvements, development controls and incentives, and partnerships with other levels of government, non-profit organizations, or private businesses to achieve specific objectives.

The Vision of Elmhurst recognizes the City as a unique community maintaining a variety of facilities and services that are common to larger communities. The Vision is based on the following elements:

- Collaborative governance,
- Quality design and urban form,
- Economic competitiveness,
- An efficient transportation system,
- Quality community facilities and services, and
- Strong neighborhoods.

The Vision forms the core of the Comprehensive Plan and provides a framework through which key community planning elements, including land use and development, transportation, economic development, housing, community facilities and services, natural resources, sustainability, and urban design, are addressed. The major goals and objectives contained in each of these elements are summarized below. While presented separately, the individual goals are designed to work together to support realization of the Elmhurst Vision.

Please note that this document represents a brief summary of the Comprehensive Plan. The complete adopted Plan is available online through the City’s website at <http://www.elmhurst.org/index.asp?nid=97>.

Land Use and Development

The Future Land Use Framework is intended to provide a blueprint of the future development pattern of the City of Elmhurst by indicating the type and organization of uses that would most effectively help the City meet its comprehensive planning goals. The Future Land Use Framework provides policy guidance over the life of the Plan for



Vicinity Map



basic development and improvement decisions. The following lists the land use and development goals recommended in the Plan:

- Maintain strong residential neighborhoods by continuing to provide quality infrastructure and promote aesthetically-pleasing neighborhoods,
- Maintain the downtown as a vibrant, attractive, and distinctive shopping, dining, and entertainment center while retaining its small-town character, range of living options, and diverse cultural activities,
- Encourage a complementary and market-driven series of commercial developments that are organized to provide a variety of goods and services throughout the community,
- Encourage aesthetically-pleasing and functionally well-designed retail and commercial shopping area environments,
- Expand and maintain a strong employment base in Elmhurst which enhances the overall standard of living, and
- Strengthen the City's industrial base.

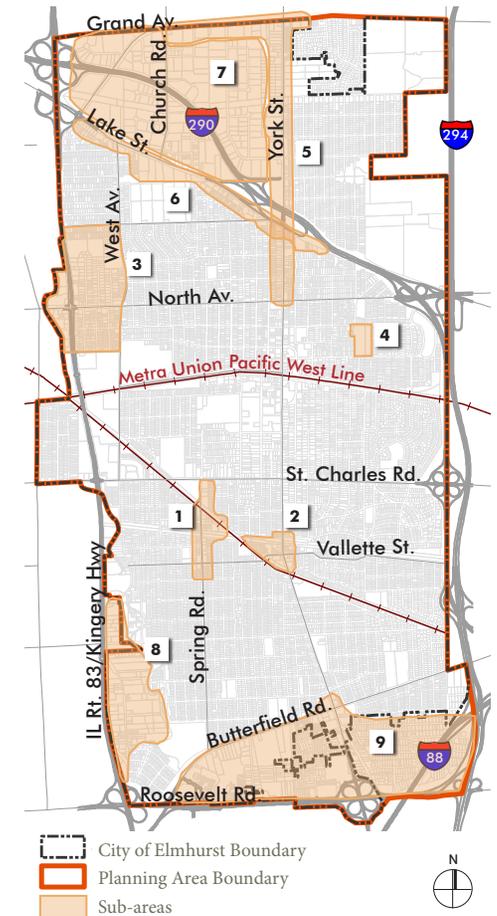
Sub-Areas

While the Comprehensive Plan applies to the entire community, nine sub-areas were identified as representing the greatest opportunity for change within the City, and were subject to a more detailed level of examination and analysis at each stage of the planning process. These planning sub-areas are illustrated on the map to the right, and detailed land use, urban design, and circulation recommendations for each is included within the full Comprehensive Plan. The full Plan is available online at <http://www.elmhurst.org/index.asp?nid=97>.

Transportation

Elmhurst's interstate highway and commuter rail access are among its strongest assets, making it a very desirable community in which to live and conduct business. Centrally located within the metropolitan region, Elmhurst residents enjoy direct access to I-290, I-294, and I-88, commuter rail service to downtown Chicago, a bus transit system, and a well-connected pedestrian and bike network. As redevelopment and investment continues in the region, and major facility changes, such as those planned for Chicago O'Hare International Airport, are undertaken, increased levels of congestion will likely be seen throughout Elmhurst's transportation network. The challenge of accommodating this increased demand can be met through the achievement of the following goals:

- Continue to enhance mobility within the City by effectively managing local traffic issues and anticipating the impact of future development on current traffic patterns,
- Maintain and determine an adequate number of parking facilities throughout the City,
- Leverage existing mass transit systems (Metra and Pace) to encourage transit-oriented development and inter-modal connections, and
- Provide safe and convenient transportation alternatives.



Planning Sub-Areas

1. Spring Road Business District
2. York/Vallette Business District
3. North Avenue / Route 83 Area
4. Elmhurst Memorial Hospital (Berbeau location)
5. North York Street and Grand Avenue Corridors
6. Lake Street Corridor
7. Elmhurst Employment District (area west of York Street and north of Lake Street)
8. South Riverside Drive Corridor
9. Yorkfield Area



Economic Development

Elmhurst's transportation assets and high-quality workforce have geographically and demographically positioned the City for sustained economic growth. The challenge facing Elmhurst is to craft an economic development strategy that effectively balances these existing assets while guiding development opportunities within a physically-constrained environment. Elmhurst can support sustained economic growth by:

- Encouraging residential and business investment through the creation of a supportive regulatory and policy environment,
- Improving Elmhurst's ability to attract and retain high-quality employers,
- Increasing tax revenues for the City through the expansion of the tax base rather than through raising current tax rates,
- Maintaining Elmhurst's high quality of infrastructure to support existing business and residential uses and encourage reinvestment, and
- Continuing Elmhurst's tradition of high-quality public education for its children, and expanding workforce training opportunities for adult residents.

Housing

Elmhurst offers a wide variety of single-family homes, condominiums, and rental units, a mixture of housing types that is critical to creating an economically and socially sustainable community. Elmhurst is a mature community, and has experienced a significant amount of residential redevelopment. While this overall improvement and upgrade to the City's housing stock has been viewed positively, it has highlighted the need to maintain balanced provision of affordable and senior citizen housing. The Comprehensive Plan seeks a balance of these needs through its land use and housing recommendations. It outlines a variety of goals that will maintain and strengthen Elmhurst's strong residential neighborhoods:

- Maintain Elmhurst as a diverse, inter-generational residential community by providing housing options to meet a variety of lifestyles,
- Encourage well-maintained housing stock and contextually-sensitive residential development, and
- Promote strong neighborhoods throughout Elmhurst that are well-served by a sufficient number and variety of community facilities and services.

Community Facilities and Services

Elmhurst maintains a strong mix of educational, recreational, and cultural facilities and a solid network of strong institutions. These community facilities, which include public utilities, public safety, parks and recreation, education, health, and governmental and institutional uses, serve the daily needs of the residents and help define the overall quality of life. It is important to maintain and upgrade existing facilities when necessary in order to continue to provide a high level of service over time. The following goals have been developed as a general framework to complement more detailed planning and programming that is undertaken by individual municipal departments:

- Maintain superior community facilities and the efficient and effective delivery of the highest quality services to all residents and businesses in Elmhurst,
- Continue to provide high quality municipal services throughout the City,
- The location and provision of fire and police protection, water service and public utilities, hospital and human care services, and other community and governmental facilities will be based on reliable long-range land use plans,
- Provide a quality telecommunications infrastructure,
- Provide an excellent system of high-quality public education at all levels that is housed, to the extent feasible, in environmentally-sustainable structures,
- Expand and enhance cultural, arts, recreation, and entertainment resources available to City residents and visitors, and
- Protect and expand existing recreation activity areas, such as natural resources and parks.

Natural Resources

In addition to Elmhurst's institutional assets, City residents enjoy access to a variety of environmental amenities, including waterways, lakes, wetlands, and wooded areas. Preservation of these assets as the community continues to develop should be a priority that can be achieved through attainment of the following goals:

- Preserve natural resources and open space within the community, and
- Improve access to natural areas.

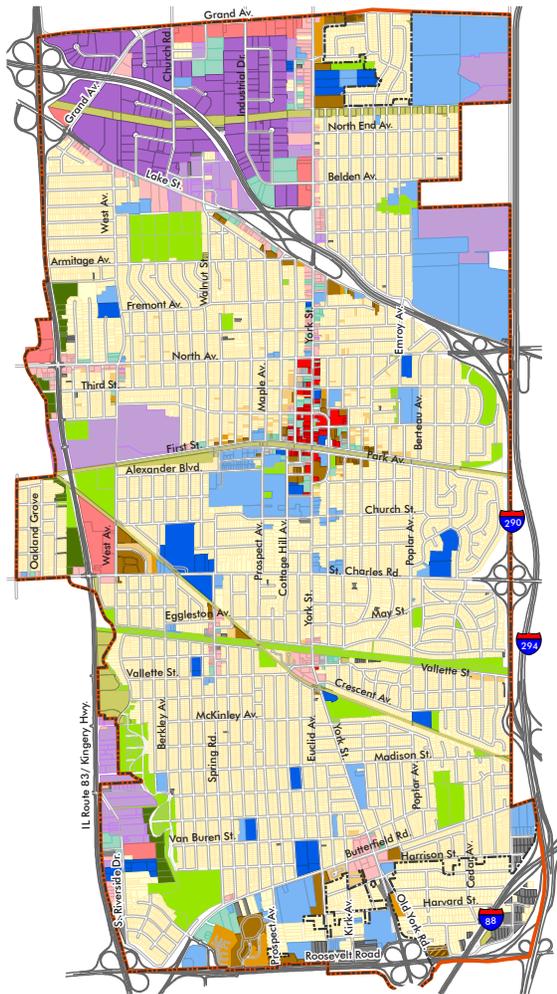
Sustainability

Sustainability is an approach to resource allocation that seeks to keep human needs and natural resources in balance. Practicing sustainability means meeting the needs of the community today in a manner that does not compromise the resources of future generations. Elmhurst already engages in a number of sustainable practices, including its development patterns that allow a complementary mix of uses on a transportation network that facilitates mobility through alternative modes of transportation. Increased levels of sustainability can be achieved, however, through the creation of a City-wide sustainability program. The following practices are recommended as part of that program:

- Develop land use policies, programs and regulations designed to support and promote sustainability in Elmhurst,
- Develop transportation policies, programs, and regulations designed to support and promote sustainability,
- Where possible, employ the seamless integration of the most effective energy conserving and carbon emission-reducing technologies into all municipal functions,
- Develop economic development policies and programs designed to support and promote sustainability, and
- Develop housing policies, programs, and regulations designed to support and promote sustainability. Encourage all City residents to adopt sustainable and "green" practices in their own homes or places of business.

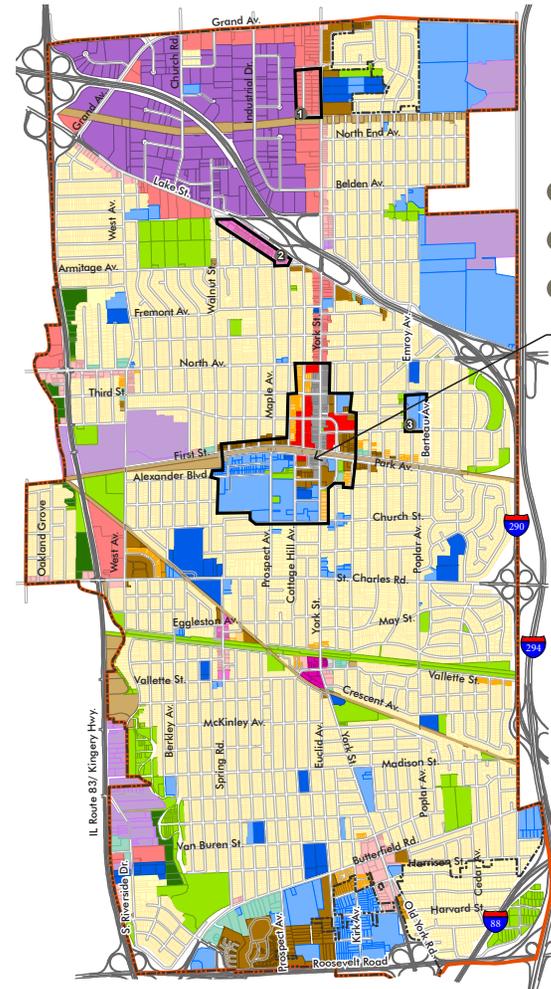


Land Use & Development Patterns



Existing Land Use

The existing pattern of land uses in the City is a strong influence on future land use and development patterns. As illustrated in the map above, Elmhurst consists mostly of single-family residential neighborhoods, with higher-density residential uses concentrated in the downtown area. Public schools, parks, and other institutional uses are well-integrated throughout the community. Commercial uses are concentrated in several areas, typically in nodes at major intersections, with the greatest concentration in the downtown. Office and industrial uses are most heavily concentrated along the northern and western edges of Elmhurst's boundaries, with smaller nodes dispersed throughout the City.



Future Land Use

While Elmhurst will remain largely a residential community in the future, the Plan carefully examined areas which may be subject to improvement through a new mix of uses. For example, portions of Elmhurst's commercial corridor are already undergoing redevelopment with contemporary retail and mixed use commercial spaces. This activity is encouraged in the Plan, as it establishes a more competitive retail alignment for the community, as well as enhance the City's tax base. Through the public involvement process, deliberate care was taken to ensure compatibility with adjoining land use area in forming recommendations for locations that may be subject to change in the future. Specific recommendations for successfully directing this growth are discussed in the full Comprehensive Plan.



Transportation



Future Vehicular Transportation Framework Roadway System

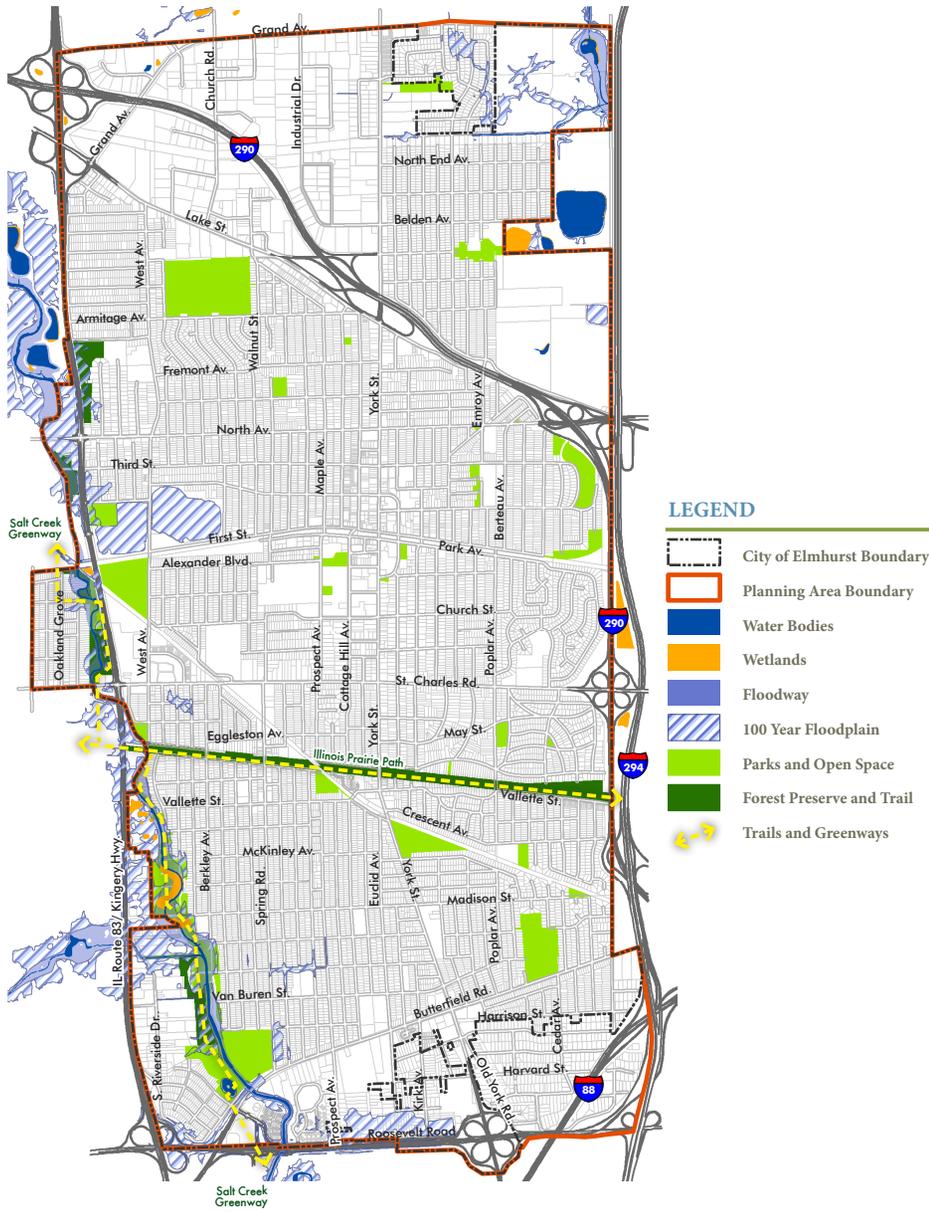
Elmhurst's existing transportation system offers residents and visitors a strong access and circulation network through a variety of different modes, including automobile, train, bus and bicycle. The map above depicts the existing road networks, railroad, and mass transit service, and identifies priority areas for transportation improvements. Priority areas identified include the I-294/North Avenue Scissor Interchange, Railroad Crossing, I-290 Lake Street/York Street Interchange, and York Street/Roosevelt Road Interchange.



Future Pedestrian and Bicycle Framework

In addition to roadway intersection improvements, the Plan recommends improvements to the City's pedestrian-friendly streets and bikeways through sidewalk network improvements and increased bikeway connections, and the use of traffic calming tools to relieve congestion through new regulations and design solutions. These improvements could be achieved through congestion management strategies, encouraging the use of alternative modes of transportation, and the appropriate prioritization and funding of capital needs.





Natural Resources

Elmhurst supports an extensive system of local parks and open spaces, maintained by the Elmhurst Park District, which blend with the natural environment and provide recreational and fitness opportunities for area residents. The natural and recreational open space areas are indicated on the map to the left and include the Salt Creek Greenway, Illinois Prairie Path, and Elmhurst Great Western Prairie, and over 430 acres of neighborhood parkland. The Cricket Creek and Salt Creek Greenways provide effective protection from flooding and double as a scenic and recreational amenity for City residents. Built recreational amenities include the Wilder Park Conservatory, the Wagner Community Center, the Sugar Creek Golf Course, and the Hub at Berens Park.

It is expected that existing public park and open space will remain largely unchanged. The Plan recommends improvements over the next ten to fifteen years which could maintain and support the existing system. Ongoing projects include improvements to the Salt Creek Greenway, the annexation of the land between I-88 and I-294 and its preservation as open space, and the City's increased participation in sustainability activities and strategies. Targeted educational outreach regarding mitigation strategies for property owners within the Salt Creek Greenway floodplain would help with flood management efforts. Broader outreach programs to all City residents can be an essential tool to inspire residents to enjoy outdoor recreational opportunities and educate about the importance of environmental conservation activities.

Natural Features

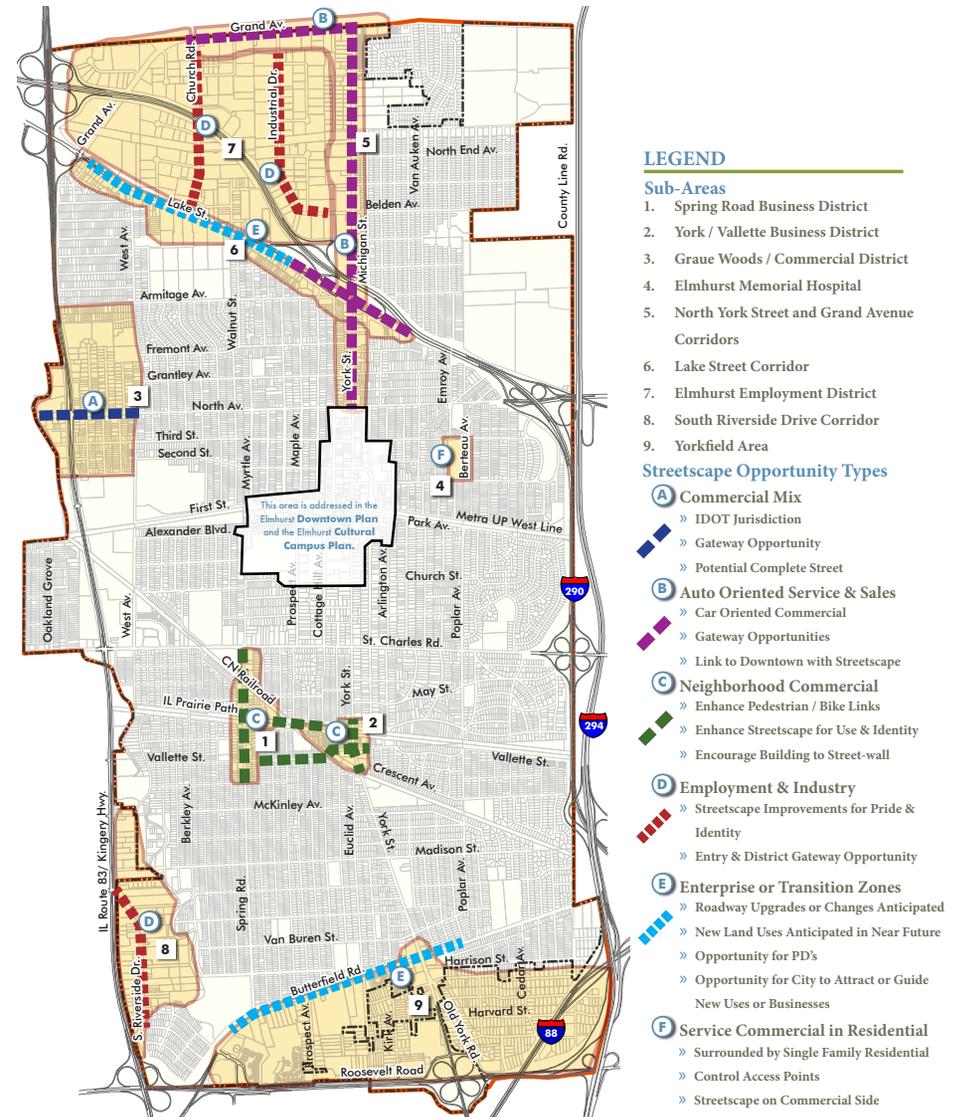
Urban Design Framework

The human scale and historic character of Elmhurst's built environment combine to create a visually distinctive and aesthetically pleasing community. As the City continues to grow and evolve, this unique character should be preserved through the application of urban design principles that strengthen this visual image and identity. An urban design strategy seeks to achieve a high-quality built environment through the visual and functional coordination of public infrastructure improvements with private sector building and site design and construction. Implementing a community-wide urban design and streetscape strategy for the City can be achieved through meeting the following goals:

- Maintain and enhance the City's high quality built environment,
- Enhance the appearance of neighborhood business districts and employment areas, as well as community entry points and traffic routes,
- Enhance the downtown with a system of public improvements that support development of this major activity center, and
- Use landscaping to soften new development, screen unattractive elements, minimize heat gain, and buffer land uses.

Urban design strategies address infrastructure improvements within the public way, such as landscaping, lighting, paving, street furniture, and public art, and it also guides the location of buildings along the street and their exterior design. These public and private elements combine to significantly influence the overall aesthetic and experiential quality of a place.

While most residential areas of the City and the downtown area exhibit strong streetscape design elements, many of the City's newer commercial districts lack consistent design treatments. The organization, massing, density, and intensity of land uses in Elmhurst plays a key role in defining and reinforcing community scale and character. As depicted in the map right, six streetscape opportunity types have been identified within each of the planning sub-areas. These six categories have been developed to provide design guidance based on the character of a specific type of land use and development pattern. In addition to specific recommendations for sections of the sub-areas, the Plan recommends the development and implementation of a City-wide streetscape program that is guided by City-wide design guidelines. Specific recommendations for both the sub-area streetscape opportunity types and the City-wide design guidelines can be found in the full Plan.



Future Urban Design Framework



Implementation

In many ways, formal adoption of the Comprehensive Plan is only the first step, not the last. Without continuing action to implement and update the Plan, City efforts up to this point will have minimal long-term impact. The Comprehensive Plan concludes with an implementation plan for the development and growth vision that has been created through the planning process. This implementation plan has been divided into actions in the near-term (0-5 years), mid-term (6-10 years), and long-term (10+ years).

Implementation of the Plan will require the City to define a structural framework, prioritize activities, and to provide the direction necessary to accomplish the action items identified throughout the Plan. **Table 2: Implementation Actions**, included at the end of the full Plan, outlines implementation actions items sequentially, and identifies the primary organizations that should be responsible for implementation. The successful implementation of the Plan will require the sustained efforts of the City, its residents, and its businesses.

