



Wilmette's Comprehensive Plan Update

Draft Goals & Objectives and Subareas – Village Board – October 25, 2022

Purpose & Intent

In many ways, the goals and objectives are the first draft of a comprehensive plan. These are the aspirational statements about how a community sees its future and the actions it plans to take to move toward that desired future. They serve several functions in the plan:

1. **Refer to existing conditions that are important to maintain** – First and foremost, the purpose of a plan is to preserve community assets and essential positive qualities of the Village. Many of these are highlighted in the goals and objectives. Therefore, in reviewing the statements one may think “But we already do that, why wouldn't we continue to do that? In fact, why is it even mentioned here?” The answer is that the goals and objectives are very much about conditions in the Village to be preserved. This is part of how the plan describes what's important to Wilmette. If the goals and objectives only focus on matters to change or problems to fix, we might lose the fundamental factors that make the Village great.
2. **Describe conditions that aren't here now but we want to accomplish** – Goals and objectives primarily are about aspirations for the Village and how to move toward them. Some goals and objectives are very specific actions (i.e., change zoning along a corridor), and some are seemingly generic statements that few could disagree with (i.e., preserve open space). Both the specific and general statements are needed to paint a picture of the community Wilmette wants to be. We can't today predict every possible opportunity or change, so the plan includes goals and objectives that describe end states by which future opportunities should be measured.
3. **Help to implement the plan** – Comprehensive plans are implemented in three primary ways – budgetary decisions of the Village Board, development projects that occur in the Village, and by investment coming from grants or other external funds. The goals and objectives help remind elected officials of the implementation ideas raised in the community-wide planning process and give leaders confidence that taking such actions advances a community vision. Also, the goals and objectives help to determine if a development proposal is appropriate. In fact, the first standard of review for a special use proposed in the Village is “the proposed use in the specific location will be consistent with the goals and policies of the Comprehensive Plan.” When securing grants, any grantor will want to ensure that their investment is part of a logical and thought out spending and use program—like a comprehensive plan.
4. **Define intentionality of the plan** – Sometimes, municipal governance hits a bump in the road. The Village may face a challenging budgetary decision, need to consider approval of a controversial development, or be faced with litigation on a zoning matter. In each of these cases the goals and objectives (and the full plan), help the Village show that decisions made were intentional and consistent with the plan. The plan, goals, and objectives shine light on how a decision was reached and provides consistency in actions over time; this lets residents and the business community know that the Village is acting logically and predictably. And if faced with the challenge of a land use related lawsuit, it shows that the Village has not been arbitrary or capricious in its decisions.
5. **Set the table for the rest of the plan** – The goals and objectives are not the end of the story. There is much background, reasoning, imagery, and detail yet to be provided in the body of

the comprehensive plan. It is not the role of the goals and objectives to say everything, but rather to highlight the main ideas that are of importance to the Village.

Goals & Objectives Defined

Goals and objectives outline policies, programs, and further planning the Village looks to conduct in implementing this comprehensive plan. The statements are reflective of past planning efforts of the Village, community input to this plan, feedback from focus groups with Village commissions, and a comprehensive evaluation by the Plan Commission. The themes into which the goals and objectives are sorted were established as Village priorities at the start of the planning effort. In many ways, the themes can be seen as the priorities set by the Village for the future, while the goals and objectives chart a course to reach that future.

Goals are aspirational statements of Village ambitions for the future. They are not measurable and may not ultimately be fully achievable – but they spell out what the Villages seeks to preserve, change, and become.

Objectives are actions (they start with verbs). They define the actions or policies to be followed in pursuit of goals. Some are broad, some more specific. They do not come with a timeline and may be changed in their ultimate implementation. They likely require more thought, deliberation, and refinement as they are brought to fruition. But that is the model for how plans come about - the desired outcomes generally remain, the environment in which they may become reality is dynamic and the plan must be applied accordingly.

Vision Statement

The summary of goals and objectives for the future is summed up in a vision statement for the plan. This is the elevator speech to explain the overarching purpose and direction of the plan. More to the point, it can be seen as a barometer, and part of the process the Village goes through when making decisions related to land use, budgets, and unexpected events. In deliberating such things, it is appropriate to consider "how does the decision we are moving toward reflect the vision for our community?" There is obviously more that goes into local decision making, but this is a useful and direct way to connect such decisions to this Comprehensive Plan.

"Wilmette is a welcoming place to make a home, run a business, and for the voices of all its citizens to be heard. The future of the community is informed by its past. Yet, change is inevitable. Ignoring this would allow change to direct the community. By meeting the future with informed, brave, and visionary planning, the Village of Wilmette seeks to actively make the community a place for thriving commerce and a better place for all people."

What we Heard...

The goals and objectives were formed in large part through community feedback received during the planning process. This included interviews with community stakeholders, focus groups with residents, a pop-up event at the plan's outset, web based polls and comments on plan themes, a community open house, comments and questions at Wilmette Talk events, review of previous planning efforts, and discussions with dozens of Village residents over the course of preparing the plan. Focus groups with Village Commissions also were held and perspectives from those discussions are incorporated here (the Commissions will be reviewing these draft statements to provide further insight and direction for the plan's goals and objectives).

No one of these feedback sources was considered the 'right answer' or given weight above others. However, considered as a whole, this input paints a picture the community, its priorities, and how Wilmette can approach the future. When combined with the planning analyses conducted in developing the plan, a vision, goals, and objectives for Wilmette emerge and are presented here for further deliberation. A summary of input that was shared is provided for each theme.

COMMUNITY CHARACTER

Community Character is more than the architecture or design of a place, it is about what one does there, the comfort of the physical space, and the enjoyment of what one is doing (dining, playing in a park, shopping, etc.). The overall character of a community is more than the success or quality of these spaces and those associated feelings, it is about the experience and emotion of getting there on roads, sidewalks, paths, etc. Community character is not a few big things, but rather a large collection of little things.

What we heard when asking... *What most influences Wilmette's community character?*

• Neighborhood feel – walkable streets, trees, attractive housing • downtown feel – walkable, gathering spaces, restaurants and outdoor dining • nature – parks and Lake Michigan, and ease of access to them • variety in feel and look in neighborhoods and business districts • people enjoy neighborhoods and caring for historic homes • downtown and east side districts are easy to get around by walking or biking • green space / nature • community institutions • mix of land uses, shops, restaurants

NEIGHBORHOODS

Goal 1: Neighborhoods that are safe, attractive and reflect a special character and sense of place.

Objectives

1. Provide for desirable residential development/redevelopment that adds to the character and future needs of Wilmette's neighborhoods.
2. Maintain a balance between the privacy of private property and the vitality of public and semi-public space.
3. Review how Wilmette's zoning districts and regulations can provide for appropriate modern uses and functions within existing neighborhoods regarding public actions and development proposals.
4. Ensure safe pedestrian and bicycle travel within, beyond and between neighborhoods.
5. Maintain streetscape and street characteristics that create desirable neighborhoods.

BUSINESS DISTRICTS

Goal 2: Thriving business districts with ample opportunities for desirable commercial activities.

Objectives:

1. Encourage and support placemaking efforts, such as public artwork, street pole banners, informal gathering spaces, and community events in business districts.
2. Assure regulations applicable to commercial areas allow for flexible design and a range of land uses.
3. Seek public- and private-led streetscape improvements in business districts to help make them interesting and attractive places.
4. Continue and add programs that support and promote local businesses.
5. Ensure that zoning regulations facilitate a variety of commercial tenants that add to a mix of uses in a business district and help to generate activity in an area.
6. Establish commercial design guidelines that can encourage consistent design quality for new development/redevelopment.

NATURAL ENVIRONMENTS

Goal 3: A blending of the natural and built environments that enhances both.

Objectives:

1. Coordinate with other local jurisdictions and private property owners to identify opportunities for new public gathering spaces (i.e. activated alleyways, pocket parks, flexible parking lots/plazas, etc.)
2. Preserve and expand the public and private tree canopies in the Village, especially in neighborhoods with fewer trees and shaded areas.
3. Support use of native landscape plantings in residential and commercial environments.

4. Incorporate green infrastructure into systems that enhance resilience to climate volatility.
5. Seek opportunities to preserve public open space and natural resources.

HISTORY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

Goal 4: Wilmette's historic character is protected and celebrated.

Objectives:

1. Celebrate the diversity of neighborhoods and preserve what makes them special.
2. Promote the history of Wilmette's settlement, growth and development by recognizing and preserving structures, sites, and geographic features that reflect the history of Wilmette and celebrate the range of cultural diversity of the community.
3. Support the creation and implementation of a preservation plan to identify and outline preservation goals and policies.
4. Develop a historic resource survey to identify and evaluate the community's historic resources.
5. Seek grant opportunities and other sources of funding at the regional, state and federal level to support preservation initiatives and programs.
6. Provide training and educational opportunities for members of the Historic Preservation Commission.
7. Review zoning regulations and consider ways to encourage rehabilitation and incentivize preservation of existing historic structures through zoning.
8. Establish residential design guidelines that can encourage consistent design quality for new development/redevelopment.
9. Create and maintain new educational tools, publications, and programs that inform realtors, business owners and residents on the benefits of rehabilitation and preservation-based development efforts.
10. Evaluate additional protections to preserve historic structures through working with the Historic Preservation Commission, Wilmette Historical Museum and Human Relations Commission to educate residents, business owners, and others about the history of the Village and the value of historic preservation.
11. Find opportunities to celebrate the variety of cultural backgrounds that make up Wilmette, its historical development, its challenges, and opportunities to expand diversity of the community

ARTS, CULTURE, ENTERTAINMENT

Arts, culture, and entertainment are critical to retaining and attracting residents and active families. They celebrate different and shared community experiences, beliefs, values, goals, and practices. Events and festivals, public artwork, live music, and events for a range of community members and visitors all contribute to the social vibrancy of Wilmette.

What we heard when asking... *What defines Wilmette's cultural scene?*

• Community facilities • restaurants • community events and festivals • the lakefront is a major asset • art & entertainment activities make the community more interesting / they bring people together / they make the Village more diverse and interesting,

ARTS & CULTURE

Goal 1: Plentiful and varied arts and cultural resources, accessible to all residents and visitors, that reveal the many talents and perspectives in the community.

Objectives:

1. Continue to communicate and partner with community institutions and groups that provide arts and cultural opportunities in the Village.
2. Support a range of arts and cultural programming and events that are affordable and available to Wilmette residents of all ages, abilities, and incomes.
3. Foster collaboration among arts and cultural groups and community partners to weave arts education, artistic expression and racial and cultural diversity into other programming and curriculum.
4. Use the arts as opportunities for community gathering and learning about Wilmette and the different cultures of its residents.
5. Work with community partners and local artists to place public artwork where it can enhance public places, bring people together and enhance understanding of the community.

ENTERTAINMENT / EVENTS

Goal 2: Local entertainment and events that engage and expand residents' wide range of interests, cultures and values.

Objectives:

1. Partner with local groups, private businesses, and other government jurisdictions to host events that cater to all segments of Wilmette's population (i.e. a "Taste of Wilmette" festival that celebrates foods of different culture)
2. Encourage community events to take place in a variety of locations around the Village, not only in the Village Center.
3. Continue to provide support for Wilmette's local restaurants to encourage hosting of events and outdoor cafes, which encourage community gathering and vibrancy.
4. Review and refine Village regulations to increase ease and flexibility for planning/permitting local events and entertainment uses.
5. Explore innovative locations for events such as parklets and dedicated pedestrian spaces.

COMMUNITY INSTITUTIONS

Community institutions are local facilities and organizations (schools, libraries, parks, non-profits, places of worship, day care organizations) that provide resources and activities related to their missions, enhance community identity, and create opportunities for residents to engage, socialize, and learn. Wilmette residents benefit from quality community institutions that create a strong sense of community.

What we heard when asking.... *How are community facilities reflected in the fabric of the Village?*

• Faith communities are strong in the Village and generally more diverse • this is a safe place to go to school • school and parks are big part of how people make their community • gov't agencies (schools, parks, library) are involved in advancing diversity / inclusiveness and sustainability • Village benefits from so many groups active about civic, transportation, and sustainability issues • But... additional youth and mental health services are needed in the area

Goal: A healthy, visible civic life where residents, organizations and local businesses work together to strengthen community.

Objectives:

1. Create a process for regular and consistent information sharing and collaboration between community institutions as part of plan implementation efforts that involve a variety of community institutions.
2. Continue participation in the Intergovernmental Cooperation Committee to regularly coordinate on infrastructure, facilities, and/or programming plans to encourage resource-sharing and efficiencies.
3. Work with the Human Relations Commission to facilitate partnerships among Wilmette's faith institutions to provide a welcoming space for residents of all backgrounds.
4. Continue and expand regular communication between the Village and local nonprofits to identify community needs and the best ways to serve them.
5. Seek and share partnership and funding opportunities that would benefit from public/private/nonprofit collaboration.
6. Plan for suitable location of new or expansion of existing police station as provided for in five-year CIP.

HEALTH, SAFETY, WELLNESS

Health, safety, and wellness make up the sense of comfort that people feel living in a community. It comes, in part, from a connection between the built and natural environments of a place. It includes access to green space, educational and recreational programming, and the other factors that support the holistic wellbeing of individuals, families, and the community at large.

What we heard when asking.... *What opportunities are there to live well and healthy in Wilmette?*

• Small town feel adds to quality of life • this is a safe community • great place to raise kids • But... kids don't have safe paths to bike and walk – more so on the west side of town.

NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

Goal 1: Well-preserved and easily accessible natural assets and amenities for all residents and visitors.

Objectives:

1. Support the Park District's efforts to maintain a healthy lakefront, sustainable and attractive community open spaces, and ADA accessible pathways to regional open spaces and forest preserves.
2. Preserve and expand the public and private tree canopies through continued tree preservation and the tree-planting program.
3. Work with the Wilmette Park District to strengthen and expand connections to natural resources via non-vehicular access to the lakefront, parks, and trails.
4. Improve connections to and coordinate with the Cook County Forest Preserve District along the North Branch of the Chicago River, just west of the Village.
5. Incorporate relevant elements of the Village's Sustainability Plan into local decision making and joint efforts with neighboring communities, school and park districts, nonprofits, and higher levels of government.
6. Encourage resilient landscape treatments on public and private property including expanding incentives for the installation of green infrastructure to reduce stormwater runoff.
7. Update zoning and subdivision ordinance to incorporate green infrastructure for stormwater management.

BUILT ENVIRONMENT

Goal 2: Buildings and infrastructure systems that provide all residents safe and desirable places to live, gather, visit and learn.

Objectives:

1. Maintain the high quality of life in neighborhoods through continued code enforcement, infrastructure maintenance, and beautification efforts.
2. Pursue sustainable construction standards in development of new Village structures and renovation of existing ones, and encourage other local jurisdictions to do the same.
3. Maintain roads, sidewalks, bike lanes, and other infrastructure to ensure user safety and access to local destinations and transportation hubs.
4. Work with Metra, Pace and CTA to ensure that service systems meet the needs of residents, employees, visitors, and students.
5. Encourage Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) improvements to enhance access and mobility for all residents when making improvements to existing buildings and infrastructure.
6. Fill gaps in the pedestrian and bicycle networks to create a safe and connected non-auto transportation system – including implementation of the Village's Master Bike and Active Transportation Plan.

PHYSICAL AND SOCIAL NEEDS

Goal 3: A community in which the wellness of residents and visitors of all ages and backgrounds is a high priority.

Objectives:

1. Coordinate with community partners (i.e. Wilmette Park District, Wilmette Public Library, School Districts 37 and 39, New Trier Township High School District, nonprofit organizations, private businesses) to promote their programs that support physical activity and health and wellness opportunities for all Wilmette residents.
2. Broaden awareness and use of Village services (provided through the Police Department and other resources) that benefit vulnerable populations, including youth, seniors, residents with disabilities, and those seeking mental health services.
3. Focus on increasing mental health resources and services with community partners (i.e. New Trier Township or local nonprofits).
4. Expand awareness and use of firearm safety programs provided by the Police Department.

ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

Environmental plans support future decision-making to provide essential environmental protection and conservation, while undoing the negative impacts of human activities, and enhancing the quality of existing environments. Village sustainability policies and programs are defined by the Wilmette Sustainable Communities Strategic Plan (SCSP), adopted in September 2021. Goals of the comprehensive plan are best accomplished by coordinating with that plan.

What we heard when asking.... *How can the Village build on the Sustainability Plan?*

• Residents and organizations are engaged in and supportive of this topic • sustainability and active transportation are linked • improvements are needed to bike and pedestrian infrastructure • there is growing interest in community walkability • there is increasing interest in solar power in the Village • air and water quality are high priorities

ENVIRONMENT: Recent changes in storm events and rainfall have exacerbated flooding and require creative strategies that integrate stormwater management with other aspects of the environment. Wilmette will work to apply sustainability principles while providing resilience for flooding impacts to infrastructure, homes, and businesses.

Goal 1: Increase Resiliency for Flooding and Water Resources Impacts.

Objectives

1. Maintain and evaluate existing stormwater credit and incentive program.
2. Increase resilience of stormwater management and other infrastructure by promoting green infrastructure at the community and residential level to reduce the volume and rate of stormwater runoff.
3. Expand the use of existing underground stormwater storage to include stormwater reuse opportunities and hydrologic restoration.
4. Track and reverse the loss of permeable surfaces.
5. Pair hard infrastructure and green infrastructure to optimize resilience and capacity

URBAN NATURAL HABITATS: Urban trees and natural landscaping provide natural habitat for pollinators and other wildlife, reduce stormwater runoff, and reduce energy use for heating and cooling. Wilmette will integrate urban forestry and habitat management with transportation planning and stormwater management to enhance natural habitats and provide other benefits.

Goal 2: Protect and Enhance Urban Natural Habitats.

Objectives

1. Maintain/implement policies that incentivize tree protection, a healthy urban canopy, and continuity of green corridors within the community and across the region.
2. Promote green streets that include urban trees and other vegetation for stormwater management and habitat, and that promote increased adoption of non-motorized transportation.
3. Increase the percentage of properties using sustainable landscaping, planting native species, and installing rain gardens.
4. Expand and enhance pollinator habitats.

CLIMATE MITIGATION: Wilmette's endorsement of the Greenest Region Compact in 2018 recognized the economic and environmental interdependencies between "Chicagoland" communities. Wilmette will work both to reduce its impact on climate and to build resilience to climate changes that are already happening.

Goal 3: A community with limited negative impact on the climate and high resilience to climate changes.

Objectives

1. Reach net zero greenhouse gas emissions as a community by 2050, as stated in the SCSP.
2. Engage with residents and businesses to increase energy efficiency.
3. Promote public transit and safe pedestrian and bicycle networks to reduce transportation energy use.
4. Track implementation of climate mitigation and adaptation measures across Village buildings, operations, and lands, including energy efficiency, water usage, and use of renewable energy sources.
5. Pursue electric aggregation and the use of green energy for Village facilities.

ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION

Active Transportation is the ability to travel with or without a car. It encompasses many modes of travel such as sidewalks, pedestrian crossings, bicycle infrastructure, access to transit, accessibility for people with disabilities, and shared uses such as scooters. Additional specifics and recommendations are detailed in the Wilmette Master Bike & Active Transportation Plan, adopted in February 2021. The goals and objectives in this section are best accomplished by coordinating with that plan.

What we heard when asking.... *How can the Village build on the Active Transportation Plan?*

• Crossing the Edens at Lake Street must be safer • Village has good public transportation • protected spaces for bicyclists and pedestrians are needed for safety • walking in town is generally seen as safe, more so than bicycling • biking and walking are harder in the western part of town

UNIVERSAL ACCESSIBILITY

Goal 1: A transportation system and networks accessible for all regardless mode, age, or ability.

Objectives:

1. Invest in new types of accessible infrastructure and technology solutions such as travel planning apps, audible signals and crosswalks, and travel aids to support mobility for people with disabilities, and other vulnerable populations such as seniors and youth.
2. Prioritize aspects of the Village's Master Bike and Active Transportation Plan that complete a continuous sidewalk / bike path network in the Village.
3. Maintain clear sidewalks, bicycle facilities, and bus stops ensuring all weather accessibility, including parking enforcement and snow-removal.
4. Provide only the necessary amount of public and private parking in business areas, to accommodate those who must drive.
5. Provide safe, multimodal circulation, pedestrian movements, and convenient bike access, while minimizing traffic impact on neighboring residential areas.

MULTIMODAL APPROACH

Goal 2: Transportation investments that support complete streets and provide seamless, multimodal travel.

Objectives:

1. Leverage roadway maintenance and utility infrastructure projects as an opportunity to add co-benefits, such as safety enhancements, green infrastructure, parks, fiber optic infrastructure, or electric vehicle charging stations.
2. Support new micro-mobility options (like shared bicycles, electric bicycles, or e-scooters) in the village as an alternative to automobile use for short trips.
3. Work with transit agencies to develop program of transit priority measures, such as signal priority, bus lanes, and smart technology.
4. Expand opportunities for bike and micro-mobility parking and repair stations.

SAFE AND PROTECTED SPACES

Goal 3: Safe and protected spaces for people walking, using transit, riding bikes, and using other types of wheeled mobility modes.

Objectives

1. Apply design elements and best practices to all transportation projects across the Village to provide the highest level of safety and protection.
2. Allocate more space for pedestrians along collector and arterial roadways by expanding sidewalk space, corner bump-outs, pedestrian zones, plazas, and shared use paths.
3. Explore innovative projects that expand protected spaces for pedestrians and bicyclists, testing new configurations, such as bus/bike boulevards, play streets, or car-free locations.
4. Address modal conflicts by reducing or eliminating curb cuts, increasing visibility and protection at intersections, and providing buffers to motor vehicle traffic.
5. Study problematic intersections, prioritizing the needs of those walking and biking.

SUSTAINABLE TRAVEL MODES

Goal 4: Transportation networks that support greater connectivity by active and sustainable modes such as walking, public transit, and biking and do not require car ownership.

Objectives:

1. Maintain a commitment to funding implementation of recommendations from the Village's Master Bike and Active Transportation Plan in accordance with plan guidance.
2. Integrate and seamlessly connect active and sustainable transportation options such as walking, transit, bicycles, and scooters.
3. Review or consider programs of shared transportation resources such as Divvy bikes and e-bikes, scooters, accessible bike share, bike charging stations, or other future mobility options.
4. Look for innovative opportunities to connect neighborhoods and increase access to parks, open space, and trail connections, such as multi-use paths over railroads and roadway infrastructure.

REDUCED AUTO DEPENDENCY

Goal 4: Community sustainability, resiliency, and equity through the ability to travel without a car.

Objectives:

1. Integrate principles of a 15-minute village to foster access to essential services, parks, open spaces, and mobility options within a 15-minute walk, regardless of age or ability.
2. Promote transit-oriented development principles when locating housing and employment closer to transit stops and stations.
3. Pursue pilot projects to repurpose roadway space currently used for cars and trucks that can be reallocated for people for walking, transit, biking, or accessibility improvements.
4. Evaluate innovative strategies used in other cities to optimize the use of curb space that prioritizes bus lanes and stops, bike lanes, bike parking, pedestrian safety designs, and electric bikes and vehicles.

ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

Goal 5: Reduce pollutants generated by transportation-related sources to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and improve air quality.

Objectives:

1. Incorporate green infrastructure solutions, including parks and open space to buffer pedestrians and bicyclists from impacts of arterial roadways and corridors with higher volumes of freight vehicles.
2. Support and fund programs and services to increase transit use by residents, employees, and visitors.
3. Reduce congestion through increased use of transit, walking, biking, and shared uses.
4. Develop a publicly available Village-wide network of electric vehicle charging infrastructure.
5. Develop guidelines and incentive programs that support the conversion of delivery fleets to alternative fuel, electric vehicles, or cargo bikes.
6. Develop a suite of last-mile delivery strategies, such as e-cargo bike requirements, zero emissions delivery zones, parcel lockers, or limited or off-hour delivery programs, which are supported by last-mile delivery data.

DIVERSITY AND INCLUSIVENESS

Diversity is about being a place where different types of people live, work, and go about their lives together. Yet diversity is only part of the equation, it is quantitative, a demographic calculation of how many people live. Inclusiveness is a way to create communities that add depth and richness to the diversity that exists, and it is qualitative.

Inclusiveness is about actively welcoming and accepting different worldviews and respecting unique needs, backgrounds, perspectives, and potentials. Inclusiveness strategies and practices are successful when all residents feel like they belong and are able to use their voice and be heard no matter their background or identity.

By embedding the practice of inclusiveness into decision-making, Wilmette will enhance and leverage diversity to build a stronger community.

What we heard when asking.... *How is Wilmette diverse and how can it be more welcoming?*

• Cost of housing limits diversity • the Village is a welcoming place ... and the Village could be a more welcoming place • more diversity is need in leadership of Village and other gov't bodies • Wilmette is tolerant and respectful of differences between people ... but not everyone and not always • make sure people who are different are recognized and heard in Village communications • people will discuss issues related to diversity, but are ok with the status quo • people need to be invited to get them involved, need more outreach to people of different backgrounds • Village is proactive in celebrating its diversity and acknowledged for it • people should just be actively nice to each other.

Goal 1: Diverse Village leadership that has greater capacity to lead inclusively.

Objectives:

1. Maintain a commitment to diversity and inclusiveness in recruitment for employees and board/commission members.
2. Ensure all Village staff and leadership have the skills needed to work in a diverse environment and can manage inclusivity including antiracism, cultural competence, managing implicit bias, etc.

Goal 2: Inclusive practices are an integral aspect of Village operations.

Objectives:

1. Establish inclusion (based on race, ethnicity, gender identity, country of origin, religion, age, economic status, life with a disability, etc.) as a core principle in the planning, decision-making and policy development processes.
2. Develop a lens through which policies, plans and outcomes are reviewed annually.
3. Ensure that Village communications include appropriate and diverse representation.

Goal 3: All residents of Wilmette have a greater sense of belonging.

Objectives:

1. Maintain a commitment to engaging all community members within civic practices.
2. Create spaces and gatherings devoted to residents of all backgrounds to listen and work together to make progress on issues of diversity and inclusiveness.
3. Work with the Human Relations Commission to:
 - create a tool and process to measure the how people feel that they belong (or not).
 - host community conversations on topics of systemic racism, oppression, and belonging.
 - create a Diversity & Inclusiveness Working Group with representatives from the community (schools, faith-based organizations, parks, public safety, etc.) to design and implement inclusion strategies leading to more welcoming spaces.
 - Implement items on the Commission's work program.
4. Work with Housing Commission to develop housing related diversity initiatives.

HOUSING AND AFFORDABILITY

Housing in Wilmette is primarily single-family dwellings, with some alternatives. For the most part, housing is costly and out of reach to groups like young families, young professionals, and people who work in the Village. The cost of housing also is seen as limiting the Village's overall diversity and its accessibility to people with disabilities. The cost of housing also makes remaining in the Village a challenge for empty nesters and seniors with fixed incomes. The Village has begun to consider options for creating housing that is more affordable generally and specifically designated affordable housing. The comprehensive plan is the forum to consider and discuss these issues and establish objectives for addressing them. This will set a baseline for further Village consideration and planning for the housing needs of its current residents and those who will be its future residents.

What we heard when asking... *What are Wilmette's main housing needs?*

- Lack of housing affordability keeps people from being able to move into the Village
- there is need for more types of housing in the Village than single-family homes
- seniors, young families, and those who work in the Village have the greatest need for more housing options in the Village
- housing should be affordable to more people
- aging in place is a "housing" option that should be available for seniors
- designated affordable housing should be part of new developments
- community education is needed about housing needs and affordable housing
- cost of housing makes the Village a hard place to start out if you're young and to stay if you're a senior
- people raised here want to come back and raise their families here.

NEIGHBORHOODS

Goal 1: A community with well-maintained residential neighborhoods.

Objectives:

1. Review development standards for newly constructed or expanded houses to ensure that they allow for a diverse range of housing options and promote accessible (ADA) housing units.
2. Continue to enforce standards for home and property maintenance to promote safety and prevent deterioration.
3. Ensure that Village housing maintenance regulations protect the public from safety hazards due to negligence or lack of maintenance.

HOUSING STOCK DIVERSITY

Goals 2: Housing that meets the needs of current and potential future residents.

Objectives

1. Encourage development of housing types that meet the needs of those at various ages, life stages (e.g., young professionals, empty nesters), and levels of physical mobility.
2. Review development codes to ensure potential for development of a variety of residential building types, including townhouses and multifamily structures, that meet the needs of current and potential future residents.
3. Review changes to Village's current accessory dwelling unit (ADU) regulations to provide greater flexibility and enhance feasibility.
4. Encourage development of accessible housing for persons with disabilities.

RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT

Goal 3: A diversity of housing stock in the Village.

Objectives:

1. Encourage development of multifamily and mixed-use developments along major commercial corridors (and in identified areas for infill development/increased density) based on the appropriate height, scale and public benefits to the community such as wider sidewalks, expanded public spaces, provision of affordable units and sustainable building practices.

2. Plan for the appropriate scale and location for multifamily, mixed-use development in Village Center to enhance the vitality of the area and support the retail and restaurants.
3. Plan for appropriate scale and location of multifamily, mixed-use development in Village business districts.
4. Undertake efforts to preserve the existing affordable housing stock that enables current residents to remain in their homes.

PRESERVE EXISTING AFFORDABLE HOUSING AND HOUSING AFFORDABILITY

Goal 4: A broad array of housing opportunities in the Village.

Objectives:

1. Undertake efforts to preserve the existing affordable housing stock that enables existing residents to remain in their homes through tools such as a land trust, rehabilitation grants or loans for income-eligible residents
2. Continue to support organizations that help residents continue to afford living in Wilmette, such as the nonprofit Housing Our Own which provides property tax and rental assistance.
3. Work with non-profit organizations, such as Community Partners for Affordable Housing (CPAH), to provide a range of housing options including single-family, townhomes, condominiums, and rental units in multi-family buildings.
4. Continue to support the needs of older residents to stay in the community either in their current homes or other housing in the Village.
5. Update the 2004 Affordable Housing Plan by establishing specific affordable housing goals, defining Village resources to support affordable housing, and identifying local and regional partner organizations and the role they can play in expanding affordable housing.
6. Seek affordable housing development partners and support community education to lead to a welcoming development review process.

EXPAND WORKFORCE/AFFORDABLE HOUSING ACCESS

Goal 5: Housing that is affordable to diverse household types.

Objectives:

1. Encourage development of housing unit sizes, such as studios and one-bedroom units, that are affordable by households in various life stages, such as empty nesters, older seniors, young professionals, and recent college graduates.
2. Encourage development of housing types that are more affordable to build than single-family detached homes.
3. Encourage development of affordable age-restricted housing.
4. Seek to understand demand for workforce housing for area employees.

BUSINESS + COMMERCE

A sound and stable business environment benefits the Village by supporting the tax base, providing for the needs of residents, and contributing to the overall character of the community. As a primarily built out community, making Wilmette a better place to live, work, and play requires pursuing a range of opportunities that will include new development, redevelopment, reuse of existing structures, and revitalization of business districts. As seen in many places, the challenge with capitalizing on those opportunities is that key factors can be out of the Village's control: regional and national real estate markets, decisions of national corporations, and property owners with differing objectives.

What we heard when asking.... *Does Wilmette have what we need for business, shopping and dining?*

- Looking forward to Edens Plaza redevelopment – should be more of a destination
- continue working with developers to create new places to live and enjoy the community
- residents really do shop local when they can
- more grocery / food purchasing options are desired by residents
- quality is the most important factor for resident decisions about spending on goods / services / food
- traffic and parking can be a challenge in business areas

TAX BASE

Goal 1: A stable and balanced tax base.

Objectives:

1. Continue to monitor ongoing economic activity in the Village to best understand the current business climate.
2. Continue to dialogue with local and potential business and property owners to best understand their needs.
3. Review development and business related codes to ensure they reflect best practices for supporting local businesses and managing any potential impacts on residential areas.
4. Work with owners of privately-owned commercial centers, like Edens Plaza and Plaza del Lago, in support of efforts to improve competitiveness of those centers.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Goal 2: A sustainable, focused economic development effort.

Objectives:

1. Work with business and real estate professionals to understand the local economy and maintain economic strength of the Village.
2. Regularly engage with the public to understand local demand/desire and report back community sentiment to economic development stakeholders.
3. Maintain a meaningful working relationship with the Chamber of Commerce, local businesses and merchant's associations.
4. Provide assistance to attract commercial tenants that increase vibrancy of the business districts.
5. Study use of financial incentives to attract and implement desired forms of development or redevelopment that cannot reasonably be expected to occur within private market forces.
6. Encourage redevelopment of underutilized commercial properties in a manner consistent with community needs and land use policies.

BUSINESS DISTRICTS

Goal 3: Appealing commercial districts that attract businesses and patrons and maintain a strong economic base.

Objectives:

1. Encourage commercial, retail, and office facilities that serve the needs of Wilmette residents.
2. Review existing streetscape programs for business districts to continue to create attractive and inviting business and shopping areas.
3. Develop design guidelines for commercial districts to facilitate the design of private commercial structures consistent with the character of the surrounding area.

4. Reuse (or redevelopment) should be sensitive to the character of the surrounding area and community sentiment, and should result in acceptable levels of environmental, traffic, fiscal and public service impact.
5. Maintain sidewalks, streetscape improvements, and other public property as an attractive element of commercial areas.
6. Identify target markets for each business district and develop proactive marketing tools (online, in print and attending commercial attraction events) to create interest in investing in Wilmette.
7. Build on renovation efforts at Edens Plaza to create an inviting activity center there.
8. Work with property and business owners in the Lake Avenue / Skokie Boulevard area to support commercial functions and renovation, and to facilitate redevelopment where feasible.

BUSINESS DISTRICTS (SUBAREAS)

The big picture of economic development in Wilmette (as described in the Business & Commerce goals and objectives) is about a stable tax base and attractive environments for businesses and consumers. Many of the detailed actions that fit into that aim will happen in the Village's business districts. The business districts and corridors in Wilmette are each distinctive and provide different challenges and opportunities for placemaking and commerce. The larger such districts in Wilmette are: the Ridge Road Corridor, Linden Square, the Green Bay Road Corridor, Village Center, Edens Plaza, and Plaza del Lago. An important point of overlap exists in that key parts of the Green Bay Road Corridor are located in the Village Center planning area; many of the aims for that part of the Green Bay Road corridor are found in the Village Center objectives

Goals:

Business districts that:

.... are of unique character.

.... have successful businesses.

.... provide a safe and enjoyable experience for customers, diners, and visitors.

Ridge Road

A brief description of the subarea....

Originally the border between Wilmette and Gross Point, Ridge Road serves the dual purpose of business area and slice of Wilmette history, with many of the existing structures predating their annexation into Wilmette. Originally a thriving scene for taverns in the Village of Gross Point, the area had seen its historic character leveraged to become a hub for antiques and retail. Ridge Road encompasses two clusters of businesses around the intersections with Wilmette and Lake avenues with multi-family housing options between and beside them.

The area, however, is seeing transformation as 3 large antique businesses have now closed, and a shopping center (Wil-Ridge Plaza) has redeveloped into a senior living facility. Vacancy rates and duration here are longer than Village Center as foot traffic and active uses like restaurants and grocery stores are low. The trend of diminishing retail has funneled a switch to service-based businesses and opened the door for redevelopment. Most notably, the Treasure Island property, the former NorShore Meats, and gas station offer opportunities for reuse or redevelopment. Neighboring R2 and R3 zoning provide opportunities for greater density and building up to 4 stories or 48' are possible.

Commercial rents are lower in this area and there is a substantive amount of vacant storefront and developable property. All these factors combined with the rich history and historic character of the area make it suitable for growth and transformation. Much of the multi-family housing along Ridge Road is naturally occurring affordable housing and it is a goal of the Village to maintain that affordable housing.

What we heard when asking... *What is important about and needed along Ridge Road?*

- Parking is a problem for the area
- Treasure Island leaving was a loss for the area
- beautify the area
- consider adding more housing there
- would like a grocery store back, but doesn't seem likely

Ridge Road Objectives:

1. Focus commercial development at key intersections to maximize market support and allow first floor residential uses away from key intersections.
2. Be open to opportunities from private developers for redevelopment of Treasure Island site at Ridge Road and Lake Avenue to attract modern businesses or mixed-use development.
3. Evaluate opportunities to rezone R-2 areas as R-3 zoning to allow multi-unit development proposals that can create new housing opportunities in the Village.

4. Engage with St. Joseph Catholic Church to consider options for future re-use of the school property.
5. Support existing local businesses on the corridor by funding façade and interior renovation of existing commercial structures.
6. Coordinate with IDOT to develop a streetscape design for the full corridor and wayfinding program to highlight the unique character and commerce of the area, highlighting intersections with Wilmette Avenue and Lake Avenue as focal points.
7. Require redevelopment of existing commercial spaces to site buildings close to public sidewalk to match existing front yard setbacks to maintain the pedestrian character of the area.
8. Identify sites where shared parking lots for employees and customers—such as the lot at St. Joseph Catholic Church—can be conveniently established along the corridor.
9. Assess existing zoning along the corridor to allow heights up to four stories, with the intent of preserving existing character of the area while also accommodating new opportunities and uses.
10. Discourage the allowance of curb cuts and require Zoning Board of Appeals approval for any curb cut requests. Do not allow additional curb cuts if there is alley access.
11. Continue the review of police station expansion as called for in the five-year CIP.
12. Consider opportunities along the corridor to add new multi-family or townhome dwellings.

Green Bay Road

A brief description of the subarea...

This corridor of Wilmette businesses is unique in that both ends serve as gateways to the Village. It is car-centric, and not pedestrian friendly, forcing businesses to rely on off-street parking lots and the limited supply of street parking. Abutting the Village Center at its center, this district hosts a variety of businesses and multifamily housing structures. There is little remaining retail and an increased presence of service and fitness-oriented businesses, which hinders its pedestrian character further.

Longstanding businesses like Homer's Ice Cream and Walker Brothers are Wilmette staples that draw patrons from neighboring communities. Other various service businesses and unique retail make up the corridor. Vacancy rates are higher here than other parts of the village, especially as you stray from the Village Center, and dense development is difficult due to the presence of single-family residential housing backing up directly to many of the lots.

What we heard when asking... *What is important about and what is needed along Green Bay Road?*

- Green Bay Road is non-descript in terms of design and character (buildings and the public way)
- zoning makes redevelopment a challenge
- not enough parking to attract businesses

Green Bay Road Objectives:

1. Understand and celebrate Green Bay Road's role as a major gateway to the Village.
2. Review allowing increased height up to four stories (45 feet with step back of height adjacent to residential uses) in the GC-1 Zoning district to encourage and support redevelopment with mixed use projects.
3. Explore incentives for businesses to improve signage and façade appearance.
4. Establish and market the Green Bay Road North Business District (Greenwood Avenue to 16th Street) as a unique area, including installation of streetscape and wayfinding elements.
5. Develop a streetscape program and wayfinding for the corridor to highlight the unique character and commerce of the area (including the east side of Green Bay Road).
6. Consider opportunities along the corridor to add new multi-family or townhome dwellings, including as part of larger mixed use developments.

Village Center

A brief description of the subarea....

The Wilmette Village Center is the historic center of our village. With its focal point at the intersection of Wilmette and Central Avenues, this historic area contains a mix of retail, offices, and personal service businesses, with a recent uptick in the restaurant and hospitality sector. Heavy foot traffic, adjacency to the Metra UP-North Line and Pace Bus routes, and a prominent outdoor dining scene give the Village Center an urban feel, while the recent streetscape work and vast Village Hall green provide a touch of nature and beauty. Combined with the charm of its historic buildings, it is no wonder why the Village Center is location with the highest abundance and greatest desire for independent retail and restaurants.

The vacancy rate in Village Center is relatively low. The existing vacancies are due in large part to landlord-specific requirements rather than a lack of interest from businesses. Open storefronts are promptly replaced with similar businesses or are absorbed by adjacent businesses for expansion. In recent years, we have seen a shift away from retail towards hospitality as successful restaurants expand their footprints across the area. Current small vacancies exist in office spaces and in a handful of storefronts, which are often filled quickly. Large vacancies exist in the Imperial Motors site along Green Bay Road and in the former Jos. A Bank location fronting Poplar Avenue. Especially in the case of Green Bay Road, opportunities for development exist.

It is a goal of the Village to develop the Village Center while maintaining its character. Exploration of a National Historic District designation can help preserve historic structures at the core of Village Center while new development on the Chase and Union Pacific lots present opportunities for transformative redevelopment and options for green space and other public benefits not possible elsewhere in Village Center. The area is zoned for 4-5 stories, though the Village is willing to entertain proposals in excess of 5 stories if design characteristics take the character of surrounding properties and public benefit warrant the increase in height.

What we heard when asking.... *How can the Village build on recent downtown success?*

- The restaurants are great, but would also like to see more retail stores,
- have a discernible architectural style downtown
- crossing Green Bay needs to be easier
- taller buildings have been established on Green Bay, shows it can be done
- how can the Chase site be redeveloped?
- streetscape is a nice addition
- Wilmette Theater is a good thing, has potential
- what will happen with Imperial Motors site?

Village Center Objectives

1. Continue working with business and property owners to support restaurants and independent businesses and services.
2. Continue to improve walkability and sense of pedestrian safety throughout the area, with emphasis on crossing Green Bay Road.
3. Improve bicycle access to and from the Village Center and Green Bay Trail per the Bicycle Master Plan recommendations.
4. Provide façade and interior renovation programs to support vitality of existing buildings and businesses along the corridor.
5. Entertain redevelopment of the Chase building (1200 Central Avenue) in keeping with the VC Master plan and evaluate potential to incorporate Metra parking lots with that redevelopment to include sites for residential development, public open space, and replacing commuter parking in appropriately designed structured parking.
6. Evaluate options to combine street parking on the east side of Green Bay Road (between Central and Wilmette Avenues) with commuter parking area between Green Bay Road and the railroad tracks, using this space to increase available parking and create an improved / safer pedestrian area.

7. Maintain communications with owners of properties likely to see development pressure to make them aware of Village objectives for the sites and Village Center, and to remain aware of local development trends.
8. Promote and support on-going property owner reinvestment in Village Center properties.
9. Enhance and support the needs of key Village Center civic institutions.
10. Provide efficient, effective and safe transportation, transit connections and pedestrian linkages, as well as increase transit access and usage.
11. Enhance linkages, amenities and safety to the Green Bay Trail, as well as local and regional bike connections throughout the Village.
12. Continue to implement recommendations of the VC plan.
13. Maintain the Village Hall in the Village Center as an activity center and central gathering place for the community.
14. When adopted, educate building owners on the benefits of the Federal Historic Preservation Tax Credit for buildings listed on the National Register of Historic Places.
15. Consider opportunities to add new multi-family or townhome dwellings in the Village Center.
16. Maintain requirement for commercial uses on the first floor in the Village Center.
17. Evaluate opportunities for additional useable open space in the Village Center.

Village Center Objectives for Green Bay Road:

18. Green Bay Road streetscape and wayfinding should highlight Village Center location and improve the pedestrian environment, on both sides of Green Bay Road.
19. Review and refine zoning standards in the VC zoning district to create and encourage redevelopment of sites along the corridor that meet the Village's objectives.
20. Maintain height regulations per VC Zoning District and consider greater height when proposed developments provide public benefits and meet criteria as specified in the Zoning Ordinance and PUD standards.
21. Incorporate new housing into developments in this part of the corridor where appropriate.
22. Preserve ground floor spaces along Green Bay Road in the VC District to incorporate retail, dining, and entertainment businesses accessible to the public.
23. Make crossing between the west side of Green Bay Road and the Village Center more inviting and safer for pedestrians, implementing recommendations from the Village Center Master Plan.
24. Increase opportunities for commerce, and create better connections between public uses like the Library and Post Office to the Village Center:
 - o Work with the Metra to revisit urban design elements that can be installed to make crossing Green Bay safe and inviting.
 - o Plan for possible redevelopment of excess parking lots into mixed-use development while consolidating parking needs for Metra riders while maintaining access to employees and customers of Village Center businesses during non-commuter hours.
 - o Include Green Bay Road streetscape enhancements in the CIP to encourage a look along Green Bay Road in the VC District that is distinguishable from the rest of the corridor and provides more emphasis on walkability and pedestrian comfort.
 - o Make the distance that a pedestrian crosses on Green Bay smaller through installation of curb "bump outs" at Wilmette and Central Avenues. Widen sidewalks and narrow traffic lanes as feasible – maintaining on street parking.
 - o Install decorative crosswalks and public art at the intersections to make the area more pedestrian oriented and attractive.

Linden Square

A brief description of the subarea....

Linden Square is a unique business area rich with Wilmette history. Anchored by the northern terminus of the CTA 'L' system's Purple Line, patrons are greeted with numerous storefronts and quaint townhomes and multi-family buildings, all steps away from Wilmette's iconic brick streets. In its hey-day, Linden Square was a community hub that served as a second Village Center of sorts. A rich retail and active service sector drew customers to the area's stores and residences.

In recent years, however, businesses have shifted towards medical, and service uses that produce low levels of foot traffic or curb appeal. These businesses dominate the area while retail is nearly nonexistent. Desires to open businesses here are lower as a result. Retail users are drawn to Village Center and Plaza del Lago, even if that means paying more in rent.

This issue stems in part due to the limit on medical and office uses on the first floor of the Village Center. While this limit may contribute to the vibrancy felt in Village Center, it might also be one of the reasons that Linden Square has become a much more service-oriented district. Another limiting factor is the preference of business type and strict requirements of a larger Linden Square property owner that liquor not be sold on properties they own, which limits uses like restaurants and grocery stores and prevents a vibrant night-life likened to that of the Village Center.

While the low amounts of vacant land means redevelopment might be less feasible in this neighborhood, the number of one-story buildings and the large CTA parking lots may afford redevelopment opportunities in the future. The existing housing stock, however, is an important aspect of the Village as it provides density near transit and offers types of housing other than single-family homes. Many units in Linden Square are naturally affordable and preserving that is a goal of the Village.

What we heard when asking.... *What is important about and needed in Linden Square?*

- Attract music and arts to the area
- the area is hard to get to
- would like to see the grocery and hardware store come back
- would be nice if it was more vibrant and had more community support (people shopping there)
- consider pop-up businesses
- a great place for dental work, its mostly services and office, wish it was more vibrant.

Linden Square Objectives

1. Develop a wayfinding program for the district to highlight connections to the Baha'i Temple, Gillson Park, the Village Center, Ryan Field, and other nearby attractions.
2. Review current streetscape program to determine if additional or revised streetscaping can enhance the district's appearance, making the area more enticing for customers and additional investment.
3. Highlight the area's unique location as a transit hub with public art (sculptures, murals, train related designs in the roadways or sidewalks).
4. Evaluate increasing permitted height in the NR-1 District to facilitate up to five stories of residential development with first floor commercial to incentivize development density that can support more retail uses in the area.
5. Work with CTA to evaluate how part of the commuter parking lot may be developed for residential use (that may include 1st floor retail). Review parking and ridership data to ensure that development would enhance transit use.
6. Maintain options for shopping and dining in the area and look to attract other desirable uses (such as those related to arts and cultural activities).
7. Expand the list of allowable activities in the area by identifying appropriate uses that are currently "special uses" and make the either "permitted uses" or "conditional uses" (uses required to meet specific performance standards, but not requiring a formal public approval process).

8. Continue working with property owners in the subarea to understand their near and long term objectives, and how those can be coordinated with Village objectives.
9. Work with Chicago's North Shore Convention and Visitor's Bureau and stakeholders (Baha'i Temple, Chamber of Commerce, Park District, and property owners) to identify ways to make the subarea a day trip destination for visitors arriving by car or Purple Line.
10. Identify and seek to attract cultural uses that can be incorporated into the area related to unique functions like the Baha'i Temple and train station.
11. Consider opportunities to add new multi-family dwellings in the NR-1 District.