



City of Elmhurst

Strategic Plan and Goal Development Update 2022

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NORTHERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY

**Center for
Governmental Studies**

Outreach, Engagement and Regional Development



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Executive Summary

Strategic planning helps to guide an organization's future more effectively than making decisions issue by issue. The City of Elmhurst ("the City") engaged the Northern Illinois University Center for Governmental Studies (NIU-CGS) to facilitate a strategic planning workshop with Council and senior staff members in February 2022 to update the City's strategic plan. The 2022 strategic planning workshop provided a positive atmosphere for the Council and senior staff members to re-visit their accomplishments and priorities from the previous plan, work together to collaboratively review and update the Council's visions for the future, and develop new or revised strategic goals to determine where the City wants to go as an organization in the next few years.

Strategic Goals

Ultimately, five key strategic priority areas were identified as an outcome of the process highlighting activities and initiatives that the City should focus on in both the short and long term. The strategic priority areas identified as a result of the strategic planning process are illustrated below (in no particular order), and a brief explanation of each is also included in the full report.

2022 Strategic Priority Areas City of Elmhurst



Strategic Priority Areas

After a series of environmental scanning discussions regarding the City’s visions for the future, current strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and challenges, participants were asked to identify short and long term goals. After an updated list of goals was developed, participants were then asked to classify each goal according to a matrix model of time and complexity. Agreed upon criteria were used to classify a goal as short or long term and as complex or routine (please see full report for defined criteria).

Following the classification exercise and after the strategic planning workshop retreat, the City Council was asked to delineate, via an online ranking exercise, which goals should be given the highest priority. In total, the group developed nine short term routine goals, nine short term complex goals, two long term routine goals and six long term complex goals. The top three goals (and ties) from each category are offered as a process “snapshot” representing those that were ranked among the most important strategic goals or priority areas for the Council and staff to address in the months and years ahead (see below). For a full review and appreciation of all the strategic goals developed, discussed, and ranked, please refer to the full report.

2022 Top Level Strategic Goals by Matrix Quadrant — City of Elmhurst

Short Term Routine

- Update the City’s downtown master plan
- Identify options to maintain financial sustainability and maintain the city’s AAA bond rating
- Analyze City real estate assets via professional study and develop a plan to maximize value

Short Term Complex

- Analyze pending stormwater projects and strategize completion including cost benefit analysis of potential/considered projects.
- Enhance traffic flow, safety and mitigate congestion; improve traffic control throughout the community as indicated by traffic study analysis.
- Analyze fire department mission/services including staffing and operational models and enhance crime/public safety technology
- Continue to enhance and evaluate crime prevention methods and technology

Long Term Routine*

- Enhance communication and engagement to all residents through the development of a communication matrix
- Refresh, revise, prioritize and update the city’s sustainability agenda for the future

Long Term Complex

- Explore the concept and development of a municipal building complex plan
- Implement the city’s consensus stormwater project completion strategy
- Develop a Destination Elmhurst marketing strategy including work on: connectivity, transportation and our Metra station, a possible boutique hotel, tech and office innovations, a mixed use sports facility, and the Illinois Prairie Path

**Note: Only two long term routine goals were created.*

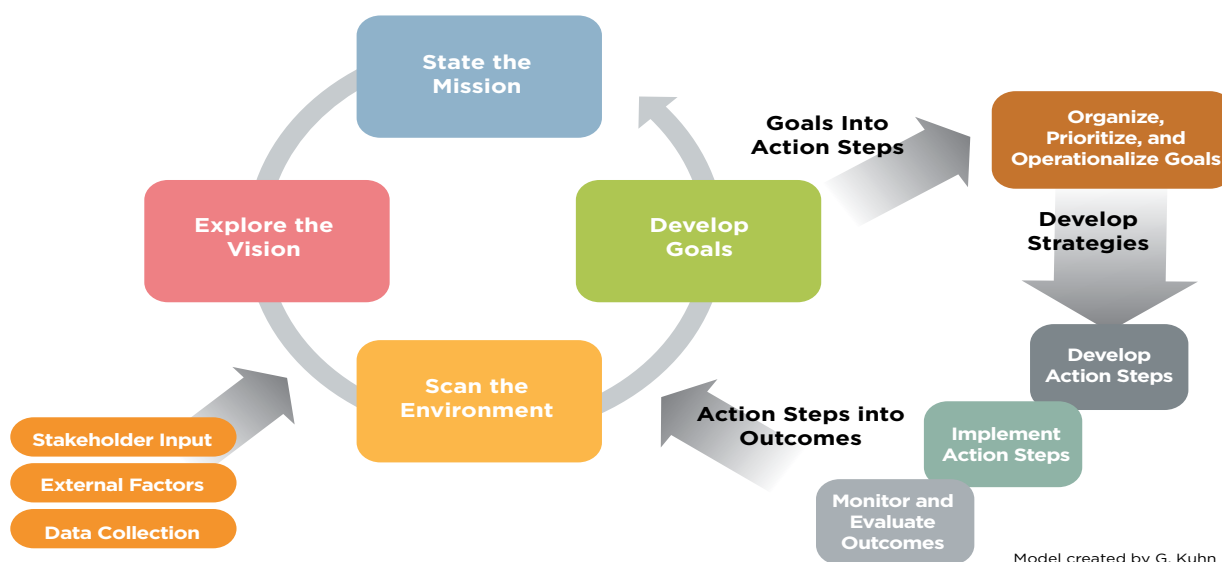
Introduction

As an organization, the City continues to place itself among the leading class of governments that have made a commitment to formalized strategic planning and goal setting exercises (Figure 1). As City leaders are aware and demonstrate through their update processes, strategic planning is not a new phenomenon for progressive communities and government agencies. Policymaking boards and staff in both private and public organizations recognize the value of these longer and broader framed exercises. This updated plan is an important part of leadership's work, and the outcomes will serve the City of Elmhurst and community well into the coming years.

The Council and senior staff members gathered in February and April of 2022 to discuss and update the City's vision, important policies, and issue areas, as well as to develop a refreshed set of goals to chart the future direction of the City. The strategic planning workshops provided another opportunity for the Council and senior staff to work in a positive atmosphere and set aside time to methodically, *strategically*, explore the future and develop goals that will help determine where the City goes as an organization and a community. As was shared with the Council and senior staff members at the conclusion of the workshops, the City should avoid the temptation to hastily rearrange priorities as the fiscal year moves along. It is important to adhere to the results of the Council and senior staff members' efforts throughout this process and the City's budgeting process.

Thoughtful use of the City's limited resources (including financial resources and professional staff time) will be the key to good results. High standards can place a strain on the organization, as excellence requires adequate staff time, expertise, and resources. In the end, quality policies and quality implementation equate to tough choices in setting priorities and in allocating resources. Only a limited number of goals and objectives can be effectively managed and implemented at any given time. In a very realistic sense, clear and stable priorities must be maintained if the City desires to stretch its resources as far as they can go.

Figure 1. Strategic Planning Model*



**Model generally represents the steps that are taken for this type of initiative.*

Pre-Workshop Stakeholder Input

Focus Groups

A total of six focus groups were conducted in-person in January and February 2022 to gain additional stakeholder input. Each focus group had approximately 8 to 12 participants in the following groups:

- Invitational Residents (aldermanic suggestions/invitations)
- Residents (Open)
- Business Community
- Intergovernmental/Civic Agencies
- City Appointed Board and Commissions
- Front-Line Staff

The focus group sessions were designed as a primer for the strategic planning process. The information presented was shared in summation at the workshop and added exploratory and thematic information for the Council and senior leadership team to consider. As a result of the focus group responses and feedback, the facilitators identified five overarching themes presented (in no particular order) in Figure 2. The themes represent important topic areas that the Council and city's leadership corps considered as they progressed through the workshop exercises to develop short and long term goals. It is not uncommon to see alignment between focus group themes and priority areas identified by the City Council as part of the strategic planning process. Please see the [Appendix](#) for a summary of focus group questions and aggregated responses for each theme.

Figure 2. Aggregated Focus Group Identified Themes



Outline Of Leadership Exercises and Discussion Sessions

All of the discussion sessions used in the planning effort employed approaches that were highly participative and interactive. The process was informed by the environmental scanning components and the identified strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and challenges for the City. The workshop facilitators utilized a group discussion approach called ‘*Nominal Group Technique*’ where participants were assured equal opportunities to speak and share opinions by the facilitator. During the workshop sessions, individuals had the opportunity to generate and share their ideas, as well as participate in group activities allowing them to weigh alternatives and refine their thinking through dialogue. As ideas were shared and debated, the group worked steadily toward a consensus regarding organizational values, purpose, future directions, and priorities.

Introduction Exercise

Important Topic and Visioning Discussion

Each participant engaged in an important topic identification and visioning exercise by answering two questions. The first was, “How would you describe the City of Elmhurst to a stranger?” The second asked participants to complete a visioning statement: “In 10-15 years when I return to the City, I hope to see, or think I will see...” in regard to services, programs, staffing levels, capital needs, and general concepts that should or would be present in the City at these intervals. Participants were asked to think about their ideas ahead of time and then be ready to share them with the group during the first session of the workshop. This was a brainstorming exercise—all ideas about the City’s future were encouraged and shared. Below is a summary of those answers.

Descriptions of the Town Using Your Initials — Word Cloud



- Dynamic
- Neighborly
- Family
- Family-friendly
- Friendly
- Respectful
- Caring
- Charitable
- Generous
- Metropolitan
- Large city – small community
- Small town feel/ Mayberry-like feel
- Evolving – modern
- Modern community
- Growing
- Accessible
- Well educated
- Affluent
- Proud
- Resourceful
- Place to be
- Safe
- Thriving
- Invested
- Always busy
- Diverse
- Progressive
- Receptive
- Transparent
- Strong sense of community
- Fast paced
- Engaged
- Desirable
- Networked
- College town
- Great cultural city
- Vibrant
- Sophisticated
- Connected
- Well-respected community
- Convenient

Visioning Exercise: Exploration of the City of Elmhurst's Desired Future Condition

Visions of the Future

...If I were to leave Elmhurst tomorrow, and not return for 10-15 years, what would I hope or think I'd see when I return? ...

Visions of the Future
Linkages between public projects and private investments
More hotels with at least one downtown
Expanded industrial park
Shared government buildings
Kids safely commuting to school
Celebrating culture and identity of residents
Commercial areas developed
A Performing Arts Center
Diversified housing
Safe community
Intra-city Transit — electrified
Complete streets implemented
Vibrant downtown
Enhanced traffic management
York development
Scale of Elmhurst remains similar to now
Easy and safe pedestrian/bike access to community amenities
EV Charging hub
Investment and protection of stormwater projects with appropriate maintenance and staff
Proactive workforce of tomorrow
Leverage technology to maintain financial stability and stewardship
Targeted workforce development
Maximize technology to eliminate manual processes
Elmhurst becomes more environmentally resilient
Increased community engagement
Continued code evolution
Attract and retain qualified personnel
More technology with camera for police department
Increased community partnerships

Environmental Scanning Part I

Surrender or Lead

Participants were introduced to a leadership exercise entitled “Surrender or Lead.” Participants were asked, in small groups, to respond to a series of structured questions designed to initiate discussion and reveal hopes, perspectives, challenges, opportunities, and possible barriers based on the collective view of each group. The groups’ responses were recorded and are reported below. The **bolded** and underlined sections are key phrases that the group provided in response to the exercise’s open/fill-in-the-blank questions and prompts.

Team #1

1. We want to **thrive**, but **need community support and resources to accomplish goals.**
2. The two most important things to focus on are **finances** and **communication** because **of current events.**
3. If it weren’t for **the great location, high quality of life, top-rated schools, and close-knit community,** we would **move somewhere warm.**
4. We need to finally **establish a municipal complex.**
5. **Technology and people** will have the biggest impact on the city in the coming 2-3 years.

Team #2

1. We want to **protect what’s good about Elmhurst** but **want to have the courage to change.**
2. The two most important things to focus on are **community** and **government services** because **they are foundational for progress.**
3. If it weren’t for **financial constraints and space,** we would **build a consolidated municipal campus.**
4. We need to finally **create an additional public gathering space in the City Center.**
5. **Reassessment of city-owned properties** will have the biggest impact on the City in the coming 2-3 years.

Team #3

1. We want to **provide everything,** but **need to find the money.**
2. The two most important things to focus on are **public safety** and **development** because **they are crucial to our community.**
3. If it weren’t for **our success,** we would **be more successful.**
4. We need to finally **determine how to optimize city assets.**
5. **Mayor Levin** will have the biggest impact on the city in the coming 2-3 years.

Team #4

1. We want to **encourage multi-generational housing,** but **we have limited control of the market.**
2. The two most important things to focus on are **finances** and **infrastructure** because **it ensures community sustainability.**
3. If it weren’t for **each other,** we would **not be a community.**
4. We need to finally **address accessibility and residential character.**
5. **Technology development** will have the biggest impact on the city in the coming 2-3 years.

Environmental Scanning Part II

Large Group S.W.O.C. Analysis

The next step of the strategic planning workshop involved reviewing and accounting for the internal and external factors present in the environment that can potentially influence the success of the City, both negatively and positively. Given the exploratory statements and challenges raised in the Surrender or Lead exercise, participants were then asked to identify what constraints and practical difficulties are likely to be encountered that will make it challenging to achieve the desired future state. These elements included both internal and external factors, conditions, trends, regulations, agencies, resources, etc. Furthermore, participants were asked to identify the organization's **strengths (S)** and **weaknesses (W)**. In what areas does the City regularly excel, and in what areas are there difficulties or shortcomings in terms of expertise, resources, training, etc.? What **opportunities (O)** are on the horizon that can be used to the City's advantage? Conversely, what trends or **challenges (C)** lie ahead that would be obstacles or hindrances? Those answers are captured in the tables that follow.

S.W.O.C. Exercise (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Challenges)

Internal

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • City staff • Location • Quarry • AAA bond rating • Engaged citizenry • Community size • Prairie Path • Diversity/changing demographics • Business community • Restaurants • Resources for businesses • Private education institutions • Elmhurst University • District #205 • Commercial property owners • Elmhurst hospital • Hospital branding including Elmhurst name • Metra & train station • Social media • Standing commissions • Volunteers • Technology • Affluence • Resources • Transportation network (air, rail, roads) • City parks • Parking • Police (1) • All Public Safety services • Housing • Residential investments • Downtown • Trolley • St. Patrick's Day parade, Turkey Trot and other parades/festivals • Spring Road • Business associations • Farmer's Market • Residents/friendly atmosphere • Own wastewater treatment plant 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Landlocked • Aging infrastructure • Flooding • Lack of succession planning • Interest or involvement of some commercial property owners • Environmental sustainability initiative • Operationalization • Lack of hotel • Changing retail landscape • Lack of affordable housing • Lack of large gathering/banquet hall options • Incomplete sidewalk system • Lack of a North/South connector path for biking and walking • Childcare options • Sports facility

External

OPPORTUNITIES	CHALLENGES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Environmental sustainability initiatives • O'Hare airport • Transportation network • Traffic • Parking • Cannabis • Affordable housing • Banquet hall • Landlocked • Downtown • North/South path connectivity • Festivals/events • Comcast "Headend" • Wastewater treatment plant • Performing Arts Center • Location • Quarry • Staff hiring/succession planning • Prairie Path • Diversity • Businesses • Resources for businesses • Climate change • District #205 • Commercial property owners • Self-assessment of status quo • Complete streets • Social media • Chicago's challenges • Technology • Unincorporated areas • Diversity in restaurants • Annexation • Sports facility 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • O'Hare airport • Traffic • Changing retail landscape • Affordable housing • Landlocked • Power grid/outages • North/South path connectivity • Inflation • Crime • Location • Flooding • Engaged community • Competing communities • State of Illinois • Diversity • Climate change • Interest or involvement of some commercial property owners • Complete streets • Social media • Technology • Annexation • Unexpected events — e.g., pandemic • Changing economy

Nominal Group Goal Identification

With the preceding workshop sessions as a sound foundation for goal setting, the final workshop session was a healthy group discussion of goals and/or action items needed to achieve the future visions expressed by the group. The agreed upon criteria used for classifying goals as either short or long term involved the following: **Short term goals** were those goals that could or should be completed or substantially underway in the next one to three years. **Long term goals** were those goals that could or should be completed or substantially underway within a three- to eight-year timeframe. **Complex goals** were goals that required extraordinary resources, specialists, supplemental funding, or the agreement of outside organizations or agencies. **Routine goals**, although not necessarily simple, were goals that could be accomplished upon unilateral decision of the Council and within present budget streams or with minor revenue enhancements or reallocations.

To begin the process, participants returned to the groups they had worked with during the previous Surrender or Lead exercise. Each member was allotted time to highlight the three or four most important policy and program goals they thought the City should accomplish in the next one to three years. The groups then shared their short term goals with the larger group. After some discussion, the small groups met again to establish long term goals focused on a three- to eight-year timeframe. Again, those were then shared with the larger group for feedback. Goals that participants developed could be highly specific or general.

Open Group Discussion and Consolidation of Goals/Objectives

This final phase of the discussion served as the forum for Council and staff members to discuss, evaluate and debate the ideas and goals offered by each participant in the previous sessions. Participants were asked to give their opinions, evaluations and judgments of the worthiness and value of different policy objectives. Participants were also asked to confirm each goal as short or long term, especially where similar goals were developed.

Post-Workshop

Goal Prioritization and Council Ranking Exercise

After the workshop, each Council member was asked to delineate, via an online ranking exercise, which goals should be given the highest priority. The Council was provided an online ranking tool where point values were assigned to each goal in each quadrant of the time and complexity matrix by individuals. The calculation of goal prioritization consisted of “forced ranking” where the ranking of each identified goal is an average of the rankings given by all participants. For example, if a goal were given the scores of 2, 5, 6, 6, 1, 2 and 3, the average total would be 3.57. **The lower the score, the higher the priority.** Again, the average totals were based on the individual ratings provided by the Council members.

The following illustration presents the dashboard of *high, medium, and lower* priority levels for the short and long term strategic goals based on the consensus ranking exercise conducted by the Council (Figure 3). The goal priority dashboard demonstrates the most important strategic goals, tasks, and objectives for the Council and staff to address in the months and years ahead.

Figure 3. Strategic Goals — Priority Levels Dashboard — City of Elmhurst 2022

Short Term Routine Goals	Priority Level
Update the city's downtown master plan	High
Identify options to maintain financial sustainability and maintain the city's AAA bond rating	High
Analyze city real estate assets via professional study and develop a plan to maximize value	High
Strengthen intergovernmental relationships	Medium
Investigate the development of civic and cultural facilities and corridor in the community	Medium
Continue implementation of sustainability action plan and explore scope and results	Medium
Explore the cost and mix of housing choices across the community/work to enhance choices and value for all ages and stages of life	Lower
Explore the establishment of a sports/athletic facility in the community	Lower
Develop draft annexation policy and strategy to consider potential unincorporated areas of Elmhurst	Lower
Short Term Complex Goals	Priority Level
Analyze pending stormwater projects and strategize completion, including cost benefit analysis of potential/considered projects	High
Enhance traffic flow, safety and mitigate congestion; improve traffic control throughout the community as indicated by traffic study analysis	High
Analyze fire department mission/services, including staffing and operational models	High
Continue to enhance and evaluate crime prevention methods and technology	High
Successful completion of the new train station, including the securing of additional funds	Medium
Improve gateways/beautify main corridors into the community	Medium
Implementation of the city's bike and pedestrian pathways plan	Medium
Evaluate options, costs, and requirements for potential construction of infill sidewalks	Lower
Analyze and plan for citywide sustainable energy infrastructure (e-charging, etc.), as part of commercial and residential developments	Lower
Long Term Routine Goals	Priority Level
Enhance communication and engagement to all residents through the development of a communication matrix	High
Refresh, revise, prioritize, and update the city's sustainability agenda for the future	Medium
Long Term Complex Goals	Priority Level
Explore the concept and development of a municipal building complex plan	High
Implement the city's consensus stormwater project completion strategy	High
Develop a <i>Destination Elmhurst</i> marketing strategy, including work on connectivity; transportation and our Metra station; a possible boutique hotel; tech and office innovations; a mixed use sports facility; the Prairie Path	Medium
Complete the city's North York development plan	Medium
Implement the results of the cultural corridor analysis identified in our STC goals that involve the History Museum, Library, donut hole, and surrounding cultural assets	Medium
Develop and implement an annexation guidance plan	Lower

Strategic Priority Areas

Based on an evaluation of the entirety of the process, including interviews, focus groups, discussions at the workshop, and the goals developed, several high-level strategic priority areas were identified. These priority areas highlight the activities and initiatives that the organization will focus on in both the short and long term. The strategic priority areas identified as a result of the strategic planning process are illustrated and fully defined below (in no particular order).

Strategic Priorities



Strategic and Cohesive Commercial Development

A vibrant economy and active business environment are a central feature of community health and fiscal strength expressed by stakeholders, the council, and the city's leadership team. Stability and sustainable growth in communities are the result of well-thought plans for commercial development and response to changing dynamics. Decisions regarding choices for development create the cornerstones for infrastructure, commuting patterns, employment, transportation of goods/resources, and community quality of life. The impacts of development decisions and plans weigh not solely on the municipality but create ripples across the region. Through a strategic, cohesive, and sound set of planning processes for commercial development, Elmhurst can help influence the current use of land and buildings while developing new ways to enhance and expand the tax base in the community.

Residential Development and Housing Options

Residents need a place to rest their heads at night and options for starter homes, places to age in place, and everything in between. Residential options and housing choices were a strategic topic on the minds of stakeholders, the council, and the city's leadership team. For current and potential residents, housing is a critical factor in determining where they wish to live, return to from college, start a family, start/expand a business, and retire. If housing choices are limited, there is a chance new or current residents will not be able to join or stay in the community. As a result, diverse housing types, price points, styles, mixed uses, etc., will be important for Elmhurst to explore as ways to expand and encourage more and varied residential development.

Community Connectivity and Safety Improvements

Physical infrastructure forms the building blocks of any community. It is critical to plan for, and adequately fund, infrastructure improvement projects to ensure sustainability, high-quality delivery of core services, and improved quality of life. In an ever-changing world where technology allows people more options for where they work and live, meeting the needs and expectations of potential and current residents and businesses is even more important. Connectivity and community safety came through in the future visions of stakeholders, the council, and the city's leadership corps. Connectivity for mixed modes of transportation will be a part of the future. Bike trails, walking paths, street network enhancement, electric vehicle facilities, and shared transportation systems will be part of future connectivity. Safety in transportation and shared rights of ways will be important, as will overall public safety in the community. As new designs, shared pathways/rights of ways and ongoing repairs emerge, it will be important to ensure that all connectivity and infrastructure keep safety and adaptation at the forefront of improvement.

Community Engagement

For communities to prosper, engagement with the community and the development of partnerships with non-profits, state agencies, and other stakeholders is essential. As expressed by stakeholders, the council and the City's leadership team, community engagement goes beyond information sharing. The city recognizes the importance of partnering with other governmental entities as well as private property and business owners. Additionally, engagement was seen by leaders as an important ingredient of City actions and activities. Engagement means not only providing information, but also interacting with residents, neighboring municipalities, and private businesses. By initiating and developing avenues of engagement and strong partnerships, communities can leverage resources and utilize competitive approaches to tackling both large and small issues of importance and consequence.

Diversified Recreation and Cultural Options/Amenities

Quality of life amenities are community resources that enhance residents' personal development, interactions, enjoyment, and health. Recreation and cultural options, including attractions, institutions, as well as dining, gathering, and entertainment venues, can make the community a vibrant place to both live and visit. Ensuring that there are plenty of cultural opportunities and diversity in the types of recreational activities and amenities that are provided can help residents settle down, flourish, and build the common experiences that enhance belonging. Today's most dynamic municipalities offer a broad cross-section of opportunities to relax, enjoy, gather, and interact. Discussions by stakeholders, the council, and the city's leadership corps during the planning process recognized that these elements are important to strategic growth, quality of life aspirations, and community advancement.

Conclusion

The value of the strategic planning process is something that the City has recognized over the past decade and beyond. We encourage the Council and leadership team to continue to use the ideas, goals, and aspirations contained in the plan as an active working guide for both the City Council and staff. This summary document is designed to capture the themes, content, and results of the 2022 update discussions to assist the City in developing implementation plans for its high priority goals.

The environment the city organization and community find themselves navigating together are framed by ongoing adaptation, changing demographics, community trends, technology advancements, and varying development opportunities. The updated strategic plan is a road map for the City with the flexibility to adapt to changes that are sure to come. With that in mind, we recommend that the City undertake regular reviews (quarterly or semi-annually) of the strategic plan, its goals, and your implementation schedule to track progress or make adjustments that might be needed over the next 2-3 years.

The 2022 update process of the strategic plan confirms that the City is fortunate to have progressive leaders and a management team that is looking ahead and committed to both strategic thinking and doing.

We wish you well with the ambitious years that lie ahead.

The image shows two handwritten signatures in black ink. The signature on the left is for Greg Kuhn, featuring a large, stylized 'G' and 'K'. The signature on the right is for Jim Norris, written in a more cursive style with 'Jim H. Norris' clearly legible.

Greg Kuhn and Jim Norris, Project Coordinators and Session Facilitators

Appendix

Focus Group Feedback Summary 2022

The information that follows is a summary of key themes and topics that emerged during the stakeholder focus group/outreach sessions. The focus group sessions served as a primer for the strategic planning process. The information that is presented in this summation was designed to add exploratory and thematic information for the Council and Senior Leadership Teams to consider during the strategic planning workshop sessions.

As noted at the beginning of the report, a total of six focus groups were conducted in-person in January and February 2022 to gain additional stakeholder input. Each focus group had approximately 8 to 12 participants from the following groups:

- Invitational Residents (Aldermanic invitations/suggestions)
- Residents (Open)
- Business Community
- Intergovernmental/Civic Agencies
- City Appointed Board and Commissions
- Front-Line Staff

One of the key analytical techniques used for focus group notes is an analyst's search for key phrases, words, or terms that emerged during the focus group sessions. Coding is done by analysts' individual readings of the data, followed by key term searches with the aid of document software. The words and phrases listed below are the results of the study team's analysis of the collected focus group notes. At a glance, the reader can discover what terms were used or referred to most frequently in the feedback notes. Using individual analysts' coding, the researcher identifies terms that recur across groups and across questions. The results are revealing in that they highlight key topics or issues that should be considered when proceeding with strategic planning discussions.

The same exploratory discussion questions were asked of each focus group, and are listed below:

1. How would you describe the City of Elmhurst to a stranger or someone who doesn't live or work here?
2. If you left Elmhurst tomorrow and didn't return for 10-15 years, what do you think you'd see, or what do you hope you'd see, when you returned?
3. What do you like best about Elmhurst? Related to that, what are the strengths/greatest assets of the City? Opportunities?
4. Can you identify areas or topics in need of attention or improvement? Related to that, what are the weaknesses/greatest needs in Elmhurst? Challenges?
5. What are/should be the top priorities for the City over the next 3-5 years?
6. If you could change or initiate one key item or thing about the City, what would it be?

Overall 2022 Themes Based on Aggregated Focus Group Feedback



Focus Group Representative Responses/Theme Analysis

Please Note: The following phrases are representative responses taken from facilitator notes generated during the focus group sessions. The phrases are not complete or direct quotes; rather, they represent the note-taker's capture of the essence and key elements of participants' responses and conversations.

Economic and Commercial Development

- Continue to attract businesses/corporations downtown
- Building codes need to be reviewed and revamped
- More transparency and communication on commercial development
- Need to increase beautification efforts
- North and South Elmhurst feels disconnected from the City Center
- More continuity throughout the City regarding signage, streetlights, etc.
- Diverse/different development to help preserve charm/character of Elmhurst
- Need to look at annexation of unincorporated areas
- Bring activities/businesses that draw people to town later at night
— Comedy club, theater, high-end sports bar, bowling alley, arcade, bands, new Arts Center, etc.
- Environmentally friendly/sustainable options

Housing and Residential Development

- More housing variety, choices/diversity, and affordability to meet the different stages and phases of life
- More starter home options available
- More balanced approach to historic preservation
- Some tear downs cover too much of the lot — concern about stormwater
- Concerns about density in new developments

Community Connectivity and Safety

- Need to mitigate traffic congestion
- Potential addition of an underpass or overpass
- Access into Elmhurst Crossing
- More sidewalks/pedestrian-friendly areas, especially north and south Elmhurst
- Lack of public transportation throughout the City
- Quality police and fire services
- Safe biking areas desired

Community Engagement

- Desire for increased collaboration between park district, City, and schools, and between some business groups
- Encourage more community participation at City Hall meetings
- Desire to increase patronizing/supporting of Elmhurst businesses
- More information options

Recreation and Cultural Dynamics

- More variety in restaurants, bars, shops – desire for more boutiques
- More space for outdoor dining downtown
- Need for more green space and open space
- Performing Arts Center
- Indoor recreation center

Key Priorities Identified Across Groups

** Denotes additional focus group participants that agreed with the statement*

Please Note: The following phrases are representative responses taken from facilitator notes generated during the focus group sessions. The phrases are not complete or direct quotes; rather, they represent the note-taker's capture of the essence and key elements of participants' responses and conversations.

Address Traffic Congestion

- Better flow of traffic *
- Install traffic control cameras
- Semi-trucks off 294 can't go east, which causes traffic and safety issues — need to reroute to not cause further damage coming through residential areas

Increase Safety/Accessibility

- Bolster general safety in the City — streets, sidewalks, and bike paths *
- Address and add more sidewalks *
- Maintain a high level of public safety *

Create a Variety of Housing Options/Mix

- Provide a variety of different housing options/stock *
- Added diversity in culture and economics

Establish New Development Guidelines

- Balance development and preservation of housing
- Developers need to better adhere to the guidelines which are consistent with the City's character and zoning regulations *
- Strengthen communication between City and residents in understanding their feel of changes/development/regulations, etc. *
- More sustainable options (e.g., green spaces, solar paneling, composting, etc.)
- Focus on TIF 4 development on the north side
- Proactively prepared for opportunities to annex land
- Active development brought to North York Rd *
- Restructure the complex along Addison St heading east and past York up to the Police Station to beautify and redevelop
- Explore donut development, i.e., development that can leave an island of unimproved or underimproved parcels*
- Addison development*

Maintain Vibrant Downtown

- Maintain vibrancy of downtown district *
- Patronizing the Elmhurst businesses
- Create a centralized business organization for all business areas
- More green spaces to gather in the downtown area
- City needs to develop a plan to attract small businesses downtown and support them so they can thrive
- Strategic plan for downtown development to have a good balance of diversity and mix of business (e.g., performance arts)
- City supports an appropriate level of development for downtown that maintains the charm of the City