



DOWNTOWN PLAN

City of Elmhurst, Illinois

Adopted June 20, 2016

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PURPOSE

The Downtown Plan is the City's official adopted policy guide for future development within this critical area of the City. It provides a decision-making framework for staff, appointed officials, and elected officials. Presenting a vision for the year 2025, the Downtown Plan also provides goals, objectives, and other recommendations of action to be undertaken by the City to maintain Downtown as an attractive and vibrant city center.

In addition, the Downtown Plan provides property owners and the development community with the City's expectation for private development and improvement. The Plan's recommendations and policies, along with the design and development guidelines set a standard for new development, and indicate the types of uses and desirable character of the built form throughout Downtown.

IN THIS CHAPTER

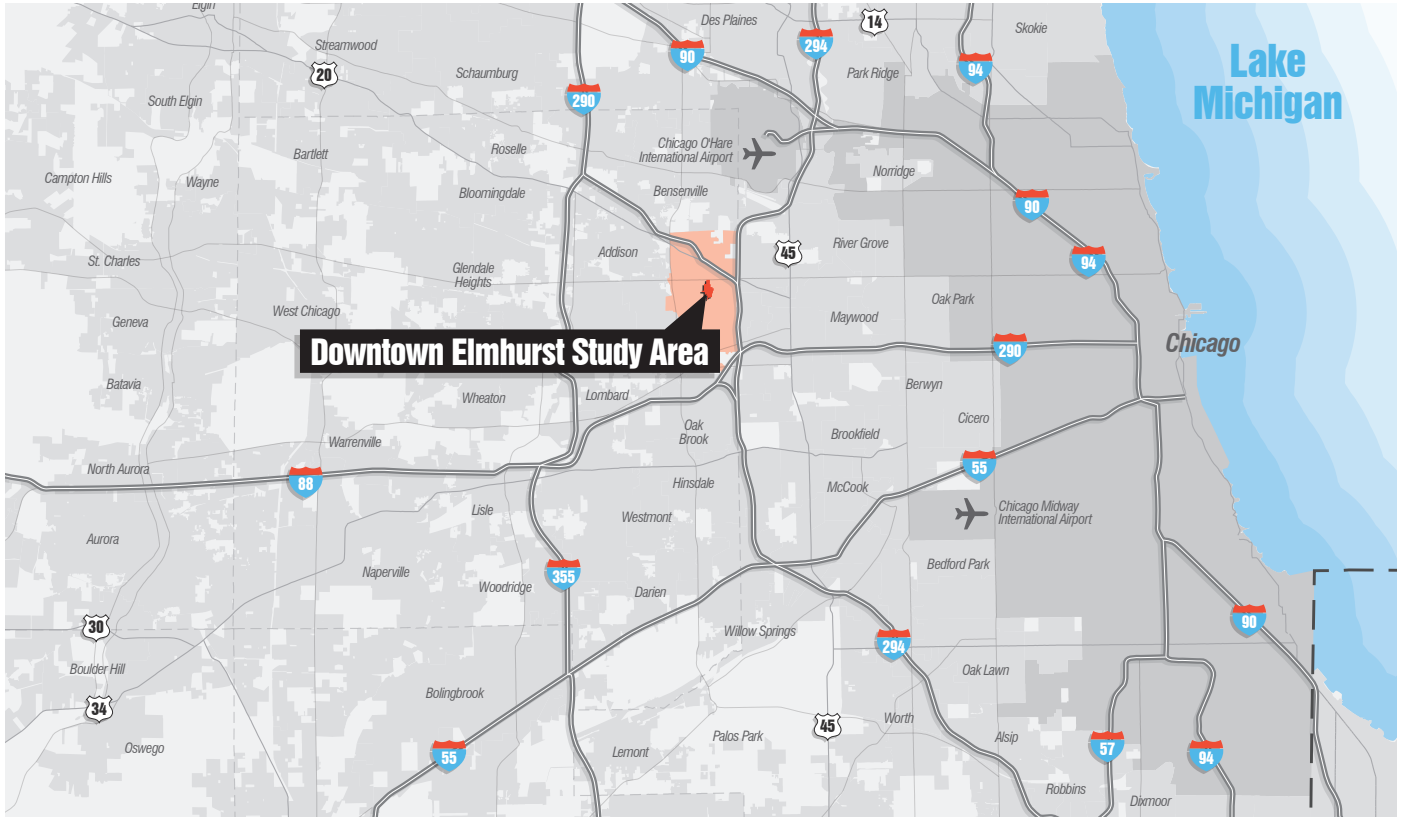
- Introduction
- A Vision for Downtown Elmhurst



INTRODUCTION

Over the last ten years, Downtown Elmhurst has continued to change and evolve. While the 1990 & 2006 Downtown Plans provided strong and insightful direction for Downtown, new issues and priorities unforeseen at those times have developed, requiring the City to reassess its vision. The 2016 Downtown Plan provides an updated framework based on current aspirations and trends, and recalibrates the community's vision for Downtown along with the appropriate recommendations and policies.

The Elmhurst Downtown Plan serves as the City's official guide to direct growth, investment, improvement, and development within Downtown Elmhurst. This Plan updates the previous 2006 Downtown Plan, with a particular emphasis on aligning the community's vision and planning recommendations with post-recession market conditions, ensuring planning policies can be easily translated into an actionable and clear regulatory framework, and resolving important issues that have materialized in recent years, such as parking and building height.



GEOGRAPHIC & MARKET CONTEXT

This section provides a brief overview of the geographic and market context of both the City of Elmhurst and Downtown Elmhurst Study Area. Data was obtained from ESRI Business Analyst and the U.S. Census Bureau.

City of Elmhurst

Elmhurst is a western Chicago suburb located twenty miles west of Downtown Chicago and ten miles southwest of O'Hare International Airport. It is roughly 10 square miles in size, surrounded by the communities of Bensenville, Northlake, Berkeley, Hillside, Oakbrook, Oakbrook Terrace, Addison, and Villa Park. The City is located in east DuPage County.

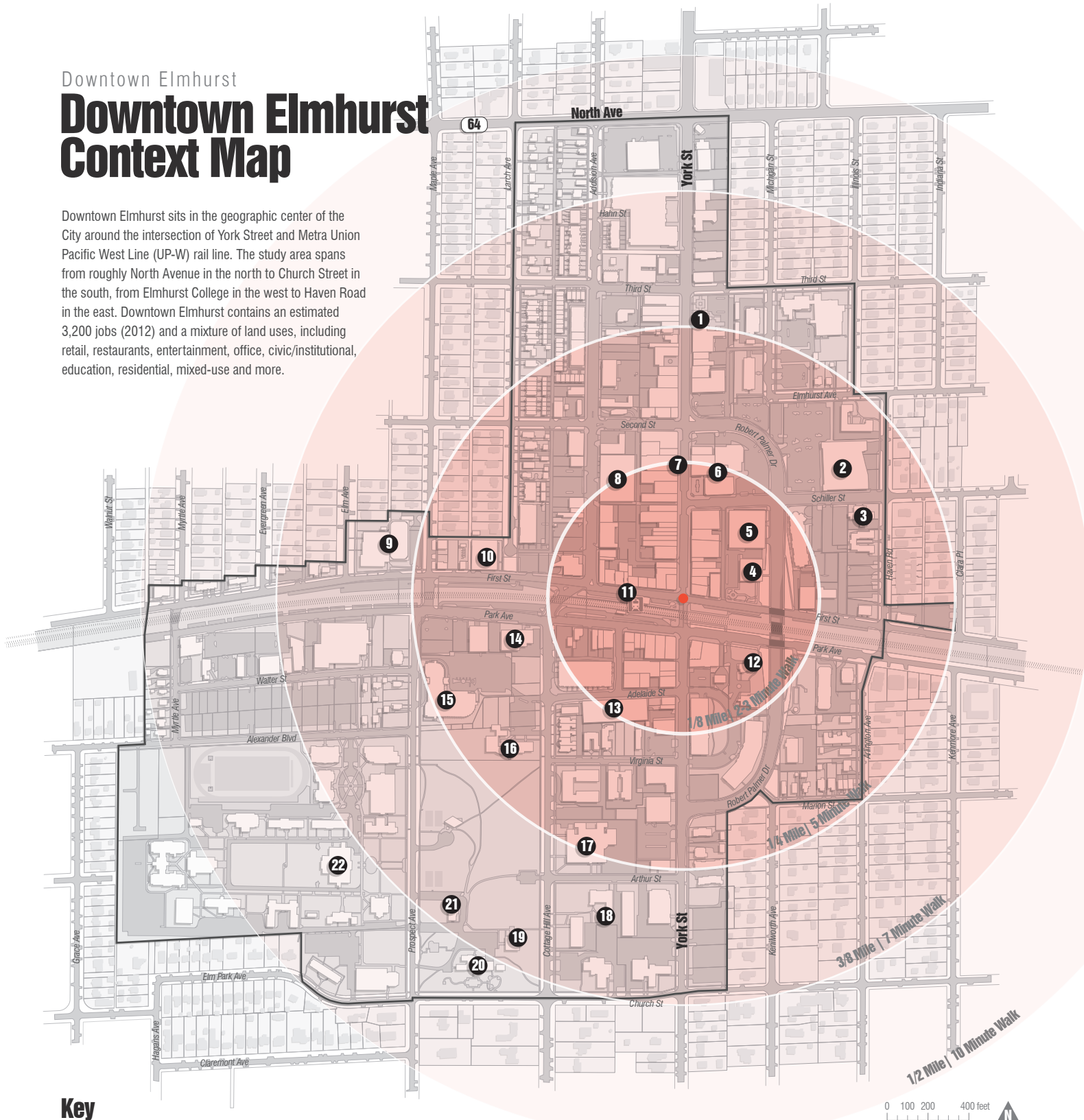
The City's estimated population is 44,823 (2015), and the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP) projects that the City's population will grow to 53,369 by 2040. It is a relatively affluent community, with an estimated median household income of \$90,319 (2015) and a median home value of \$370,960 (2015).

Community assets include a regional hospital, a liberal arts college, several museums, and great local schools and parks. It has ready access to several major highways, including I-290, I-88, I-294, and U.S. Route 20, and contains stops along both Metra Union Pacific West Line (UP-W) rail and Pace bus lines.

Downtown Elmhurst

Downtown Elmhurst Context Map

Downtown Elmhurst sits in the geographic center of the City around the intersection of York Street and Metra Union Pacific West Line (UP-W) rail line. The study area spans from roughly North Avenue in the north to Church Street in the south, from Elmhurst College in the west to Haven Road in the east. Downtown Elmhurst contains an estimated 3,200 jobs (2012) and a mixture of land uses, including retail, restaurants, entertainment, office, civic/institutional, education, residential, mixed-use and more.



Key

Context

- Downtown Elmhurst Boundary
- Railroad
- Walk Distances / Distances

Activity Generators

- | | | | |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------------|---|---|
| 1 Elmhurst City Hall | 7 York Theatre Classic Cinema | 13 Adelaide Parking Deck | 19 Elmhurst Lizzardo Museum |
| 2 Jewel Osco | 8 Addison Parking Deck | 14 Elmhurst Post Office | 20 Elmhurst Park District Conservatory |
| 3 Elmhurst Memorial Clinic | 9 Elmhurst YMCA | 15 Elmhurst Public Library | 21 Elmhurst Wilder Museum |
| 4 Elmhurst Police Station | 10 Larch Parking Deck | 16 Elmhurst Art Museum | 22 Elmhurst College |
| 5 Schiller Parking Deck | 11 Elmhurst Metra Station | 17 Hawthorne Elementary School | |
| 6 Elmhurst City Centre | 12 Elmhurst Historical Museum | 18 Immaculate Conception Schools | |



PAST PLANS & STUDIES

This section contains a review of past plans and studies commissioned by or used by the City of Elmhurst impacting policy, planning, and development within Downtown Elmhurst. The Downtown Plan recognizes the value of past planning efforts and builds upon them where applicable as a component of the community's new vision.

Downtown Sector Plan (1990)

The City's first plan for the Downtown was the Downtown Sector Plan, developed as a subarea plan within the City's 1990 Comprehensive Plan. The 1990 Comprehensive Plan recommended improvement and enhancement of the historic role and character of Downtown, and also promoted new redevelopment in selected locations. Specific recommendations included:

- Downtown should be maintained as Elmhurst's multi-purpose commercial and service focal point.
- Downtown should remain relatively small and compact, and the present scale and character of the area should essentially be maintained.
- The blocks north of the railroad should be reinforced as Downtown's primary retail shopping area. The blocks south of the railroad should be improved as a mixed commercial area dominated by office and service uses.
- Low- to medium-density residential uses should frame the Downtown and provide a transition between the commercial area and adjacent neighborhoods.
- Streetscape improvements, including lighting, landscaping, sidewalks and signage, should continue to be undertaken to enhance the image and appearance of Downtown.

City Centre Plan (1999)

In 1999, the not-for-profit “City Centre” organization developed an independent plan for the future of Downtown. Many of its design and development recommendations were incorporated into the 2006 Downtown Plan. Some of the Plan’s major improvement and redevelopment recommendations include:

- Develop a clear, identifiable signage program with four types of signs: a) gateway signs; b) identity signs; c) directional signs; and d) information signs.
- Improve building facades to enhance the character of “Main Street” in the Downtown.
- Establish architectural guidelines to encourage higher quality design for new and renovated buildings.
- Complete the City’s streetscape project, especially along Addison Avenue.
- Continue to reevaluate Downtown’s overall parking supply and traffic circulation system.
- Consider two-way traffic on various Downtown streets, including York Street, Cottage Hill Avenue and along Second Street between Addison Avenue and York Street.
- Consolidate and link adjacent parking lots to provide more efficient, shared parking and to increase parking supply.
- Consider relocating the main Post Office out of Downtown. The building could be reused for a smaller Postal facility, a Park District headquarters, and/or a visitor’s center.

North Downtown Plan (2000)

The North Downtown Plan addressed basic development, design and zoning issues in the area between Third Street and North Avenue along York Street. The previous C2 zoning in this area would encourage more suburban “strip shopping center” style development. The City concluded that this area should function as a part of the Downtown core, and be subject to development regulations similar to the CBD regarding building setbacks, parking and other features to encourage a pedestrian environment. Following adoption of the North Downtown Plan, the City prepared and adopted the “C4A North Downtown Business District” zoning amendment to implement the development regulations and design principles of the North Downtown Plan.

Subarea “H” Crescent Court Downtown Plan (2004)

This Plan was prepared early in the planning process for the 2006 Downtown Plan to address the unique redevelopment needs of the former Fifth Third Bank block at the corner of York Street and Robert Palmer Drive. Land use mix, development intensity, building positioning, and the conservation of existing structures on the site were important issues addressed. The City Council accepted the Plan as an interim plan and strategy on June 16, 2003. Since that time, the Crescent Court Development (Subarea H) project has been approved, and developed. This plan was integrated into the 2006 Downtown Plan.

Cultural Campus Plan (2004)

The Cultural Campus Plan was developed to create a coordinated planning and development strategy for the Wilder Park area. At the time of the Plan's development, several important projects were underway, including development of the new Elmhurst Public Library, campus master planning by Elmhurst College, ongoing planning by the Elmhurst Park District, proposed expansion of the Elmhurst Art Museum, and more. Major issues addressed by the joint-planning effort included off-street parking, pedestrian access and safety, the location and scale of new buildings, and the conservation of open space. Several alternative plans were developed and were included within the 2006 Downtown Plan.

Downtown Plan (2006)

The City's 2006 Downtown Plan replaced the 1990 Downtown Plan and knit together several other Downtown planning efforts that had occurred over the previous years. The Plan made general land use recommendations, established design guidelines, and detailed site-specific recommendations for nine subareas. Some of the Plan's key recommendations include:

- Multi-family and commercial uses should not be permitted to penetrate surrounding neighborhoods.
- Buffer single-family neighborhoods to the west and southwest with low-density multifamily development.
- Conserve Downtown's historic buildings.
- Maintain the Downtown streetwall with a high level of streetscaping.
- Encourage two to four story redevelopment while discouraging single story construction.
- Taller buildings may be appropriate at major intersections and in centrally located areas not adjacent to lower density residential areas.
- Encourage ground floor space devoted to retail, restaurant, or other active pedestrian oriented use.
- The most intensely developed area of the Downtown should occur along York Street between North Avenue and just south of Park Avenue.
- Collaborate and work closely with public service and institutional agencies in the Downtown to meet future needs.
- Connect the Cultural Campus to Downtown Elmhurst.
- Protect and enhance Wilder Park Open Space.

Comprehensive Plan (2009)

The City's 2009 Comprehensive Plan replaced the 1990 Comprehensive Plan. The Plan's vision was based on six key elements: collaborative governance, quality design and urban form, economic competitiveness, an efficient transportation system, quality community facilities and services, and strong neighborhoods. The Plan's recommendations were organized into several policy areas: land use and development, transportation, economic development, housing, community facilities, sustainability, and natural resources. The Comprehensive Plan did not issue new recommendations for Downtown Elmhurst, but supported the 2006 Downtown Plan and recommended full implementation.

Bicycle Plan (2013)

The City's official Bicycle Plan was adopted in 2013, and focuses on strengthening bicycle infrastructure and identifying strategies to increase biking among residents. The Plan's recommendations were based on a wide variety of public input, including two workshops, a community survey, public hearings, and the guidance of the Elmhurst Bicycle Task Force.

Identified assets for biking in Elmhurst were quality roadways, a walkable downtown, an efficient street grid, and an existing network of bike trails and paths. Key barriers to bikability include busy arterial roadways, few options for bike parking, and inability to add bike lanes due to limited roadway width.

The Plan proposes a two-pronged approach to make Elmhurst more bike-friendly: "conservative" and "incremental" infrastructure improvements coupled with encouraging residents to bike more. Key recommendations included:

- Implementing a network of dedicated bike lanes with appropriate wayfinding signage;
- Using "sharrow" pavement markings to increase visibility of bicyclists and their ability to ride on busier streets, especially those within Downtown; and
- Increasing the availability of bike parking, both in number and location, to make biking more efficient and attractive.

North York Street Corridor Plan (2015)

The Plan outlines the City's vision and strategies for improvement, redevelopment, beautification, and revitalization of the North York Street corridor. The corridor is a 1.8 mile stretch of North York Street that begins at North Avenue at the southern end (the northern border of the City's Downtown) and ends at Grand Avenue, the City's northern municipal boundary. The Plan envisioned North York as an auto-centric, but pedestrian friendly and aesthetically pleasing, corridor split into three functional zones, each serving a distinct purpose. Design guidelines and priority redevelopment opportunities were also established.

PLANNING PROCESS

The Updated Elmhurst Downtown Plan is the product of a multi-phased, community driven process. It initiated with a review of the 2006 Downtown Plan, documented the existing physical and regulatory environment, and then, with the help of the community, identified issues or challenges facing the Downtown. Building on this understanding, a vision for Downtown was established, and recommendations, policies and comprehensive regulatory strategies were developed to support preferred community improvement and conservation ideas. The planning process included:

- Continuous **community outreach** over the course of several months, including a Community Workshop with a strong residential turnout, a Business Owners Workshop, a Property Owners Workshop, a residential focus group, and interviews and focus groups with more than 30 key stakeholders in the business, non-profit, and real estate sectors;
- A **survey and assessment** of existing conditions, including an overview of land use, zoning, transportation and parking;
- **Creation of a draft Updated Elmhurst Downtown Plan**, based upon an update of the 2006 Plan and the community's input, and including plans for land use and development, parking and circulation, design guidelines, and regulatory strategies;
- **Public review** of the draft Updated Elmhurst Downtown Plan at a open house and public hearing; and,
- **Formal adoption** of the Plan as the City's official policy document for Downtown by the City Council.

To be completed in next step

PLAN ORGANIZATION

The organization of the Downtown Plan is not sequential to the Planning Process. When completed the new Elmhurst Downtown Plan will be organized into the following eight chapters, however not all chapters are presented within this interim report:

- **Chapter 1: Purpose** introducing the purpose of the plan, the regional and local context, highlighting past plans and studies, providing an overview of the planning process, and explaining the organization of the Plan; establishing the community vision that guides the Updated Elmhurst Downtown Plan document and paints a picture of what Downtown should look like in 2030
- **Chapter 2: Influences & Opportunities** summarizing all of the outreach that was conducted as well as the key issues, themes, and ideas that were generated by the public; providing a survey of existing land use, zoning, transportation and parking

- **Chapter 3: Actions & Recommendations** describing land uses, policies, and key projects that should occur within Downtown and identifying multi-modal recommendations related to the transportation network, including those for vehicles, pedestrians, bicyclists, rail, and bus
- **Chapter 4: Design Guidelines** articulating the desired scale, style, materials, bulk, lighting, and orientation of buildings, signage, and parking within Downtown
- **Chapter 5: Regulatory Strategies Framework** providing a regulatory framework and recommendations necessary to successfully implement the Elmhurst Downtown Plan.

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A VISION FOR DOWNTOWN ELMHURST

The Vision for Downtown Elmhurst incorporates the most central ideas and themes generated during the community outreach process and establishes a guiding framework for recommendations provided in the Plan. The Vision Statement is written to be forward looking, describing the accomplishments the City aims to achieve within Downtown Elmhurst over the next 10 years following adoption of the Plan.



THE VISION FOR DOWNTOWN ELMHURST

The Vision Statement provides important focus and direction for the preparation of recommendations for the Elmhurst Downtown Plan.

The downtown will achieve a healthy balance of residential growth and commercial redevelopment. Vacant storefronts will be filled, parking and traffic problems will be alleviated, businesses will thrive, and the sidewalks and public spaces will come alive. Downtown will become a neighborhood for its residents, a focal point for the community, and a destination for the region.

Downtown Elmhurst will remain the heart of our community. It will continue to serve as a unique place in our great city that belongs to everyone. A mix of stores, restaurants, parks, plazas, events, and entertainment venues, will give everyone a reason to be in Downtown.

Although the community was proud of Downtown, the adoption of the 2016 Downtown Plan and the completion of the new parking deck mark a significant milestone in its continued revitalization. Shortly after the new Plan is adopted, the City and its partners will actively respond to community input and comments gathered during the planning process. Together, they will launch a concerted campaign to achieve the goals and objectives of the new Downtown Plan.

Lacking specific direction and a clear vision, development in Downtown is currently uncoordinated. Among the first actions undertaken will be a revision to the zoning code to align with the new Downtown Plan's recommendations. This will provide better direction for future development and improve coordination between the City, developers, investors, and business owners.

Guided by the land use and development recommendations of the Downtown Plan, the revised zoning code will make new downtown development more predictable, and the once "hot-button" issue of building height will be resolved. Although building height along York Street will gradually increase through future redevelopment, the new zoning code will ensure building height is appropriate and provides human scale and sense-of-enclosure. Buildings will become shorter as they transition into the neighborhoods around Downtown.

A mix of housing options, both in scale and in type, will attract millennials and young families to Elmhurst as well as provide longtime residents with an opportunity to age in place.

Metra trains will continue to roll into town along the Union Pacific West Line, providing convenient access to Downtown Chicago and all points in between. Downtown will become a regional model for a successful and vibrant transit-oriented-development (TOD). Businesses will benefit from commuter traffic, and nearby residents can own a car by choice, and not necessity.



Drawn to Metra access, walkability, and a vibrant mixed-use environment, taller buildings around the core will increase the amount of both residents and employees in Downtown and improve environmental sustainability. An increased downtown population, or “rooftops,” will increase the viability of downtown businesses and establish a critical mass of activity. As a result of these public-private efforts, Downtown vacancy will fall to a record low and new and exciting redevelopment and reuse projects will be able to come online. While the nearby Oakbrook Mall will remain a retail and restaurant competitor of Downtown, its focus on national retailers and chains should allow Downtown to flourish with boutique shopping and dining.

Downtown’s dining options and the York Theatre will anchor Downtown’s entertainment scene, which will soon be complemented by a new venue that hosts concerts, theatre performances, and art exhibits. The community’s summer festivals will continue Downtown, and thanks to a new skating rink, community interaction in Downtown can happen year round.

Streets in Downtown will be safer and less congested than ever before, especially York Street. By directing faster moving traffic to Robert Palmer Drive and Route 83 around Downtown, York Street will blossom into a “comfortable” pedestrian street. Although York Street may get congested at times, it’s understood that not having traffic rip through the heart of Downtown is a good thing.

Improved streetscaping throughout Downtown, including new wayfinding signs and directories, combined with more pedestrian friendly streets will help tie the fabric of the Downtown together into a cohesive unit. Currently, Downtown Elmhurst seems disconnected, like a collection of unique districts with independent roles. The new streetscaping and pedestrian enhancements will improve connectivity between the “north side” and “south side of the tracks,” and help ensure that Elmhurst College is part of the Downtown fabric. A network of parks, plazas and courtyards will add to the Downtown atmosphere and provide gathering spaces for numerous new activities in Downtown, as well as providing green infrastructure for enhanced sustainability.

In the face of all this investment and development, Downtown Elmhurst will not lose its cherished character. It will remain a vibrant and active pedestrian environment, and a source of pride for the community. Visitors and residents alike will take full advantage of the retail, restaurant, entertainment, and recreation amenities the Downtown has to offer. These improvements will enhance Downtown’s character, with attractive new development blending with the existing built form. Residents will enjoy being able to walk to dinner and a movie, read in Wilder Park, sip coffee on sidewalks or outdoor patios, and take the train to Downtown Chicago. Parking will be plentiful and visiting Downtown will be easy. On any given day, sidewalks will be alive, filled with people of all ages, each with their very own reason to be in Downtown Elmhurst.



INFLUENCES & OPPORTUNITIES

To be effective and viable, establishing a vision and plan for Downtown must be founded on a solid understanding of the existing physical and regulatory conditions of Downtown. This chapter presents a review of key existing conditions that will provide vital information that provided a “baseline” for the Downtown Plan and helped inform and shape its recommendations. The review of existing conditions includes an assessment of the existing land use, current zoning, transportation, mobility, transit, parking, and infrastructure.

IN THIS CHAPTER

- Community Outreach
- Existing Land Use
- Current Regulatory Controls
- Existing Transportation & Infrastructure



COMMUNITY OUTREACH

The Updated Elmhurst Downtown Plan is the product of a planning process that actively sought input from a variety of stakeholders, including residents, business owners, developers, service providers, Elmhurst college students, appointed officials, and City staff. A variety of outreach efforts, both in-person and online, were used to gather this input. This section briefly summarizes the community outreach efforts that were completed during the planning process.

OUTREACH OVERVIEW

The Downtown Elmhurst Plan utilized a planning process that actively sought input from a broad spectrum of stakeholders, including residents, business owners, developers, service providers, appointed officials, and City staff. A variety of ongoing outreach efforts, both in-person and on-line, were used to gather the concerns, ideas, and aspirations of the community.

Community Workshop

On Thursday, May 28th, 2015 at 7 p.m., an Elmhurst Downtown Plan workshop was held with over 90 community members at City Hall. This workshop was the first of many opportunities for residents and stakeholders to publicly discuss issues facing Downtown Elmhurst. The workshop began with a brief overview of the planning process and concluded with a community discussion of issues, concerns, and ideas. The workshop included a questionnaire exercise, from which participants shared their written comments with the overall group.

Stakeholder Interviews

In order to obtain greater detail about challenges and issues within Downtown Elmhurst, the consulting team conducted one-on-one interviews and roundtable discussions with over thirty people on May 11-12 and June 18, 2015. Those interviewed possessed a wide range of perspectives and backgrounds, and included long-time and new residents, business owners, property owners, real estate brokers, Elmhurst College students, residential and commercial developers, and City staff.

Business & Property Owner Workshops

On the morning of May 12, 2015, two workshops were held at City Hall: one with Downtown business owners and another with Downtown property owners.

Both workshops began with a brief overview of the planning process and concluded with an interactive workshop of issues, concerns, and ideas. The workshop centered on challenges and issues facing businesses and property owners in Downtown, desired projects and actions, and assets.

Community Open House

On the evening January 7, 2016, a Community Open House was held at City Hall with over 150 participants. Attendees included residents, the business community, developers, and others who have a vested interest in the Downtown's future.

The Open House provided an opportunity to view key recommendations in the Downtown Plan and talk to the consultants one-on-one about questions, comments, and suggestions they had about the Plan. A presentation was given after the Open House which provided an overview of the draft Downtown Plan and was followed by a public discussion including questions or suggestions attendees thought the next iteration of the Plan should address.

Project Website

A project website was created to establish a centralized location for information regarding the Downtown Elmhurst Plan. The website contained information and updates concerning the project, meeting notices, and downloadable versions of project documents and reports. To provide convenient and comprehensive information, the project website was accessed through a link on the City of Elmhurst's home page. The project website also contained links to online questionnaires for residents and business owners.

- **Community Questionnaire.** An on-line questionnaire for Elmhurst residents was posted on the project website. It was designed to supplement in-person outreach activities conducted throughout the community. As of the drafting of the Downtown Plan, over 750 residents submitted answers to the questionnaire.
- **Business Questionnaire.** An online questionnaire for Downtown Elmhurst's businesses was also posted on the project website, with the purpose of soliciting insight about the local business climate. As of the drafting of the Downtown Plan, 32 business owners and operators submitted answers to the questionnaire.

TOP COMMUNITY ISSUES

While dozens of issues were identified by the public (and each is detailed within the individual summaries included within this chapter), several key themes were repeated throughout the various outreach activities. After multiple workshops, hundreds of questionnaires, and dozens of interviews and focus groups, the top community issues for Downtown Elmhurst are:

- **Improving the business climate.** Residents and business owners believe Elmhurst is a challenging place to do business. Specific hurdles included uncertain and burdensome regulatory processes, retail market competition from neighboring mega-malls.
- **Diversifying the types of businesses.** The community believes that Downtown lacks a healthy mix of restaurants, entertainment opportunities, shops, and offices that can appeal to all age demographics. It was routinely cited that there needed to be more business diversity and that there are too many yogurt/ice cream shops, banks, and beauty/hair/nail salons. A particular emphasis was placed on attracting arts and entertainment activity generators that can draw people from around the region to Downtown Elmhurst.

- **Placemaking and sprucing up Downtown.** The community would like to see more public spaces, greenery, outdoor dining, and art within Downtown.
- **Reducing vacancy.** Vacant storefronts are detrimental to Downtown. They communicate disinvestment, detract from Downtown's appearance, and create "gaps" in the Downtown environment. It was noted that many vacant buildings are challenging to sell or rent, given that they are relatively short buildings, limited in square footage, expensive, and in need of repair and upkeep. As a result parcel consolidation and redevelopment may be the best option for some buildings.
- **Leveraging and connecting with other institutions.** The greater Downtown area extends beyond just the York Street commercial area and includes the Elmhurst Public Library, Elmhurst College, Wilder Park, Elmhurst Art Museum, and Lizzadro Museum of Lapidary Art. The community desires a greater level of connections, both physical (e.g. sidewalks, signage, and trails) and social (e.g. joint programming, events, etc), between the different assets of Downtown.
- **Improving the ease of parking.** A variety of different perspectives existed on Downtown parking, but generally, most felt it was challenging for customers, employees, and tourists to navigate and that a clear, coordinated strategy is needed.
- **Enhancing pedestrian friendliness and connectivity.** Generally, residents believe that Downtown is well-laid out and pedestrian friendly. However, several problematic crossings were identified, and the community would like to see better pedestrian access across the rail tracks, such as signage, a new tunnel, or striping, as well as better physical connections between the different institutions within Downtown.
- **Establishing an identity.** What type of Downtown should be established? A local destination? A regional destination? What sets it apart from other western suburban downtowns? The community desires a clear strategy and identity for Downtown Elmhurst.

It is important to note that the comments in this chapter are not policy recommendations by the consultant, but candid ideas, opinions, and concerns shared with the consultant team by **residents, business & property owners, stakeholders, and city staff**. Where used, quotations denote that the statement was made verbatim by an interviewee.



EXISTING LAND USE

Existing land uses and development patterns within Elmhurst's Downtown distinguish the area from the rest of the City and play an important role in the shaping the recommendations and ideas of the new Downtown Plan. This section of the Plan includes an inventory of the existing land uses and development patterns within the Downtown Plan's project study area. The inventory is based upon reconnaissance undertaken in the Spring 2015 and includes each parcel within the project study area and the surrounding neighborhood.

Residential

Single Family Detached

Downtown is bordered on all sides by established, attractive, and well-maintained single-family neighborhoods, some with local historical or architectural significance. These areas were developed with a traditional grid, which provides a relatively uniform layout due to standard street and lot dimensions. Albeit a lower density, residents of these neighborhoods provide a strong base of support for Downtown's commercial uses. There are a few single family detached homes within the study area boundaries, but they are out-of-scale and context relative to their adjacent uses.

Single Family Attached / Duplex

Single-Family Attached homes consist of structures containing multiple single-family dwellings, each sharing a common wall with at least one adjacent dwelling but maintaining their own separate entrance. Examples include duplexes, townhomes, or rowhomes. There are several high-quality duplex and townhome developments within the study area, serving as transitions between higher intensity uses and surrounding residential neighborhoods. They blend into the traditional single-family environment by adhering to similar heights, setbacks, building materials, and architectural styles as single-family detached homes. In most instances parking is provided through alley access.

Multi-Family

The multi-family land use consists of structures with multiple housing units that utilize common entrances and hallways and shared building amenities. Examples of multi-family residential developments include apartments, condominiums, and senior housing. In recent years, several standalone apartment/condominium buildings have been developed within Downtown, with more planned. Downtown also benefits from Greencastle, which is senior citizen lifestyle housing, and the development of mixed-use buildings with residential units located on the upper floors.

Commercial

Retail / Commercial Service

Downtown Elmhurst maintains a small but relatively strong retail component. Retail uses include shops, boutiques, and grocery stores, and are most prominent along and near York Street, particularly in the blocks between Third Street and the railroad, and along First Street between York and Addison. There is a large mix of small local and national retailers.

Commercial service uses are widely scattered throughout the Downtown, particularly along York Street and Addison Avenue. These include real estate offices, small medical clinics, travel agencies, barber shops, salons, dry cleaners, and other personal services.

Restaurant / Entertainment

Downtown contains more than 25 restaurants, demonstrating that dining is an emerging and important part of the entertainment fabric of Downtown. While restaurants are scattered throughout the study area, a large concentration of them are found along York Street between North Avenue and Adelaide Street. There is also a cluster of restaurants along First Street and Park Avenue, near the commuter station. Another signal of the Downtown's evolving role as an entertainment center was the opening of Fitz's Lanes, a "boutique" bowling business with a restaurant and billiards. Of particular note is the York Theatre, with 10 screens and about 1,676 seats, located along York Street near Schiller Street. In addition to being a major entertainment attraction, the theatre building has long been a visual focal point for the area.

Mixed Use

Mixed-Use land uses include single story buildings with a mix of uses and multiple story buildings with restaurant, retail, and service uses on the ground floor and office or residential uses on upper floors. Typically, buildings are built to the property line with parking provided in the rear to enhance character and walkability. Mixed-use makes up the bulk of uses found along York Street within the heart of Downtown.

Auto Service

Auto Service uses are commercial land uses designed with the automobile in mind, such as gas stations, fast food, and repair shops. A few of these uses are scattered throughout the Downtown. While not numerous, they occupy prominent and highly visible corner sites along both York Street and Addison Avenue and are generally inconsistent with the character of Downtown.

Office

Office uses are also scattered throughout the Downtown, particularly along York Street, Addison Avenue, First Street, and Park Avenue. Examples include business and corporate offices, as well as other professional offices. These businesses operate out of stand-alone commercial buildings, upper floors of a mixed-use building, and converted single family detached homes.

Bank

Downtown contains several banks. While these financial institutions generate foot traffic and employ workers during the day, these sizable properties do not produce much activity in the evenings or weekends, leading to a gap in street activity.

Public & Semi-Public

Religious

Religious land uses include churches and other religious institutions, such as Immaculate Conception Parish, First United Methodist Church, and Saint Peters United Church of Christ. They are mostly concentrated in the southern portion of the study area but there are a few others found throughout the study area.

Civic / Institutional

The Civic/Institutional designation is comprised of public and civic land uses such as schools and city facilities. All of these structures are sound and well maintained, and many are considering improvements or redevelopments. Civic land uses are an important element in Downtown identity and designating it as the core of the community. This category does not include Elmhurst College due to its size and prominence and is classified separately in its own land use category.

Elmhurst College

Elmhurst College's 48-acre campus is located in the southwestern segment of the study area. The College is made up of more than 3,350 students and 160 full-time faculty. The campus includes a wide range of uses, including administrative buildings, classrooms, dormitories, and athletic facilities. The consistent usage of red brick in building design gives the campus a distinctive character.

Parks & Open Space

The Parks & Open Space category includes parks, pocket parks, plazas, and open spaces. They can be either publicly or privately owned, and the category encompasses both grounds used for active recreation, such as Wilder Park and Glos Memorial Park. Additionally, several small plazas are located throughout the Downtown, including at the southeast corner of North York Street and West Third Street (near City Hall) and the northeastern corner of North York Street, Schiller Street (with the public fountain), and the northwest corner of First Street and Commerce Parkway (Elmhurst Police Department plaza).

Several institutional uses, such as Elmhurst College, also contain parks and/or open spaces within their campuses. Examples include the College's Arboretum or the relatively large lawns, yards, and setbacks utilized by many institutions to support greenery.

The most prominent recreational space within the study area is Wilder Park. The 17.5 acre park is a major asset for Downtown Elmhurst. The park also creates an attractive setting for the Public Library, the Art Museum, and the Lizzadro Museum of Lapidary.

Cemetery

Cemeteries function as open space. St. Mary's Cemetery and St. Peter's Cemetery are adjacent to one another within the study area.

Transportation & Infrastructure

Parking

The parking land use includes parking lots and parking decks. A significant amount of land within Downtown Elmhurst is utilized for parking. Downtown Elmhurst is supported by on-street parking, four municipal and privately owned parking decks, and smaller, onsite, privately and publicly owned surface lots scattered throughout the Downtown.

Railroad

The Railroad land use includes rail right-of-way as well as Downtown's Metra station. More than 2,300 riders board daily during the weekday, making it the busiest station on the UP-W line and the seventh busiest station in the entire Metra network of 236 stations.

Utility

There are two utility parcels in Downtown including a substation on the north side of First Street between Maple Avenue and Larch Avenue and a utility station east of the Elmhurst College tennis courts on the southwest corner of Park Avenue and Myrtle Avenue.

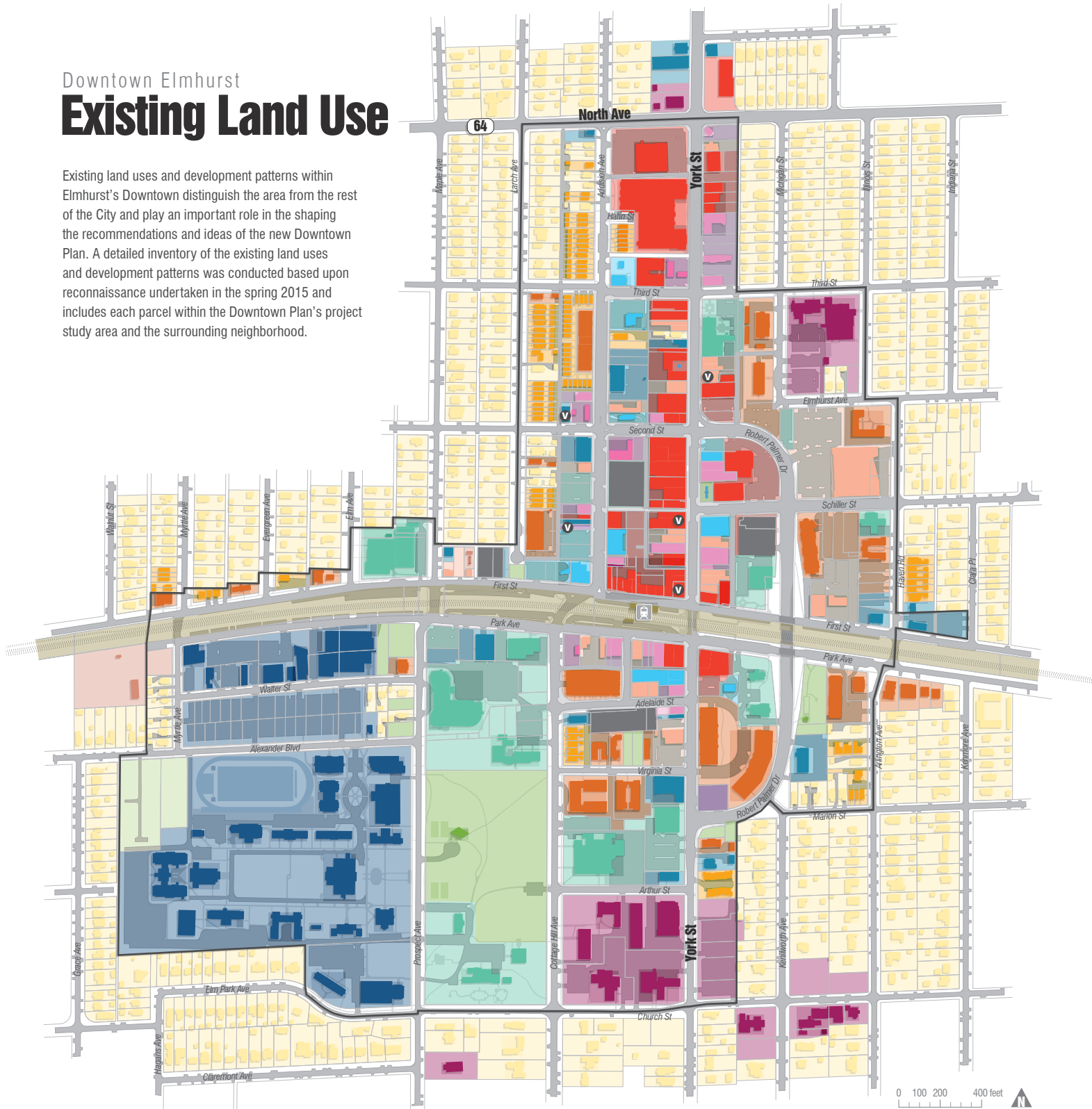
Undeveloped / Vacant Parcel

There are very few undeveloped and/or vacant parcels in the Downtown. The Plan should address these parcels and provide recommendations for the types of uses that should be prioritized in these areas. As of the drafting of this Plan, a few sites have been cleared and readied for new construction.

Downtown Elmhurst

Existing Land Use

Existing land uses and development patterns within Elmhurst's Downtown distinguish the area from the rest of the City and play an important role in the shaping the recommendations and ideas of the new Downtown Plan. A detailed inventory of the existing land uses and development patterns was conducted based upon reconnaissance undertaken in the spring 2015 and includes each parcel within the Downtown Plan's project study area and the surrounding neighborhood.



Key

Context

- Downtown Elmhurst Boundary
- Railroad
- Roads & Surface Parking Lots

Existing Land Use

- Single Family Detached
- Single Family Attached / Duplex
- Multi-Family

- Retail / Commercial Service
- Restaurant / Entertainment
- Mixed Use
- Auto Service
- Bank
- Office

- Church / Religious
- Civic / Institutional
- Elmhurst College
- Parks / Open Space
- Cemetery

- Parking Garage/Deck
- Railroad
- Utility
- Undeveloped / Vacant Parcel
- Vacant Building



Vacant Building

Downtown Elmhurst contains small pockets of vacant storefronts, mostly along York Street. Although these storefronts currently lack an existing use, the Existing Land Use map depicts them as either their previous use or their most likely future use, with the understanding that these buildings could be re-occupied at any given time.

Building Heights

Existing building heights vary within the Downtown study area -- a function of economics, architectural taste, municipal regulations, and technology. While current zoning for the heart of Downtown permits buildings up to four stories in height, with special allowances for up to eight stories, most buildings remain within one to three stories. Taller buildings tend to be either residential, mixed-use, or parking structures. In general, building heights along York Street remain lower due to past development practices at the time of their construction.

The accompanying model illustrates the variation in height and scale within Downtown Elmhurst. For more information on the permitted heights allowed by current zoning, please see the Current Regulatory Controls section.

Downtown Elmhurst

Existing Downtown Massing Model



Key

Context

- Downtown Elmhurst Boundary
- Open Space & Lawn Areas
- Roadway
- Surface Parking Lots
- Railroad
- Sidewalks & Trails

Reference Points

- 1 Elmhurst College
- 2 Lizzardo Museum of Lapidary Art
- 3 Hawthorne Elementary School
- 4 Elmhurst Public Library
- 5 Elmhurst YMCA
- 6 Elmhurst Metra Station
- 7 Parking Deck
- 8 York Theatre Classic Cinema
- 9 Elmhurst Place Apartments
- 10 Jewel Osco
- 11 City Hall
- 12 CVS Pharmacy / Panera Bread



CURRENT REGULATORY CONTROLS

The regulatory controls for Downtown refer to the City's codes and ordinances which dictate use, appearance, function, and development of property. They seek to ensure safety, health, and welfare of the public by reducing incompatible land uses and hazards, mitigating nuisances, safeguarding natural features, and facilitating a visually attractive environment. These controls, including the zoning ordinance which regulates land use and development intensity, are absolutely vital in shaping a positive environment within Downtown Elmhurst, and if used effectively, can be leveraged to create a more vibrant, and attractive area conducive to new investment and growth.

ZONING DISTRICTS

A total of 17 different districts comprise the City of Elmhurst's current zoning code for the entire City. Of the 17, only 9 Districts are within and relevant to Downtown. Each of these districts are summarized as follows.

Single Family Residence (R1)

Newer neighborhoods containing large-lot single family homes define the Single Family Residence (R1) District. Single family detached dwellings are the only permitted use, with a minimum lot size of 9,000 square feet and frontage of 60 feet. Only 30% of the lot's size may be built out. Accessory buildings such as pools, tool sheds, or carports are allowed, provided they are built on the same zoning lot. One area in the southeast side of the Downtown along Robert Palmer Drive and Arlington Ave is zoned R1.

Single Family Residence (R2)

The Single Family Residence (R2) District is the most common residential zoning district in the City of Elmhurst, encompassing significant portions of the southern and western portions of the City. R2 accommodates single-family neighborhoods comprised of smaller lot sizes than both the RE and R1 Districts. The only permitted use is single-family detached homes with a minimum lot size of 7,260 square feet. The R2 district permits more conditional uses than RE and R1 districts, including nursing homes, retirement communities, and extended care medical facilities. Two pockets near the border of the study area are zoned R2, but the northern half of the study area is surrounded by R2 neighborhoods.

Two Family Residence (R3)

The Two Family Residence (R3) District creates targeted pockets of duplex (two-family) dwellings throughout the City. R3 zoning tends to occur in limited concentrations near commercial areas, and serves as a buffer between busier thoroughfares and R1 and R2 single-family neighborhoods. In addition to two-family detached structures, the district also permits single-family detached homes and residential accessory units. The minimum lot size for duplexes is 7,260 square feet. Conditional uses are similar to other residential districts. The northwestern part of the study area, along segments of North Addison Avenue and North Larch Avenue, are zoned R3.

Limited General Residence (R4)

The intent of the Limited General Residence (R4) District is to encourage a mixture of residential options within a particular area. The R4 residential designation is the most inclusive, and permits a blend of single-family (both attached and detached), two-family (both attached and detached), multi-family, senior, and group dwellings in the district. R4 is typically found near commercial corridors, institutions, the downtown, and the hospital. Minimum lot size and frontage is identical to R2 and R3 at 7,260 square feet. Conditional uses are similar to other residential districts, and encompass educational, institutional, and medical uses. Pockets of the study area along Cottage Hill Avenue, West First Street, Arlington Avenue, and Park Area are zoned R4.

Specialty Residence (R5)

The Specialty Residence (R5) District is a unique district intended to provide a mixture of single-family and medium density multi-family dwellings, with the opportunity for such structures to also serve as offices or bed-and-breakfasts, contingent upon City Council approval. Permitted uses include single-family (both attached and detached) dwellings, two-family (both attached and detached) dwellings, and multi-family dwellings, with multi-family density limited to one unit for every 2,900 feet of lot area or 15 dwelling units per acre. Lot size must be a minimum of 9,000 square feet. Bed-and-breakfasts and offices are the only two conditional uses allowed. A half-block portion of South York Street is zoned R5.

North Downtown Business (C4A)

The North Downtown Business District (C4A) is a special zoning district created as a result of the North Downtown Design Plan. It establishes a pedestrian-oriented “transition area” between the denser, Downtown central business district and the more auto-centric, service oriented commercial area to the north. However, the District is closer to the former than the latter in appearance and function.

The North Downtown Business District (C4A) is unique in that it is the only zoning district with explicit boundaries: North Avenue on the north, Third Street on the south, Addison Avenue on the west, and the alley east of York Road on the east. Both the (C4A) District’s permitted and conditional uses are similar to those of the C4 District, with the same maximum floor area ratio (FAR) and minimum lot size, 4.0 and 1,500 square feet, respectively.

The northern portion of the study area is zoned C4A.

Central Business (C4)

The Central Business District (C4) is a special zoning designation designed to preserve and bolster Elmhurst's downtown. It promotes a "mixed-use" environment, with a blend of retail, office, institutional, and residential units, provided they are above the ground floor. The C4 district is the densest part of the City, with a floor area ratio (FAR) of 4.0. There shall be provided not less than 1,500 square feet of lot area per dwelling unit; except that senior citizen housing developments shall provide not less than 580 square feet of lot area per dwelling unit.

Permitted and conditional uses are subject to four conditions:

- No dwelling units (outside of a hotel) are permitted below the second floor.
- All business shall be conducted within completely enclosed buildings.
- "Drive-through" establishments are only allowed by conditional use permits.
- The parking of trucks associated with business operations shall be limited to vehicles of not over one and one-half tons capacity when located within seventy-five (75) feet of a residence district boundary line. Any parking of trucks on land adjacent to residential property shall be screened therefrom by a wall or fence not less than five feet nor more than eight feet in height.

A significant portion of the study area around York Street is zoned C4.

Office/Institutional/Cultural (O/I/C)

The Office/Institutional/Cultural (O/I/C) District serves to accommodate existing concentrations of office buildings, civic and governmental structures, educational and cultural institutions in a "mutually compatible" campus-like environment. Permitted uses include libraries, government buildings, schools and colleges, philanthropies or charities, recreational facilities and parks, and religious institutions. Lot sizes must be a minimum of 14,000 square feet. The maximum floor area ratio (FAR) varies between 0.8 and 1.0, depending on the permitted use.

Conditional uses include a variety of health, medical, social, and civic uses, including hospitals, funeral homes, private clubs and lodges, nursing homes, and daycare centers. The southwestern part of the study area, encompassing Elmhurst College, Wilder Park, Elmhurst Public Library, and the Immaculate Conception Parish, is zoned O/I/C.

Office (O1)

The Office District (O1) provides targeted locations for offices and health clinics convenient to residential areas. Permitted uses include offices, both business and professional, as well as medical and dental clinics. Dwelling units are permitted, provided they are above the structure's ground floor. O1 zoning is located along major roads and intersections throughout the city, and is limited in size to just a few contiguous parcels. Minimum lot size and frontage are 7,260 square feet and 50 feet, respectively. The floor area ratio is capped at 1.0. A small pocket of parcels on the east side of the Downtown along Haven Road and First Street are zoned O1.

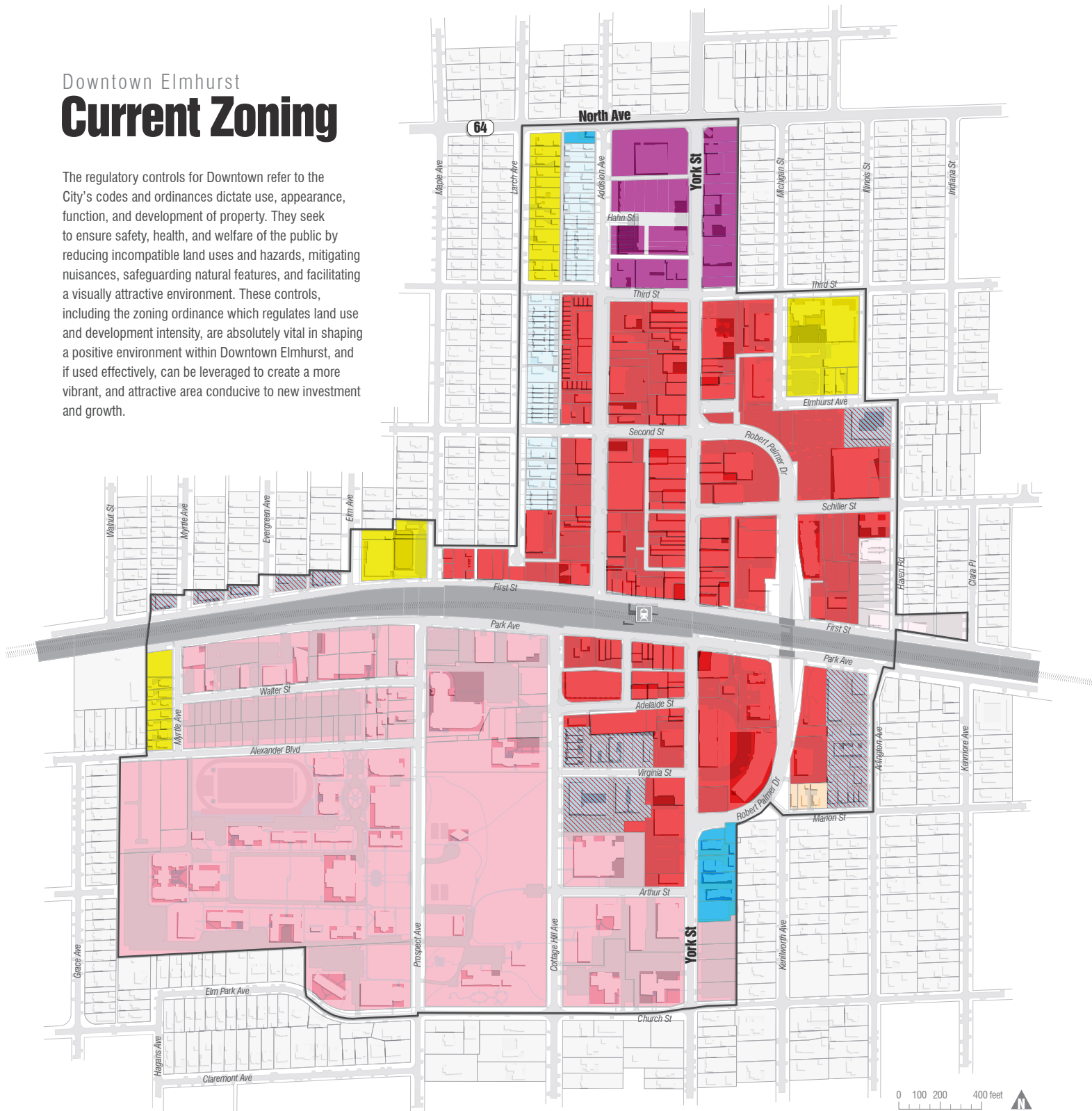
Pharmacies, senior housing, glass product production, art studios, as well as other limited educational, health, and residential uses comprise the O1 District's conditional uses.

Both O1 and R5 districts accommodate adaptive re-use of existing single family residential uses for new uses.

Downtown Elmhurst

Current Zoning

The regulatory controls for Downtown refer to the City's codes and ordinances dictate use, appearance, function, and development of property. They seek to ensure safety, health, and welfare of the public by reducing incompatible land uses and hazards, mitigating nuisances, safeguarding natural features, and facilitating a visually attractive environment. These controls, including the zoning ordinance which regulates land use and development intensity, are absolutely vital in shaping a positive environment within Downtown Elmhurst, and if used effectively, can be leveraged to create a more vibrant, and attractive area conducive to new investment and growth.



Key

Context

- Downtown Elmhurst Boundary
- Railroad

Current Zoning Districts

- R1 – Single Family Residence
- R2 – Single Family Residence
- R3 – Two Family Residence
- R4 – Limited General Residence
- R5 – Specialty Residence
- C4 – Central Business
- C4A – North Downtown Business
- O1 – Office
- O/I/C – Office/Institutional/Cultural



BUILDING HEIGHTS

Maximum building heights vary throughout the study area. The accompanying table shows building heights for each district: those permitted by right (maximum height allowed without special permission from the City) and those that are allowable (absolute maximum height after requiring a conditional use permit from the City).

Maximum Height Allowable & Permitted by District

Descending by permitted building height

District	Allowable (w/ Conditional Use Permit)		Permitted (By Right)	
	Stories	Feet	Stories	Feet
C4	8	90	4	45
O/I/C	6	75	4	45
R4	--	--	3 / 5*	35 / 55*
O1	--	--	3 / 5*	35 / 55*
C4A	4	45	3# / 4	35# / 45
R5	--	--	3	35
R1	--	--	2.5	35
R2	--	--	2.5	3.5
R3	--	--	2.5	35

Listed in descending order by height. Code allows one or the other (stories vs. height).
 * denotes the height limit for lots that are greater than one acre in size.
 # denotes the height limit for lots located on the east side of Addison Street between Third Street and North Avenue.



LANDSCAPING

The Zoning Code does not have a stand-alone section dedicated to landscaping standards. However, the City does require throughout the Code various levels of buffering through vegetation, walls, or fences, depending on the zoning district, land use, and/or activity.

All open yards within an office or commercial district must be “adequately sodded and landscaped,” all site plans within most commercial zoning districts must include a landscaping plan, and all refuse containers and all areas of permitted outdoor storage shall be enclosed by a screening fence, wall or densely planted evergreen hedge of a height sufficient to screen such containers or storage.

OFF-STREET PARKING

Article X of the Zoning Code contains the City's off-street parking for both vehicles and bicycles.

Vehicles

- **Downtown Core:** Off-street parking is not required in the C4 district for commercial uses. This minimizes fragmented parking lots, reduces curb cuts and driveways, and promotes a more compact and viable central business district. Neither parking lots nor parking garages are permitted by-right, they require conditional approval. For residential uses within the C4 district, 2 parking spaces are required per unit for a unit with less than 3 bedrooms; 2.5 spaces for each unit with more than 3 bedrooms.
- **Number:** The required number of off-street parking spaces is dictated by the parking class assigned to each permitted or conditional use. All permitted and conditional uses are grouped into 30 different parking classes, each containing its own unique parking requirement. For example, hotels and motels are grouped in "Class 4," requiring 1 parking space per unit and 1 per employee, while banks and business offices are grouped in "Class 9," mandating 4 parking spaces per 1,000 square feet of gross floor area.

- **Lighting:** Lights shall not create a nuisance and are to be directed away from residential areas. They must conform to City lighting standards and not exceed a 0.2 foot candle measurement.
- **Design and Maintenance:** All parking areas and driveways must be surfaced with asphalt or cement paving. Screening is required when the property abuts a residential or institutional district. All lots are required to have continuous curbs or wheel stops on the lot's periphery.
- **Cross-Access:** Off-street parking facilities for separate uses may be combined as long as the total number of spaces is not less than the sums of the separate requirements of each usage.
- **Location:** All required parking spaces must be located within 300 feet of the main entrance of the office, commercial, or industrial building.

Bicycles

In March 2012, the City Council passed a new bike parking ordinance. The following standards must be met:

- **Location:** Bike racks must be highly visible from the street and located in a place that minimizes conflicts with vehicles and pedestrians. Exception is given to racks solely for employees; these may be located inside or near a side entrance.
- **Design:** Bikes must be able to be locked in an upright position, with the rack securely anchored.
- **Number:** Only C2 and C3 districts require bike parking; neither of these districts are located within the study area. In these districts, the total number of bike parking spaces is 5% of vehicle parking spaces, with a minimum of two bike parking spaces.

SIGNS

Article XI of the Zoning Code is dedicated to regulation of signage within City limits. The purpose of such regulations are to enhance the City's physical appearance, avert property depreciation due to incompatible signage, reduce distractions to motorists and pedestrians, prevent new signage from blocking existing signage, and to ensure a vibrant and attractive economic climate.

The code:

- Permits all existing legal signage to continue in operation
- Classifies signage into 28 functional (e.g. purpose) and 18 structural (e.g. structural manner in which it is displayed) categories
- Requires that no sign be erected, enlarged, expanded, altered, relocated, or maintained without a sign permit. Certain signs, such as those of a political nature or personal sales signs, are omitted from this regulation, however, they must adhere to size standards that vary by purpose
- Prohibits citywide a wide range of signage, including advertising, billboards, marquees, moving or animated signs, roof signs, and any sign on a tree or light pole
- Requires that all promotional, civic, and temporary banners receive the approval of the Zoning Administrator

All signs:

- Must meet illumination and minimum elevation standards
- Cannot employ the usage of more than three colors
- Cannot obstruct or impair traffic lights
- Cannot be placed in or extend into the public right-of-way
- Must be kept in a neat, orderly, and functional condition
- Cannot be placed within two feet of another sign
- Cannot create any sort of nuisance or threat to public safety, health, or welfare

Prohibited signs include:

- Billboards
- Marquees (outside of the York Theatre marquee, which is exempt)
- Parapet signs
- Portable signs
- Roof signs
- Moving or animated signs

District Provisions

Each respective zoning district has different signage regulations, depending on the desired appearance and function of each district. Key regulations relating to the C4 and C4A districts include:

- **Sign Area:** The total area of all signs on a lot shall not exceed one square foot per foot of zoning lot frontage; however, certain signs are exempt. Individual sign area varies by type.
- **Height:** Sign height varies by type between 5 and 20 feet above grade.
- **Setback:** 6 feet is the minimum setback from all lot lines.
- **Illumination:** Signs may only be illuminated by indirect or internal white light, not exceeding 50 foot candles when measured with a light meter.

A large, abstract red line graphic that starts at the top right, curves down and left, then curves around the bottom and right side of the page, ending near the bottom right corner. It has a shape reminiscent of a stylized '2' or a large bracket.

EXISTING TRANSPORTATION & INFRASTRUCTURE

Downtown Elmhurst contains a traditional street grid, modified by the presence of a rail line and several one-way streets. The existing street system includes principal, arterial, collector, local streets, and alleys that provide access to the Downtown area from the surrounding region, connect the Downtown to other parts of the City, and accommodate the movement of vehicles and pedestrians within and through the area. Downtown is also served by Metra commuter rail service and several Pace bus routes.

Infrastructure, such as storm sewer, sanitary sewer, and water delivery, also play an important role in the operation of Downtown as a center of commerce and culture. While often unnoticed, their role is essential in ensuring residential and commercial quality of life.



VEHICULAR CIRCULATION

Traffic operations have been a concern in the Downtown in the past. Participants in the Community Workshop frequently mentioned the need for improved traffic circulation within the Downtown. Some Downtown merchants are concerned that the present circulation system makes accessibility difficult for patrons, especially out of town customers.

Specific concerns identified include

- Vehicle flow and access,
- One-way and two-way street circulation,
- Improving the railroad crossings at York Street and Addison Avenue, and
- Improving the pedestrian- and bicycle-friendliness of the area.

The City conducted a study in 2006 of the traffic access and circulation in the Downtown. The area addressed in the assignment is bounded by Third Street on the north, Arthur Street on the south, Addison Avenue on the west, and Robert Palmer Drive on the east. The focus of the study was to develop traffic circulation alternatives and to evaluate their impacts on traffic operation and congestion.

Traffic Access & Circulation Study

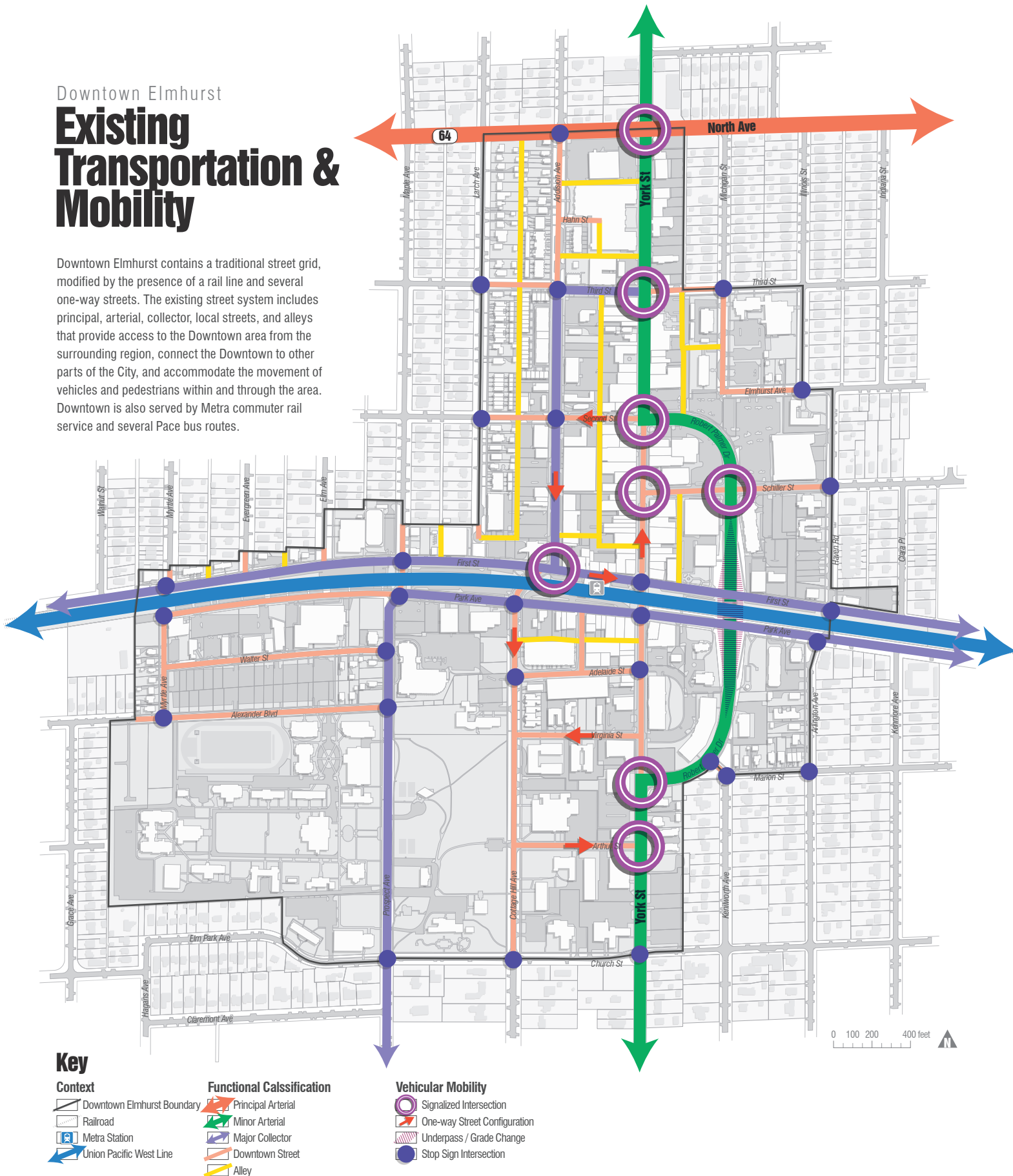
The study, which compared alternative vehicle flow and on-street parking options with associated costs and benefits, concluded that the current Downtown street configuration should remain in its present configuration for the foreseeable future.



Downtown Elmhurst

Existing Transportation & Mobility

Downtown Elmhurst contains a traditional street grid, modified by the presence of a rail line and several one-way streets. The existing street system includes principal, arterial, collector, local streets, and alleys that provide access to the Downtown area from the surrounding region, connect the Downtown to other parts of the City, and accommodate the movement of vehicles and pedestrians within and through the area. Downtown is also served by Metra commuter rail service and several Pace bus routes.





PARKING

Adequate and convenient parking is essential to the continued success of Downtown Elmhurst. Key features of the existing parking system are highlighted below.

Private Off-Street Parking

In addition to the public parking system, several private businesses provide their own off-street parking. The small private lots are generally not an efficient use of land, and the City has been acquiring a number of them to create consolidated public parking areas that would increase the overall number of spaces available.

Public Off-Street Parking

In total, there are 1,823 public off-street parking spaces. These spaces can be found in a mixture of public parking garages and public lots. A 690 space parking deck on Addison Avenue has recently opened, increasing the total supply of public off-street parking to more than 2,500 spaces.

On-Street Parking

Nearly 500 parallel and diagonal parking spaces are located along First, Second, Third, York, and Schiller Streets; Adell Place; and Cottage Hill, Park, Adelaide, and Addison Avenues. On-street parking is a mix of permit parking (mainly around the train station) and 10-minute and 3-hour time-zoned parking.

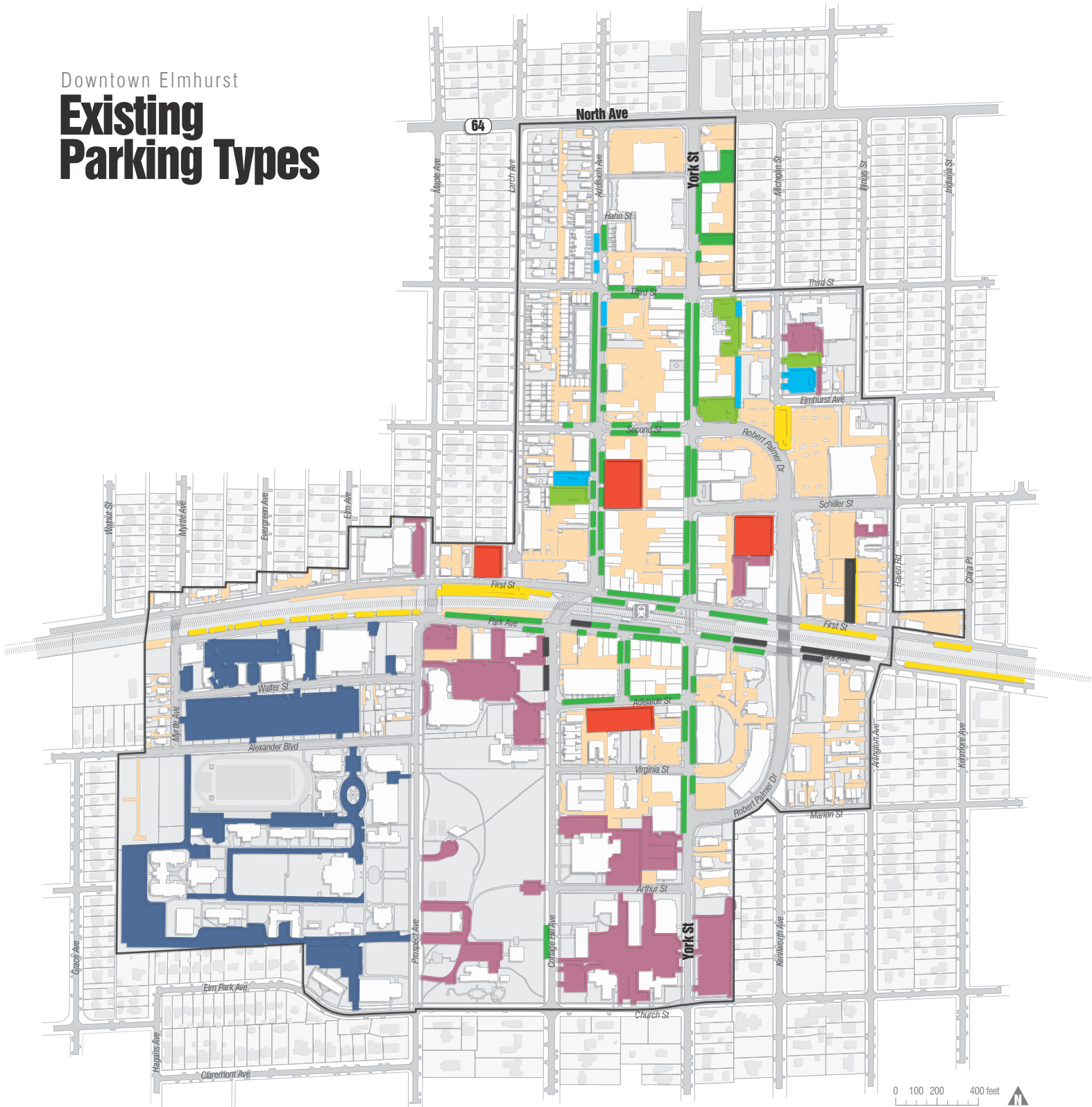
All spaces (including permit spaces) are free after 5 PM weekdays and all day on weekends. The blend of parking types generally functions well for Downtown visitors and businesses, provided that short-term on-street parking spaces are not used by employees and commuters.

Employee vs. Visitor Parking

Prioritizing access to on-street parking is an important issue in the Downtown. At present, community members and business owners have expressed frustration that employees of certain businesses are taking up prime on-street parking spots, which makes parking for shoppers difficult and discourages them from patronizing Downtown businesses. The City recently conducted a pilot project in the northern part of the study area to assess whether on-street employee parking should be regulated within Downtown. Starting January 1, 2016 a majority of onstreet parking will be shopper only.

Downtown Elmhurst

Existing Parking Types



Key

Context

- Downtown Elmhurst Boundary
- Railroad

Parking Areas

- Permit Only Parking
- Employee Permit Parking
- Pay by Space Parking
- Free Shopper / Customer Parking
- Additional Shopper Parking

Off-Street Parking

- Public / Semi-Public
- Elmhurst College
- Private Off-street Parking
- Garage Parking (Includes a mix of Permit Only, Employee Permit, Pay by Space, Free Shopper)

PUBLIC TRANSIT

The City of Elmhurst is served by two types of public transit services – commuter rail (Metra) and bus (Pace Suburban bus). These services are briefly described below.

Pace

Pace suburban bus service provides two bus routes that directly serve the Downtown area. Route (332) stops at the intersection of Schiller Street and Palmer Drive, connecting riders to both the Oakbrook Shopping Center and Chicago Transit Authority (CTA) “blue line” station in Rosemont, which is often used by travelers headed to O’Hare airport. Route (309) runs throughout Elmhurst’s downtown and connects it east to Oak Park and the CTA Green Line’s Austin stop, which is used for commuters heading to downtown Chicago.

Pace bus service is an important linkage between Downtown, the surrounding community and nearby regional destinations. Although Route (313) and Route (301) do not operate directly within the Downtown, they do provide regional connectivity for residents, shoppers, and commuters. Route (313), which stops near York High School and along St. Charles Road, connects the Yorktown transfer station to the West Suburban Hospital and Austin CTA station in Oak Park. Additionally, Route (301) travels along HWY 56, connecting Wheaton’s Roosevelt Road east to the CTA Blue Line’s Forest Park station.

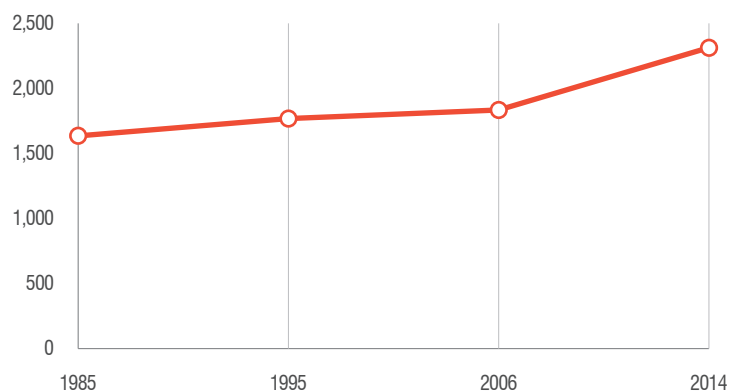
Metra

Downtown Elmhurst is served by the Union Pacific West Line, which provides service between Chicago and Elburn, Illinois. Metra trains to and from Chicago make about 55 stops in Downtown on weekdays (including evenings), with stops approximately 15 minutes apart during rush hours. The commuter station is an important asset and “entryway” to Downtown Elmhurst. Spring 2014 data shows that the Downtown station is the seventh busiest station out of Metra’s 236 stations, with more than 2,300 daily boardings during the weekday. That is an increase of roughly 500 daily riders from 2006 levels.

The station was the second most frequently mentioned advantage of Downtown at the Community Workshop undertaken early in the planning process. Several ideas were mentioned by workshop participants for enhancement of the station area, including: a) adding amenities, such as small stores and shops, in the Metra station, b) improving pedestrian and vehicular access across the rail tracks, and c) drawing more commuters into the Downtown business area

Daily Weekday Station Boardings

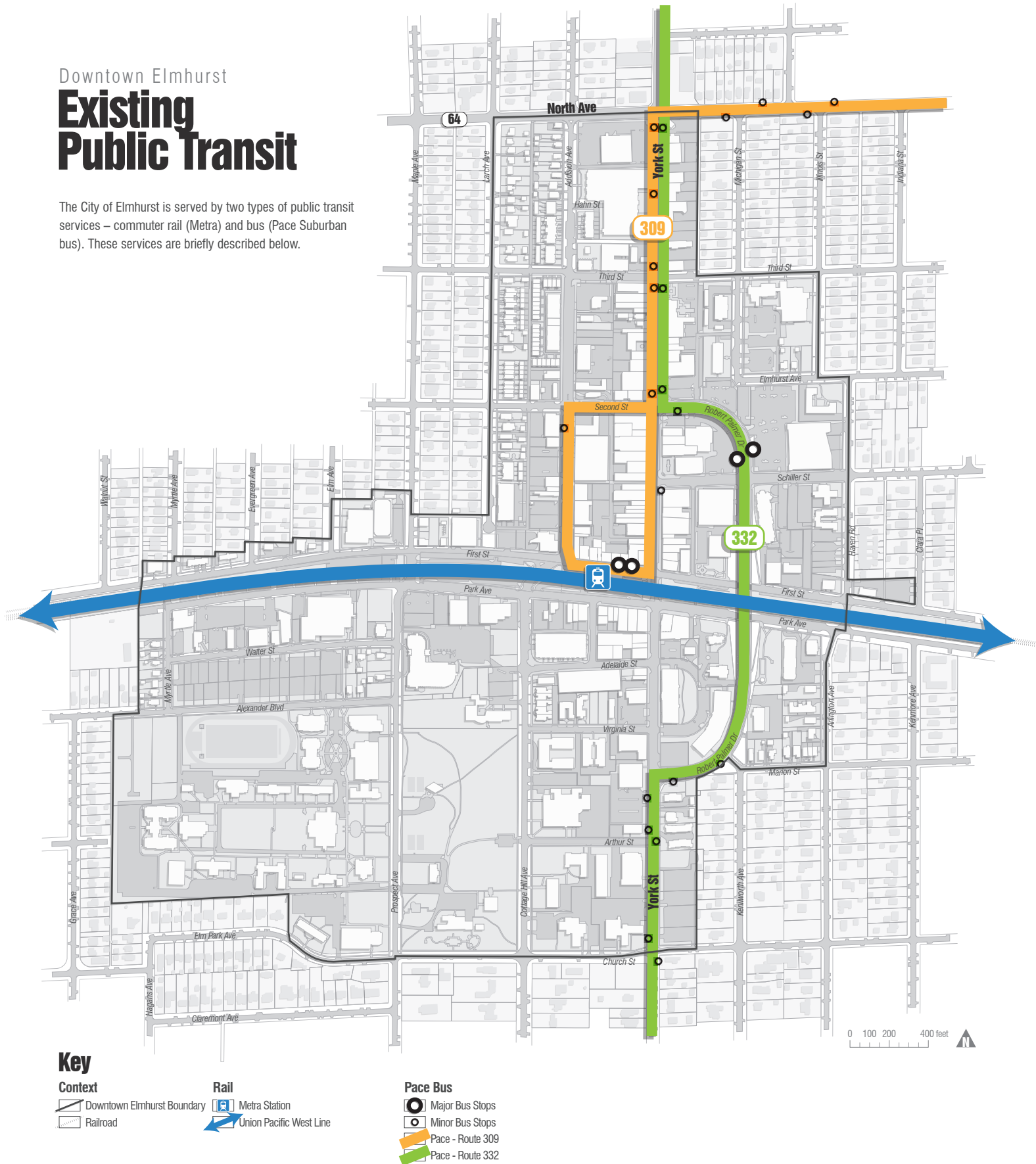
Elmhurst Metra Station (1985-2014)

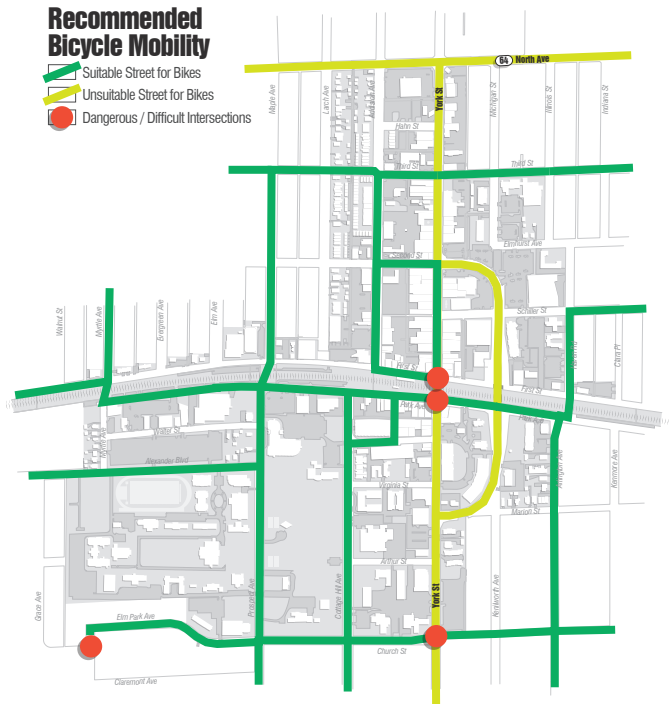


Downtown Elmhurst

Existing Public Transit

The City of Elmhurst is served by two types of public transit services – commuter rail (Metra) and bus (Pace Suburban bus). These services are briefly described below.





BICYCLE

The City prepared an official Bicycle Plan that focuses on strengthening bicycle infrastructure and identifying strategies to increase biking among residents. Identified assets for biking in Downtown Elmhurst were quality roadways, a walkable downtown, an efficient street grid, and an existing network of bike trails and paths.

Key barriers to bikability include busy arterial roadways, few options for bike parking, and inability to add bike lanes due to limited roadway width. The Bicycle Plan proposes a two-pronged approach to ensure a more bike-friendly Downtown: “conservative” and “incremental” infrastructure improvements coupled with encouraging residents to bike more.

Key recommendations included:

- Implementing a network of dedicated bike lanes with appropriate wayfinding signage;
- Using “sharrow” pavement markings to increase visibility of bicyclists and their ability to ride on busier streets, especially those within Downtown; and
- Increasing the availability of bike parking, both in number and location, to make biking more efficient and attractive.

The City’s regulations do not require bicycle parking within the study area, and there are a few bike parking facilities provided. They are located at City Hall, Metra station, Northeast corner of York Street & Robert Palmer Drive, City Parking Lot along Addison, between Second Street & First Street, Elmhurst College, and throughout institutional campus area on the Southwest side of the Downtown Area.

WALKING

The existing street grid and right-of-way dimensions allow pedestrians good accessibility throughout the Downtown. Pedestrian paths and promenades are also provided through alleys and vacated right-of-ways.

Many streets include pedestrian elements that encourage walking, such wide sidewalks, decorative pavers, street trees, tree grates, pedestrian-scale lighting, benches, raised planters, trash receptacles, and wayfinding. In most cases, the streetscape is in good condition but the Plan may need to identify where aspects of the streetscape need to better coordinate with the uses developments they front.

The remaining streets within the Downtown begin to transition into a more typical or residential scale as the Downtown blends into the surrounding context. The surrounding residential neighborhoods have a good sidewalk network connecting to key destinations and activity generators in the Downtown.



INFRASTRUCTURE

Public and private facilities in Downtown Elmhurst are generally in fair to good condition, and no major infrastructure projects are anticipated to support the Downtown program. The condition of key facilities are briefly described in this section.

Storm Sewer System

Elmhurst's storm sewer system is designed to handle a 10-year storm event. Recent projects include:

- Addison Parking deck has a vault for stormwater
- The parking lot on the northeast corner of York and Robert Palmer has a vault for stormwater
- Elmhurst 255 has a vault for stormwater
- The City is making an effort to implement stormwater management bmp's throughout the Downtown.

Sanitary Sewer System

- The overall condition of the sanitary sewer system is fair to good, with adequate capacity.
- Though the sanitary system is adequate, there is still concern with infiltration and inflow during heavy rainfall events.
- There are no major sanitary sewer projects planned for the Downtown area at this time.

Potable Water

- The overall condition of the water system is good with adequate capacity.
- In Downtown Elmhurst, the water works system is approximately 75 years old, and in fair condition. Much of the pipe material is cast iron, and is gradually being replaced with ductile iron pipe.
- In the future, segments of pipe will be replaced along Park, Myrtle, Evergreen, Elm, Maple, and Larch Avenues; Adell Place; and Virginia Street.

3

ACTIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter establishes physical design, land use, and development recommendations that can be utilized by the City and its partners to guide change and preservation within Downtown Elmhurst.

The Downtown Plan aims to create a unique, exciting, and vibrant pedestrian-oriented Downtown atmosphere. By definition, Downtown should look and feel different than the rest of the community. A mix of land uses, taller buildings, public art, interesting architecture, public spaces, and entertainment and dining options are all vital pieces of fostering that atmosphere. At their core, all of the Plan's recommendations support and reinforce the notion that Downtown should be a special place for all to enjoy.

IN THIS CHAPTER

- Land Use & Development
- Built Form
- Downtown Streets
- Bikes & Bike Infrastructure
- Public Transportation
- Parking
- Streetscape
- Public Spaces
- Gateways, Wayfinding & Connections



LAND USE & DEVELOPMENT

Developed along a traditional street grid, Downtown Elmhurst is accessible, compact and walkable. A mix of storefront, restaurants, and other uses line York Street, the main artery through Downtown. Uses surrounding York Street are mixed, varying from a large college campus, to standalone commercial buildings catering to patrons arriving by automobile.

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Altered by the 2008 market collapse and the advent of online shopping, consumer behaviors and desires appear to be shifting, and Downtown Elmhurst is well positioned for new investment. Its built environment is attractive and the physical footprint has not been significantly altered to cater to the automobile. Some aspects of Downtown however, are underutilized and uncompetitive, and many opportunities for greater potential remain untapped and unrealized.

Through this planning process the Elmhurst community has voiced a strong desire for a downtown that is more energized and thriving, with a critical mass of residential, commercial, and entertainment activity. By embracing traditional planning principles such as walkability, density, and design quality Downtown Elmhurst can be reinvigorated. With that end in mind, this section presents a framework for land use, development, and redevelopment changes within Downtown Elmhurst to adapt and reposition its land use composition to meet the demands of the twenty-first century.

Land use and development recommendations are based on an assessment of existing conditions and market potential, previous planning efforts, input from residents and business owners, and best planning practices.

LAND USE

Almost all successful downtowns are best described as a mix of different land uses within a walkable and well-designed environment. This section provides a brief and general overview of desirable land uses within Downtown Elmhurst and how they contribute to making Downtown a unique area. Specific recommendations relative to use intensity and location are included in the subsequent section ("Functional Zones").



Similar to many other downtowns, changes in development patterns and shopping habits over the past several decades has pulled consumers and investment away from Downtown Elmhurst, toward auto-oriented shopping centers, malls, big box clusters, and office developments along major roadways and interstates such as the Oak Brook Mall.

Residential

A residential population provides a consumer base for Downtown businesses and leads to greater activity on the street, particularly in the early mornings and evenings when the “9-5 workforce” is not present. Downtown Elmhurst could support a greater level of residential density, and new units are expected to come online in the next two years. Multi-story mixed-use buildings with ground floor commercial and upper floor residential units (either apartments or condominiums) can help expand housing options in the community. Development intensity generally stepping down as one moves away from the Center of Downtown and with appropriately scale and transition to the single-family detached neighborhoods that surround Downtown.

Retail

Retail is an important element in positioning Downtown Elmhurst as both a neighborhood for its residents and a destination for the community. A grocery store and pharmacy help keep Downtown livable, however, retail generally struggles to compete with Oakbrook Center for national tenants. Support for retail will increase with greater residential density, and Downtown’s desirable authentic environment provides it with a competitive advantage over commercial corridors and destination retail centers.

Entertainment

Entertainment uses contribute significantly to the overall appeal of Downtown as both a neighborhood and destination. Experiences like dining, bowling, seeing a movie, or simply people-watching are all unique attractions for people to visit and stay Downtown. Throughout the outreach process, residents expressed a desire for more entertainment options and activity generators, such as a performing arts venue, a winter ice skating rink, art galleries and more. These types of uses give more urbanized downtowns a market edge because such “experience-driven” activities are generally hard to replicate in a suburban setting.

Service

Service uses, such as a barber shop, dentist office, or dry cleaner, generate activity in a downtown and can support the day-to-day needs of both downtown residents and workers. However, too great of a concentration of service uses within a compressed area can reduce pedestrian interest in downtown and cause market oversaturation and perception.

Office

Office uses increase the daytime population of Downtown Elmhurst and support retail, dining, and service businesses, particularly during the lunch hour. Office uses can take many different forms, including small-single story office buildings, free-standing multi-story professional office space, and lower or upper floors of a mixed-use development. Currently, quality office space within Downtown is scarce due to both a high demand and limited supply. The development of additional office space should be supported to help increase activity, generate additional tax revenue, and increase the consumer base of other businesses. It should be recognized that office uses also compete with suburban office clusters like Oak Brook, Rosemont, and Downers Grove.

Civic/Institutional

Civic/Institutional uses are public or semi-public uses such as municipal facilities, parks, churches, museums, and Elmhurst College. As they remain stable over time, they anchor the study area and act as a community focal point, consistently drawing patrons to the Downtown area. It is not expected that the existing location or character of these uses will change in the coming years, however the Downtown Plan does provide recommendations to better connect these areas to the rest of Downtown.

FUNCTIONAL LAND USE ZONES

Although it is all considered Downtown Elmhurst, the study area is composed of several distinct character areas or neighborhoods. Each has its own form, uses, conditions, traffic patterns, design characteristics, and potentials. The need for a cohesive, connected Downtown must be balanced with respect for the function and role of each of these different geographic areas. Four different “functional zones” have been identified. They include:

- Core
- Outer Core
- Neighborhood Transition
- Civic/Institutional

The following land use discussion is summarized in the accompanying table, “Future Land Use by Functional Zone.” This permits easy reference for the desired types of development within each zone as well as comparison between different zones. Uses are given one of three classifications for each character area:

- **Preferable (P)** uses are those that are encouraged and desired;
- **Compatible (C)** uses are appropriate if preferable uses are not viable or feasible; and,
- **Discouraged (-)** uses are those that are not preferred or appropriate within the character area; whether they should be discouraged or ultimately prohibited remains at the discretion of the City.

Future Land Use by Functional Zone

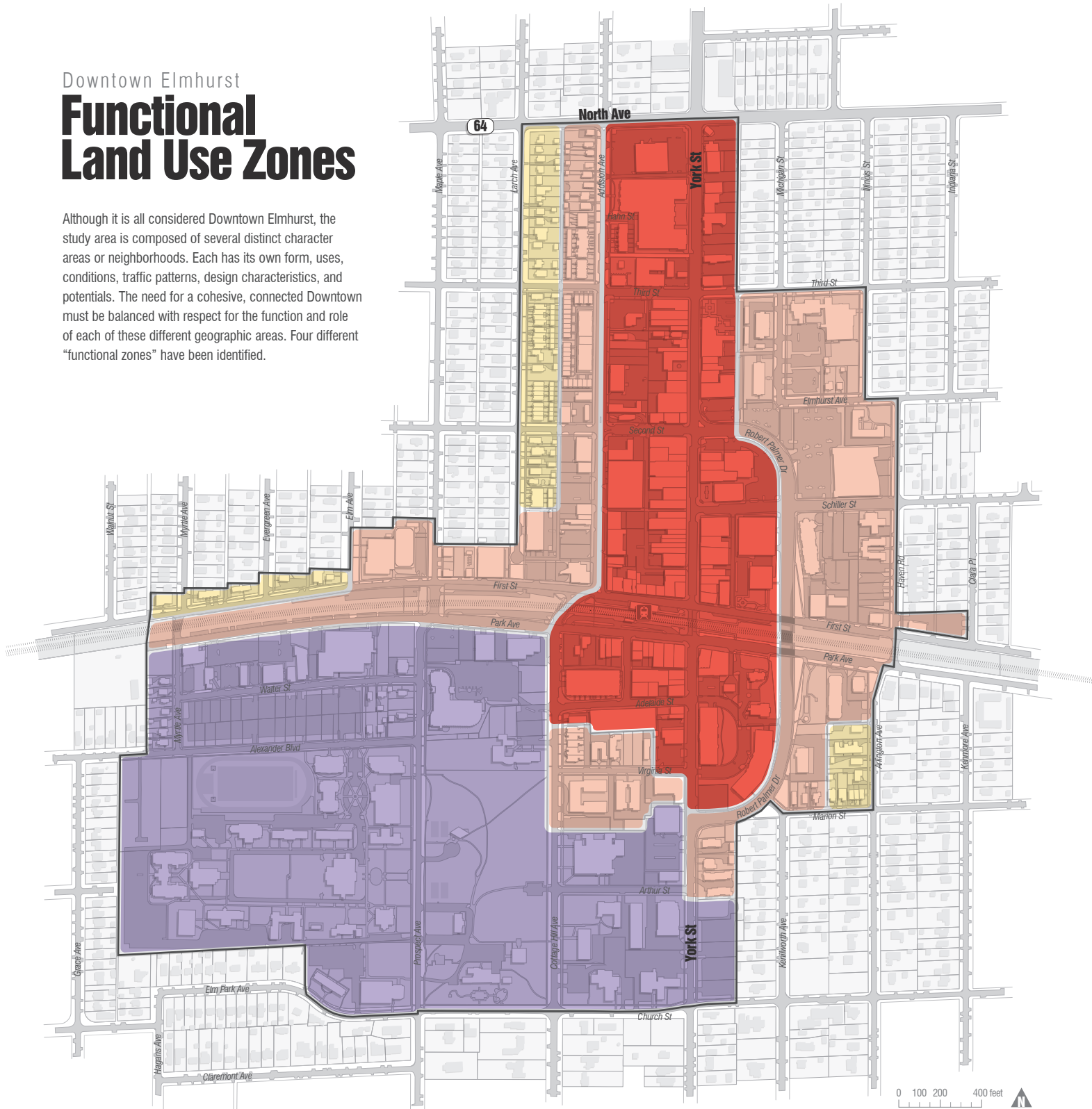
	Core	Outer Core	Neighborhood Transition	Institutional
Ground Floor of a Mixed-Use Building				
Residential	-	C	-	-
Retail	P	C	-	-
Entertainment	P	C	-	-
Office	P	C	-	-
Commercial Service (frequent activity)	P	C	-	-
Commercial Service (infrequent activity)	-	C	-	-
Civic (includes civic offices and residences)	P	C	-	P
Upper Floor(s) of a Mixed-Use Building				
Residential	P	P	-	-
Retail	-	-	-	-
Entertainment	C	C	-	-
Office	P	C	-	-
Commercial Service (frequent activity)	-	C	-	-
Commercial Service (infrequent activity)	P	C	-	-
Civic (includes civic offices and residences)	C	C	-	P
Stand-Alone Building				
Single Family Detached	-	-	-	-
Single Family Attached	-	C	P	-
Multi-Family	-	P	C	-
Retail	-	C	-	-
Entertainment	C	C	-	-
Office	-	C	-	-
Commercial Service (frequent activity)	-	C	-	-
Commercial Service (infrequent activity)	C	C	-	-
Auto	-	-	-	-
Civic (includes civic offices and residences)	P	C	-	P

These designations refer to future land uses within Downtown Elmhurst and do not require any current businesses to relocate. However, incompatible businesses looking to expand or relocate, or new businesses looking to locate within Downtown, should work with the City to identify suitable locations within Downtown Elmhurst or another appropriate location within Elmhurst.

Downtown Elmhurst

Functional Land Use Zones

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Key

Context

- Downtown Elmhurst Boundary
- Railroad
- Roads & Surface Parking Lots

Zones

Core Zone
The Core is the heart of Downtown and the area that everyone considers to be a part of Downtown. Mixed-use in nature, it includes most of Downtown's shopping, dining, and entertainment uses.

Outer Core Zone
The Outer Core surrounds the Core area and plays a unique role in the function of Downtown. Its interior areas provide an opportunity for Core expansion, while its outer areas provide a unique environment to increase the density of Downtown employees and residents.

Neighborhood Transition Zone
Neighborhood Transition areas help Downtown decrease its intensity moving away from the Core and Outer Core toward quiet single family neighborhoods. It should continue consist of moderate residential density.

Civic/Institutional Zone
The Civic/Institutional Campus area is a special area defined by its unique mix of public, institutional, and quasi-public uses within a concentrated location.

Core

The Core is the heart of Downtown and the area that everyone considers to be a part of Downtown. It is primarily oriented along York Street but extends to buildings fronting on secondary streets around York Street. Mixed-use in nature, it includes most of Downtown's shopping, dining, and entertainment uses. To establish a critical mass, this zone should be the primary focus of new investment and attention.

Built Form

The built form of the Core Zone should consist of buildings at or near the sidewalk and front property line. Parking should be provided on-street, in public garages, or in the rear of buildings accessed by side streets and rear alleys. Surface lots should be prohibited.

The tallest new development in the City should occur within the Core Zone, and the City should permit new development to reach 6 stories by right, and up to 10 stories based on parcel consolidation, market conditions, context, and alignment with other City objectives and regulations. Greater height will allow for greater density within Downtown Elmhurst, better “activating” the area and providing a consumer base for goods, services, and entertainment. As development moves away from the Core Zone, it should step down in height to gradually blend in with the surrounding residential character of the City.



Residential

Residential units within the Core should be upper floor components of multi-story mixed-use buildings. Stand-alone multi-family buildings and ground floor residential units should be discouraged, and single family attached or detached units should be prohibited.

Retail

Retail uses should be promoted, and all new retail uses should be directed to the Core, as appropriate, to establish a higher concentration of activity generators closer to the core of Downtown. Redevelopment of single and two story retail buildings that lack historic merit should be encouraged to increase density and economic competitiveness. Standalone retail uses should be discouraged. Retail developments should be oriented towards the pedestrian, not the automobile.

Entertainment

Bars, restaurants, theatres, bowling alleys, and other entertainment spaces are a vital component of the Core. Generally, entertainment uses should occupy the ground floor of a taller mixed-use building, with residential or office space on the upper floors. In some cases, occupation of the upper floors for entertainment uses may be permissible. Stand-alone entertainment uses are generally discouraged unless they are a significant activity generator such as the York Theatre, or repurposing an existing building.

Service

Service uses that generate frequent customers and contribute to the energy and activity in Downtown and on the sidewalk should be integrated into the mix of ground floor uses in the Core. Other commercial service uses that operate more like office space may be appropriate on the upper floors of mixed-use buildings.

Office

Office uses should be encouraged within the Core as a component of mixed-use buildings. Generally, office uses that do not generate much activity should be discouraged from occupying the ground floor. However, given retail market competition from major shopping centers nearby, select ground floor properties ideally suited for retail uses may be appropriate for office uses in the short term.

Civic

Public uses within the Core should be treated similarly to office and service uses. Civic uses that generate consistent customers and traffic could be considered appropriate for stand-alone buildings or the ground floor of a mixed-use building. Those civic uses that are more “white collar” in nature and do not turn-over visitors regularly should be directed to upper floors of a mixed-use building.



Outer Core

The Outer Core surrounds the Core area and plays a unique role in the function of Downtown. Its interior areas provide an opportunity for Core expansion, while its outer areas provide a unique environment to increase the density of Downtown employees and residents.

Built Form

The Outer Core is an area that exhibits some characteristics of the Core, but is generally less compact. New development within the Outer Core should generally be less intense and shorter in height than the Core. The Outer Core has ample room to transition to the lower density areas around Downtown. A mixture of mixed-use and stand-alone buildings will be found in the Outer Core, helping to stitch together the Core with surrounding neighborhoods.

While the Outer Core has historically been more auto-oriented in design (e.g. auto service uses, surface parking lots, drive-thrus), redevelopment should be more compact and pedestrian oriented. A continuous streetwall may be desirable in some areas, such as Addison Avenue, however, some larger sites could develop with side yards and setbacks.

As with the Core, surface parking lots should be discouraged and parking should be provided on-street or in public parking garages. Where surface parking is necessary, such as at a grocery store, the lot should be screened and well-landscaped.

New development in the Outer Core should be 4 stories by right. When not adjacent to a single family detached home or single family attached home, new development may rise to 6 stories by right.

The block of Virginia Street between York Street and Cottage Hill has a unique character about it being bounded by both the Core and the Civic Institutional Zones. The Plan recommends that zoning regulations remain flexible in this area to ensure that future development responds to the needs of the Downtown and the community and that uses are compatible with both the adjacent Core and the Civic Institutional Zones.



Residential

Residential units should be a component of a larger mixed-use building or as stand-alone residential buildings. The Outer Core is the best location within Downtown to accommodate residential density.

Retail

Retail uses are supported within the Outer Core, but should first be directed to the Core. Standalone retail developments are permissible but mixed-use is preferred.

Entertainment

As with retail uses, entertainment uses should be primarily located within the Core, but should be permissible in the Outer Core, particularly in areas indicated for potential Core expansion.

Service

Service uses that generate frequent customers and contribute to the energy and activity in Downtown and on the sidewalk should be directed to the Core before developing within the Outer Core. Other types of commercial service uses should be considered appropriate in the Outer Core.

Office

Similar to residential, office uses should preferably be a component of a mixed-use development, but stand-alone office buildings are permitted.

Civic

Public uses should be considered appropriate within all areas of the Outer Core.



Neighborhood Transition

Neighborhood Transition areas help Downtown decrease its intensity moving away from the Core and Outer Core toward quiet single family neighborhoods. It should continue consist of moderate residential density. Neighborhood Transition Zones are located on the fringes of the study area. An improved Downtown Elmhurst would positively affect nearby neighborhoods provided they are connected and accessible to Downtown.

Built Form

The Neighborhood Transition Zone is a low to moderate density residential neighborhood, with residences set back from the street and one another to accommodate front yards, side yards, and landscaping. The neighborhood has a “traditional” feel, although smaller scale multi-family buildings may be located within the zone. On-street and driveways are the primary method of providing parking, although multi-family buildings may have their own dedicated lots behind the building.

Residential

Residential uses should be a blend of single family attached and two to three story multifamily buildings; however, residential structures could be higher in specific and appropriate areas. It is important that multifamily and single family attached buildings are well designed and constructed with quality materials to ensure they complement and support the existing single family detached character of the neighborhood.

Retail, Entertainment, Service, Office & Civic

Retail, entertainment, service uses should not be permitted within the Neighborhood Transition Zone. Office and civic uses may be appropriate provided they are low intensity and residentially scaled.



Institutional Campus Zone

The Institutional Campus area is a special area defined by its unique mix of public, institutional, and quasi-public uses within a concentrated location. The area contains Elmhurst College, Elmhurst Public Library, Elmhurst Art Museum, Wilder Mansion, Wilder Park, U.S. Post Office, Lizzardo Museum of Lapidary Art, Hawthorne Elementary School, Elmhurst School District 205, Immaculate Conception Grade School, Immaculate Conception Parish, IC Catholic Prep, First United Methodist Church, and Saint Peters United Church of Christ.

Built Form

The Institutional Campus is an area defined by its parks, churches, and institutions southwest of the Core. Its low density and open spaces disconnect it from other areas, however its amenities and Elmhurst College, provide significant activity generators capable of fostering visitation to Downtown. Buildings vary in height depending on their function, but are typically between one and three story civic or institutional structures. Development is scattered and set back from the street, incorporating green space and creating a campus. Given the institutional nature of this zone, significant new development is not expected, however additional improvements beyond land use and development could be made to better to connect the Institutional Campus to the rest of Downtown.

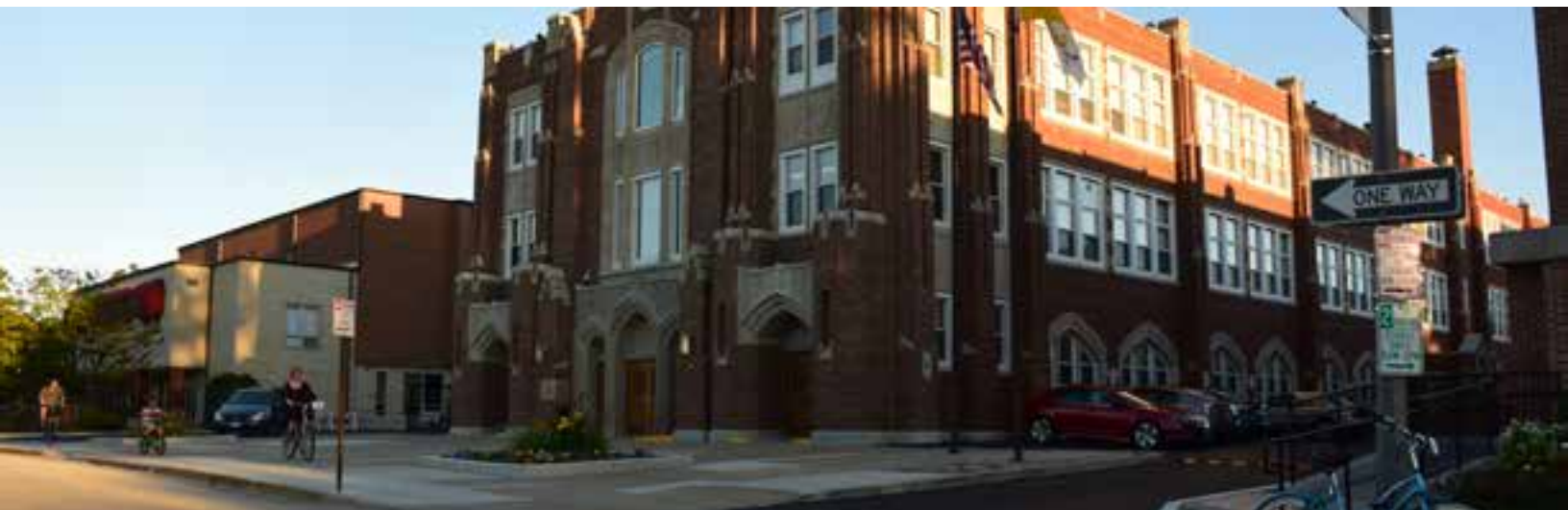
This zone should be well-connected to the heart of Downtown through sidewalks, bike connections, and unified streetscaping. More integrated public programming and branding could help establish this zone as a vital cultural element of Downtown Elmhurst.

Residential

Private residential, retail entertainment, service, and office uses are not allowed, although such uses may be components of a greater civic use, such as a dormitory for Elmhurst College.

Civic

Civic uses should remain the only use within the Institutional Campus Zone.





CONNECTIONS TO PAST ARCHITECTURE IN DOWNTOWN ELMHURST

Downtown Elmhurst contains many architecturally rich buildings, with unique stylings, materials, and craftsmanship. These buildings contribute to a special urban fabric within Downtown Elmhurst and are a connection to the past. All new development should consider the architectural attributes and character of existing buildings in the Downtown.





SUSTAINABLE BEST MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

The City should continue to incorporate sustainable best management practices (BMPs) for new development and improvements in the Downtown. Green infrastructure needs to play a larger role in future developments and improvements to address stormwater issues more cost-effectively, reduce pollution, and become more energy efficient.

The City should encourage best management practices to reduce the overall impervious surface in Downtown which will address flooding issues and reduce the reliance on the City's existing storm sewer system.

Sustainable efforts should include biodiversity, increasing the urban tree canopy, short-term stormwater storage, bioswales/bioretention, rain gardens, green roofs, green walls, permeable pavers, porous paving, and native plants.

Below are sustainable stormwater management practices recommended in the Elmhurst Downtown Plan:

- Encourage increased density in Downtown by incorporating Transit Oriented Development (TOD) principles into future redevelopment opportunities
- Reduce reliance on vehicular travel by encouraging pedestrian and bicycle in Downtown
- Promote the use of public transit
- Use native plant material
- Encourage biodiversity
- Reduce parking maximums (results in less paved surfaces in Downtown)
- Use Permeable pavers and porous asphalts in new parking lot construction to reduce stormwater runoff
- Use bioswales/bioretention in new development, parking lots, and the public right-of-way to reduce stormwater runoff

For more information about how Elmhurst is maintaining and improving environmentally-friendly practices in Elmhurst refer to **Chapter 9 Sustainability** in the City's **Comprehensive Plan** (2009).





REDEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Redevelopment opportunities are underutilized properties -- vacant parcels or surface parking lots -- where development would have a significant positive effect on Downtown Elmhurst. The Downtown Plan identifies four catalyst sites and fourteen potential redevelopment sites: four surface parking lots and two vacant parcels.

Surface parking areas consume large amounts of land, promote a sprawled development pattern, consist of large amounts of impervious surface, and create “gaps” in the storefronts significantly detracting from the pedestrian appeal and overall walkability of Downtown. At the same time, if these lots are redeveloped over time and parking spaces are taken offline, it will be important to offset such parking losses elsewhere.

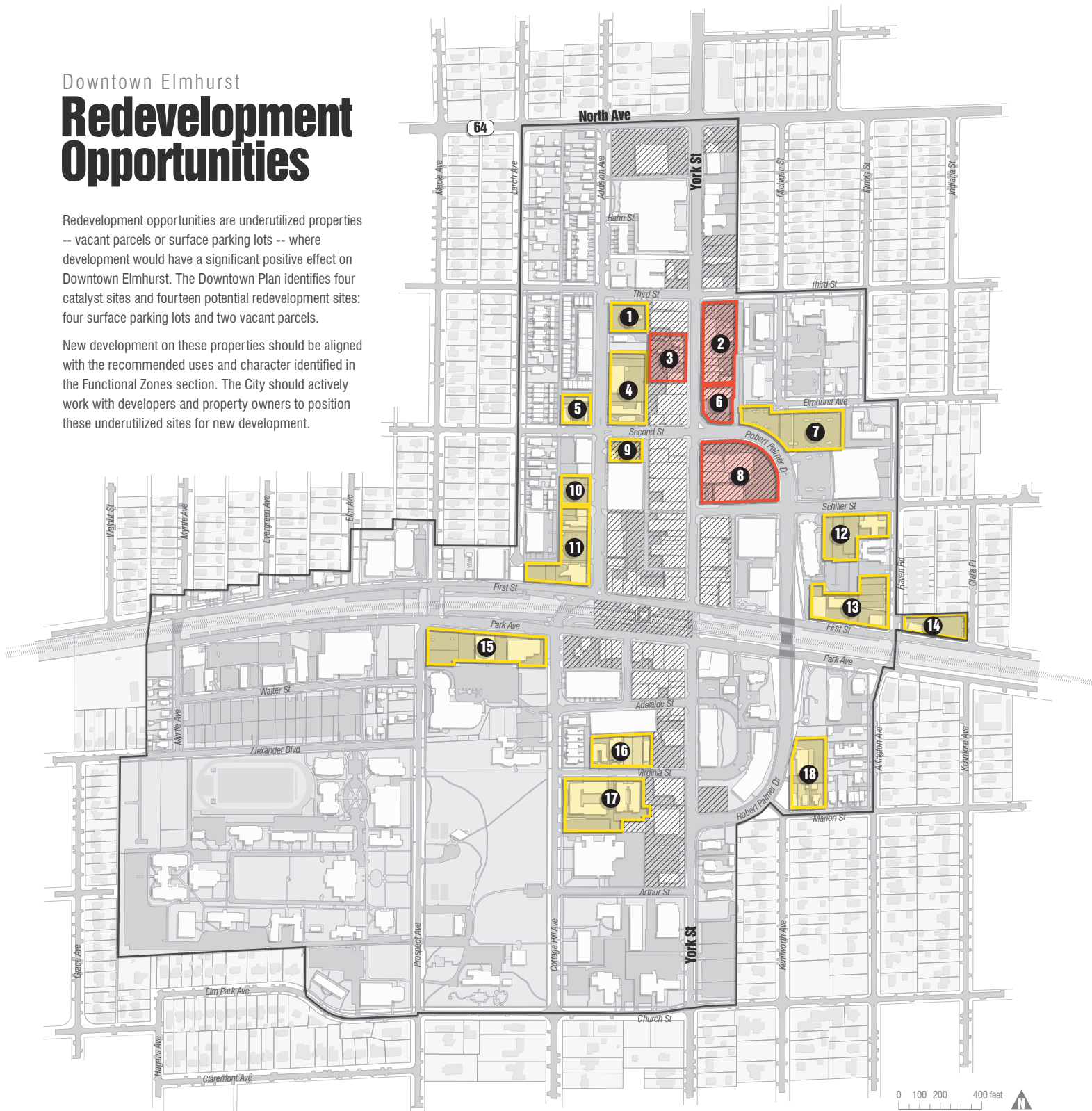
New development on these properties should be aligned with the recommended uses and character identified in the Functional Zones section. The City should actively work with developers and property owners to position these underutilized sites for new development.

Downtown Elmhurst

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Key

Context

- Downtown Elmhurst Boundary
- Railroad

Redevelopment Opportunities

- Catalyst Opportunities
- Potential Redevelopment Opportunities
- Priority Efforts



BUILT FORM

Downtown's built form is integral to the fabric of Downtown Elmhurst. The location, density, massing, and appearance of buildings directly creates and shapes the Downtown's character, ambiance, and walkability.



PROMOTING TRANSIT ORIENTED DEVELOPMENT (TOD)

Elmhurst has long utilized the principles of transit oriented development (TOD) in its downtown planning. The importance of Transit Oriented Development in Downtown Elmhurst is to recognize the strong and mutually reinforcing relationship between multimodal transit facilities and redevelopment possibilities. Residential and commercial investment is drawn to Downtown Elmhurst in part due to its transit accessibility.

Strong multimodal transit services are also important to the Downtown business community and Elmhurst commuter population. The commuter relies not only on the station for access to employment, but often utilizes retail and service proximate and convenient to the Downtown along their daily commuter route.

Transit Oriented Development principles can be organized around the three dimensions, or the “3D’s” of transit oriented development. They include: Density, Design, and Diversity.

Density

Increased density supports both retail and commercial uses in the Downtown, while enhancing transit ridership and reducing automobile dependence. In Elmhurst, pertinent principles include:

- Continue to provide new housing and commercial office space in the Downtown in accord with the recommendations of the Land Use Plan.
- When properly designed, private development projects can overcome the negative stereotypes of appearance and building mass.
- Balance densities with publicly accessible open spaces and plazas to enhance the pedestrian experience.



Design

Design is a critical element to successful transit oriented land use and development. Key principles include:

- Street design should be approached with a focus on pedestrian needs, rather than typical vehicle capacity considerations.
- In private redevelopment proposals, consider the need for pedestrian and bicycle oriented facilities.
- Connect residential developments within the Downtown to public transportation with necessary infrastructure, streetscaping, and other urban design tools.
- Provide adequate parking for both commuters and businesses, and continue to provide for shared parking opportunities.
- Inter-modal transit facilities should continue to maintain bus stops, bike storage areas, “kiss and ride” lanes, and commuter parking facilities.
- Metra commuter station services and facilities which cater to the commuter/pedestrian should be considered.
- Public open spaces and event spaces should feel secure, with adequate lighting and visibility.

Diversity

Diversity is applicable to the mix of land uses within a transit area. The principle advocates the presence of diverse, yet mutually reinforcing, land uses which create a desirable living, working and recreational environment. In Elmhurst, consideration should be given to the following:

- Mixed use development is highly desirable. Retail, office, and residential land uses generate the greatest ridership and are mutually supportive in a TOD area.
- Mixed uses need not always be accommodated within one building, but can be reflected in the commuter station area as a whole.
- Consistent with past policy, varied housing types should continue to be located within walking distance to transit facilities.
- Density combined with mixed land use creates the most effective and successful TOD, particularly with regard to generating increased usage of transit facilities.



ACTIVATING VACANT STOREFRONTS

As building occupants turn-over in the ebb-and-flow of business cycles, buildings within Downtown Elmhurst will be vacant at times. However, vacant buildings should not sit dormant without any hint of future reinvestment. Instead, property owners should be encouraged to increase the vitality of their buildings by decorating the windows similar to a canvas. Possibilities include public art or the posting of signs that say “Coming Soon...” or “What Should Go Here?”



IMPROVING BUILDING FAÇADES

A façade is the front exterior of a building along a primary street. Façades within the Downtown should be attractive, built with quality materials, and well-maintained. Poorly designed or crumbling facades communicate disinvestment and are unattractive to look at. The City should continue to provide incentives for the maintenance or improvement of commercial or mixed-use property facades located within the Core and Outer Core of the Downtown study area. Recommendations for the design of new facades are provided within **Chapter 4 Design Guidelines**.

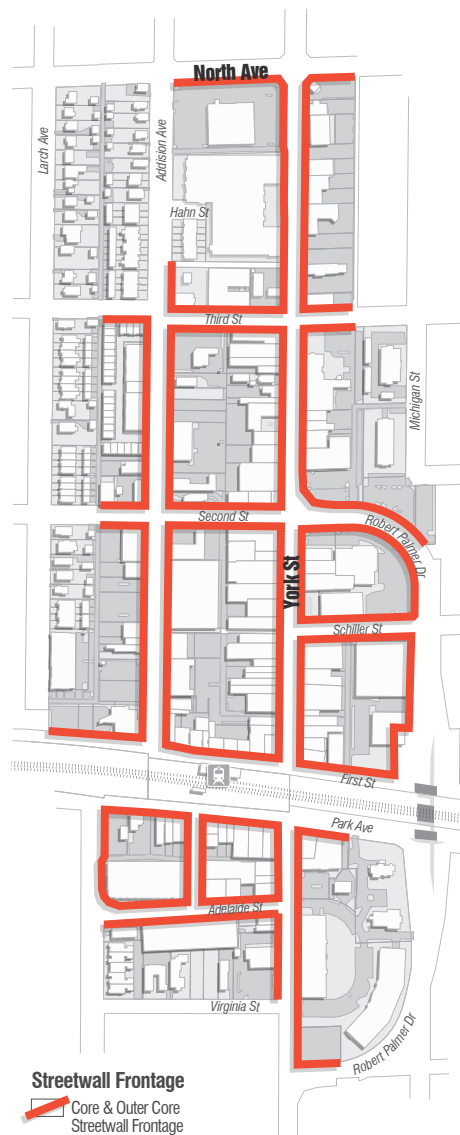




INCONSISTENT BUILDING HEIGHTS

The Downtown Plan recommends greater building heights within the Core Zone (please see the Land Use and Development chapter). As redevelopment occurs within Downtown Elmhurst, particularly along York Street, visual disparities will occur as taller new buildings are built next to shorter older buildings. It is important to resist the temptation that all new development should match the size and scale of its neighbors. Height disparities between old and new buildings will correct themselves over time as additional redevelopment at a greater scale and density occurs.

New buildings within the Core and Outer Core Zones should not be required to include setbacks. To ensure an attractive design aesthetic that is consistent with the desired character of Downtown Elmhurst, building massing should be encouraged to be consistent from ground up and built to the property line, where applicable.



Examples of height disparities between old and new buildings throughout Downtown Elmhurst. These differences in height will correct themselves over time as redevelopment occurs at a greater scale and density.



DOWNTOWN STREETS

Downtown Elmhurst is built off of a traditional street grid, modified by the presence of a rail line, college campus, Wilder Park, and several one-way streets. An alley system within the core of Downtown assists with service access, loading, and circulation.

While Downtown Elmhurst should accommodate both vehicles and pedestrians, walking should be the primary mode of transportation within Downtown. This section makes recommendations for Downtown's street network, including improvements, policies and investments for Downtown roads, sidewalks, crossings, and rail crossings. It focuses on both



DOWNTOWN “MAIN STREETS”

A “main street” is the archetypal and traditional downtown street. It contains buildings that are built to the property line, architecturally rich buildings, and a consistent streetwall. Prior to the advent of the automobile and shopping mall, this street was the primary destination for shopping, commerce, and entertainment. While its use has changed over time, many still consider it to be the symbolic “heart” of the community.

The purpose of “main streets” are fundamentally different than other streets in the community and should be treated differently. Their function is not to move vehicles quickly and efficiently, but to provide a safe, inviting, and attractive environment for pedestrians.

Downtown Elmhurst currently has three such “main streets”: York Street, First Street, and Park Avenue. Additional streets such as Addison Avenue, may redevelop and become “main streets” over time. The Downtown Plan recognizes this special role of these streets and makes a series of recommendations to preserve their unique character and function.

STREET TYPE

Downtown Elmhurst’s street network has been classified into four different tiers to help differentiate different street types and guide investments based on function and purpose of each type. Each type includes both the vehicular right-of-way and the accompanying sidewalk and streetscape. All street types within Downtown should be pedestrian-oriented, however, the intensity and scale of infrastructure and streetscaping will vary by area.

Strolling Street

Strolling Streets include the mixed-use heart of Downtown along York Street, as well as supporting side streets. This should have the highest quality pedestrian infrastructure, as it accommodates the highest volume of pedestrian traffic -- visitors, shoppers, employees, and residents – and is considered the hub of Downtown Elmhurst.

Destination Street

Destination Streets include most of the side streets just off of York Street. These routes provide access to the Strolling Walk areas. Pedestrian infrastructure and streetscaping should be present, but may be less intense relative to the Strolling Walk areas. It accommodates shoppers, residents, and employees. These streets serve “point A” to “point B” circulation patterns and pedestrians typically used these streets to move around or towards a Strolling Street.

Neighborhood Street

Neighborhood Streets includes residential and institutional areas. These are lower density areas with slower vehicle speeds and lower vehicular volume. Sidewalks and pedestrian crossings should be provided, however, at a lower intensity than the Strolling Walk and Destination Walk.



Pedestrian Throughways

Pedestrian Throughways are pedestrian “shortcuts” extending off of the formal sidewalk system. The Schiller Court walkway is an example.

Service Streets & Alleys

Service streets and alley are typically narrow streets to the rear of a building that provides for service or parking access from the rear. The purpose of alleys are to move traffic off of the primary road network and shield the unsightly loading/unloading of goods and garbage.

The City should continue its efforts to improve service vehicle access and loading within Downtown. Idling service vehicles on key roadways such as York Street, Addison Avenue, First Street, and Park Avenue worsen congestion by blocking traffic lanes, creating visual and sound nuisances, reducing visibility of businesses, and hindering access to on-street parking. The City should encourage delivery and service traffic to use alleys, rear-side lots, and parking lots wherever possible. The City should also establish new guidelines for the design and location of private refuse collection areas within Downtown.





INTERSECTIONS & CROSSWALKS

The safe and easy crossing of Downtown streets is integral to fostering a pedestrian-oriented environment. Common tools utilized to aid in safe crossing include signage, striping, countdown timers, and bump-outs. The type and intensity of tools used should vary based on the functional classification of the intersecting roadways, surrounding land uses, and type of pedestrian route. Based on these factors, Downtown's intersections have been classified into a hierarchy of five categories:

- Core Intersections
- Outer Core Intersections
- Neighborhood Transition Intersections
- Civic/Institutional Intersections
- Service Streets & Alleys Intersections





Core Intersections

Core intersections are the busiest and most prominent intersections within Downtown Elmhurst. They are a mix of signalized and stop sign intersections and are located mostly along York Street in the Core areas.

Outer Core Intersections

Outer Core Intersections are less intense than Primary Intersections but still generate a fair level of activity. They are typically signed with either a two-way or four-way stop sign. These intersections are located within the Outer Core zone.

Neighborhood Transition Intersections

Neighborhood Transition Intersections are low intensity intersections, mostly within residential areas. Given the low volume of traffic, they are not signaled and may not be signed either. These intersections are typically located within the Neighborhood Transition zone.

Civic/Institutional Intersections

Civic/Institutional Intersections are medium intensity intersections, supporting pedestrians moving through the civic and institutional uses in the southern end of the Downtown including Elmhurst College, Elmhurst Public Library, Post Office, and the surrounding residential areas. Given the volume of traffic, they are not all signalized and may not be signed either. There are opportunities for Elmhurst College to incorporate their brand and identify into some of the adjacent intersections and crosswalks adjacent to the school entry points. These intersections are located within the Civic/Institutional zone.

Service Streets & Alleys Intersections

Service Streets & Alleys intersections are locations where alleys intersect with one another or another type of street. Their narrow right-of-way combined with their mid-block, somewhat hidden location can create blind spots for both pedestrians and drivers. The City should work to add safety measures such as stop zones, signage (e.g. “watch for pedestrians,” “watch for vehicles,” “honk when exiting,” etc.), and two-way mirrors.

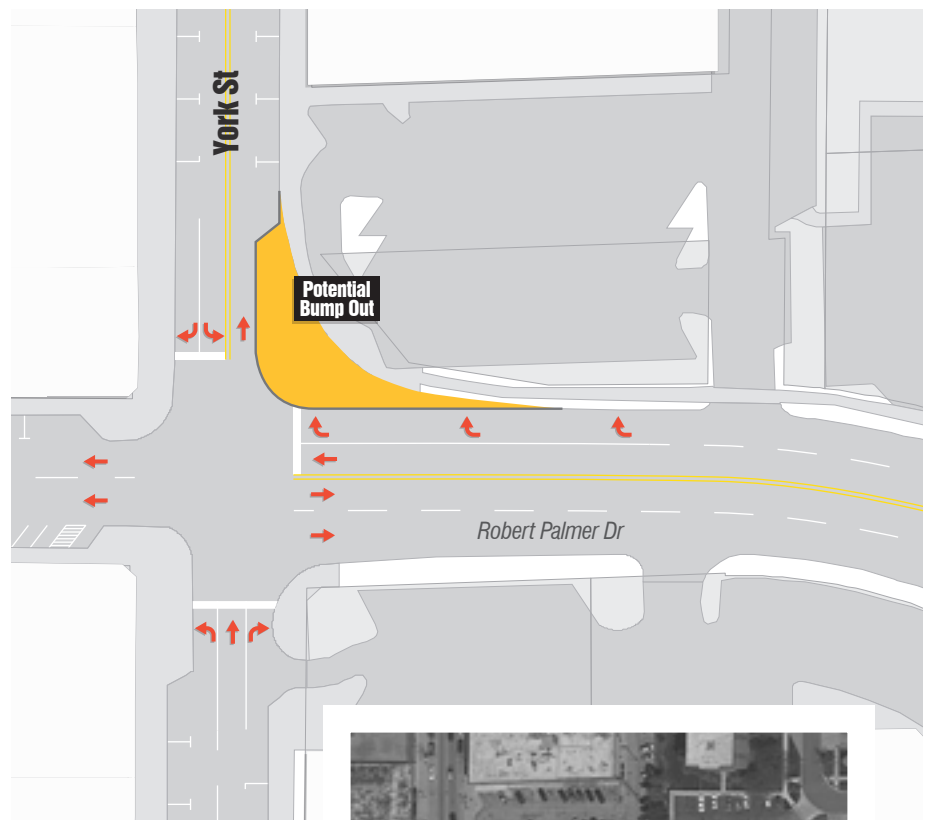


BUMP OUTS

Bump outs are curb extensions that “bump out” into the right-of-way to reduce the distance that pedestrians have to cross, increase visibility for both vehicles and pedestrians, and slow vehicular traffic. Bump-outs already occur in several locations within Downtown Elmhurst, such as on the southeast and southwest corners of Third Street and Addison Avenue, although they are relatively small in scale. Bump-outs should be considered for all primary and secondary intersections, where right-of-way width and traffic patterns allow.

Potential Intersection Reconfiguration

At present, northbound traffic along Robert T. Palmer Drive has a dedicated right turn lane (“porkchops”) onto York Street, with a curved right hand turn lane that more closely resembles an interstate on-ramp than a typical turn lane. This can lead to fast vehicle speeds turning onto York Street, as well as reduction in the cohesiveness of the streetscape and street grid. It is recommended that the “porkchop” lane be eliminated and that a traditional 90 degree turn lane be implemented. Parking can be brought down to the intersection and a bump out can be installed to decrease traffic speeds.





ONE-WAY & TWO-WAY CONFIGURATION

Downtown contains several one-way streets, including segments of York Street, Second Street, First Street, Addison Avenue, and Cottage Hill Avenue, as well as the entirety of Virginia Street and Arthur Street. The remaining roads within the study area accommodate two-way traffic flow.

Both one-way and two-way configurations have benefits and challenges. The one-way streets in Downtown Elmhurst prioritize the automobile and allow for the quicker movement of vehicles. This is achieved through traffic signal synchronization, elimination of the need for left turn lanes and signals, and reduction in conflict points (e.g. no head on collisions, drivers only need to look one way, etc.). Along York Street, the one-way configuration also permits safer movement around idling vehicles or trucks along York, avoiding the need to cross into oncoming traffic.

On the other hand, while slower for vehicles, two-way streets better balance the needs of the vehicle and the pedestrian. Two lanes of oncoming traffic are proven to slow vehicle speeds, making the roadway feel safer, and more welcoming for pedestrians, cyclists, and those trying to park a car. Reduced speeds can also increase the visibility of businesses along the roadway.

It is not recommended that the City alter its existing one-way/two-way configurations at this time. However, if significant changes in land use and mobility occur over time, the City may want to conduct an updated traffic study to evaluate whether to continue the existing one-way configuration. Topics for analysis include the impact such actions would have on traffic patterns, business vitality, and pedestrian mobility.





TRAFFIC

The Downtown Elmhurst street network experiences congestion and delays during peak periods. This is due to several factors, including Metra traffic and the fact that Downtown also serves as a “pass-through” for traffic associated with important regional roadways such as I-290, I-294, IL 56, and IL 64. Intersections experiencing congestion during peak periods include:

- York Street and North Avenue (signaled intersection)
- York Street and Robert T. Palmer Drive (signaled intersection)
- York Street and Park Avenue (stop sign; however, northbound traffic is heavily impacted by commuter trains making stops or traversing through Downtown)
- First Street and Addison Avenue (signaled intersection; southbound traffic on Addison Avenue is impacted by commuter trains making stops and/or moving through Downtown)

While traffic congestion is not ideal, it is to be expected within peak periods within Downtown Elmhurst. The City should continue to ensure that Downtown’s road network is safe for vehicles, but should recognize that Downtown’s purpose is not to circulate regional traffic, but to provide a pedestrian friendly and quaint environment for the community.

Circulation patterns are also impacted along Cottage Hill Avenue, Arthur Street, and Church Street during pick-off and drop-off for children attending Hawthorne Elementary School, Immaculate Conception Catholic Prep (ICCP), and Immaculate Conception Grade School. At present, saw horses are used to direct and control traffic. It is recommended that a more permanent and aesthetic solution be devised to better manage circulation.

SIGNAGE

Bright signage denoting an intersection as a pedestrian crossing should be present at all secondary intersections. It is evident at all primary intersections that pedestrians should have the right-of-way as they are signaled; at tertiary intersections, they may not be necessary given the low volume of traffic.

STRIPING

Striping distinguishes the pedestrian realm from that of the automobile on the roadway. This treatment should occur at all primary and secondary intersections; distinctive pavers are also acceptable based on the aesthetic of the block. Striping should be distinctive and clear, such as in the continental, ladder, or zebra style. At tertiary intersections, striping may or may not be used; if used, it should be coupled with the appropriate signage.

SIGNALING

Signal timers should occur at all Primary Intersections. This includes both “walk/don’t walk” signaling as well as count-down timers.



RAIL CROSSINGS

An active Union Pacific rail line runs east-west through Downtown, inhibiting pedestrian mobility. At-grade crossings occur along Myrtle Avenue, Maple Street/Prospect Street, Cottage Hill Avenue, and York Street.

At present, there is no striping or visual cue suggesting that pedestrians are permitted to cross the at-grade tracks when a train is not present. This uncertainty can also create a sense of physical division. Other communities -- ranging from Downers Grove, IL to Tokyo, Japan -- stripe pedestrian crossings across the tracks.

It is recommended that the City put attractive signage near the crossing and striping that encourages movement across the tracks when safe and appropriate. This will better stitch together the “northern” and “southern” parts of Downtown Elmhurst.

The City should also work to identify logical pedestrian connections for commuters getting to and coming off of Metra trains. This could include signage or striping.

As depicted in the adjacent photo, a underground tunnel allows pedestrians to circumvent the tracks underground. It is recommended that the tunnel be beautified, better lighted, and better signed.



A Metra station tunnel allows pedestrians to circumvent the tracks underground, although it is narrow and not well signed and is unsightly. The existing tunnel should be beautified and better signed. Additional tunnels are not recommended at this time.



BIKE INFRASTRUCTURE

Downtown should be a multi-modal environment that fosters a sense of energy and vitality. To that end, the usage of bicycles should also be supported and encouraged, especially given proximity to the Prairie Pathway. A bicycle friendly environment can stimulate greater activity on the street, economic growth, and healthy lifestyles.

The City's first official Bicycle Plan was adopted in 2013, and focuses on strengthening bicycle infrastructure and identifying strategies to increase biking among residents. The Plan's recommendations were based on a wide variety of public input, including two workshops, a community survey, public hearings, and the guidance of the Elmhurst Bicycle Task Force. The Plan serves as the basis for the recommendations within this section.



BIKE ROUTES

Designated Routes

At this time, bicycle traffic should be discouraged along York Street. While traffic moves relatively slow, it is a busy street with on-street parking and a narrow right-of-way that is not conducive to safe bicycling. Similarly, bicycle traffic should also be discouraged along Robert Palmer Drive due to the speeds of vehicles and the curve of the right-of-way. However, the avoidance of York Street and Robert Palmer Drive for bicycling should be re-evaluated if traffic patterns change and as new development occurs downtown.

Bicycle traffic flowing in the north/south direction within the study area should be encouraged along Addison Avenue, Cottage Hill Avenue, and Myrtle Avenue. East/west bike traffic should be directed to Third Street or Park Avenue, understanding that some other east/west streets may serve as connections to local destinations from the designated routes. As one moves away from Downtown, bicycle route options increase as bike paths and regional systems become acceptable.

“Sharrows” and/or signage should be utilized along designated routes that meet appropriate standards. Such signage will communicate to drivers that bicyclists are welcome and to bicyclists what the appropriate routes are.

Connectivity to the Prairie Path

The regional Prairie Path trail runs in an east-west direction roughly one mile south of the heart of Downtown Elmhurst. It is recommended that the desired Downtown bike routes along Cottage Hill Avenue and Park Avenue be better promoted and better signed to communicate connections to the Prairie Path. Similarly, when exiting the Prairie Path, signage should direct cyclists to Downtown Elmhurst.

Posting Official Bike Route Map

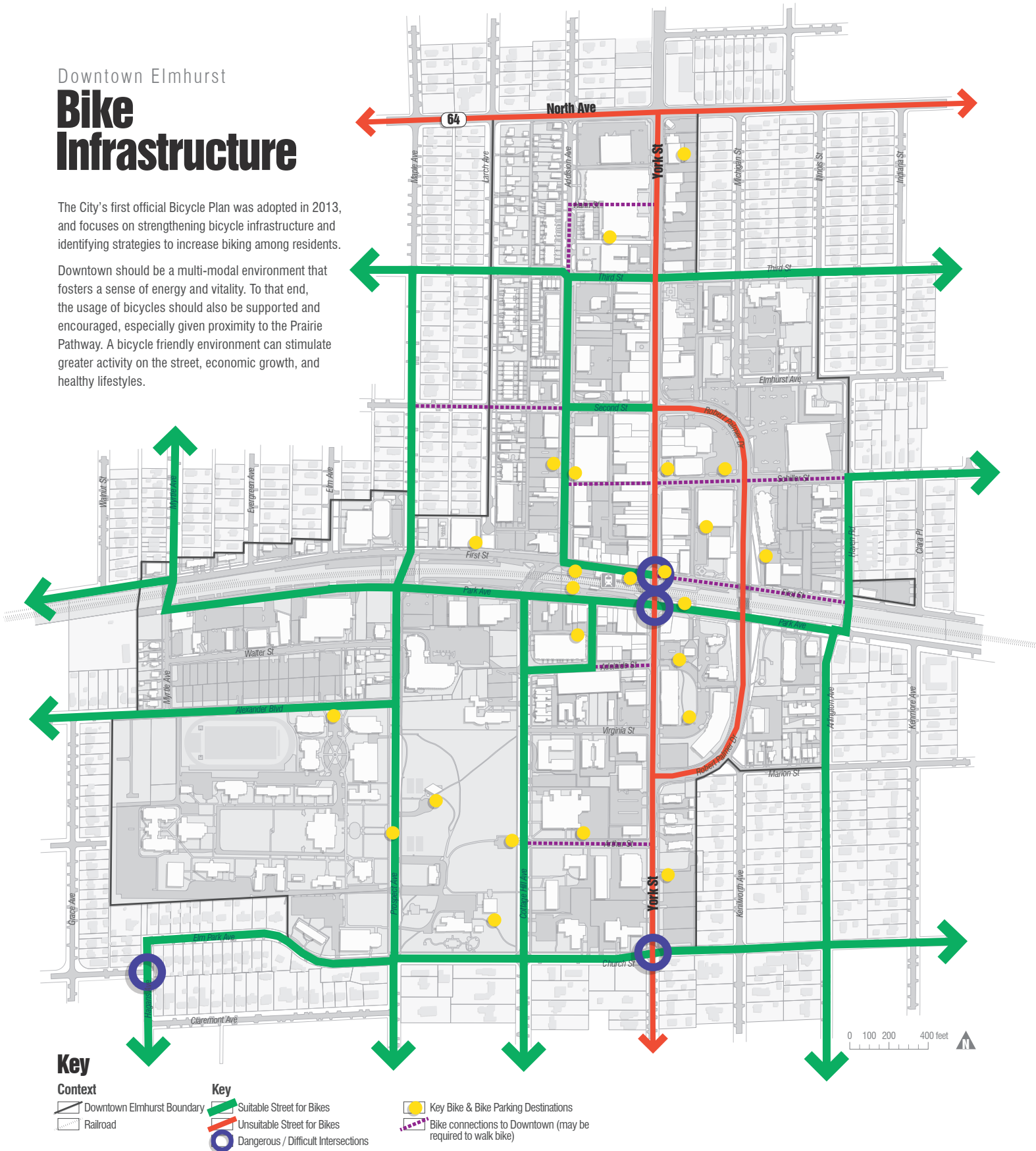
The City should develop an official “bike route” map. The map could be printed on brochures or handouts, as well posted on signage within Downtown or hung in a kiosk. The document should also contain “rules of the road” for cyclists to help them better understand cycling in Elmhurst.

Downtown Elmhurst

Bike Infrastructure

The City's first official Bicycle Plan was adopted in 2013, and focuses on strengthening bicycle infrastructure and identifying strategies to increase biking among residents.

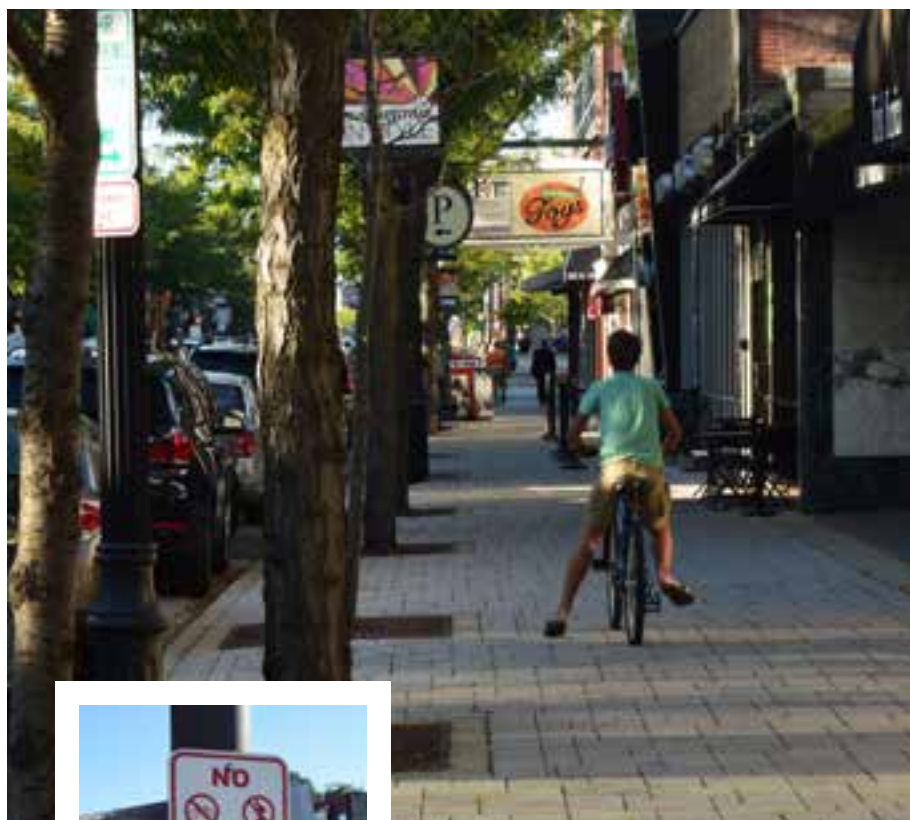
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PREVENTING BIKES ON SIDEWALKS

The City should actively work to prevent cyclists from using the sidewalks within the Downtown study area, particularly within the Core Zone and Outer Core Zone. This may include educational outreach, as well as signage and advertising near bike parking.



The City has already posted signs throughout the Downtown to discourage the bicyclists, skateboarders, rollerbladers, and scooters on sidewalks in the Downtown. This effort can be supplemented by including educational outreach, signage, advertising, and recommended bike route maps near bike parking provided in the Downtown.



BIKE STORAGE

The 2013 Elmhurst Bike Plan details existing bike racks within the City. Combining the Plan's information with additional information found on Google Earth, it is estimated that Downtown Elmhurst has roughly 250 spots for bicycle parking.

The City should support the installation of additional bike parking at both public and private facilities, and additional bike storage should be encouraged as new development occurs within Downtown.



The City should provide a map at key bike destinations, storage, and routes to inform users how to safely get into the Downtown.



PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

Quality public transportation reduces roadway congestion and transports riders to important destinations at a low cost. Within the Chicago metro region, access to public transportation is also one of the most important factors in choosing where to live.

Downtown Elmhurst is served by two public transportation providers: Pace, the suburban bus route service, and Metra commuter rail. This section supports these providers in their mission and advocates for greater and more efficient public transportation access.



PACE

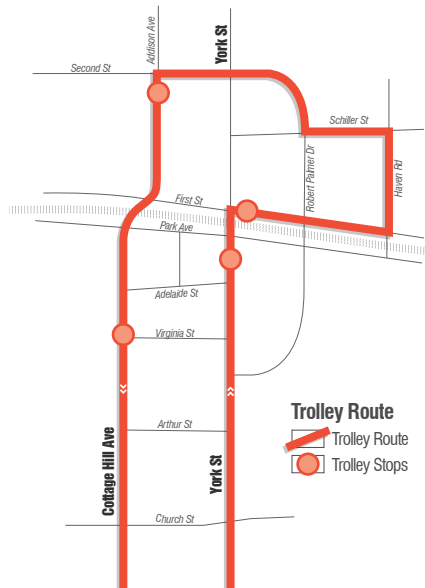
Existing Pace bus routes within Downtown Elmhurst include Route 309 and Route 332. Route 309 runs in an east-west direction from Downtown Elmhurst to the CTA Green Line's Austin stop. Route 332 runs in a north-south direction and extends from O'Hare International Airport through Downtown Elmhurst to the Oakbrook Center. In June 2015, roughly 890 people rode Route 309 on a typical weekday, while roughly 700 rode Route 332. During this same period, the average Pace bus route transported 525 people.

The City should support Pace in its operations within Downtown Elmhurst and work with them to determine if there is an opportunity to improve existing and/or expand service. There are several nearby routes that could be altered to include stops in Downtown Elmhurst. Better Pace connectivity with surrounding communities could play a role in making Downtown Elmhurst more of a regional destination.



EXPLORE ELMHURST EXPRESS TROLLEY

The Explore Elmhurst Express is a free trolley service connecting Elmhurst City Centre with the Spring Road and York and Vallette business districts. Riding the trolley is free, and it runs during the weekends of summer. In 2015, it operated from July 24 to September 13. The trolley service is an excellent opportunity to better connect residents with Downtown and to expose them to new restaurants, shops, and activities.



METRA

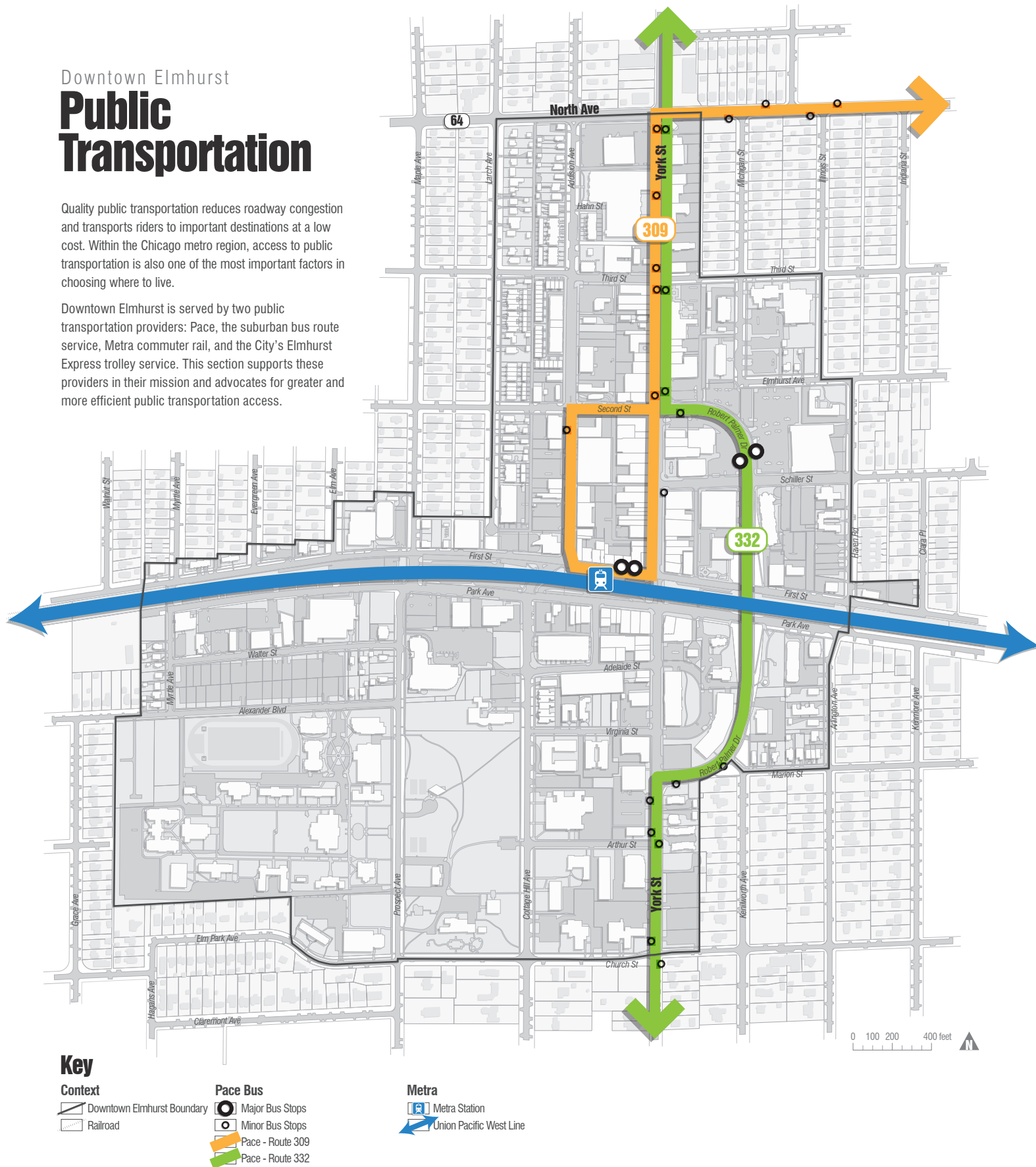
Metra service within Elmhurst is well-established and the Downtown Elmhurst Metra stop is the busiest on the Union Pacific West line and the seventh busiest station within Metra's entire network of 236 stations. At present, no recommendations are necessary regarding Metra service. The City recently released a Request for Qualifications (RFQ) for the renovation of the Metra Station.

Downtown Elmhurst

Public Transportation

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Downtown Elmhurst is served by two public transportation providers: Pace, the suburban bus route service, Metra commuter rail, and the City's Elmhurst Express trolley service. This section supports these providers in their mission and advocates for greater and more efficient public transportation access.



PARKING

Parking within Downtown Elmhurst is provided on-street, in surface parking lots, and within parking structures. As of 2015, it is estimated that Downtown Elmhurst contains more than 3,000 public parking spots: roughly 2,500 off-street parking spots (including the new Addison Parking Deck) and 500 on-street parking spots for patrons. Many of these spots go unused throughout the week. Based on the City's average household size of 2.72 (2015 data from ESRI), the existing supply could accommodate roughly 6,800 visitors.

Many users of Downtown perceive parking downtown as difficult. This is mostly due to the location of the existing parking, not the overall supply: users would prefer to park exactly outside of their desired destination, similar to at a strip mall or big box store. Given the nature and fabric of Downtown Elmhurst, this is not feasible or desirable, and should not be accommodated.

Drivers should encounter a "park once" environment upon arrival, where it is easy to park in one centrally-located place and then walk on foot from location to location rather than driving between each location. It should be expected that parking may not be available directly in front of the desired location. An interesting streetscape with things to see and do along the way ("walk appeal") will assist in making the most of the short 2 or 3 block walk.



DOWNTOWN PARKING OPTIONS

While Downtown contains more than 3,000 parking spaces, and many of these go unused throughout the week, parking within Downtown is perceived to be confusing and difficult. This can be mitigated through the usage of signage, which can efficiently and easily direct drivers to appropriate parking locations, and streetscaping, which can make the walk from the parking space to the destination more enjoyable and attractive.

It is recommended that the City:

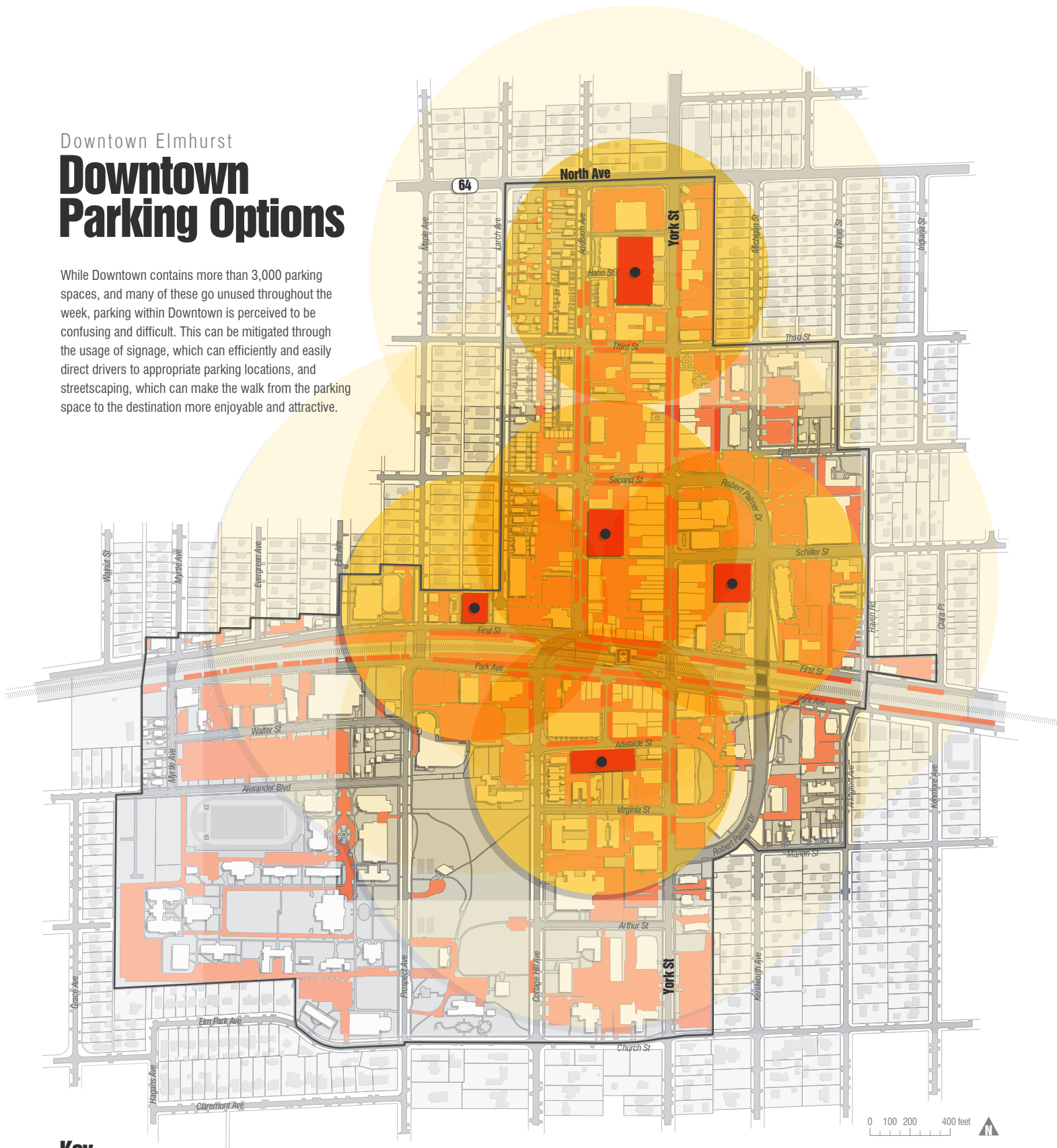
- Develop a “gateway” signage program along key approaches to announce entry into Downtown and to notify motorists of nearby parking options.
- Provide maps and wayfinding resources to assist motorists in locating parking lots and understanding the regulations that control those facilities.
- Develop a more prominent identification system for parking facilities, including advance-notice signs for motorists and location signs for pedestrians.
- Install real-time parking count signs on the outside of parking garages.
- Link existing parking lots and garages with the remainder of the Downtown through streetscaping, unique pavers, and pedestrian improvements.
- Evaluate parking time limits for all options of parking in the Downtown including on street, surface lots, parking decks regularly as new development occurs or parking habits change.



Downtown Elmhurst

Downtown Parking Options

While Downtown contains more than 3,000 parking spaces, and many of these go unused throughout the week, parking within Downtown is perceived to be confusing and difficult. This can be mitigated through the usage of signage, which can efficiently and easily direct drivers to appropriate parking locations, and streetscaping, which can make the walk from the parking space to the destination more enjoyable and attractive.



Key

Context

- Downtown Elmhurst Boundary
- Railroad

Parking Options

- Public Parking Garages
- 2-3 Minute Walk Time
- 5 Minute Walk Time
- Off-Street Parking
- On-Street Parking



PARKING REQUIREMENTS

Commercial

Commercial uses within the Downtown Core Zone should not be required to provide off-street parking. Such a policy minimizes curb-cuts and drive-ways, consolidates parking within centralized locations, and preserves the architectural fabric and streetwall of the downtown. At present, the Downtown Core Zone is split between several zoning districts: C-4, C-4A, and R-4, and only the C-4 district does not currently require off-street parking for commercial uses. The City should update the Zoning Code to eliminate parking requirements for commercial uses across the entire Downtown Core Zone.

Residential

People are attracted to living within Downtown Elmhurst due to its walkability, density, and access to public transportation, particularly Metra. Accordingly, residential parking requirements within Downtown should differ from more traditional neighborhoods where reliance on the automobile is more prevalent. Existing regulations within Downtown Elmhurst require 2.0 to 2.5 spaces per dwelling unit, varying by both the zoning district and type of housing. Only senior housing and apartments for the elderly are permitted 1 space per dwelling unit.

The City should replace its existing residential parking requirements with a reduced tiered parking zone system that better fits the purpose and character of Downtown. A reduction in parking requirements for multi-family or mixed-use developments can lower build-out costs for developers, more productively use limited space, and preserve the character of Downtown by preventing the creation of surface parking lots.

Parking requirements should be dictated by the distance a new development is from the intersection of York Street and First Street, the heart of the Downtown and location of the Metra station. These recommended tiered zones were created by radiating outward from this intersection by increments of an eighth of a mile, which represents roughly a 2-3 minute walk time. The radiating walk zones were squared off to reflect the Downtown's current street grid.

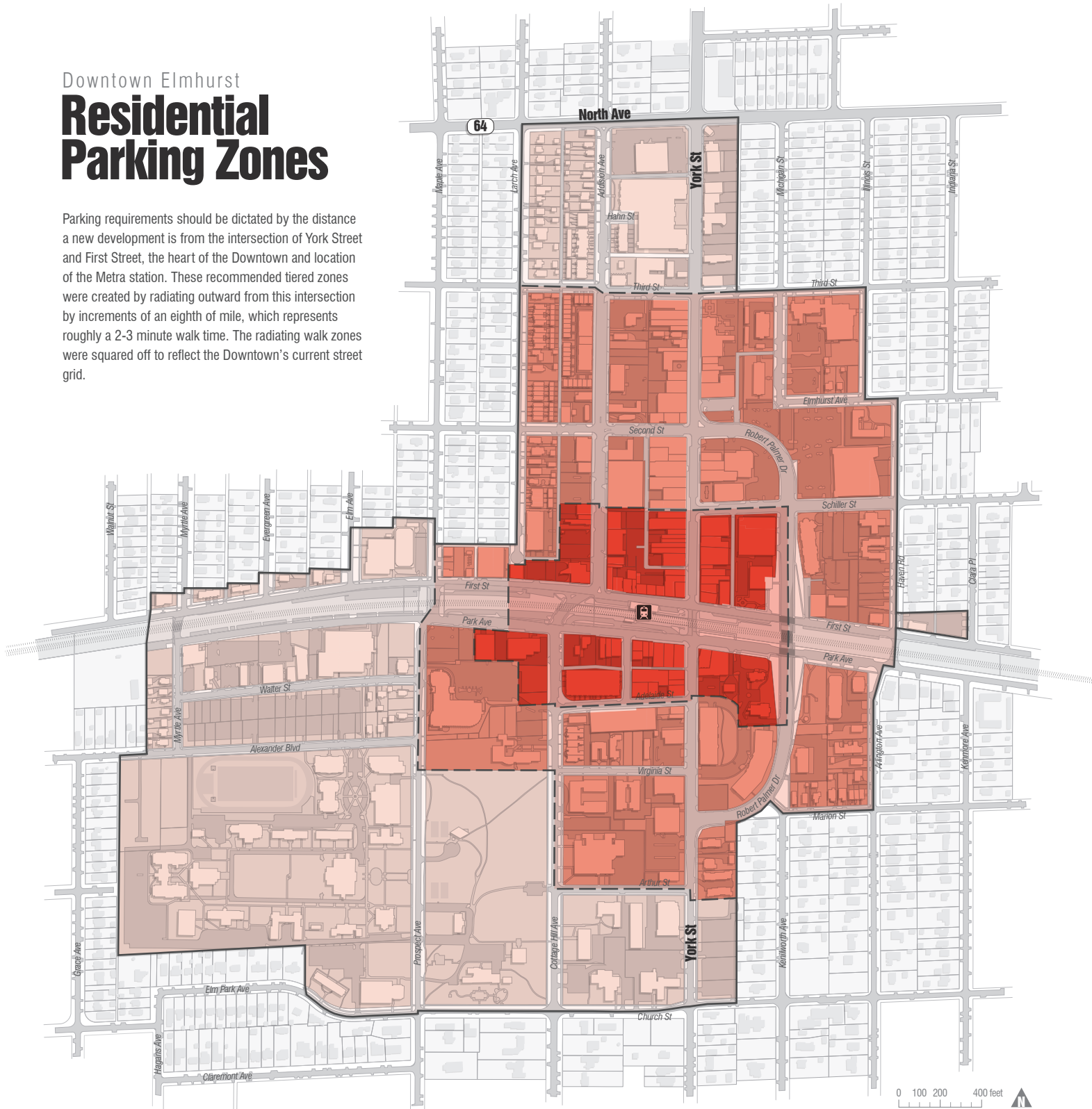
The recommended parking tier zones are broken into the following 3 categories:

- **Tier 1** – 0.5 space per dwelling unit
- **Tier 2** – 1.0 space per dwelling unit
- **Tier 3** – 1.5 space per dwelling unit

Downtown Elmhurst

Residential Parking Zones

Parking requirements should be dictated by the distance a new development is from the intersection of York Street and First Street, the heart of the Downtown and location of the Metra station. These recommended tiered zones were created by radiating outward from this intersection by increments of an eighth of a mile, which represents roughly a 2-3 minute walk time. The radiating walk zones were squared off to reflect the Downtown's current street grid.



Key

Context

- Downtown Elmhurst Boundary
- Railroad

Pace Bus

- Tier 1 – 0.5 parking spaces/du
- Tier 2 – 1.0 parking spaces/du
- Tier 3 – 1.5 parking spaces/du



ACCESS MANAGEMENT FOR EXISTING DEVELOPMENTS

Frequent curb cuts and driveways disrupt the sidewalk network and remove opportunities for elements that could enhance the appearance of the Downtown, such as buildings, decorative fences, or landscaping. Every effort should be made to limit the number of curb cut access points within Downtown Elmhurst.

The City should continue its efforts to establish continuous and well-connected parking areas to the rear of buildings and promote shared access drives, alley access, and cross-access to eliminate excessive or redundant curb cuts along the public right-of-way.

Short-term access management should be applied to existing developments in the Downtown, with the intensity varying by *Functional Land Use Zones*:

■ Core Zone

The use of curb cuts and driveways should be discouraged on *Strolling Streets* and *Secondary Streets*. Traffic should be directed to alleys and efforts should be made to consolidate parking lots at the rear of buildings where possible.

■ Outer Core Zone

The use of curb cuts and driveways should be tightly controlled by consolidating existing access points and limiting future access points as development occurs. Where possible and when appropriate, traffic should be required to use alleys.

■ Neighborhood Transition Zone & Civic/Institutional Zone

Curb cuts should be minimized to the extent possible. Shared parking, shared driveways, and connected parking lots should be encouraged.



Examples of poor access management in the Downtown including redundant driveways, excessive curb cuts, and uncoordinated entry points onto primary streets.

Downtown Elmhurst

Access Management for Existing Developments



Key

Context

- Downtown Elmhurst Boundary
- Railroad

Access Management

- Maintain Existing Alley Entry
- Maintain Alley Access to Private Parking
- Maintain Existing Curb Cut Access
- Remove Existing Curb Cut Access



IMPROVEMENTS FOR EXISTING PARKING LOTS

The recommended location, usage, size, and appearance of parking lots and garages varies within Downtown by functional zone. Generally, parking lots and garages should be attractive, well-landscaped, and compatible with the scale and character of Downtown Elmhurst. For specific information on landscaping, buffering, and screening, please reference **Chapter 4: Design Guidelines**.

General policies for off-street parking are provided by functional zone.

■ Core Zone

Parking should be provided on-street, in public garages, or to the rear of buildings accessed by side streets and rear alleys. Surface parking lots should be prohibited. Parking garages should complement the desired Downtown in terms of scale, materials, and bulk and should be well landscaped and attractive.

■ Outer Core Zone

Surface parking lots should be discouraged away from fronting the public-right-of-way. If a surface lot is permitted, it should be appropriately screened from the public right of way through landscaping or low level fencing. Landscaped islands and pedestrian pathways should be provided. As with the Core Zone, parking garages should complement the desired built environment in terms of scale, materials, and bulk.

■ Neighborhood Transition Zone

Surface parking lots and parking garages should be prohibited in these areas. Parking should occur on-street or within driveways.

■ Civic Institutional Zone

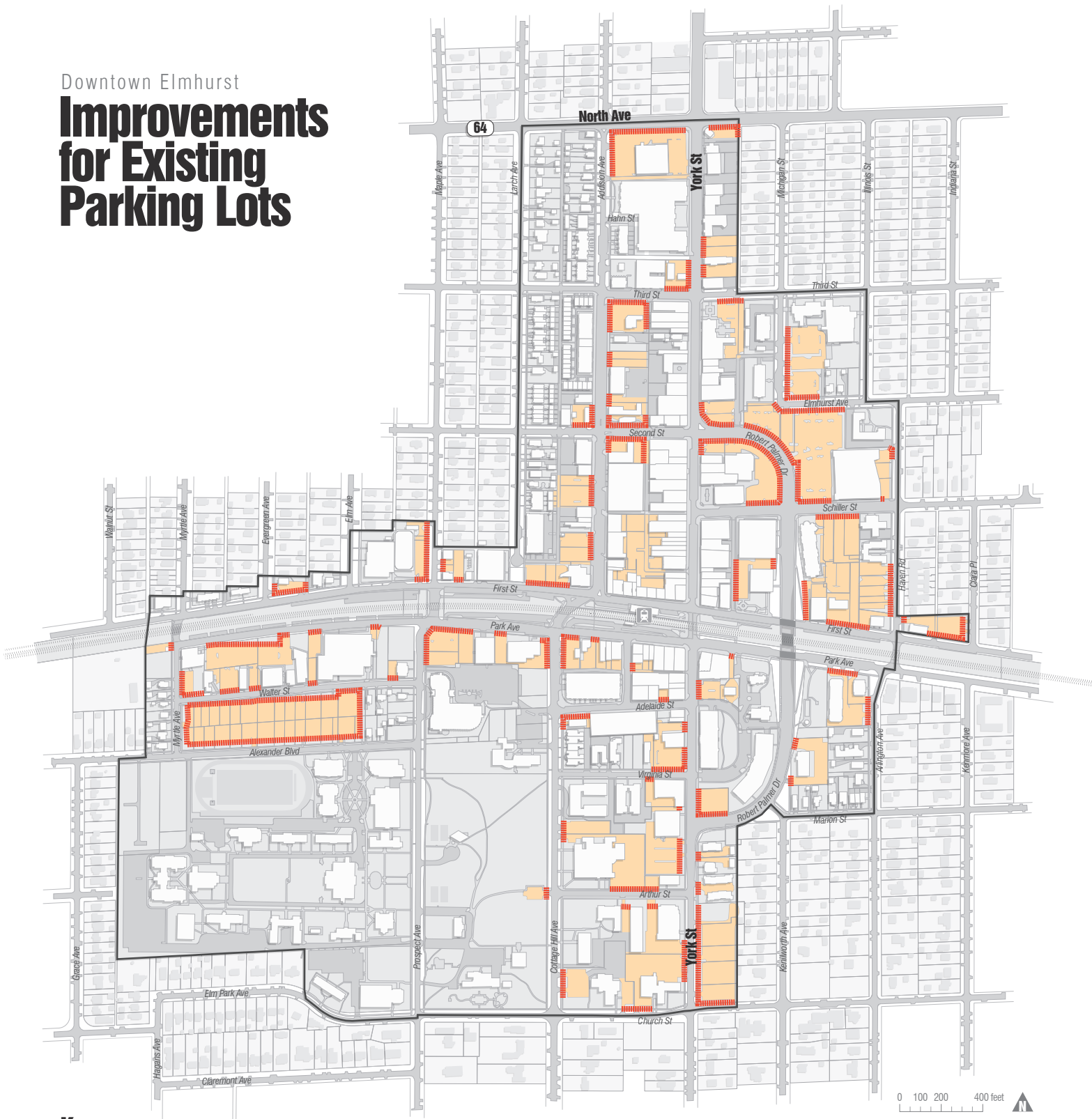
Surface parking lots should be permitted, but should be appropriately screened and buffered from the right-of-way and other uses. Low density parking garages may be appropriate in select locations.



Examples of unattractive parking lots in the Downtown that should be improved in the short-term. Improvements could include buffering, landscaping, low level fencing or walls, parking lot islands,

Downtown Elmhurst

Improvements for Existing Parking Lots



Key

Context

- Downtown Elmhurst Boundary
- Railroad

Access Management

- Unattractive/Unsightly Parking Lot
- Potential Parking Lot Screening



STREETSCAPE

Significant improvements have been made in the Downtown since adoption of the updated streetscape plan in 1999. These improvements include installation of a unified pavement system along the sidewalks, a coordinated street furniture palette, street light standards, and street tree installation. This Streetscape section identifies recommended improvements to Downtown Elmhurst's streetscape that builds on the previous streetscape plan.

The City should work with private property owners to infill unattractive concrete fields and unattractive foundation landscaping with materials and planters that better match the intent of the streetscape plan



CLOSING THE GAP

There are instances where buildings located in the Downtown do not come to the property line. This creates a large gap where concrete sidewalks have been installed adjacent to the City-installed streetscape and pavers. To the pedestrian, the private property and public right-of-way function collectively as a public walkway, however the contrasting paving treatments creates visual discord and arbitrarily demarcate the edge of private and public space. In these cases, the City should work with private property owners to infill unattractive concrete fields and unattractive foundation landscaping with materials and planters that better match the intent of the streetscape plan.

STREET LIGHTS

The City has an established street light standard for the Downtown. The following light types are currently used throughout the Downtown.

- **Sodium Halide:** This older light mode provides a yellow glow that can be considered unattractive.
- **Halogen:** These lights provide a bright, white light and meet lighting and spacing standards already in place.
- **LED:** These white/warmer tone lights are energy efficient, produce less heat, and provide a bright color for pedestrians walking the Downtown.

Over the long term, the City should strive to replace all sodium halide and halogen lights with LED lights. Sodium halide lights should be prioritized for replacement over halogen lights. As the City moves toward the exclusive use of LED street lights, they may need to review the overall siting of street lights to ensure that they meet lighting requirements. The City should also consider the systematic replacement of street lights on a block-by-block or street-by-street basis to ensure consistent lighting as visitors travel throughout the Downtown.



The City should consider undertaking a coordinated effort to replace outmoded or dead light types with energy efficient LED lights



STREET TREES

The Downtown could benefit from a more diverse street tree palette for shade tree installations. While very few gaps or unhealthy trees are found within the streetscape in the Downtown, the City's heavy reliance on only a few tree species (with a significant percentage of those being Honey Locust) creates greater potential for exposure to damage caused by pests, diseases, and severe weather conditions. To maintain a healthy street tree population, the City should consider utilizing a greater diversity of plant materials for future installations and replacements.

This suggested urban street tree plant list is not intended to be exhaustive, but identifies other urban tolerant trees. These trees are salt tolerant, ideal for Downtown Parkways, tree grates, and sidewalk cut-outs, suitable for hardiness zones 5 and 6, and promotes biodiversity. Hardiness Zones are USDA plant standards developed to determine which plants are most likely to thrive at a location. The map is based on the average annual minimum winter temperature, divided into 10-degree Fahrenheit zones.

The trees identified in the following list are generally well-suited to parkways on arterial streets, narrow parkways (less than 4' wide), and other restricted size planting sites.

Suggested Urban Street Tree Plant List

Common Name	Scientific Name		
Common Name	Genus	Species	Cultivar
Hedge Maple	Acer	campestre	
State Street® Miyabe Maple	Acer	miyabei	'Morton'
Satisfaction maple	Acer	platanoides x truncatum	'Satisfaction'
Sycamore Maple	Acer	pseudoplatanus	
Norwegian Sunset® Maple	Acer	truncatum	x A. platanoides 'Keithsform'
Pacific Sunset® Maple	Acer	truncatum	x A. platanoides 'Warrenred'
Baumann Horsechestnut	Aesculus	hippocastanum	'Baumannii'
Northern Catalpa	Catalpa	speciosa	
Sugarberry	Celtis	laevigata	
Chicagoland Hackberry	Celtis	occidentalis	'Chicagoland'
Hackberry	Celtis	occidentalis	
Windy City Hackberry	Celtis	occidentalis	'Windy City'
Ginkgo, Male only	Ginkgo	biloba	
Magyar Ginkgo	Ginkgo	biloba	'Magyar'
Princeton Sentry Ginkgo	Ginkgo	biloba	'Princeton Sentry'
Imperial honeylocust	Gleditsia	triacanthos	var. inermis 'Imperial'
Shademaster honeylocust	Gleditsia	triacanthos	var. inermis 'Shademaster'
Skyline honeylocust	Gleditsia	triacanthos	var. inermis 'Skyline'
Kentucky Coffeetree	Gymnocladus	dioicus	
European Larch	Larix	decidua	
Cucumbertree magnolia	Magnolia	acuminata	
Exclamation!™ London Planetree	Platanus	x acerifolia	'Morton Circle'
Ovation™ London Planetree	Platanus	x acerifolia	'Morton Euclid'
Robusta Poplar	Populus	x euramerica	'Robusta'
Siouxland Poplar	Populus	deltoides	'Siouxland'
Sargent Cherry	Prunus	sargentii	
English Oak	Quercus	robur	
Skymaster® English Oak	Quercus	robur	'Pyramich'
Heritage® Macdaniel's Oak	Quercus	x macdanielii	'Clemons'
Chicago Blues Black Locust	Robinia	pseudoacacia	'Chicago Blues'
Mountain ash	Sorbus	aucuparia	
China Snow® Peking Lilac	Syringa	pekinensis	'Morton'
Summer Snow Japanese Tree lilac	Syringa	reticulata ssp. reticulata	'Summer Snow'
Baldcypress	Taxodium	distichum	
Shawnee Brave Baldcypress	Taxodium	distichum	'Shawnee Brave'
Discovery Elm	Ulmus	davidiana	var. Japonica 'Discovery'
Accolade® Elm	Ulmus	japonica x wilsoniana	'Morton'
Patriot Elm	Ulmus	wilsoniana	'Patriot'
Prospector Wilson's Elm	Ulmus	wilsoniana	'Prospector'
Commendation™ Elm	Ulmus	carpinifolia	'Morton Stalwart'
Village Green Japanese Zelkova	Zelkova	serrata	'Village Green'



STREET FURNISHINGS & PEDESTRIAN AMENITIES

Generally the Downtown provides adequate pedestrian amenities including seating, trash and recycling receptacles, street lighting, street light banners, informational kiosks, and priority crosswalk signage. The City should continue to work with City Centre to install site furnishings that complement existing streetscape investments and enhance Downtown character over time.





Outdoor Seating/Dining

Outdoor seating should be designed in a way that doesn't impact pedestrian circulation. In some cases existing outdoor seating areas in the Downtown feel forced and do not fit the character and style of the Downtown. The roping off of the space is important, but the materials used should be in line with the character of the Downtown.

ADA Accessibility

The public right-of-way and private properties should be designed to appeal to all users and provide the same means of use by incorporating Universal Design and ADA standards wherever possible. All sidewalks, curb-ramps, and crosswalks in the Downtown should meet the current ADA/PROWAG (Public Rights of Way Accessibility Guidelines) guidelines for accessibility. Key examples of noncompliance issues that should be resolved in the Downtown include the following:

- Longitudinal slopes in excess of 5%;
- Cross slopes in excess of 2%;
- Curb ramp layouts; and,
- Lack of tactile surfaces.



Existing curb ramp with tactile surfaces



Existing curb ramp **without** tactile surfaces



PUBLIC SPACES

Public spaces are an increasingly valued amenity within Downtown Elmhurst. Public input received during the planning process indicates a desire for various public space amenities including gathering spaces, resting locations, and outdoor seating areas are valued as assets in the Downtown. Whether for active or passive use, an effective open space system is critical in creating a positive image and environment in the Downtown. The Public Spaces section illustrates issues and opportunities for the following public space components; existing plazas, parks, and campus areas, existing areas of open space with potential for improvement, and potential new open spaces.



POCKET PARKS & PLAZAS

Pocket parks and plazas are small in scale, typically ranging from a few hundred square feet to not more two thousand square feet. Located in the heart of Downtown, pocket parks provide aesthetically pleasing “wayside” spaces for visitors and shoppers to relax. These spaces have been designed for a quiet retreat offering shade, passive seating, and visual interest. Similar to the plaza north of City Hall, these spaces should incorporate decorative plantings, special paving, pedestrian amenities, and wayfinding signage. Special care should be taken to reflect the character of Elmhurst in the design of these spaces through public art such as sculpture, signage, planting and/or paving.

The plaza in front of the Police headquarters on First Street was improved to include an extension of the existing “lawn” near the police station. This improvement created a more inviting front entrance into this important civic building.

Areas for Potential Improvements

A Robert Palmer & York Street/Second Street: New Plaza or Pocket Park. A small parking lot located on the southeast corner of the intersection of Robert Palmer and York Street creates a void in the streetwall leading up to the intersection and detracts from the overall appearance of the district. The installation of a small plaza, comprising only one or two parking spaces and adjacent pedestrian right-of-way at the corner, could be used to “close the gap” created by this parking lot. This would provide an amenity to visitors and significant positive visual impact at a prominent intersection in the Downtown.

B Adell Place: “Pedestrian Mall.” It may be possible in the future to consider closure of Adell Place to traffic using the area exclusively as a pedestrian mall. It could provide entrances to adjoining business while serving as a pedestrian reprieve in the area south of the tracks. This area would also serve as an open space amenity to existing and future residents living nearby as well. The ultimate feasibility of this improvement, however, should consider the impacts of street closure to the adjoining alley and properties it serves.



Ⓒ Donut Hole Pocket Park. There is potential to develop either a pocket park, or a more substantial open space in the area currently referred to as the “Donut Hole”. In the short-term, the City could design and install a small-scale pocket park on the parcel they currently own and use for parking. A long-term goal could be to acquire the parcel to the south and develop a more substantial open space area. Improvements should include better pedestrian connections to the surrounding businesses, improved parking lot circulation patterns, and a small plaza space or gathering space.



Potential park concept for the Donut Hole areas. Recommendations include better pedestrian connections to the surrounding businesses, improved parking lot circulation patterns, and a small plaza space or gathering space.



NEIGHBORHOOD PARKS

Small parks can provide venues for farmers markets, outdoor concerts, and food vendors. These parks and plazas serve as destinations for area families as well as Downtown visitors, and should incorporate appropriate elements such as tot lots, open lawns and seating. Spaces should have a balance of “hardscape” areas such as sidewalks and paved plazas and “softscape” areas consisting of lawns and landscaped areas. Small parks are best located at the perimeter of the Downtown where they can be accessed by Downtown visitors as well as nearby residential neighborhoods. General locations may be subject to refinement depending upon ultimate development patterns in the Downtown.

Areas for Potential Improvements

As discussed in **Section 1: Land Use & Development**, there are several large sites throughout the Downtown that should be considered for redevelopment. As redevelopment occurs, the City should work with property owners to incorporate public open space into the design at key locations in the Downtown. The following recommendations identify potential future park locations that could benefit the Downtown as well as surrounding neighborhoods.

① Park Avenue: New Park. This area is along Park Avenue between Prospect and Cottage Hill Avenues and includes the current U.S. Post Office Building. As uses change, the area could accommodate a new park or recreation area as a component of the redevelopment of the adjacent cultural campus. This park space could provide a central green space that complements new development that fronts the nearby intersections while providing a vista into nearby Wilder Park.



E Schiller Court: New Park. A small community park in this area would provide a public destination at the terminus of the Schiller Court pedway. The park could also be used to extend pedestrian access from the pedway to the adjoining residential area to the west. If redeveloped in conjunction with the public parking lot to the north, this site could be large enough to accommodate downtown gatherings and special events.

F North Addison: New Park. This area is located opposite a large multi-family complex within limited open space and immediately south of a proposed multi-family project. As redevelopment occurs at this site, a small park on the north end of the property could serve as an amenity to multiple sites.

RAILWAY CORRIDOR

The Union Pacific West Line provides service between Chicago and Elburn, Illinois. With nearly 2,200 getting off a train every weekday, the Elmhurst commuter station is an important asset and “entryway” to Downtown Elmhurst.

Area for Potential Improvements

G Rail Corridor Greenway. This railroad right-of-way runs the length of the Downtown, fronting both First Street and Park Avenue. Where possible, the railroad right-of-way should be enhanced to function as an attractive greenway. Much of the right-of-way is too narrow to accommodate significant open space improvements, but this area could be improved with landscaping to enhance visual interest, public art, and screening for uses that directly front the railway corridor. Where sufficient depth is provided, improvements to the railway corridor could also include small plaza spaces and extended platforms for commuters.

FARMERS MARKET

Farmers Markets not only sell healthy produce and artisan goods, but also act as informal public spaces for the community to interact with one another. At present, Downtown Elmhurst does not have a farmers market, although a farmers market is held from June to October just south of the study area. The City should continue to work with relevant stakeholders to determine if a Downtown Farmers Market is feasible and appropriate.



PUBLIC ART

The benefits of public art are numerous. Public art can foster community pride, stimulate social interaction, encourage healthier life styles, reduce vandalism and cost, promote ecology, nurture and strengthen grass roots cultures, expand learning and awareness, heal the social fabric, explore risk and make lateral connections between the various people and agencies responsible for the public art.

The economic benefits of public art are also well documented. The Chicago “Cows on Parade” was a world-renowned temporary public art project in 1999 where hundreds of “bovine works of art” were scattered at sites throughout the city. It is estimated that the public art exhibit brought an estimated additional 2 million visitors to the city, and during the three-month exhibit, these tourists spent approximately \$500 million on hotels, food, and sightseeing. One store in Chicago reported a \$40,000 profit over its weekly projections due to thousands of additional customers generated by the exhibit. Other retail shops, restaurants, and hotels reported a 20% increase in sales.

Public Art Funding

The City Centre of Elmhurst has hosted a rotating public art display whereby artists are able to decorate a three-dimensional version of the Elmhurst City Centre logo. In the last call for redesign, local artists were given the example of modern pop artists to inspire their concepts to create art that is “impactful, functional and has staying power.” Over the years, these blocks are sanded down and recreated; the next recreation is scheduled for 2017.

The City could also consider establishing a “set aside” for public art or a “percent for art” requirement for new development. For example, the City of San Francisco mandates 2% of all construction costs be allocated to public art installations while the City of Oakland has a 1% allocation for both public and private construction projects. The City of Vancouver, British Columbia also requires private development to allocate money to public art in the amount of \$0.95 per square foot of built space.

Downtown Core Focus

While public art can complement and enrich almost any part of Downtown Elmhurst, public art installations should be prioritized within the Core to improve the area’s appearance, vitality, and interest. Public art installations should also be considered at prominent locations such as key gateways within the Outer Core and Civic/Institutional areas. Working with the City Centre, Elmhurst Art Museum, local artists, and other groups and agencies, the City should explore opportunities for public art projects and programs.

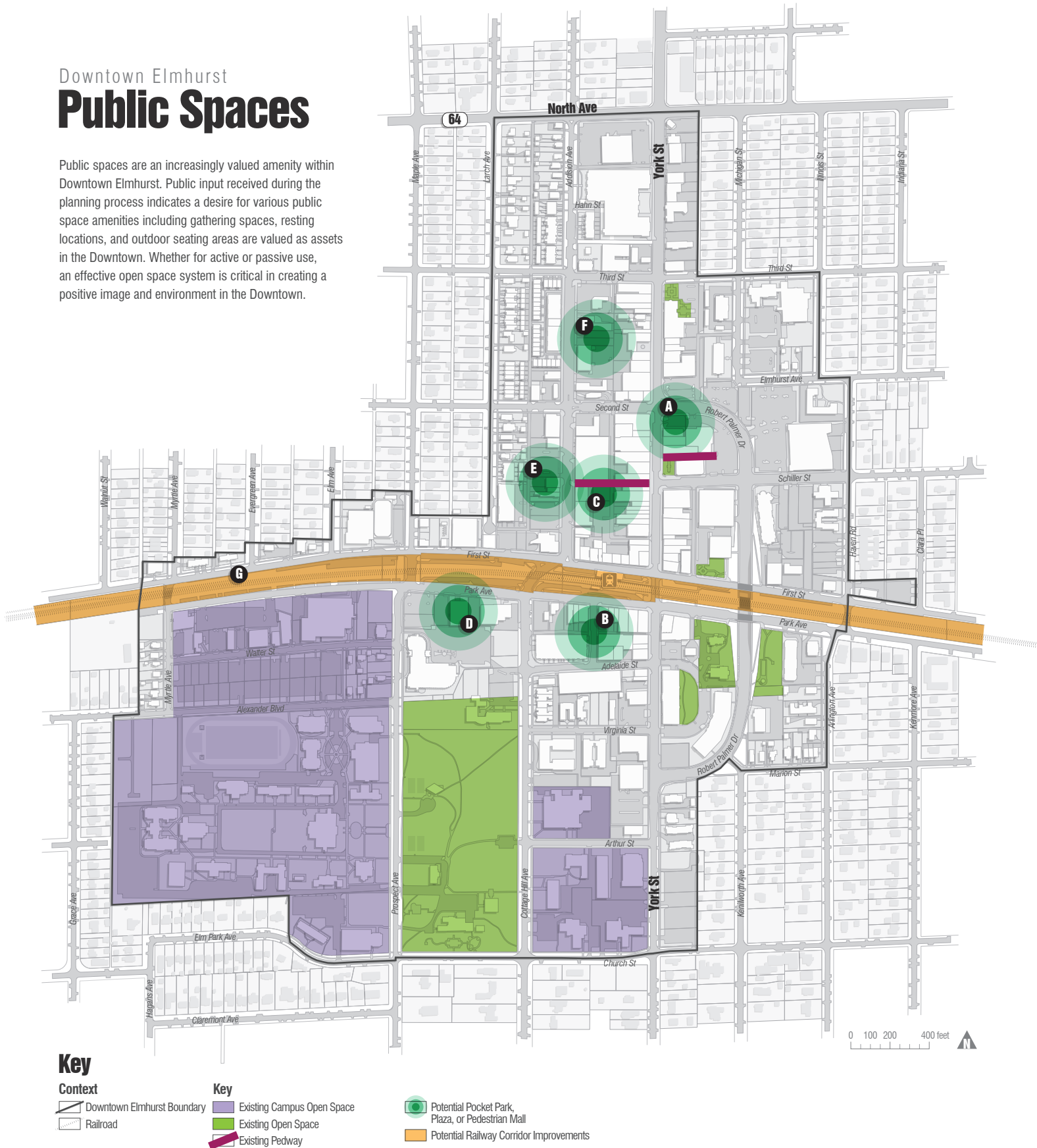


Examples of the City Centre Blocks: An Intersection of Art & Commerce installation in Downtown Elmhurst

Downtown Elmhurst

Public Spaces

Public spaces are an increasingly valued amenity within Downtown Elmhurst. Public input received during the planning process indicates a desire for various public space amenities including gathering spaces, resting locations, and outdoor seating areas are valued as assets in the Downtown. Whether for active or passive use, an effective open space system is critical in creating a positive image and environment in the Downtown.





GATEWAYS & WAYFINDING

Creating “sense of place” for an area means creating a place that is unique, distinguishable, and memorable. Gateways and wayfinding signage are two tools that can help achieve that goal and increase the visibility, access, and appearance of Downtown Elmhurst.



GATEWAYS

The areas at where visitors enter a downtown are called “gateway” areas. The character and appearance of these areas are important factors in determining the overall image and perception of the downtown as a whole. They also help visually delineate what part of the community “is downtown” and what part “isn’t downtown.”

It is recommended that attractive gateways be installed at key locations to announce entry into Downtown Elmhurst. These gateways should include special landscaping, lighting, and decorative paving. Pedestrian amenities should be incorporated into gateway and wayfinding installations to enhance their visibility and contribute to their prominence.

Banners should also be utilized that can reinforce the spaces between the gateways, incorporated into ornamental street lights and showcasing special events or the City’s identity.





WAYFINDING

A coordinated wayfinding system should be installed throughout the Downtown to convey a local design theme or character and to direct pedestrians and vehicles to community assets such as York Theatre, City Hall, Elmhurst College, and Wilder Park.

The City should implement a comprehensive signage program that can better guide travelers to Downtown and more effectively direct movement within and around Downtown.

It is recommended that:

- Build upon the City's high quality "wayfinding" signage program to better direct motorists to and from the Downtown from the surrounding community and the regional highway system. This entails the placement of signs along roadways well outside of the boundaries of Downtown.
- Provide improved signage within the boundaries of Downtown to better direct motorists to public parking areas and other key destinations.
- Place directional signage "before" street intersections along York Street to aid motorists and increase traffic safety.
- Implement wayfinding signage to and from the Metra station. At present, visibility is low and the circulation pattern is difficult.
- To enhance the downtown experience, the use of directional signs, maps, and banners create an intuitive navigational system for vehicles and pedestrians.





THE METRA EXPERIENCE

The Metra Station area and railway corridor are specific locations where the City has opportunities to distinguish Elmhurst from surrounding communities along the Union Pacific West Line. The City should work with Metra to make Downtown Elmhurst's Metra station and railway corridor more attractive and functional, which can increase the desirability of using public transit and create a positive first impression for daily commuters, weekend riders, and potential visitors.



Metra improvements should be targeted to two different groups who each utilize the rail line: (a) daily commuters getting on and off in Elmhurst and (b) those who "travel through" Elmhurst to other destinations. For the station's 2,300 daily weekday commuters, the station should be functional and attractive, and encourage the usage of public transportation in Elmhurst. Their "experience" on-boarding and off-boarding should be pleasant.

These needs are somewhat different from those traveling through on the rail line, whose only impression of Elmhurst may be what they see out of the train window. Each weekday, 59 Metra trains pass through Elmhurst with an average daily ridership of 28,300. For these travelers, not only should the station area be attractive, but also the associated view shed into the Downtown area. This view shed is a branding exercise for the City of Elmhurst, an opportunity to communicate that Elmhurst is a fantastic place to live, work, invest, and visit and that travelers should consider getting off the train here.

For the station's 2,300 daily weekday commuters, the station should be functional and attractive, and encourage the usage of public transportation in Elmhurst

Station Area Improvements

If redevelopment of the existing station occurs at some point, Metra and the City should ensure that the new station's design is architecturally rich and suggestive of historic train stations.

The City should work with Metra to add a unique element to the station, such as a welcoming and distinctive sign or piece of public art. Other amenities could include lampposts to improve perceived safety, planters for colorful landscaping, and site furniture to facilitate both a train station as well as a community space. The station should also include maps, signage, a message board, and other information that can increase awareness of Downtown's amenities, businesses, and Pace bus options.

If a new station is built, the City should work with Metra to establish a lease structure for potential tenants that can provide riders with transit-related services. Subsequently, the City should actively recruit potential tenants, including a coffee shop, bakery, newsstand, or other small-footprint uses that appeal to transit users.



Rail Corridor Improvements

Communities that have established the best impression from the railway corridor have integrated elements in the private and public realm that create an attractive viewshed along the rail line and into the surrounding downtown districts. Improvements the City should make to the railway corridor include:

- Gateways announcing entry into Downtown Elmhurst before arriving at the station platform
- Elmhurst branding elements and public art
- Improving commuter parking lots with landscaping and reconfigured circulation patterns
- Improving the street wall fronting the railway corridor with high quality redevelopment on private properties and a coordinated streetscape in the public right-of-way
- Landscaping in the railway right-of-way incorporating shade trees, ornamental trees, evergreens, shrubs, native grasses, and perennials (for color and summer interest)





DESIGN GUIDELINES

This chapter presents Design Guidelines focused on promoting high quality and compatible building improvements and new developments that will complement the existing scale, character of Elmhurst's distinctive and attractive Downtown. These Design Guidelines are one avenue towards enhancing the Downtown's visual appearance. They guide development so that it reflects the community's needs and desires, as well as supplementing the City's Zoning Ordinance and development standards.

IN THIS CHAPTER

- Purpose of the Guidelines
- Use & Application of the Guidelines
- Design Guidelines
- Preservation of Existing Buildings

PURPOSE OF THE GUIDELINES

Buildings in the Downtown have been more traditionally designed, with retail uses located on the ground floor and office and residential uses located on the upper floor(s). Most buildings are of masonry construction, have attractive entryway treatments and large display windows on the street level, and are characterized by earth tones in the red and buff color ranges. Many have attractive brick and stone accent treatments.

In recent years, there has been increasing interest in improving and upgrading existing structures, and replacing older buildings with new construction. As Downtown continues to evolve in the years ahead, it is important that building improvements and new developments be compatible with the overall scale and character of Downtown.

While architectural styles need not be the same, the Downtown should foster development that is compatible in terms of scale, placement, orientation, materials, color and façade articulation, particularly buildings along the same block face. While architectural diversity should continue to be encouraged, it is recommended that the City refer to the following set of basic “Design Guidelines” in order to maintain and enhance the existing character of Downtown, while still permitting desirable building improvements and new redevelopment.

Where appropriate or necessary these design guidelines provide specific recommendations for the Functional Land Use Zones including the Core, Outer Core, Neighborhood Transition, and Civic/Institutional. Refer to **Functional Land Use Zones** (pages 56-63) for more information about the intent of the zones.

USE & APPLICATION OF THE GUIDELINES

The Design Guidelines should be used by the City, Downtown organizations, architects, and developers on a cooperative basis to promote high quality new building redevelopment, while maintaining the character and charm that make Downtown Elmhurst unique.

- The Design Guidelines should be used as a framework by City staff and others in reviewing plans and proposals for new Downtown projects and improvements. This could include a staff level development plan review process. This technique should be studied by the City for implementation.
- The Design Guidelines should be distributed to property owners and prospective designers and developers as a statement of the City’s desires and preferences regarding Downtown redevelopment.
- The Design Guidelines should be used as a reference by architects and developers as they prepare plans for new Downtown redevelopment projects
- The Design Guidelines should also be used by City Centre and other Downtown organizations to advise and encourage Downtown merchants and property owners in the improvement and redevelopment process.



Building Placement & Orientation

Most blocks within the core of the Downtown are characterized by continuous rows of commercial buildings constructed at the sidewalk's edge. This development pattern results in a distinctive "streetwall" effect which creates visual interest, enhances the pedestrian environment, and establishes a "human" scale within the Core area. This "streetwall" effect should be maintained and enhanced.

The following guidelines apply with regard to the placement and orientation of Downtown buildings:

- In the Core, all buildings should be placed along the front property line. In the Outer Core, non-residential buildings should be placed on or near the front property line, though residential buildings could be set back up to 15' to reflect surrounding residential development.
- In blocks where a "streetwall" is in place, new construction should occupy the entire width of the front lot line
- Buildings should "front" the street; the placement of buildings at odd or irregular angles to the street should be avoided.
- While main entrances should be at the front of the building and should face the sidewalk, buildings in prominent locations or corner buildings should incorporate design elements that create visual interest, such as turrets, rounded corners, chamfered corners, etc.
- Any breaks in the "streetwall" should be used for open space, plazas, public art or pedestrian ways.
- Where building setbacks and parking exist along primary pedestrian and shopping streets, the "streetwall" should be maintained through the use of landscaping, pedestrian amenities, and decorative walls, or fencing to define the street edge.



Building Scale

Downtown is composed of a range of building heights between one and nine stories. Many people perceive Downtown as having “small town” characteristics that are largely due to the compact size of the commercial area.

The following guidelines apply with regard to building height within the Downtown:

- One-story buildings are too small to maintain the urban character and “streetwall” effect and should be discouraged.
- Up to six story buildings should be encouraged in the Core. Taller buildings may be appropriate adjacent to key intersections, or at other selected locations, provided that they are located within the Core and Outer Core, and do not front directly on residential uses.
- Rehabilitation and new construction should respect the existing scale of Downtown.
- Design elements that extend beyond the typical building height, such as clock towers or spires, should be encouraged and allowed on a case-by-case basis provided that they enhance the character of a focal point in the Downtown.



Building Bulk & Proportion

Much of the charm and character of Downtown results from the relatively consistent width of buildings that line the primary shopping streets. Many of the older commercial buildings have relatively small “footprints” and are located on lots with narrow widths. However, many contemporary commercial uses require larger spaces, more generous floor areas, and higher ceiling heights than are afforded by these older buildings.

The following guidelines apply with regard to the bulk and proportion of Downtown buildings:

- Columns, pilasters, window placement and other architectural features should be used to subdivide the facades of larger buildings into several smaller vertical segments to reflect the scale and proportion of adjacent properties.
- Architectural details on larger buildings should be used to help maintain the scale and proportion of Downtown. These details include the size of windows, the location of doorways, and the design and placement of columns, pilasters, moldings and other decorative features.

- Multiple storefronts that are part of the same building should have complementary facade designs, particularly with respect to color, cornice line and decorative materials
- Consideration should be given to building elements at the ground level to ensure that the buildings have human scale and create a harmonious environment.
- New construction should respect the character and elements of existing Downtown buildings.



Architectural Style

In many ways, Downtown's special and distinctive character is due to its wide variety of architectural styles. This architectural diversity should be celebrated and enhanced.

The following guidelines apply with regard to architectural style in the Downtown:

- New buildings need not be historic replicas, but should offer high-quality and compatible interpretations reminiscent of traditional design details but reinterpreted in modern forms and materials.
- Building improvements, renovations, and additions should reinforce and enhance the original architectural characteristics of a building rather than apply new or different stylistic treatments.
- The distinguishing features of Downtown's older buildings should be retained and restored, particularly decorative cornices, columns, reliefs and other significant facade detailing.
- Where original features have been covered up, buildings should be closely examined and old photographs reviewed (if they are available) prior to undertaking significant improvements.
- All development in the Core, as well as non-residential development in the Outer Core, should include the defining ground floor façade elements, including large, deep display windows, upper story masonry with regularly spaced windows, and a decorative cornice that caps the building.

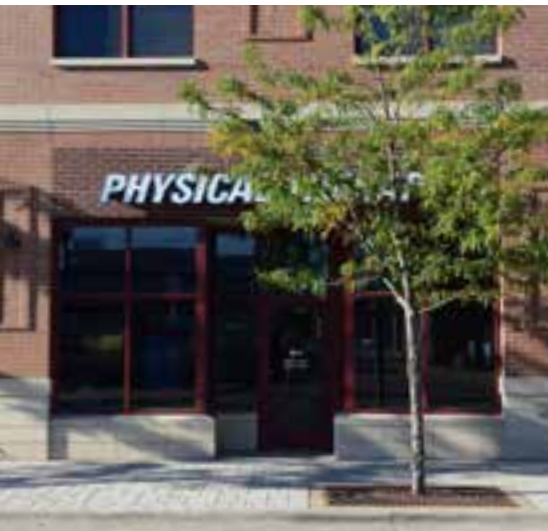


Building Materials

The use of appropriate building materials is key to compatible rehabilitation and new construction. The building materials most common within Downtown are earth-toned brick and stone in the red and buff color ranges. Ceramic tile and terra cotta are also appropriate as ornamentation around doors, windows and cornices.

The following guidelines apply with regard to building materials in the Downtown:

- Buildings throughout the Downtown should use masonry and brick as the primary material.
- Whenever possible, original building materials should be maintained and restored.
- Accent materials should include stone, simulated stone, terra cotta, and wood and metal trim.
- New buildings within the Downtown should be constructed of traditional masonry building materials such as brick or stone.
- New materials, including the color, size and finish of brick and stone, should be compatible with older existing materials; new mortars should also be compatible in color and texture.
- Rough saw wood, aluminum siding, rustic shingles and shakes, exterior insulation finish systems (EIFS) or Dryvit, plastic panels, and other materials inconsistent with traditional building materials should be discouraged within the Downtown.



Doors & Entrances

Doors and entrances are among a commercial building's most important features. They should provide an open invitation to potential customers, be attractive and inviting to pedestrians, and add visual interest to the street. Doors and windows should be appropriately sized and in scale with a building's facade.

The following guidelines apply with regard to doors and entrances on Downtown buildings:

- All renovation and rehabilitation efforts should aim to restore doors to their original design in terms of size, proportion, and material.
- Doors and entrances should be at grade with the public sidewalk at the point of entry to the building.
- The front doors of new buildings should reflect the doorway placements and proportions of existing buildings along the same block.
- Entrances should be recessed from the front lot line between 3' and 8' in order to accommodate out-swinging doors that do not interfere with pedestrian circulation on the public sidewalk.
- New doors should be compatible with the architectural style and character of the facade.
- Entrances should be clearly identified and emphasized with address numbers and attractive doorway detailing.
- Residential buildings can use an elevated stoop or porch as the primary building entrance. The height of the stoop or porch should be consistent with surrounding residential development.



Windows

Display windows on the ground floor of commercial buildings are a distinguishing feature of the Downtown. In general, passersby should be able to see the merchandise and activity within a commercial building from the sidewalk.

The following guidelines apply with regard to windows on Downtown buildings:

- Building renovations or rehabilitations should restore the window area to its original design through expanded openings and uncovered transoms.
- The size and placement of windows on new buildings should reflect the window types, sizes, proportions and patterns on nearby existing buildings.
- Ground-floor display windows are encouraged on storefronts in order to create more dramatic and visible display areas.
- Blank walls should be avoided, particularly next to pedestrian walkways.
- Where existing windows are important architectural features in a building's facade, window size and configuration should be maintained.
- Window glazing on the ground floor should be clear or slightly tinted, not dark or reflective.
- Storefronts should maximize the amount of transparent area through the use of large ground-floor display windows, transom windows, and large glass panels on doors.
- Decorative or functional shutters are appropriate for upper story façades. However, shutters should be sized to fully cover the window area when closed, and should be made of attractive high-quality materials consistent with the primary façade and trim materials.



Rear Yards & Building Entrances

The design, appearance and upkeep of the rear portions of commercial properties are also important, particularly where these areas are visible to the public.

The following guidelines apply with regard to rear yards and building entrances:

- The rear portions of all properties within the Downtown should be clean, well maintained, and clear of trash and debris.
- Trash receptacles, dumpsters, service areas and outdoor storage facilities should be well maintained and screened from view from public streets, sidewalks, and parking areas.
- The backs of existing non-residential buildings should be repaired, repainted and upgraded as required

- New buildings within the Core should have attractive rear facades.
- Rear entrances to stores and shops should be encouraged where practical, particularly on blocks where public parking or pedestrian walkways are located behind the buildings.
- Rear entrances to stores and shops should be attractive, safe and inviting, and should be characterized by design treatments that are “comparable” to front entrances.



Rooflines & Parapets

Roofs within the Downtown are typically flat or shallow-sloped, sometimes with front parapets. The rooflines of some buildings are edged with accent masonry.

The following guidelines apply with regard to rooflines and parapets on Downtown buildings:

- In most cases, the original roofline and cornice treatment of existing buildings should be maintained and restored.
- Rooflines and cornice elevations should be generally consistent with surrounding development, though variation is encouraged to provide visual interest.
- Long, continuous eaves or rooflines should be broken by vertical trim elements, small setbacks, moderations in elevation, etc. to avoid monotony and create visual interest.
- In the Outer Core and Neighborhood Transition, pitched roofs, including gable or hip roofs, are appropriate for multi-family or mixed-use structures.
- Gable roofs should be discouraged within the Core.
- Roof parapets should be encouraged to create an interesting building profile when combined with neighboring buildings; parapets should extend above the roof to hide vents, coolers and other rooftop mechanical equipment. Parapets are decorative and should not count in the overall measurement of the building height.
- Sloped mansard, shake or shingle roofs should be discouraged.



Awnings & Canopies

Historically, a number of Downtown buildings have been fitted with colorful canvas awnings which are both functional and attractive. Awnings and canopies protect shoppers from the elements, and are an inexpensive way to provide color and vitality to the street.

The following guidelines apply with regard to awnings and canopies in the Downtown:

- Awnings and canopies should be in character with the architectural style of the building.
- Awnings and canopies should be positioned at least eight feet above the sidewalk
- Awnings should fit within the frame of the storefront; they should not hide the building's facade, distort its proportions, or cover architectural features. Generally, awnings should be mounted between the ground floor cornice and transom window.
- Where several storefronts were developed as a single building, they should have awnings of a similar style and similar color.
- Adjacent buildings developed at different times should have awnings of a compatible style and color scheme.
- Awnings should be made of a canvas or durable fabric material that can be easily cleaned; vinyl or metal awnings should be discouraged.
- Awning frames should be an accessory to the building facade and not a permanent fixture.
- Shingle, mansard and arch-profiled canopies should be discouraged.



Lighting

The lighting of a building's facade has the dual purpose of advertising a business and creating a safe environment in the Downtown.

The following guidelines apply with regard to lighting on Downtown buildings:

- Front and rear entries should be adequately but not overly illuminated.
- Most exterior lighting sources should be concealed; where concealment is not practical, light fixtures should be compatible with storefront design.
- Incandescent and neon lighting create a warm atmosphere and should be encouraged for store identification and accent lighting within the Core; if neon is used, colors should be compatible with and complement the façade of the building.
- Exterior spotlighting could be used to illuminate prominent buildings and/ or building details.



Signs

Signs are among the most important features of a commercial building. Signs communicate the nature of a business and its products or services. Signs also influence the overall image and character of a commercial area. In general, signs should look like they belong on the building, not as if they were applied as an afterthought.

The following guidelines apply with regard to signage on Downtown buildings:

- Exterior signs should be limited to business identification and description; Temporary signs for special promotions, sales, products, and advertising should be discouraged.
- The size, material, color and shape of signs should complement the architectural style and scale of the building.
- When a building contains multiple storefronts, signage for all businesses should be consistent in design and placement.
- Signs on neighboring buildings should be compatible.
- Raised individual letters mounted directly on the building face should be encouraged.
- Wall-mounted signs should be designed as an integrated component of the building facade, and should not cover important architectural details.
- Illuminated box signs are not appropriate in the Downtown.
- Small signs, graphics and logos applied directly on glass windows and doors should be encouraged at the street level.
- The use of temporary sidewalk “sandwich boards” signs could be considered, subject to strict control for safety and accessibility.
- While temporary signs and posters may be applied to doors or windows, they should not be so large or so extensive that they obscure views into stores and shops or result in unnecessary visual clutter.
- The City should discourage the use of any pole signs or pylon signs in the Downtown.



Landscaping & Screening

There are some instances where parking lots front on public streets. In these instances, the edge of the parking lot should include a minimum 5' planting area. This planting area should include shade trees placed no more than every 30', ground cover, a hedgerow, and/or a decorative fence between 3' and 4' in height.

The following guidelines apply with regard to Downtown landscaping and screening:

- Parking lot landscaping should include landscape islands at a ratio one per fifteen parking spaces. Landscape islands should consist of shade trees, shrubs or ornamental grasses, and attractive groundcover.
- Landscape buffers should be provided near property lines that abut residential uses. The buffer should be a minimum of 5' in width and include shade trees and/or hedges.
- Utility areas, refuse areas, and service bays should be screened from view from the public sidewalk. Screening should include landscaping and/or decorative fencing that is of the same character as the primary building.
- Landscaping should consist of salt-tolerant shade trees, ornamental trees, evergreens, shrubs, groundcover, and perennials.
- Native vegetation to the Northern Illinois Region (USDA Plant Hardiness Zone 5b) should be encouraged.
- The use of low-impact plant materials is encouraged in order to maximize the attractiveness of the Downtown and minimize the use of water.
- Businesses are encouraged to use temporary decorative planters in the public sidewalk, so long as the planters reflect the character of the Downtown and do not impede safe and accessible pedestrian traffic or parking and vehicular accessibility.
- Sidewalk cafes and retail display areas should be enclosed by a decorative fence or corral. The fence or corral should be compatible with the Downtown character and be located in order to maintain a safe, accessible, and continuous public sidewalk.
- Loading areas, service areas, and dumpsters should be screened from public view.
- All landscaping, fencing, and screening should be maintained in a healthy and attractive condition to preserve the aesthetic character of the Downtown area.



Parking Lots & Parking Garages

Off-street parking lots and parking garages should be designed and located so that they are safe, efficient, and do not disrupt the traditional scale and character of Downtown. In general, parking structures should look like other Downtown buildings and should be designed to comply with all of the Design Guidelines presented here.

The following guidelines apply with regard to Downtown parking lots and parking decks:

- Where possible, surface parking lots should be located behind buildings or at midblock; parking lots at corners should be avoided.
- Where possible, vehicular access to parking lots should be provided from alleys or side streets. Curb cuts and access drives are discouraged along pedestrian shopping streets.
- Pedestrian access to parking lots should be provided through planned walkways located between buildings.
- Landscaped islands and clearly marked pedestrian pathways should be provided within the interior of parking areas.
- Landscape islands should consist of shade trees, groundcover, and/or decorative shrubs.
- Surface parking lots should be screened from view along sidewalks and streets through the use of low masonry walls, decorative fencing, or landscaping.
- Parking lots that are used during evening hours should be adequately illuminated.
- All parking lots should be paved, well-marked, sufficiently lit, and provided with proper drainage. Permeable pavement, bioretention, shade trees, dark-sky compliance lighting, and low-impact native landscaping are encouraged to provide long-term environmental benefits and cost savings.
- When possible and appropriate, shared parking agreements allowing cross-access easements and curb cut consolidation should be encouraged between adjacent property owners.



- Parking garages should complement the existing Downtown in terms of scale, materials, bulk, etc. the exterior “skin” of these structures on facades which face, or are visible from public right-of-way should seek to extend architectural styles of adjoining structures.
- The ground floor of parking structures within the Core and Outer Core should be used for retail stores or service establishments
- Parking garage rooflines and floor level articulations that are visible from the street should be horizontal; ramps and inclines should occur within the structure or on the interior of the block.
- Bike parking is encouraged and should be in visible areas and near main entrances to buildings.
- Bicycle parking should include racks and/or lockers that are in a designated location that is clearly delineated from automotive parking and on-site pedestrian sidewalks.

PRESERVATION OF ARCHITECTURALLY RICH BUILDINGS

While many of the Design Guidelines focus on new construction, it is important to consider preserving existing Downtown buildings with rich architectural attributes.

To help promote the preservation of the existing buildings, where appropriate, it is recommended that the City consider the possibility of providing assistance to rehabilitate, reuse or otherwise improve buildings with architectural or historic significance that are of value to the community.

The objective should not be to preclude redevelopment—which is essential to a viable and healthy Downtown—but rather to encourage property owners and developers to preserve locally significant buildings whenever possible.



REGULATORY STRATEGIES FRAMEWORK

This chapter provides a detailed regulatory strategies framework that identifies needed changes to the City's zoning ordinance, map, and development procedures and processes. The regulatory strategies framework identifies specific sections of the City's zoning ordinance that should be amended in order to facilitate the recommendations provided in the Elmhurst Downtown Plan. The intent of this chapter is to ensure that the zoning ordinance is clear, easy to use, appropriate, efficient and effective. The regulatory strategies framework provides the specificity necessary to allow the City to immediately amend the zoning ordinance upon adoption of the Elmhurst Downtown Plan.

IN THIS CHAPTER

- Districts & Location of Districts
- Permitted Uses
- Vacant Buildings
- Front Yard Building Setbacks
- Side Yard Building Setbacks
- Building Heights
- Parking
- Streetscaping Pavers on Private Property
- Outdoor Café Seating
- Awnings & Canopies
- Portable Signs
- Administrative Processes

REGULATORY STRATEGIES FRAMEWORK

#	Topic	Recommendation	Affected Code	Actions
Zoning Code				
1	Districts & Location of Districts	Align the City's zoning code and zoning map with the Downtown Plan's Functional Land Use Zones.	Chapter 22, Article 8	<p>Clearly define the Downtown Boundary Area.</p> <p>Create a Downtown Core District on the zoning map aligned with the Functional Zones Land Use Map.</p> <p>Create a Downtown Outer Core District on the zoning map aligned with the Functional Zones Land Use Map.</p> <p>Create a Downtown Neighborhood Transition District on the zoning map aligned with the Functional Zones Land Use Map.</p> <p>Amend the name of the O/I/C District to read Downtown Institutional Campus District and update the footprint of the district to align with the Civic/Institutional Zone depicted on the Functional Zones Land Use Map.</p> <p>Remove the C4 and C4A district from the zoning code and assign parcels to new zones.</p>
2	Permitted Uses	<p>Establish permitted and conditional uses for each new zoning district, guided by the framework presented within the Downtown Plan's "Future Land Use by Functional Zone Table."</p> <p>Amend the permitted and conditional uses allowed within the Downtown Institutional Campus District (formerly O/I/C District) to align with the framework presented within the Downtown Plan's "Future Land Use by Functional Zone Table."</p>	<p>Chapter 22, Article 8</p> <p>Chapter 22, Article 8</p>	<p>Using the permitted and conditional uses from the former C4 zoning district, establish a list of permitted and conditional uses for the new Downtown Core District, guided by the Downtown Plan's "Future Land Use by Functional Zone Table."</p> <p>Establish a list of permitted and conditional uses for the new Downtown Outer Core District, guided by the Downtown Plan's "Future Land Use by Functional Zone Table."</p> <p>Establish a list of permitted and conditional uses for the new Downtown Neighborhood Transition District, guided by the Downtown Plan's "Future Land Use by Functional Zone Table."</p> <p>Remove from the list of conditional uses for the Downtown Institutional Campus District zoning district: offices, business and professional.</p>
3	Planned Development	Amend the zoning code to include Downtown-appropriate standards related to future PD projects.	Chapter 22, Article 3	<p>Amend current Planned Development regulations to include Downtown-appropriate standards related to minimum PD acreage, open space requirements, parking management, etc.</p> <p>The City could also allow for voluntary PD review, on behalf of the applicant, to allow for Downtown projects that go beyond basic zoning requirements and achieve broader community objectives.</p>
4	Vacant Buildings	Amend the zoning code to encourage usage of attractive temporary window signage within Downtown.	Chapter 22, Article 11	<p>Require that any ground floor commercial space located within the Downtown Core District or Downtown Outer Core District that is vacant shall contain a decorative storefront window display. Said display shall be in place until the commercial space is no longer vacant. Property owners are encouraged to partner with a local government or community service organization to create a decorative display.</p> <p>Permit the affixing of window decals on vacant storefronts that mimic an occupied three-dimensional storefront.</p> <p>Prohibit the covering vacant display windows with plain paper, butcher paper, newspaper, soap, tarp, plastic sheets or unpainted plywood. The previously mentioned items may be acceptable if they are used as a backdrop or background to a decorative display.</p> <p>Prohibit the stacking or storing of trash, debris, crates, cardboard boxes or other packing materials in any vacant storefront windows.</p>

#	Topic	Recommendation	Affected Code	Actions
Zoning Code				
5	Front Yard Building Setbacks	Establish new front yard requirements within each Downtown district to ensure building placement facilitates a visually rich streetscape in keeping with the purpose of each district.	Chapter 22, Article 8	<p>Require all new buildings within the Downtown Core District to be built to the front property line.</p> <p>Require all non-residential buildings within the Downtown Outer Core District to be built to the front property line. All residential buildings must be built within 15 feet of the front property line.</p> <p>Require all new buildings within the Downtown Neighborhood Transition District to be built no farther than 25 feet of the front property line.</p>
6	Side Yard Building Setbacks	Establish new side yard requirements within each Downtown district to ensure building placement facilitates a visually rich streetscape in keeping with the purpose of each district.	Chapter 22, Article 8	<p>Require zero side yard setbacks for all new buildings within the Downtown Core District, except when providing public space such as pathways, trails, and open space.</p> <p>Require zero side yard setbacks for all new non-residential buildings within the Outer Core District, except when providing public space such as pathways, trails, and open space. Residential buildings may have side yard setbacks of up to 5 feet.</p> <p>Require side yard setbacks of up to 5 feet within the Downtown Neighborhood Transition District.</p>
7	Building Heights	Establish new building heights within each Downtown district that are in keeping with the desired character of that district.	Chapter 22, Article 8	<p>Within the Downtown Core District, permit structures of up to 6 stories by right and up to 10 stories with City approval or by special use.</p> <p>Remove regulations requiring dwelling units per acre (DU/ac) and replace with regulations stated minimum residential unit size.</p> <p>Within the Downtown Outer Core District, permit structures of up to 4 stories by right and up to 6 stories by right when not adjacent to single family detached and/or single family attached uses.</p> <p>Within the Downtown Neighborhood Transition District, permit structures of up to 3 stories by right and up to 4 stories with City approval or by special use.</p>
8	Off-Street Private Parking (Commercial Uses)	Establish new standards for off-street commercial parking within Downtown Elmhurst.	Chapter 22, Article 10	<p>Require no off-street parking for non-residential uses within the Downtown Core District.</p> <p>Require no off-street parking for non-residential uses in the Downtown Outer Core.</p> <p>Consider requiring a maximum of 3 parking spaces per 1,000 sq. ft. of gross floor area within the Downtown Outer Core Zone to keep the size of parking areas to a minimum in the Downtown. The City could require City approval or a special use for parking lots that exceed more than 20 spaces in the Downtown Core or the Downtown Outer Core.</p>
9	Off-Street Private Parking (Residential Uses)	Establish new standards for off-street residential parking within Downtown Elmhurst.	Chapter 22, Article 10	<p>Create new parking standards for residential uses within the Downtown Core District, Downtown Outer Core District, Downtown Neighborhood Transition District, and Downtown Institutional Campus District based on the distance from the intersection of York Street and First Street:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Tier 1 (roughly 1/8 Mile): 0.5 parking space/DU ■ Tier 2 (roughly 1/4 Mile): 1.0 parking spaces/DU ■ Tier 3 (roughly 3/8 Mile or greater): 1.5 parking spaces/DU
10	Charging Stations	Encourage and facilitate the usage of electric car charging stations within off-street parking facilities.	Chapter 22, Article 10	<p>Permit the usage of electric car charging stations within off-street parking facilities.</p>

#	Topic	Recommendation	Affected Code	Actions
Zoning Code				
11	Off-Street Bike Parking (All Uses)	Establish new standards for off-street bike parking within Downtown Elmhurst.	Chapter 22, Article 10	<p>The City should require bike parking for all new developments within the Downtown Core, Downtown Outer Core, Neighborhood Transition, and Civic/Institutional Districts.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Commercial uses should have a minimum of 3 spaces or 1 space per 5,000 sq. ft. of GFA, whichever is greater. Civic and institutional uses should provide a reasonable number of parking spaces based on the specific use. The requirement for residential uses varies. Single family, two-family, and multi-family dwellings with three or less units should not be required to provide bike parking. Multi-family dwellings with greater than 3 units should provide 1 space per every 2 dwelling units. Off-street bicycle facilities in a development with multiple uses or in neighboring developments may be provided collectively if the total number of spaces provided collectively is not less than the greatest minimum requirement by a single use in the development and provided that all regulations governing location of accessory parking spaces in relation to the use served are adhered to. <p>In cases where the City and property owner deem that bike parking cannot be reasonably incorporated into the site, the City should require developers to pay into a fee in lieu program established to fund future bike parking locations throughout the Downtown.</p>
12	Off-Street Private Parking Lot Access Management	Establish new standards and guidelines for parking lot access management within Downtown Elmhurst.	Chapter 22, Article 10	<p>Discourage the usage of curb cuts along York Street between North Avenue and Church Street.</p> <p>Within the Downtown Core District (outside of York Street), prohibit the usage of curb cuts and driveways along streets identified within the Downtown Plan, within the Downtown Boundary Area, including: North Avenue, between Addison Avenue and the eastern study area boundary; Hahn Street, between Addison Avenue and York Street; Third Street, between Addison Avenue and York Street; Second Street, between Addison Avenue and York Street; Schiller Street, between York Street and Haven Road; First Street, between Elm Avenue and Haven Road; Park Avenue, between Elm Avenue and Arlington Avenue; Adelaide Street, between Cottage Hill Avenue and York Street; Virginia Street, between Cottage Hill Avenue and York Street; Arthur Street, between Cottage Hill Avenue and York Street; Cottage Hill Avenue, between Park Avenue and Church Street; Adell Place, between Park Avenue and Adelaide Street; York Street, from Church Street to North Avenue; Addison Avenue, from First Street to North Avenue; Robert Palmer Drive, from York Street to York Street</p> <p>Within the Downtown Outer Core District, limit curb cuts and driveways as development occurs and permit consolidation of existing access points.</p> <p>Where feasible, require the use of existing alleys.</p> <p>Minimize the number of permitted curb cuts and encourage shared parking, shared driveways, and parking lot connections in the Neighborhood Transition District.</p>
13	Location and Use of Surface Parking Lots	Regulate the location of surface parking within Downtown to safeguard the character of Downtown Elmhurst and properly manage traffic flow.	Chapter 22, Articles 8 & 10	<p>Prohibit the location of surface parking lots fronting the public right-of-way (not including alleys) within the Downtown Core District. Require surface parking lots be located at the rear of properties, behind buildings, and away from the right-of-way.</p> <p>Prohibit or discourage the location of surface parking lots fronting the public right-of-way (not including alleys) within the Downtown Outer Core District. Require surface parking lots be located at the rear of properties, away from the public right-of-way, as appropriate.</p> <p>Prohibit the use of surface parking lots within the Downtown Neighborhood Transition District. All parking must occur on-street or within driveways.</p>

#	Topic	Recommendation	Affected Code	Actions
Zoning Code				
14	Location and Use of Parking Garages	Regulate the location of parking garages within Downtown to safeguard the character of Downtown Elmhurst, properly manage traffic flow, and centralize parking in an efficient manner.	Chapter 22, Articles 8 & 10	<p>Permit the use of parking garages within the Downtown Core District.</p> <p>Permit the use of parking garages within the Downtown Outer Core District.</p> <p>Prohibit the use of parking garages within the Downtown Neighborhood Transition District.</p> <p>Permit the use of parking garages within the Downtown Institutional Campus District with City approval.</p>
15	Design & Appearance of Parking	Regulate the design and appearance of off-street parking within Downtown Elmhurst to ensure an attractive environment.	Chapter 22, Article 10	<p>Require that all Downtown parking garages complement the desired Downtown aesthetic in terms of scale, materials, and bulk, and be well-landscaped.</p> <p>Continue to require that all surface parking lots be appropriately screened from the public right-of-way with landscaping or quality low-level fencing. Landscaped islands and pedestrian pathways must be provided.</p>
16	Loading Requirements	Consider removing the requirement to provide off-street loading and/or loading docks for future development in the Downtown Core Zone.	Chapter 22, Article 10	Remove requirements for off-street loading and/or loading docks for uses in the Downtown Core Zone.
Assorted Codes & Regulations				
17	Streetscaping Pavers on Private Property	Require that the design of pavers on private property matches the streetscape of Downtown Elmhurst.	Chapters 5, 22, and/or Chapter 24	All new developments where the building is set-back from the property line and falls within a to-be-determined distance, the property owner must match the Downtown Streetscape in full with City approval.
18	Streets, Alleys, & Sidewalks Code – Outdoor Café Seating	Regulate outdoor café seating to ensure that it adds to the vibrancy of Downtown but does not produce unreasonable nuisances.	Chapter 5, Article 1	<p>Establish clear standards for the appearance of outdoor dining and patio seating in the public right-of-way. Standards should include the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Furniture type and materials ■ Size ■ Location ■ Timeframe for setup <p>Continue to require a five foot walkway between patio seating and planting areas to meet ADA compliance.</p>
19	Awnings & Canopies	Regulate awnings and canopies to provide an attractive aesthetic and safe passage within the right-of-way.	Chapters 5, 22	<p>Permit the usage of awnings and canopies within all Downtown districts.</p> <p>Amend current regulations on drop down awnings to require that when let down to their full extent, they are not less than eight feet above the sidewalk at all points (Chapter 5, Article 1, Section 20).</p>
20	Portable Signs	Amend the zoning code to provide for portable signs.	Chapter 22, Article 11	<p>Permit the usage of portable signs (including A-Frames) within the Downtown Core District and Downtown Outer Core District, provided they meet City standards for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Size ■ Location ■ Quality ■ Permitted vs. not permitted
Administrative Processes				
21	Address Recent Zoning Variances	Reduce approval process time	Chapter 22, Article 3	The City should review recent zoning variances to determine if there are regulations that can be revised to streamline and speed up the development process.



SUMMARY OF COMMUNITY OUTREACH

*The Elmhurst Downtown Plan is the product of a planning process that actively sought input from a variety of stakeholders, including residents, business owners, developers, service providers, Elmhurst college students, appointed officials, and City staff. A variety of outreach efforts, both in-person and online, were used to gather this input. **Appendix A** summarizes the community outreach efforts that were completed during the planning process.*

IN THIS APPENDIX

- Outreach Overview
- Top Community Issues
- Key Person Interviews & Focus Groups
- Business & Property Owner Workshops
- Community Workshop
- Project Website
- Online Surveys

OUTREACH OVERVIEW

The Downtown Elmhurst Plan utilized a planning process that actively sought input from a broad spectrum of stakeholders, including residents, business owners, developers, service providers, appointed officials, and City staff. A variety of ongoing outreach efforts, both in-person and on-line, were used to gather the concerns, ideas, and aspirations of the community.

Community Workshop

On Thursday, May 28th, 2015 at 7 p.m., an Elmhurst Downtown Plan workshop was held with over 90 community members at City Hall. This workshop was the first of many opportunities for residents and stakeholders to publicly discuss issues facing Downtown Elmhurst.

The workshop began with a brief overview of the planning process and concluded with a community discussion of issues, concerns, and ideas. The workshop included a questionnaire exercise, from which participants shared their written comments with the overall group.

Stakeholder Interviews

In order to obtain greater detail about challenges and issues within Downtown Elmhurst, the consulting team conducted one-on-one interviews and roundtable discussions with over thirty people on May 11-12 and June 18, 2015. Those interviewed possessed a wide range of perspectives and backgrounds, and included long-time and new residents, business owners, property owners, real estate brokers, Elmhurst College students, residential and commercial developers, and City staff.

Business & Property Owner Workshops

On the morning of May 12, 2015, two workshops were held at City Hall: one with Downtown business owners and another with Downtown property owners.

Both workshops began with a brief overview of the planning process and concluded with an interactive workshop of issues, concerns, and ideas. The workshop centered on challenges and issues facing businesses and property owners in Downtown, desired projects and actions, and assets.

Project Website

A project website was created to establish a centralized location for information regarding the Downtown Elmhurst Plan. The website contained information and updates concerning the project, meeting notices, and downloadable versions of project documents and reports. To provide convenient and comprehensive information, the project website was accessed through a link on the City of Elmhurst's home page. The project website also contained links to online questionnaires for residents and business owners.

- **Community Questionnaire.** An on-line questionnaire for Elmhurst residents was posted on the project website. It was designed to supplement in-person outreach activities conducted throughout the community. As of the drafting of the Downtown Plan, over 700 residents submitted answers to the questionnaire.
- **Business Questionnaire.** An online questionnaire for Downtown Elmhurst's businesses was also posted on the project website, with the purpose of soliciting insight about the local business climate. As of the drafting of the Downtown Plan, 31 business owners and operators submitted answers to the questionnaire.

TOP COMMUNITY ISSUES

While dozens of issues were identified by the public (and each is detailed within the individual summaries included within this chapter), several key themes were repeated throughout the various outreach activities. After multiple workshops, hundreds of questionnaires, and dozens of interviews and focus groups, the top community issues for Downtown Elmhurst are:

- **Improving the business climate.** Residents and business owners believe Elmhurst is a challenging place to do business. Specific hurdles included uncertain and burdensome regulatory processes, retail market competition from neighboring mega-malls.
- **Diversifying the types of businesses.** The community believes that Downtown lacks a healthy mix of restaurants, entertainment opportunities, shops, and offices that can appeal to all age demographics. It was routinely cited that there needed to be more business diversity and that there are too many yogurt/ice cream shops, banks, and beauty/hair/nail salons. A particular emphasis was placed on attracting arts and entertainment activity generators that can draw people from around the region to Downtown Elmhurst.

- **Placemaking and sprucing up Downtown.** The community would like to see more public spaces, greenery, outdoor dining, and art within Downtown.
- **Reducing vacancy.** Vacant storefronts are detrimental to Downtown. They communicate disinvestment, detract from Downtown's appearance, and create "gaps" in the Downtown environment. It was noted that many vacant buildings are challenging to sell or rent, given that they are relatively short buildings, limited in square footage, expensive, and in need of repair and upkeep. As a result parcel consolidation and redevelopment may be the best option for some buildings.
- **Leveraging and connecting with other institutions.** The greater Downtown area extends beyond just the York Street commercial area and includes the Elmhurst Public Library, Elmhurst College, Wilder Park, Elmhurst Art Museum, and Lizzadro Museum of Lapidary Art. The community desires a greater level of connections, both physical (e.g. sidewalks, signage, and trails) and social (e.g. joint programming, events, etc), between the different assets of Downtown.
- **Improving the ease of parking.** A variety of different perspectives existed on Downtown parking, but generally, most felt it was challenging for customers, employees, and tourists to navigate and that a clear, coordinated strategy is needed.
- **Enhancing pedestrian friendliness and connectivity.** Generally, residents believe that Downtown is well-laid out and pedestrian friendly. However, several problematic crossings were identified, and the community would like to see better pedestrian access across the rail tracks, such as signage, a new tunnel, or striping, as well as better physical connections between the different institutions within Downtown.
- **Establishing an identity.** What type of Downtown should be established? A local destination? A regional destination? What sets it apart from other western suburban downtowns? The community desires a clear strategy and identity for Downtown Elmhurst.

It is important to note that the comments in this chapter are not policy recommendations by the consultant, but candid ideas, opinions, and concerns shared with the consultant team by **residents, business & property owners, stakeholders, and city staff**. Where used, quotations denote that the statement was made verbatim by an interviewee.

KEY PERSON INTERVIEWS & FOCUS GROUPS

May 11-12 and June 18, 2015

In order to obtain greater detail about challenges and issues within Downtown Elmhurst, the consulting team conducted confidential one-on-one interviews and roundtable discussions with over thirty people on May 11-12 and June 18, 2015. Those interviewed possessed a wide range of perspectives and backgrounds, and included long-time and new residents, business owners, property owners, real estate brokers, Elmhurst College students, residential and commercial developers, and City officials.

Participants were asked a series of questions about Downtown Elmhurst, with particular attention on economic development issues. The collective responses have been synthesized and organized into key themes and issues that came up frequently. Where disagreements exist between participants, both perspectives are shared.

General Issues

Establishing Identity

Participants generally believed that Downtown Elmhurst was trending in a positive direction, and that it was the heart of the community. However, Downtown was reported as having “not found itself yet” and that its identity is not clearly established. Issues raised included whether development, amenities, and programming should be locally-focused or regionally-focused as well as the appropriate composition of retail, residential, and office uses. What sets Downtown Elmhurst apart from Downtown Wheaton, Lombard, Glen Ellyn, and other neighbors? It was expressed that the planning process should help clarify these issues and provide a clear action agenda.

Most participants believed Downtown Elmhurst should be more regionally-focused in nature, however, the need to balance development with preservation of local character is clearly a fundamental issue within the community at-large. Interviewees also noted that the traditional recipe of Downtown success may need to be altered due to the amount of competition within the larger market area.

Geographic fragmentation within the Downtown study area also contributes to a lack of a clear identity and role, creating several distinct sub-areas that can seem disconnected or rival one another. One participant noted, “Where does Downtown start and end?” The rail tracks divide Downtown into the area “north of the tracks” or “south of the tracks,” and some interviewees suggested that there was some competition between York Street and Addison Street in attracting new investment. Key assets, such as Elmhurst College, civic/cultural amenities, and Wilder Park seem both physically and socially disconnected from the heart of Downtown.

Regulatory Environment

Issues relating to the City's regulatory environment generally fall into two categories: (1) the regulations themselves and (2) the processes that administer these regulations.

Generally, developers and business owners found zoning and development regulations unclear at times and/or in conflict with what the City has expressed it desires for Downtown. Several in the business community noted that many uses that are often by-right in other communities require a variance in Downtown Elmhurst. It was suggested that City officials clearly define what Downtown is and implement zoning and regulations that are consistent. Building codes were also labeled as being difficult to navigate.

Nearly all interviewees within the business community expressed a desire that both the City Council and the Zoning and Planning Commission be timelier in taking action on important initiatives. The amount of time that transpires for approval of various requests leaves developers in the lurch, guessing where they stand and cutting into the limited time each year that is conducive to new construction. Examples of slow-movement include a pending parking ordinance and the Hahn Street development that has been ongoing for several years. Participants suggested giving City staff more power in planning and development matters to accelerate and streamline action.

Building Stock

Downtown's physical environment was described by many as being "quaint," charming, or "like Bedford Falls" (the community in the film *It's a Wonderful Life*). However, while attractive on the outside, the limitations of the building (single-story, low ceilings) often make it unattractive to national businesses needing higher ceilings and more square footage. Conversely, rents remain too high to attract "mom-and-pop shops" and small scale users. This dichotomy, combined with a desire to preserve more historic buildings, makes occupancy a challenge within certain areas of Downtown.

Building heights were also discussed, with participants noting that the community remains divided on the issue. One individual reported that residents who live farther from the Downtown generally support taller buildings while those who live nearby are more inclined to prefer lesser height. Of the participants that weighed-in on the issue, there was general agreement that buildings should uniformly "step-up" as you approach Downtown and "step-down" as you move away; scale should be carefully managed and in keeping with the general character of the community.

Parking

Downtown parking is shared between commuters, employees, and shoppers. Generally, interviewees did not believe that parking was a significant issue in the Downtown, although a few interviewees did disagree. There was generally agreement that the addition of a new parking deck, coupled with several existing decks, provides the right supply of parking. According to those interviewed, on-street parking should be reserved for customers only and employees should park either in public parking structures or dedicated spaces. A City pilot program to that effect is currently underway for the area north of Third Street along York Street, with employees prevented from on-street parking and receiving a ticket if they do so.

Additionally, some developers believed that the City requirement of two parking spaces per residential unit was too high and led to an overbuilding of private parking for residential developments.

Activity Generators

The York Theatre was identified as Downtown's most significant activity generator, but it alone is not able to provide the critical mass of activity needed within Downtown. It was suggested by many participants that the City should actively pursue an additional "big draw." Suggestions included an open air market, a big public gathering space, a comedy club, ice skating rink, a concert venue, and more.

Elmhurst College

Participants tended to not see Elmhurst College as a significant player in shaping the identity of Downtown Elmhurst at present, although the college was viewed as an asset and in a positive light. It was reported that the college "seeks autonomy" and that the Downtown has just "never been able to connect" properly with the College. Its nature as a commuter college was noted by some as playing an influence, as commuting students are less likely to see Elmhurst as home. Participants were divided on whether opportunities existed to capitalize on the college's presence.

Interviews with students confirmed that the Downtown and campus tend to operate independently. Students did note that they patronize the Downtown during the day for errands or lunch, but that they spend most of their evenings in other communities that provide a better mix of places to go, were more oriented towards a college crowd, and were closer to where they lived. Students accepted that Elmhurst will never be a "college town," but hoped that more student-friendly uses could be supported within Downtown Elmhurst. Suggestions to better connect Downtown and the campus included more promotions to draw in student spending, better coordination for joint events and festivals, and encouraging restaurants and bars to stay open later.

Assets

While much of the discussion focused on issues that need to be addressed, participants often had good things to say about Downtown Elmhurst. Some of the key assets identified included:

- Phenomenal transportation options, including a Metra stop and nearby access to I-290 and I-294;
- Quaint, small-town charm;
- Diverse array of restaurants at a variety of price points;
- Downtown grocery store (Jewel) that can support residential living;
- York Theatre;
- Street grid;
- Physical and social connections to Chicago (easy Metra commute, same street names – Fullerton, Armitage, Schiller, North, etc.); and
- First Metra stop outside of Cook County on the Metra Union Pacific-West line (advantageous for regulatory and tax reasons).

Issues by Development Type

Residential

Increasing the residential population in Downtown Elmhurst was identified as a top priority. This will help support existing businesses, as well as provide a critical mass of activity.

The Downtown market is demanding more rental units than condominiums, and in the coming years, rentals are expected to outpace owner-occupied units. It was noted that tenants/buyers looking to move Downtown are not seeking to “downsize but simplify.” Units must be attractive and well-designed with amenities that can attract empty nesters, seniors, and young professionals. Much of the existing stock was described as “aged” and “not competitive.” Developers noted that they do not see much of a market for young professionals within Downtown Elmhurst at this time.

Retail

Retail was described by participants as being the most challenging market of the “three-legged stool of retail, residential, and office” within Downtown Elmhurst. Market competition from the nearby regional malls such as Oakbrook Center in Oak Brook and Yorktown Center in Lombard draws consumers and spending away from Downtown. Malls are able to provide the square footage and ceiling heights necessary for national brands, as well as discounted prices and easy parking for consumers that are difficult to compete with smaller stores within Downtown. Additionally, it was reported that these malls require that many tenants sign covenants that prevent the opening of additional locations within a defined radius that includes Downtown Elmhurst.

Consensus on how to respond to this challenge of retail tended to fall into one of two categories: (1) focus efforts on niche and mom-and-pop retailers and (2) lessen the emphasis on retail. The former tended to be a more common perspective, but interviewees familiar with real estate noted that high rents can often make it difficult for local retail. The latter perspective was embodied by one business leader who said, “call it a day on retail: harness the theatre and entertainment, capitalize on the restaurant base, and attract service sector businesses as a means of economic development.”

It was a common perspective that Downtown Elmhurst’s attractiveness for some element of retail would improve as residential density increased. The restaurant market was praised for being diverse in its offerings, but probably near saturation.

Office

Issues of both quantity and quality challenge Downtown Elmhurst’s office market. High quality office space was reported as being in high demand in Downtown Elmhurst; one expert noted that there is “no decent office space available” within Downtown Elmhurst. Additionally, virtually every property greater than 2,500 square feet is currently leased.

BUSINESS & PROPERTY OWNER WORKSHOPS

May 12, 2015

On the morning of May 12, 2015, two workshops were held at City Hall: one with Downtown business owners and another with Downtown property owners. Because discussions within both workshops overlapped, some individuals participated in both workshops and therefore the two sessions have been summarized collectively.

Each workshop began with a brief overview of the planning process and concluded with an interactive workshop of issues, concerns, and ideas. The workshop centered on discussion of three key questions:

- What are five issues or concerns facing Downtown Elmhurst?
- What are three specific projects or actions you would like to see undertaken within Downtown Elmhurst?
- What are the primary strengths and assets of Downtown Elmhurst?

The following is a summary of the thoughts, comments, and opinions received in the workshop in response to the above questions. Some comments were shared with the entire group, while others were recorded privately on worksheets. It is important to note that the items identified in this summary are not recommendations or observations of the consultant, but rather feedback and comments received from those who participated in the workshops.

Top Issues & Concerns

Attendees were first asked to identify the most important issues facing Downtown Elmhurst. A wide variety of topics were discussed in response to the question; however, many of these issues were interrelated and in alignment with other responses and opinions. Accordingly, the responses are grouped below into the most common themes.

Traffic Congestion

Participants noted that the confluence of vehicle traffic, commuter and freight rail traffic, and pedestrian traffic (often associated with boarding and alighting of Metra trains) during peak periods can create congested conditions within Downtown Elmhurst. Concern was also expressed that the new parking garage would support additional traffic through the Downtown.

Parking

Parking was seen as challenging within Downtown. Many participants felt that a sense of competition existed between Metra commuters, employees, and shoppers. Existing structured parking was reported as being monopolized by Metra commuters while prime on-street parking is often taken up by employees, leaving shoppers with few options. Some suggested that parking signage was lacking or positioned too low to be visible. Optimism was expressed that the new parking deck would alleviate some of these issues.

Diversity of Retail

Workshop participants noted that they felt Downtown Elmhurst lacked diversity in retail options. Examples of over-saturated businesses included restaurants, banks, salons, and yogurt places. It was stated that the City should work to establish a diverse “critical mass” of businesses that could make Downtown more well-rounded and exciting.

Support for Existing Retail Businesses

Many participants felt that retail businesses in Downtown Elmhurst were struggling and that the City should focus on retaining these businesses as opposed to attracting new ones. Concern was expressed that “mom-and-pop” cannot compete with national chains.

More Public Spaces

Public spaces were seen as vital to making Downtown lively and attractive, and participants would like to see more public spaces with greenery within Downtown. It was noted by some participants that too much focus was placed on the Downtown plaza, and that new public spaces scattered throughout Downtown would help better distribute Downtown events.

Regulations, Taxes, & Fees

Attendees reported that they feel that the City's regulations are not in keeping with the City's stated policy objectives (e.g. what uses are permitted by right), that they can be overly complex, and that enforcement can be inconsistent. Frustration was also expressed over the fact that so many uses within Downtown are not by-right, but require a variance. It was also stated that increasing property taxes made it a less competitive and market feasible location for some businesses.

Character & Identity

Downtown's identity is closely tied to its physical appearance. Downtown is suffering from a lack of design cohesion, according to workshop participants. Some stated that mix of older buildings with low ceilings interspersed with larger, new buildings created an incongruent landscape that prevented a shared narrative. Others noted that high vacancy has given the Downtown a perception that it is dying. Some also reported that they did not know "who we are" relating to the Downtown's identity.

Other

Other comments included: (1) the need to increase the residential population, (2) flooding/stormwater management, and (3) lack of visibility and signage for the cultural center.

Priority Actions & Projects

Workshop participants were asked to list specific projects or actions that could improve Downtown Elmhurst. All responses are listed below and grouped by common topic areas. They are in no particular order of importance:

Governance

- Hold more public meetings for input from property and business owners
- Improve communication between residents, property and business owners, and City Hall
- Be honest and clear about the City's vision for Downtown
- Revisit zoning
- Develop a sustainability plan for green space and green buildings
- Improve the business friendliness of City Hall
- Concentrate on more traditional municipal projects such as streets, sanitation, and police

Economic Development

- Encourage locally-owned shops and discourage chain stores
- Develop a Strategic Business Plan
- Encourage business diversity
- Create a board that businesses need to go before to see if they can open in Elmhurst
- Prioritize development of new office space before new residential space
- Develop a shop locally loyalty program
- Support construction of professional office space
- Fill vacant properties
- Complete the Hahn Street project

Transportation & Mobility

- Upgrade the Metra station
- Make York Street a two-way street
- Build a ramp/stairwell over the tracks
- Add a left turn signal at York and Third Street
- Widen the Schiller Walkway
- Make Downtown more pedestrian friendly
- Reduce the amount of Metra parking
- Reduce the amount of handicapped parking spaces near the Metra station
- Add angled parking on York or another method that can generate more parking spaces than the status quo

Identity & Character

- Add more park benches and congregation spots
- Increase the cohesive visual appearance of shops
- Spruce up the “dumpster” walkway between Walgreen’s and Egg Harbor Café
- Approve a historic district
- Keep existing height restrictions
- Encourage higher density development
- Market Elmhurst as a destination for a day trip – 3 museums, shops, restaurants, and Wilder Park
- Spread events throughout the Downtown area
- Increase residential density

Other

- Improve and fix drainage to stop flooding
- Work with Elmhurst College to increase enrollment and student housing

Community Strengths & Assets

The workshop concluded with a discussion of the assets that Downtown Elmhurst has to build upon and should be preserved moving forward. All assets and strengths identified in the workshop are listed below:

People

- Engaged, civic-minded residents
- Hardworking property owners

Businesses

- Starbucks
- York Theatre
- Friendly business owners
- Great restaurants

Identity & Sense of Place

- City Centre fountain
- Historic character
- Family oriented-community
- Comfortable, inviting atmosphere
- Good reputation
- Safe
- Elmhurst College

Transportation & Location

- Good central location with a variety of transportation options
- Close to Oakbrook Mall
- Pedestrian friendly

Public Services, Facilities & Infrastructure

- Police are quick to respond to problems
- Good schools
- Good infrastructure
- Palmer Drive underpass
- City Centre SSA
- Critical mass of public institutions – library, 3 museums, symphony, parks programming

COMMUNITY WORKSHOP

May 28, 2015

On Thursday, May 28th, 2015 at 7 p.m., an Elmhurst Downtown Plan workshop was held with over 90 community members at City Hall. This workshop was the first of many opportunities for residents and stakeholders to publicly discuss issues facing Downtown Elmhurst.

The workshop began with a brief overview of the planning process and concluded with a community discussion of issues, concerns, and ideas. The workshop included a questionnaire exercise, from which participants shared their written comments with the overall group. The following is an issue-based summary of the input received during the workshop.

The following is a summary of the thoughts, comments, and opinions received. Some comments were shared with the entire group, while others were recorded privately on worksheets. It is important to note that the items identified in this summary are not recommendations or observations of the consultant, but rather feedback and comments received from those who participated in the workshop.

Top Issues & Concerns

Attendees were first asked to identify the most important issues facing Downtown Elmhurst. A wide variety of topics were discussed in response to the question; however, many of these issues were interrelated and in alignment with other responses and opinions. Accordingly, the responses are grouped below into several common themes.

Retail Vacancy

Many community members see retail vacancy as one of the most important challenges confronting Downtown Elmhurst. Vacant storefronts contribute to blight and communicate disinvestment, as well as decrease the energy and vitality of a Downtown. It was noted that high rents, as well as market competition from other nearby malls, make retail difficult at present.

Connections between the Downtown Core, Wilder Park, Elmhurst College, & Museums

One of the most common points of discussion was the need to strengthen social and physical connections between the core of Downtown and key civic destinations such as the Elmhurst Art Museum, Lizzadro Museum of Lapidary Art, Wilder Park, and Elmhurst College. Residents would like to see better sidewalks, bike connections, and streetscaping that could more closely tie these areas together physically, as well as a more integrated programming and branding that sees these areas as a vital cultural element of Downtown Elmhurst.

More Green Spaces & Public Spaces

Community members expressed a desire for more public spaces within Downtown Elmhurst, including green spaces, parklets, plazas, benches, and al fresco dining. It is important to the community that as Downtown develops, social spaces are created and maintained, and natural features are added or preserved.

Arts Activity Generator

Community members would like to see a central arts venue within Downtown Elmhurst that could host music concerts, theatre performances, art exhibits, and more. While the York Theatre was seen as an important cultural asset, a second arts activity generator focused on the performing arts could increase activity and investment within Downtown, as well as cement Elmhurst's reputation as a destination for art and culture.

Traffic Circulation & Congestion

Community members expressed frustration with current traffic conditions within Downtown Elmhurst. Automobile traffic, pedestrians, and rail traffic converge to create congested conditions during peak periods, according to workshop participants. Some key traffic issues within this category included poor stoplight timing, confusing one-way streets, uncoordinated site circulation, and at-grade rail crossings.

More Downtown Housing

Community members would like to see an addition of more housing units within the Downtown area that can capitalize on changing market attitudes and access to the Metra station ("transit-oriented development"). It was envisioned that new units would be a blend of rental and for-sale units and townhome and multi-family units at a variety of price points. Specific focus was placed on attracting young professionals, empty nesters, and senior citizens. It was emphasized that units should be attractive, safe, and well-designed.

Priority Actions & Projects

Workshop participants were asked to list specific projects or actions that could improve Downtown Elmhurst. Their responses provide a wide range of ideas that span from improving infrastructure to small business development to developing and marketing Elmhurst as a regional destination. All responses are listed below and grouped by common topic areas. They are in no particular order of importance:

Economic Development

- Consider the impact on tax revenue when deciding approval of new structures
- Redevelop northwest intersection of First Street and York Street
- Diversify the type of businesses
- Develop in a way that captures urban feel
- Recruit anchor tenants to fill vacant retail space
- Encourage higher density residential developments
- Reduce taxes/cost of doing business
- Construct hotels in Downtown area
- Use enterprise zone incentives
- Downsize large vacant properties to better suit small retailers
- Fill empty stores with non-trendy stores that will survive
- Redevelop Addison Avenue
- Stop giving TIF funds to over-saturated business types
- Develop more office space with modernized amenities
- Drive economic development with performing arts
- Redevelop empty lot on Park Street across from post office
- Encourage more food trucks
- Bring artists to Downtown
- Develop a marketing plan

Identity & Sense of Place

- Attract more unique businesses
- Support construction of a performing arts center
- Encourage live music on streets
- Encourage artist spaces
- Build a sports facility
- Provide weekend activities downtown
- Attract millennials
- Improve streetscaping
- Encourage outdoor restaurant seating
- Develop train station to have state-ment architecture that spans over the gateway tracks
- Cover windows of empty stores with something useful and attractive
- Add more park benches
- Improve architectural quality
- Facilitate social places for seniors to meet
- Design a gathering spot in the “doughnut hole” for events such as performing arts and a farmers’ market

Transportation & Connectivity

- Improve integration with Elmhurst College
- Connect bike paths to Downtown
- Close York Street to make it a pedestrian mall
- Beautify façades
- Foster a more bicycle and pedestrian-friendly environment
- Post way-finding signage highlighting stores, restaurants and other key destinations
- Connect both sides of streets with sidewalks
- Improve connections between Downtown and Wilder Park
- Add a non-obstructed crossing over tracks to assist vehicle and pedestrian connectivity
- Reconstruct a new underpass for pedestrian and bicycle connectivity
- Redo all crosswalks to provide increased safety and perception
- Change York Street and Addison Avenue to two-way traffic
- Close off York Street between First and Second Streets
- Tunnel the train tracks
- Control residential and commercial growth to prevent traffic congestion
- Fix traffic patterns of post office site to make it more convenient
- Create a pedestrian-only center, perhaps in “doughnut hole”
- Renovate inside of existing parking structures with lights and paint

Sustainability

- Emphasize transit oriented development
- Incorporate green infrastructure into all new construction
- Install renewable (solar) energy on public buildings
- Increase recycling
- Increase green space
- Promote sustainability with building guidelines
- Manage flooding and stormwater

Regulations

- Mesh the zoning ordinances and design guidelines with the new Downtown Plan
- Modernize zoning codes

Housing

- Build student housing
- Increase density of multi-family housing
- Construct more affordable housing

Community Strengths & Assets

The workshop concluded with a discussion of the assets that downtown Elmhurst has to build upon and should be preserved moving forward. All assets and strengths identified in the workshop are listed below:

- Elmhurst Public Library
- Elmhurst College
- York Theatre
- Elmhurst Historical Museum
- Elmhurst Art Museum
- Great schools
- Faith-based groups
- Good police and fire services
- Public services are useable and accessible
- “Block-to-Block Party” programming
- Variety of restaurants
- Proactive City staff
- New parking garage
- Palmer Drive underpass
- Easy parking
- Train station/Metra access
- Train access to Chicago, freeways
- Close proximity to Chicago
- Close to O’Hare airport
- Downtown is easy for trip-chaining; i.e. can get from bank to post-office to grocery store very easily
- Most things are within walking distance
- Street trees
- Wilder Park
- Potential to create a new “downtown”
- Tax Increment Financing (TIF)
- Strong tax base
- College town
- Long-term business owners, although dwindling in recent years
- Good restaurants
- Fitness-oriented, active residents looking for destinations to walk/bike/run to
- Engaged residents
- Cultured, educated residents
- Available office space for new business
- Safe
- Strong sense of community
- Several business districts with which to collaborate
- Good shopping
- Beautiful homes
- Decent reputation
- Representative and trustworthy City Council
- Chicago, village feel
- Prestigious history
- Family-friendly city
- Pedestrian-friendly
- Overall small size

PROJECT WEBSITE & ONLINE SURVEYS

April 2015 - September 2015

Project Website

A project website was created to establish a centralized location for information regarding the Downtown Elmhurst Plan. The website contained information and updates concerning the project, meeting notices, and downloadable versions of project documents and reports. To provide convenient and comprehensive information, the project website was accessed through a link on the City of Elmhurst's home page. The project website also contained links to online questionnaires for residents and business owners.

Resident Questionnaire

An online questionnaire for Elmhurst residents was posted on the project website. It was designed to supplement in-person outreach activities conducted throughout the community, and is not intended to be a scientific survey instrument. As of the drafting of the Downtown Plan, over 700 residents submitted answers to the questionnaire. A summary of their responses to key questions are provided below.

Visiting Downtown

Participants were asked how often they visited Downtown Elmhurst. 47% reported they visited weekly, 24% daily, 24% monthly, and 6% a few times a year.

An additional question asked why they patronized Downtown. Selection of more than one answer was permitted. 74% reported for dining, 41% for entertainment, 39% for shopping, 22% for bars, 19% for community events, and 17% for living. Only 5% reported that their patronage was for work.

Amenities

Participants were asked to compare the amenities of Downtown Elmhurst with other downtowns in the area. 43% said Downtown Elmhurst was worse, 25% the same, 23% better, and 9% not sure.

The top 5 types of commercial development that respondents would like to see more of are: retail (90%), restaurants (81%), entertainment (77%), mixed-use (36%), personal services (35%), and hotels (19%).

Housing

A majority of respondents characterized the quality of Downtown's housing stock as good (55%) or excellent (11%), with only a minority identifying it as fair (17%) or poor (2%).

Residents were asked to select the types of new residential development they would like to see in Downtown. The responses were: townhomes (38%), condominiums (37%), none (32%), 23% single family homes, apartments (15%), and 15% senior citizen housing.

Favorite Things

The questionnaire asked participants to list their favorite things about Downtown. The following is a representative sample of answers selected from over three hundred provided:

- Family-friendliness
- York Theatre
- Fountain
- Interesting variety of shops and restaurants
- Metra station
- Quaintness
- Walkability
- Outdoor dining
- Adequate parking
- Elmhurst Public Library

Least Favorite Things

The questionnaire asked participants to list their three least favorite things about Downtown. The following is a representative sample of answers selected from those provided. It is important to note that some answers contradict those reported as favorite things in the previous section, noting that the community is divided on some issues such as dining variety and parking.

- Vacancies
- Limited dining options (would like to see more diverse and higher quality options)
- Train traffic
- Lack of parking
- Too many boutique stores and upscale stores
- Pedestrian unfriendliness (lack of public benches, difficult to cross train tracks)
- Lack of business variety (too many hair/nail salons, banks, yogurt places etc.)
- Addison parking garage (too tall)
- Loitering at the fountain/plaza area

Incentives

Respondents support the use of tax incentives to attract and retain businesses (66%), with only 9% saying they do not support and the remainder stating they are unsure.

Public Facilities & Services

Residents were asked to rate a variety of public facilities within Downtown as either “good,” “fair,” or “poor.” Each facility or service is listed below in descending order based on the percentage of respondents who labeled it as “good.”

- Library services (93%)
- Fire protection (84%)
- Police protection (84%)
- Water quality (73%)
- Trees and landscaping (69%)
- Trash service (64%)
- Parks and open space (62%)
- Recreational facilities and programs (54%)
- Electric service (52%)
- Healthcare services (51%)
- Sewer service (49%)
- Cultural facilities and programs (46%)
- Community meeting space (46%)
- Snow removal (45%)
- Data and technology infrastructure (25%)
- Storm water drainage (21%)

Communication

Residents were split roughly down the middle on whether they felt informed about what is going on in Downtown, with 54% feeling informed, 38% feeling uninformed, and 7% reporting they weren’t sure. The most common method of getting information about the Downtown was via the internet (64%), newspapers (54%), and word-of-mouth (45%).

Quality of Life

When asked to describe their satisfaction with the current quality of life in Downtown, residents were pleased with the current state of affairs, with 77% reporting either satisfied or very satisfied.

Comparing the quality of life today to ten years ago within Downtown, residents generally believed it was about the same or only marginally better. However, residents remain optimistic about the future. A majority (61%) believe things will get better over the next 5 years.

Plan Priorities

The top five issues that survey participants asked the Plan to focus on are, noting that respondents could select three options:

- Shopping options (62%)
- Business attraction and retention (56%)
- Entertainment options (52%)
- Vacancy (24%)
- Development and growth potential (19%)

Business Questionnaire

An online questionnaire for Downtown Elmhurst's businesses was also posted on the project website, with the purpose of soliciting insight about the local business climate.

As of the drafting of the Downtown Plan, 31 business owners and operators submitted answers to the questionnaire. A plurality of survey respondents work in "white collar" industries, with consumer service and the restaurant/entertainment business comprising most of the rest. A summary of their responses to key questions are provided below. Roughly 40% of respondents also live in Downtown, and the overwhelming majority rent the space their business resides in.

Public Facilities & Services

Business owners and operators were asked to rate a variety of public facilities and services as either "good," "fair," or "poor." Each is listed below in descending order based on the percentage of respondents who labeled it as "good."

- Fire protection (81%)
- Recreational facilities and programs (80%)
- Parks and open space (80%)
- Police protection (75%)
- Cultural facilities and programs (71%)
- Water quality (67%)
- Sidewalks (65%)
- Trees and landscaping on public property (62%)
- Local streets (58%)
- Sewer service (52%)
- Trash service (52%)
- Snow removal (38%)
- Municipal permitting and approval (35%)
- Electric service (33%)
- Arterial roads (32%)
- Storm water drainage (14%)
- Data and technology infrastructure (10%)

Downtown Appearance

A slight majority of respondents believe the appearance of Downtown buildings are "good," although no respondents reported they were "excellent" and 40% reported they were "fair" or "poor."

Downtown Tax Increment Financing (TIF) District

Respondents generally believe the TIF has been effective. 5% believe it has been very effective, 45% effective, 15% kind of effective, 5% not effective, and 30% do not know.

Relocation

If given the chance, 61% of survey respondents would not move their business out of Downtown, while 39% would. Reasons for possible relocation included: too much competition, lack of parking, effects of the sign ordinance, increasing rents, and no business perks.

Incentives

A majority of respondents (70%) support the use of tax incentives to attract and retain businesses.

Business Climate

The survey asked business owners and operators to list, in their own words, ideas that can improve the business climate. A sample of the responses provided were:

- Minimize red tape for permits, zoning requests, and signage
- Increase government collaboration to reduce project logjams due to City Council infighting
- Hire a new and effective marketing company to better advertise and brand Downtown
- Better and free parking, including metered parking instead of restricting parking to 3 hours or increasing parking limits to 5 hours
- Issuance of grants
- Regulate the concentration of specific types of businesses within the same block
- Support greater density
- Better and faster plowing of York Street

Transportation & Parking

Nearly all business owners, their employees, and their customers use the automobile as the main means of transportation. Very few (<20%) walk, bike, work at home, or take public transportation.

A slight majority (53%) consider the difficulty of parking downtown as “average,” with 11% labeling it easy and 37% difficult. Responses were split relatively evenly on whether more parking spots were needed near their place of business.

Housing

Businesses overwhelmingly believe (68%) that more housing within Downtown will help their business.

Governance & Citizen Communication

A majority (53%) reported feeling uninformed about the City’s plans for the Downtown and 57% believe the City is not receptive to the business community.

Quality of Life

When asked to describe how Downtown Elmhurst has changed over the past decade, 28% believe it has improved, 33% reported it has stayed about the same, and 17% stated it has declined. The remainder were not sure.

Moving forward, business leaders are optimistic. 58% believe Downtown Elmhurst will be a better place in five years.

Plan Priorities

The top five issues that survey participants asked the Plan to focus on are, noting that respondents could select three options:

- Business attraction and retention (74%)
- Vacancy (32%)
- Commercial/shopping options (32%)
- Entertainment options (26%)
- Development and growth potential (26%)