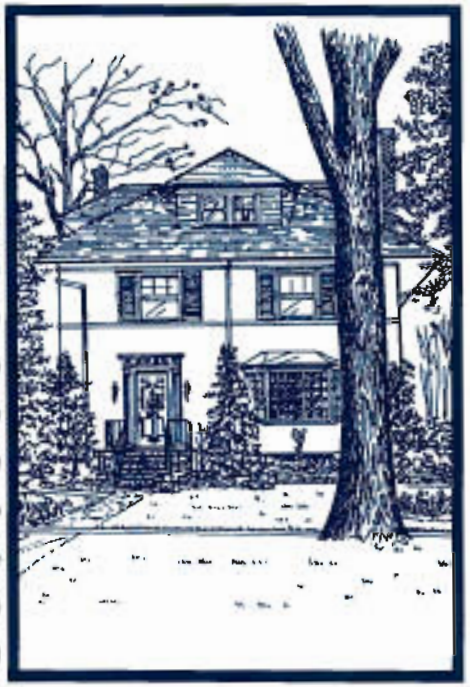
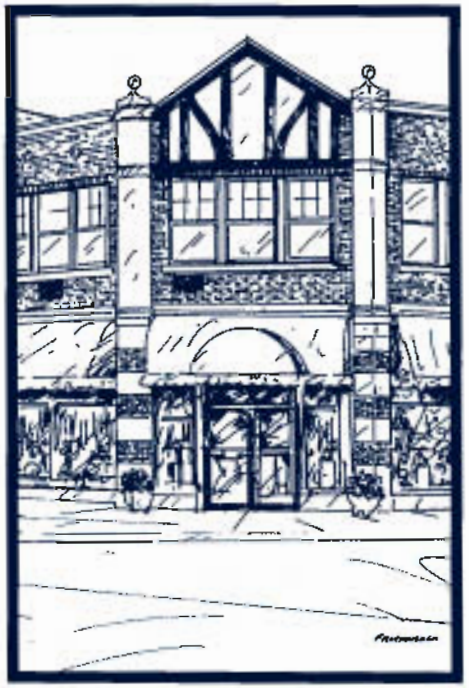
Comprehensive Plan





Village of Wilmette 2000

Acknowledgments

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Special thanks to those who contributed to the Comprehensive Plan
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Village Departments
Community Development
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Designed and illustrated by Linda Frothingham.

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CHAPTER ONE: Introduction

This document presents an updated comprehensive plan to guide planning and development decisions in the Village of Wilmette. Updated over a period of two years, and involving a host of citizens, this document supercedes the Comprehensive Plan of 1986.

The Nature of the Plan

This Plan recognizes that the Village has completed its growth phase and has entered a period of relative stability in size, character and function. This Plan has been developed, in both form and structure, as a "policy plan" rather than a physical plan. The Plan may be viewed as a series of guidelines arranged in a logical manner to guide local governmental authorities and the citizenry in their decision-making processes on specific issues as they arise in the future. For this Plan to have real utility, however, the policies must be designed to achieve generally accepted community goals. Accordingly, the policies set forth in this Plan are linked to goals appropriate for a fully developed community.

Like the previous comprehensive plan, this Comprehensive Plan is considered a "policy plan" for the following reasons:

1. The Village's basic pattern of land use is already in place. Efforts to change the existing pattern are likely to involve adaptations of an evolutionary, incremental nature dependent on community attitudes and market conditions. Since these types of changes cannot be fully foreseen, comprehensive plan guidance is best found in goals and policies that guide land use decisions.

2. The public facilities in the Village have already been built making the Village's primary role maintaining, replacing or upgrading existing facilities as necessary. As in the case of land use decisions, comprehensive plan guidance for these actions is best found in a policy plan.

3. There are sites throughout the Village that may become candidates for redevelopment. These properties may require detailed planning attention on a more narrow scope than that which can be provided through a community-wide land use plan. Such planning should respond to the values and conditions of the community generally and the neighborhood specifically at the time redevelopment is proposed. These factors can best be treated through a policy-oriented approach to planning.

This document should be viewed as an evolving rather than a rigid plan. Periodically, the Village Board should ask the Plan Commission and other relevant commissions and boards to review the policies contained herein and note their utility and applicability to the needs and aspirations of the Village and its citizens. Other jurisdictions should also be encouraged to do the same. Based on these reviews, the Village Board should reconfirm the policies that are still valid, add new policies that have been developed since the last review and revise or delete those that are no longer applicable. This type of review could be helpful in facilitating the establishment of Board agendas for the community following a biennial election. Such review of the Plan will assure that it remains a current and useful guide to community decision-making – the primary purpose of its preparation.

The Plan addresses a host of community concerns, but not all of these concerns are the responsibility of, or resolvable by, the municipal government. Certain problems or ideas identified within this Plan are best left to the private sector and our residents as individuals. Others are legally and properly within the province of other governments, such as the Library District, the Park District, the School District and New Trier Township. The concerns and policy responses outlined here have not been developed with the intent of usurping responsibilities of other local governments or intervening in private market processes and the freedom of individuals. Rather, they reflect an attempt to incorporate, in one place, a vision of Wilmette as seen through the eyes of citizens who became involved in the plan development process and the local governments that chose to participate in the plan development process. Hopefully, all local government bodies will look to relevant aspects of this Plan when formulating policy to treat issues discussed herein.

In summary, the policy approach of this Plan reflects a presumption that the primary role of government in Wilmette is to efficiently deliver services to a residential and business base that will remain stable in size and composition, and to respond to externally developed proposals for change in such a way as to maintain the Village's stability and character.

A Vision of Wilmette

The vision of Wilmette underlying this plan is no different from the vision shared by Village residents for many years. That vision was well stated in the Village's first plan prepared in 1922:

"It may be taken for granted that those who have made their homes here and who have developed an affectionate interest in their community will see in the plans presented in this booklet something more than cold-blooded statistics and specifications. The task is to turn our love for this elm-shaded suburb of ours into a practical vision of its highest possibilities in respect to beauty and convenience."

Many of the concerns reflected in the goals of the 1922 Plan (and then echoed in the 1973 and 1986 Comprehensive Plans) are also addressed throughout this current plan. Both then and now, the Village shows concern for issues such as the appearance of structures and streetscapes, preservation of a small town atmosphere, transportation improvements, adequate water and sewer services, open space, tree preservation, modern and efficient street lighting and inter-governmental cooperation. Current residents, like those of the past, share an affectionate interest in their village and strive to keep the "vision" alive and well.

Drawing on the comprehensive plans of the past, the following vision statements have been established for this Plan:

- The Village of Wilmette should remain primarily a residential community and retain its single-family detached dwelling character while also encouraging adequate housing for the wide range of individuals and families that make up the community.

- The Village should strive to preserve and enhance the aesthetic and functional qualities of the residential environment.

- The Village should strive to preserve historically and architecturally significant sites, structures and neighborhoods as set forth in its Historic Preservation Ordinance.

- The Village should promote the safety and well being of its residents, and should promote and enhance the quality and dignity of life in Wilmette.

- The Village should encourage responsible and appropriate commercial development in a manner that serves the needs of Wilmette residents and preserves a strong economic base.

- The Village should, in cooperation with other governmental agencies, promote parks and open space as well as recreational, artistic, cultural and educational opportunities for village residents.

- The Village should continue to acknowledge the value of diversity within our community and strive to be free of discrimination based on race, color, religion, national origin, ancestry, sex, age, disability, sexual orientation, marital status, parental status, military discharge status, source of income or housing status.

- The Village should provide an equal opportunity to all Wilmette residents to participate and share in our economic, educational, recreational, political and social activities.

The Organization of the Plan

In Chapter 2, Wilmette Today and Tomorrow, a brief outline of the current and expected geographical and demographic conditions is provided, together with a discussion of the identified limitations of future growth and change. Chapters presenting community issues, along with the goals and policy responses of the Plan are organized into five chapters dealing separately with land use, housing, commercial areas, historic preservation, and municipal services and infrastructure. Finally, a chapter discussing issues and policies related to implementation of the recommendation of this Plan is included.

CHAPTER TWO: Wilmette Today and Tomorrow

From the early years of incorporation through 1970, Wilmette experienced continual population growth. However, in 1970 the population peaked at 32,124. By 1980 the trend had reversed, and population declined for the first time to 28,229, a number that closely approximated the 1960 population of 28,268. By 1990, the population had declined even further to 26,530, but in 2000 the population rose slightly to 27,651. Although the 2000 population is closer to the population sizes of 1960 and 1980, the characteristics of the population have changed in important ways.

Age & Race

The median age of Wilmette residents has continued to increase over the past several decades, from 32.2 years in 1960 to 32.8 years in 1970, and then again from 37.9 years in 1980 to 40.4 years in 1990 and up to 42.2 years in 2000. This increase in median age reflects an aging American population and is typical of communities throughout the country. Nationally, median age is expected to continue rising.

While the median age is increasing, there is also a significant increase in the number of children under the age of four. From 1980 to 2000, the number of individuals 4 years of age or younger has increased from 4.9% of the total population (1,384) in 1980 to 6.9% (1,837) in 1990. The percentage is slightly larger now than the 6.2% (1,977) it was in 1970, but not as great as it was in 1960, when it reached 10.7% (3,031). Based on the School District's study and information provided by Claritas, Inc., the increase in the number of young children in our community is expected to continue.

At the opposite end of the age spectrum is where the Village finds its most significant increase. The number of residents 65 years of age and older, and particularly those 85 years of age and older, has increased significantly in the past several decades. Individuals 65 years of age and older made up 12.7% of the Village population (3,585) in 1980, 16.2% of the population (4,312) in 1990, and 17.2% of the population (4,748) in 2000. Again, this trend is reflective of patterns across the country and is an indication of a healthier society nationally due to advances in the health and medical fields and the addition of local housing opportunities for seniors.

These two growing segments of the Wilmette community, the elderly and the very young will change population dynamics over time. As the population continues to age, the Village will need to respond to the changing needs of the community. Likewise, the growing group of individuals 5 years old and younger will increase the demand for various educational, recreational and other services as it ages. The Wilmette population may be stable, but it remains dynamic. The Village must respond to these changes.

Table 1 Age Distribution of Population in Wilmette

Age Group Years of Age	1980 Census Total Persons	1980 Census Percent	1990 Census Total Persons	1990 Census Percent	1990 Census Change	2000 Census Total Persons	2000 Census Percent	2000 Census Change
0-4	1,384	4.9%	1,837	6.9%	24.7%	1,973	7.1%	7.4%
5-13	3,838	13.6%	3,260	12.3%	-17.7%	4,895[1]	17.7%	20.2%
14-17	2,522	8.9%	1,425	5.4%	-77.0%	1,762[2]	6.4%	23.6%
18-20	965	3.4%	733	2.8%	-31.7%	529	1.9%	-27.9%
0-20	**8,709**	**30.9%**	**7,255**	**27.3%**	**-20.0%**	**8,630**	**31.2%**	**19.0%**
21-24	1,214	4.3%	880	3.3%	-38.0%	592[4]	2.1%	-32.7%
25-34	3,026	10.7%	2,647	10.0%	-14.3%	1,520	5.5%	-42.5%
35-44	3,996	14.2%	4,627	17.4%	13.6%	4,474	16.2%	-3.3%
45-54	4,299	15.2%	3,629	13.7%	-18.5%	4,753	17.2%	31.0%
55-64	3,400	12.0%	3,195	12.0%	-6.4%	2,934	10.6%	-8.2%
21-64	**15,935**	**56.4%**	**14,978**	**56.5%**	**-6.4%**	**14,273[5]**	**51.6%**	**-4.7%**
65-74	2,073	7.3%	2,528	9.5%	18.0%	2,379	8.6%	-5.9%
75-84	1,183	4.2%	1,306	4.9%	9.4%	1,709	6.2%	30.9%
85 and over	329	1.2%	463	1.7%	28.9%	660	2.4%	42.5%
65 and over	**3,585**	**12.7%**	**4,297**	**16.2%**	**16.6%**	**4,748**	**17.2%**	**10.5%**
TOTALS	28,229	100.0%	26,530	100.0%	-6.4%	27,651	100.0%	4.2%
MEDIAN AGE	37.9		40.6			42.2		

[1] Grouped by 5 to 14 years old, disaggregated data not available. [2] Grouped by 15 to 19 years old, disaggregated data not available. [3] Grouped by 0 to 19 years old, disaggregated data not available. [4] Grouped by 20 to 24 years old, disaggregated data not available. [5] Grouped by 20 to 64 years old, disaggregated data not available.

Wilmette Today and Tomorrow

The racial make-up of the community has changed slightly over the years to show an increase in the percentage of minorities. The African-American population of Wilmette in 1990 was approximately 0.5% and in 2000 it rose slightly to approximately 0.6%. The overall percentage is extremely low, but seems to be increasing with each decade. The Asian-American population has increased more significantly in recent years. In 1990 the Asian American population was 6.9%, but by 2000 it had risen to 8.2%. Other minorities are represented by less than 0.3% of the population.

The 2000 Census also shows that 16% of Wilmette's population does not speak English as a primary language at home. The demographic information clearly shows that Wilmette is becoming increasingly racially diverse. This suggests a need for community education to help Wilmette residents better understand and appreciate the opportunities and changes that are taking place in their neighborhoods.

Table 2 Population by Race

	1980 Census	1990 Census	2000 Census	Change
White	27,209	24,481	24,791	1.3%
Black	95	84	156	85.7%
Asian	N/A	1,848	2,255	22.0%
American Indian	N/A	24	10	-58.3%
Other	925[1]	93	121	30.1%
Hispanic (not included in total)	337	403	574	42.4%
Total Housing Units	**28,229**	**26,530**	**27,651**	**4.2%**

[1]Includes Asian, American Indian, and Other

Housing, Income & Transportation

The median home value in Wilmette has increased from $121,800 in 1980 to $441,600 in 2000. The price of houses in Wilmette is expected to continue to increase. The 2000 median household income for Wilmette was $106,773, a number that is also expected to continue to increase.

Transportation is an issue affecting every suburban community. 1990 Census information for Wilmette indicates that 711 residents work at home and that those who commute to work have an average commute time of 45-59 minutes. In 2000, 881 residents reported working at home. The CTA reports that ridership has decreased at the Fourth and Linden station from 662,211 riders in 1980 to 385,628 in 2001. Metra has reported that ridership is steady but the 2000 Census shows that most people drive to work rather than take mass transit. Wilmette is fortunate to have access to a variety of transportation alternatives, and the Village should encourage the use of mass transit.

Growth Potentials and Limitations

Throughout the Village's 5.4 square mile area, there is virtually no vacant residential property. The single-family detached housing stock is relatively fixed because there is little opportunity for the creation of a substantial number of single-family lots. Existing homes may be enlarged or torn-down and replaced, but the total number will not likely grow significantly beyond the 8,017 existing single-family detached houses (approximately 77.6% of the total number of dwelling units available in the Village). While family sizes may increase, thereby increasing the population of the Village, a significant increase in population would most likely result from an increase in the number of multi-family residential dwelling units (condominiums, townhomes and apartments). The existing 2,299 multi-family units (approximately 22% of the total number of dwelling units) could significantly increase under the current Zoning Ordinance.

Similar to residential property in the Village, there are few vacant business and commercial properties. There are, however, a number of commercial properties that may become candidates for redevelopment. Any major development of a nonresidential nature must take place primarily through the redevelopment or intensification of existing business and commercial areas.

Sources utilized in this chapter include: 2000 Census, PD-1; 1990 Census; 1980 Census, Donnelley Demographics; 1997 Demographic Trends and Enrollment Projections for School Districts 29, 35, 36, 37, 39 and 203, prepared by John D. Kasarda, Ph.D.; Illinois Population Trends 1990 to 2020 published by the Illinois Department of Commerce and Community Affairs; 1997 Demographic Update prepared by Northern Illinois University Center for Governmental Studies; Multiple Listing Service of Northern Illinois; Northeastern Illinois Planning Commission (NIPC), Summary of Census 2000 Profiles of General Demographic Characteristics; North Shore Board of Realtors Profile Sales Activity Report; NIPC 1996 Special Census; Chicago Area Transportation Study (CATS) 2020 Regional Transportation Plan; Chicago Transportation Authority (CTA) Ridership Information 1993-1997; and demographic information, estimates, and projections provided by MDR Demographic Applications, Inc., with estimates and projections produced by Claritas, Inc.

CHAPTER THREE: Land Use

Conditions

The Existing Land Use Map (page 10/11) identifies the locations and relative sizes of established land uses. The Land Use Designation Map (page 12/13) is consistent with the Zoning Map and indicates the intended land uses for the Village. The scarcity of vacant property underscores the fact that the community is almost fully developed, possessing a character that is a reflection of past comprehensive plans. Given the limited amount of vacant land, any new development, rehabilitation or expansion will have to occur on previously developed sites. Such redevelopment may be brought about by conditions that render existing uses obsolete or impractical in their current locations.

While the community has attained an established character that is valued by its residents, the Village is by no means static. It should be recognized that change will continue to occur. The goals and policies that follow have been established to guide that change in a consistent manner, protecting residential neighborhoods and assuring that any redevelopment and annexation will be consistent with community desires and reflective of community character.

Goals

Goal One: Maintain a predominantly single-family residential community.

Goal Two: Encourage commercial, retail, service and office facilities that serve the needs of Wilmette residents and preserve a strong economic base.

Goal Three: Promote, in cooperation with other governmental agencies, parks, open space, recreation, arts and culture and educational opportunities for village residents.

Goal Four: Maintain a superior quality of life in residential neighborhoods.

Goal Five: Establish and maintain land use controls that are consistent with the goals and policies of the Plan.

Goal Six: Encourage the retention and sound reuse of public lands no longer needed for their original purpose.

Policies

A series of land use policies are provided here to meet the current and future needs of the Village. Although these policies are considered to be comprehensive in scope, they are not intended to represent a complete and final statement. Future circumstances and community attitudes may foster the development of additional statements or the revision of those contained here. Indeed, the utility of this policy-plan approach is that, with proper attention and amendment, this Plan can continue to evolve, thereby providing long-term guidance in a manner responsive to the changing needs and values of the community.

Rezoning and Annexation

Petitions for zoning variations, special uses, and rezonings are regularly received, and small-scale land use decisions are made accordingly. Given that a series of land use decisions may have a cumulative impact on an area over time, those decisions should be made within a planning context and with consistency.

Policy One:
When assessing the reasonableness of land use changes within the community, the following factors should be considered.

1. Compatibility with the existing development pattern and the zoning of nearby properties.
2. Changes in the circumstances upon which the original zoning designation was based.
3. Major changes in land uses or conditions since the zoning was established.
4. Conformance of the current zoning and the proposed zoning to the current Comprehensive Plan.
5. Satisfaction of a public need by the proposed use.
6. Suitability of the subject property for the zoned purpose and the proposed use and purpose.
7. Availability of sites for the proposed use in existing districts permitting such use.
8. Compliance of the present development of the area with existing ordinances.
9. Possible unreasonable hardship imposed by the existing zoning.
10. Likelihood of a reasonable economic benefit being realized from uses in accordance with the existing zoning.
11. Effect of proposed use and zoning on property values in the area.
12. Effect of the existing use and zoning on adjacent properties.
13. Contribution to the redevelopment of a deteriorated area.
14. Conflicts with existing or planned public improvements.
15. Impact on traffic patterns, congestion and infrastructure.
16. Impact on population density such that the demand on public facilities is adversely affected (including but not limited to schools, recreational areas and facilities, sewers and streets).
17. Environmental impact on the vicinity.
18. Effects on the health, safety and welfare of the neighborhood and Village.

Policy Two:
Assess all requests for annexation based upon the following criteria:

1. Will the new municipal borders have logical boundaries based on natural features, public improvements and community orientation?
2. Can the annexed area become an integral part of the community and not an isolated enclave?
3. Can the annexed area be served by Village utilities and services without undue difficulty or economic penalty to the Village and property owners?
4. Are existing Village zoning and subdivision regulations compatible with the existing development pattern of the annexed area?
5. Will annexation and the subsequent application of Village land use regulations improve existing conditions in, or assure the sound development of, the annexed area?

Land Use

Specific Policies for Development Areas

Certain areas of the Village are expected to change, whether because they are currently underutilized, because of evolving market conditions or because of Village-originated actions in accordance with this Plan. Many of the areas of the Village that fall within these categories are in commercial districts and are discussed in Chapter Five.

There are, however, several common policies applicable to both commercial and non-commercial lands that are either vacant or likely to experience a significant change even though currently developed. These policies are as follows:

Policy Three:
Identify reuse alternatives when the present use is expected to cease. Such alternatives should reflect the character of the neighboring area and community sentiment, and should result in acceptable levels of environmental, traffic, fiscal and public service impact.

Policy Four:
Consider utilizing financial and legislative incentives to attract and implement desired forms of development or redevelopment that cannot reasonably be expected to occur as a result of private market forces.

Policy Five:
Adopt land use controls that will assure patterns of development or redevelopment compatible with neighboring properties.

Policy Six:
Continue to require submission of an overall plan for the development or redevelopment of properties involved in a rezoning or planned unit development request. The overall plan should demonstrate how such new development relates to adjacent land uses and maintains the character of the community.

Public Lands Policies

Recent experience indicated that various units of local government having jurisdiction within the Village boundaries have had reason to consider land acquisition and disposition and changes in the use of land already owned. Because such changes can affect the pattern and character of land use within the village, coordinated public land use policies are necessary.

Policy Seven:
In cooperation with other units of local government, develop procedures and standards for deciding whether a proposal for a new or materially changed use of land is consistent with the best interests of the community and the neighboring residents.

General Policies for Land Use Regulation

In a developed community such as Wilmette, the primary land use issues often relate to whether present uses of land should be allowed to change. The key control is the zoning ordinance which delineates the permitted uses for each parcel of land within the Village and regulates their development intensity. The broad policies that are reflected in the zoning and other ordinances that control land use in the Village include the following:

Policy Eight:
Assure that zoning regulations applicable to commercial areas and multi-family residential areas allow flexibility in design while maintaining property values and the character of neighboring land uses and prohibiting undesirable levels of development density.

Policy Nine:
Maintain or strengthen existing land use regulations to assure the preservation of neighborhoods and neighborhood ambiance, and develop controls to reduce any negative effect that new-home and large-addition construction has on existing neighborhoods.

Policy Ten:
Maintain or strengthen existing land use controls to regulate and limit non-residential uses in residential neighborhoods.

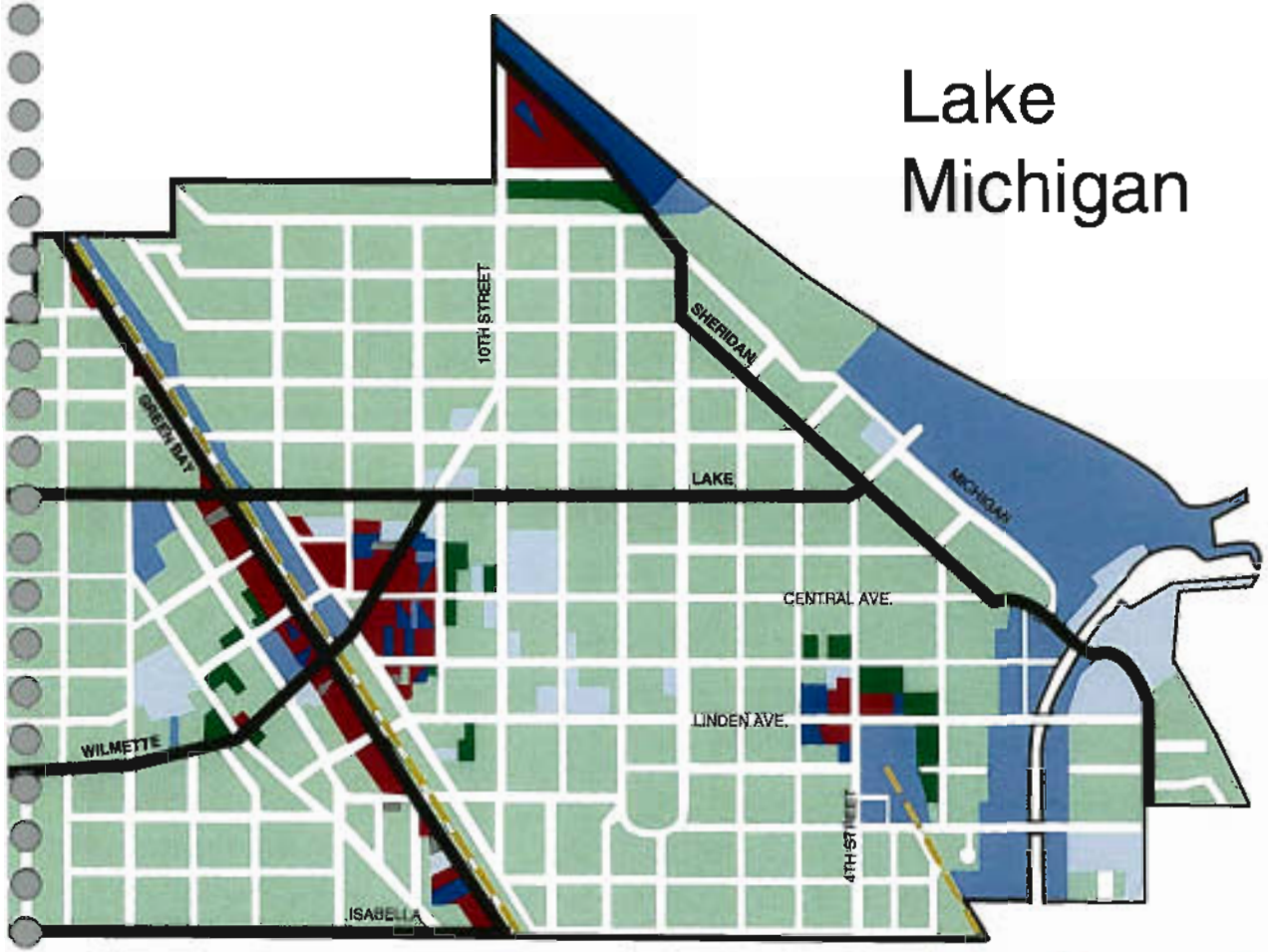
Policy Eleven:
Ensure that land use regulations are unambiguous and enforceable.

Policy Twelve:
Protect the integrity of zoning districts.

Policy Thirteen:
Balance potentially positive effects of all proposed changes in land use against the potentially negative impacts on nearby areas and either limit or prohibit land use changes that are likely to create an impact that is substantially inconsistent with the character of the area.

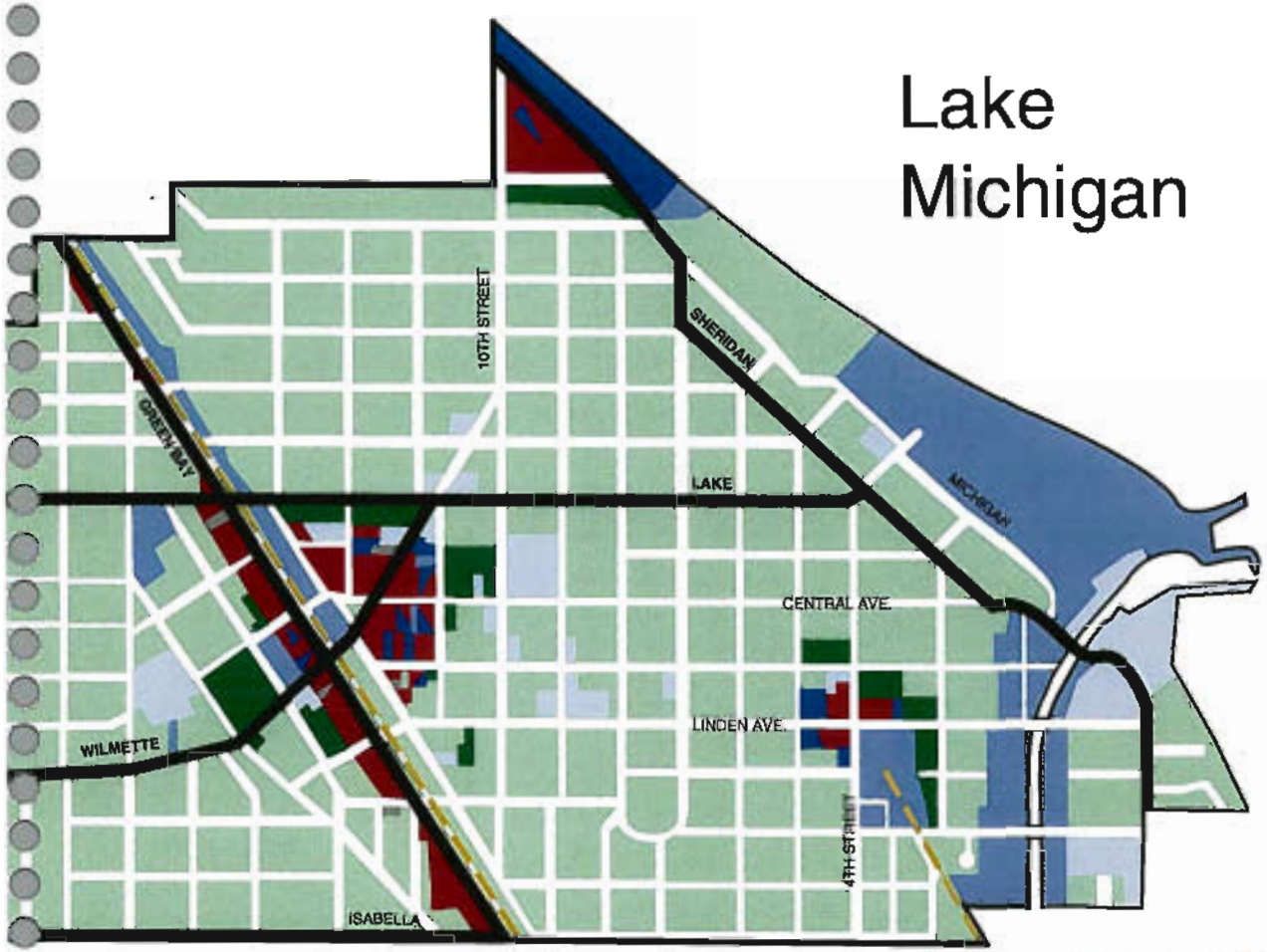
Wallace Bowl and Gillson Park

Existing Land Use Map


Lake
Michigan
10TH STREET
SHERIDAN
GREEN BAY
LAKE
MICHIGAN
CENTRAL AVE.
LINDEN AVE.
WILMETTE
4TH STREET
ISABELLA
Single Family Residential
Townhomes
Multiple Family Residential
Commercial
Office
Public
Institutional
Tracks

Wilmette

Land Use Designation Map


Lake
Michigan
10TH STREET
SHERIDAN
GREEN BAY
LAKE
MICHIGAN
CENTRAL AVE.
LINDEN AVE.
WILMETTE
ISABELLA
4TH STREET
Single Family Residential
Townhomes
Multiple Family Residential
Commercial
Office
Public
Institution
Tracks

Wilmette

CHAPTER FOUR: Housing

In 2000, there were 10,332 housing units in the Village. Approximately 77.6% of the units were detached single-family residences, giving the Village a single-family home character. The remainder of the Village's housing units were attached single-family (townhomes) and multi-family (apartments and condominiums) residences. Table Three shows the types of housing units in the Village in 1970, 1980, 1990 and 2000.

The Village's housing units serve an increasingly diverse population. Notwithstanding this diversity and perhaps because of it, the Village has a unique and strong sense of community pride and support. Wilmette will adhere to the principle reflected in its current ordinances that housing in the Village shall be open to all persons regardless of race, color, religion, national origin, ancestry, sex, age, disability, sexual orientation, marital status, parental status, military discharge status, source of income or housing status.

In 1990, as part of a comprehensive re-write of the Zoning Ordinance, Wilmette created a lot coverage and floor area ratio formula for single-family homes. This additional requirement, sometimes referred to as a bulk control ordinance, restricts the size of a home on a given property based on the size of the lot. In this way, the Village protects and controls the scale of residential neighborhoods contributing to the small town character so highly valued by residents.

Two continuing housing issues are: (1) the availability of decent, safe and reasonably affordable housing for elderly and low and moderate income households and (2) whether an appropriate range of housing options is available to the Village's senior citizens.

Table 3 Housing Units by Type

	1970 Census	1980 Census	1990 Census	2000 Census
Single-Family Detached	7,592	7,830	7,807	8,017
Single-Family Attached	307	434	496	524
Two Units	411	276	170	104
Three and Four Units	106	77	86	92
Five or More Units	1,088	1,365	1,418	1,579
Mobile Homes/Trailer	73	4	0	16
Other	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Total Housing Units	9,577	9,986	9,977	10,332
Total Renter Occupied	1,512	1,431	1,360	1,327
Total Owner Occupied	7,761	8,294	8,351	8,712

With respect to the affordability of housing, the following table shows that the property values of single-family homes in Wilmette have risen steadily since 1980. The Village acknowledges that the monetary rise in the housing market has and will continue to limit the economic diversity of Wilmette's population. As set forth in Chapter 2, the 2000 median household income in Wilmette was $106,773.

With respect to housing availability for senior citizens, Wilmette has responded by supporting various forms of housing assistance, encouraging affordable housing for the elderly and permitting different types of housing such as multiple-family developments. Some of the housing policies set forth below are intended to address the special housing needs of this growing segment of the Village's population.

Table 4 Cost of Housing Relative to Household Income

	1980	1990	2000
Median Home Value	$121,800	$278,300	$441,600
Down Payment 20%	$24,360	$55,660	$88,320
Balance to Finance	$97,440	$222,640	$353,280
Finance Period	30 years	30 years	30 years
Interest Rate	13%	9.5%	7%
Monthly Payment (Including Taxes and Insurance)	$1,440	$2,501	$2,924
Income to Qualify (30% of Annual Income)	$57,600	$100,040	$116,979
Median Household Income	$36,980	$71,274	$106,773

Goals

Goal One: Maintain and preserve the high quality, predominantly detached single-family dwelling character of Wilmette.

Goal Two: Continue to provide housing options in appropriately zoned locations that complement the traditional single-family character of Wilmette.

Goal Three: Foster a climate for equal housing opportunities.

Housing

Policies

Policy One:
Maintain residential densities at approximately the levels permitted by the Zoning Ordinance in effect at the time this Plan is adopted.

The various residential zoning districts within the Village have varying levels of permitted density. Every effort should be made to maintain the densities in particular neighborhoods at approximately the existing permitted levels and the overall density of the Village at approximately the existing permitted level.

This policy uses the word "approximately" because it is recognized that each proposal for the use of land must be judged on the particular circumstances involved in the proposal. However, it is the Village's policy that the densities allowed for individual parcels generally should be no greater than the zoning in effect at the time this Plan is adopted. Exceptions should be made rarely and only when other compelling public interests outweigh this policy and justify a change.

Policy Two:
Continue to support the Housing Commission, whose purpose is to study and make recommendations on housing issues, needs and programs.

Housing needs change with economic and social trends. The Wilmette Housing Commission has, since its creation in 1977, been charged with the task of studying housing needs in the Village and recommending to the Village Board measures to address identified needs. The Commission should continue these tasks.

In addition, the private sector and local, state and federal governments offer many housing assistance programs ranging from conventional mortgages to actual cash rent subsidies. The Housing Commission should maintain a list of available housing programs and provide eligible residents with information about these programs.

Policy Three:
Continue to provide opportunities for the development of non-single-family detached housing options in accordance with the uses and densities permitted under the current Zoning Ordinance, and research additional housing options that may assist in addressing the housing needs of the changing Wilmette population.

Policy Four:
Continue to support opportunities for the development of housing to accommodate group living by unrelated physically handicapped, mentally disabled or developmentally disabled residents.

Among the families of the Village are persons who are physically handicapped, mentally disabled or developmentally disabled. Some of these persons have special housing needs that can be met within the Village. Group homes for both the elderly and the disabled were added as a permitted use in the R, R1, R2 and R3 residential zoning districts as part of the 1990 re-write of the Zoning Ordinance. Similarly, group homes for the elderly and for the disabled should be added as a permitted use in all other zoning districts that have residential dwelling units.

Policy Five:
Continue to support opportunities for the development of housing and housing-related programs for the elderly in order to meet the needs of Wilmette seniors.

The absolute number and the proportion of Wilmette residents who are 65 or older increased significantly between 1970 and 2000. This trend is expected to continue in the coming years. In the future, the Village should support the development of housing for elderly residents in appropriate locations and densities. These developments should address the different types of housing that the elderly require or prefer, such as group homes for the elderly, extended care and congregate facilities and market rate multi-family housing for those who can live independently, but cannot or no longer wish to maintain a larger home.

Policy Six:
Continue a Housing Assistance Program.

The Wilmette Housing Assistance Program (HAP) is designed to provide financial aid to resident senior citizens and permanently disabled heads of household who demonstrate a need for such assistance in order to continue living in Wilmette. The program, which was created in 1981, gives assistance in the form of rent, mortgage or property tax payments. This program should be re-evaluated periodically to assure that it meets the needs at the time.

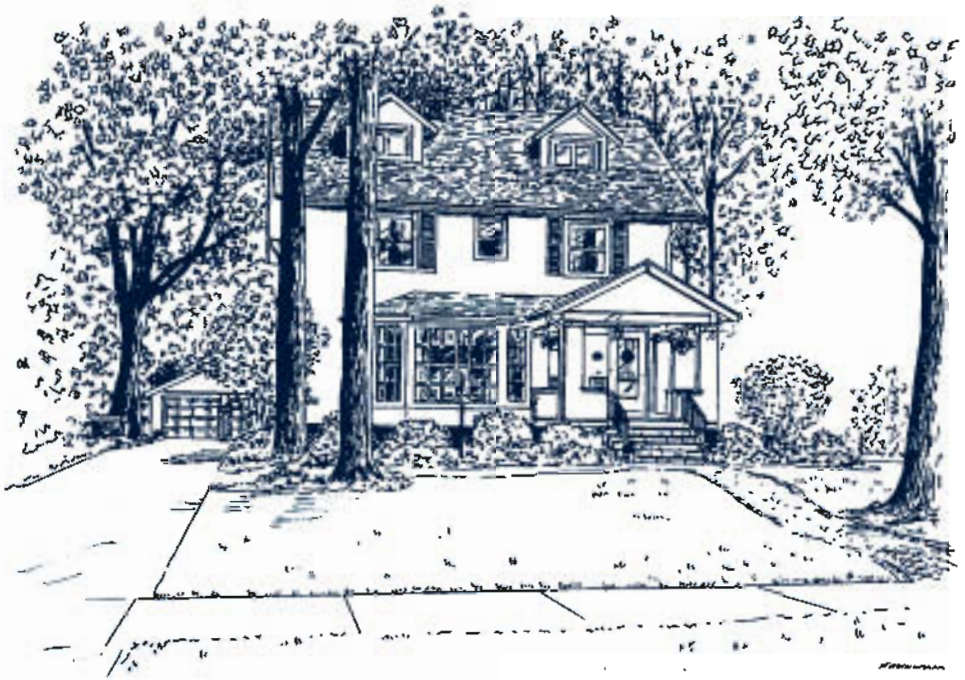
Policy Seven:
Foster compliance with the Village's Fair Housing Ordinance, which prohibits discrimination in real estate transactions based on race, color, religion, national origin, ancestry, sex, age, disability, sexual orientation, marital status, parental status, military discharge status, source of income or housing status.

Policy Eight:
Periodically review development standards for single-family detached and two-unit dwellings.

The bulk and appearance of newly constructed or expanded houses has the potential to affect the character and scale of a neighborhood. Recognizing this, the Village should periodically review its development standards and make such adjustments as may seem appropriate to preserve the desirable character or scale of a neighborhood without impinging on the rights of property owners, sacrificing property values or impeding desirable investment in the replacement or upgrading of housing units that have become obsolete, deteriorated or inconsistent with changing lifestyles.

Policy Nine:
Continue to enforce standards for home and property maintenance that are appropriate to promote safety and prevent severe deterioration.

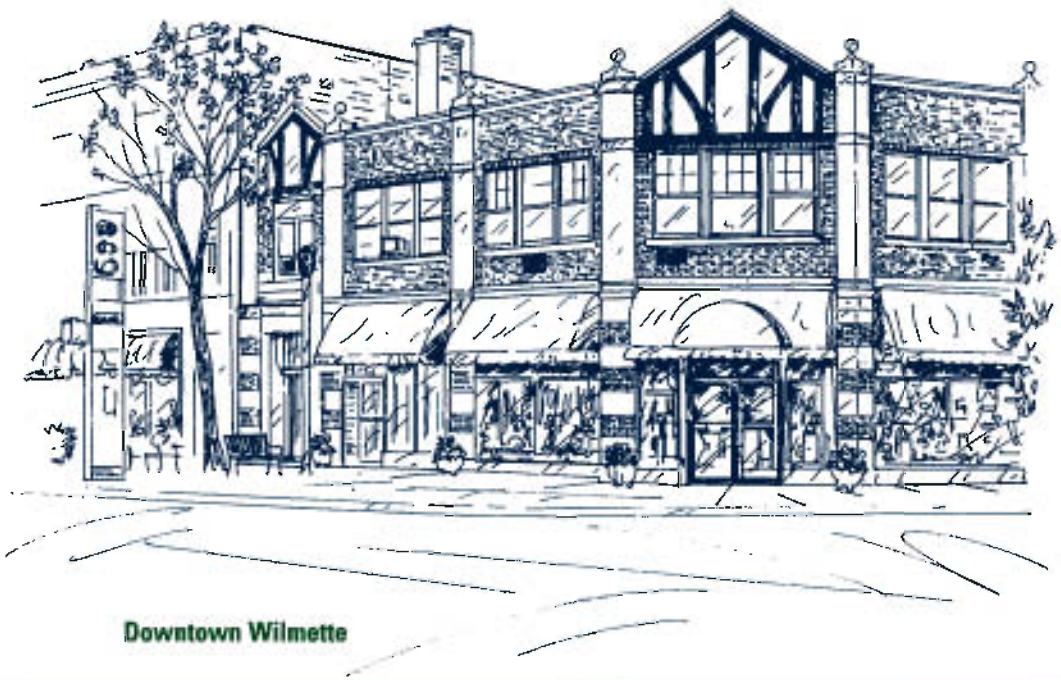
Village housing maintenance regulations should allow the Village to (1) protect the public from safety hazards that might occur on private property due to negligence or lack of maintenance and (2) prevent possible negative impacts on the Community's character that might occur due to severe deterioration of housing units. These regulations should continue to be vigorously enforced.



CHAPTER FIVE: Commercial Areas

Wilmette has an established base of commercial activities conducted in a number of zoning districts located throughout the Village, namely: three planned commercial development districts (PCD-1, PCD-2, PCD-3), the Village Center business district (VC), the General Commercial zoning district (GC1), three Office-Research districts (OR), seven Neighborhood Retail business districts (NR) and two General Commercial districts (GC-2). These commercial districts were developed out of goals and policies included in the Comprehensive Plan of 1986. Together, these commercially zoned areas comprise Wilmette's retail/service base, the health of which is extremely important to residents in term of the availability of goods and services, and to governmental units in terms of the tax revenue that they generate. These commercial areas are shown on the map (page 19) and described in the Chapter below.

In this Chapter, goals and policies are set forth with the recognition that the private sector has a critical role in determining whether a commercial area meets the community's expectations. The Village, however, acknowledges that it should encourage and support new and existing businesses by among other things, providing sound infrastructure, maintaining public areas in good and attractive condition and establishing regulatory policies that encourage desirable business activity while discouraging those activities that are not consistent with the Village's goals.



Downtown Wilmette

Goals

Goal One: Maintain attractive commercial areas from which a variety of goods and services are offered to the markets that have historically been served by these areas.

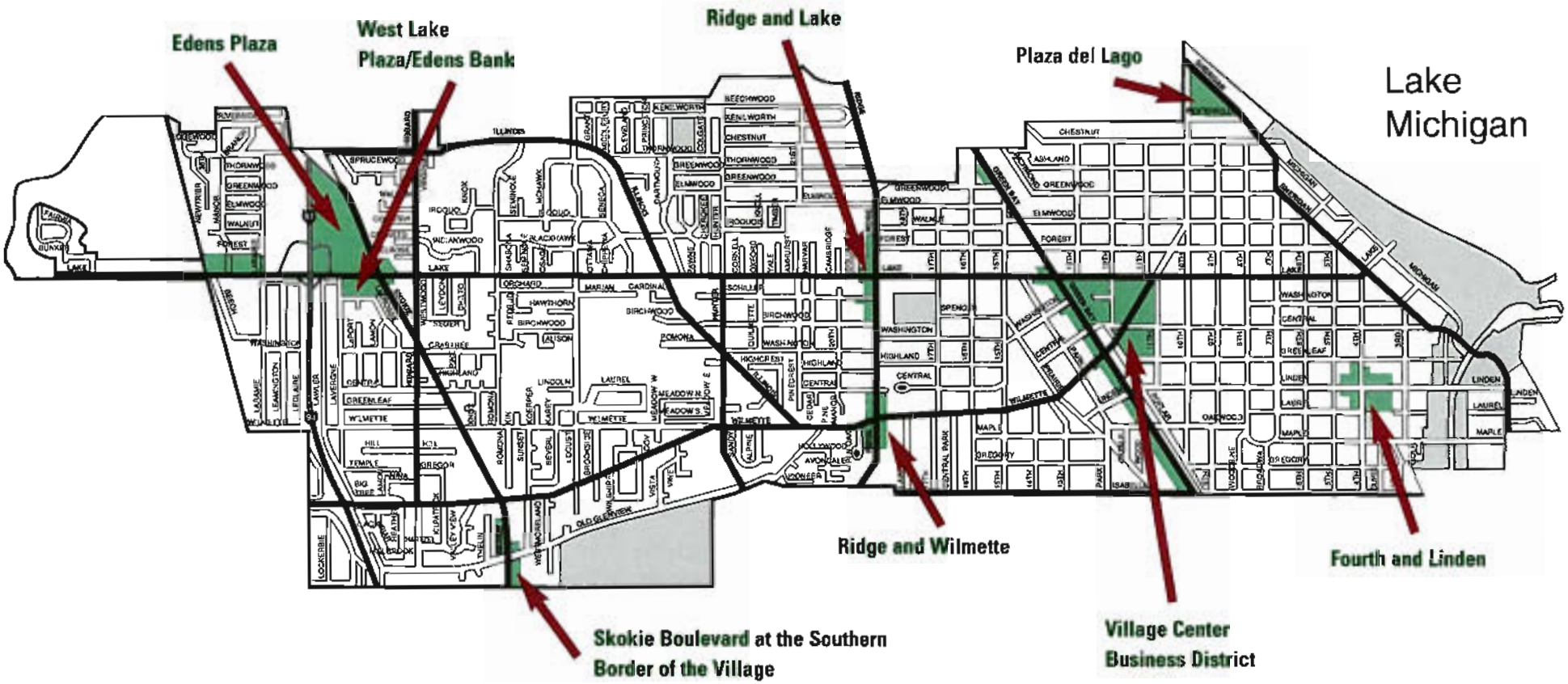
Goal Two: When the opportunity arises, encourage redevelopment of underutilized commercial properties to increase the tax base in a manner consistent with community needs and land use policies.

Goal Three: Maintain public property as attractive components of commercial areas.

Goal Four: Encourage design of private commercial structures that is consistent with the character of the surrounding area.

Goal Five: Provide for efficient traffic circulation, pedestrian movement and secure, convenient bicycle access in commercial areas while minimizing traffic impact on neighboring residential areas.

Goal Six: Promote adequate and efficient public and private parking facilities in commercial areas.


Edens Plaza
West Lake
Plaza/Edens Bank
Ridge and Lake
Plaza del Lago
Lake
Michigan
Ridge and Wilmette
Fourth and Linden
Skokie Boulevard at the Southern
Border of the Village
Village Center
Business District

Commercial Areas

Planned Commercial Development Districts (PCD)

There are three distinct shopping centers located in the Village. Although all three of these shopping centers are architecturally very different, they are classified into the general zoning category of the Planned Commercial Development District. The following provides a brief description of the each center, as well as its surrounding environment.

Edens Plaza shopping center is a 340,000+ square foot retail center located at the northwest corner of the intersection of Lake Avenue and Skokie Boulevard. The center was redeveloped and expanded in 1993 and contains large national retail stores as well as restaurants and personal service uses. The perimeter of the center along Skokie Boulevard and Lake Avenue is attractively landscaped, and there is an adequate supply of free parking. A local sign ordinance has been adopted for the center.

Edens Plaza is served by a bus route and has good vehicular access. Located nearby are an entrance and an exit to the Edens Expressway which runs along the western perimeter of the property. (Across Lake Avenue to the south is the West Lake Plaza/Edens Bank shopping center, and to the east is the Chalet Nursery property which is described below under Office Research Districts.)

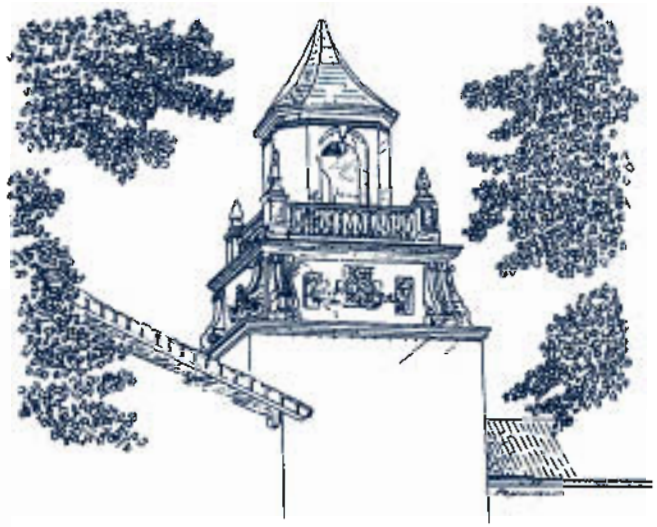
West Lake Plaza/Edens Bank is a 33,000+ square foot retail center located at the southwest corner of the intersection of Lake Avenue and Skokie Boulevard, directly south of Edens Plaza. It includes primarily convenience and specialty retail stores, personal and professional services and restaurants.

The Edens Bank is located at the northwest corner of the property. Local sign regulations have been adopted for the shopping center. Free parking is provided within the center.

Also located in this district is a gas station located at the southeast corner of the intersection of Lake Avenue and Skokie Boulevard.

Plaza del Lago is a commercial area located on Sheridan Road in the northeast corner of the Village. Its principal occupant is the Plaza del Lago shopping center. Other uses include a bank and a building that houses offices on the lower level and residential condominium apartments on the upper levels. To the east across Sheridan Road are high-rise apartment buildings; to the south is a townhouse development that gives way to single-family housing.

The Plaza del Lago center is an 83,000 square foot shopping center containing a variety of stores and restaurants ranging in size from 400 square feet to 20,000 square feet. Twenty-five dwelling units are located above the stores. The center has a unique integrated architectural design and a comfortable pedestrian environment. The center surrounds a well-landscaped parking lot on three sides, and additional parking is available to the north of the center. Local sign regulations have been adopted for the center.



Plaza del Lago

Village Center Business District (VC)

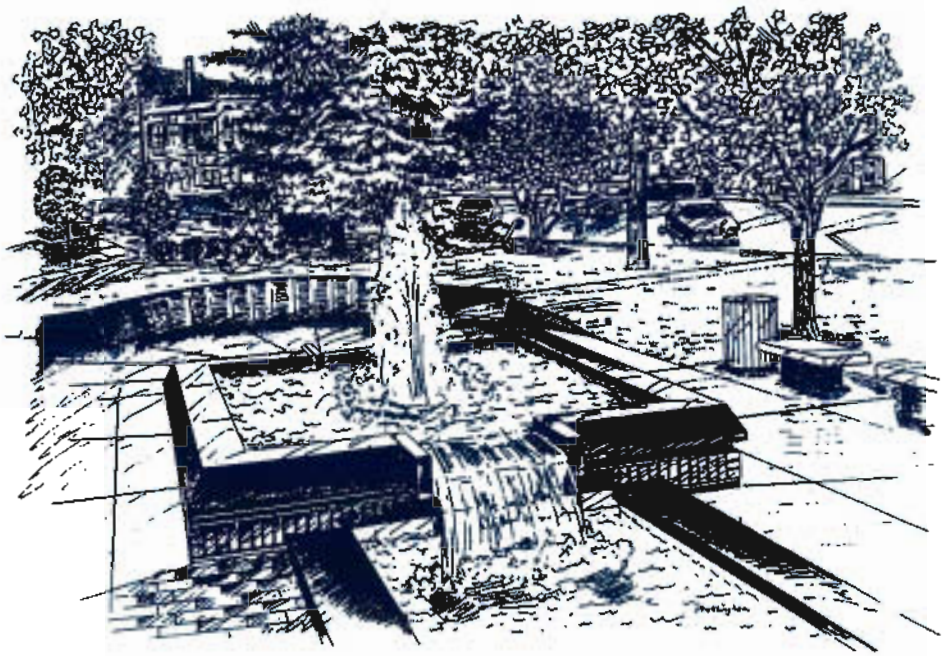
The Village Center business district is a centrally located, compactly developed and unplanned commercial area that is centered at the intersection of Wilmette and Central Avenue east of the Metra rail road tracks. Areas around the Village Center include the general commercial business district along Green Bay Road to the west and several areas zoned for townhouses, but containing a large number of single-family detached houses.

The Village Center has a small town ambience that is valued by the community. Recently completed streetscape improvements have greatly enhanced its visual attractiveness. The district consists primarily of small retail stores and service uses. It also includes numerous dwelling units located above first floor commercial uses. The Village Hall, banks, the Post Office and the Wilmette Public Library are located in or near the district, helping attract people to the area. Among the strengths of the Village Center are the several collector streets that intersect the area and provide good visibility and accessibility and quick access to public transportation facilities (Metra and Pace).

Free parking is available along the streets as well as in a number of public and private parking lots located in or near the district. Permit parking for business owners and their employees is available for modest fees in Village-owned or leased parking facilities including the recently completed underground Burmeister garage. The Metra parking lot is also located in the district.

In 1994, the Plan Commission completed an in-depth study of the Village Center. As part of that study, the Commission recommended, and the Board of Trustees approved, the following as the Village's vision for that area:

"The Village Center should be a vibrant and exciting shopping area that offers a variety of quality retail and restaurant establishments while maintaining its traditional hometown character and pedestrian scale."



Wilmette Centennial Fountain and Memorial

Commercial Areas

General Commercial District 1 (GC1)

The General Commercial district consists of the commercially zoned properties fronting the west side of Green Bay Road from the east-west alley just north of Lake Avenue to Central Avenue and from just south of Wilmette Avenue to the Village border with Evanston. According to the current zoning ordinance, this district was established "to provide a location for a higher volume and higher intensity commercial uses" than, presumably, would be appropriate in the Village Center zoning district that is located across the railroad tracks to the east and actually bisects the district from Central Avenue to just south of Wilmette Avenue. To the north and the west of the district are areas zoned for single-family detached dwellings as well as an area zoned for townhouses, but containing a number of single-family detached houses.

At the present time, the General Commercial district includes, among other things, office buildings; local outlets of national chain stores; automobile service and fuel businesses; an automobile distributorship; a children's museum; a variety of retail stores, restaurants and service uses and an apartment building. There is free street parking on Green Bay Road, and a number of the uses in the district provide parking for their patrons and employees. The district is well served by public transportation, as it is close to the Metra commuter train station and is part of the PACE bus route. The reconstruction of Green Bay Road and the coincident streetscape improvements should improve the flow of traffic in the district and enhance its visual attractiveness.

Office-Research Districts (OR)

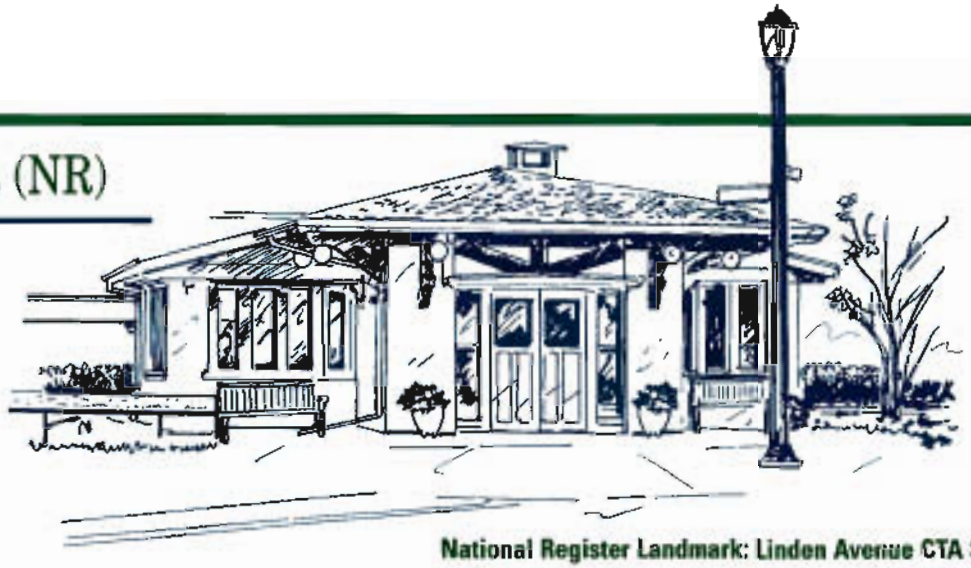
The three office-research districts are located (1) at the northeast corner of the intersection of Lake Avenue and Skokie Boulevard, directly east of the Edens Plaza shopping center; (2) along the Edens Expressway at the south border of the Village and (3) at the northeast corner of the intersection of New Glenview Road and Kilpatrick Avenue.

The OR district located at the northeast corner of the intersection of Lake Avenue and Skokie Boulevard is generally referred to as the "Chalet Nursery property". It is made up of approximately 56,000 square feet and includes a garden shop, greenhouse, parking area and a 5-story office building. Development of the office building was allowed under a court order entered in 1969. This order also allows an additional 5-story building to be constructed on the site of the garden shop and boat sale area. To the north and east of the property are institutional uses and single-family detached homes; to the south across Lake Avenue is a gas station and to the west is the Edens Plaza shopping center.

The OR district located at the southwest corner of the Edens Expressway and the Village limits is accessible via a frontage road and includes two office buildings located on two separate lots. On the northernmost property is a three-story office building and on the southernmost property is a one-story office building. Both properties have large surface parking lots. The present zoning of these properties will allow construction of a larger building on the southern lot. Given the current zoning and location of these properties, it is likely that the southern lot will be expanded or redeveloped.

The OR district located at the northeast corner of the intersection of New Glenview Road and Kilpatrick Avenue contains the Community Recreation Center. This property formerly housed Bell School but was bought by the Park District. Current uses in the building include a fitness center, classrooms and an auditorium. The subject site is surrounded by residential uses.

Neighborhood Retail Business Districts (NR)



National Register Landmark: Linden Avenue CTA Station

The neighborhood retail business districts were established to maintain the scale and promote the continuation of commercial centers that provide goods and services primarily for the convenience of the residents of their respective surrounding neighborhoods. A neighborhood retail business district may also include residential dwelling units located above first floor commercial uses. The neighborhood retail business districts are as follows:

The **Fourth and Linden** neighborhood business district includes a variety of stores, restaurants and offices; a walk-up banking facility located in a recently restored historically significant building and the recently built Chicago Transit Authority (CTA) terminal and station. This station also serves as a PACE terminus, making the district exceptionally well served by public transportation.

This area is characterized by a traditional atmosphere with varied architectural styles and streetscape features that form a comfortable pedestrian environment. Improved parking arrangements and streetscape enhancements were installed in 1999-2000. Sufficient parking is available along the streets and in parking lots.

The **Ridge and Lake** and **Ridge and Wilmette** neighborhood business districts are part of what is sometimes referred to as the "High Ridge Corridor" that straddles Ridge Road from Elmwood Avenue in the north to the Village's southern border with Evanston. Uses in the corridor include the Mallinckrodt campus; St. Joseph's Church, school and cemetery; senior citizens' housing developments; the Village's police station and historical museum and a number of apartment buildings and townhouses. To the east and the west of the corridor are single-family detached homes.

The two neighborhood business districts included in the corridor have over 45 establishments including a food store, small shops and offices. A large, recently constructed residential apartment building with limited commercial space is located in the northern district, and some housing is available above certain other commercial uses in the district. There is some on-street parking available and several off-street parking lots, including one free parking lot north of the Village Green Atrium.

At Lake and Ridge Road, there is a pedestrian scale environment with historic structures. The dominance of St. Joseph's Church and school gives the area a unique character. The Ridge and Wilmette intersection has an orientation directed more to the automobile.

The district known as **Green Bay Road at the Northern Border of the Village** consists of the commercially zoned properties fronting on the west side of Green Bay Road from the Village border with Kenilworth to Elmwood Avenue. To the south and west of the district, and to the east, across the Metra tracks, are single-family detached residences. The district includes restaurants, personal service uses and retail uses.

The **Skokie Boulevard at the Southern Border of the Village** district, which is centered at the intersection of Skokie Boulevard and Old Glenview Road, includes the Wilmette Commons shopping center, another shopping center and a funeral home. These developments are similar in that they both have surface parking lots containing parking space for employees and patrons and provide service and retail uses.

Other neighborhood retail business districts are located (1) along the north side of Lake Avenue between Laramie Avenue on the east and railroad tracks on the west and (2) at the intersection of Wilmette Avenue and Skokie Boulevard.

Commercial Areas

General Commercial District 2 (GC2)

The GC2 district stretches along the railroad tracks from the northern border of the Village just west of Happ Road to the southern border at Wilmette Avenue. Included in this district are the Village Yard located off Laramie Avenue and building materials and storage businesses located in the northern portion of the district off of Lake Avenue, west of Manor Drive.

General Commercial Area Policies

Policy One:
Encourage the establishment and retention of permitted uses in commercially zoned districts.

While the Zoning Ordinance defines the special uses that may be established in a commercially zoned district, the establishment and maintenance of permitted uses is primarily responsible for the execution of the intentions of the district. Accordingly, applications for special uses in commercially zoned areas should be carefully considered.

Policy Two:
Encourage developers to use the Planned Unit Development process to develop or redevelop significant commercial properties when they become available.

The planned unit development process provides a mechanism for discussions among the developer, residents and the Village to determine the most appropriate use and design for a property. The planned unit development process is advantageous to the developer because it allows flexibility in design and use; it also benefits the community by providing a forum for negotiations of design, use, parking and public amenities such as open space.

Policy Three:
Continue to make streetscape improvements in commercial districts.

The Village has installed or arranged for streetscape improvements in the Village Center, the general business district along Green Bay Road and the Fourth and Linden neighborhood business districts. These improvements, which have noticeably improved the appearance of those areas, have included new street lights, trees with irrigation systems, brick trimmed sidewalks, landscape planters, bicycle racks, benches and waste receptacles.

Similar streetscape improvements, together with gateway treatments when appropriate, should be made in other commercial areas of the Village in connection with basic infrastructure improvements. To promote a unified image of the Village's commercial areas, such improvements should, to the extent feasible, follow the design patterns already installed in selected areas.

Policy Four:
Encourage the design of new and renovated structures in commercial areas to be appropriate for commercial uses and enhance the streetscape.

In general, the purpose of a new or a significantly renovated structure located in a commercial district should be consistent with the commercial purposes for which the district was established. This means that, in the case of a mixed-use building, the structure should be designed for the primary purpose of attracting permitted commercial uses.

Policy Five:
Maintain a meaningful working relationship among the Village, the Chamber of Commerce, local business owners and their employees, merchant associations, commercial property owners and other elements of the business and professional community.

A working relationship among and between the Village government and the private business community will be beneficial in, among other things, attracting desirable commercial and professional activities to Wilmette, promoting Wilmette as a good place for providers and consumers of goods and services, adjusting and explaining the Village's regulatory processes, and achieving the goals of this Comprehensive Plan and the purposes for which the various commercial districts were established.

Policy Six:
Initiate a study of the General Commercial 1 Zoning District and its relationship with the Village Center business district.

The changing character of the GC-1 zoning district along Green Bay Road, together with the potential for significant future developments within this district and within that part of the Village Center business district west of Green Bay Road, suggest the need for an in-depth study of the area and its relationship with the major portion of the Village Center business district that lies east of Green Bay Road across the Metra railroad tracks.

The purpose of this study should be to consider the circumstances of the district and formulate recommendations with respect to such questions as the following:

1. Should all or some part of the district be included in the Village Center zoning district?

2. If some or all of the district is to continue to be separate from the Village Center zoning district, should a vision for the future of the district be articulated? If so, what should the vision be?

3. What policies should be adopted to give effect to any vision statement developed as a result of question 2 above?

4. Should additional housing options be permitted in the GC1 District?

Policy Seven:
Develop design guidelines for all commercial districts.

The redevelopment of key properties throughout the Village may have a significant impact on the Village's appearance. The development of design guidelines will help prevent buildings from being developed that are not in character with the surrounding properties. The development of design guidelines will also assist the Plan Commission and Village Board when reviewing Planned Unit Development applications.

Policy Eight:
Continue to develop sub-area plans for commercial areas where potential Planned Unit Developments may occur.

The planned unit development process provides the opportunity for the Village to work with developers to bring about better development. The creation of plans for potential commercial redevelopment areas can help bring about development that meets the vision defined by the Village.

CHAPTER SIX: Historic Preservation

Wilmette's special character is exemplified by its single-family residences, attractive commercial areas, brick-paved streets, tree-lined streets, period street lights and proximity to Lake Michigan. Its charm is enhanced by historically and architecturally significant sites, structures and neighborhoods. The character of the Village cannot be maintained without also preserving these resources. They allow present and future residents to identify with the generations of residents who have worked for more than 125 years to make the Village a desirable place in which to live and raise families.

The 1986 Comprehensive Plan identified historic preservation as an issue that had been somewhat overlooked in Wilmette and called for the creation of the Historic Preservation Commission and a local preservation ordinance. A preservation ordinance was adopted in 1989 and the Wilmette Historic Preservation Commission was created. In addition, the Village cooperated with the Wilmette Historical Society in the acquisition and restoration of the historic Gross Point Village Hall and in the creation and ongoing work in that building of the Wilmette Historical Museum.

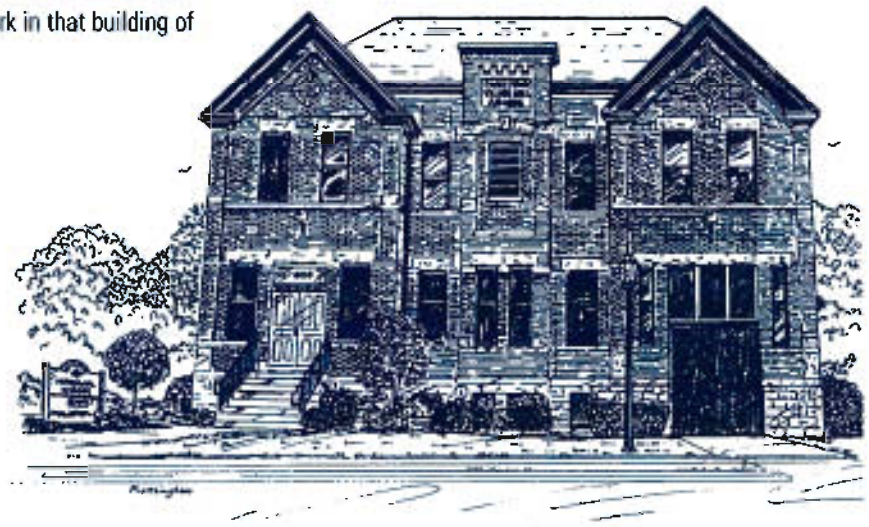
Goal

Preserve the character of community life by recognizing, preserving and acknowledging the significance of those artifacts, structures, sites, geographic features, and trees that exemplify or reflect cultural, social, economic, political or architectural history of the Village of Wilmette.

Policies

Policy One:
Continue to support the Historic Preservation Commission whose duties and responsibilities include:

(a) gathering and disseminating, creating, organizing and administering public educational programs and materials which promote the appreciation of local history, architecture and historic preservation;



Wilmette Historical Museum

(b) providing technical assistance to property owners wishing to preserve or restore significant properties and/or artifacts within, or significant to, the Village of Wilmette;

(c) identifying and recommending to the Village Board those artifacts, structures, sites, geographical features and trees which should be recognized, preserved, acquired or acknowledged, including, but not limited to, the designation of Wilmette landmarks;

(d) seeking funding from public or private agencies, where appropriate, to accomplish its purposes;

(e) communicating and cooperating with and soliciting advice from the Wilmette Historical Society and when appropriate, including representatives of the Society in its deliberations;

(f) evaluating and making recommendations on the proposed alteration or demolition of artifacts, structures, sites, geographic features and trees which are designated Wilmette landmarks;

(g) recommending to the Village Board that it request of State or Federal agencies the granting of landmark statutes and listing in registries of historic places or, as appropriate, the removal of the same; and

(h) acting as the historic preservation review commission as required by the certified local government provisions of the Illinois Historical Preservation Agency.

Policy Two:
Continue to provide staffing and other support for the Wilmette Historical Museum.

Policy Three:
Continue to grant local landmark status to properties that meet the appropriate criteria.

Local landmark status provides protection to the property and the surrounding neighborhood by requiring review of any proposed changes, additions or demolitions by the Historic Preservation Commission prior to the issuance of a building permit. Since 1989, local landmark status has been granted to Gross Point Village Hall, the Chicago and Northwestern Passenger Depot, the Baha'i House of Worship and a number of single-family residences.

Policy Four:
Complete the process of recommending local landmark status for those properties in Wilmette already on the National Register of Historic Places.

Policy Five:
Examine the creation of National Register Historic Districts and consider amending the Historic Preservation Ordinance to include provisions for the formation of local historic landmark districts.

Policy Seven in Chapter 4 (Housing) calls for the Village to periodically review its development standards and make such adjustments as may seem appropriate to preserve the desirable character or scale of a neighborhood without impinging on the rights of property owners, sacrificing property values or impeding desirable investment in the replacement or upgrading of housing units that have become obsolete, deteriorated or inconsistent with changing lifestyles. In this connection, local historic landmark districts may be useful in preserving the desirable character of certain neighborhoods that are historically significant.

Policy Six:
Continue the Historic Preservation Recognition Awards Program that was established in 1993.

The program gives public recognition to property owners, architects and crafts people who have promoted preservation in Wilmette by completing projects that are in keeping with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards of Rehabilitation.

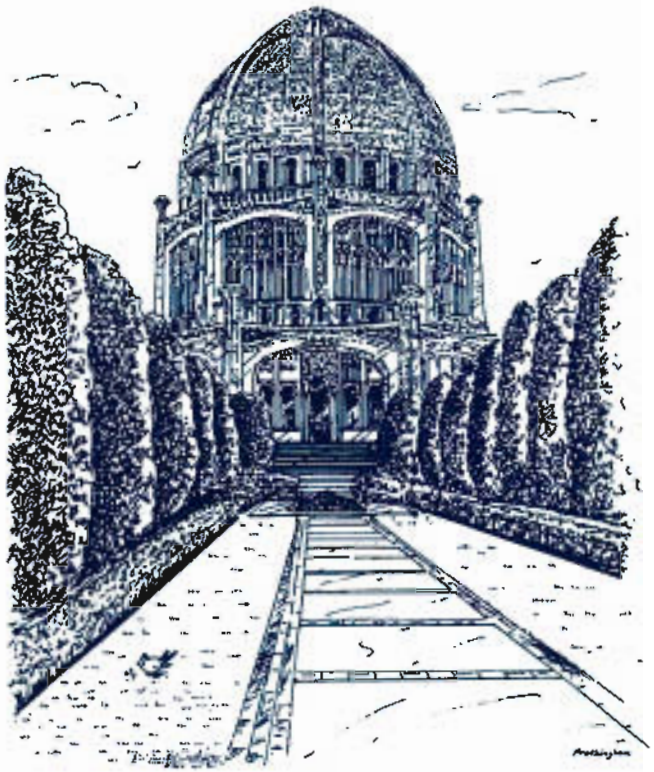
Policy Seven:
In addition to providing, when requested, technical assistance to property owners and crafts people on topics such as preservation, renovation, and restorations, the Historic Preservation Commission should also provide property owners with access to and guidance regarding public and private sources of financial incentives for the preservation of historic structures.

Programs that may provide potential financial incentives for preservation include property tax assessment freezes for rehabilitation of local landmarks, the National Register tax credit rehabilitation program and easement donations to the Landmarks Preservation Council of Illinois.

Policy Eight:
Promote coordination of the efforts of the various community groups and organizations that may sponsor public education in and awareness of Wilmette's history.

Policy Nine:
Continue to meet the requirements of the Certified Local Government program administered by the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency and utilize the resources made available by that affiliation.

Accreditation as a Certified Local Government (CLG) gives the Village access to support from the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency (IHPA) in the form of grants and information from IHPA staff.



Local Landmark: Baha'i House of Worship

CHAPTER SEVEN: Municipal Infrastructure and Services

Maintenance of infrastructure and delivery of services are two of municipal government's primary functions. The Village's success in performing these functions determines to a great extent the quality of life in the community. Although the infrastructure of Wilmette is substantially in place, continual replacement of, improvements to and maintenance of our streets, sewers, water systems and other facilities are necessary.

In delivering services and maintaining infrastructure, the Village should be conscious of the potential aesthetic impact of these functions. Residents take pride in the beauty of their Village and would justifiably object to the Village actions which unnecessarily detract from appearance and diminish property values.

Goals

Goal One: Maintain a safe and functional street and sidewalk system.

Goal Two: Minimize through traffic in residential areas.

Goal Three: Provide a safe circulation system for bicycle riders.

Goal Four: Maintain an efficient and effective street lighting system consistent with the character of the community.

Goal Five: Encourage and maintain tree lined streets.

Goal Six: Maintain a water system adequate to serve community needs and fulfill contractual commitments to other communities.

Goal Seven: Maintain functional sewer systems of a capacity adequate to serve efficiently community needs.

Goal Eight: Provide high quality emergency (police, paramedic and fire) services.

Goal Nine: Keep public buildings and facilities in good condition and of a capacity adequate to serve community needs efficiently.

Goal Ten: Continue to provide access to public buildings and public ways for mobility handicapped persons.

Goal Eleven: Maintain the solid waste disposal system at the current level of service.

Goal Twelve: Develop a comprehensive approach to pedestrian, bicycle, vehicular and mass-transit traffic.

Goal Thirteen: Encourage water and energy conservation.

Goal Fourteen: Maintain an attractive appearance along public ways.

Goal Fifteen: Encourage the establishment of new infrastructure to take advantage of technological advancements in communications.

Policies

Policy One:
Continue using a five-year capital improvements program, updated annually to reflect current conditions and needs, for planning Village capital improvements, which tend to be very expensive. It is not within the financial capability of the Village to perform all desirable capital improvements in a short period of time. It may be necessary to perform certain projects in phases over an extended period. It may be necessary to finance certain projects by issuing bonds. A five-year capital improvements program is a valuable tool for setting priorities and determining financing approaches. The Village already uses such a program and should continue to do so.

Policy Two:
Continue the existence of the Transportation Commission whose duties and responsibilities include:

(a) designate areas to be posted "no parking 2:00 a.m. to 5:00 a.m." and conduct the hearing procedure therefor in Section 13-8.4 of the Village Code;
(b) designate residential permit parking areas in accordance with the survey & hearing procedure specified in Sections 13-8.21.1, 13-8.21.2 and 13-8.21.3 of the Village Code;
(c) conduct such studies as the Village Board may request of it from time to time and make such recommendations as appropriate;
(d) assume all the functions and duties of the Bicycle Safety Commission heretofore created by Resolution No. 74-R-13, which has been dissolved, and which included the study of bicycle laws and their enforcement and the promotion of policies and dissemination of information regarding safe bicycle usage;
(e) designate locations in the village where it is necessary to place school crossing guards; such designations shall be pursuant to and in accordance with the school crossing guard guidelines adopted by the Village Board on June 16, 1992;
(f) monitor transportation issues within the village and recommend to the Village Board ways to coordinate village, other public, and private transportation actions to increase efficiency, effectiveness, and safety; and
(g) act as liaison with PACE, CTA, RTA, Metra, and other public and private entities which provide transportation services affecting the Village of Wilmette.

Policy Three:
Continue using a functional classification system to designate Wilmette streets as local, collector, arterial or expressway.

The National Committee on Urban Transportation is a federal body consisting of nationally recognized traffic and transportation experts. The Committee has developed a uniform classification system for urban streets that the Village adopted with its 1974 Plan. The system is still useful because it provides uniform standards for designating local, collector and arterial streets. The classification system for Wilmette roadways appears on the map (page 31).

Policy Four:
To preserve the character of our existing neighborhoods, more emphasis should be placed on reducing driving speeds and the accommodation of pedestrian and bicycle travel. The design of Wilmette's local transportation system should recognize factors of:

(a) Pedestrian and bicycle movements as well as motorized vehicular movements, and the need to protect vulnerable users such as children, the disabled and the elderly.
(b) Convenient and efficient pickups and deliveries, emergency access (fire, police, paramedic), and maintenance service (Public Works) and, where justified, bus service.
(c) Enhancement of overall aesthetics of neighborhoods through well-designed street layout, street landscaping and maintenance of brick and other pavements.
(d) Non-local traffic on local streets. Non-local traffic can be detrimental to residential neighborhoods by creating noise and jeopardizing safety. Methods for reducing such traffic and diverting it to collector and arterial streets should be studied, and criteria should be developed for determining when a particular method should be applied.

Policy Five:
Discourage overnight parking on arterial and collector streets, but regulate such parking on local streets based on the desires of neighborhood residents. Wilmette's current overnight parking ordinance strikes a balance between the safety and security interests that support an overnight parking ban and the need or desire of many residents to park their vehicles on the streets overnight. This approach should be continued.

Policy Six:
Facilitate bike usage, by providing bike routes and bike racks. Bicycle riding is an important means of transportation and recreation for many children and adults, and it is, therefore, important for the Village to provide safe bicycle routes. However, if bicycle use is to be practical, it is also necessary for the Village to provide adequate and secure storage facilities.

Municipal Infrastructure and Services

Policy Seven:
Vacate unopened, unimproved and unused alleys.

Many of the unopened, unimproved and unused alleys in residential areas have been vacated. Subject to a reservation of utility easements, the Village should continue to vacate these alleys where consistent with other goals and policies of this Plan, thereby transferring ownership at no immediate cost to the adjacent homeowners and placing the property on the tax rolls.

Policy Eight:
Continue to ramp sidewalks as part of street and curb projects and make other improvements that increase accessibility of public areas to mobility handicapped persons.

In 1990, Wilmette had a handicapped population of about 2.1% of the residents, which approximated the national average of 2%. Reasonable efforts should be made to insure accessibility of public areas to these residents. Ramped sidewalks are a small but significant step in improving mobility for the handicapped. The general public also benefits from such facilities.

Policy Nine:
Continue to modernize the wiring of the Village's 1925 style street lighting system.

The existing 1925 style street lighting poles and fixtures have assumed almost landmark status in Wilmette and residents appear to favor their preservation. However, the wiring is outdated and key components of the system such as transformers and fuses are no longer available. Continue the program to update the system, while maintaining the 1925 style.

Policy Ten:
Continue programs that protect the health and population of trees on public and private property.

The Village is committed to disease eradication for all trees in the community. The Village carefully monitors and prepares for potential threats to its suburban forest. The Village has adopted an ordinance that requires the removal of diseased or dangerous trees on private property.

Policy Eleven:
Continue the parkway tree maintenance and replacement program.

The Village has developed an aggressive tree-planting program. The Village's parkway tree replacement program has resulted in the planting of over 9,000 parkway trees since 1966. Since 1974, more trees have been planted every year than lost.

Policy Twelve:
Continue to monitor energy conservation measures in Village-owned buildings and vehicles and make improvements when practical and cost effective.

Policy Thirteen:
In cooperation with other members of the Solid Waste Agency of Northern Cook County, continue to pursue facilities that are adequate to meet the solid waste disposal needs of area communities.

Policy Fourteen:
Encourage use of newer methods such as the Village's web site and the WCTV Cable Channel to increase resident awareness of, and participation in, the Village's recycling program.

Policy Fifteen:
Develop plans that provide reasonable assurances that Village equipment and deployment plans will be sufficient to provide for timely, efficient and effective services such as snow removal and leaf collection.

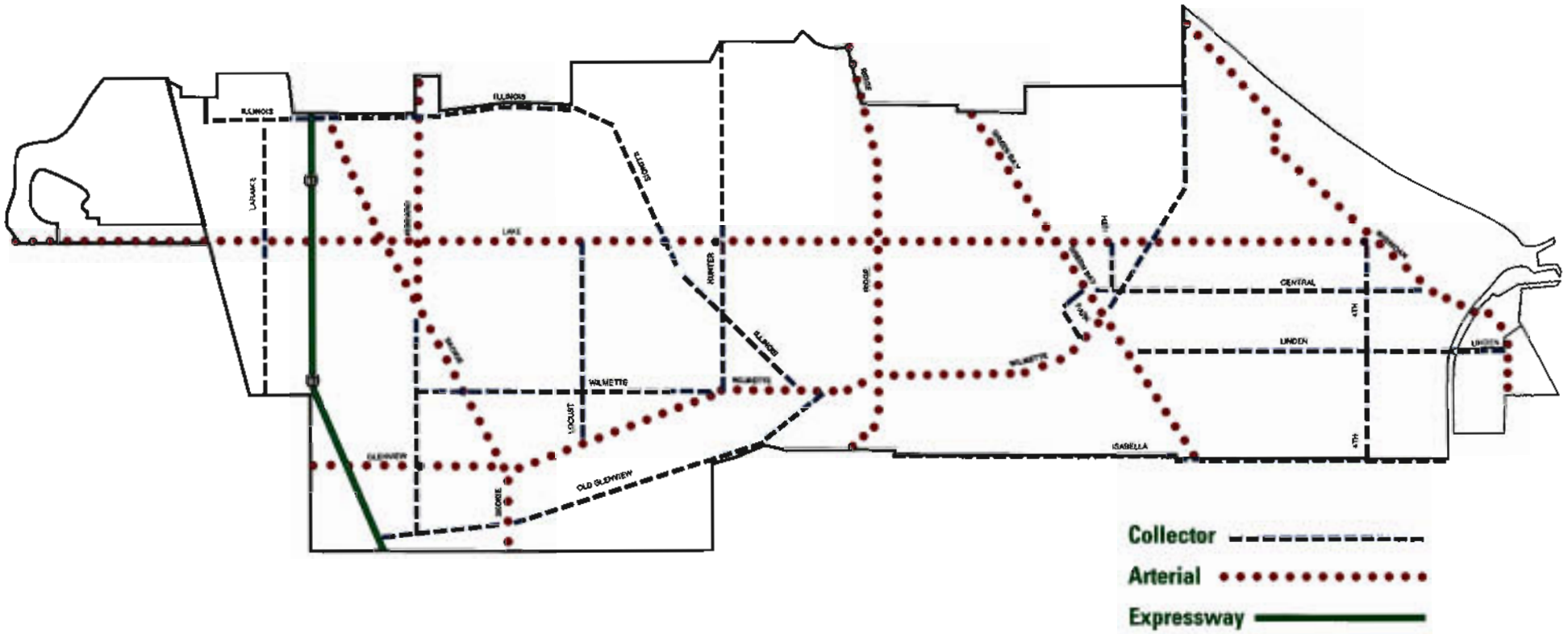
Policy Sixteen:
Continue the current ten year accelerated street resurfacing program started in 1999.

The condition of the Village's roadways are important for many reasons, including the effective provision of police and fire services. The ten year accelerated street resurfacing program ensures that the Village's roadways will be maintained to acceptable standards.

Policy Seventeen:
Support efforts whenever possible to ensure residents are able to receive effective service from utility companies at the lowest possible cost.

The Village should continue to seek out additional cable television providers so residents have a choice and competition is available. In addition, the Village should monitor the telephone, natural gas and electric utility industries to ensure that residents have competition when possible as well as effective service.

Roadway Classification System



Local streets not shown.

CHAPTER EIGHT: Implementation

The Challenge of Implementation

The previous chapters have outlined a number of goals and policies and, in some cases, specific projects, for the Village of Wilmette. However, setting forth the goals and policies of the Village will not mean much if action is not taken to attain the goals and to implement the policies. In this Chapter, the actions required by the Village Board and, hopefully, other local government units will be discussed.

As in the past, Wilmette will continue to face challenges associated with plan implementation. These include the need to plan, design, finance and develop normal public improvements such as streets, water and sewers. They also include the monitoring and making appropriate adjustments of standards for the subdivision and use of land. The implementation tools and policies required in these areas exist and are generally adequate.

Updating the Zoning Ordinance and Redevelopment Controls

The Zoning Ordinance of 1990 has generally served the needs of the Village, but should be reviewed against the goals and policies of this Plan. The Zoning Ordinance should be amended as required to provide reasonable assurances that residential neighborhoods and commercial districts are maintained and redeveloped in a manner that is not inconsistent with this Plan. In this connection:

(a) Zoning districts should continue to be geared to the pattern of development within Wilmette and support the land use policies of this Plan.

(b) Zoning maps should reflect the policies of this Plan.

(c) There should continue to be a high level of coordination among the Zoning Ordinance and other techniques of land use regulation. The Zoning Ordinance should work in tandem with subdivision regulations, site plan review criteria, building codes and other regulations designed to achieve Plan objectives.

Planning Studies

To effectively implement the goals of this Plan, it may be useful if more detailed planning studies are undertaken from time to time of certain areas in the Village. These studies should result from a public process that includes relevant constituencies and experts. The results can serve as general guidance for future redevelopment, changes to Village policies and ordinances and the planning and budgeting of associated public improvements. Such a study of the General Commercial Zoning District is called for in Policy Six of Chapter Five.

Recent planning studies for the Village Center and the former Jewel site on Lake Avenue are examples of how such studies can be useful. The Village Center Plan led to significant streetscape improvements and changes in parking requirements. The hearings on the former Jewel site allowed the community to express preferences on redevelopment alternatives.

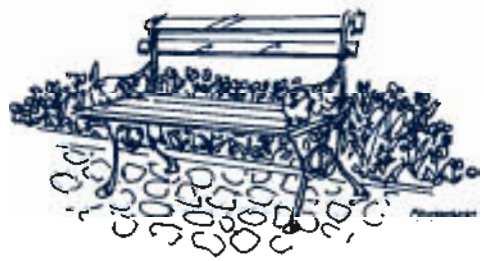
The scope of such planning studies can vary from simply an expression of community preferences to comprehensive master plans. These studies may expand in more detail the goals and policies of this Plan and, as such, may, if adopted in accordance with the provisions of the Village Code, become amendments to this Plan.

Inter-Governmental Cooperation

Many of the goals of this Plan cannot be achieved unless the actions of one or more public agencies are closely coordinated. The citizenry expects this sort of governmental cooperation. Thus, as the Village moves to implement the policies of this Plan, it should do so on the basis of sharing and cooperation. Hopefully, all other units of government with primary constituencies within the boundaries of Wilmette will work with one another. To this end, the Village should encourage continuation of the programs of regularly scheduled and ad hoc meetings among officials of all governmental units in the community.

Similarly, coordination with the private sector and the community is important to the realization of this Plan.

Broad public support and involvement is required as a prerequisite to the attainment of the goals and the implementation of the policies set forth in this Plan. If adequate support is to be developed, a vigorous and continuing program of discussion, education and participation must be carried on. This Plan has been the product of such community involvement. Its visions will be attained only if that spirit of community involvement and good citizenship continues.



Notes & Comments

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