







VILLAGE OF WILMETTE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN











Village Board Review Draft • March 12, 2024

# Acknowledgments



This plan was developed by and for the Wilmette community. It is the product of an extensive community-wide engagement process and effort that included hundreds of residents, businesses, organizations, staff, and elected and appointed officials. Thank you to all who participated; this document is a reflection of your vision, ideas, and commitment to Wilmette and its future.

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**CHAPTER ONE** 

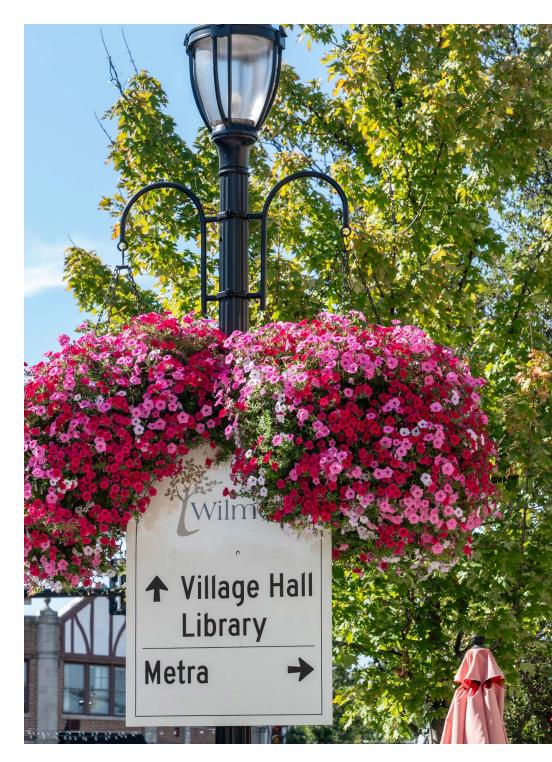
A PLAN FOR WILMETTE

# What is a Comprehensive Plan?

Comprehensive plans are prepared by communities to chart a path forward. This is done through a series of specific tasks and defined policies. Plans allow the community to proactively work toward a desired future, and create resiliency to face the unexpected. Such actions for Wilmette are defined throughout this plan and summarized in the implementation chapter, while policies are defined by the goals and objectives for the future, which the Village developed as part of preparing this plan. These statements are found throughout the document related to their relevant planning themes and chapters. The actions and policies are complementary and built on previous planning efforts by the community.

Wilmette recently celebrated its 150th anniversary, and as such there is a lot of history and past planning to build on. This plan does not start from scratch or forget what has happened prior to 2023, as that would ignore what makes Wilmette remarkable and would not consider the importance of past actions that contribute to defining the future.

Wilmette is a different sort of place. It is similar to its neighboring communities in that it is primarily built-out. New development will mostly take the form of redevelopment when sites or districts experience development pressure from the real estate markets. This type of development can be challenging, as it removes something that has been in place for some time and potentially impacts direct neighbors that have been there just as long. Such change can be difficult for communities. That is why they plan and consider as many potential impacts or changes as possible (both positive and negative).



### A different sort of place...

What has been different in Wilmette recently is the success of efforts by the private and public sectors to create a new vibrancy in the downtown. This change has been broadly noticed in the region and is the result of thoughtful and deliberate efforts, rather than simply relying on major new development. These efforts have spurred new development in the Village Center as a result of the thoughtful planning and implementation of the 2011 Village Center Plan and recent aesthetic and streetscape enhancements.

Other seemingly straightforward, but highly significant, recent changes made by Wilmette were re-establishment of the Village's Housing and Human Relations Commissions and the large-scale Stormwater Improvement Project (discussed further in Chapter 5). Further, just prior to commencing the comprehensive plan, the Village completed plans for sustainability and active transportation. As much as anything, these actions define the major conversations that the Village chose to advance in this planning effort: Housing Affordability, Diversity and Inclusion, Sustainability, and Transportation. These are among the most challenging and significant issues of our time, and Wilmette has chosen to address them head-on by making them the focal points of its comprehensive plan.

### A different sort of plan...

Beginning the Wilmette Comprehensive Plan raised an interesting question about how the effort would serve the community. How do you manage a community that is built out, well-established, and doing well? The answer is to look at planning questions through a forward-looking lens that focuses on: diversity and inclusiveness, sustainability, housing affordability, and transportation. In fact, the Village had already begun addressing these challenges, making this plan a continuation of those conversations. The plan's role is to responsibly advance those discussions by informing, confirming, and inspiring further actions. The context of how those discussions have been advanced is set in the various chapters of this plan, while recommendations for how to take those steps are defined in its implementation chapter.

### What's significant about Wilmette?

Describing Wilmette and this planning process in just a few words is a challenge. There is the risk of oversimplifying or missing something. Yet, early in the process, a short-hand definition emerged; looking back, this early assessment holds true. Wilmette...

- is a multicultural, multigenerational, built-out residential community,
- desires to preserve history and quality of place,
- has clearly defined commercial corridors and transit-oriented nodes,
- has distributed green space, accessible Village-wide,
- is working to enhance connectivity and accessibility to increase active transportation,
- is strategizing to expand access to housing throughout the Village, and
- is working to enhance diversity, equity, and inclusion in the community.

# A History of Planning in Wilmette

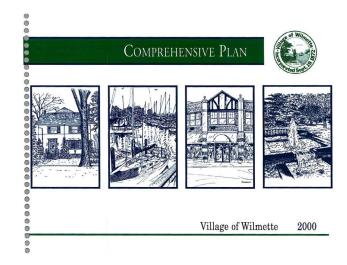
The most recent planning efforts by the Village, incorporated into this planning effort, are:

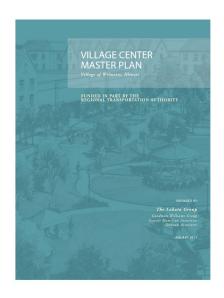
# 2000 Comprehensive Plan Update

- Update to the 1986 Comprehensive Plan.
- Considered a "policy plan" since the Village was already built out.
  - Major aspects of the plan focused on new development and community preservation.
- Plan recommendations focused on policies:
  - Updating the zoning ordinance and redevelopment controls as needed,
  - Pursuit of additional planning studies to determine next steps, and
  - Prioritizing inter-governmental cooperation.

# 2011 Village Center Master Plan

- Focused vision for Wilmette's Downtown.
- Identified catalytic projects and redevelopment sites, zoning changes to increase residential density, and recommended wayfinding/streetscape improvements.
- The overarching goal was to create a more vibrant hub for retail, dining, and entertainment that meets housing, employment and transportation needs of the community in a way that maintains the historic, small town character that is uniquely Wilmette.



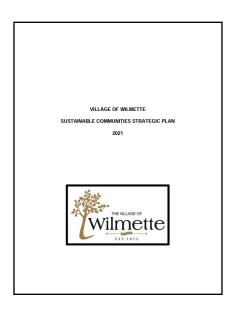


# 2021 Sustainable Communities Strategic Plan

- Developed by the Environmental and Energy Commission (EEC), guided by the Greenest Region Compact (GRC) plan framework.
- Recognizes there are "Village efforts" and "resident efforts" that play a part in reaching goals.
- Overarching themes and directives include:
  - Modifications to land use regulations to enhance sustainable uses and lifestyles equitably.
  - Maintenance of mobility infrastructure to encourage active transportation/transit use.
  - Restoration and protection of biodiversity.
  - Reduced energy waste and increased renewable energy infrastructure/access.

### 2021 Master Bike and Active Transportation Plan

- Plan aims to strengthen and improve active transportation networks to encourage more trips outside of private cars (i.e., biking and walking).
- Goals include Safety, Education and Encouragement, Awareness, Convenience, and Community.
- Identifies and prioritizes gaps in networks and improvements needed to enhance comfort.
- Plan includes performance measures and strategies for implementation.





Other plans prepared for the Village, and in some cases used to inform this current plan are:

- 1922 Comprehensive Plan
- 1973 Comprehensive Plan
- 1986 Comprehensive Plan
- 1990 Zoning Ordinance Updates
- 2000 West Village Center Plan
- 2004 4th and Linden Plan
- 2004 Affordable Housing Plan
- 2005 Green Bay Road Corridor Study
- 2005 Village-Wide Market Analysis
- 2006 Village Center Redevelopment Research
- 2007 Parking Structure Feasibility Study
- 2008 ULI Study Revitalizing a Class American Town
- 2014 Zoning Ordinance Updates
- 2016 UIC Linden Station Study

From the 1922 Wilmette Comprehensive Plan, as true today as 100 years ago:

"It may be taken for granted that those who have made their homes here and now 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 of this Elmshaded suburb of ours in to a practical vision of its highest possibilities in respect to beauty and convenience."



# **Planning Themes**

At the outset of the planning process, the Village defined the themes that would drive the plan. These were reflective of community values, opportunities, and concerns. These themes are:



# **Community Character**

Community Character refers to **features that help shape** a **place's identity** and the way residents experience the Village and their neighborhood. From architecture, design, and history, to environment, technology, people, and cultures. All these factors and more influence and contribute to community character.



**Arts, Culture, and Entertainment** 

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



Health, Safety, and Wellness

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



# **Community Institutions**

Community institutions are the local facilities and organizations (schools, libraries, parks, non-profits, places of worship, day care organizations) that **provide** resources and activities related to their missions, enhance community identity, and create opportunities for residents to engage, socialize, and learn. Wilmette is fortunate to have outstanding government entities managing these important community institutions including Schools Districts #37, 39 and #203, the Wilmette Public Library, and the Wilmette Park District.



# **Sustainability**

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



### **Active Transportation**

Active Transportation is human-powered mobility, such as biking, walking, or rolling. This theme encompasses many elements of a transportation network such as sidewalks, pedestrian crossings, bicycle infrastructure, access to transit, accessibility for people with disabilities, and shared uses such as scooters. Additional specifics and recommendations are detailed in the Wilmette Master Bike & Active Transportation Plan, adopted in February 2021. The goals and objectives in this section are best accomplished in coordination with that plan.



# **Diversity and Inclusion**

Diversity in a community is about being in a place where different types of people live, work, and go about their lives together. Yet diversity is only part of the equation; it is a quantitative calculation of how many people live somewhere. Inclusion is a way to create communities that add depth and richness to the diversity that exists. Inclusion is about actively welcoming and accepting different worldviews and respecting unique needs, backgrounds, perspectives, and potentials. Inclusion strategies and practices are successful when all residents feel like they belong and are able to use their voice and be heard no matter their background or identity.



# Housing

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



#### **Business + Commerce**

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



#### **Business Districts (Subareas)**

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

# A Brief History of Wilmette

### **Early Settlers**

Settlement of the area goes back to the Native Americans who arrived in the 1700's and included the Miami and Pottawatomi peoples. These groups were relocated as a result of treaties established in the 1820's and 1830's.

The Ouilmette family, the source of the Village's name, were early settlers until about the 1840's, when they sold their lands. The first Europeans came to the area soon after, many from Germany.

# **Growth of the Village**

The Village was incorporated in 1872 and by 1900 was considered a full-fledged Chicago suburb. Western Wilmette was initially established as the Village of Gross Point, incorporated in 1874 and eventually annexed into Wilmette.

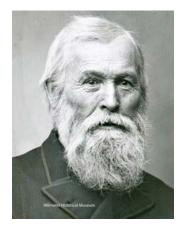
The form of Wilmette and how it fits into the Chicago area is very much a function of its commuter rail line, first established in 1855 as the Chicago Milwaukee Rail line, then the Chicago and Northwestern Railway, and ultimately—today—the Metra Union Pacific North Line. CTA service in the Village was first established in 1912.

In the early 1950s, the other major transportation connection for the Village was built, the Edens Expressway. Together, these elements of local history have played a key role in shaping Wilmette today.<sup>1</sup>













<sup>1</sup> Source: Images of America: Wilmette. Kathy Hussey-Arntson and Patrick Leary. 2012

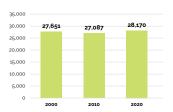
# Who is in Wilmette?

A full demographics, land use, market assessment and statistical review of the Village is provided in Appendix 1 of this plan. By way of introduction, a few key demographics about the community are provided here:

### **Demographics**

- Wilmette experienced a slight population decrease between 2000 and 2010.
- 2020 Census data show a population increase since 2000.
- The 50 to 64 age cohort is the fastest growing age cohort in Wilmette.
- The Median Age in Wilmette continues to increase and is higher than Cook County overall.
- Wilmette has a high proportion of school aged children (19 and under), which has remained consistent since 2000. This is the largest age cohort in Wilmette.
- The 20 to 34 population is the smallest age cohort in Wilmette and has continued to decrease since 2000.
- Median income in Wilmette has consistently been more than double that of Cook County and the Nation – and it has continually increased.
- The majority of Wilmette households earn \$100k+ annually.

### **Population**



#### Income

#### Median Household Income

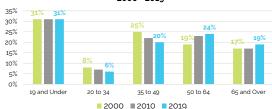


#### Median Household Income Distribution (2020)



### Age

#### Age Cohorts 2000 - 2019



	2000	2010	2019
Wilmette	42.2	44.5	45.5
<b>Cook County</b>	33.6	35.3	36.8

# **Using this Plan**

Completing the preparation of a comprehensive plan is as much a beginning to the hard work, as it is the conclusion of the hard work. Implementing the plan once it is completed takes many forms; specific implementation tasks are outlined in the chapters that follow. More broadly, a few implementation resources are noted here:

#### **Commissions**

Commissions in the Village will play an ongoing role in bringing the plan to fruition, as they did in its development. Their work regarding the key values of Wilmette started before this plan was begun and will continue. Nearly all of the commissions noted below served as focus groups for the planning process as they reviewed and refined the goals and objectives related to their areas of focus. Through this interactive engagement process, more than 35 residents with detailed knowledge of the community and expertise in their field had the opportunity to provide feedback on specific components of this Plan. Beyond the plan, this list of commissions tells much of what one needs to know about the main concerns of Wilmette. The commissions, along with the Village Board, regularly meet to review, refine and act on matters related to Village priorities.



Appearance Review Commission



Environmental & Energy Commission



Historic Preservation Commission



**Housing Commission** 



Human Relations Commission



**Plan Commission** 



Zoning Board of Appeals

# **Implementation**

There is no single right answer for how to use a comprehensive plan moving forward, but best practices are as follow:

- When considering future development proposals before the Village, the plan is a useful tool to consider the extent to which such proposals advance the plan. This does not just relate to the location, height, and type of use – but may extend to other plan focus points such as housing and sustainability.
- Care must be taken to not let the plan sit on a shelf. In the challenge of managing a community, the plan can sometimes be forgotten. For this reason, communities identify an annual point at which the plan is reviewed, and decisions made on which priorities are to be acted upon, and assess progress in actions taken. One way of doing this is for the Plan Commission to annually review the comprehensive plan goals and objectives, and implementation tasks.
- The plan also serves as a communication tool for the Village. Directing people to the document is a way to share Wilmette's goals, expectations and planned actions with partner organizations, grant sources, government agencies, developers, and the community at large.

# **Understanding the Goals & Objectives**

### **Goals & Objectives Defined**

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



**Goals** are, and for the purposes of this document defined as, aspirational statements of Village ambitions. They are not measurable and may not ultimately be fully achievable — they spell out what the Village seeks to preserve, change, and become.



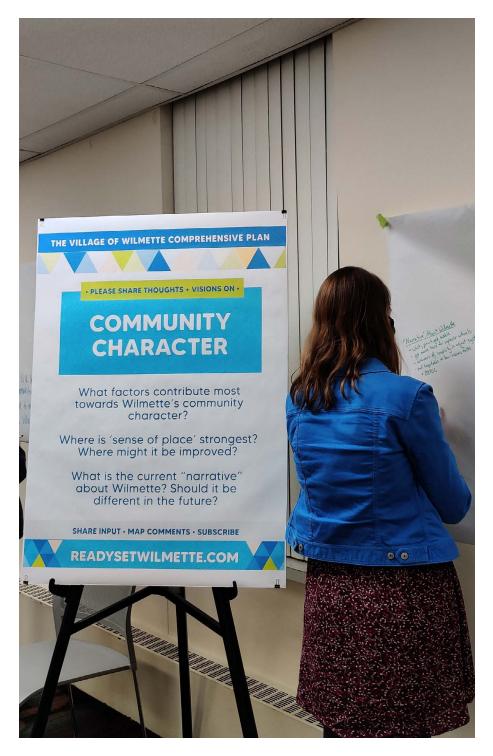
**Objectives** are actions (they start with verbs). They define the actions or policies to be followed in pursuit of goals. Some are broad, some more specific. They do not come with a timeline and may be changed in their ultimate implementation. They likely require more thought, deliberation, and refinement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

### **Goals and Objectives Applied**

Goals and objectives are aspirational statements about how a community sees its future and the actions it plans to take to move toward that desired future. They serve several functions in the plan:

- Refer to existing conditions that are important to maintain: First and foremost, the purpose of a plan is to preserve community assets and essential positive qualities of the Village. Many of these are highlighted in the goals and objectives. Therefore, in reviewing the statements one may think "But we already do that, why wouldn't we continue to do that? In fact, why is it even mentioned here?" The answer is that these are important conditions to be preserved, and this is part of how the plan describes what's important to Wilmette. If the goals and objectives only focus on matters to change or problems to fix, the plan loses the fundamental factors that make the Village great.
- Describe conditions that aren't here now but we want to accomplish: Goals and objectives primarily are about aspirations for the Village and how to move toward them. Some goals and objectives are very specific actions (i.e., change zoning along a corridor), and some are seemingly generic statements that few could disagree with (i.e., preserve open space). Both the specific and general statements are needed to paint a picture of the community Wilmette wants to be. Every possible opportunity or change can't be predicted today, so the plan includes goals and objectives that describe end states by which future opportunities can be measured.

- Help to implement the plan: Comprehensive plans are implemented in three primary ways budgetary decisions of the Village Board, development projects that occur in the Village, and by investment coming from grants or other external funds. The goals and objectives help remind elected officials of the implementation ideas raised in the community-wide planning process and give leaders confidence that taking such actions advances a community vision. Also, the goals and objectives help to determine if a development proposal is appropriate. In fact, the first standard of review for a special use proposed in the Village is: "the proposed use in the specific location will be consistent with the goals and policies of the Comprehensive Plan." When securing grants, any grantor will want to ensure that their investment is part of a logical and thought-out spending and use program—like a comprehensive plan.
- Define intentionality of the plan: Sometimes, municipal governance hits a bump in the road. The Village may face a challenging budgetary decision, need to consider approval of a controversial development, or be faced with litigation on a zoning matter. In each of these cases, the plan helps the Village show that decisions made were intentional and consistent with the plan. The plan, goals, and objectives shine light on how a decision was reached and provides consistency in actions over time; this lets residents and the business community know that the Village is acting logically and predictably. And if faced with the challenge of a land use related lawsuit, it shows that the Village has not been arbitrary or capricious in its decisions.
- Set the table for the rest of the plan: The goals and objectives are not the end of the story. There is much background, reasoning, imagery, and detail yet to be provided in the body of the comprehensive plan. It is not the role of the goals and objectives to say everything, but rather to highlight the main ideas that are of importance to the Village.





**CHAPTER TWO** 

# COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

#### Introduction

A comprehensive plan is developed with and for the people who live in that community. While much of the analysis that leads to recommendations that are technical, the final plan is not a technical document — it is a vision for the community and a set of policies to follow in advancing that vision. To effectively serve as a roadmap for the future that guides Village policy-and decision-making, *the plan must reflect the values and priorities of Wilmette*.

This notion was embedded into the Ready Set Wilmette process from the start, with a unique public engagement strategy designed not only to hear ideas from as many residents as possible, but to *bring people into the fold of the process through community conversations and education* on planning themes.

There is not one singular way to approach community engagement. The most effective and wide-reaching outreach must be a multi-pronged approach that provides many avenues for communication, learning, idea sharing, and refining plan concepts.

The Ready Set Wilmette engagement process responded to a specific set of topics identified by the Village prior to beginning the effort. Recognizing the importance of laying a foundation of common knowledge and clarity about these topics, the importance of active listening, and education through engagement, the planning team grouped the topics into "planning themes" and structured outreach around a series of "engagement seasons." A new theme was introduced and explored each season via special events, polls, and online tools for continued participation. The process included the following key elements:



### Fall 2021

#### **Themes**

Community Character Arts, Culture, Entertainment Health, Safety, Wellness



# Spring 2022

#### **Themes**

Community Diversity Inclusiveness Community Institutions



# **Summer 2022**

#### **Themes**

Business + Commerce Housing Variety + Affordability District Plans



# Fall 2022

#### **Themes**

Active Transportation
Environment + Sustainability

# **Early Outreach & Focus Groups**

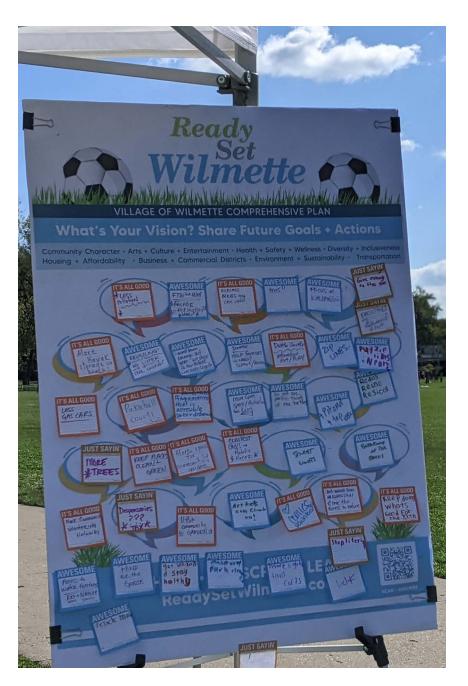
Prior to engaging the wider community, the planning team met with Village Boards & Commissions to introduce the process and ask about their vision for Wilmette. The team also conducted focus group interviews with local organizations, businesses, places of worship, schools, and other stakeholders and individuals. These insights informed the context and structure for next steps in community outreach.











#### Wilmette Talks

Community-wide events titled Wilmette Talks—held in the spirit of TED Talks—took place each "engagement season" featuring presentations and panel discussions with local experts, followed by questions and discussion from community participants. Each Talk was tailored to embrace the nuances of the topic at hand, and offered a range of perspectives, data, and "food-for-thought". Panelists ranged from diversity and inclusion experts and sustainability leaders to high school students, principals, and affordable housing specialists. Both the process of hosting and facilitating the Talks and the outcomes (learnings and questions raised during), were key to plan development. A summary from each talk can also be found in Appendix C.

Wilmette Talk #1: Community Character; Arts, Culture, Entertainment; Health, Safety, Wellness. A session on these topics was held at the Wilmette Park District Community Recreation Center. Members of the consultant team presented ideas that defined these themes, shared the latest thinking about them and how they apply to communities, and how they might specifically relate to Wilmette and the comprehensive plan.

Wilmette Talk #2: Moving Towards a More Welcoming Wilmette & What it Means to Belong. Diversity and inclusion were the focus of this session, built around two panel discussions and held at the Regina Dominican High School. Both were led by consultant team member Terri Johnson, and the first was a small group discussion with members of the Village's Human Relations Commission. The discussion was frank and shared the perspectives of members from the Village's minority community. The second panel discussion included representatives of community institutions (schools, parks, places of workshop) who shared their work to make the community more welcoming. The discussion highlighted how there is much happening to make Wilmette a diverse and welcoming community, and that the work will continue.







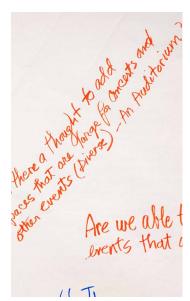


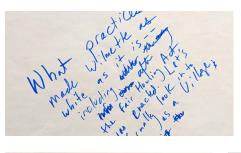


Wilmette Talk #3: Housing & Business / Commerce. These real estate market themes were discussed as an online webinar, with a panel for each of the two topics. Both sessions began with a presentation of existing conditions and continued with a discussion about how the theme would be incorporated into the plan. Panels included members of the consultant team and Wilmette residents and business persons knowledgeable about the topic. The housing discussion recognized the high cost of housing in this north shore community. It also highlighted ongoing Village efforts to increase the variety of housing available in the community and its affordable housing program. Recommendations for both would become part of the plan. The business / commercial discussion considered the large change in shopping habits and retail development over the past decades, as well as how those trends were accelerated by the pandemic. A high point was discussion about how downtown Wilmette is thriving with restaurant and residential development. The discussion also acknowledged that changes in retailing had similarly changed the types of businesses found in areas like Linden Square and the Ridge Road corridor. The retailing patterns of the past are not going to return, and opportunities for former retail hubs would have to be considered.

Wilmette Talk #4: Active Transportation & Sustainability. These themes also were discussed as an online webinar, with a panel for each. Again, the panels included members of the consultant team and those with local expertise on the subject. Since the Village had recently completed specific plans for each of these topics, the discussions started with a description of those plans, how they would benefit the Village, and how they could be coordinated with this comprehensive plan. The discussions both also considered the natural synergies that exist between these themes. The active transportation discussion focused on the overall topic of connectivity for walkers and bikers. While there are many options, not all parts of the Village are equally connected - a point to be tackled in implementing the recent Active Transportation Plan. The sustainability discussion emphasized that this topic is not met only by large projects, but also by a range of small efforts by the Village, other government agencies, and individual residents.

Summaries of all sessions, and video of the last three talks, were shared on the project website so that they were available to be widely viewed.



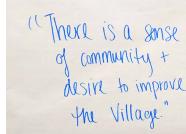


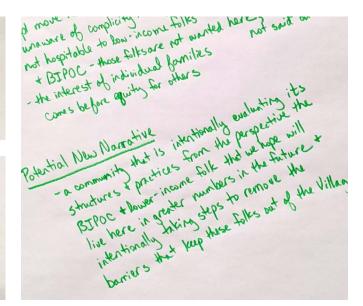
Let's let go of our obsession with the property value of our homes + trust that the value

of an equitable + diverse

greater return on investment.















Wilmette Talk #2: Moving Towards a More Welcoming Wilmette & What it Means to Belong was a powerful evening of coming together, candid reflections, personal experiences, and future aspirations. Panelists included: Terri Johnson (C-Change in Action), Dr. Kassie Porreca (Regina Dominican HS), Gerry Smith (Human Relations Commission Chair), Kelly Jackson (Highcrest Middle School/District 39), Dr. Chimille Tillery (New Trier), Steve Wilson (Wilmette Park District), George Davis (Baha'i House of Worship), and Neela Chandraraj (New Trier student + Human Relations Commission Member). See Appendix for complete event summary.

#### **Boards & Commissions Review**

The draft goals and objectives were shared with and reviewed by the Boards and Commissions who will be responsible to assist in implementing the plan. This additional review provided an added level of confidence that the goals and objectives identified through out the community engagement process were appropriate to help guide the Village into the future.

# **Planning Theme Polls**

Introduced each season and published following each Wilmette Talk, polls were developed to generate deeper engagement on each theme and ask specific, measurable questions. Each poll generated hundreds of responses, results from which helped shape plan recommendations. Poll findings are highlighted throughout this plan document as they relate to each planning theme.

# **Locations & Equitable Access**

Community events were intentionally hosted in different areas and venues across town, specifically in locations other than Village Hall/ in the Village Center. An early outdoor pop-up was held at a soccer game to generate awareness and meet with young parents and others identified as hard-to-reach. Wilmette Talks #1 and #2 were held in west Wilmette, at the Community Recreation Center and at Regina Dominican High School, with virtual participation options also offered for both events.

The project website and its tools served as an essential virtual hub for the planning process. It facilitated two-way communication, providing a means for the planning team to share information (draft materials, documents, event announcements, etc.) and tools for the community to share ideas and feedback. The website included a subscribe feature and at every stage, new users learned about the plan, subscribed, and shared ideas. Over the course of the project, the website had over 12,000 views, 6,000 visitors, and nearly 400 subscribers.

### **Project Website**

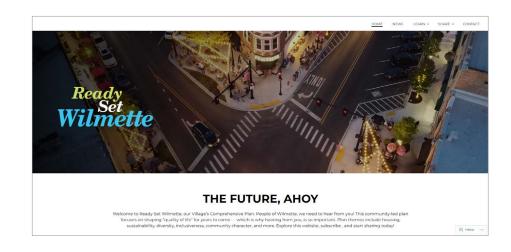
The project website served as the plan's "front porch" and was a welcoming place to come learn about the project, share ideas, and ask direct questions of the planning team.

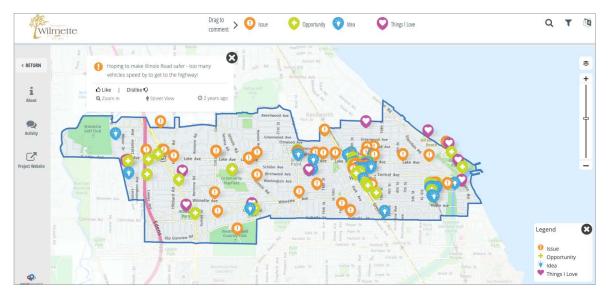
#### **Interactive Tools**

Recognizing that people enter the planning process at different points in time, interactive sharing tools, including an Ideas Wall and Comment Map, were open on line 24-7 for the full length of plan preparation, encouraging feedback on any and all topics at any point in the process.

# **Tracking Progress**

Monthly Project Update Memos were prepared for the Village Board and Commissions to ensure transparency and document plan-making progress. This strategic, creative, and incremental engagement process yielded key findings that shaped a vision and direction not only for Wilmette's long-term future, but also for near-term priorities and actions (see Implementation Chapter for more detail).







The Interactive Comment Map (top image), allowed people to place comments on a web-based map of Wilmette for place-based thoughts. The Ideas Wall asked users to share broad, open-ended ideas. Together, users shared over 150 unique ideas with these tools.



To raise awareness of the plan as it was getting started, hundreds of project postcards were printed and distributed around town to introduce the effort and encourage participation on the website.



**CHAPTER THREE** 

# COMMUNITY CHARACTER

**Community character** is not one thing or a few big things, but a collection of many things. It is more than simply architecture or design, it is about what you do in a place, the comfort of the physical space, and your enjoyment of what you are doing (dining, playing in a park, shopping, etc.). The overall character of a community is more than the success or quality of these spaces and those associated feelings, it is about the experience and emotion of getting there and being there. It even includes the people you are with.

# **Community Character in Wilmette**

# **Community Form**

To many, Wilmette's character is exemplified by brick-paved and tree-lined streets, period streetlights, single-family homes, attractive commercial districts, and proximity to Lake Michigan. Much of this character dates back to the early days of Wilmette's history, 150 years ago. Not all of Wilmette is over a century old, however. After World War II, the housing boom of the 1950s transformed the area west of Ridge Road from farmland to residential subdivisions. Still today, much of that area is characterized by ranch-style and bi-level houses, distinctive street layouts, schools, places of worship, and suburban-style shopping centers. Every section of Wilmette informs the look and feel of the whole Village—each section can have distinct characteristics, but they all contribute to the Village wide community character.



Wilmette has 36 local historic landmarks, 3 National Register Historic Districts, and 8 individual properties listed on the National Register of Historic Places. One of the National Register properties, the Train Depot, is pictured above. The train line that connected Chicago and Waukegan through Wilmette (now the Metra) was laid in 1854. It brought people and goods to the small community, including the daily newspapers and the mail. This early photo shows the 1873 station in its original location, just north of Wilmette Avenue on the west side of the tracks.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Source: Wilmette Historical Museum Online Map













# **Residential Density**

Density is a number. Most typically it is expressed as the number of dwelling units, on average, located on an acre of land. Single-unit homes often are found at 3 to 5 dwellings per acre (or less in some communities). Townhomes/stacked flats range broadly from 8 to 20+ units per acre. And multiple unit dwellings might be as low as 15 units per acre up to hundreds of units per acre in urban settings.

All too often residential density is used as a surrogate to decide that a development is undesirable or will bring adverse impacts. And yes, on its face the notion that more units will bring more traffic, more students, and more service demand is true. But there are trade-offs. Data show that single-unit detached homes generate more traffic trips – to work, and school, and drop offs at children's activities etc. And townhome/stacked flat and apartment developments require less infrastructure and place less demand on services like road and utility maintenance.

In some cases, concerns about density are a function of aesthetics, that townhomes or apartments will be unattractive or not fit in to the character or streetscape of an area. This can be the case if the style and design of such units does not match the context of where it is located, or if too many townhomes look too much alike. In a town of varied architecture, too many units of the same design are out of context for the community.







That is the point of good development at any density. The new should be in context with the existing development – not be the same, but be respectful and reflective of what came before. This has come to be known as "soft density." Townhomes/stacked flats or apartments/condos that are designed in such a way as to fit in with their environment – accomplishing this goal has little to do with the number of units. There can be wonderful higher density developments and undesirable low-density developments. One of the best examples of density in context is in Wilmette, along the lake, across from Plaza del Lago. Those condominium buildings are the densest living in the village. Yet their location and how they fit into the context of the lakefront, Sheridan Road and Plaza del Lago, make them just the right development in just the right place.

New townhomes/stacked flats can be considered in the same light. A good townhome/stacked flat development is not a function of how many there are, but how well they fit into the context of their location and whether they provide a suitable living environment for future residents – do they have space for residents to enjoy private outside space, do they provide safe access for pedestrians rather than being heavily auto oriented, are they connected to public spaces and recreational areas, etc. These become the considerations to be made in deciding if a townhome/stacked flat development best serves the community.

#### **Sense of Place**

Sense of place is a critical piece of community character—how we describe and interact with a place, what we value in it, our respect for the ecosystem and other people, and our attachment to a place and desire to improve it. Many aspects of a community collectively define this sense of place, such as experiences (do people know their neighbors and attend community events?), physical elements (streets, sidewalks, parks, lighting, outdoor amenities, shops, public art, distinctive architecture), and other networks or institutions (schools, the library, parks, chamber of commerce, places of worship, and community groups). Sense of place may differ depending on where you are, whether in a residential neighborhood or commercial district, or in downtown Wilmette versus along Green Bay Road.



The quotes highlighted in this photo were shared on the project comment map by Wilmette residents. These speak to some of the things people love about Wilmette's character.

"A sense of place is a unique collection of qualities and characteristics – visual, cultural, social, and environmental – that provide meaning to a location. Sense of place is what makes one cityor town different from another, but sense of place is also what makes our physical surroundings worth caring about." 3

– Edward McMahon, The Distinctive City (2012)

<sup>3</sup> Source: https://urbanland.uli.org/developmentbusiness/the-distinctive-city/. Edward McMahon, The Distinctive City (2012)

#### **Natural Features**

Wilmette's environment is closely connected to water, including Lake Michigan, the North Shore Channel, and the North Branch of the Chicago River. These features contribute greatly to the community's character and environmental efforts related to climate action. This is something Wilmette is actively addressing, with a recently completed Sustainability Plan and environmental infrastructure projects. One example is a recently completed project in Wilmette that constructed three large underground storage reservoirs to hold stormwater runoff and reduce flooding.

Many parts of Wilmette are graced by dense tree canopies, and since 1983 Wilmette has consistently received Tree City U.S.A. status. In addition to their beauty, urban trees can reduce energy use, carbon emissions and heating/cool costs. This presents an opportunity to re-imagine streetscapes that build on the role of trees and vegetation in managing rainwater, providing natural habitats for pollinators, and playing a role as bicycle and pedestrian connections across the community.



The Village's robust tree planting program ensures replacement parkway trees are planted in a timely manner so the dense urban canopy is preserved. The Village also updated its tree preservation policy in 2022 to minimize the number of unnecessary removals, and ensure sufficient replacement requirements when healthy trees are removed to maintain and grow the community's tree canopy. Credit: Google Earth.

# **Demographics**

Also considered part of a community's character is how and when a place develops and who resides there. Wilmette was incorporated 1510 years ago, in September of 1872, and the Village celebrated its sesquicentennial year with a community-wide block party. Today, nearly 30,000 people reside in Wilmette.

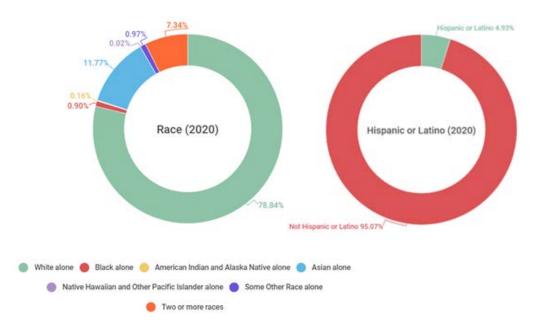


Other key community demographics informing Wilmette's character include income and race. The Village, as a whole, is considered an affluent and well-educated community, with a median household income of \$164,681 (more than double the countywide median household income of \$69,500) and a large majority of residents (83%) having completed a Bachelor's Degree or higher (compared with 41% of Cook County residents).

The above charts show a Snapshot on Race in Wilmette from the 2020 Census. Though nearly 80% of residents are White, the racial and ethnic mix of Wilmette residents is gradually increasing. Since the 2010 Census, the percentage of people who identify as Two or More Races has increased from 2% to 7%, which mirrors national trends, and the percent of Hispanic or Latino population increased from 3% to nearly 5%.

Village leadership and many of those engaged in the community visioning process as part of this plan's development have expressed that diversity and ensuring that Wilmette is as a welcoming place for all is another important piece of community character.

This theme explores topics relating to identity, sense of place, and how the different aspects of character come together to define the community and tell the "Wilmette story."



#### **STORY SPOTLIGHT:**

"Community character is influenced by the physical environment, but it's also influenced by the level of connection and caring among residents and their willingness to forego self-interest for the general welfare.

One hundred years ago, the first Plan of Wilmette was adopted. It recognized that "all concerted action toward improving the appearance of the village must go hand in hand with a developed community spirit." Since then, countless steps have been taken that develop and maintain a strong community spirit, ranging from the creation of civic organizations like the Wilmette Rotary Club in 1923 to the celebration of Wilmette's Sesquicentennial in 2022. Residents have united to tax themselves for excellent schools, parks. library, and infrastructure; to provide jobs to unemployed neighbors during the Great Depression; and to grieve with families who lost sons and daughters during the nation's wars. Capable community leaders have generously donated their time and energy to advance the general welfare, as exemplified by ongoing actions designed to welcome people who were previously excluded from full participation in the village's affairs. And many residents contribute to community spirit by individual acts like helping elderly neighbors with tasks beyond their diminished physical capabilities, shopping locally, attending block parties, and participating civilly in the process of resolving local issues.

Lifestyle changes have presented new challenges to building and maintaining a strong community spirit, but many of the Goals and Objectives of this and other sections of the plan address these challenges by promoting connectivity and caring while pursuing the general welfare."

— John Jacoby, Past Wilmette Village President

# Findings & Relevant Data

The importance of community character to Wilmette is supported by sentiments shared throughout the engagement process, by respondents saying what they value and cherish about the Village. Highlights from community comments are summarized below:

# What we heard when asking...

#### What most influences Wilmette's community character?

- The neighborhood feel walkable streets, trees, attractive housing.
- The downtown walkable, gathering spaces, restaurants and outdoor dining.
- Green space and nature parks and Lake Michigan, and ease of access to them.
- Variety in the look and feel of neighborhoods and business districts.
- People's enjoyment of their neighborhoods and caring for historic homes
- Downtown and destinations in east Wilmette are easy to get around by walking or biking.
- Community institutions are strong.
- The mix of land uses, shops, and restaurants creates a vibrant community.

# Which factors contribute most towards fostering positive community character in Wilmette?







Quality of community institutions



Vibrant mix of uses, shops, and restaurants

Poll #1 as part of plan engagement asked the above question and had participants select up to three choices. \*Results reflect the percentage of participants who chose the option as one of their top three priorities.

# Goals & Objectives

Goals and objectives describe policies, programs, and further planning the Village looks to conduct in implementing this comprehensive plan. The statements are reflective of past planning efforts of the Village, community input to this plan, feedback from focus groups with Village commissions, and a comprehensive evaluation by the Plan Commission.

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

**Objectives** are actions that define policies to be followed in pursuit of goals. They do not necessarily have a timeline and may be modified in their ultimate implementation, as they likely require more thought, deliberation, and refinement to be brought to fruition. This is the how a comprehensive plan gets used – the desired outcomes generally remain, while the environment in which they may become reality is dynamic and the plan must be applied accordingly. More specific suggestions and recommendations follow the goals and objectives in the next section (Opportunities).

### **NEIGHBORHOODS**

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

### Objectives:

- 1. Provide for desirable residential development/redevelopment that adds to the character and future needs of Wilmette's neighborhoods.
- 2. Maintain a balance between private property and the vibrancy that public and semipublic spaces (i.e. public plazas on private properties) can add to neighborhoods.
- 3. Ensure safe pedestrian and bicycle travel within, beyond and between neighborhoods.
- 4. Maintain streetscape and street characteristics that create desirable neighborhoods.

### **BUSINESS DISTRICTS**

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

- 1. Enhance streestcapes on commercial corridors, with a special focus on areas that are gateways into Wilmette, such as Green Bay Road and Lake Avenue.
- 2. Encourage and support placemaking efforts, such as public artwork, street pole banners, informal gathering spaces, and community events in business districts.
- 3. Assure regulations applicable to commercial areas allow for flexible design and a range of land uses.
- 4. Continue and add programs that support and promote local businesses.
- 5. Ensure that zoning regulations facilitate a variety of commercial tenants that add to a mix of uses in a business district and help to generate activity in an area.





Native flowers in front of Wilmette's Village Hall.

### NATURAL ENVIRONMENTS

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

### Objectives:

- 1. Preserve and expand the public and private tree canopies in the Village, especially in neighborhoods with fewer trees and shaded areas.
- 2. Support use of native landscape plantings in residential and commercial environments.
- 3. Incorporate green infrastructure into systems that enhance resilience to climate volatility.
- 4. Seek opportunities to preserve public open space and natural resources.

### HISTORY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION Goal 4: Wilmette's historic character is protected and celebrated.

### Objectives:

1. Promote the history of Wilmette's settlement, growth and development by recognizing and preserving structures, sites, and geographic features that reflect the history of Wilmette and celebrate the range of cultural diversity of the community.

- 2. Develop a historic resource survey to identify and evaluate the community's historic resources.
- 3. Develop a Preservation Plan to be used as a planning tool to protect and enhance Wilmette's historic resources and guide long term land use decision-making.
- 4. Seek grant opportunities and other sources of funding at the regional, state and federal level, and from private sources such as the Driehaus Foundation and Rockefeller Foundation, to support preservation initiatives and programs.
- 5. Continue to provide education and training resources such as the Commission Assistance and Mentoring Program (CAMP) offered by the National Alliance of Preservation Commissions.
- 6. Review zoning regulations and consider ways to encourage rehabilitation and incentivize preservation of existing historic structures through zoning.
- 7. Collect and disseminate educational resources that inform realtors, business owners, and residents on the benefits of rehabilitation and preservation-based development efforts.
- 8. Evaluate additional protections to preserve historic structures through working with the Historic Preservation Commission, Wilmette Historical Museum and Human Relations Commission to educate residents, business owners, and others about the history of the Village and the value of historic preservation.
- Periodically review plans from surrounding communities and best practices in historic preservation for ways to help realize the Village's historic preservation goals.

### **Opportunities & Recommendations**

While the Goals and Objectives provide high-level guidance for ongoing Village decision-making and actions, the following opportunities and recommendations suggest more specific actions or programs the Village may pursue to implement the goals and objectives.

- 2. Zoning Review: Review zoning regulations and consider ways to encourage rehabilitation and incentivize preservation of existing historic structures, while also providing flexibility for appropriate modern uses and functions. Zoning creates an "envelope" of building size and use that manages the type of development that can best occur in the Village. Reviewing the code to ensure it provides desired outcomes is an ongoing process that the Village addresses regularly. Zoning changes related to specific plan subareas are noted in the land use chapter of this plan.
- 2. Design Principles: While zoning primarily establishes the shape and use of new development, much of the character from development is in its architecture (although the zoning ordinance provides design details regarding development in the Village Center). Commercial and multi-unit residential new construction, exterior remodels, and certain other projects require an Appearance Review Certificate from the Village's Appearance Review Commission, based on sixteen standards in the zoning ordinance. This approach has served the Village well. An additional step could be to develop a full set of Design Principles for multiple-unit residential and commercial buildings. Not regulatory or prescriptive, these can allow for flexibility but also provide a more detailed and graphic presentation of design expectations to developers. Design Principles would not identify any specific architectural style, but rather could convey desired character, provide guidelines for ensuring development is respectful of existing buildings and context, and communicate Village design goals in greater detail.
- a. Public Placemaking & Streetscaping: Enhancing the built environment with placemaking elements like streetscaping and plazas is not a new concept in Wilmette. These ideas have been implemented in the Village Center in recent years, bringing a fresh look and people friendly environment to the area as it has become a vibrant North Shore restaurant scene. There are opportunities for this type of improvement to continue in public and private areas around the Village. This can include new public gathering spaces (i.e. activated alleyways, pocket parks, flexible parking lots/plazas, etc.) in coordination with other local jurisdictions and private property owners. It can also be part of public (i.e. rights-of-way) and private (i.e. parking lots, plazas on private properties, etc.) led streetscape improvements in business districts to foster a sense of place and provide interesting and attractive places.
- 4. Historic Preservation: Preserving and highlighting the historic elements of the built environment are always front of mind in Wilmette, and will continue to be. The Village Center was recently designated as a National Register Historic District. The Village has historic structures mapped and is available for all to note. Next steps in this process of supporting historic preservation may include creation and implementation of a survey to inventory existing historic resources and a preservation plan to outline community preservation goals and policies and define more detailed implementation tasks. In addition, resource materials to those living in historic structures could encourage compatible design that is sensitive to the character of the structure.



**CHAPTER FOUR** 

## COMMUNITY CULTURE

ARTS, HEALTH & WELLNESS, INSTITUTIONS & PARTNERS

### **Culture in Wilmette**

If Community Character is largely about the look and feel of Wilmette, then Community Culture focuses on the people who live here and the activities and events that take place. While character might attract people to move to or visit a place, culture leads people to establish roots, become involved in their neighborhood, volunteer for Village boards or commissions, and to raise families that remain in a community over multiple generations. "Culture" encompasses a wide range of topics, and this chapter explores topic within the concepts of: Arts, Entertainment, Community Institutions, and Health, Safety, and Wellness.

"A sign of a healthy community is its simultaneous ability to preserve and invent its culture — that is, to conserve its history and heritage and at the same time develop new expressions for current times."

 Kimberley Hodgson, AICP, Kelly Beavers "How the Arts and Cultural Sector Strengthen Cultural Values and Preserve Heritage and History" (2011)



Supporting local businesses and enjoying outdoor dining is one aspect of Wilmette's community culture. This shared experience contributes to the vibrancy of a street or shopping center — Plaza del Lago is pictured above—and fosters social connections and neighborliness.

## Findings & Relevant Data

### **Arts, Culture, and Entertainment**

Arts, culture, and entertainment are experiences essential to a community's well-being and economic and cultural vitality. Events and festivals, public artwork, live music, and more allow for a range of community members and visitors to share in and help create the social vibrancy of Wilmette. These activities provide an opportunity to celebrate Wilmette's unique identity, engage with each other, and learn from diverse perspectives. Some research on the topic indicates that:

### What we heard when asking....

#### What defines Wilmette's cultural scene?

- Community facilities (like the Recreation Center)
- Restaurants
- Community events and festivals
- The lakefront is a major asset
- Art & entertainment activities make the community more interesting and bring people together



- 72% of Americans believe the arts unify across age, race, and ethnicity and 73% agree that arts "help us understand other cultures." In other words art is a universal language.
- Events and entertainment can activate a community and boost economic development by drawing people to different parts of town that they might not otherwise have reason to visit. In Wilmette, people may visit Gillson Park for the Wilmette Beach Bash, Linden Square for the Pumpkin Walk, the Wilmette Community Recreation Center for the Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month Celebration, and Downtown for larger events like the Wilmette Block Party and Chamber of Commerce Sidewalk Sale.
- People enjoy experiencing the arts in unexpected places. 70% enjoy the arts when found in "nontraditional" venues like music in the park, performances in airports, or exhibits in retail spaces."5
- 90% believe cultural facilities (theaters, museums, sculpture parks, arts centers, etc.) improve quality of life and are important to the local economy.<sup>6</sup> For a community of its size, Wilmette is fortunate to have several cultural institutions, including: the Wilmette Theater, Wilmette Center for the Arts, the Actors Training Center, Music Theater Works, the Historic Society, and more.
- Children and teens involved in arts programs tend to do better in school than their peers. For older adults, engaging in arts programs is connected with healthier aging.

<sup>4.5,6</sup> Source: Americans for the Arts. 2018

### **Community Institutions**

Community institutions are the local facilities and organizations — such as schools, libraries, parks, non-profits, service-oriented clubs, social clubs, recreational athletics, educational organizations, places of worship, day care organizations, etc. — that provide resources and activities related to their missions, enhance community identity, and create opportunities for residents to engage, socialize, and learn. Wilmette residents benefit from quality local institutions that create a strong sense of community.

One piece of the community-based institutional fabric in Wilmette is its wide range of religious institutions. Historically, the Village was known for being much more open to different religions at a time when its neighboring towns may not have been, and that legacy carries through to today's religious mix and network of faith leaders and organizations.

### What we heard when asking....

How are community facilities reflected in the fabric of the Village?

- Faith communities are strong in the Village and generally more diverse than others in the North Shore.
- Wilmette schools are a draw.
- Schools and parks are a big part of how people create/foster community.
- Government entities (like schools, parks, the library) are involved in advancing diversity / inclusiveness and sustainability.
- The Village benefits from so many groups actively engaged in civic, transportation, and sustainability issues.



This photo from a community event at the Wilmette Library depicts the vibrancy that can be sparked by the simple combination of music, an inviting open space, and an opportunity for gathering. The library hosts an array of in-person and virtual events for all ages such as author talks, story time for children, concerts, and Maker Programs.



Wilmette is home to the Baha'i House of Worship, which is one of only eight Baha'i temples in the world, the only one in the U.S., and the oldest one still standing. It has been named one of the "Seven Wonders of Illinois" and draws 250,000 visitors per year.

### Health, Safety, & Wellness

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

An important factor in community health and wellness is access to parks: Wilmette excels by this metric, as 97% of all residents live within a 10-minute walk of a park. That is nearly double the national average (55%). The 10-minute walk is a national standard representing roughly a half-mile distance, which is what many consider to be "nearby." The remaining 3% that are not within a 10-minute walk are within less than a 20-minute walk, or about one-mile). Using green spaces is associated with decreased health complaints, improved blood pressure and cholesterol, reduced stress, improved general health and a greater ability to face problems.

Walkability, more broadly, is an important element not only for the convenience and livability of a community, but also a key piece of community health and wellness:

"Where we live shouldn't determine how long or how well we live. In our communities, we all should be surrounded by conditions that enable us to live the healthiest life possible, such as access to healthy food, quality schools, stable housing, good jobs with fair pay, and safe places to exercise and play."

Robert Wood Johnson Foundation



**Health:** The average resident of a walkable neighborhood weighs 6-10 pounds less than someone who lives in a sprawling neighborhood.



**Happiness:** Cities with good public transit and access to amenities promote happiness.



**Environment:** 87% of CO2 emissions are from burning fossil fuels, but your feet are zero-pollution transportation machines.



**Finances:** Cars are the second largest household expense in the U.S. One point of WalkScore is worth up to \$3,250 of value for your property.



**Culture and Engagement:** Walkability is associated with higher levels of arts organizations, creativity, and civic engagement. <sup>7</sup>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup> Source: WalkScore.com

### THE ROLE OF Communities JOINT USE The number of children who IN PROMOTING PHYSICAL ACTIVITY are physically active outside is WALKABLE COMMUNITIES higher when People who live schoolyards are kept open for public play. in walkable neighborhoods are times as likely to get enough physical activity as those who don't. RECREATIONAL FACILITIES Teens who live in poor or mostly minority neighborhoods are TRAILS less likely to have a recreational facility near home. People who live near trails are more likely to meet physical **Active Living Research** activity guidelines. www.activelivingresearch.org American Journal of Health Promotion, 18(1): 58–69, September/October, 2003. WALKABLE COMMUNITIES: Frank LD, Schmid TL, Sallis JF, Chapman J, Saelens BE. Linking objectively measured physical activity with objectively measured urban form. Findings from SMARTRAQ. American Journal of Preventive Medicine 2005; 28(252):117-125. JOINT USE: Farley T, Meriwether R, Baker E, Watkins L, Johnson C, Webber L. Safe play spaces to promote physical activity in inner-city children: Results from a pilot study of an environmental intervention. Am J Pub Health. 2007;97:1625-1631. RECREATIONAL FACILITIES: Gordon-Larsen P, Nelson MC, Page P, Popkin BM. "Inequality in the Built Environment Underlies Key Health Disparities in Physical Activity and Obesity." Pediatrics, 117(2): 417-424, 2006. Sources: TRAILS: Huston S, Evenson K, Bors P, et al. "Neighborhood Environment, Access to Places for Activity, and Leisure-Time Physical Activity in a Diverse North Carolina Population."

Downtown Wilmette has a WalkScore of 79 which is considered "very walkable" – most errands can be accomplished on foot. The Village overall has a Score of 58, meaning that it is "somewhat walkable", and some errands can be accomplished on foot. Wilmette's WalkScores can vary widely depending on what exact point you choose on the map: east side or west side, closer to a grocery store, etc.

In addition to being fairly walkable, Wilmette also has one of the most extensive transit networks in the suburbs with Metra, CTA, and Pace, and excellent biking routes nearby, such as the Green Bay Trail. These all contribute to an environment that makes it much easier to incorporate healthy habits and wellness activities into daily life.

Mental health also is integral to health and well-being, though it may often be considered an individual issue, rather than one to be addressed at a community-wide level. In 2019-2020, 20% of U.S. adults were experiencing a mental illness, and over half do not receive treatment. Over 1 in 10 youth are experiencing depression that severely impairs their ability to function at school, at home, with family, or in their social life. While there are many factors at play in mental health, communities can play a supportive role by spreading awareness of local resources, organizing and promoting community events that foster social connection, and collaborating with institutions to expand mental health funding and programming.

### What we heard when asking....

What opportunities are there to live well and healthy in Wilmette?

- Small town feel adds to quality of life.
- Wilmette is a safe community and a great place to raise kids.
- However, kids don't have safe paths to bike and walk even more so on the west side of town.
- Additional youth and mental health services are needed.





<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup> Source: https://mhanational.org/issues/state-mental-health-america The State Of Mental Health In America

## Community Perspectives on Culture (from Poll #1)

Arts, culture, and entertainment are experiences essential to a community's well-being and economic and cultural vitality. Events and festivals, public artwork, live music, and more allow for a range of community members and visitors to share in and help create the social vibrancy of Wilmette. These activities provide an opportunity to celebrate Wilmette's unique identity, engage with each other, and learn from diverse perspectives. Some research on the topic indicates that:

## Wilmette's arts, culture, and entertainment scene is largely defined today by its...



Note: Poll participants were allowed to select up to three choices. Results reflect the % of participants who chose the option as one of their top three priorities.

### Future goals: arts, culture, and entertainment should...

Make the community more interesting and attractive

64% of participants ranked as a top priority

Bring people together to feel more connected to each other and Wilmette

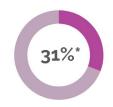
47% of participants ranked as a top priority

Make our Village more diverse, inclusive, and welcoming

30% of participants ranked as a top priority

### Which of the following are challenges to engaging with different types of people, cultural activites, or artistic events?







Lack of cross-cultural integration

Communication that furthers community awareness

Lack of opportunities to experience varied art forms

### In the realm of health, safety, and wellness, Wilmette excels MOST in the following areas:



of respondents ranked Parks and Open Space as one their top three answers.









Parks and open space (82%)

Walkability (57%)

Public safety (40%)

### Improvements in health, safety, and wellness should focus on:



3 out of 4 respondents ranked bike infrastructure and/or sidewalk **connectivity/pedestrian safety** as one of their top three answers



1 out of 4 respondents ranked connecting and unifying people and **neighborhoods across Wilmette** as one of their top three answers

#### STORY SPOTLIGHT:

"I have lived in Wilmette my entire life, raised my family here, sent them through the same schools I attended, and today, my wife and I have our law practice in Wilmette - one hundred yards from Chalet, where I worked in high school.

When I first volunteered for the Village, I did so because I knew the community, its residents, and its businesses. I did so because service to the community was a value instilled in me by my parents. And I did so to ensure that Wilmette remained a great place for all the people who call Wilmette home.

As Village President my goal was to increase the vitality of our community. We have done that in many ways. Despite the Great Recession, the storms, and the Pandemic, the Village continues to thrive. We have new restaurants like Sophia Steak and Pescadero and we shop at established businesses like Burhop's and Lambrecht's.

But Wilmette's success is not limited to business. The true measure of our success is whether we have created a better Wilmette. I know that we have accomplished this goal as I have seen neighbors drag out water soaked-carpeting out of neighbors' basement, shovel driveways and sidewalks for elderly neighbors or sit outside on a summer night in our Village Center and eat, drink, and laugh. Through these shared experiences, we have all contributed to the fabric of Wilmette.

We have a new generation of residents, many of whom moved in during the Pandemic. Just as my generation has made Wilmette better in several ways, I hope that our new residents will strive to create a new fabric of Wilmette that they and their families will be proud of."

— Chris Canning, Past Wilmette Village President

# Goals & Objectives

Goals and objectives describe policies, programs, and further planning the Village looks to conduct in implementing this comprehensive plan. The statements are reflective of past planning efforts of the Village, community input to this plan, feedback from focus groups with Village commissions, and a comprehensive evaluation by the Plan Commission.

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

**Objectives** are actions that define policies to be followed in pursuit of goals. They do not necessarily have a timeline and may be modified in their ultimate implementation, as they likely require more thought, deliberation, and refinement to be brought to fruition. This is the how a comprehensive plan gets used – the desired outcomes generally remain, while the environment in which they may become reality is dynamic and the plan must be applied accordingly. More specific suggestions and recommendations follow the goals and objectives in the next section (Opportunities).

### **ARTS & CULTURE**

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

### Objectives:

- 1. Continue to communicate and partner with community institutions and groups that provide arts and cultural opportunities in the Village.
- 2. Support a range of arts and cultural programming and events that are affordable and available to Wilmette residents of all ages, abilities, and incomes.
- 3. Foster collaboration among arts and cultural groups and community partners to incorporate arts education, artistic expression and racial and cultural diversity into programming and curriculum.
- 4. Use the arts as opportunities for community gathering and learning about Wilmette and the different cultures of its residents.

### **ENTERTAINMENT & EVENTS**

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

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





### **COMMUNITY INSTITUTIONS**

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

### Objectives:

- 1. Continue participation in the Intergovernmental Cooperation Committee to regularly coordinate on infrastructure, facilities, and/or programming plans to encourage resource-sharing and efficiencies.
- 2. Work with the Human Relations Commission to facilitate partnerships among Wilmette's community groups and organizations to provide a welcoming space for residents of all backgrounds.
- Continue and expand regular communication between the Village and local nonprofits to identify community needs and the best ways to serve them.
- 4. Seek and share partnership and funding opportunities that would benefit from public/private/nonprofit collaboration.
- 5. Continue to plan for a suitable location for the new/expanded police station.

### **HEALTH, SAFETY, & WELLNESS**

#### **NATURAL ENVIRONMENT**

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

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

#### **BUILT ENVIRONMENT**

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

### Objectives:

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

#### PHYSICAL AND SOCIAL NEEDS

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

- 1. Coordinate with community partners (i.e. Wilmette Park District, Wilmette Public Library, School Districts 37 and 39, New Trier Township High School District, nonprofit organizations, private businesses) to promote their programs that support physical activity and health and wellness opportunities for all Wilmette residents.
- 2. Focus on increasing mental health resources and services with community partners (i.e. schools, New Trier Township, local nonprofits).
- 3. Expand awareness and use of firearm safety programs provided by the Police Department.





# Opportunities & Recommendations

While the Goals and Objectives provide high-level guidance for ongoing Village decision-making and actions, the following opportunities and recommendations suggest more specific actions or programs the Village may pursue to implement the goals and objectives.

- 1. Public Artwork: Work with community partners and local artists to add public artwork where it can enhance public places, bring people together, and enhance understanding of the community. In partnership with Wilmette's arts community, a process of selecting artists and specific locations for public art would communicate Wilmette's history, character, and culture. This might include sculptures and monuments, murals, temporary or permanent installations, street art, light art, or interactive art. The process of creating the art itself could be a community-led initiative that brings together multiple artists and groups.
- 2. **Event Permitting:** Review and refine Village regulations and outreach to increase awareness of and ease for putting on local events and locating entertainment uses.
- 3. Communication & Collaboration: Encourage regular and consistent information sharing and collaboration between community institutions. Implementing a comprehensive plan cannot be done by the Village alone it requires active participation from partners and collaborative efforts among institutions. Establishing a structure for this type of communication can help advance Village goals that also align with local partners and community groups.

- 4. Equitable Access: Though Wilmette's sidewalk network is generally well-connected and maintained, there are continuous improvements that can be made to pedestrian infrastructure and older buildings that can make getting around easier and safer for people using wheelchairs, strollers, or others with disabilities.
- 5. Public Education & Outreach: Broaden public awareness and use of Village services and programs such as those provided through the Police Department and others that benefit more vulnerable populations, including youth, seniors, residents with disabilities, and those seeking mental health services. The Village diligently publishes news and important information to residents through channels like the weekly Wilmette E-News and The Communicator printed newsletter. Building on this, targeted outreach to specific populations and groups that may not be plugged into these channels could help them draw on existing resources that may be less well known and underutilized.

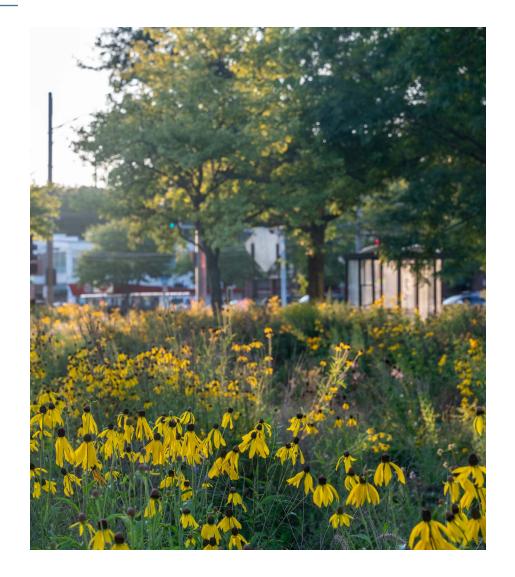


## Sustainability in Wilmette

"Sustainability," as used in this plan, describes Wilmette's role in stewarding the natural environment, taking steps locally to reduce climate impact, and to improve community resiliency. The Village and its residents collectively take part in protecting Wilmette's many natural resources, which are critical to community character and quality of life (including assets like Lake Michigan, Gillson Beach, the Green Bay Trail, and parks and open spaces throughout Wilmette).

During the planning process, improving community sustainability was often mentioned as an aspiration that Wilmette residents contribute to environmental efforts. Likewise, there is an expectation that the local government advance sustainability efforts to lead by example, work in coordination with local organizations, and keep sustainable practices, incentives, and policies front of mind. Villagewide, energy, urban forestry, and habits of individual residents particularly resonated with community members who provided input to the plan. The community also benefits from two commuter rail lines, allowing residents to take advantage of regional transit opportunities. Ultimately, Wilmette is striving to forge "a better place to live and work" even as the climate changes.

Sustainability has many facets and relates to many themes of this Comprehensive Plan. It is about the resiliency of a community and its relationship to the broader environment. It means fostering healthy habitats for people and wildlife, managing environmental resources wisely, providing safe and efficient transportation options, and keeping environmental enhancements affordable.



### Wilmette Sustainability Initiatives

### **Greenest Region Compact**

The major Village of Wilmette effort to advance sustainability occurred in 2018 when it endorsed the Greenest Region Compact (GRC). This Compact between Chicago-area communities addresses environmental sustainability on a regional scale, in recognition of the interdependencies between Chicagoland municipalities regarding their collective economy and environment.

### Wilmette's Sustainability Plan

Along with endorsing the GRC, Wilmette adopted its own Sustainable Communities Strategic Plan (Sustainability Plan) in the fall of 2021. That Plan addresses the same ten sustainability elements identified in the GRC, within the context of and issues facing Wilmette. The Sustainability Plan identifies a set of recommendations for the Village to consider as it works to reduce its environmental footprint.

### **Environmental & Energy Commission**

Wilmette residents are very attuned to and involved in sustainability efforts. The Village has an active and engaged Environmental & Energy Commission (EEC). The EEC serves as a focal point for sustainability initiatives in the community and provided thoughtful input to the Comprehensive Plan.

### Incorporating the Comprehensive Plan

The goals of this comprehensive plan are best accomplished by coordinating with the Sustainability Plan. Table 1 indicates areas in which the Comprehensive Plan themes may find synergy with ongoing sustainability initiatives in the Village. Table 2 highlights opportunities for collaboration between the Comprehensive Plan and Sustainability Plan implementation actions, along with specific metrics—quantifiable measures that can be used for assessing and tracking progress over time—identified by the Sustainability Plan.

Table 1. Comparison of planning themes between Wilmette Comprehensive Plan and Sustainable Communities Strategic Plan

Comprehensive Plan	Sustainability Plan
Environmental Sustainability	Climate
Community Sustainability	Municipal Operations
Business + Commerce	Economic Development
Health, Safety, and Wellness	Waste & Recycling
Community Character	Land Use
Active Transportation	Mobility
Housing	Sustainable Communities
Community Institutions	Water
Subareas	Energy
Diversity and Inclusiveness	Leadership

### Stormwater Management

Wilmette has made a large investment in reducing persistent flooding problems through the Stormwater Improvement Project. This project involved installing a series of underground storage systems to capture stormwater runoff before it causes flooding, storing water underground, and gradually releasing it downstream. This commitment to stormwater management has received positive feedback from the Wilmette community.

Table 2. Summary of opportunities for overlap between Sustainability Plan and Comprehensive Plan

Sustainability Plan Theme	Comprehensive Plan Opportunities	Metrics
Climate	<ul> <li>Greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions reductions (NOTE: the Village began a GNG inventory with Northern Illinois University in July 2023)</li> <li>Increasing resiliency in Village infrastructure</li> <li>Engagement with residents and partners to mitigate impacts and/adapt habits</li> </ul>	Reduce GHGs by 45% from 2010 levels (GRC Goal) and reach net zero by 2050
Economic Development	<ul> <li>Maintain local economy to support and promote sustainability</li> <li>Promote and enhance sustainability as part of a community brand</li> <li>Plan and manage development to enhance sustainability</li> <li>Encourage green innovation</li> <li>Adopt Master Plan that assures economic stability</li> </ul>	<ul> <li>Attract and retain businesses that practice and promote sustainability</li> <li>Attract visitors through natural resources and parks</li> </ul>
Energy	<ul> <li>Develop policies that support energy use reduction and adoption/use of renewable energy</li> <li>Collaborate with partners such as utilities non-profits, and neighboring communities for assistance implementing renewable energy systems</li> </ul>	<ul> <li>% energy reduction goals</li> <li>Benchmark energy use and track energy use type</li> <li>Energy saving commitments from members of the Village</li> </ul>
Land	<ul> <li>Achieve Community Wildlife Habitat certification and protect open space</li> <li>Change zoning and policies to facilitate/incentivize land use goals</li> <li>Encourage locally grown food</li> </ul>	• % of properties that use sustainable landscaping, plant native species, install rain gardens, and permeable hardscapes
Leadership	<ul> <li>Partner with local schools, library, park district, other governments, and other environmental commissions to encourage/achieve sustainability</li> <li>Maintain SolSmart status</li> </ul>	
Mobility	<ul> <li>Include alternative modes of transportation in plans and policies and ensure they are accessible to residents and visitors</li> <li>Encourage electric vehicle adoption</li> </ul>	<ul><li>Commuter bike ridership</li><li>Bike network mileage</li><li>Bike parking sites</li><li>Electric charging stations</li></ul>
Municipal Operations	<ul> <li>Analyze Village's current sustainability practices</li> <li>Involve all Village staff and governmental entities</li> <li>Hire sustainability coordinator (NOTE: the Village has a sustainability coordinator, shared with other local government agencies)</li> </ul>	<ul> <li>Alternative fuel vehicles in Village fleets</li> <li>Track and manage data related to sustainability efforts</li> <li>Energy and waste reduction</li> </ul>
Sustainable Communities	<ul> <li>Maintain and encourage diversity of housing stock</li> <li>Encourage growing own food through policies (i.e. allowing egg-laying hens or front yard/parkway gardens) and educational resources (such as how to grow vegetables in Wilmette's commonly shady environment)</li> <li>Assess lighting practices and pesticide use to improve pollinator habitat</li> </ul>	
Waste & Recycling	Community education to build habits of reuse and recycling	Reduce generation of all waste types
Water	<ul> <li>Manage stormwater to reduce flooding and eliminate Combined Sewer Overflows (CSO)</li> <li>Promote use of green infrastructure</li> <li>Actively protect Lake Michigan, drinking water sources</li> </ul>	<ul> <li>Reduce water consumption in commercial &amp; residential users</li> <li>Reduce volume of groundwater and rainwater entering sewers</li> <li>Participants in stormwater incentive program</li> </ul>

## Findings & Relevant Data

The importance of sustainability in Wilmette was raised throughout the planning process. Key highlights of what the planning team heard from the community are summarized below.

### **General Community Observations about Sustainability**

- Air and water quality are high priorities
- Residents and organizations are engaged in and supportive of sustainability
- Sustainability and active transportation are linked
- Improvements are needed in bike and pedestrian infrastructure
- There is growing interest in and demand for community walkability
- There is increasing interest in solar power in the Village
- There is growing use of native landscaping

### **Community Perspectives on Sustainability**

### What is Wilmette doing well on sustainability?

- Stormwater Management
- Recycling
- Maintaining quality of drinking water
- Maintaining the urban tree canopy
- Planning for bikeability and walkability

### What are the greatest opportunities for the Village to improve sustainability?

- Habitat protection and land use
- Transit usage
- Implementing bike and pedestrian infrastructure
- Mitigating the impact of increasing impervious surfaces.

"There is a desire to move around the Village without a car, in a way that accommodates all ages and abilities."

- Jill Hayes, Wilmette Transportation Commission

"Many people are expecting to live in a sustainable, walkable community – we need to meet that demand."

- Beth Drucker, Go Green Wilmette

"I love the composting program Wilmette has. Our sustainability efforts are exceptional! Keep it up!"

- Website comment





1. Preserving Lake Michigan



2. Healthy Outdoor Air Quality



3. Drinking Water Quality

One of the community polls focused on questions related to sustainability. The illustration at left summarizes how respondents ranked their personal sustainability priorities for Wilmette/the region vs. those priorities that respondents believe Wilmette is currently working to address.

#### **Priorities Residents Believe Wilmette is Currently Addressing:**



1. Stormwater Management



2. Drinking Water Quality



3. Urban Tree Canopy

### **STORY SPOTLIGHT:**

"Wilmette's tree canopy and natural ecosystems are an important and unique part of the village. Recognizing the value of older trees, particularly native species, not only preserves these ecosystems, but also adds to the historic character, beauty and livability of the village. Coordinating these efforts with the Park District, Library, and other community organizations strengthens these efforts, and helps ensure that the entire village benefits. While the village is mostly developed and does not have a great deal of open space for green infrastructure, its use is encouraged, both on private and public property.

Recent projects to add native plants in various locations throughout the village, including the downtown area, library, and plantings near the Edens Expressway, which is also one of the main entrances to the Village, do a great deal to establish a unique aesthetic for the village. At the same time, these projects introduce residents and visitors to the beauty of native plants and hopefully inspire residents to take steps to preserve natural ecosystems, including use of native plants, and practices such as "leave the leaves" that support pollinators. Encouraging use of rain gardens takes this a step further by reducing stormwater runoff and preserving local aquifers." — Julie Wolf, Environmental & Energy Commission Chair

# Goals & Objectives

Goals and objectives describe policies, programs, and further planning the Village looks to conduct in implementing this comprehensive plan. The statements are reflective of past planning efforts of the Village, community input to this plan, feedback from focus groups with Village commissions, and a comprehensive evaluation by the Plan Commission.

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

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#### **ENVIRONMENT**

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

### Goal 1: Support implementation of the Sustainable Communities Strategic Plan (Adopted 2021).

### Goal 2: Increase Resiliency for Flooding and Water Resources Impacts.

- 1. Maintain and evaluate existing stormwater credit and incentive program.
- 2. Increase resilience of stormwater management and other infrastructure by promoting green infrastructure practices distributed across the community to reduce the volume and rate of stormwater runoff.
- 3. Expand the use of existing underground stormwater storage to include stormwater reuse opportunities and mitigate the impacts of urbanization on the water cycle.
- 4. Track and reverse the loss of permeable surfaces on public and private properties.
- 5. Pair hard infrastructure and green infrastructure in public and private development projects to optimize resilience and capacity.
- 6. Protect the water quality in Lake Michigan to ensure a source of safe drinking water.



#### **URBAN NATURAL HABITATS**

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

### Goal 3: Protect and Enhance Urban Natural Habitats.

### Objectives:

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

### **CLIMATE MITIGATION**

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

### Goal 4: A community with limited negative impact on the climate and high resilience to climate changes.

- 1. Reach net zero greenhouse gas emissions as a community by 2050, as stated in the Wilmette Sustainable Communities Strategic Plan.
- 2. Engage with residents and businesses to increase energy efficiency.
- 3. Promote public transit and safe pedestrian and bicycle networks to reduce transportation energy use.
- 4. Track implementation of climate mitigation and adaptation measures across Village buildings, operations, and lands, including energy efficiency, water usage, and use of renewable energy sources.
- 5. Pursue electric aggregation and the use of green energy for Village facilities.
- 6. Review the Village Building Code and look for opportunities to tie climate mitigation measures and sustainable practices to building code regulations for new construction.



### **Opportunities & Recommendations**

The following opportunities and recommendations suggest actions or programs the Village may pursue to implement the goals and objectives. Examples of some recommendations are provided as case studies in the following section.

Two overarching themes that integrate many of the sustainability goals and objectives are *livability and resilience*. The following recommendations build on these community strengths.

- 1. Green Infrastructure and Sustainable Landscaping. Review plans and regulations for streets and stormwater management to identify ways to implement green infrastructure in public streetscapes. Integrate these projects into the bicycling and pedestrian infrastructure and in areas where the Village wishes to foster more interesting and vibrant streetscapes. Continue to identify sites and opportunities for green infrastructure and native landscaping on Village property. Evaluate policies to identify roadblocks to implementing green infrastructure on public property and adjust to create more opportunities for implementation. For privately owned land, develop educational and incentive programs to encourage landscaping with native vegetation and green stormwater infrastructure on private properties.
- 2. Stormwater Capture and Reuse. Identify sites and opportunities to capture, store and reuse stormwater for irrigation, industrial processes such as cooling, and toilet flushing. Evaluate the potential to leverage Wilmette's investment in the underground stormwater storage system recently installed for water reuse through minor retrofits where there is a potential reuse opportunity nearby (e.g. green space irrigation). This would transform and upgrade the rate control facility to a more modern rate and volume control facility, limiting stormwater impacts, while also creating a

- beneficial use for the captured water. Evaluate potential energy and cost savings due to reduced demand for potable water.
- 3. Tree and Pervious Surface Preservation. Continue tracking impervious surface coverage and changes over time. Review regulations and consider ways to encourage and incentivize preserving existing trees, planting new trees, reducing the footprint of new impervious surfaces, and removing existing impervious surfaces.
- 4. Renewable Energy. To actively promote renewable energy, incorporate solar exposure regulations in building and zoning ordinances. Additionally, credits and/or incentives could be provided for rooftop solar on residential, office, commercial, and school buildings. Solar also is becoming an option for larger parking lots, such as those found at Edens Plaza, where single-use asphalt lots can provide shade to parked cars while also generating electricity in larger footprints. If on-site options are limited, community solar gardens offer another alternative, either officially through Village programs or by educating and promoting such opportunities to residents and business owners.
- 5. Water Usage. The average Wilmette resident uses about 44,000 gallons per year, or 120 gallons per day. This is higher than the statewide average, and several Midwestern states have percapita domestic water uses below 75 gallons per day per person. Reducing water usage in a community is important because it lowers the energy costs of pumping and treating water while also reducing stress on source waters. Opportunities to reduce potable water use can be accomplished through sustainable landscaping and reusing stormwater.

<sup>9</sup> https://www.wilmette.com/fags/#44

<sup>10</sup> How We Use Water | US EPA

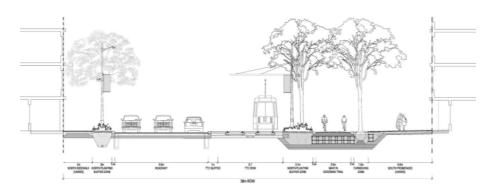
### **Best Practices in Sustainability: Case Studies**

### **Green Infrastrucutre: Integrating Sustainability**

A green street is a stormwater management approach that integrates roadways, green infrastructure transit, and safe places for walking and biking. They are part of the community's ecological fabric and can enhance community health and prosperity. Green streets incorporate a variety of design elements including street trees, permeable pavements, bioretention, and vegetated swales to slow and filter stormwater runoff. Streets comprise a large percentage of publicly owned land and impervious surfaces, and they are a vital part of community member's' daily lives. Thinking differently about streets is one strategy to integrate sustainability into plans and capital improvements, including natural habitats, bicycling and pedestrian infrastructure, and stormwater management.

Toronto has high-profile examples of community revitalization and advanced environmental protection in a Great Lakes setting. The City has experienced a large revitalization of its working waterfront along Lake Ontario. Part of that revitalization has been creating strong green and complete street corridors along heavily traveled roads near and along the lakefront. A key function of green streets is stormwater treatment for urban runoff prior to it entering the lake. The lake shore is directly affected by urban runoff, influencing how inviting this area is to the public. Therefore, reconstructing roads as green streets created solutions to mitigate multiple stormwater impacts. A whole new suite of stormwater practices to address runoff volume and water quality with Low Impact Development and Green Infrastructure strategies are being designed and implemented by the City.





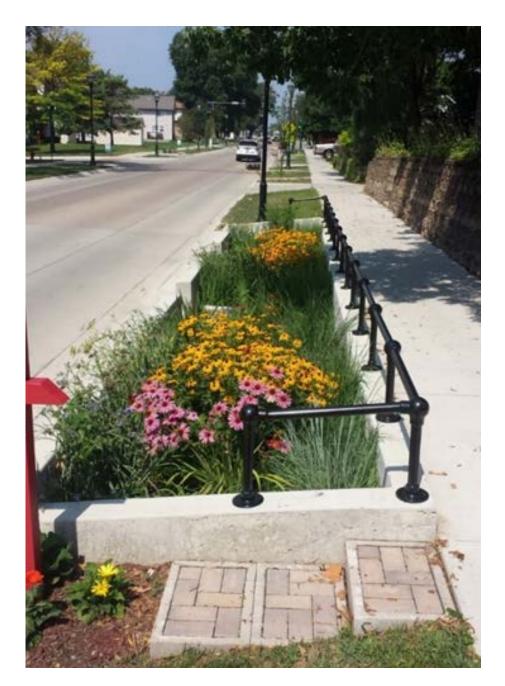
<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>11</sup> National Association of City Transportation Officials, Urban Street Stormwater Guide. Urban Street Stormwater Guide | National Association of City Transportation Officials (nacto.org)



Above and Right: 5th Street "Green Catch Basins", Coralville, IA

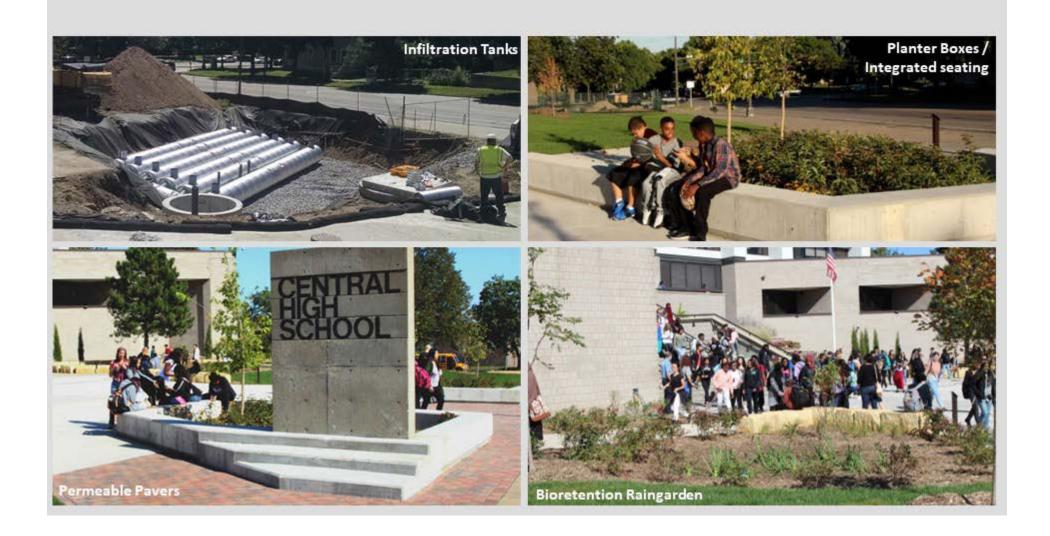






### **Examples: Central High School – LID Elements**





### **Water Reuse**

## Examples: The Rose-Urban Redevelopment – Affordable Housing







CRWD Office, St. Paul, MN



## **Active Transportation in Wilmette**

The U.S Department of Energy defines **active transportation** as "human-powered mobility, such as biking, walking, or rolling. Active transportation directly replaces motor vehicle miles traveled, so these modes are effective at conserving fuel, reducing vehicle emissions, bridging the first- and last-mile gap, and improving individual and public health. Bicycles, electric bikes, wheelchairs, scooters, and even walking are all considered active transportation." Data shows how human-powered mobility is important for Wilmette:

- As populations age and driving becomes less viable as a means of transportation, it is important to plan for a transportation network that is highly walkable, connected, and accessible. The 50 to 64 age group is the fastest growing age cohort in Wilmette and the median age in Wilmette continues to increase. As documented by CMAP, the region's population is aging as the senior population in northeastern Illinois is growing, particularly in northern Cook County, western McHenry County, and southern Will County. The Illinois Department of Aging reports that in 2018, 22% of the population was aged 60 or over, and projected to increase to 25% by 2030.<sup>13</sup>
- As stated in Global Designing Cities Initiative Designing Streets for Kids, "prioritizing children means that streets are safer and more comfortable, beautiful, and enjoyable for all people." (NACTO/Global Designing Cities Initiative, 2020). Wilmette has a high proportion of school aged children, with residents 19 and under making up the largest age group in the community, highlighting the importance of designing transportation networks with a particular focus on this age group as pedestrians, cyclists, and transit riders.



<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>12</sup> Planning for an Aging Population in Northeastern Illinois, September 2021

<sup>13</sup> Illinois State Plan on Aging FY2022 - FY2024, July 2021

- One-fifth (19.8%) of households in the Village have no vehicle or only one vehicle (2022 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates).
- The Village has 166 miles of sidewalk that must be maintained and cleared all year round to ensure safe connections and use. Within those 166 miles, it is important to acknowledge that some areas are not connected or lack a sense of comfort or safety.
- The Village has achieved a Bronze level "Bicycle Friendly Community" by the League of American Bicyclists. The League established the Bicycle Friendly Community program to acknowledge efforts by communities to improve conditions for bicycling and provide additional guidance for further improvements. Levels range from bronze to platinum. For Wilmette, next steps for moving up to the Silver level would include strategies such as continued expansion of the on-road bike network, bicycle facility selection criteria that increases separation and protection of bicyclists, and safety plans to reduce traffic crashes and deaths for all road users, including bicyclists and pedestrians.

All of these emphasize the need for a safe and connected pedestrian and bicycle network.



### **Comprehensive Plan Guides Overarching Transportation Policy**

This chapter of the Comprehensive Plan is additive to the adopted 2021 Master Bike and Active Transportation Plan (MBATP) and provides context and guidance for transportation decision-making. From a transportation perspective, the Comprehensive Plan can build upon the Village's previous efforts, creating new opportunities that directly impact overall quality of life through the following:



Explore best practices and innovative projects that promote universal accessibility and prioritize protected spaces for pedestrians, bicyclists, and transit services.



Integrate climate action, sustainability, and transportation as a combined effort rather than as individual silos.



View transportation networks through a different lens by prioritizing different users and modes, where appropriate. In many cases, pursuing these actions also will require considering trade-offs and difficult choices.



Increase focus on safety through a Safe Systems Approach, which designs streets to prioritize people's safe mobility over vehicular movements.



Leverage transportation infrastructure as a transformative investment, important in advancing quality of life in the Village.

The Village of Wilmette has been diligently working toward enhanced connectivity and accessibility to increase active transportation, understanding that a network for all types of road users, based on safety, sustainability, comfort, and efficiency is necessary to support Wilmette's current residents and future growth. The 2021 Master Bike and Active Transportation Plan outlines recommendations to improve walking and biking both within the Village and regionally, as well as to improve access to destinations such as transit stations, business districts, schools, parks and recreational areas.

## Findings & Relevant Data

### 2021 Master Bike and Active Transportation Plan

Implementing an active transportation plan creates community-wide benefits for all residents and all types of travel. That plan is an important asset to help guide Village decisions in implementing an active transportation network. The Village's last bicycle plan was adopted in 1998. Creating a new plan based on updated design standards and recommendations, as well as Villagers' current motivations and priorities, is a progressive step forward toward achieving a robust on-the-ground network for all types of travel. The 2021 Master Bike and Active Transportation Plan (MBATP) identified improvements in bike and pedestrian networks to increase the ease, comfort, and safety of active transportation throughout Wilmette, creating a roadmap to prioritize future projects when opportunities are available, such as:



Support for grant applications



Concept-level design ideas

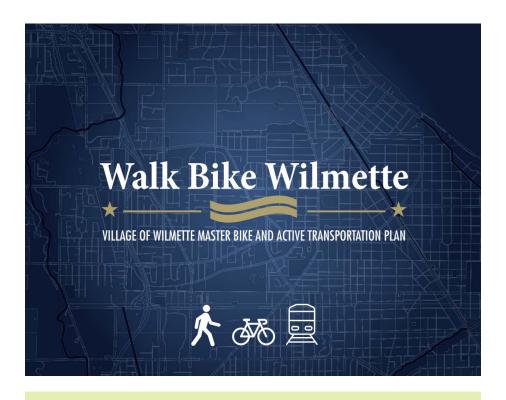


Village-wide initiatives



General best practices and menu of options

The Village has an annual review process to review implementation of the MBATP as part of the overall Capital Improvement Program. During the annual review, recommendations will be considered for current relevancy and/or potential updates.



### **Key Points:**

- The MBATP aims to strengthen and improve active transportation networks to encourage more trips outside vehicles.
- Goals include Safety, Education and Encouragement, Awareness, Convenience, and Community.
- Identifies and prioritizes gaps in networks and improvements needed to enhance comfort.
- Plan includes performance measures and strategies for implementation.

The transportation component of the Comprehensive Plan is intended to coordinate with and support implementation of the MBATP in several ways:



Incorporate improvements that are additive, and bolster planned active transportation networks.



Identify projects
and actions that
are complementary
to implementation
actions and schedule.



Identify projects
that support other
topics such as green
infrastructure, reduced
emissions, reduced need
for personal vehicles,
affordable, equitable,
and accessible for all.

# **Transportation Connections with Other Planning Themes**

Active transportation intersects with many topics in the Comprehensive Plan: there are clear linkages with sustainability, and transportation also relates to urban design, diversity and inclusion, community well-being, health & safety, and affordability.

#### **Sustainability**

Active transportation and sustainability are inherently linked, often with shared initiatives and similar desired outcomes. For example:

- Walkable, bikeable, and transit-accessible communities can decrease greenhouse gas emissions.
- Transit-oriented and compact developments generate less waste and promote more sustainable modes of transportation.
- Right-sizing parking requirements along with increased bike parking can encourage shifts from driving to active transportation modes.
- Increased use of infrastructure that supports electric vehicles (EV), and encourages EV ownership and use.
- Expanding the use of green infrastructure often enhances use and comfort for pedestrians and bicyclists.
- There is a need to coordinate and strategize when providing lighting for safe pedestrian routes while minimizing light pollution.
- Maintenance of transportation and mobility infrastructure yearround encourages active transportation/transit use.

#### **Diversity and Inclusion**

Transportation planning furthers goals related to diversity and inclusion by providing access and mobility opportunities for all, with a focus on how socio-economic and demographic differences may create specific obstacles or challenges.

Transportation network shortcomings impact those less likely to drive, including more vulnerable populations such as older adults, people with disabilities, children and teens, or populations with lower incomes, or immigrant groups. Approaches that address mobility within the context of diversity and inclusion include:

- Address mobility and accessibility equitably by integrating land uses and diverse populations that may have specific transportation needs.
- Pilot innovative transportation options and best practices that can fill specific gaps or needs, such as small electric or automated shuttles or sidewalk accessibility apps.
- Consider infrastructure enhancements to address diversity and inclusion, such as audible pedestrian signals, longer crossing times, additional locations for new infrastructure, height and display of streetscape elements such as large print signage placed at levels more visible to those with low vision or vision impairments.
- Promote design of infrastructure with safety measures and protections to support equitable access to all areas of the Village.

# **Transportation Connections with Other Planning Themes (cont.)**

Throughout the planning process, Wilmette residents shared ideas and insights that demonstrated how transportation and other topics are linked:

#### **TRANSPORTATION**

# What we heard when asking....

How can the Village build on the Active Transportation Plan?

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

#### **COMMUNITY CHARACTER**

### What we heard when asking....

What most influences Wilmette's community character?

- Neighborhood feel walkable streets, trees, attractive housing.
- Downtown feel walkable, gathering spaces, restaurants and outdoor dining.
- Nature parks and Lake Michigan, and ease of access to them.
- Variety in feel and look in neighborhoods and business districts
- People enjoy neighborhoods and caring for historic homes.
- Downtown and east side districts are easy to get around by walking or biking.

#### **HEALTH, SAFETY, WELLNESS**

## What we heard when asking....

What opportunities are there to live well and healthy in Wilmette?

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

#### **SUSTAINABILITY**

# What we heard when asking....

How can the Village build on the Sustainability Plan?

- Residents and organizations are engaged in and supportive of this topic.
- Sustainability and active transportation are linked.
- Improvements are needed to bike and pedestrian infrastructure.
- There is growing interest in community *walkability*.
- Solar power is seeming more interest in the Village.
- Air quality and water quality are high priorities.



*3 out of 4 respondents ranked* **bike infrastructure** *and/or* **sidewalk connectivity/pedestrian safety** *as one of their top three answers* 

# **Community Perspectives on Transportation**

A central theme across all community input was that Wilmette residents desire a more walkable and bikeable community that prioritizes safety and visibility. Perspectives centered on:



# **Safety**

- Crossing the Edens at Lake Street must be safer.
- Protected spaces for bicyclists and pedestrians are needed for safety.
- Walking in town is generally seen as safer than bicycling.



# Connectivity

- Walking and biking is more difficult in the western part of town.
- Connected east/west bikeway from the lake to west Wilmette is needed.
- Connections to regional bike paths/trails are lacking.



## **Accessibility**

- ADA accessible improvements are needed.
- Sidewalk network enhancements, expansion, and maintenance should be a priority.



## **Sustainability**

- Support resident access to and use of transit.
- Support green infrastructure throughout the Village.
- Support pedestrians and bicyclists with safe travel paths.

Following Wilmette Talk #4, which focused on Transportation & Sustainability, a community poll asked questions on the same topics. Key considerations for plan recommendations that emerged from poll results include:

- Enhancing safety for pedestrians and bicyclists was seen as the greatest transportation related challenge (such as expanded crosswalks, flashing beacons, more lighting, etc.)
- Secondary to safety:
  - Complete the sidewalk network so it is continuous across all parts of the Village
  - Maintain and clear sidewalks
  - Add more bike parking
  - Improve accessibility for all remove sidewalk obstructions, repair uneven sidewalks; these affect not just people with disabilities, but many others (those pushing strollers, older persons, or small children)
  - Stronger enforcement of traffic laws (speeding, running stop signs, etc.)
- 44% of respondents supported converting appropriate neighborhood streets into "shared streets" (where pedestrians, bikes, and vehicles all use the same space at reduced travel speeds). NOTE: Many communities who implemented these types of temporary strategies during COVID-19 restrictions have converted to permanent.
- 40% supported the use of parking spaces for expanded outdoor dining areas. Although some expressed concern about using existing sidewalks or parking spaces for dining, others commented that sidewalks are not wide enough, and there is need to coordinate with other Village efforts.
- Considering how Wilmette can reduce vehicle use and prioritize sustainable transportation (transit, biking, and walking)...

- 62% said add bike lanes and emphasize crosswalk areas
- 55% said integrate green infrastructure intro streetscapes and parking areas
- 54% said move towards energy efficient or solar powered public lighting
- Others said...
  - Promote use of Pace buses and coordinate for improved service (weekend service with smaller vehicles; better timing; coordination with Metra schedule, etc.)
  - The Village bike-share program and scooters received mixed reviews
- As the Village implements its Active Transportation Plan, respondents suggest the Village prioritize investments in infrastructure (such as paths, sidewalks, and intersections) that create more effective connections throughout the community and increase safety while walking and biking. Highest priorities included:
  - 66% Upgrade intersections and crosswalks with safety enhancements
  - 48% Focus resources on maintaining existing sidewalks and bike lanes
- What changes could best transform travel in the Village?
  - Bike/pedestrian connections across I-94
  - Implement the Active Transportation Plan more quickly (big demand for bike infrastructure and filling in the sidewalk network)
  - There was no clear position expressed regarding to roundabouts and road diets
- Respondents felt safer walking in most places in Wilmette vs. biking. On a scale of 1-10 (1 = not safe at all and 10 = very safe), walking received an average score of 8.22 while biking scored an average of 6.35.

## **Sustainability + Transportation**

## **Pedestrian + Bike Infrastructure**

# **Outdoor Dining**



### **STORY SPOTLIGHT:**

"I believe the ability to walk and bike to local destinations is one of the most appealing characteristics of Wilmette, and was one of the reasons our family chose to move here. We love that we can walk or bike to school, parks, restaurants, shops, and even to our soccer games! I am glad that the Comprehensive Plan supports continued expansion of Active Transportation opportunities and infrastructure throughout the Village. With a strong network of safe, comfortable pedestrian and bicycle facilities in the future, all residents and visitors will enjoy the physical, mental and social benefits of a walkable, livable environment. That is the kind of place I want to live in, and the kind of place I want Wilmette to be."

– Jill Hayes, Transportation Commission Chair

# Goals & Objectives

Goals and objectives describe policies, programs, and further planning the Village looks to conduct in implementing this comprehensive plan. The statements are reflective of past planning efforts of the Village, community input to this plan, feedback from focus groups with Village commissions, and a comprehensive evaluation by the Plan Commission.

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

**Objectives** are actions that define policies to be followed in pursuit of goals. They do not necessarily have a timeline and may be modified in their ultimate implementation, as they likely require more thought, deliberation, and refinement to be brought to fruition. This is the how a comprehensive plan gets used – the desired outcomes generally remain, while the environment in which they may become reality is dynamic and the plan must be applied accordingly. More specific suggestions and recommendations follow the goals and objectives in the next section (Opportunities).

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

Goal 1: Support implementation of the Wilmette Master Bike & Active Transportation Plan (Adopted 2021).

#### **UNIVERSAL ACCESSIBILITY**

Goal 2: A transportation system and networks accessible for all regardless of mode, age, ability, or location.

- 1. Invest in new types of accessible infrastructure and technology solutions such as travel planning apps, audible signals and crosswalks, and travel aids to support mobility for people with disabilities, and other vulnerable populations such as seniors and youth.
- 2. Prioritize aspects of the Village's Master Bike and Active Transportation Plan that complete a continuous sidewalk/bike path network in the Village.
- 3. Maintain clear sidewalks, bicycle facilities, and bus stops ensuring all weather accessibility, including parking enforcement and snow-removal.
- 4. Right-size the amount of public and private parking in business areas, finding a balance between too much and too little.
- 5. Provide safe, multimodal circulation, pedestrian movements, and convenient bike access, in neighborhoods.
- 6. Minimize traffic impact on residential areas.
- 7. Ensure that new development projects do not redirect or exacerbate traffic onto residential streets.

#### **MULTIMODAL APPROACH**

Goal 3: Transportation investments that support complete streets and provide seamless, multimodal travel.

### Objectives:

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

#### SAFE AND PROTECTED SPACES

Goal 4: Safe and protected spaces for people walking, using transit, riding bikes, and using other types of wheeled mobility modes.

#### Objectives:

- 1. Apply design elements and best practices to all transportation projects across the Village to provide the highest level of safety and protection.
- 2. Allocate more space for pedestrians along collector and arterial roadways by expanding sidewalk space, corner bump-outs, pedestrian zones, plazas, and shared use paths, where possible using designs that consider impacts to trees or other natural features.
- 3. Explore innovative projects that expand protected spaces for pedestrians and bicyclists, testing new configurations, such as bus/bike boulevards, play streets, or car-free locations.
- 4. Address modal conflicts by reducing or eliminating curb cuts, increasing visibility and protection at intersections, and providing

- buffers to motor vehicle traffic.
- 5. Study problematic intersections, prioritizing the needs of those walking and biking.
- 6. Minimize cut-through traffic in neighborhoods.

#### SUSTAINABLE TRAVEL MODES

Goal 5: Transportation networks that support greater connectivity by active and sustainable modes such as walking, public transit, and biking and do not require car ownership.

## Objectives:

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

## REDUCED AUTO DEPENDENCY

Goal 6: Community sustainability, resiliency, and equity through the ability to travel without a car.

- 1. Integrate principles of a 15-minute village to foster access to essential services, parks, open spaces, and mobility options within a 15-minute walk, regardless of age or ability.
- 2. Promote transit-oriented development principles when locating housing and employment closer to transit stops and stations.
- 3. Pursue pilot projects to repurpose roadway space currently used for cars and trucks that can be reallocated for people for walking, transit, biking, or accessibility improvements.

4. Evaluate innovative strategies used in other cities to optimize the use of curb space that prioritizes bus lanes and stops, bike lanes, bike parking, pedestrian safety designs, and electric bikes and vehicles.

#### **ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY**

Goal 7: Reduce pollutants generated by transportation-related sources to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and improve air quality.

- 1. Incorporate green infrastructure solutions, including parks and open space to buffer pedestrians and bicyclists from impacts of arterial roadways and corridors with higher volumes of freight vehicles.
- 2. Support programs and services to increase transit use by residents, employees, and visitors.
- 3. Reduce congestion through increased use of transit, walking, biking, and shared uses.
- 4. Develop a publicly available Village-wide network of electric vehicle charging infrastructure.
- 5. Consider guidelines and incentive programs that can support the conversion of delivery fleets to alternative fuel, electric vehicles, or cargo bikes.
- 6. Consider and coordinate with partners to allow for a suite of last-mile<sup>14</sup> delivery strategies, such as e-cargo bike requirements, zero emissions delivery zones, parcel lockers, or limited or off-hour delivery programs, which are supported by last-mile delivery data.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>14</sup> The "last-mile" refers to the final step of the delivery process, when goods are moved from a transportation hub to a final destination.

# **Opportunities & Recommendations**

Many efforts are already happening in the Village towards the goals of improving active and sustainable transportation modes. While some of these may take more time or budget (such as adding new protected bike lanes, pedestrian bridges, enhancing sidewalks and expanding the sidewalk network, or piloting a new mode or technology) smaller actions can make an impact as well. These include installing more bike racks or bike parking areas, adding covered bike parking with fix-it stations, updating sidewalks in disrepair with a focus on areas most in need such as Linden Square and Green Bay Road, sidewalks cleared of snow and ice, and creating barrier-free pathways and curb ramps so that a person with a disability can proceed unimpeded.

These modest actions require looking at networks in a different lens by prioritizing different users and modes. In many cases, pursuing these actions also will require considering trade-offs. These actions should be considered as opportunities when planning for new or updated infrastructure projects, or part of new development or redevelopment projects.

The planning process showed that the Wilmette community supports "thinking outside the lane." Wilmette is a community where transportation is much more than driving alone in one's car, and that thoughtful application of transportation related efforts advance may of its goals. The following opportunities and recommendations will help the Village to build on this approach to active transportation:

 Continued implementation of the Village's Master Bike and Active Transportation Plan, prioritizing a continuous sidewalk / bike path network in the Village. This includes consideration of a greater annual budget commitment allowing for more rapid implementation. As described previously, the Village annually reviews MBATP recommendations as funding needs are identified. Projects that build on a continuous network connecting all areas of the Village are critical for early implementation.

- 2. Explore innovative projects that prioritize and expand protected spaces for pedestrians, bicyclists and transit services, testing new configurations, such as bus/bike boulevards, play streets, or car-free locations. As documented by the Global Designing Cities Initiative, existing roadway designs and/or functions that may either no longer meet the needs of the community or conditions change are opportunities to "reimagine the urban space" or "repurpose existing infrastructure." Strategies that prioritize active transportation over vehicular traffic can include adding traffic calming, protected infrastructure for pedestrians and bikers, or dedicated space for transit. These types of strategies are supported by the MBATP and Village sustainability efforts. Strategies could be tested as interim or pilot projects that could evolve to a permanent transformation. These can also be included as part of new or redevelopment projects.
- 3. Focus on safety for all by reducing or eliminating curb cuts, increasing visibility and protection at intersections, adding pedestrian safety designs, and providing buffers to motor vehicle traffic. These are common tenets of a Safe Systems Approach which designs streets to prioritize people's safe mobility over vehicular movements by physically separating people walking and biking from drivers, wherever possible. Strategies could be protected bike lanes, incorporating protected intersection design, or adding leading pedestrian intervals (LPI) at traffic signals. LPIs

allow pedestrians to get a head start in the crosswalk before drivers make turns. A protected intersection uses enhanced design elements to provide greater safety, visibility, and comfort to those walking, biking, or accessing transit. Elements can include a combination of curb extensions, corner safety islands, center crossing refuge, forward bike stop bars, and enhanced signal features to prioritize accessibility for pedestrians and bicyclists.

- 4. Expand opportunities for bike and micro-mobility parking and repair stations. Explore programs of shared transportation resources such as bike/e-bike/scooter/share, bike charging stations, or other future mobility options. This could include development of mobility hubs at key Village activity centers such as train stations, schools, parks, and libraries. The National Association of City Transportation Officials (NACTO) recently published "Designing for Small Things with Wheels," highlighting that the use of shared micro-mobility has soared in North America and the variety of devices used have expanded. Pedal bikes, e-bikes, e-scooters, cargo-bike, and tri-wheeled vehicles attract people with varying degrees of skills, expertise, and comfort. Since each type of vehicle moves differently, design considerations for "All Ages / All Abilities," should assess lane widths, surfaces, intersections, and crossings.
- 5. Evaluate innovative programs or technologies implemented in other cities as these might be applicable to Wilmette. Piloting new services or technologies such as e-bike sharing, low emission small vehicles/shuttles, flexible curb use, or accessibility strategies can be a way to test specific projects in specific locations. Using temporary or tactical solutions can also be a method to pilot projects.

- 6. Identify potential "cross-pillar" projects that support the nexus of transportation to other Village priorities and initiatives such as green infrastructure, reduced emissions, reduced need for personal vehicles, affordable, equitable, and accessible for all. Examples of cross-pillar projects may include: incorporating green infrastructure solutions as part transportation improvements; using parks and open space to buffer pedestrians and bicyclists from impacts of arterial roadways and corridors with higher volumes of freight vehicles; and developing a publicly available Village-wide network of electric vehicle charging infrastructure (and opportunities to charge electric bikes).
- 7. Prioritize opportunities for transit oriented and compact development, which are more supportive of using transit, walking, and biking. Developments near train stations and on bus routes are an opportunity for denser living types and pedestrian oriented businesses. Such development has less impact on the community, the environment and the traffic network as it can be accomplished with reduced emphasis on cars and driving.
- 8. Consider and coordinate with delivery companies and businesses to allow for a suite of last-mile delivery strategies, such as e-cargo bike requirements, zero emissions delivery zones, parcel lockers, or limited or off-hour delivery programs, which are supported by last-mile delivery data.
- 9. Right-size the amount of public and private parking in business areas, finding a balance between too much and too little, and consider curb use optimization strategies. Curb allocation can also include the use of green infrastructure, parklets, bike corrals, spaces for electric vehicle charging, and new technology for dynamic management and pricing.



DIVERSITY & INCLUSION

# More Than Diversity: Moving From Welcome To Respect & Belonging

Wilmette continues its commitment to diversity and inclusion, recognizing that everyone in the community should feel as if they can make a valuable contribution and feel like they belong. Recent examples of this commitment include the priority of exploring these issues during development of this Comprehensive Plan, as well as the reinvigoration of the Human Relations Commission and Village programming and events related to this theme.

As the Village continues these efforts, it must bear in mind that even the best efforts can fall short for some groups of residents. In polls and interviews that were part of the planning process, residents shared that the "village is a welcoming place and that it could be more welcoming." Further discussions added the perspective that "Wilmette is tolerant and respectful of differences between people ... but not everyone and not always."

Managing the needs of a diverse population and creating inclusive governance are complex. The task to do so requires consistency, intention and clarity. While diversity and inclusion are inter-related and in the best scenarios are implemented as complementary strategies, those working on creating inclusive environments need to pay attention to the nuances and differences between the two.

"Even the most welcoming of communities may find that they engage more with some groups of residents than others. They may have outdated codes or policies that have unintentionally caused harm or excluded certain groups from participating fully in the community. Perhaps the community has witnessed a gradual shift in its demographics while its staff and elected officials have remained largely the same, leaving them vulnerable to overlooking the needs of their new residents."

- Diversity, Equity and Inclusion in Municipal Government, a resource from the Metropolitan Mayors Caucus



# **Definitions**

# **Diversity**

Diversity focuses on the ways in which different perspectives and lived experiences impact an entire community, institution or organization. Differences are considered essential to the whole. It is a demographic calculation of the many different types of people in a community and the ways they live, work, worship and play. It can be used as a quantitative metric as well as a community value.

#### Inclusion

Inclusion (also called inclusiveness) is community building that intentionally adds depth and richness to the diversity that exists, This strategy is about actively welcoming and accepting different worldviews and respecting unique needs, backgrounds, perspectives, and potentials. Inclusiveness strategies and practices are successful when all residents feel like they belong and are able to use their voice and be heard no matter their background or identity. It is more qualitative than quantitative.

Per the definition from the Chicagoland Metropolitan Mayors Caucus, inclusion "is about intentionally bringing people from diverse backgrounds and perspectives into conversations and decision-making processes. An organization that is inclusive acknowledges its vulnerability in making equitable and just decisions without the participation of its diverse constituents. It actively seeks to invite and include the voices of those who have been historically and systemically excluded, and it creates ongoing pathways to ensure that any individual or group can feel welcomed, respected, and fully participate in all aspects of the organization and community."

# **Belonging**

A newer concept for those who want to build stronger communities is that of *belonging*. Belonging is a deeper extension of inclusiveness and is related to the ways people experience and participate in broad community life.

According to the Othering & Belonging Institute at the Haas Institute for a Fair and Inclusive Society at the University of California at Berkeley, "belonging means more than just being seen. Belonging entails having a meaningful voice and the opportunity to participate in the design of social and cultural structures. Belonging means having the right to contribute to, and make demands on, society and political institutions."

When people express a feeling of belonging, it is an indication that efforts to "make people feel safe and welcome," as expressed in the Village of Wilmette's Commission on Human Relations' mission statement, have been successful. This concept was explored throughout the planning process, in particular during a focus group with the Human Relations Commission and in the Wilmette Talk focused on welcoming and belonging.

# **Equity**

Borrowing again from the Metropolitan Mayors Caucus, "Equity is both the process and outcome of ensuring the consistent and systemic fair, just, and impartial treatment of all individuals, especially those who belong to historically underserved and marginalized groups. A commitment to equity involves a focused effort to involve the participation of staff from multiple departments as well as diverse community voices in the assessment and review of policies, practices, and procedures that perpetuate inequities within an organization and the broader community."

# A Foundation for the Discussion

# **Relevant Findings and Data**

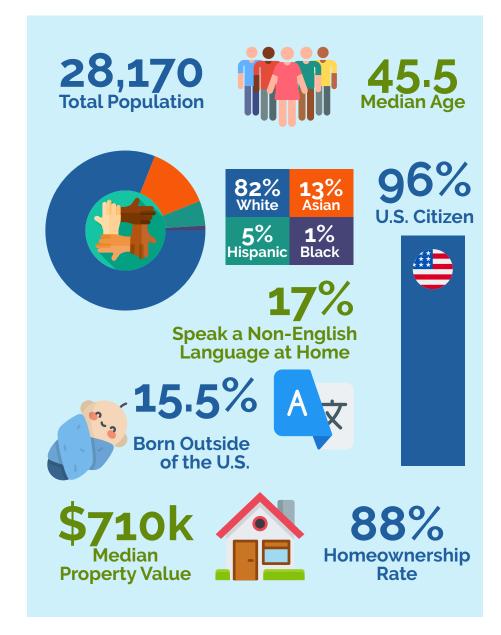
Understanding "who" Wilmette is serves as a fundamental point of beginning. As recorded in the 2020 Census, Wilmette's population is just over 28,000 people with a median age of 45.5.

It remains a predominantly white community. The largest groups are White (Non-Hispanic) (81.2%), Asian (Non-Hispanic) (12.6%), Hispanic (4.5%) and Black or African – American (0.7%). As of 2020, 15.5% of Wilmette, IL residents (about 4.190 people) were born outside of the United States, which is higher than the national average of 13.5%. 96.4% of the residents in Wilmette are U.S. citizens and 17% of Wilmette households report speaking a non-English language at home.

Per the 2019 American Community Survey, 8% of residents in Wilmette live with a disability (such as difficulties with hearing, vision, cognitive, ambulatory, self-care, or independent living).

Wilmette is home to 17 houses of worship, including: American Baptist, Bahai, Catholic, Church of Christ, Congregational Church, Episcopal, Evangelical Covenant, Jewish, Latter Day Saints, Lutheran, Methodist, Presbyterian, and Chinese Christian.

In 2022, according to the US Census, the median property value in Wilmette was \$710,400 and the homeownership rate was 88%. It is a long-standing reality that the cost of housing in Wilmette presents a challenge in increasing the diversity of the population.



# **Community Perspectives on Diversity & Inclusion**

To go beyond demographics and better understand how Wilmette residents experience and think of diversity and inclusion, a variety of community engagement strategies were employed. Based on community input through the plan website and surveys, attendance at Wilmette Talk #2, and involvement in focus groups, a simple question was pursued:

#### "How is Wilmette diverse and can it be more welcoming?"15

The answer to this question was as complex as the theme it considers, but responses coalesced around a few key notions. Primarily, there is recognition that while the Village is "proactive in celebrating its diversity and is being acknowledged for it, poll respondents expressed concern that while people will explore issues related to diversity, most are also "okay with the status quo." This feedback underscores the importance of and need for the Human Relations Commission's commitment to host ongoing heritage forums and celebrations that focus on awareness and education with social and cultural components that also provide exposure to related businesses." Additionally, while respondents recognized Village efforts related to diversity, they pointed to the need for there to be more diversity in Village leadership and other governmental bodies.

Other responses from a community poll, showed that:

- 68% of all respondents and 60% of Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) respondents Agreed or Strongly Agreed that Wilmette is a welcoming community. And nearly half (47%) of all respondents were Not Sure if there are opportunities for people to express concerns about feeling welcome in Wilmette.
- Microaggressions due to race, ethnicity, sexuality or gender are more likely to be experienced by BIPOC respondents (reported

by 45% of all BIPOC vs. 16% of all White respondents). The above findings illustrate how there can be two things going on at the same time. BIPOC residents can feel welcome in some spaces in their community and in other places experience microaggressions. Village leadership must remember this when designing policies and strategies to advance diversity and inclusion.

- 68% of all respondents think Wilmette should be doing more to enhance diversity and inclusion. Another finding raises the question of whether or not these respondents know enough about the specific activities happening throughout the Village. 63% of all respondents were either Not Sure, Disagreed, or Strongly Disagreed that they know where to find resources to learn more about diversity and inclusion in Wilmette.
- Of all respondents, 2 in 3 were either Not Sure, Disagreed, or Strongly Disagreed that perspectives from all people are included in Wilmette's decision making.
- Specific suggestions to increase inclusion that came from community members included:
  - Making sure all people are recognized and heard in Village communications.
  - Employ broader outreach strategies that include people of all backgrounds, but also focus on BIPOC communities.

A microaggression is a remark or action that makes a person feel mistreated or insulted because of their racial, ethnic, or gender identity. Such acts are often unintentional. The intention does not lessen the hurtful and marginalizing impact.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>15</sup> Whether or not residents feel welcomed is often used as measurement of whether or not they feel included. It is also considered a measurement of safety for people who are in minority populations.

The overarching question for the Village of Wilmette as it moves forward with diversity and inclusion strategies is: How does the Village of Wilmette deepen its current inclusive practices and create more inclusive policies, while continuing to work to increase diversity? The answer is that this work begins with the diverse populations currently living in the Village. Village leadership can neither wait for a critical mass of residents who are Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) to do this important work, nor can it let the people already living in Wilmette feel marginalized or excluded.

As Wilmette makes this comprehensive plan a part of its ongoing work to be a welcoming, diverse and inclusive community, it does so with the understanding that these notions are deeply complex. Yes, the Village does see itself as a welcoming place; and yes, there are those living here that do not always feel welcome. Both perspectives are legitimate. Together they show that Wilmette strives to be, and is working toward, becoming a more diverse and welcoming place and this journey is not a quick or simple one.



Wilmette Talk #2 focused on questions of diversity and inclusion, welcoming, and belonging.

#### **STORY SPOTLIGHT:**

"I've lived with my family in Wilmette for 30 years and I love this village. Our children attended world class schools, participated in sports and enrichment programs and made lifelong friends. I am so impressed with the community's support and involvement not only in our schools, park district, and local government, but also in numerous non-profits supporting diverse needs such as Our Place, The Warming House, Haven Youth and Family Services, and Housing Our Own to name a few.

I've seen first-hand how our public schools actively include students with disabilities in the classroom and community. The result has been wonderful, not just for our daughter, but for all students and community members because they interact with people who are different. Living, interacting, and working with a diverse group of people makes a stronger community. The challenge for Wilmette and local non-profits is integrating members with disabilities fully into our community with recreational, employment and housing opportunities. This challenge can only be met by a strong public and private partnership, and I believe our community is up to the challenge.

This is one of many dimensions of diversity and inclusion. All community members must be welcomed, respected, and valued. A strong community respects and appreciates differences. I applaud the Village's efforts to be welcoming to all. There is still a lot of work to be done and it will take time, but it's important that we continually strive to be better."

- Ann Dronen, Human Relations Commission Chair

# Goals & Objectives

Goals and objectives describe policies, programs, and further planning the Village looks to conduct in implementing this comprehensive plan. The statements are reflective of past planning efforts of the Village, community input to this plan, feedback from focus groups with Village commissions, and a comprehensive evaluation by the Plan Commission.

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

**Objectives** are actions that define policies to be followed in pursuit of goals. They do not necessarily have a timeline and may be modified in their ultimate implementation, as they likely require more thought, deliberation, and refinement to be brought to fruition. This is the how a comprehensive plan gets used – the desired outcomes generally remain, while the environment in which they may become reality is dynamic and the plan must be applied accordingly. More specific suggestions and recommendations follow the goals and objectives in the next section (Opportunities).

By embedding the practice of inclusion into decision-making, management and planning, Wilmette can enhance and leverage diversity in ways that build a stronger community.

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

#### Objectives:

- 1. Maintain a commitment to diversity in recruitment for employees and board/commission members.
- 2. Identify opportunities to hire and develop leadership from underrepresented identity groups.

#### Goal 2: Inclusive practices are embedded in Village operations.

#### Objectives:

- 1. Establish inclusion (based on race, ethnicity, gender identity, country of origin, religion, age, economic status, life with a disability, etc.) as a core principle in the planning, decision-making and policy development and implementation processes.
- 2. Commit to a review process of policies, plans and outcomes centering inclusion.
- 3. Ensure that Village communications include appropriate and diverse representation.

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

- 1. Maintain a commitment to engaging all community members within civic practices.
- 2. Create spaces and gatherings devoted to residents of all backgrounds to listen and work together to make progress on issues of diversity and inclusiveness.
- 3. Work with Housing Commission to explore complementary strategies which combine efforts around diversity and inclusion with efforts to increase housing affordability (one example might be community conversations that discuss how providing a range of housing types and options can further diversity and inclusion in Wilmette for specific populations—see Chapter 8 for more discussion on this).
- 4. Explore the possibility of creating diversity and inclusion training that can be offered to residents.

# **Opportunities & Recommendations**

1. Develop and implement an equity & inclusion lens through which policies, plans and outcomes are reviewed. An equity lens is the set of questions asked by Village leaders throughout all phases of the decision-making process. This lens can interrupt the impact of "unintended consequences" by centering the lived experiences and perspectives of the diverse communities that the Village intends to serve more effectively. It can also improve the level of inclusion of residents. The lens is not a static document and should be revisited to make sure it is as thorough as possible.

Sample Questions for the Equity & Inclusion Lens:16

- What is the policy, program, or decision being reviewed?
- What groups (racial, ethnic, gender identity, sexual orientation, etc.) are experiencing disparities related to the policy, program, or decision?
- Is the policy, program, or decision equitable in terms of household incomes?
- Are they at the table participating in the review? If not, why? What is being done to bring them to the table?
- Does the policy, program, or decision improve, worsen, or make no change to existing disparities?
- How is the policy, program, or decision interpreted by different communities?
- What might be unintended consequences of the policy, program, or decision?
- Does it result in systemic changes of any kind?
- Based on what is discovered in the process of answering these questions, what are the possible revisions to the policy, program or decision under review?
- What next steps are recommended and how will that be advanced?

- 2. Ensure all Village staff and leadership have the skills needed to work in a diverse environment and can manage efforts to encourage greater inclusivity. Topics for workshops and discussions could include anti-racism, cultural competence, managing implicit bias, ways to give feedback, managing conflict and addressing microaggressions, etc. Wherever possible, design group learning opportunities and moments for peer-to-peer support. Beyond workshops, these lessons must be followed with ongoing opportunities to practice what is learned.
- 3. Support the Wilmette Human Relations Commission to implement the HRC Work Plan (Adopted 2022) and consider activities such as:
  - Create a tool and process to measure how people feel that they belong (or not).
  - Host ongoing community conversations on topics of systemic racism, oppression, and belonging.
  - Create a Diversity & Inclusiveness Working Group with representatives from the community (schools, faith-based organizations, parks, public safety, etc.) to design and implement inclusion strategies leading to more welcoming spaces.
  - Continue to develop and present to the community events that celebrate the various cultures and backgrounds in Wilmette, as is currently outlined in the HRC Work Plan.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>16</sup> Questions adapted from Race Forward's Racial Equity Impact Assessment Tool



**CHAPTER EIGHT** 

HOUSING

# **Housing in Wilmette**

The Village of Wilmette offers its residents homes in attractive, well-maintained neighborhoods. The housing stock consists mainly of detached single-family residences, which account for about 78 percent of the total housing units. Nearly 80 percent of housing units were built prior to 1970 (only 8 percent were built after 2000), most of the dwellings have three or more bedrooms, and most housing (87 percent) is owner occupied (only 13 percent of units are renter occupied). The graphs and graphics that follow add context to these existing conditions.

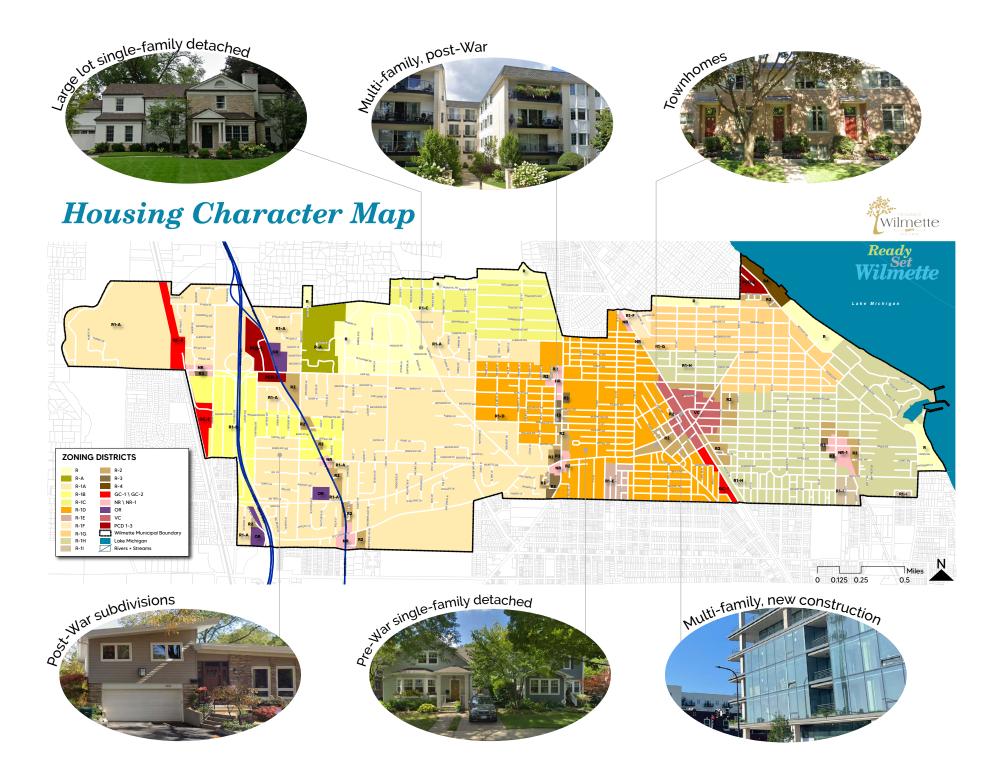
For the most part, housing in Wilmette is costly and out of reach to groups like young families, young professionals, and people who work in the Village. The cost of housing also can limit the Village's overall diversity and its accessibility to people with disabilities. Housing costs may also make remaining in the Village a challenge for empty nesters and seniors with fixed incomes.

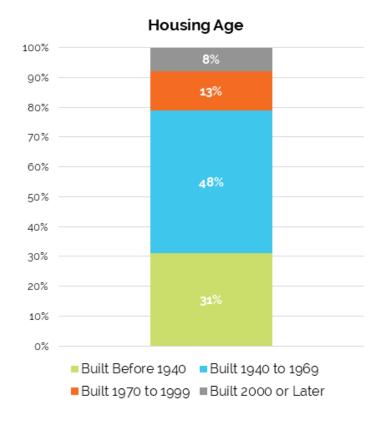
The Village has begun to consider options for creating housing that is more attainable generally, as well as specifically designated affordable housing. This Comprehensive Plan provides an opportunity to consider these issues and establish objectives for addressing them. This will set a baseline for further Village consideration and planning for the housing needs of its current and future residents, to be followed up with a more detailed housing plan to further implement the goals and objectives detailed here.















The Village's multifamily structures are mainly located along major commercial corridors, including Green Bay Road, Ridge Road, and Village Center. The structures include apartments and condominiums located above first-floor commercial uses. Additional multifamily housing is located near the Linden Square commercial area and along the lakefront across from Plaza del Lago. In recent years some larger-scale, Transit Oriented Development, multifamily buildings have been developed in the Village Center area where new development includes the Residences of Wilmette with 75 units and the Optima Verdana with 100 units. These projects grew out of recommendations from the Village Center Master Plan and rewrite of the Zoning Ordinance, adopted in 2014.

# Affordable & Attainable Housing

The term "affordable housing" is often misunderstood and unintentionally misused. Those using the term may be discussing housing that is simply more affordable than what is generally available in a community. This comprehensive plan considers both "affordable housing" and housing that is more affordable which may also be referred to as "attainable housing."

## Affordable Housing

Affordable housing refers to a specific housing unit for which the price is set as a function of the buyer or renter's income. That dwelling will be maintained at a below market rate. This type of housing is pursued by communities to encourage a financially diverse population and in support of other local objectives. The price of affordable housing is based on a percentage of the Chicago Region Area Median Income (AMI). Depending on the type of financing secured and local policies, that percentage may range from 60 to 120 percent of the AMI – in the Chicago region, not Wilmette. For example, based on income limit data provided by the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) in 2020, the Chicago Region AMI for a family of four is \$91,000.

The process by which affordable housing is developed and maintained requires more steps and ongoing consideration than market rate housing but provides benefits to communities – some of which are discussed in this Chapter. Affordable housing has been developed throughout the Chicago region and along the north shore of Lake Michigan. The character, maintenance, and look of these dwellings is in keeping with the areas where they are built, and typically indistinguishable from market rate units.

## Attainable Housing

Housing need not be designated as "affordable" to be a more attainable product within the local housing mix. For example, townhomes, stacked flats, and condominiums are for-sale dwellings typically

available in the market for less cost than a single-family detached home; likewise, smaller single-family detached homes on smaller lots typically are less costly. This generally is a function of land cost, and the ability to locate more dwellings on a given development parcel. By allowing these types of dwellings, communities make their housing more attainable. Rental apartments are often thought of as a type of housing that is more attainable. However, depending on the location and type of units designed, these dwellings may not be affordable enough to provide housing in Wilmette to the groups noted here looking for more affordable living spaces in the Village.

There are more differences to these housing types than are briefly listed here. However, this base understanding is important in reviewing this chapter of the plan and as the Village takes steps to implement its goals and objectives.



# Findings & Relevant Data

Characteristics of the Wilmette housing stock affect the affordability of housing and consequently, the types and diversity of households who can find housing in the Village. Key findings from analysis and community engagement as part of the planning process are summarized below.

# **Overall Housing Characteristics**

- Single-family detached dwellings in the Village offer attractive housing options in comfortable, established neighborhoods.
- The single-family housing stock is best suited for middle- and upper-income families, especially those with children.
- Aging housing stock may lack modern features and amenities.
- Single-family homes consist mostly of larger units with three or more bedrooms.
- Housing costs/prices for both rental and for-sale housing are high in comparison to the region, but consistent with nearby communities.
- Housing options are limited for down-sizing empty nesters, seniors, college students, young professionals, young families, persons with disabilities, and local employees who want to live near their places of work.
- Age restricted housing is the only type of affordable housing historically created in the Village.
- Limited attainable housing for area residents and employees with moderate and lower incomes is available.

# **Housing for Sale**

- Median sales price of single-family detached housing is high: \$850,000 in 2021.
- Median sales price of single-family attached homes/townhouses is lower than detached homes (\$325,000 in 2021); however, attached homes account for a smaller number of sales (about 130 in 2021) than detached homes (nearly 500 in 2021).
- In 2023, Community Partners for Affordable Housing (CPAH) created Wilmette's first six (6) permanently affordable for-sale homes (single-family detached). CPAH is expected to create an additional four units of permanently affordable for-sale homes (two condominium units & two townhome units) by July 2026.
- Between 2011 and 2021, only 2 single-family detached homes and 111 single-family attached homes sold in Wilmette would have been considered affordable, per the State's definition.<sup>17</sup>

# **Rental Housing**

- There is insufficient rental housing for families in Wilmette as the majority of affordable housing for rent is small, studio units. Larger size units exceeded affordable monthly rents.
- Over 58 percent of persons employed in Wilmette but living elsewhere cannot afford current monthly rents of rental units in the Village, per analysis of US Census information.
- Wilmette has only a limited number of age- and/or incomerestricted rental housing units.
- The most recently constructed affordable rental housing development, Cleland Place built in 2021, had 16 affordable units for which 117 households applied.
- In 2023, CPAH acquired five rental units in two buildings that will be maintained as permanently affordable rental units.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>17</sup> The State of Illinois Housing Planning and Appeal Act's definition of affordability assumes that owners earning 80 percent of area median income (AMI) and renters earning 60 percent of AMI pay no more than 30 percent of household income for housing.

#### Single Family, Detached Homes Sales \$850,000 600 \$800,000 500 \$700,000 \$600,000 400 UNITS \$500,000 \$400,000 \$300,000 200 \$200,000 100 \$100,000 0 \$0 2007 2008 2009 2010 2011 2012 2013 2014 2015 2016 2017 2018 2019 2020 2021 Total Units Sold -Median Sale Price Source: ML

### Single-Family, Attached Home Sales



#### STORY SPOTLIGHT:

Wilmette has some of the most beautiful housing in the region. With the quality of our schools, parks and thriving downtown, our community is one of the finest places to live anywhere.

Planning for stable, sustainable growth requires that we examine the local housing patterns and consider how best to prepare for future demand. We have a responsibility to ensure that we meet the needs of current residents, while providing a welcoming community for our next generation with a focus on changing families, longer lives and diverse backgrounds.

With this comprehensive plan, the Village of Wilmette continues an ongoing discussion about housing in our community. Much has been done in the past, and the recent reestablishment of our Housing Commission will add focus to the work of understanding housing needs and how they can be most aptly met.

- Jeff Head, Housing Commission Chair

# What we heard about housing....

Attainable housing and affordability were identified by the Village from the start of this planning process as elements to be explored. This was consistent with the Village having reconstituted their Housing Commission, and the expectation that a Housing Plan would be prepared in follow up to the housing analysis done as part of this plan. The community was engaged around this topic throughout the process, with a particular focus as part of Wilmette Talk #3 and the poll that followed. Insights from the community include:

- Lack of attainable housing keeps people from being able to move to Wilmette.
- There is need for more types of housing than single-family homes.
- Seniors, young families, and those who work in the Village have need for more housing options in the Village.
- How can housing be more affordable for more people to enrich the community and provide greater opportunities?
- Aging in place, being able to remain in the same house or community as you grow older, is an option that should be available for seniors.
- Designated affordable housing should be part of new developments.
- Community education is needed about housing needs and affordable housing.
- Cost of housing makes the Village a hard place to start out if you're young, and to stay if you're a senior.
- Affordable housing can play a role in creating a more diverse and inclusive Wilmette.
- People raised here want to come back and raise their families

When asked "Is it appropriate for Wilmette to look for ways to facilitate creation of housing for people that work here (such as teachers, public employees, service workers, etc.)," 56 percent of comprehensive plan survey respondents said yes.

When asked, "What types of additional new housing do you feel are most needed in Wilmette," 23 percent of comprehensive plan survey respondents said townhouses.

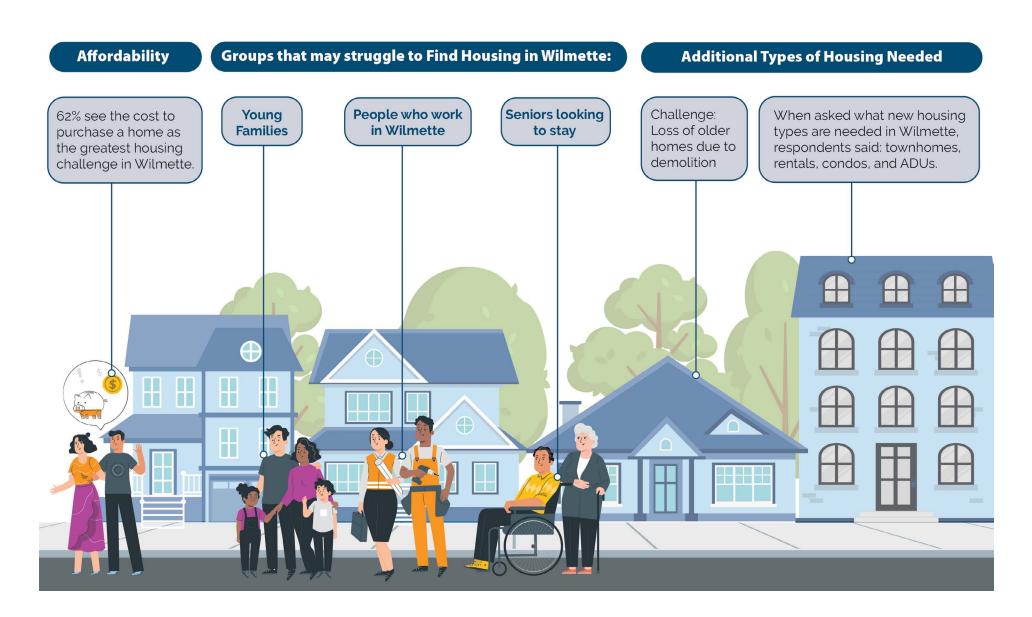
"I think affordable housing is an important aspect of creating more diversity within our community and is something the Village should actively work to increase."

- Website comment

"One of the biggest impediments to progress in this Village is exemplified...in the arguments over affordable housing units in recent construction projects."

- Website comment

# Results from Community Poll



# Goals & Objectives

Goals and objectives describe policies, programs, and further planning the Village looks to conduct in implementing this comprehensive plan. The statements are reflective of past planning efforts of the Village, community input to this plan, feedback from focus groups with Village commissions, and a comprehensive evaluation by the Plan Commission.

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

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#### **NEIGHBORHOODS**

**Goal 1: A community with desirable residential neighborhoods.** 

#### Objectives:

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

#### HOUSING STOCK DIVERSITY

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

- 1. Encourage development of housing types that meet the needs of those at various ages, life stages (e.g. empty nesters), and levels of physical mobility.
- 2. Review development codes to ensure potential for development of a variety of residential building types, including townhouses and multifamily structures, that meet the needs of current and potential future residents while still respecting the character of the neighborhood and streetscape.
- 3. Review changes to Village's current accessory dwelling unit (ADU) regulations to provide greater flexibility and enhance feasibility.
- 4. Encourage development of accessible housing for persons with disabilities.
- 5. Develop a Housing Plan that analyzes and develops strategies for Wilmette housing needs.

#### RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT

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

#### Objectives:

- 1. Encourage development of multifamily and mixed-use developments along major commercial corridors (and in identified areas for infill development/increased density) based on the appropriate height, scale, and public benefits to the community such as wider sidewalks, expanded public spaces, provision of affordable units and sustainable building practices.
- 2. Plan for the appropriate scale and location for multifamily, mixeduse development in Village Center to enhance the vitality of the area and support the retail and restaurants.
- 3. Plan for appropriate scale and location of multifamily, mixed-use development in Village business districts.

# PRESERVE EXISTING AFFORDABLE HOUSING AND HOUSING AFFORDABILITY

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

# Objectives:

- 1. Undertake efforts to preserve the existing affordable housing stock that enables existing residents to remain in their homes through tools such as a land trust, rehabilitation grants or loans for income-eligible residents.
- 2. Continue to support organizations that help residents continue to afford living in Wilmette, such as the nonprofit Housing Our Own-Wilmette, which provides property tax and rental assistance.
- 3. Work with non-profit organizations, such as Community Partners for Affordable Housing (CPAH), to provide a range of affordable housing options including single-family, townhomes, stacked flats, condominiums, and rental units in multi-family buildings.
- 4. Continue to support the needs of older residents to stay in the community either in their current homes or other housing in the Village.

- 5. Develop a new Housing Plan which updates the 2004 Affordable Housing Plan and establishes specific affordable housing goals to meet state requirements, defines Village resources to support affordable housing, and identifies local and regional partner organizations and the role they can play in expanding affordable housing.
- 6. Seek affordable housing development partners and support community education to lead to a welcoming development review process.
- 7. Study the impact of single-family home demolitions on the supply of attainable housing and ways in which to encourage the retention of such housing.

# EXPAND WORKFORCE/ATTAINABLE HOUSING ACCESS

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

- 1. Encourage development of housing unit sizes, such as studios and one-bedroom units, that are attainable for households in various life stages, such as empty nesters, older seniors, and younger households.
- 2. Encourage development of housing types that are more affordable to build than single-family detached homes.
- 3. Seek to understand demand for workforce housing for area employees.
- 4. Conduct a Housing Plan for the Village that builds on findings of the Comprehensive Plan.



# Opportunities & Recommendations

Understanding housing needs for households who live or would like to live in the Village was an objective of this plan from its outset. Workshops, interviews, and surveys of Village residents and officials as part of this planning process confirmed this aim, and further raised the broadly held notion that increased housing affordability for a variety of household types in Wilmette would generate a greater sense of belonging for all Village residents. The relationship between housing and having a diverse and inclusive community points to an opportunity of accomplishing this goal through the separate and joint efforts of the Housing Commission and Human Relations Commission.

A community based and thoughtful assessment and discussion of housing was a significant Village objective for this comprehensive plan. Not only has the topic been front of mind for the Village with recent policy discussions and development proposal evaluations, but it has been Wilmette's intent to follow this plan with an updated Housing Plan to build on this comprehensive plan. That Housing Plan would further consider housing issues generally, and focus on key populations that may have distinct housing needs in Wilmette including prospective residents. Those populations were considered during this comprehensive plan and are described here.

# **Considering Housing for Key Populations**

Currently, some categories of households have difficulty finding appropriate housing in the Village because of its costs and/or limited housing types. In particular, households in various life stages have limited housing choices and specific needs, including senior citizens/empty nesters, young families, and young professionals. In addition, persons with disabilities, and low- and moderate-income persons who work in the Village but live elsewhere have difficulty finding appropriate housing. These population/household groups are not mutually exclusive or always readily visible through data sources of local social circles. For example, young professionals and young families are not always distinguishable in population data when grouped by age and household characteristics. Similarly, some young professionals may also be people with disabilities.

Although these population/household groups are somewhat difficult to define precisely, local research indicates that assessing the housing needs of these groups is important to understand Wilmette's housing gaps. According to a poll conducted as part of this plan, 25 percent of respondents think that seniors who want to stay in Wilmette have the greatest challenge finding housing in

the Village, 19 percent of respondents think that people who work in Wilmette have the greatest challenge, and 18 percent think that young families have the greatest challenge.

The housing opportunities and challenges facing existing and potential future residents have been examined as part of this plan and can be used as background for a detailed Housing Plan for Wilmette. The analysis includes an overview of demographic and socioeconomic characteristics of current Village residents and persons working in the Village, as well as an overview of the housing stock and general market characteristics. In particular, the research examined the current affordability of housing for various population groups and the impact of high housing costs on efforts by the Village to diversify its population. Key populations in the Village with potential housing needs include: 1) senior citizens/empty nesters, 2) young families, 3) young professionals. 4) people with disabilities, and 5) persons who work in the Village but live elsewhere. Housing considerations for these populations and the Village's housing planning can be found in Appendix B.





BUSINESS & COMMERCE

#### Context

Locally and nationwide, the retail landscape has undergone significant changes over the past two decades due to many factors and changing trends, many of which were exacerbated during the COVID-19 pandemic. The rise of e-commerce, smartphones, and data analytics has changed the way people shop, and how businesses advertise products and services. The competitive retail environment that downtowns and municipalities operate in today must adapt to these changing trends by finding new methods to reach consumers, diversifying retail offerings, and promoting more sustainable business practices.

There is no one-size-fits-all approach to determining the success of a commercial district or destination, as they serve different purposes and needs. Downtowns tend to focus on creating authentic experiences and promoting local restaurants, products, and services, while ancillary business districts may serve residents' personal or professional service needs, provide necessary grocery or household items, or offer residents and visitors a place to shop for retail goods. These districts and destinations must be curated, branded, and marketed properly to thrive in the current competitive retail climate.

Clearly, business and commerce are critical components of any municipality. The key to success is that those areas are authentic to their host communities. Yes, they play an essential role in providing residents with goods and services, drive economic growth by providing jobs and attracting visitors, and generate tax revenue that funds community initiatives; that must occur in a way that is logical for the Village and in keeping with market realities.

In Wilmette, these activities are found in downtown Wilmette and the Village's various business districts. Those areas each have unique shops and restaurants and contribute to the vitality and character of the community in their own way. Over recent years these areas have all changed. They still provide economic benefits and contribute to the quality of life for residents, but not the way they once did. In some cases, those changes are celebrated, in others they are a source of loss for what the areas once were. This section of the plan considers the Village's business areas, respects their past, and builds on their present to define options for a successful future.



# **Business & Commerce in Wilmette**

In some cases dating back to the mid-19th century, Wilmette's business environment has a rich history that has evolved alongside the growth and development of the community. Urbanization and population growth continually spurred commercial activity, bringing forth unique business districts and commercial destinations throughout the Village. The addition of shopping centers in Wilmette and the surrounding area certainly had an impact on the local retail landscape. However, Wilmette maintained its small-town charm by preserving a balance between larger shopping centers like Edens Plaza and Plaza del Lago, and smaller local business districts. like Village Center, Linden Square, and corridors along Ridge Road, Green Bay Road, Skokie Boulevard and west Lake Avenue.

Village Center (Wilmette's downtown) became a focal point for business and commerce, offering a mix of locally known retail stores, services, eating and drinking places and entertainment venues that have become staples of the community and contribute to the character and identity of the Village. In the past decade, Wilmette has focused on strategic planning and economic development, in part through implementation of the 2011 Village Center Master Plan. The plan focused on downtown revitalization by enhancing its attractiveness with streetscape improvements, zoning and policy changes to support business growth, and marketing efforts that introduced new businesses to the Village Center, particularly eating and drinking places. Today, village officials and retailers in the community are well-positioned to face the changing retail environment and the aftermath of COVID-19, and the Village Center continues to widen offerings to area residents and visitors.

Wilmette's current business environment reflects a blend of local businesses, national retailers, and service providers, displaying the community's commitment to supporting small businesses and preserving its distinct character, while embracing changing market trends and conditions.

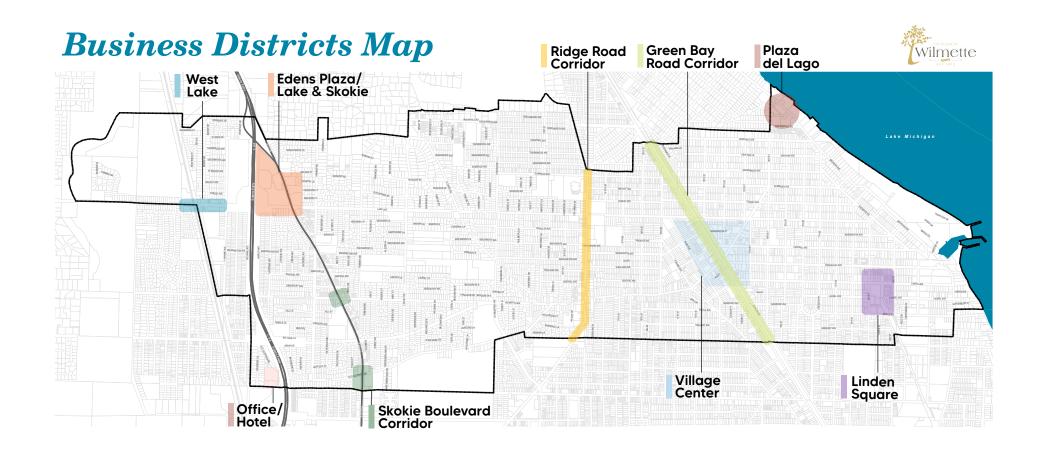




2023 Total Retail Square Footage: 1,331,307



2023 Retail Vacancy Rate: 16.5%





# **Village Center**

The Village Center is Wilmette's downtown hub of business and commerce. The business mix is well-balanced with mostly local businesses, and there are currently few storefront vacancies. In addition to the wide range of local shopping and dining options, the Village Center serves important civic uses like the public library and Village Hall. The Wilmette Theater is an iconic venue and is undergoing improvements that will bring additional entertainment and generate more food and beverage demand. In addition, the Metra train station brings added foot traffic and vitality to the street and provides transportation for commuters and visitors directly to and from the Village Center. Recent streetscape improvements have enhanced the pedestrian environment and helped attract new businesses.

Historically, the portion of Green Bay Road between Lake and Linden Avenues has been the western portion of Village Center, despite being separated from the core of that area by the Union Pacific rail line. Businesses here benefit from high traffic counts, visibility, and plentiful on-street parking, although crossing Green Bay Road and the tracks can be a challenge and is perceived as a barrier and the availability of parking at certain times is being impacted by the influx of restaurant uses.

One recommendation of the 2000 Comprehensive Plan was to conduct a corridor study on Green Bay Road, which was completed in 2005. The study identified demand for additional mixed-use

development in Village Center and presented opportunities for ground floor retail development with several floors of residential multi-family housing units above. In recent years, the street has seen significant growth with the two new residential buildings, The Residences of Wilmette and Optima Verdana, bringing more than 175 residential units and ground floor retail to the corridor. Additional development is likely to occur in the future, with demand that could lead to filling current vacancies, like the 41,000 square foot Imperial Motors site and underutilized commercial property near the train station. Any additional development will need to ensure that appropriate infrastructure is in place to accommodate increased density, vehicular/pedestrian traffic and parking demands.

The Village Center has grown to be known as a community hub and well-loved destination on the North Shore, largely due to implementation of the 2011 Village Center Master Plan. Those actions played a significant role in expanding diverse shopping and dining options through strategic initiatives, such as improvements to the pedestrian environment and the area's attractiveness and appeal. One notable example of the plan's impact is the straightforward change to liquor license policies. This seemingly small change exemplifies how even minor policy improvements can spur major success. These incremental achievements, when combined, have paved the way for the overall success of the Village Center as a prosperous commercial area.

#### **Green Bay Road**

The Green Bay Road Corridor runs the length of the Village and is bisected by the Village Center. Over its complete length in the Village, it catered to more auto-centric uses, including a vacant car dealership, auto shops, gas stations, drive-through banks, and a grocery store. However, one- and two-story buildings also provide space for other specialty shops including arts and antiques, fitness, salons, and an ice cream shop. Businesses here benefit from ample street parking and parking lots, high visibility, and high traffic counts.



#### **Ridge Road**

Ridge Road is a commercial thoroughfare that features a variety of businesses catering to the local community. Historically, antique and furniture stores played a role in shaping the character of Ridge Road, providing unique and eclectic shops that offer locals and visitors one-of-a-kind goods. Today, the area is home to a number of personal and professional services, including attorneys and financial advisors, with some specialty retail shops and restaurants.

Despite its relatively quiet atmosphere compared to other business districts in Wilmette, Ridge Road has growth potential. The areas around the intersections of Ridge Road and Lake and Wilmette Avenues are key to the future of the corridor and may face redevelopment pressure as potential redevelopment opportunities. Redeveloping the vacant Treasure Island site at Lake Avenue and Ridge Road is an opportunity noted often during the engagement process as a desire for new commercial uses from the community.



#### **Linden Square**

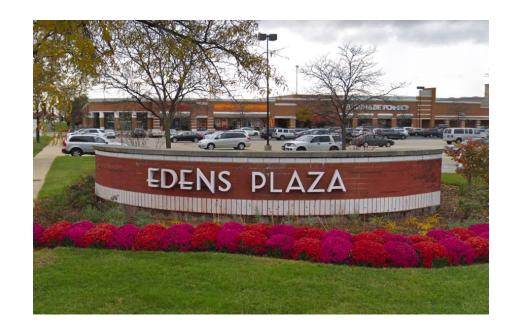
Linden Square is one of the smaller business districts with 40 storefronts within multiple low-rise buildings. Initially established as a gathering space for locals, it gradually evolved into an active area with a small grocery store, hardware store, pharmacy, and other businesses that encouraged social gathering. The area's low commercial building heights (primarily one- and two-stories) and pedestrian-friendly nature contribute to its charm and appeal. The current business mix is largely comprised of medical office and personal and professional services. Surrounding Linden Square are multiple 4 story buildings located in the R3, Multi-family Residence district.

Linden Square is by no means unsuccessful, as vacancy rates remain low and the area provides essential services to residents. But during community engagement residents expressed a desire to bring back some of the uses that once made it a more thriving community commercial hub. Leveraging nearby anchors—such as the CTA's Purple Line terminus at Linden Station and the Baha'i Temple which is a regional destination and tourist attraction, could bring needed foot traffic and business activity.

#### **Edens Plaza/Lake & Skokie**

The Edens Plaza/Lake & Skokie business district is a regional commercial destination located between the Edens Expressway and Skokie Boulevard north and along Lake Avenue. Many of the Village's national and regional tenants are located here due to high traffic counts and visibility, off-street parking, availability of larger format storefronts, and clustering near other high-credit tenants. This commercial area includes Edens Plaza, West Lake Plaza, retailers along Lake Street, and in out lot buildings just east of Skokie Boulevard, including Chalet Garden and Nursery.





Edens Plaza is a longstanding shopping center located on Wilmette's west side between Skokie Boulevard and the Eden's Expressway, making it accessible to both Wilmette residents and visitors from nearby communities. Built in 1956, Edens Plaza has more than 340,000 square feet of space, and in the past has featured a diverse mix of stores, including many national tenants and a major grocery store. The departure of Carson Pirie Scott department store from Edens Plaza in 2018 had a significant impact on the shopping center, as it left a large void that has been difficult to fill. The high vacancy rate resulting from the Carson's closure has been a challenge for the shopping center's owners and community as a whole, as it has resulted in a decrease in foot traffic and consumer spending in the area.

WS Development purchased Edens Plaza in 2022, and brought the first of its kind retail concept from e-commerce giant Wayfair to the 152,000 square foot vacant Carson Pirie Scott space. Other plans for the center include improvements to the façade, sidewalks, and parking lots and the consolidation of some storefronts.

#### **West Lake**

West Lake is a smaller node of commercial activity along Lake Avenue from roughly Cariann Lane to Laramie Avenue. Along the corridor are one- and two-story buildings that provide a wide range of commercial uses including medical offices, office buildings, fast-casual, and auto-centric uses, and a small pocket of heavy commercial uses. This pocket of heavy commercial uses has been subject to developer interest for residential development. Should current uses become no longer economically viable, this area's proximity to the Wilmette Golf Course and potential extension of the Skokie Valley Trail (envisioned to be located along a former railway right-of-way) may make the area attractive for Park District activities. South of this area is a commercially zoned property west of Laramie Avenue and north of Wilmette Avenue, that likely will continue to be used for self storage.





#### **Skokie Boulevard Corridor**

The Skokie Boulevard Corridor is a commercial area located at the intersections of Skokie Boulevard and Wilmette Avenue and Skokie Boulevard and Old Glenview Road. This area provides residents with many personal and professional service uses, such as spas, hair and nail salons, and exercise facilities as well as banks and tax services. Within the northern portion of this area is an office building, auto repair business, one-story commercial structure and a vacant gas station. Within the southern portion of this area is Wilmette Commons, a 35,300 square foot neighborhood center, Wilmette Place, a 5,700 square foot strip-center plaza, a vacant restaurant building, and funeral home.

**Office/Hotel** is a commercial area located just west of the Edens Expressway and just south of Old Glenview Road. This area contains two office buildings and the Village's only hotel, a Mariott Residence Inn.

#### Plaza del Lago

Plaza del Lago is an attractive outdoor shopping center located in the far northeast corner of the Village. Built in 1928, Plaza del Lago has been a staple of the Wilmette community for over 80 years. The 100,000 square foot plaza features unique Spanish-style architecture and a mix of national and local retailers including a grocery store, specialty food and beverage places, medical offices, retail stores and personal services.

After purchasing Edens Plaza, WS Development continued their investment in Wilmette by purchasing Plaza del Lago, further expanding their footprint in Wilmette.





#### What we heard when asking....

Does Wilmette have what we need for business, shopping and dining?

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



#### STORY SPOTLIGHT:

#### VILLAGE CENTER MASTER PLAN

A comprehensive plan provides an opportunity to revisit previously adopted Village plans and policies. Through this planning process, the goals and recommendations of the Village Center Master Plan were re-evaluated to confirm their direction and intent aligned with today's realities and the vision in this comprehensive plan.

To fully understand the plan's intent, as part of the 2023 planning effort, a focus group discussion about the plan and activities in the years since was held with that plan's Steering Committee.

Since 2011, Wilmette has seen new development in the Village Center which generally aligns with the goals and intent of the Master Plan, which include supporting local business, providing more housing options, and creating new vitality in the area. Though specific developments may not precisely adhere to concept plans in that document, such is the case with all planning.

Market realities and forces ultimately influence the exact shape and form of any given development, but planning is about describing a vision for the future and general parameters to accomplish that vision. While specifics may vary, being true to the vision is the ultimate value of any plan. In evaluating the 2011 Village Center Master Plan as part of this planning process, its intent and recommendations were found to be in keeping with the 2023 vision for the future defined by the Wilmette community. The 2011 Village Center Master Plan is adopted by reference as part of this comprehensive plan.

## Findings & Relevant Data

Multiple data sources and interviews with stakeholders active in Wilmette's business community helped define market realities in the Village. Key analysis findings that informed plan recommendations are summarized below:

- Wilmette has more than 1.3 million square feet of commercial space. As a primarily built-out community, this supply has remained relatively consistent since the early 2000s.
- While Wilmette has two shopping centers of 100,000 square feet or more, there is much competition in the area with over 40 shopping centers of that size or larger, including three nearby shopping centers/malls with over 1 million square feet of retail.
- Nearby Glenview, Skokie, and Evanston have higher inventories of retail square footage in their communities, and therefore collect more retail sales tax. Retail sales tax collection in Wilmette declined to a 15 year low in 2020 with the Village collecting \$2.5 million, largely due to the COVID-19 pandemic. However, a strong

recovery between 2020 and 2022 resulted in a 15-year high, with the Village collecting more than \$3.6 million in retail sales tax in 2022. Significant increases in tax collection came from eating and drinking places, food sales, automotive and filling stations, amongst other retail categories.

#### **Retail Sales Tax**

- The retail vacancy rate by total square footage, however, has increased over the years, from a low 7% in 2010 to 16.5% in 2023. The long vacant 150,000 square foot Carson Pirie Scott space is the main cause of the increase. Once Wayfair opens in that space, the vacancy rate will decline substantially.
- The Village maintains an inventory of all storefronts in the Village and tracks vacancies based on the number of vacant storefronts rather than vacant square footage. As of February 2024, 41 of the total 408 storefronts were vacant, amounting to 10%.

#### Types of Goods/Services People Purchased in Wilmette in a Typical Month:



93% said Groceries

83% said **Healthcare** 





75% said **Restaurants** 

68% said Personal Services

Results from respondents of community poll that asked questions on shopping in Wilmette



- The market area has 40+ shopping centers with 100,000 SF or more. including two (2) in Wilmette
- Shopping Centers with 1 million+ SF
  - Westfield Old Orchard Skokie
  - Northbrook Court Northbrook
  - 3 Golf Mill Shopping Center Niles

NOTE: This map includes Niles to capture the many shopping destinations near the Village

Source: CoStar, February 2022

# Goals & Objectives

Goals and objectives describe policies, programs, and further planning the Village looks to conduct in implementing this comprehensive plan. The statements are reflective of past planning efforts of the Village, community input to this plan, feedback from focus groups with Village commissions, and a comprehensive evaluation by the Plan Commission.

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

**Objectives** are actions that define policies to be followed in pursuit of goals. They do not necessarily have a timeline and may be modified in their ultimate implementation, as they likely require more thought, deliberation, and refinement to be brought to fruition. This is the how a comprehensive plan gets used – the desired outcomes generally remain, while the environment in which they may become reality is dynamic and the plan must be applied accordingly. More specific suggestions and recommendations follow the goals and objectives in the next section (Opportunities).

#### TAX BASE

#### Goal 1: A stable and balanced tax base.

#### Objectives:

- 1. Continue to monitor ongoing economic activity in the Village to best understand the current and projected business climate.
- 2. Continue to dialogue with local and potential business and property owners to best understand their needs.
- 3. Work with owners of privately-owned commercial centers, like Edens Plaza and Plaza del Lago, in support of efforts to improve the success and competitiveness of those centers.

#### **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

#### Goal 2: A sustainable, focused economic development effort.

#### Objectives:

- 1. Work with business and real estate professionals to understand the local economy and maintain economic strength of the Village.
- 2. Regularly engage with the public to understand their desires and report back community sentiment to economic development stakeholders.
- 3. Maintain a meaningful working relationship with the Chamber of Commerce, local businesses and merchant's associations.

#### **BUSINESS DISTRICTS**

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

#### Objectives:

- 1. Encourage retail and office facilities that serve the needs of Wilmette residents and visitors.
- 2. Review existing streetscape programs for business districts to continue to create attractive and inviting business and shopping areas.
- 3. Develop design guidelines for commercial districts that encourage building elements (i.e. massing and proportion, building rhythm, setbacks, façade features, etc.) that are consistent with the character of the surrounding area.
- 4. Reuse (or redevelopment) should be sensitive to the character of the surrounding area and community sentiment, and should result in acceptable levels of environmental, traffic, fiscal and public service impact.
- 5. Maintain sidewalks, streetscape improvements, and other public property as an attractive element of commercial areas.

## Opportunities & Recommendations

Central to future actions is maintaining the Village's established and well-organized economic development work, which focuses on attracting and supporting businesses to drive economic growth in the community. The Village manages a thorough inventory of commercial space in Wilmette, offers guidance to current and potential tenants, and builds relationships to position Wilmette as an attractive place to do business. Through the understanding of local market and industry trends current efforts provide, Village staff can identify opportunities, develop strategic initiatives, and implement effective business attraction and retention strategies.

Opportunities and recommendations provided in this comprehensive plan aim to further develop and build on the productive work already being done at the Village, present strategies for potential or anticipated commercial opportunities, and further incorporate diversity and sustainability practices to the business and commerce framework in Wilmette.

# 1. Prepare Policies & Opportunity Sites for Desired Development Several areas and opportunity sites in Wilmette are likely to experience development pressure, or would benefit from redevelopment or revitalization interventions. These opportunity sites are likely to see a mix of uses, including commercial. The following recommendations should be considered to prepare and position the commercial components for success.

## Locations anticipated to see development pressure include:



#### Village Center

Near the Metra Station, Chase Bank site, northwest corner of Green Bay and Central, Imperial Motors site.



#### **Green Bay Road**

Properties between Walker Bros to Isabella.



#### **Ridge Road**

Old Treasure Island site, underutilized commercial buildings.



#### **Linden Square**

Near the terminus CTA Purple Line Station.



## Plazas & Shopping Centers

Edens Plaza, Plaza del Lago.

With proactive measures, the Village can better attract desired investment, stimulate economic growth, and provide a business environment that benefits both the community and businesses alike. Encouraging redevelopment of underutilized commercial properties in these areas consistent with community needs and land use policies is supported through affirmative actions by the Village.

Such steps include reviewing current development code procedures and standards to ensure that permitting and regulatory processes add value. These should be opportunities to bring enhancements to proposed developments into the process. Steps that don't add value should be revised or removed, as they can discourage development activity that otherwise helps implement this plan. Likewise, continuing to involve the community in development review processes is important. Community support and trust early in the development process can foster partnerships with developers and collaboration with stakeholders, leading to more desirable and successful projects.

The relatively minor change to Village liquor requirements unlocked opportunities for more restaurants in the Village Center teaching the important lesson of not dismissing the value of modest action. Ongoing review and update to development or business-related codes to support local businesses, while managing potential impacts to residents, may help to maintain a positive business environment and create additional successes.

#### 2. Business Attraction & Retention

Attracting and retaining the right kinds of commercial tenants that increase the vibrancy of the business districts is key. This can involve offering resources, guidance, and incentives that attract or retain businesses that align with the community's vision and needs. Studying the use of financial incentives that may be right for Wilmette's business environment can be valuable in attracting and implementing desired forms of development or redevelopment that cannot be reasonably expected to occur within private market forces. By assessing and implementing appropriate incentives, Wilmette



can encourage investment in areas that require revitalization. Additionally, collaborating with property and business owners in the area is essential to support commercial functions, promote renovation, and facilitate development that is financially feasible.

#### 3. Branding & Marketing

To incorporate effective branding and marketing strategies in Wilmette, it is important to identify target markets for each business district and tailor promotional efforts accordingly. By understanding the unique characteristics and offerings of each district, Wilmette can develop proactive branding and marketing tools that resonate with potential shoppers and investors. This may include creating compelling websites or social media platforms to promote business districts, engaging in print advertising, and attending commercial attraction events. By showcasing Wilmette's variety of benefits, offerings, and opportunities, strategic branding and marketing efforts can generate interest and attract new businesses.

#### 4. Build on Development Momentum and Existing Assets

Leveraging the recent developments and existing assets in Wilmette is a strategic approach to further enhance the economic landscape of the community. New mixed-use developments on Green Bay Road present exciting opportunities for business growth with the combination of increased residential density and new commercial spaces that could attract a diverse range of businesses and customers. The ongoing renovations at Edens Plaza and addition of Wayfair serve as a major catalyst that can attract a wider customer base to Wilmette and contribute to the center's overall growth and vitality, as well as the reimagining of Plaza del Lago. Lastly , the Baha'i House of Worship presents a unique opportunity to draw that destination's estimated 250,000 annual visitors<sup>18</sup> to Wilmette's local businesses. By actively partnering and promoting this important cultural anchor, Wilmette can potentially capture the tourist base and attract new customers.

 $<sup>^{\</sup>mbox{\tiny 18}}$  https://evanstonroundtable.com/2022/08/07/bahai-house-of-worship-wilmette-directorgeorge-davis/





#### 5. Promote Diversity & Sustainable Business Practices

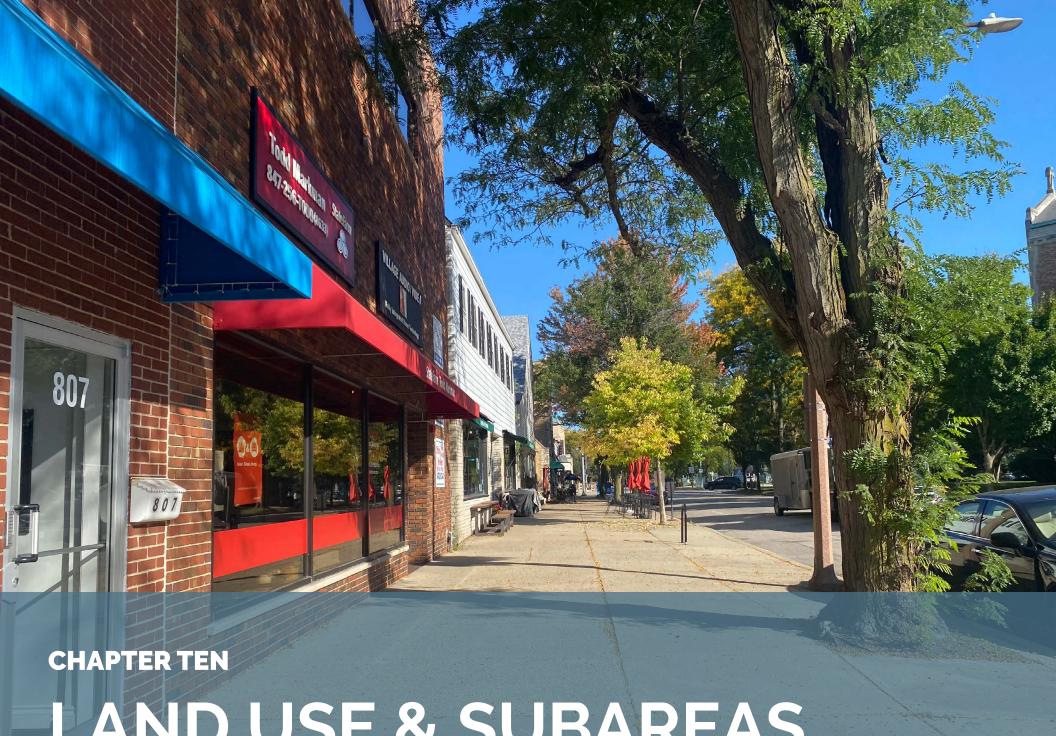
Achieving greater business diversity in Wilmette requires proactive measures and inclusive strategies. The Village can create programs and initiatives that specifically target and support underrepresented groups including women, people of color, and other backgrounds. Providing information on available resources, financial assistance, and business support programs can help break down barriers and encourage diverse business owners to establish or expand their ventures in Wilmette. Collaborating with local organizations that promote diversity and inclusion, such as the Village's Human Relations Commission, can provide valuable insights and resources. A greater diversity of business types and owners can create a more dynamic and special business community that serves a wider range of people.

Implementing sustainable business practices can be encouraged through educational campaigns and incentives that promote energy efficiency, waste reduction, and responsible sourcing. Providing resources and guidance to businesses on adopting sustainable measures, as well as offering potential incentives or grants to businesses that demonstrate a commitment to sustainability can help reach the Village's sustainability goals.

As referenced in the adopted 2021 Wilmette Sustainability Plan, "A significant program has been developed by the not-for-profit community group Go Green Wilmette which educates, certifies and promotes businesses which practice specific sustainability practices. 13 local business are currently participating." <sup>19</sup> In fact, the plan has a section on economic development that provides insight into combining sustainability and a thriving business community.

By embracing diversity and sustainable practices, Wilmette can foster a more inclusive and resilient business community that contributes to the long-term success of the local economy.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>19</sup> https://readysetwilmette.files.wordpress.com/2021/09/wilmette-sustainability-plan-g-28-14-vb-meeting-180.pdf

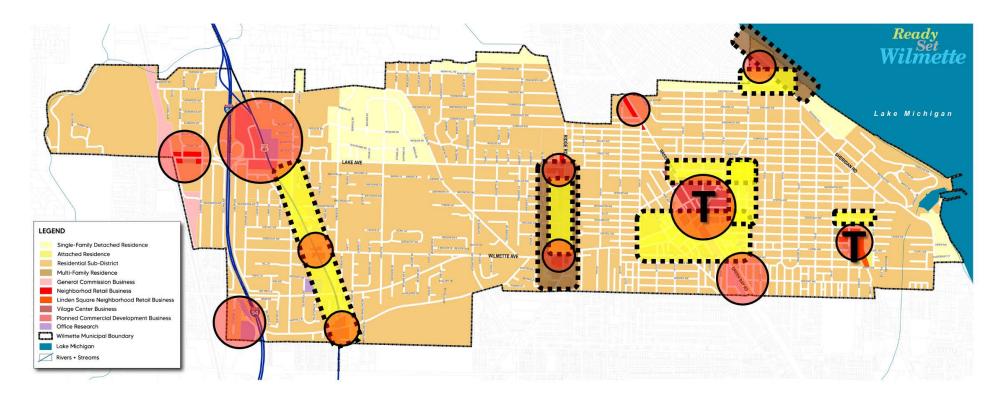


LAND USE & SUBAREAS

## **Land Use in Wilmette**

Land use is the structure that describes the physical elements of a community and their relationship to one another. It considers where neighborhoods are located and how one gets to the commercial districts from them. Likewise, where are recreational uses and community facilities that serve residents and visitors, and how does the use of land reflect or end up defined by the local road network. These and other considerations create a general pattern and community character. Wilmette's land use pattern is influenced by when specific neighborhoods were developed, access to transit, and the major roadways running through the community. At a macro level, the figure below shows how these characteristics come together.

Commercial hubs (in red) are located along major roadways and near transit (market with a "T). Higher density residential areas are shown in yellow and highest density areas in brown – again, along roadways and near transit. The rest of the Village is comprised of primarily single-family residential neighborhoods and community facilities. That is and will remain the primary land use and land use characteristic of Wilmette. Of interest is that the arrangement and design of homes in those neighborhoods change as one goes from west to east in the Village; the latter is a more traditional grid street pattern typical of pre-World War II development, and the former is reflective of more recent curvilinear street design.

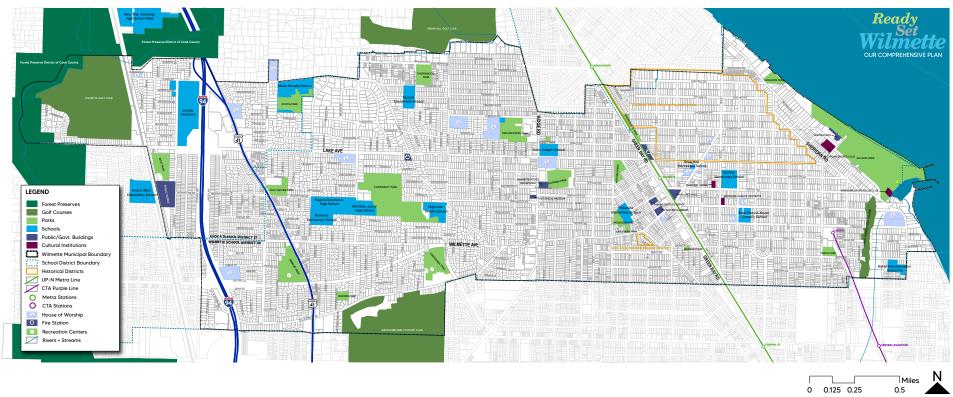


Of greatest significance in understanding land use in the Village (past and future) is that the community is built out. There are no large estates, farms, or other large tracts of private land available for development. Changes in land use will come from renovation and redevelopment of existing areas. This type of change can be challenging for communities, especially when the land use pattern is so well established.

Considering land use change is done thoughtfully in a built-out environment like Wilmette, because it replaces something that has been a part of the community for some time. Yet, change is constant and inevitable. The comprehensive plan provides the opportunity to evaluate the existing land use pattern, see where there may be market pressures for change, define what changes are in keeping with community goals, and outline an approach to managing that change. Those notions are raised and addressed in this chapter.

## **Community Facilities**





Wilmette's land use composition is primarily single-family residential, with dispersed activity areas/business districts/commercial corridors, scattered institutional uses (schools, places of worship, civic buildings, etc.), various parks and open spaces, and limited pockets of heavy commercial and warehouse uses. This pattern is seen in the Existing Land Use Map (page 123).

The Village's single-family residential character is one of its key defining features. The street network changes from east (grid system) to west (more suburbanstyle), but the dispersed network of activity clusters and gathering places all contribute to Wilmette's walkable, neighborly, and small-town feel.

As a built-out community with very limited vacant land, Wilmette's land use composition is not likely to significantly change. Incremental changes will occur through redevelopment of underutilized or outdated properties, even if the changes happen over a long period of time. Future land uses in Wilmette can be expected to largely reflect that which is there today—shops, restaurants, services, dwellings—though in some cases these uses may take new shape in the form of mixed-use or multi-family residential.

The Village is seeing increased pressure for such development, primarily in the Village Center and other business districts (recent developments in these areas are discussed further in Chapter 9: Business and Commerce). The oldest business districts in Wilmette are the Ridge Road Corridor, Linden Square, the Green Bay Road Corridor, and Village Center.

Wilmette's oldest and most historic business districts and corridors are each distinctive and provide different challenges and opportunities for placemaking, economic development, and future land use changes. As such, these key subareas of Wilmette are the primary focus of this chapter. Edens Plaza/Lake & Skokie, Plaza del Lago, Westlake Plaza, and the Skokie Boulevard Corridor are also important commercial areas in the Village, but because most of those commercial areas are made up of shopping centers under unified ownership (in contrast to the Village's older business districts) they are not evaluated to the same degree. They are anticipated to remain generally commercial or of mixeduse, but detailed decisions about the business mix in those areas will be made by the property owners. In fact, as of the crafting of this plan, the owner of two of those centers is working to enhance both centers.







## Findings & Relevant Data

#### **Existing Land Use**

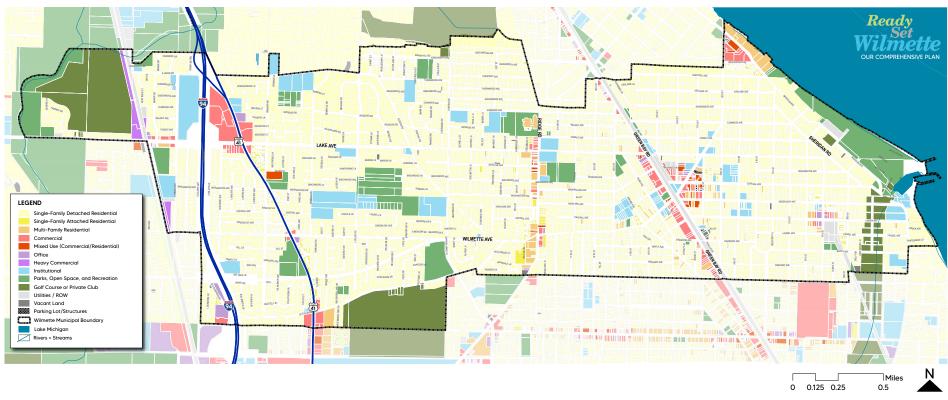
Wilmette's existing range of land uses currently serves the community well, with a mix of residential areas, parks and open space for recreation, and business areas to serve consumer needs.

- 52% of all land in the Village is Single-Family Residential, 1.6% Multi-Family Residential, and 0.3% is Mixed-Use.
- Attached residences (townhomes and multifamily) are located in clusters and along mixed-use corridors.
- 25% of all land is dedicated to Transportation + Utilities uses, which includes road rights-of-way and Metra/CTA land.
- Open space—including parks, golf courses, and recreation centers—occupy 12% of land.
- Schools, parks, and houses of worship are well-dispersed throughout Wilmette and located in most neighborhoods.
- The Green Bay Trail's southern trailhead is in Wilmette this path is 8.9 miles of paved bicycle trail spanning from Wilmette north to Glencoe and then connecting to other trails north and west.
- 97% of properties in Wilmette are within a half-mile (10-minute walk) of a park/recreation center or other open space.



## Existing Land Use Last modified 2/26/2024





#### **Zoning**

Zoning, which relates to and often reflects existing land use, is what controls the use and development of land to promote the community welfare and to protect the health and safety of residents. The Wilmette Zoning Ordinance limits use and density to support compatibility with existing development. It is one of the tools used to implement the comprehensive plan.

The Zoning Ordinance divides the Village into various zoning districts that permit specific uses of land and set standards for character of the built environment. Each zoning district contains regulations for development such as use, setbacks, building heights, lot coverage, minimum lot size, permitted encroachments, and floor area ratios. These requirements protect open space and ensure that development is orderly and consistent with surrounding uses and structures. Design review is within the jurisdiction of the Appearance Review Commission.

- In total, the Zoning Ordinance provides for 24 zoning districts/ sub-districts in four general categories: Residential, Village Center, Commercial, and Planned Commercial.
- Wilmette has nine R-1 zoning "sub-districts" which are intended to reflect and maintain the unique character of existing neighborhoods.
- 93% of the Village is zoned for Residential Uses.
- Commercially zoned land is a small proportion of the Village concentrated along a) main corridors, b) near transit, and c) in the downtown
- Institutions (schools, houses of worship, parks, and community spaces) are permitted within residential districts, integrating them into neighborhoods throughout the Village.

#### **STORY SPOTLIGHT:**

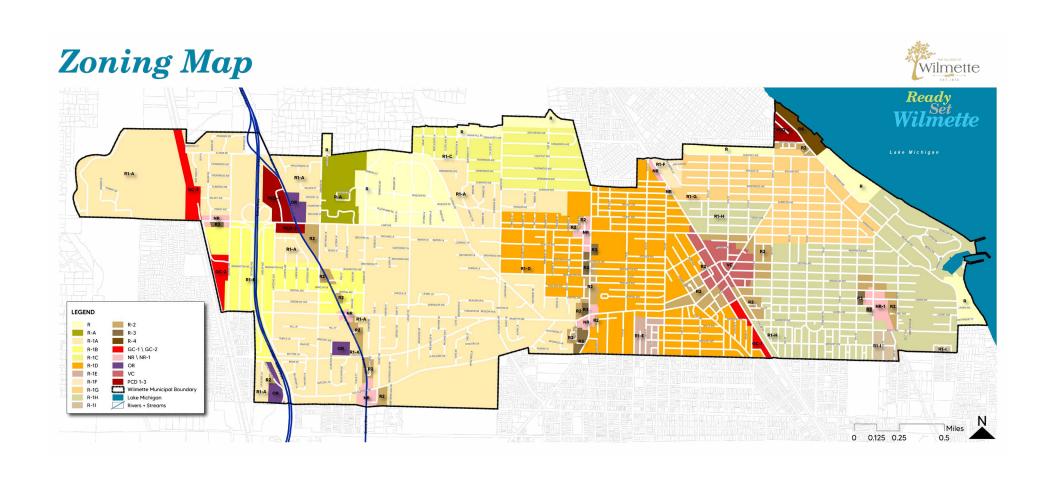
For over 100 years, the comprehensive plan has served as Wilmette's land use roadmap. Past comprehensive plans have emphasized the defining features of the Village and its land use composition: the largely residential character, bricklined streets, historically significant homes, lakefront location, and charming commercial districts.

The significance of Wilmette's residential neighborhoods over the years has undoubtedly influenced the Village's development, from its inception to the current infill development it is experiencing. Given the growing desirability of Wilmette as a place to live and the evolving nature of its residential neighborhoods, it has become increasingly important to consider how new development respects existing character—a driving factor in what makes Wilmette special and desirable—of its surroundings.

One measure through which the Village has protected neighborhood character is the creation of ten residential subdistricts in the 2014 rewrite of the zoning ordinance. These sub-districts better address the unique aspects of varying lot sizes, widths, building heights, and architectural features that define Wilmette's different neighborhoods.

Like this plan, past comprehensive plans have acknowledged Wilmette's commercial districts and what makes them unique. The Village Center, one of Wilmette's oldest commercial areas, has consistently been recognized as an important meeting place and a hub of commerce in every comprehensive plan. Most recently, the adoption of the 2011 Village Center Master Plan expanded on the significance of this area by outlining specific goals and objectives to ensure that it remains an exciting and vibrant place for future generations of Wilmette.

– John Adler, Community Development Director



## Subarea Goals, Objectives, and Conceptual Graphics

#### **Redevelopment Considerations**

The conceptual graphics that follow in this section are bulk and massing drawings that depict general concepts for the future, envisioning the type of development that could occur at a certain site in one of Wilmette's subareas. They also provide planning considerations (annotated text explaining specific elements of the sites). Those recommendations reflect the goals of this plan and consider the context of each site to its surroundings; they will be broadly applicable to proposed developments.

The graphics focus on the proposed scale and form of development to communicate the Village's vision for redevelopment and serve as a starting point for discussion with developers. The sketches do not show building, design character, streetscaping, or architectural features. Such elements are important, but will vary greatly based on the property owner and designer proposals, and are ultimately subject to approval based on Village standards and commission review.

#### GOALS THAT ARE APPLICABLE TO ALL BUSINESS DISTRICTS:

Business districts that:

- are of unique character,
- have successful businesses,
- and provide a safe and enjoyable experience for customers, diners, and visitors.

#### **RIDGE ROAD**

#### **About the Subarea**

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

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

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

#### What we heard when asking...

What is important about and needed along Ridge Road?

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

#### **Objectives for Ridge Road**

#### Character

- Support existing local businesses on the corridor by funding façade and interior renovation of existing commercial structures.
- When redevelopment occurs, encourage the siting of buildings to be close to the public sidewalk to match existing front yard setbacks and maintain the pedestrian character of the area.
- Discourage the allowance of curb cuts and require Zoning Board of Appeals approval for any curb cut requests. Do not allow additional curb cuts if there is alley access.
- Coordinate with IDOT to develop a streetscape design for the full corridor and wayfinding program to highlight the unique character and commerce of the area, highlighting intersections with Wilmette Avenue and Lake Avenue as focal points.
- Consider submitting a National Register Historic District nomination for a portion of the Ridge Road Corridor.

#### Redevelopment

- Focus commercial development at key intersections to maximize market support and allow first floor residential uses away from key intersections.
- Consider evaluating sites where shared public-private parking can be conveniently established along the corridor.
- Continue the review of the construction (and possible relocation) of a new police station expansion as called for in the ten-year CIP.
- Consider opportunities along the corridor to add new multifamily or townhome/stacked flat dwellings.

#### **Opportunities & Recommendations for Ridge Road**

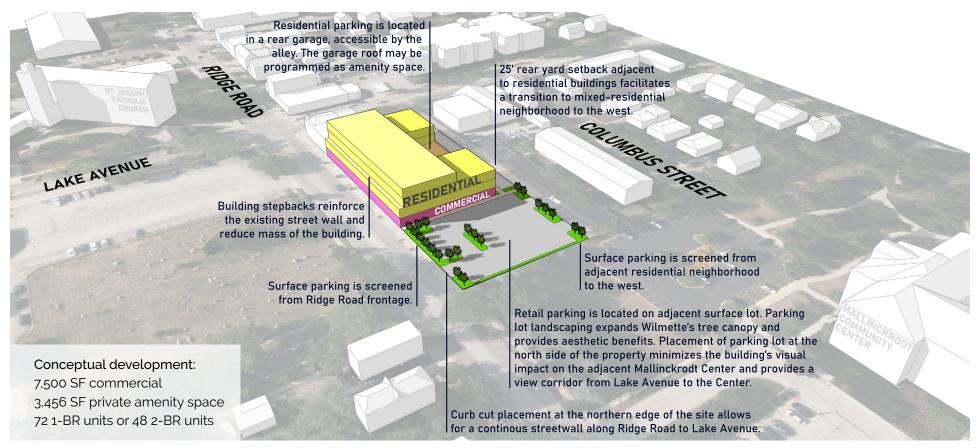
Ridge Road has a unique and attractive character and function within the Village. The land use and zoning recommendations presented below do not seek to change those facts . However, the area includes opportunities for redevelopment that can modernize some sites and advance other Village goals related to housing.

#### 1. Zoning:

- Reviewing current zoning standards and the zoning of specific properties in the corridor can open potential for new development or redevelopment and implement plan goals. Two such suggestions for Ridge Road are to: Evaluate opportunities to rezone R-2 areas that are within the Ridge Road business district as R-3 zoning to allow multi-unit development proposals that can create new housing opportunities in the Village.
- Assess existing zoning along the corridor to allow heights up to four stories, with the intent of preserving the existing character of the area while also balancing and accommodating new opportunities and uses.

#### 2. Redevelopment:

Redevelopment pressure can be expected to be highest along the corridor where it intersects with Lake Avenue and with Wilmette Avenue. This is because those locations see the highest traffic volumes and structures in those areas are older and less likely to accommodate today's in-demand land uses. Of note is the former Treasure Island site. While the use was very much appreciated in the community, the physical space of the building and site do not reflect current development formats (consequently, redevelopment of the site has not yet occurred). Given that the site is vacant, this property may see redevelopment sooner than others. In both these instances, the Village is open to opportunities from private developers for redevelopment to attract new businesses or mixed-use development that are consistent with the recommendations of this plan and the Village's zoning ordinance.



Note: Graphic is a conceptual presentation of possible site development. Actual development will be based on a developer's proposal, as regulated by zoning, bulk, and use standards at the time.

#### **Ridge Road Conceptual Development**

The concept for Ridge Road envisions redevelopment of the former Treasure Island grocery store (vacant at the time this plan is adopted) and adjacent strip center commercial. Together, these sites present an opportunity for a mixed-use redevelopment that includes commercial uses on the ground floor and residential units on the upper stories. To maintain flexibility and respond to changing market demands, the ground floor could also include space for residential units or live/work tenants, located away from the intersection of Lake Avenue and Ridge Road (Note: this may require a zoning change as the current Neighborhood Retail (NR) District only permits residential uses above the ground floor). As stated in the zoning code, the "NR District is established to promote the continuation of existing commercial centers that provide goods and services primarily for the convenience of the residents of the surrounding neighborhood. In addition, the district is designed to accommodate limited multi-family housing opportunities in a small-scale, mixed-use neighborhood environment." Should there be rezoning, it should be based on a proposed redevelopment for the site found to be in keeping with the intent of this plan and the context of surrounding uses.

#### **GREEN BAY ROAD**

#### **About the Subarea**

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

Longstanding businesses like Homer's Ice Cream and Walker Brothers are Wilmette staples that draw patrons from neighboring communities. Other various service businesses and unique retail make up the corridor. Vacancy rates have historically been higher here than other parts of Wilmette, especially as you get farther from the Village Center. Dense development is difficult due to limited lot depths, which also make it hard to mitigate impacts on the abutting single-family residential housing.

#### What we heard when asking....

What is important about and what is needed along Green Bay Road?

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

#### **Objectives for Green Bay Road**

#### Character

- Celebrate and promote Green Bay Road's role as a major gateway to the Village.
- Explore incentives for businesses to improve signage and façade appearance.

Establish and market the Green Bay Road North Business District (Greenwood Avenue to 16th Street) as a unique area, including installation of streetscape and wayfinding elements.

#### Redevelopment

Consider opportunities along the corridor to add new multi-family or townhome/stacked flat dwellings, as part of larger mixed use developments or by themselves in the case of lots with shallow depths.

## Opportunities & Recommendations for Green Bay Road

The Green Bay Road corridor includes a wide range of uses that serve the community and visitors. This pattern is expected to continue into the future, and there are opportunities for enhancement that include:

#### 1. Zoning:

To support options for redevelopment to be in keeping with this plan, the Village can review allowing increased height up to four stories (45 feet with step back of height adjacent to residential uses) in the GC-1 Zoning district to encourage and support redevelopment with mixed-use projects. Notwithstanding the desire to further goals and objectives of this plan, the Village must ensure that any infrastructure limitations are identified and addressed while reviewing redevelopment opportunities.

#### 2. Urban Design:

Green Bay Road is a main thoroughfare of the Village that carries people to and near the Village Center. Increases awareness of the Village Center from Green Bay Road, and increasing business and economic development, can be supported by developing a streetscape program and wayfinding for the corridor to highlight the unique character and commerce of the area (including the east side of Green Bay Road).

#### **VILLAGE CENTER**

#### **About the Subarea**

The Village Center is the historic center of our village. With its focal point at the intersection of Wilmette and Central Avenues, this historic area contains a mix of retail, offices, and personal service businesses, with a recent uptick in the restaurant and hospitality sector. Heavy foot traffic, adjacency to the Metra UP-North Line and Pace Bus routes, and a prominent outdoor dining scene give the Village Center an urban feel, while the recent streetscape work and vast Village Hall green provide a touch of nature and beauty. These traits, paired with the charm of its historic buildings, have led to a vibrant Village Center that is home to the highest number of independent retail and restaurants in Wilmette.

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

The Village Center zoning district has had a long-standing preference toward retail and restaurant uses, limiting office and personal service uses to a percentage of the district. Surrounding communities had similar regulations, but have relaxed those requirements over the years as the number and duration of vacancies have increased and the supply of retail uses has receded. The Village of Wilmette chose to not relax those regulations across the board, and instead allowed personal service uses in select blocks of its downtown and granted special use permits in cases where vacancies proved difficult to lease

to retail or restaurant uses. In retrospect, this policy has proven to be a benefit as vacancies that would have been quickly filled by office or personal service uses are now occupied by retail or restaurant uses. Anecdotal evidence collected from commercial real estate brokers indicates that while it may have been difficult for them to lease spaces, they acknowledge the Village's policy has resulted in a more vibrant downtown.

It is a goal of the Village to develop the Village Center while maintaining its character. The recent establishment of the Village Center as a National Register Historic District designation helps preserve historic structures at the core of Village Center while new development on the Chase Bank and Union Pacific lots present opportunities for transformative redevelopment and options for green space and other public benefits not possible elsewhere in Village Center. The area is zoned for 4-5 stories, though the Village is willing to entertain proposals in excess of 5 stories if design characteristics take the character of surrounding properties and public benefit warrant the increase in height. Currently, development proposals in the Village Center zoning district with building heights greater than 42 feet or with a floor area ratio greater than 3.0, can only seek approval through Planned Unit Development review.

#### What we heard when asking....

How can the Village build on recent downtown success?

- The restaurants are great; would also like to see more retail stores
- Have a discernible architectural style downtown
- Crossing Green Bay needs to be easier
- Taller buildings have been established on Green Bay, shows it can be done
- How can the Chase site be redeveloped?
- Streetscape is a nice addition
- Wilmette Theatre is a good thing, has potential
- What will happen with Imperial Motors site?

#### **Objectives for Village Center**

#### Character

- Continue working with business and property owners to support restaurants and independent businesses and services.
- Provide façade and interior renovation programs to support vitality of existing buildings and businesses along the corridor.
- Enhance and support the needs of key Village Center civic institutions.
- Continue to implement recommendations of the Village Center plan. (See Spotlight in Business and Commerce chapter for more detail).
- Maintain the Village Hall in the Village Center as an activity center and central gathering place for the community.
- Educate building owners on the benefits of the Federal Historic Preservation Tax Credit for buildings located in the Village Center National Register District or listed on the National Register of Historic Places.
- Maintain requirements for commercial uses on the first floor in the Village Center.
- Evaluate opportunities for additional useable open space in the Village Center.
- Preserve current height and character it creates at the Village Center core (east of 12th Street).
- Preserve architectural characteristics of the Village Center.

#### Redevelopment

- Maintain communications with owners of properties likely to see development pressure to make them aware of Village objectives for the sites and Village Center, and to remain aware of local development trends.
- Promote and support ongoing property owner reinvestment in Village Center properties.
- Consider opportunities to add new multi-family or townhome/ stacked flat dwellings in the Village Center.

#### **Access & Transportation**

- Provide efficient, effective, and safe transportation, transit connections, and pedestrian linkages, as well as increase transit access and usage.
- Continue to improve walkability and sense of pedestrian safety throughout the area, with emphasis on crossing Green Bay Road.
- Improve bicycle access to and from the Village Center and Green Bay Trail per the Bicycle Master Plan recommendations.
- Enhance linkages, amenities, and safety to the Green Bay Trail, as well as local and regional bike connections throughout the Village.



#### **Objectives for Green Bay Road in Village Center**

#### Character

- Green Bay Road streetscape and wayfinding should highlight the Village Center and improve the pedestrian environment, on both sides of Green Bay Road.
- Preserve ground floor spaces along Green Bay Road in the VC District to incorporate retail, dining, and entertainment businesses accessible to the public.

#### Zoning

 Maintain height regulations per VC Zoning District and consider greater height when proposed developments provide public benefits and meet criteria as specified in the Zoning Ordinance and PUD standards.

#### Redevelopment

- Incorporate new housing into developments in this part of the corridor where appropriate.
- Plan for possible redevelopment of parking near the Metra station into mixed-use development while consolidating parking needs for Metra riders and maintaining access to employees and customers of Village Center businesses during non-commuter hours.

#### **Access & Transportation**

- Make crossing between the west side of Green Bay Road and the Village Center more inviting and safer for pedestrians, implementing recommendations from the feasibility study and Village Center Master Plan.
- Create better connections between public uses like the Library and Post Office to the Village Center.
- Work with Metra to revisit urban design elements that can be installed to make crossing Green Bay safe and inviting.

## Opportunities & Recommendations for the Village Center

The Village Center has been thoughtfully planned under a plan adopted in 2011. The directions and recommendations of that effort remain appropriate for this comprehensive plan update, which a couple of additions noted here.

#### 1. Redevelopment:

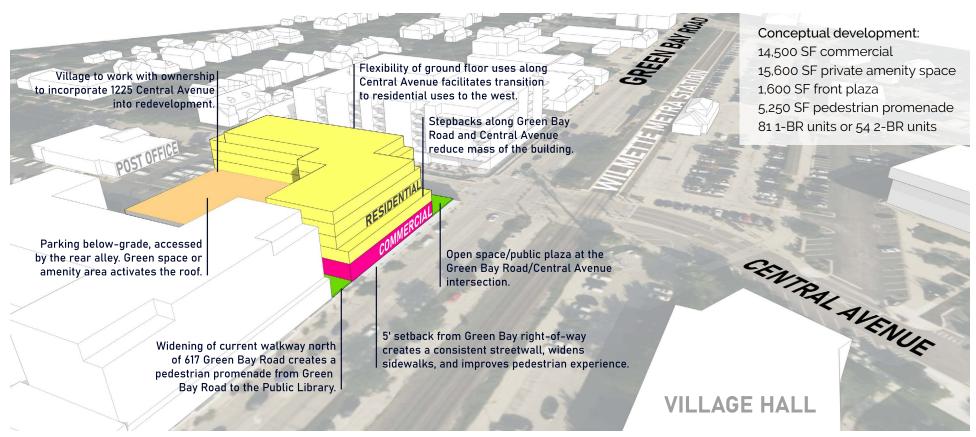
Entertain redevelopment of the Chase building (1200 Central Avenue) in keeping with the VC Master plan and evaluate potential to incorporate Metra parking lots with that redevelopment to include sites for residential development, public open space, and replacing commuter parking in appropriately designed structured parking.

#### 2. Zoning:

Review and refine zoning standards in the VC zoning district to create and encourage redevelopment of sites along the corridor that meet the Village's objectives.

#### 3. Urban Design:

- Include Green Bay Road streetscape enhancements in the CIP to encourage a look along Green Bay Road in the VC District that is distinguishable from the rest of the corridor and provides more emphasis on walkability and pedestrian comfort.
- Investigate improvements to pedestrian crossings on Green Bay at Wilmette and Central Avenues, including how the steepness of the crossing just west of the railroad tracks can be made more accessible.
- Evaluate options for the east side of Green Bay Road between Central and Wilmette Avenues to remove surplus parking, while maintaining sufficient public parking for Metra commuters, and create an improved and expanded pedestrian area. See concepts in the Village Center Master Plan (Figures 5.13 - 5.15).
- Install decorative crosswalks and public art at the intersections to make the area more pedestrian-oriented and attractive.



Note: Graphic is a conceptual presentation of possible site development. Actual development will be based on a developer's proposal, as regulated by zoning, bulk, and use standards at the time.

#### **Village Center Conceptual Development**

Identified as a target site in the Village Center (VC) Master Plan, the southwest corner of Green Bay Road and Central Avenue is a prime location for redevelopment in the Village's core. The VC Master Plan and the above conceptual graphic envision a 5-story mixed use building at this corner, with commercial on the ground floor (allowing flexibility for other ground floor uses along Central Avenue to transition towards the residential to the west), residential units on the upper stories, and parking below-grade. The above massing diagram also depicts common area/green space behind the building (also specified by the VC Master Plan), which could be accessed via a widened and improved pedestrian walkway from Green Bay Road. A second, smaller open space/plaza area at the corner of Green Bay Road and Central Avenue would help to bring activity to the street and strengthen pedestrian connections in the Village Center, linking both sides east and west of Green Bay Road and the Metra tracks.

#### **LINDEN SQUARE**

#### **About the Subarea**

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

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

This issue stems in part due to the limit on medical and office uses on the first floor of the Village Center. While this limit may contribute to the vibrancy felt in Village Center, it might also be one of the reasons that Linden Square has become a much more service-oriented district. Another limiting factor is the preference of business type and strict requirements of a larger Linden Square property owner that liquor not be sold on properties they own, which limits uses like restaurants and grocery stores and prevents a vibrant nightlife likened to that of the Village Center. Furthermore, uses historically found in this area such as independent/small-scale pharmacies and hardware stores are not often feasible in today's market.

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

units in Linden Square are naturally more affordable and preserving that is a goal of the Village.

#### What we heard when asking....

What is important about and needed in Linden Square?

- Attract music and arts to the area
- The area is hard to get to
- Would like to see the grocery and hardware store come back
- Would be nice if it was more vibrant and had more community support (people shopping there)
- Consider pop-up businesses
- A great place for dental work, it's mostly services and office

#### **Objectives for Linden Square**

#### Character

- Maintain options for shopping and dining in the area and look to attract other desirable uses (such as those related to arts and cultural activities).
- Continue working with property owners in the subarea to understand their near- and long-term objectives, and how those can be coordinated with Village objectives.
- Work with Chicago's North Shore Convention and Visitor's Bureau and stakeholders (Baha'i Temple, Chamber of Commerce, Park District, and property owners) to identify ways to make the subarea a day trip destination for visitors arriving by car or Purple Line.
- Identify and seek to attract cultural uses that can be incorporated into the area related to unique functions like the Baha'i Temple and train station.
- Consider submitting a National Register Historic District nomination for Linden Square area

#### Redevelopment

 Consider opportunities to add new multi-family dwellings in the NR-1 District.

## **Opportunities & Recommendations for Linden Square**

#### 1. Urban Design:

- Review current streetscape program to determine if additional or revised streetscaping (i.e., beautification and landscaping) can enhance the district's appearance, making the area more enticing for customers and additional investment.
- Encourage the use of surface parking lots facing the street for community events such as farmers markets or arts fairs to help attract activity to this area.
- Highlight the area's unique location as a transit hub with public art (sculptures, murals, train related designs in the roadways or sidewalks).
- Develop a wayfinding program for the district to highlight connections to the Baha'i Temple, Gillson Park, the Village Center, Ryan Field, and other nearby attractions.

#### 2. Zoning:

- Evaluate increasing permitted height in the NR-1 District to facilitate up to five stories of residential development with first floor commercial to incentivize development density that can support more retail and restaurant uses in the area.
- Expand the list of allowable activities in the area by identifying appropriate uses that are currently "special uses" and make them either "permitted uses" or "conditional uses" (uses required to meet specific performance standards, but not requiring a formal public approval process). Uses to be considered should be those that would generate more commercial and entertainment activity, including: brew pubs, convenience marts, craft brewery/distillery, health club, indoor amusement, office, printing shops, and restaurants.
- Allow for future mixed use development that can bring residents and commercial activity to the district.

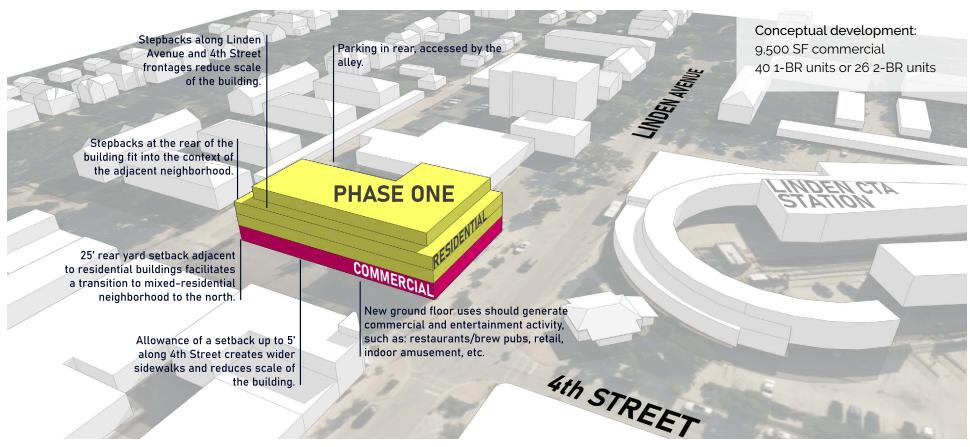
#### 3. Redevelopment:

- Work with CTA to evaluate how part of the commuter parking lot may be developed for residential use (that may include first floor retail). Any redevelopment of the CTA parking lot would have to be coordinated with that agency to ensure that transit parking needs can be met over the long term. In addition, potential for enhancing CTA ridership (either by new residents or supported by new retail) would be evaluated as part of any development opportunity.
- Encourage the consolidation of smaller lots to provide greater flexibility in site planning.

#### **Linden Square: Conceptual Development Scenarios**

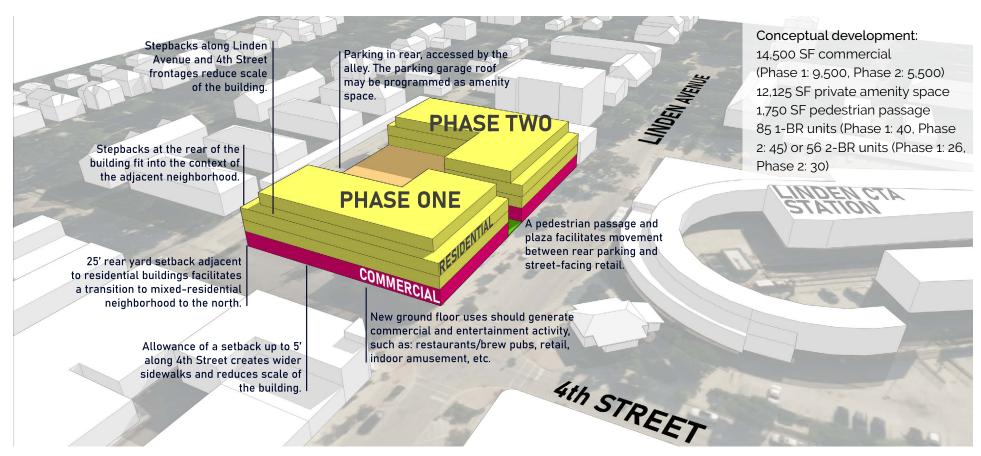
A single, cohesive development is often more able to achieve desirable building design, and so is recommended for the northeast corner of 4th Street and Linden Avenue. This format allows structural bulk to be arranged in a way that minimizes impact on nearby properties and more likely results in a financially feasible project. However, property owners and market conditions will significantly impact how development occurs. As such, two scenarios are depicted for the Linden Square area in the following pages. One is a phased approach that begins with redeveloping the northeast corner of 4th Street & Linden Avenue (currently seeing greater development pressure), then moving to a second phase of development that would complement the first. A second scenario envisions one consolidated development, in which all three existing sites are redeveloped as a single structure or unified development.

#### **Linden Square Development Concept - Phase One**



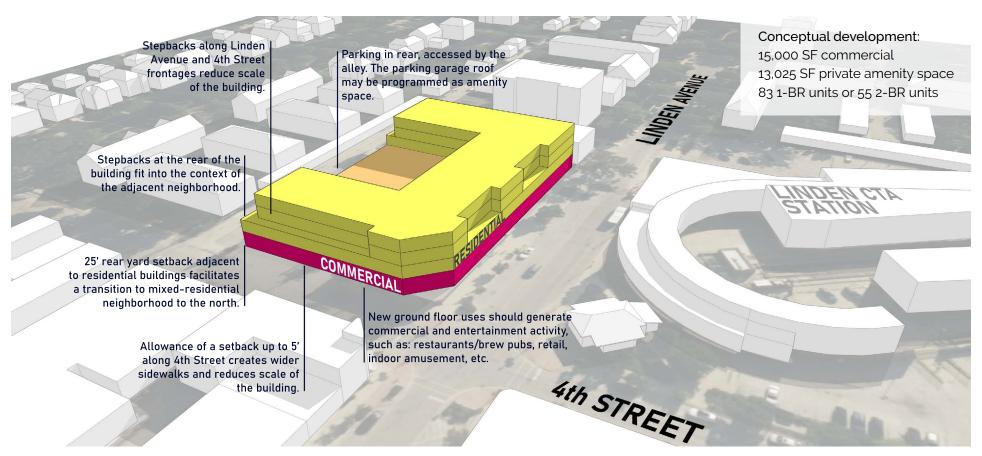
Note: Graphic is a conceptual presentation of possible site development. Actual development will be based on a developer's proposal, as regulated by zoning, bulk, and use standards at the time.

#### **Linden Square Development Concept - Phases One and Two**



Note: Graphic is a conceptual presentation of possible site development. Actual development will be based on a developer's proposal, as regulated by zoning, bulk, and use standards at the time.

#### **Linden Square Development Concept - Single Consolidated Development**



Note: Graphic is a conceptual presentation of possible site development. Actual development will be based on a developer's proposal, as regulated by zoning, bulk, and use standards at the time.

#### **Future Land Use Plan**

A Future Land Use (FLU) Map or Plan illustrates the community's vision for the use of land in the future. Land Use is distinct from zoning, because it refers to a generally intended use (e.g., mixed-use commercial or single-family residential), rather than specifying regulations that determine how a property can be developed and used.

The Village will use the Future Land Use Plan to evaluate development proposals. The FLU Map is a means of communicating the vision of the Comprehensive Plan, but in some cases may be updated independently of the rest of the comprehensive plan. It illustrates where existing uses are appropriate to remain or change. Recommended land use or zoning changes in this chapter are based on their benefits to the Village, are responsive to market trends, and support the goals and objectives of this plan.

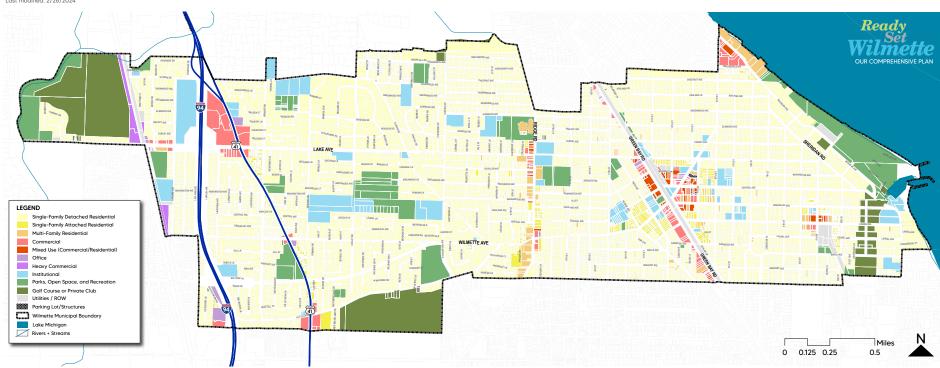
Even where redevelopment opportunities are indicated in subareas or may occur elsewhere in the Village, Wilmette's future land uses are generally expected to remain similar to what they are today. An area for which future use has several options is found west of the Edens Expressway on Lake Avenue (referred to as "West Lake" in the Business & Commerce chapter). This unique historically heavy commercial area has been subject to developer interest over the years for residential development. Issues with existing utilities on the properties, geometries, and the number of property owners have made such development difficult to pursue. The current uses provide service to the Village and surrounding communities, making their continued operation positive for Wilmette. Once these heavy commercial/industrial uses become no longer economically viable, proximity to the Wilmette Golf Course and potential expansion of the Skokie Valley Trail (envisioned to be located along the former railroad right-of-way) make the area attractive for Park District activities.





## Future Land Use Map Last modified: 2/26/2024







CHAPTER ELEVEN

# IMPLEMENTATION

## How to Implement a Plan

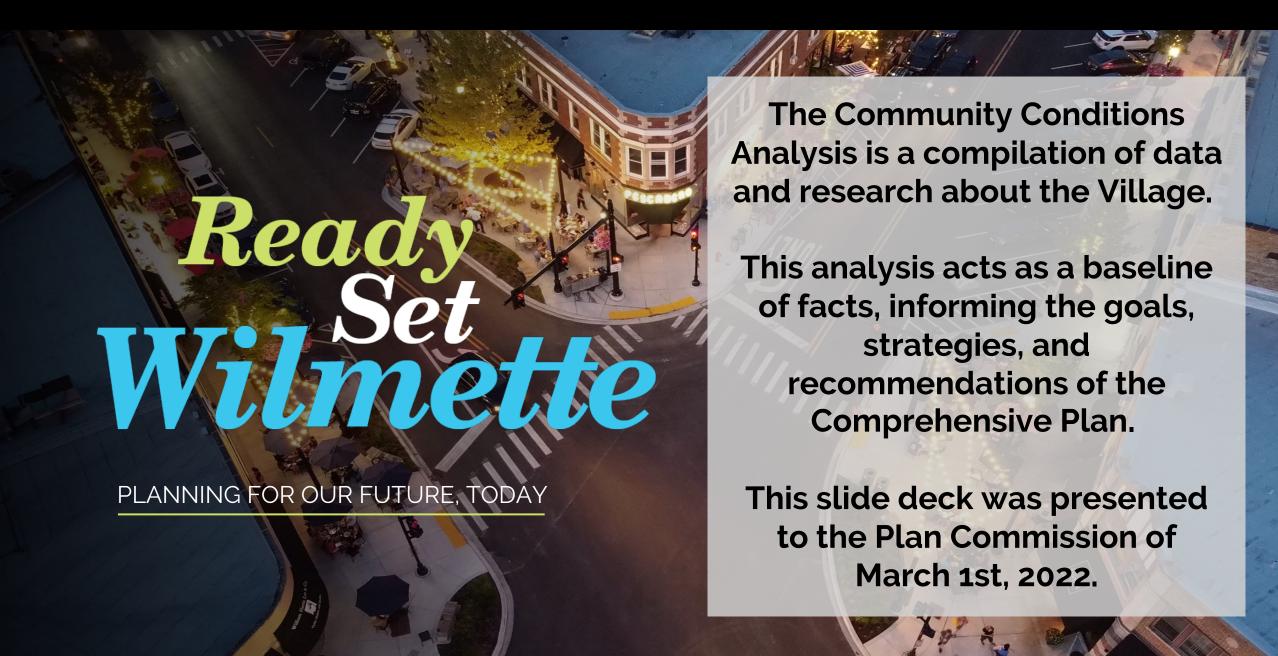
This comprehensive plan for Wilmette includes a range of general policies to be applied as well as specific actions to be conducted. How and when those come into play is the act of implementing the plan. In some cases, an implementation action is specific and planned. In other cases, implementation is in reaction to an outside occurrence or opportunity. No matter the influence to make them happen, the plans, programs, and policies outlined are important steps to reaching the goals and objectives developed by the community as part of the comprehensive planning process. In general, plan implementation happens in three ways:

- 1 Annual review process. This plan was developed with and by the Village's Boards and Commissions. These groups can continue to play a role in the plan's implementation by annually reviewing comprehensive plan priorities and incorporating them into their work programs and evaluation of matters coming before them. Other factors to consider when determining priorities include: available staffing and funding sources, other ongoing projects, and the Village's ability to undertake certain actions. It is also worth noting that this document is adopted at a specific moment in time. Markets, technologies, external influences and community priorities evolve over time. Therefore, an annual review taking those changes into account is necessary for effective ongoing implementation.
- Proposals for new development. When the Village receives proposals for new development, this can be seen as an opportunity to implement the comprehensive plan. Ultimately, the Village does not build all the businesses, homes, and institutions that create the community. When developers, property owners or others propose a new development that requires Village approval, that presents an opportunity to incorporate the comprehensive plan's goals, objectives, and recommendations into those deliberations. Similarly, chances to work with other governmental bodies, local organizations, and property owners to advance community quality of life can be measured against the vision and goals outlined in this plan.
- 3 External funding opportunities. New and unexpected opportunities will arise for the Village, such as grant funds or other external factors. Using the plan as supporting documentation of the Village's vision and goals, the Village can pursue opportunities that advance the vision and overall framework set forth in this plan.



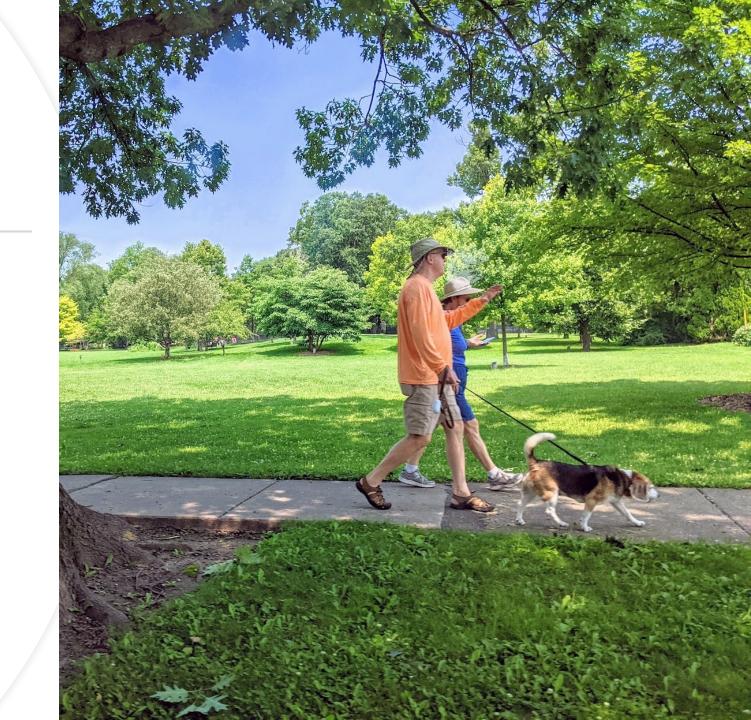


# Appendix A



# Agenda

- 1. Welcome
- 2. Engagement Summary
- 3. Community Conditions
  - Business + Commerce
  - Housing + Affordability
  - Overview of Planning Efforts
  - Built Environment
  - Diversity + Inclusiveness
  - Environment, Sustainability + Water
  - Community Culture + Wellbeing
- 4. Clear or Blurry? + Discussion
- 5. Next Steps



## **Consultant Team**



Teska Associates, Inc. Lead Planning Consultant
Goodman Williams Group · Market
Applied Real Estate Analysis, Inc. · Housing
EOR · Environment and Sustainability
C- Change · Diversity, Equity and Inclusiveness
Fish Transportation Group · Active Transportation



Community Engagement Summary



5,600+ website visits

2,400+ unique users

**266** website followers

500 Poll #1 respondents

### **CONVERSATIONS:**

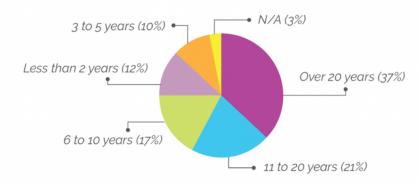
- Pop-up chats + Focus Groups
- Village Commission workshops
- Stakeholder Interviews
- Local Brokers + Developers
- Affordable Housing Developers

### **WILMETTE TALKS:**

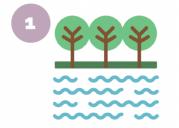
<b>FALL</b> Community Character, Culture, Activities & Wellbeing (Teska) Parks, Recreation and Open Space (Teska)
WINTER Diversity and Inclusiveness (C-CHANGE) March 15 <sup>th</sup> Community Institutions (Teska)
SPRING Business and Commerce (GWG) Housing Affordability and Diversity (AREA)
SUMMER Environment, Sustainability & Water (EOR) Active Transportation (FTG)



## If a resident, how long have you lived in Wilmette?



#### What do folks like most about Wilmette?



Access to parks and the lakefront (69%\*)

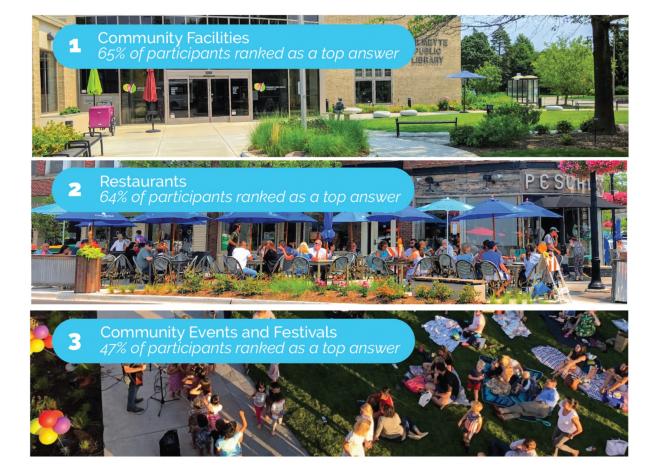


Quality of community institutions (59%\*)



Great place to raise a family (44%\*)

Wilmette's arts, culture, and entertainment scene is largely defined today by its...



Which factors contribute most towards fostering positive community character in Wilmette?



Green space and the natural environment



Quality of community institutions



Vibrant mix of uses, shops, and restaurants

In the realm of health, safety, and wellness, Wilmette excels MOST in the following areas:



of respondents ranked Parks and Open Space as one their top three answers.



Parks and open space (82%)



Walkability (57%)



Public safety (40%)

### Improvements in health, safety, and wellness should focus on:



*3 out of 4 respondents ranked* **bike infrastructure** *and/or* **sidewalk connectivity/pedestrian safety** *as one of their top three answers* 

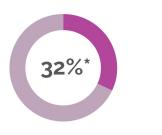


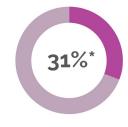
1 out of 4 respondents ranked connecting and unifying people and neighborhoods across Wilmette as one of their top three answers

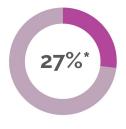
#### Where does Wilmette have the greatest opportunity to improve?

- Business mix, economic development, tax base (44%\*)
- Community diversity and inclusiveness (43%\*)
- 3 Environment and sustainability (36%\*)

Which of the following are challenges to engaging with different types of people, cultural activites, or artistic events?







Lack of cross-cultural integration

Communication that furthers community awareness

Lack of opportunities to experience varied art forms

### Future goals: arts, culture, and entertainment should...

Make the community more interesting and attractive

Bring people together to feel more connected to each other and Wilmette

Make our Village more diverse, inclusive, and welcoming

64% of participants ranked as a top priority

47% of participants ranked as a top priority

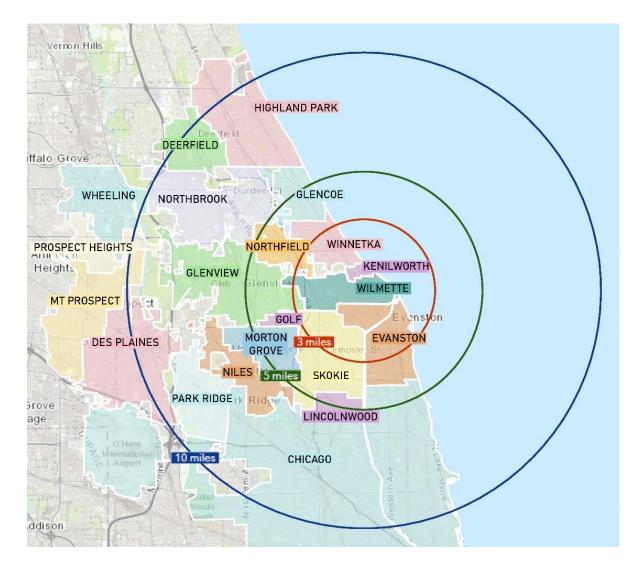
30% of participants ranked as a top priority

Source: Poll #1



# Wilmette & Surrounding Communities

Market Area



- The Market Area extends nearly five miles around Wilmette, including the following communities:
  - Kenilworth
  - Winnetka
  - Glencoe
  - Northfield
  - Glenview
  - Morton Grove
  - Skokie
  - Evanston

# Comparative Demographics Wilmette & Surrounding Communities

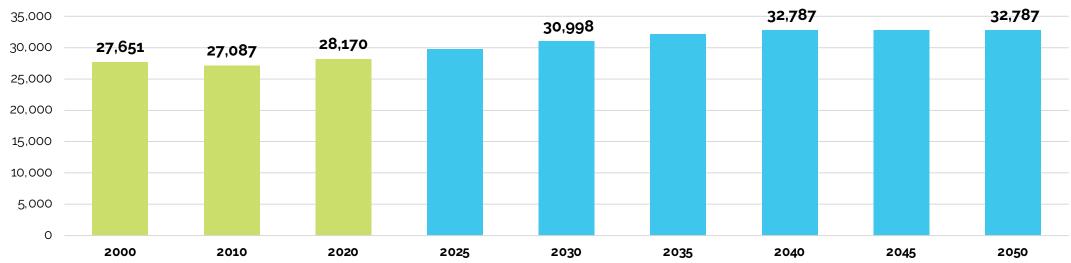
	Total Population 2020	Total Households 2020	Household Size 2020	Median Age 2019	Median Household Income 2019	
Evanston	78,110	31,425	2.3	36.1	\$78,904	
Skokie	67,824	24,173	2.8	43.7	\$73,046	
Glenview	48,705	17,855	2.7 46.5		\$115,198	
Wilmette	28,170	9,985	2.8	45.5	\$164,681	
Morton Grove	25,297	9,015	2.8	47.8	\$85,360	
Winnetka	12,744	4,170	3.1	40.9	\$250,001	
Northfield	5,751	2,263	2.5	48.8	\$149,077	
Kenilworth	2,514	791	3.2	42.6	\$227,404	

Source: US Census 2020. American Community Survey 2016 – 2019 Estimates

## **Demographics**

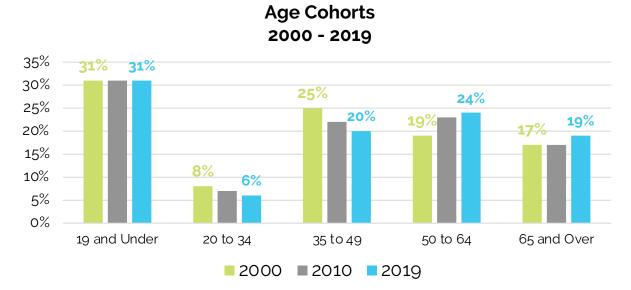
## Wilmette Population & Forecasts

### **Population & Forecasts**



- Source: US Census 2000, 2010, 2020. CMAP ONTO 2050 Population Forecasts
  - Wilmette experienced a slight population decrease between 2000 and 2010.
  - 2020 Census data show a population increase since 2000.
- CMAP's population forecasts project **continued population growth until 2040**, at which time the population is expected to level off at approximately 32,800 people.
- Based on CMAP's population forecast, Wilmette could experience a population increase of 4,600 people by 2040 approx. 1,600 new households.

# **Demographics**Wilmette Age



Source: US Census 2000 & 2010, ACS 2016-2019 Estimates

- Wilmette has a high proportion of school aged children (19 and under), that has remained consistent since 2000. This is the largest age cohort in Wilmette.
- The **20 to 34 population is the smallest age cohort** in Wilmette and has continued to decrease since 2000.

Median Age 2000 - 2019

	2000	2010	2019
Wilmette	42.2	44.5	45.5
Cook County	33.6	35.3	36.8

Source: US Census 2000 & 2010, ACS 2016-2019 Estimates

- The 50 to 64 age cohort is the fastest growing age cohort.
- The Median Age in Wilmette continues to increase and is significantly higher than in Cook County.

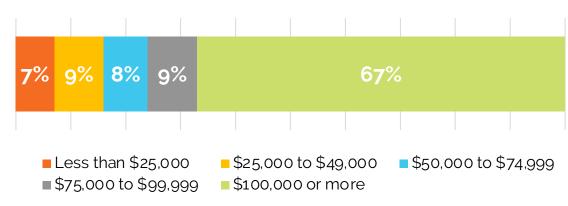
# **Demographics**Wilmette Income

#### Median Household Income\*



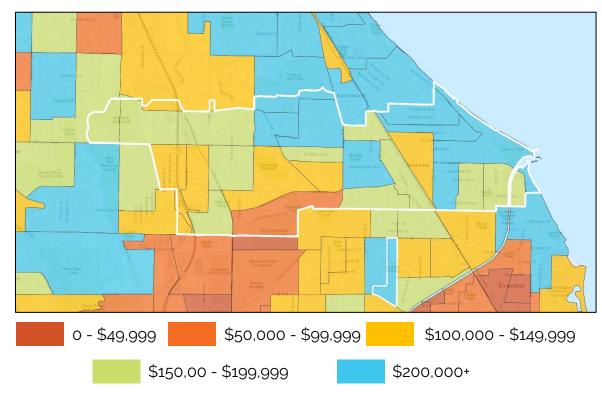
Source: US Census 2000 & 2010, ACS 2016-2019 Estimates

### Median Household Income Distribution (2019)



Source: ACS 2016-2019 Estimates

### Median Household Income by Block Group (2019)



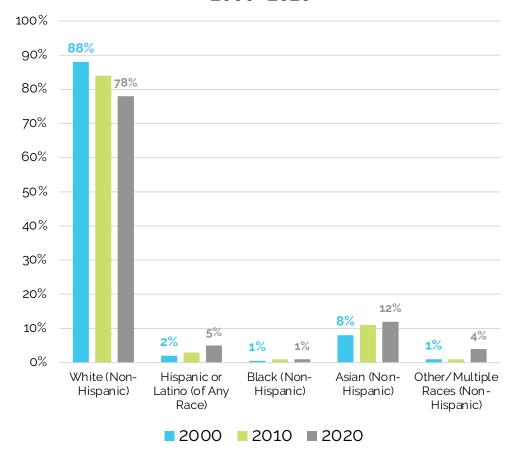
Source: Esri Business Analyst

- Median income in Wilmette has consistently been more than double that of Cook County and the Nation – and it has continually increased
- The vast majority of Wilmette households earn \$100k+ annually
- Household Income is highest closer to the lake, and Village Center

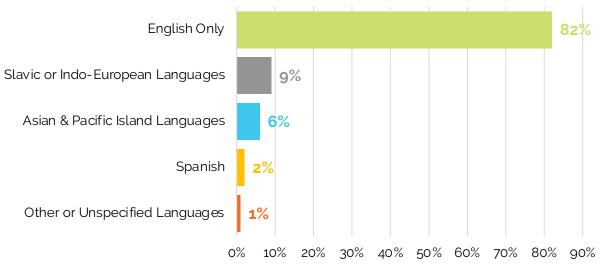
<sup>\*</sup>Adjusted to 2019 dollars

# **Demographics**Race & Ethnicity

## Race & Ethnicity 2000 -2020



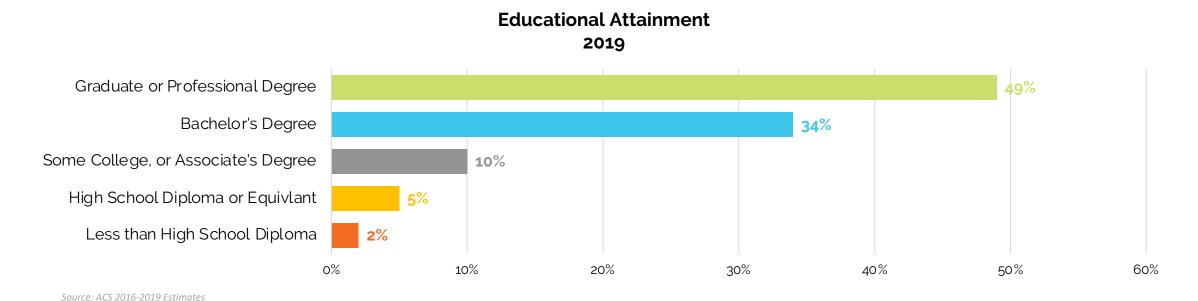
### **Languages Spoken at Home**



Source: ACS 2016-2019 Estimates

- While the majority of Wilmette residents identify as White non-Hispanic, shifts in race and ethnicity occurred between 2000 and 2019, with a decrease in the White non-Hispanic population, and an increase in the Asian non-Hispanic population and other/multiple races non-Hispanic population
- The percentage of Hispanic or Latino has increased slightly between 2000 and 2019, while the Black non-Hispanic populations remained unchanged
- 18% of Wilmette residents speak a language other than English at home, with the largest percentage speaking a Slavic or Indo-European language, followed by Asian and Pacific Island languages

# Demographics Education & Employment of Wilmette Residents



- 83% of Wilmette residents aged 25 and older have obtained a bachelor's degree or higher, with nearly 50% obtaining a Graduate or Professional degree
- 62% of the employed population in Wilmette worked within six industry sectors, with educational services, health care, and professional services the top three



**Total Jobs in Wilmette:** 7,171 **Wilmette Workforce:** 12,715

6,356
LIVE ELSEWHERE,
WORK IN
WILMETTE



11,900
LIVE IN
WILMETTE,
WORK ELSEWHERE

## **Internal Jobs filled by Non-Residents**

58% of these employees earn \$40,000 a year or less

## **Internal Jobs filled by Residents**

66% of these employees earn \$40,000 a year or less

Leading industries include education, retail trade, accommodation and food services, and healthcare

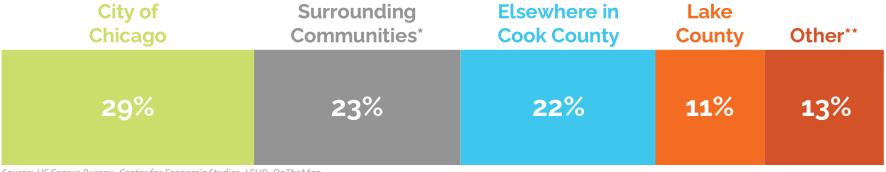
### **External Jobs filled by Residents**

67% of these employees earn more than \$40,000 a year

Leading industries include education, healthcare, and professional services

## **Employment Commuting Patterns**

WILMETTE



Source: US Census Bureau, Center for Economic Studies, LEHD. OnTheMap



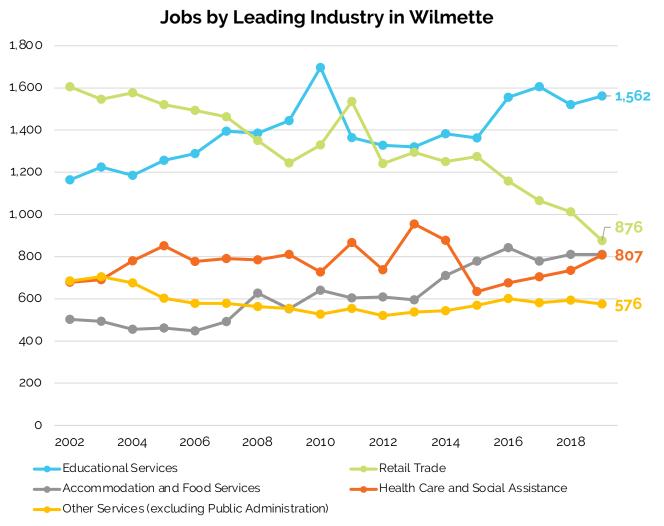


<sup>\*</sup>Surrounding Communities include: Evanston, Glencoe, Winnetka, Kenilworth, Skokie, Glenview, Morton Grove, and Northfield \*\*Other areas include: DuPage County (3%), McHenry County (2%), Kane County, (1%), and other counties with less than 1%

<sup>\*</sup>Surrounding Communities include: Evanston, Glencoe, Winnetka, Kenilworth, Skokie, Glenview, Morton Grove, and Northfield \*\*Other areas include: Will County (1%), Kane County (1%), and other counties with less than 1%

## **Employment in Wilmette**

## Leading Industries

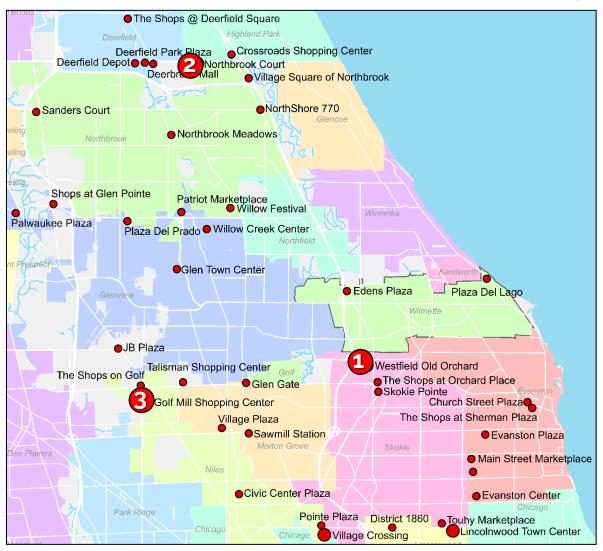


- Education Services is the leading industry, followed by Retail Trade, which has experienced significant losses since 2002
- Accommodation and Food Services has increased, which could be a result of the growth of food services in Village Center
- Significant decrease in retail trade jobs

Source: US Census Bureau, Center for Economic Studies, LEHD. OnTheMap

## **Commercial Retail Market**

## Competitive Retail Destinations - Shopping Centers 100k SF or more

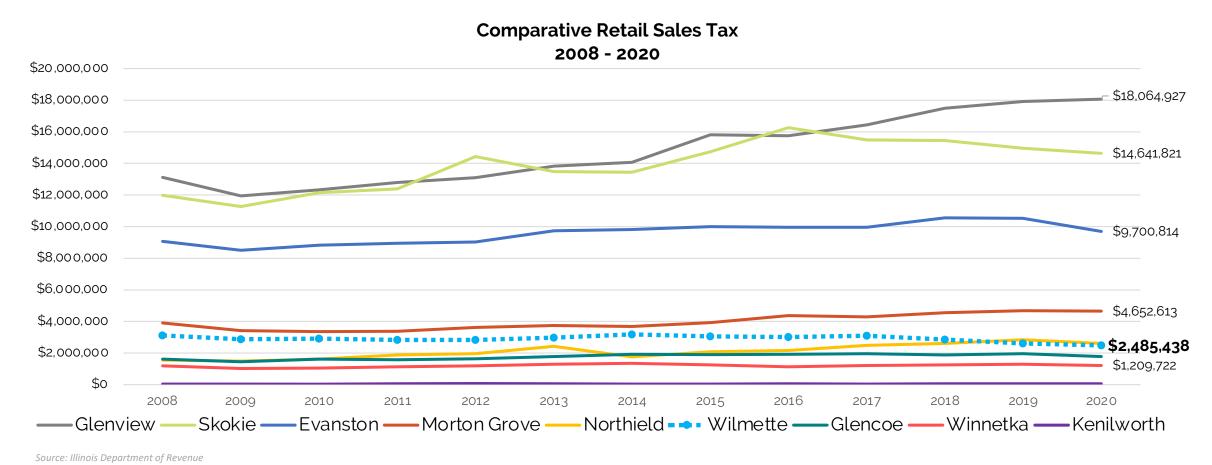


- The market area has 40+ shopping centers with 100,000 SF or more, including two (2) in Wilmette
- Shopping Centers with 1 million+ SF
  - Westfield Old Orchard Skokie
  - 2 Northbrook Court Northbrook
  - **3** Golf Mill Shopping Center Niles

NOTE: This map includes Niles to capture the many shopping destinations near the Village

## **Commercial Retail Market**

## Comparative Analysis



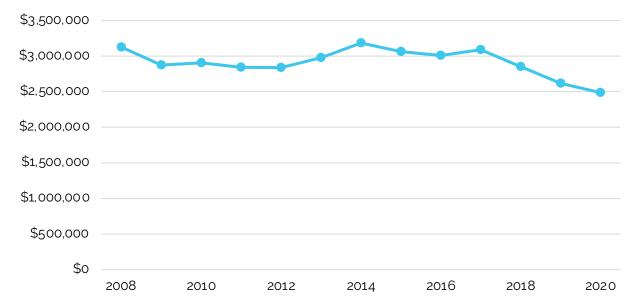
- The top three communities have collect more retail sales tax due to a higher retail inventory. Large scale regional malls or shopping centers are located here, that collect dollars from residents and non-residents
  - Glenview has 4.1M sf, Skokie has 5.2M sf, and Evanston has 4.4M compared to Wilmette with 1.3M sf

# Commercial Retail Market Wilmette

Inventory	Vacancy Rate	Net Absorption	NNN Rent	
1,325,183 sf	18.4%	22,184 SF	\$24.33 / SF	

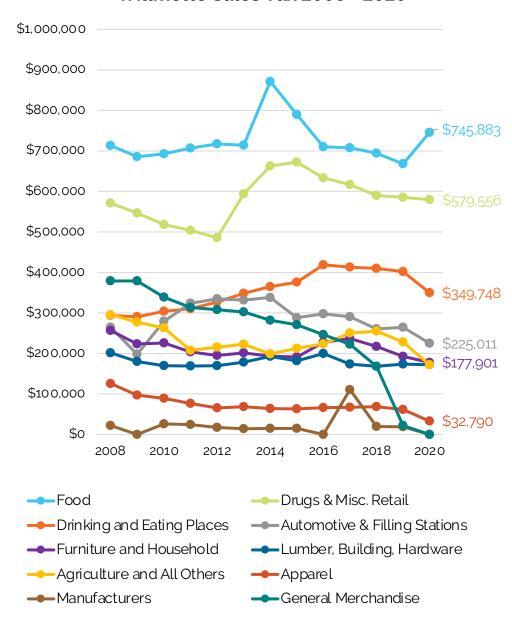
Source: CoStar, February 2022

#### Wilmette Retail Sales Tax 2008 - 2020



Source: Illinois Department of Revenue

#### Willmette Sales Tax 2008 - 2020



## **Commercial Retail Market**

## Wilmette Shopping Centers & Big Box Retailers

#### **Edens Plaza**

3200 Lake Avenue

**Year Built / Renovated**: 1956 - 1964 / 1992

**Size**: 342,781 SF (including outlot building)

**Anchors**: Walgreens, Bed Bath & Beyond, The

Fresh Market

Vacancy Rate: 21.7%

**Lease Rates**: <u>\$46 - \$56</u>

Parking Spaces: 1,372

**Owner:** Newport Investment Management

WS Development announced their purchase of Edens Plaza in 2022 for an undisclosed sum and plans to bring Wayfair to the 150,000 SF vacant Carson Pirie Scott space that closed in 2018.



### Plaza del Lago

1515 Sheridan Road

Year Built / Renovated: 1928 / 1996

**Size**: 100,213 SF

**Anchors**: Jewel Osco, NorthShore University

Healthsystem, CVS Pharmacy

Vacancy Rate: 13.1%

**Lease Rates**: <u>\$35 - \$42</u>

Parking Spaces: 350

Owner: Kite Realty Group

Retail Properties of America purchased Plaza Del Lago in 2017 for \$48M and has been active in repositioning current tenants and recruiting new.



### **Plazas & Big Box Retailers**

**Wilmette Commons**50 – 126 Skokie Blvd

Size: 33,200 SF
Year Built: 1988

Westlake Plaza Size: 32,542 SF 3207 Lake Avenue Year Built: 1963

Jewel-Osco Size: 35,200 SF 411 Green Bay Road Year Built: 1985

Imperial MotorsSize: 41,000 SF821 Green Bay RoadYear Built: 1974Vacant



## Village Center



Source: visitchicagonorthsohre.com/wilmette

- Well balanced business mix
- Mostly local businesses, very few national chains
- Recent addition of full service restaurants with outdoor patios and a new streetscape
- Many home building and design storefronts, including construction, flooring, painting, decorating, drapes, blinds, amongst others

## **BY THE NUMBERS**

Number of Storefronts: 128 Occupied Storefronts: 121 Vacant Storefronts: 7 National Tenants: 6

### **Business Mix 2021**



Source: Village of Wilmette, Business Inventory 2021

## Linden Square



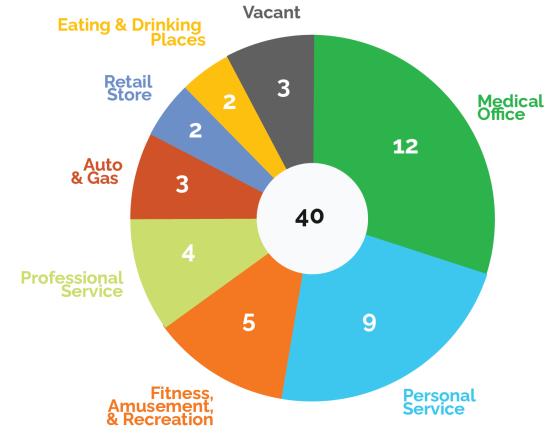
Source: flickr.com/photos/eridony/6149012064

- Dominated by medical office, particularly dentists and orthodontist offices, and service uses, and other "one trip" destinations
- Very few eating places, and no grocery or specialty food
- Baha'i Temple owns the large corner building, and has restricted uses

## **BY THE NUMBERS**

Number of Storefronts: 40 Occupied Storefronts: 37 Vacant Storefronts: 3 National Tenants: 0

## **Business Mix 2021**



Source: Village of Wilmette, Business Inventory 2020

## Green Bay Road Corridor



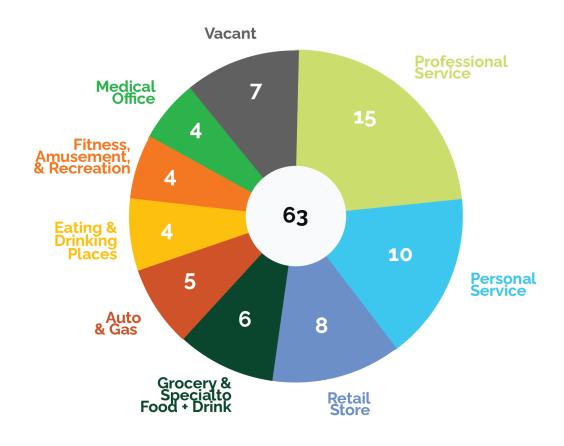
Source: Google Maps Screenshot

- Many service uses, particularly professional service
- Many auto and gas tenants, due to automotive nature of the street
- Addition of 180+ residential units between the Residences of Wilmette, and Optima
- Opportunity at Imperial Motors site for added commercial or residential uses

### **BY THE NUMBERS**

Number of Storefronts: 63 Occupied Storefronts: 56 Vacant Storefronts: 7 National Tenants: 6

### **Business Mix 2021**



## Ridge Road Corridor



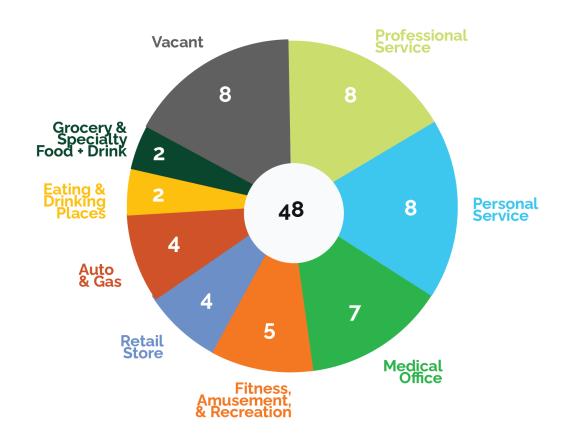
Source: Google Maps Screenshot

- Mostly smaller scale local businesses
- Many personal and professional service users, and medical office
- Opportunity at closed Treasure Island site

## **BY THE NUMBERS**

Number of Storefronts: 48 Occupied Storefronts: 40 Vacant Storefronts: 8 National Tenants: 2

### **Business Mix 2021**



## **Commercial Retail Market**

## Retail Gap Analysis

Summary Demographics	
2021 Population	27,247
2021 Households	9,717
2021 Median Disposable Income	\$120,523

- Wilmette has a very high median disposable income, more than \$900M in spending power
- High retail spending gap
  - Wilmette residents are spending more than \$528M dollars a year outside of the Village
- For every \$1.00 spent in Wilmette, \$2.40 is spent outside the Village
- The supply of the following industry sectors meets local demand: Home Furnishing Stores, Lawn & Garden Stores, Specialty Food Stores, and Sporting Good/Hobby/Music Stores
- The largest retail spending gap is in Motor Vehicle Parts & Dealers, General Merchandise, Food Service & Drinking Places, Food & Beverage Stores, & Retail Stores

	Demand (Retail Potential)	Supply (Retail Sales)	Retail Gap	
Total	\$906,200,190	\$377,431,836	\$528,768,354	
Total Retail Trade	\$812,359,608	\$340,378,287	\$471,981,321	
Total Food & Drink	\$93,840,582	\$37,053,549	\$56,787,033	

	Demand (Retail Potential)	Supply (Retail Sales)	Retail Gap
Motor Vehicle Parts & Dealers	\$166,780,497	\$12,646,259	\$154,134,238
General Merchandise	\$139,872,984	\$73,719,561	\$66,153,423
Food Service & Drinking Places	\$93,840,582	\$37.053.549	\$56,787,033
Food & Beverage Stores	\$129,331,490	\$120,815,784	\$8,515,706

Source: Esri Business Analyst, 2021

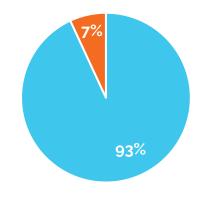
# Wilmette Housing Profile

Occupancy & Tenure								
	2000		2010		2019		% Change	
	<u>Count</u>	<u>Percent</u>	<u>Count</u>	<u>Percent</u>	<u>Count</u>	<u>Percent</u>	<u>Count</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Total Housing Units	10,332	100%	10,290	100%	10,438	100%	106	1%
Occupied Housing Units	10,045	97%	9,742	95%	9,717	93%	-328	-3%
Owner-Occupied	8,721	87%	8,482	87%	8,482	87%	-239	-3%
Renter-Occupied	1,324	13%	1,260	12%	1,235	13%	-89	-7%
Vacant Housing Units	287	3%	548	5%	721	7%	434	151%

Source: US Census 2000 & 2010, ACS Estimates 2016 - 2019

- Housing vacancy increased between 2000 and 2019, from 3% to 7%
- Owner-occupancy remained unchanged between 2000 and 2019 at 87%

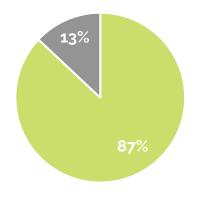
## Occupancy (2019)



Occupied Housing Units

Vacant Housing Units

## Tenure (2019)

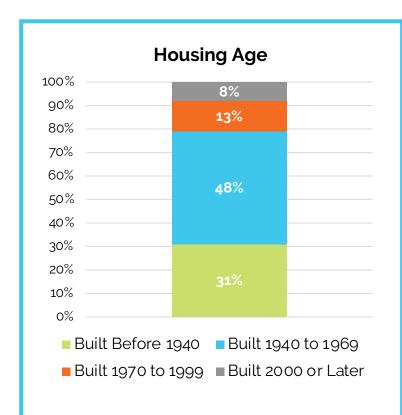


Owner-Occupied

■ Renter-Occupied

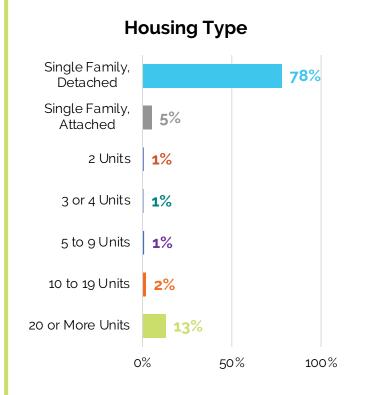
Source: ACS Estimates 2016 - 2019

# Wilmette Housing Profile



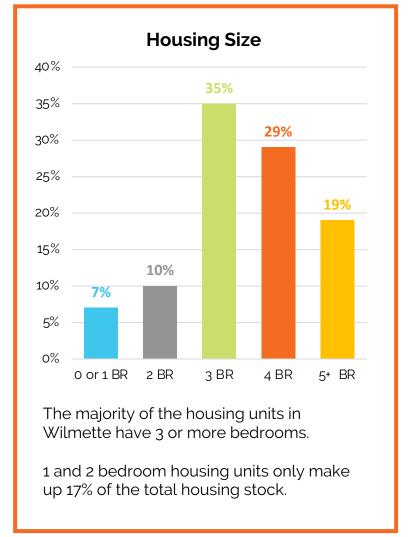
Wilmette has an older housing stock.

Nearly half of the homes in Wilmette were built prior to 1940 and 1969, and only 8% have been built since 2000.



The majority of the housing units in Wilmette are single family, detached homes.

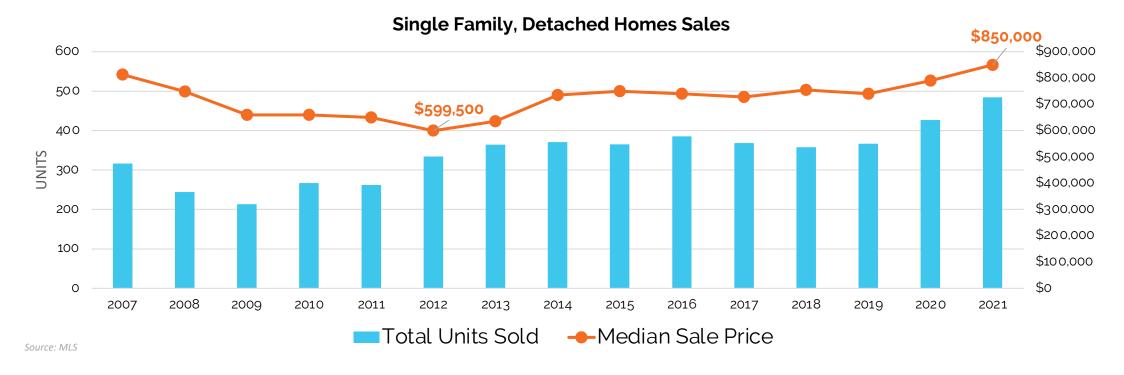
Multifamily units make up 18% of the housing stock, with the majority of those in buildings with 20 or more units.



Source: ACS Estimates 2016 - 2019 Source: ACS Estimates 2016 - 2019 Source: ACS Estimates 2016 - 2019

## **For-Sale Housing Market**

Single Family, Detached Homes



- Median sales prices have continued to increase from a low in 2012, and are now above prerecession prices at \$850k in 2021
- The total number of units sold in 2020 and 2021 are the highest they have been in over 14 years
- Average days on the market have decreased from a high of 169 days in 2009 to 51 days in 2021
- 36% of all homes sold in 2021, or 176 homes, sold for \$1M

## For-Sale Housing Market

Single Family, Attached Homes

### Single Family, Attached Home Sales



- Median sales prices have continued to increase from a 2012 low, but have still not surpassed pre-recession prices
- More single family, attached total housing units sold in 2021 than any other year since 2007

- Average days on the market have varied over the years, from a low of 52 days in 2009 to a high of 132 days in 2021
- 75% of all single family, attached homes sold in 2021 were under \$500k

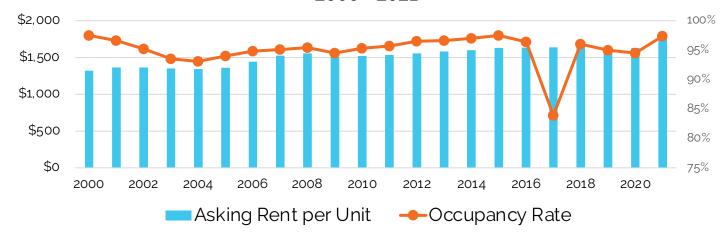
### **Rental Market Conditions**

### Market Rate Apartments

Rental Market Comparison							
Submarket: Far North Suburban Cook Wilmette County* Cook							
Total Units	490	3,798	385,771				
Occupancy (%)	97.4%	89.0%	93.6%				
Average monthly asking rent/unit	<i>\$1,773</i>	\$2,233	\$1,639				
Average monthly rent/SF	\$2.16	\$2.42	\$2.12				
Five year rent growth, annualized (%)	5.0%	5.5%	8.1%				

<sup>\*</sup>Far North Suburban Cook County Submarket is defined by CoStar, and extends from County Line Road to the North, Lake Michigan to the East, Central Street to the South, and I-94 to the West. This includes: Wilmette, Skokie, Northbrook, Glencoe, Winnetka, Northfield, Glenview, and Kenilworth Source: CoStar, February 2022

### Rent and Occupancy Trends in Wilmette 2000 - 2021



- CoStar reports **490 total market rate rental units** in Wilmette across 16 buildings,
  - 13% of total units in the Far North Suburban Cook County submarket
- Mostly low and mid-rise buildings of 1 to 5 stories, located on Wilmette Avenue near the intersections of Green Bay Road and Ridge Road
- Wilmette has higher occupancy rate than the submarket and county overall at a high 97.4%, indicating a healthy rental market
- Average asking monthly rents per unit in Wilmette are higher than averages in Cook County, but remain lower than average monthly rents in the submarket
- Occupancy rates in Wilmette have remained above 93% between 2000 and 2021, with the exception of 2017 after the opening of a 75 unit apartment building, The Residences of Wilmette which took some time to fully lease up

Source: CoStar, February 2022

# **Large Apartment Developments**

Of the 16 market rate apartment buildings in Wilmette, six have 20 or more units

### **The Residences at Wilmette** 617 Green Bay Road



**Total Units**: 75 **Stories**: 5

Year Built: 2017

**Developer**: M&R Development

Occupancy Rate: 97.8% Ground Floor Retail: 6,300 SF

			<b>Avg Rent</b>	Avg
Type	Units	Avg SF	/Unit	Rent /SF
Studio	4	657	\$1,986	\$3.02
1 BR	33	765	\$2,545	\$3.33
2 BR	32	1,221	\$3,752	\$3.07
3 BR	6	1,543	\$5,812	\$3.77

### **High Ridge Apartments** 307 – 315 Ridge Road



Total Units: 82 Stories: 3

Year Built: 1984

Occupancy Rate: N/A Ground Floor Retail: 0 SF

			<b>Avg Rent</b>	Avg
Type	Units	Avg SF	/Unit	Rent /SF
1 BR	72	500	\$1,050	\$2.10
2 BR	10	900	\$1,300	\$1.44

Older apartment building of mostly small 1 bedroom units at a low price

#### Hillcrest Apartments 141 Green Bay Road



**Total Units**: 48 **Stories:** 4

Occupancy Rate: 97.8% Ground Floor Retail: 0 SF

			Avg Rent	_
Type	Units	Avg SF	/Unit	Rent /SF
Studio	16	430	\$1,024	\$2.38
1 BR	16	600	\$1,181	\$1.97
2 BR	16	750	\$1,364	\$1.82

#### 423 - 431 Linden Avenue



**Total Units**: 40 **Stories:** 4

Occupancy Rate: 86.4% Ground Floor Retail: 0 SF

			Avg Rent	Avg
Type	Units	Avg SF	/Unit	Rent /SF
1 BR	7	712	\$1,273	\$1.79
2 BR	33	981	\$1,485	\$1.51

Older apartment building of mostly 1 and 2 bedroom units near the CTA

#### 520 Fifth Street

Total Units: 74
Stories: 4

Occupancy Rate: N/A
Ground Floor Retail: 0 SF

Older apartment building with smaller 1 bedroom apartments, pricing not available.

#### 3513 Lake Avenue

Total Units: 38
Stories: 4

Occupancy Rate: N/A Ground Floor Retail: 0 SF

Older apartment building with 1 – 3 bedroom units, ranging in price from \$958 to \$1,490

## **Recently Completed & Under Construction**

### Residential Development

# Recently Completed (2010 – 2021)

- Cleland Place, 2021
  - 1925 Wilmette Avenue
  - 16 Units, 100% Affordable
  - More details in Affordable Housing section
- Green Leaf Apartments, 2019
  - 1121 Greenleaf Avenue
  - 14 Units, Market Rate
  - 7 two unit BR, 7 three unit BR
  - Occupancy rate N/A
- The Residences of Wilmette, 2017
  - 617 Green Bay Road
  - 75 Units, Studio, 1, 2, 3 BR
  - More details in Market Rate Apt section
  - Occupancy Rate: 97.8%

#### **Under Construction**

#### Optima Verdana, Delivers May 2023

1210 Central Avenue

109 Luxury Units 1 BR: 25 / 2 BR: 48 / 3 BR: 36

Developer: Optima Inc.

**Ground Floor Retail:** 8,000+ SF **Parking:** 28 Parking Spots

Amenities: Private terrace, rooftop sky deck

and pool, pickleball court, residential

courtyard, suite of amenities



#### Masonic Lodge, Delivers 2022

1100 Central Avenue

16 Units, Age Restricted 55+ 3 BR: 16

**Developer**: BK Wilmette Lodge LLC

Parking: 18 Parking Spots



Resident & Employee Housing Needs



# Resident/Employee Housing Needs

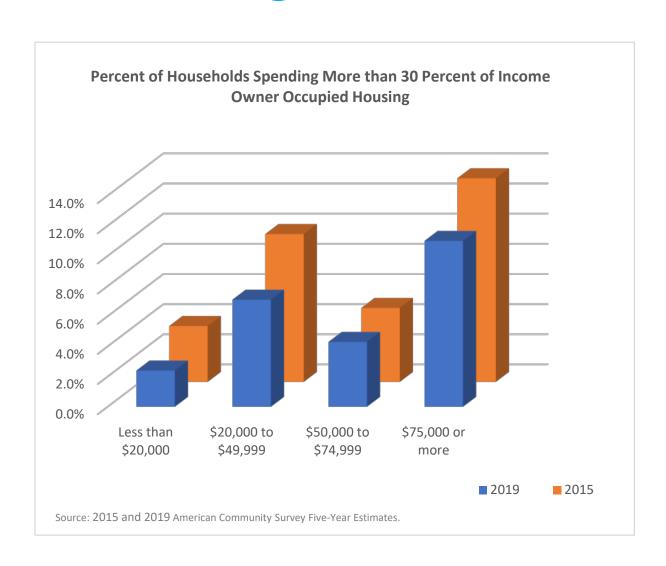
Substantial for-Sale Housing Costs

#### **Excessive Housing Costs**

- Costs are excessive if account for 30% or more of household income
- Costs for owners focus on owners with a mortgage

#### **Key Findings - Owners**

- Some Wilmette higher income owners appear to be "house poor" paying more that 30% of income for housing
- Percentage of owners with excessive housing costs is higher for households with incomes of \$75,000 or more than for lower income households.



# Resident/Employee Housing Needs

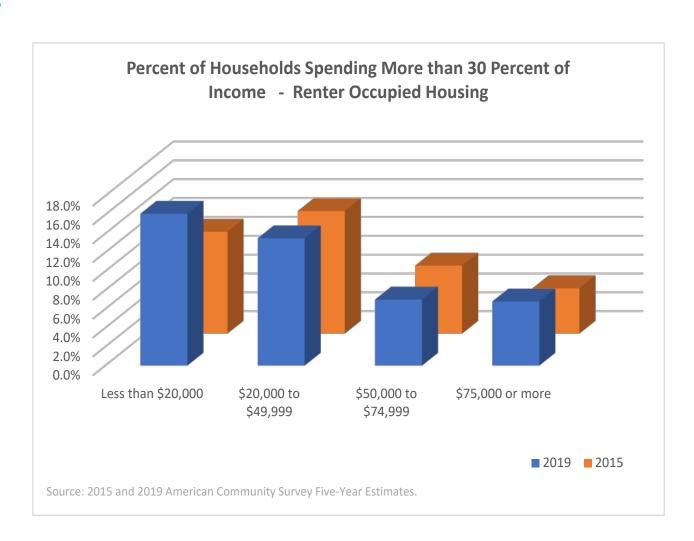
### Substantial Rental Housing Costs

#### **Excessive Housing Costs**

- Costs are excessive if account for 30% or more of household income
- Costs for owners focus on owners with a mortgage

#### **Key Findings - Renters**

- Low-income renters have greatest burden of excessive housing costs
- Excessive housing cost burden for renters decreases as incomes increase
- Percentage of renters with excessive housing costs is higher for most income groups in 2019 compared to 2015, especially for households earning less than \$20,000



# **Affordable Housing**

### State of Illinois Affordable Housing Planning and Appeal Act (AHPAA) Requirements

# **AHPAA Definition of Affordable Housing Units**

- Units affordable by renters earning 60% of area median income (AMI) or owners earning 80% of AMI
- Households paying no more than 30% of income for housing
- For owners, housing costs include:\*
  - Mortgage
  - Taxes

# **AHPAA Calculation of Affordable Housing Units**

- Estimates updated every five years
- Most recent estimates dated 2018 using 2016 American Community Survey five-year data
- Combines numbers of rental and owneroccupied housing
- Communities must meet specific goals for affordable housing.

	Place	Year Round Units	Total Affordable Units	Affordable Housing Share
2018				
	Kenilworth	792	18	2.2%
	Glencoe	3,081	78	2.5%
	Winnetka	4,014	110	2.7%
	Northfield	2,126	67	3.2%
	Wilmette	9,551	431	4.5%
	Glenview	16,782	1,223	7.3%
	Evanston	28,613	4,993	17.5%
<b>Estimated</b>	2019			
	Wilmette			
	Rental*	1,190	284	23.9%
	Owner-Occupied	8,482	129	1.5%
	Total	9,672	413	4.3%

<sup>\*</sup>Paying rent.

Source: Illinois Affordable Housing Planinng and Appeal Act: 2018 Non-Exempt Local Government Handbook; 2016-2019 American Community Survey Five-Year Estimates; Applied Real Estate Analysis.

<sup>\*</sup>The AHPAA does not include other costs, such as insurance, because of insufficient data for all locations.

# Resident/Employee Housing Needs

## Housing for Sale

- Based on AHPAA criteria, the price of an affordable house is \$145,669
- Between 2011 and 2021, few homebuyers seeking housing in Wilmette purchased homes that were defined as affordable

- Between 2011 and 2021, homes in the affordable price range included:
  - Only 2 single-family <u>detached</u> homes
  - Only 111 single family <u>attached</u> homes

NOTE: State of Illinois AHPAA estimate of affordable units uses American Community Survey data for existing houses

	Current Affordable Housing Sales Price \$145,669 Wilmette Sales of Affordable Single-Family Housing Units, 2011-2021											
Price Range	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	Total 2011 to 2021
Single-Family Attached	2011	2012	20.10	2014	2010	2010	2011	2010	2010	2020	<u> 2021</u>	2021
Less than \$49,999												
\$50,000 - \$99,999	2	5	3	2	3	1				1	1	18
\$100,000 - \$149,999	10	7	12	14	5	9	9	5	8	7	7	93
Total in Affordable Range	12	12	15	16	8	10	9	5	8	8	8	111
Single-Family Dettached												
Less than \$49,999									1			1
\$50,000 - \$99,999												0
\$100,000 - \$149,999	1											1
Total in Affordable Range	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	2

Source: Midwest Real Estate Data.

# Income- and Age-Restricted Rental Housing

#### **Shore Line Place**

324 Wilmette Avenue



Total Units: 43 Stories: 5

Year Built: 1985

Manager: Lutheran Social Services of

Illinois

Occupancy Rate: 95.8% **Ground Floor Retail:** 0 SF

Rent Type: Affordable

Affordable Type: Rent Subsidized

			Avg Rent	Avg
Type	Units	Avg SF	/Unit	Rent /SF
Studio	11	500	\$1,163	\$2.33
1 BR	32	650	\$1,428	\$2.20

#### **Gates Manor**

1135 Wilmette Avenue



Total Units: 51 Stories: 5

**Approximate Year Built: 1977** Manager: Related Midwest Management Company LP

Occupancy Rate: N/A **Ground Floor Retail: 0 SF** 

Rent Type: Affordable

Affordable Type: Rent Restricted

			<b>Avg Rent</b>	Avg
Type	Units	Avg SF	/Unit	Rent /SF
1 BR	51	650	\$1,685	\$2.59

#### **Mather Place**

2901 Old Glenview Road



Total Units: 65 Stories: 4

Year Built: 2005

**Developer**: Mather LifeWays

Occupancy Rate: 94.2% Ground Floor Retail: 0 SF

**Rent Type**: Market Rate

Affordable Type: Market-Rate Units

Туре	Units		Avg Rent /Unit	
1 BR	35	600	\$3,863	\$6.44
2 BR	30	950	\$5,684	\$5.98

- Wilmette has two income-restricted rental housing developments for seniors and one market-rate rental housing development.
- Residents of Shore Line Place and Gates Manor pay no more that 30 percent of income for gross rent, including utilities.

# Income- and Age-Restricted for-Sale Housing

#### **Village Green Atrium**

800 Ridge Road



Total Units: 35 Stories: 2

Year Converted to Housing: 1983

Occupancy Rate: Not Available Ground Floor Retail: 0 SF

Condominium Type: Seniors Housing Affordable Type: Initial Income and

**Resale Restrictions** 

Туре	Units	Avg SF	Avg Price /Unit	Avg Price/SF
			Based on	
1 BR	25	780	Income	NA
			Based on	
2 BR	10	980	Income	NA

#### Mallinckrodt in the Park

1041 N. Ridge Road



Total Units: 81
Stories: 5

Approximate Year Built: 1917 Year Converted to Housing: 2013

Manager: Chicagoland Community Management

Occupancy Rate: 3.7% Ground Floor Retail: 0 SF

Condominium Type: Seniors Housing
Affordable Type: 12 Units Priced Affordably

Bedroom/ Bath Type		Avg SF	Avg Sales Price	Avg Price/SF	# of Sales 2019 to 2021
Affordable					
1/1	1	745	Based or	n Income	NA
2/1	11	953	Based or	n Income	NA
Open Mark	et				
1/1	5	1,124	\$340,344	\$288	3
1/1.5	3	1,359	\$422,450	\$310	2
2/2	21	1,402	\$443,714	\$323	7
2/2.5	38	1,994	\$670,833	\$328	3
2/3.5	2	3,307	NA	NA	0

- Village Green Atrium offers for-sale condominium units focused on low- and moderate-income seniors, especially current and previous Wilmette residents.
- Mallinckrodt in the Park offers market-rate and some income-restricted condominium units focused on seniors.
- Recently a 2-bedroom, 2.5bath, market-rate unit in Mallinckrodt sold in May 2022 for \$675,000.

# **Income-Restricted Rental Housing**

Not Age-Restricted

- Housing Opportunity Development Corporation completed development of Cleland Place in 2021
- Target: households at or below 60% of area median income
- Approximately 115 households applied to rent the 16 available units within 2 weeks after the units were advertised

### Cleland Place 1925 Wilmette Avenue



Total Units: 16 Stories: 3

Year Built: 2021

**Developer**: Housing Opportunity

Development Corp. of Wilmette (HDOC)

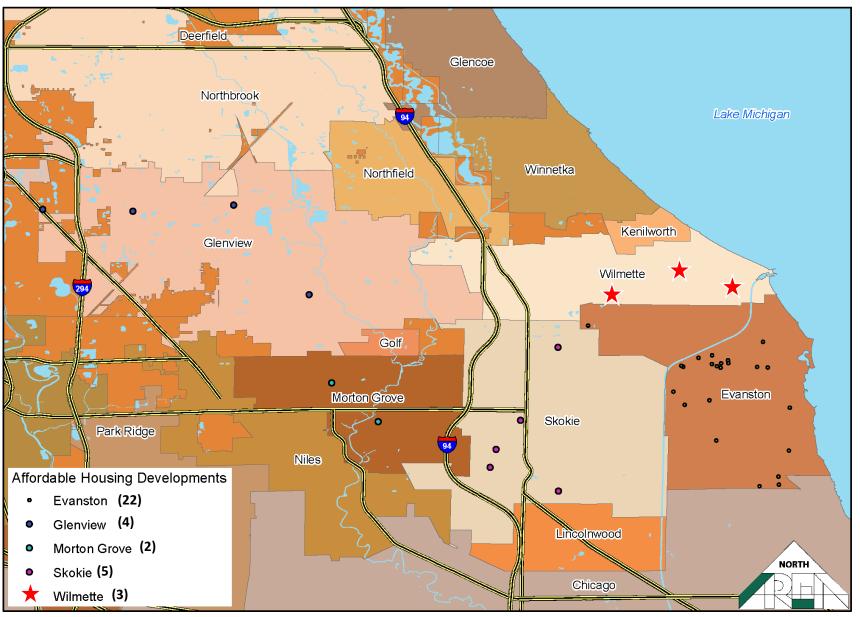
Occupancy Rate: N/A Ground Floor Retail: 0 SF

Rent Type: Affordable

Affordable Type: Rent Restricted

Туре	Units		Avg Rent /Unit	_
1 BR	10	535	N/A	N/A
2 BR	6	657	N/A	N/A

# **Income-Restricted Rental Housing**



Overview of Planning Efforts



# **Timeline of Planning Efforts**

- 2021 Sustainable Communities Strategic Plan
  - Master Bike and Active Transportation Plan
- 2016 UIC Linden Station Study
- **2014 Zoning Ordinance Updates**
- **10** 2011 Village Center Master Plan
  - 2008 ULI Study Revitalizing a Class American Town
  - 2007 Parking Structure Feasibility Study

- 2006 Village Center Redevelopment Research
- 2005 Green Bay Road Corridor Study
  - Village-Wide Market Analysis
- 2004 4<sup>th</sup> and Linden Plan
  - Affordable Housing Plan
- 20 2000 · Comprehensive Plan Update
  - West Village Center Plan
  - 1990 Zoning Ordinance Updates
  - 1986 Comprehensive Plan

# 2000 Comprehensive Plan

#### **Key Points**

- Update to the 1986 Comprehensive Plan
- Considered a "policy plan" since Village was already built out
- Major driving aspects of the plan:
  - 1) Development and 2) Preservation
- Plan recommendations focused on policies:
  - 1) Updating the zoning ordinance and redevelopment controls as needed,
  - 2) Pursuit of additional **planning studies** to determine next steps, and
  - 3) Prioritizing inter-governmental cooperation.

#### **Carryover into Update**

- □ Align preservation efforts with current goals and capacity
- ☐ Align policies with themes to reach present day goals

# 2011 Village Center Master Plan

#### **Key Points**

- Focused vision for Wilmette's Downtown
- Identified catalytic projects and redevelopment sites, identified zoning changes to increase residential density, and recommended wayfinding/streetscape improvements.
- Overarching goal was to create a more cohesive and modern character in Downtown leading to a more vibrant and walkable area.

### **Carryover into Update**

☐ Update implementation plan for recommendations that remain relevant and incomplete.

# 2021 Wilmette Sustainability Plan (Strategic Plan)

### **Key Points**

- Developed by the Environmental and Energy Commission (EEC), guided by the Greenest Region Compact (GRC) plan framework
- Recognizes that there are "Village efforts" and "resident efforts" that play a part in reaching goals
- Overarching themes and directives include:
  - Modifications to land use regulations which enhance sustainable use and lifestyles equitably
  - Maintenance of mobility infrastructure to encourage active transportation/transit use
  - Restoration and protection of biodiversity
  - Reduced energy wastage and increased renewable energy infrastructure/access

### **Carryover into Update**

- Improve sustainability of lifestyles in Wilmette through land use regulation and increased active transportation/transit use
- □ Restoration and Preservation of existing structures
- Ongoing improvements of Village infrastructure and facilities to enhance sustainability and resiliency

# 2021 Master Bike and Active Transportation Plan

### **Key Points**

- Plan aims to strengthen and improve active transportation networks to encourage more trips outside vehicles.
- Goals include Safety, Education and Encouragement, Awareness, Convenience, and Community.
- Identifies and prioritizes gaps in networks and improvements needed to enhance comfort.
- Plan includes performance measures and strategies for implementation.

### **Carryover into Update**

- ☐ Identify projects and actions that are complementary to implementation actions and schedule.
- ☐ Incorporate improvements that bolster planned active transportation networks.



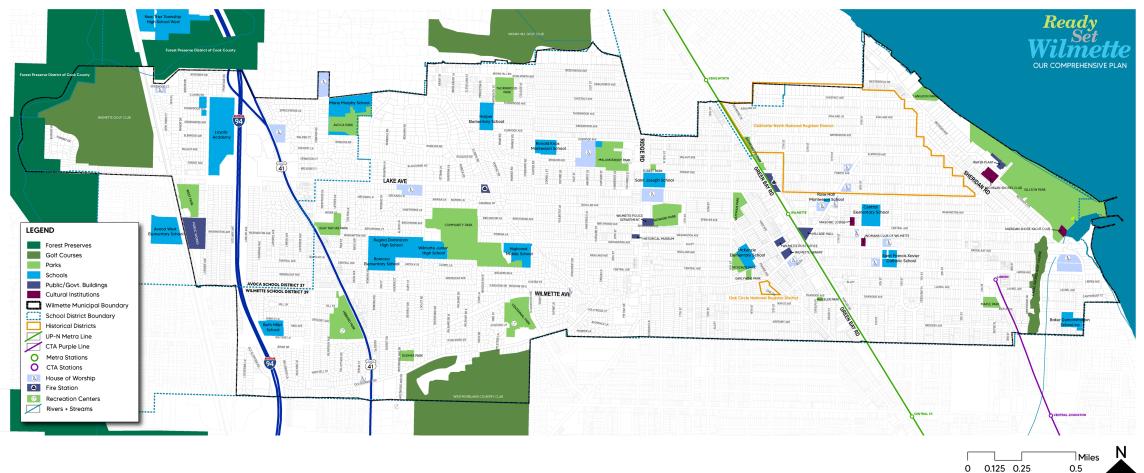
# Built Environment

Community Institutions
Community Character
Active Transportation

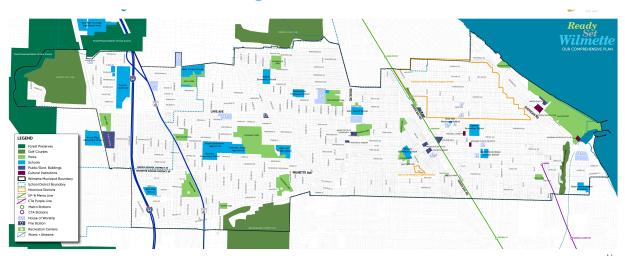


### Community Facilities





# **Community Facilities**



Parks/Park Facilities 17 (190 ac)
Recreation/Nature Centers 4
Golf courses 3\* (365 ac)

Schools 16
Houses of Worship 19
Fire Stations 2

### **KEY FINDINGS**

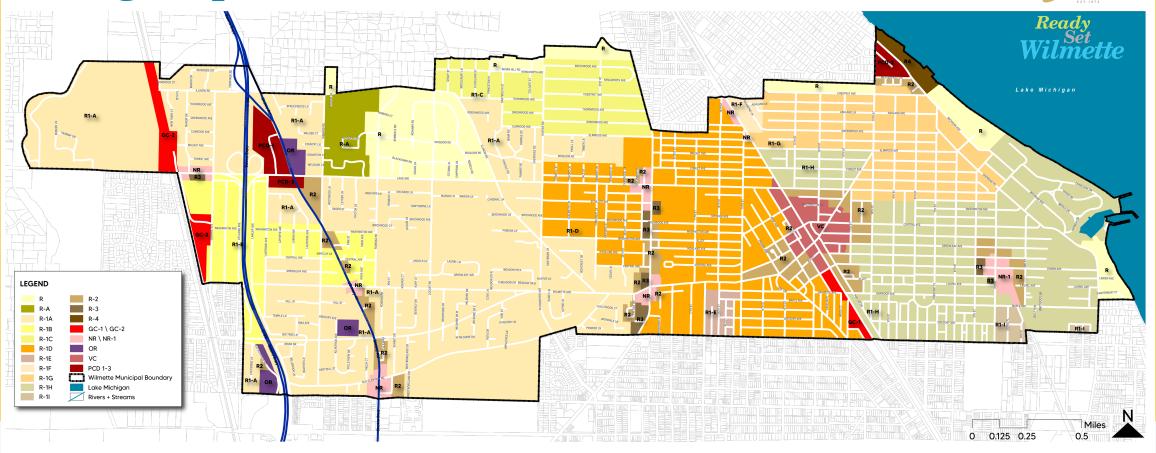
- Schools, parks, houses of worship are located throughout Wilmette.
- Green Bay Bike Trail southern trailhead in Wilmette – 8.9 mi paved trail + access to North Branch Trail, 21.3 mi
- 100% of properties in Wilmette are within 0.5 miles of a park/recreation center or other open space.
- ☐ The 2021 Master Bike and Active

  Transportation Plan identified improvements in bike and pedestrian networks to increase the ease, comfort, and safety of active transportation throughout Wilmette.

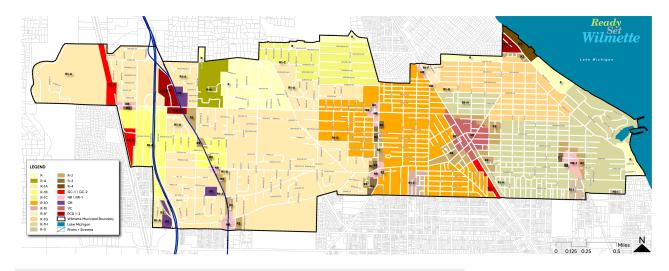
<sup>\*</sup> Acreage represents all golf course land within the Village.

# **Zoning Map**





# **Village Zoning Districts**



**Residential Districts 15** 

**Res Subdistricts 10** 

Office/Research 1

**General Commercial 2** 

Planned Commercial 3

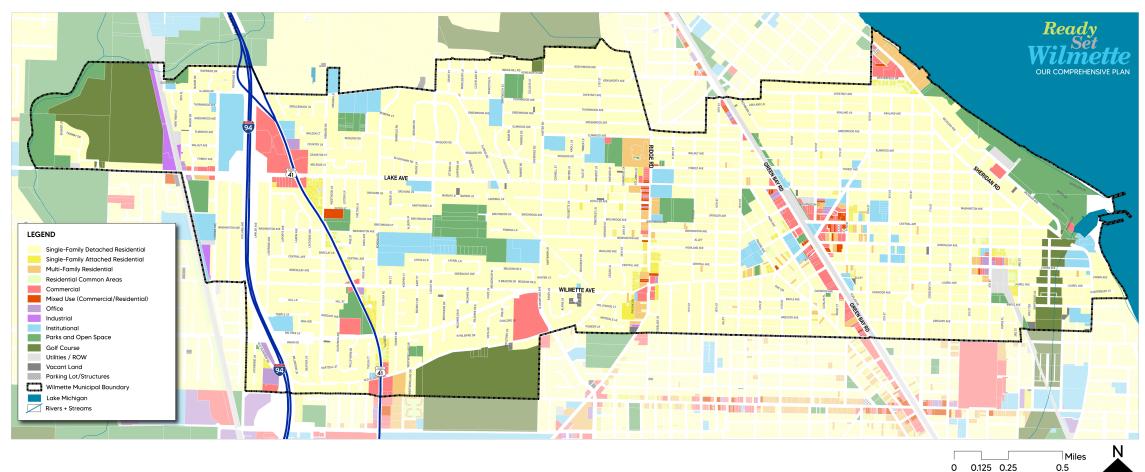
**Neighborhood Commercial 2** 

#### **KEY FINDINGS**

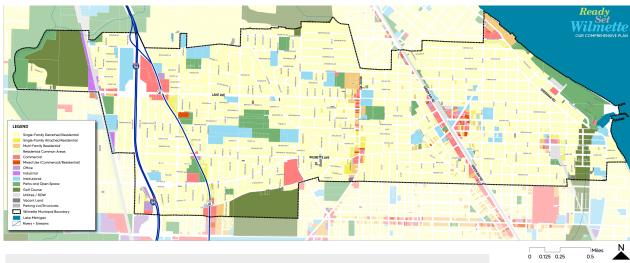
- Wilmette has 10 R-1 zoning "subdistricts" which are intended to maintain character of existing neighborhoods.
- 93.4% of the Village is zoned for Residential Uses.
- Commercially zoned land is a small proportion of the Village concentrated along a) main corridors, b) near transit and c) in the downtown.
- Institutions schools, houses of worship, parks and community spaces - are permitted within residential districts, integrating them into neighborhoods throughout the Village.

# Existing Land Use





## **Existing Land Use + Distribution**



### **Anchors**

residential neighborhoods

### **Evenly Distributed**

parks, schools, houses of worship

### **Synergistic Clusters**

commercial/retail

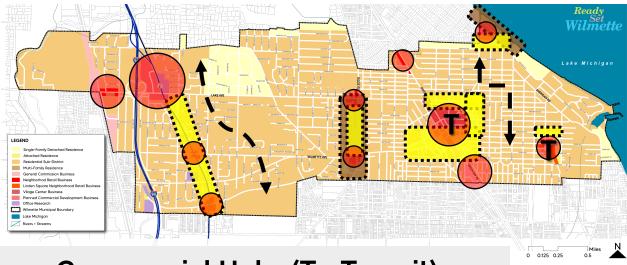
#### **KEY FINDINGS**

- 1. 52% of all land in the Village are Single-Family, **1.6% are Multi-Family** and 0.3% is Mixed-Use.
- Within the Village, ¼ of land is dedicated to Transportation + Utilities uses, primarily Metra/CTA.
- 3. 12% of land within the Village is dedicated open space, including parks, golf courses, ad recreation centers.

Source: CMAP 2015 Land Use Inventory

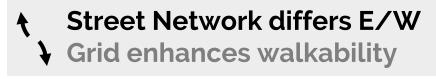
### **Community Character Map** Ready Lake Michigan LAKE AVE LEGEND Single-Family Detached Residence Attached Residence Residential Sub-District Multi-Family Residence General Commission Business Neighborhod Retail Business Linden Square Neighborhood Retail Business Vilage Center Business Planned Commercial Development Business Office Research Wilmette Municipal Boundary Lake Michigan Rivers + Streams 0 0.125 0.25

# **Community Character**



Commercial Hubs (T = Transit)
Higher intensity / activity areas





#### **KEY FINDINGS**

- Attached residences (Townhome, Multifamily) are located in clusters and along corridors.
- Street network changes from east (grid system) to west (suburban pattern).
   Grid makes for a more inherently walkable and connected system.
- Transportation (active + vehicular) networks heavily influence lifestyle and development.



### **Native Land**

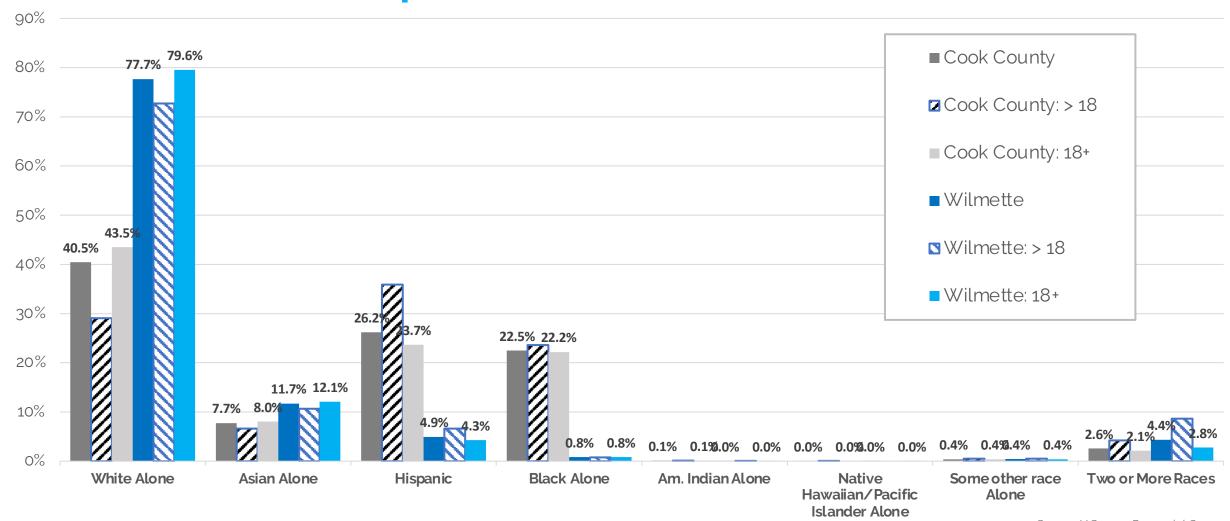
Present day Wilmette is located where the following native tribes trace their history:

- Peoria
- Očhéthi Šakówin
- Myaamia
- Kikaapoi (Kickapoo)
- Hoocak (Ho-Chunk)
- Bodwéwadmi (Potawatomi)



Source: www.native-land.ca/

### Racial + Ethnic Composition of Wilmette



# **Composition of Generations**

#### POPULATION BY GENERATION



9.3%

Greatest Gen: Born 1945/Earlier

77+



12.6%

Millennial: Born 1981 to 1998

24 - 41



26.9%

Baby Boomer: Born 1946 to 1964

58 - 76



25.6%

Generation Z: Born 1999 to 2016

6 - 23



Age

in

2022

20.8%

Generation X: Born 1965 to 1980

42 - 57



4.8%

Alpha: Born 2017 to Present

0 - 5

#### **KEY FINDINGS**

- 57% of Wilmette's population is over 40, which may impact markets & housing and service needs in coming years.
- Median Age in Wilmette is 47.6 a nearly even split between Gen X and Millennials. Chicago MSA median = 38
- Millennials are currently in the family formation stage – in 2050, today's youngest generation will be in their 20s and 30s.

Source: ESRI Business Analyst 2021; ACS 2015-2019

Environmental Sustainability + Resiliency



# Sustainability

the ability to meet needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs



#### **Efforts toward <u>Sustainability</u>**:

- Solar Energy/Community Solar Program
- Recycling Collection
- Curbside Food Scrap Composting
- Water Conservation
- Public Transit Access
- Regional Bike Paths/Trails
- Sidewalk network enhancement & maintenance (including ADA Accessibility improvements)
- Right-sizing parking requirements + requiring bike parking
- Historic preservation

Q: How much water does the average Wilmette resident use each year?

A: The average resident uses about 44,000 gallons per year...more per capita than Canada (40,300), Poland (15,700), China (7,300) or India (3,900).

## Resiliency

the ability to bounce back and adapt to change

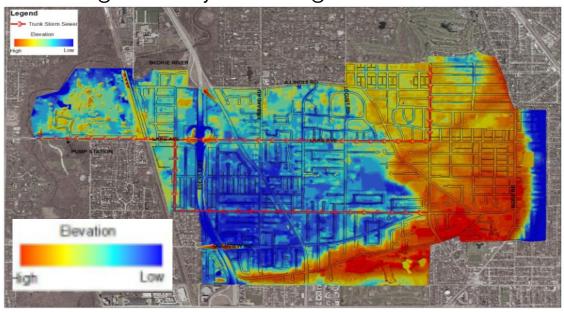


#### **Efforts to Enhance Resiliency**:

- Stormwater Improvement Project
- Installation & Maintenance of BMPs on public + private property
  - e.g. rain gardens, rain barrels, permeable pavement
- Tree Maintenance by the Forestry Division
- Elmwood Dunes Preserve

#### Natural Topography contributes to flooding

Wilmette developed prior to modern stormwater management practices, limiting the Village's ability to manage runoff.



Source: Village of Wilmette Stormwater Action Plan, Separate Storm Sewer Study Update, Sept 24, 2015

# Village Policies + Partnerships

- Idle Reduction Policy for employees
- Village diesel vehicles have been using a 2% Bio-Diesel fuel blend since 2006
- Public Works received a grant to install Diesel Oxidation Catalysts on 9 trucks
- Village Hybrid Vehicles
  - Purchase of 4 hybrid police utility interceptors approved Jan 2020
  - 2 hybrid vehicles replaced 2 gas powered vehicles in 2007









Community
Culture +
Wellbeing







COMING ATTRACTIONS GRAND REOPENING NOV 6



# Programs, Services + Public Involvement

### **Programs + Services:**

- Stormwater Incentive Program
- Lead Service Program
- CPR/First Aid Classes
- Emergency Housing Assistance
- Housing our Own

### **Public Involvement:**

- There are 10 commissions, ranging from Historic Preservation to Housing to Human Relations -- there are a plethora of ways to get involved as a resident of Wilmette.
- Commissions especially are an outward reflection of priorities and interests in Wilmette.





TOP: Sesquicentennial Planning Committee Meeting BOTTOM: Housing Commission Meeting

# **Partnerships**

Wilmette has partnerships with local and regional government entities and advocacy organizations, some of which are shown here.

The Village maintenance of these relationships facilitates effective communication, pooling of resources, and implementation of Village goals.

### **Local Government**













**Advocacy Orgs** 





LANDMARKS

LLINOIS







**Municipal Neighbors** 

The Village of Northfield



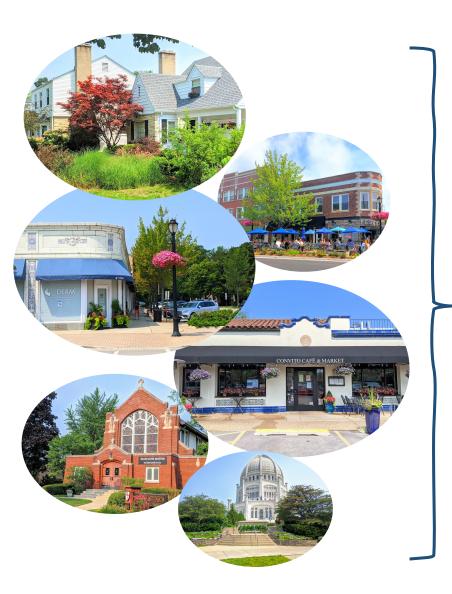








# **Snapshot of Wilmette...**



- a multicultural, multigenerational built-out residential community
- desires to preserve history and quality of place
- has clearly defined commercial corridors and transit-oriented nodes
- has distributed green space, accessible Villagewide

- working toward enhanced connectivity and accessibility to increase active transportation
- strategizing to expand access to housing throughout Village with affordable housing activities.
- working to enhance diversity, equity, and inclusion in the community

# Wilmette is what it is because of...



## If this, then that, e.g.

- Comprehensive Plan
- Downtown Master Plan
- Complete Streets
- Capital Improvement Plans



# Regulations



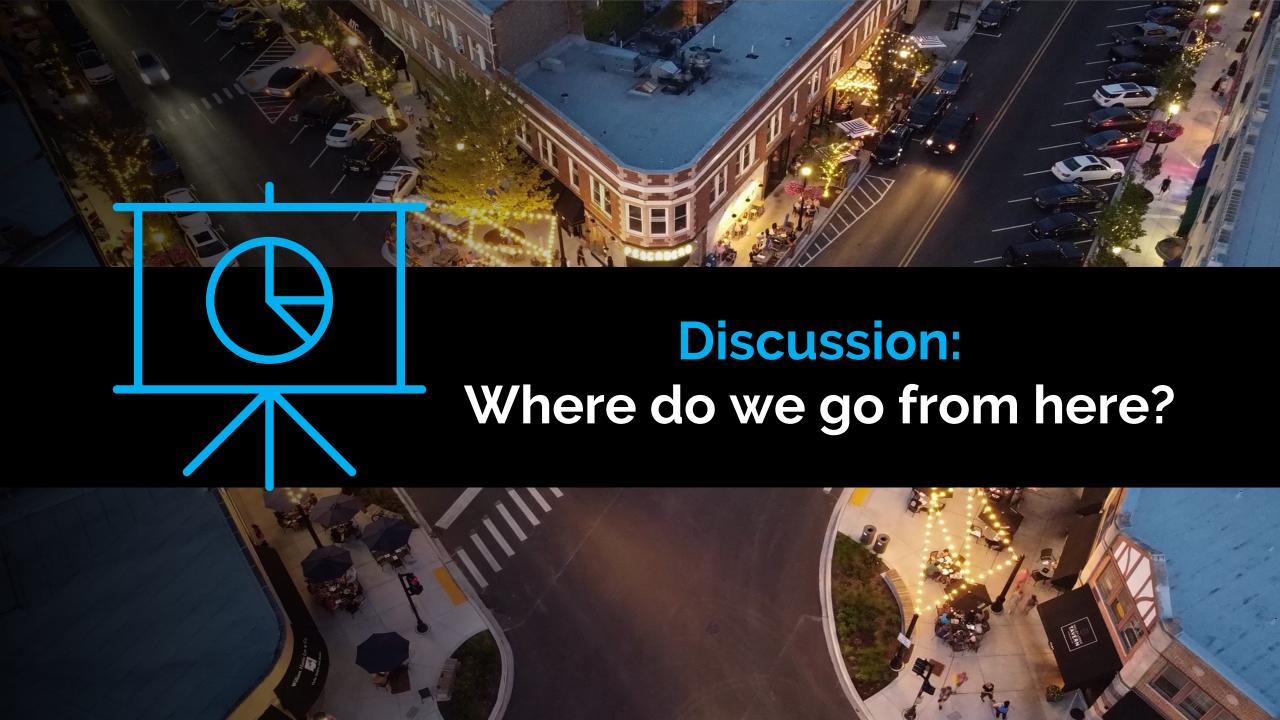
- Village Code
- Zoning Ordinance





## The Wilmette Lifestyle

- Housing Diversity / Affordability
- Walkability / Bikeability
- Transit / Transportation
- Services, Programs and Facilities



# What is something you learned about Wilmette?

What did you learn that surprised you?

What feels important to prioritize in the Comprehensive Plan?

Is there anything we've missed?

# **Next Steps**

- Wilmette Talk #2: Welcoming and Belonging
- Goals and Objectives: A Vision for Wilmette
- Subarea Planning
- Wilmette Talks #3 + #4

#3 – Summer - Economic Development & Housing #4 – Fall - Environment & Transportation



THE VILLAGE OF WILMETTE'S COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

WILMETTE TALK #2 • MARCH 15, 2022 • 6:30PM REGINA DOMINICAN HIGH SCHOOL • 701 LOCUST ROAD

### ON THE TALKING TABLE

**Moving Towards** 

A MORE WELCOMING WILMETTE & WHAT IT MEANS TO BELONG



LEARN MORE + SUBSCRIBE @ READYSETWILMETTE.COM

# **Subarea Planning**

- Subareas:
  - Linden Square
  - Ridge Road Corridor
  - Green Bay Road Corridor
- Review Village Center Plan
- Workshop with Staff and Plan Commission



# Thank You!



# Appendix B

# Appendix B: Housing Considerations for Key Populations

### Considering Housing for Key Populations

Currently, some categories of households have difficulty finding appropriate housing in the Village because of its costs and/or limited housing types. In particular, households in various life stages have limited housing choices and specific needs, including senior citizens/empty nesters, young families, and young professionals. In addition, persons with disabilities, and low- and moderate-income persons who work in the Village but live elsewhere have difficulty finding appropriate housing. These population/household groups are not mutually exclusive or always readily visible through data sources of local social circles. For example, young professionals and young families are not always distinguishable in population data when grouped by age and household characteristics. Similarly, some young professionals may also be people with disabilities.

Although these population/household groups are somewhat difficult to define precisely, local research indicates that assessing the housing needs of these groups is important to understand Wilmette's housing gaps. According to a poll conducted as part of this plan, 25 percent of respondents think that seniors who want to stay in Wilmette have the greatest challenge finding housing in the Village, 19 percent of respondents think that people who work in Wilmette have the greatest challenge, and 18 percent think that young families have the greatest challenge.

The housing opportunities and challenges facing existing and potential future residents have been examined as part of this plan and can be used as background for a detailed Housing Plan for Wilmette. The analysis includes an overview of demographic and socioeconomic characteristics of current Village residents and persons working in the Village, as well as an overview of the housing stock and general market characteristics. In particular, the research examined the current affordability of housing for various population groups and the impact of high housing costs on efforts by the Village to diversify its population. Key populations in the Village with potential housing needs include: 1) senior citizens/empty nesters, 2) young families, 3) young professionals. 4) people with disabilities, and 5) persons who work in the Village but live elsewhere. Housing considerations for these populations and the Village's housing planning are explored here.

### Senior Citizens/Empty Nesters

The age range for senior citizens often begins with age 55. However, there is no clearly defined age when a person becomes a senior citizen. Many people consider themselves seniors when they retire from a career or workplace, sign up for Medicare or Social Security, begin to spend retirement savings, experience health changes, or just shift social priorities. Many businesses and organizations, such as AARP, offer discounts for persons age 50 or 55 and older, the Federal Fair Housing Act protects against age discrimination for persons age 55 or older, and publicly subsidized, age-restricted housing usually is available for persons age 55 or 62 or older. Benefits that facilitate retirement vary with Medicare available beginning at age 65 and Social Security available as early as 62 or as late as age 70. Similarly, there are

often penalties for taking funds from accounts such as 401(k) plans or Individual Retirement Accounts prior to age 59 ½.

Health conditions such as arthritis, hypertension, or hearing loss often cause people to consider themselves seniors. For many people, health issues that limit independence and require assistance with daily living activities begin late at age 80 or older; however, some health problems can occur well before that age.

#### Characteristics of Senior Citizens/Empty Nesters in Wilmette

Nearly 6,500 persons age 50 to 64, at least some of whom may be empty nesters, currently reside in Wilmette. This group is 24 percent of the total Village population and the most rapidly growing age cohort. Between 2000 and 2019, the age group increased from 19 percent to 24 percent of the total population. In addition, nearly 2,900 persons age 65 to 74, about 1,600 persons age 75 to 84, and over 700 persons over age 85 live in Wilmette.

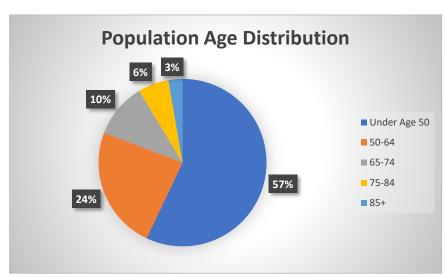


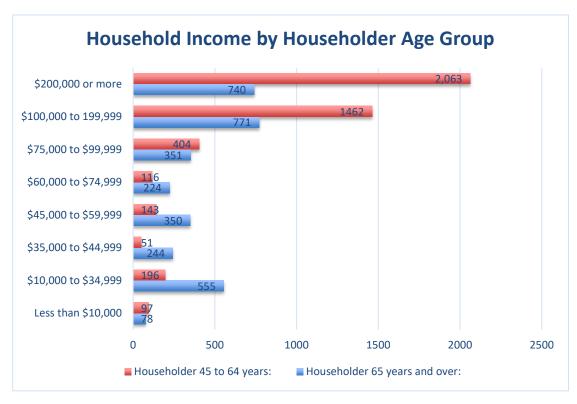
Figure 1

Source: American Community Survey 2015-2019 estimates.

Approximately one in four senior-headed households in Wilmette have incomes that qualify them for affordable housing. Most affordable housing programs, such as Low-Income Housing Tax Credit-funded units, target households with incomes up to 60 percent of the area median income. In 2019 the Illinois Housing Development Authority set income limits of \$42,780 for two-person households in Cook County, which would include many seniors/empty nesters. As shown in the following chart, 800 households or 27 percent of households with heads over age 65 would qualify for affordable housing based on income. Yet, using a fairly broad definition of empty nesters as persons age 40 to 64 for which information is readily available, only 300, or less than 7.0 percent of households in this category, would qualify for affordable housing, but this can be traced, in part, to the lack of affordable units. In contrast, 740 households with heads age 65 or older have annual household incomes of \$200,000 or more, and 2,063 households (46 percent) age 40 to 64 have incomes in this category. These higher income earners do not need affordable units, but could benefit from a greater range of housing stock. Many empty-nesters no longer want or

need single-family homes and would prefer greater choices of townhomes, condominiums or high-quality rental housing. Recent development activity in the downtown attests to this demand.

Figure 2



Source: American Community Survey 2015-2019 estimates.

In addition to income, each household's financial assets are an important measure of housing affordability. In communities like Wilmette, financial assets are likely to be a key determinant of the type of housing affordable to each senior, and households who qualify for affordable housing based on income alone are not likely to need affordable housing given that they may sizable assets.

A senior's housing options are also influenced by ability to live independently. Seniors who need assistance with one or more activities of daily living (ADLs) are normally not able to live completely on their own. Examples of ADLs include bathing, dressing, grooming, transferring from a bed to a chair, eating, or toileting. These services are offered in assisted-living facilities, personal care homes, and nursing homes, but they require a higher staffing ratio than is typical in independent-living facilities.

National surveys provide some guidance in estimating the percentage of older adults who need help with various ADLs. The most recently available National Health Interview Survey (NHIS) for 2007 conducted by the Centers for Disease Control's National Center for Health Statistics concludes that 98.4 percent of noninstitutionalized American adults over age 18 rate their overall health as excellent or very good. For older adults, 97.1 percent of those persons aged 65 to 74, 93.9 percent of those age 75 to 84, and only 82.2 percent of those aged 85 and older were similarly positive. As shown in Figure 3, a small percentage of seniors age 55 to 84 indicate that they have limitations with activities of daily living.

Noninstitutionalized Civilian Population Needing Help with Activities of Daily Living

#### **Limitation in Activities of Daily Living (ADL)**

Age	Total	No ADL	1 ADL	2 ADLs	3+ ADLs	
	Percent Distribution					
55-64 years	100%	98.4%	0.4%	0.3%	0.9%	
65+ years	100%	94.3%	1.4%	1.2%	3.2%	
65-74 years	100%	97.1%	0.7%	0.6%	1.6%	
75-84 years	100%	93.9%	1.4%	1.2%	3.5%	
85+ years	100%	82.2%	4.7%	3.4%	9.7%	

Source: National Health Interview Survey, 2003-2007.

Figure 3

### Potential Housing Preferences and Appropriate Housing Types

Most research on housing mobility and preferences of seniors indicates that seniors prefer to age in place. According to the AARP 2021 Home and Community Preferences Survey, at least half of adults age 50 and older indicate that they will never move from their current home. Similarly, a 2019 study titled "Senior Housing and Mobility" by the Urban Institute found that senior households are less apt to relocate as they age. Although the Urban Institute study concluded that seniors have a low mobility rate, the research found that those who do move say that housing is the main reason for moving. Older seniors also move because of health-related issues. The study found that only 3 percent of seniors age 55 to 64 moved for this reason compared to 26 percent of seniors ages 75 and older.

Given these common housing preferences and influences, the types of housing often desired or needed by seniors at various life stages include:

- Reduced Housing Unit Size/Responsibilities. Households who occupy a single-family, owner-occupied house often decide that the requirements of ownership, such as maintenance, are no longer desirable after they reach a certain age. For households commonly known as "empty nesters," who raised children in single-family dwellings, the decision to leave a single-family home often occurs when their children have moved out permanently. However, even single-family home occupants who never had children frequently decide that less space and reduced housing maintenance responsibilities are desirable as the occupants age. For these households, some of whom could be under age 55, a shift to a for-sale or rental unit in a townhouse or multiunit building is often preferred to continued single-family occupancy.
- Age-Restricted Housing. Some seniors decide that housing targeted to senior households offers
  amenities, services, and a sense of community that is not available in housing that caters to all age
  groups. For these seniors, the type of housing preferred is usually determined by health status
  and includes:

- Independent Living Facilities. These facilities are appropriate for seniors who do not need assistance with activities of daily living and prefer housing with easy access to dining, off-site medical care, and entertainment. The housing industry usually refers to these independent persons as "active adults." Although independent living facilities are usually available to persons 55 or 62 or older, many occupants of independent living facilities are under age 75 or 80. Both subsidized and market-rate, age-restricted rental housing are available in Wilmette. Some senior living communities in the Chicago area also offer options to buy into independent living facilities and/or continuing care facilities that offer increased housing services as seniors age.
- Assisted Living Facilities. These facilities provide a variety of services for seniors who need
  assistance with daily living activities, such as meal preparation, housekeeping, and laundry
  services. Many residents of assisted living facilities are age 75 or older.
- Skilled Nursing Facilities. These facilities accommodate persons with extensive disabilities and healthcare needs. This housing option was not assessed as part of the housing review.

### Availability of Preferred Housing for Seniors

For seniors who may want to remain in Wilmette but reside in housing other than the single-family home in which they typically live, it is important that these types of housing be available in the Village. Currently, age-restricted housing, both affordable and market rate, is limited to three rental developments that offer independent living facilities and two age-restricted condominium development:

• Shore Line Place. This income-restricted development offers 43 studio and one-bedroom units for persons aged 62 or older. Rents are adjusted so that they do not exceed 30 percent of the resident's income.



Gates Manor. This income-restricted development offers 51 one-bedroom units for seniors and
persons with special needs. Based on information available from the property manager as of
spring 2022, the median age of current residents was 79, the oldest resident was 95, and the
minimum was 64. Rents are adjusted so that they do not exceed 30 percent of the resident's
income. Most tenants have lived in the building for many years with very little turnover. The
property also has a waiting list.



• Mather Place. This market-rate, 65-unit housing development caters to persons aged 62 and older. Average monthly rents are \$3,863 for one-bedroom units and \$5,684 for two-bedroom units. These rents are substantially higher than rents for other one- and two-bedroom units in larger multifamily developments in the market place, which reflect the amenities and services offered by the development. Amenities include a library, indoor pool, art studio, restaurants, and landscaped gardens. The development also offers yoga classes and opportunities for residents to gather for activities.



• **Village Green Atrium.** This development offers 35 for-sale units, is age-restricted, and has an established preference for buyers who have low- to moderate-incomes. There is a resale agreement for the units that ensures that the units will remain affordable by low- and moderate-income owners. The minimum age for residents and those on the waiting list is 62.



 Mallinckrodt in the Park. Mallinckrodt in the Park offers market-rate and income-restricted condominium units for persons 55 year of age and older. The facility includes 81 condominiums (one, two and three bedroom) and a range of facilities and activities. Twelve of the 81 units are set aside as affordable.



These five age-restricted developments offer a total of 159 rental units and 116 condominium units. The 106 income- and age-restricted units currently serve about 15 percent of the roughly estimated 700 to 750 income-eligible seniors. The 65 market-rate, age-restricted rental units in Mather Place serve a small percentage of the approximately 2,600 persons over age 65 who are not eligible for affordable rental units.

Similarly, the 35-unit Village Green Atrium and 12 unites at Mallinckrodt in the Park currently serves a small number of the income-eligible seniors who might want to purchase a condominium unit.

Of course, seniors who might want to move to a different home in Wilmette are not limited to age- and income-restricted developments. In particular, many empty nesters and "active adults" might prefer market-rate rental or for-sale units in townhomes or multifamily buildings that offer freedom from the responsibility for home maintenance. A total of 1,235 rental units were in the Village in 2019. Although a few of these units are in the same type of single-family homes that seniors might no longer find attractive, some rental as well as for-sale units are in the multifamily structures that comprise approximately 18 percent of housing stock in the Village. Many of these multifamily buildings are located on the lakefront, along Green Bay Road, and in areas such as Ridge and Linden Square.

### Policy Implications for Housing Seniors

To consider needs of seniors who may be seeking to move from a current Wilmette home to a desirable option in the Village, the following issues are relevant for the upcoming Housing Plan:

- Develop a clearer understanding of demand for additional age-restricted rental and for-sale housing, given the existing and planned competitive developments in Wilmette as well as surrounding communities that might attract current Wilmette seniors.
  - o Existing and planned affordable, age-restricted rental and for-sale housing.
  - o Existing and planned market-rate, age-restricted rental and for-sale housing.
- Assess the demand for additional market-rate housing that is age-restricted, including both rental and for-sale housing in Wilmette and competitive surrounding communities.
- Assess demand for additional market-rate rental and for-sale housing that is not age-restricted, such as townhouses and units in multifamily buildings.
- Conduct surveys and/or focus-group sessions with seniors to determine housing preferences.

### Young Families

For purposes of this analysis of housing needs and demand, young families are generally be defined as households headed by persons age 20 to 34 with one or more adults and one or more children. As discussed in the following section, the housing element of the plan examines separately the housing needs

of young professionals in this general age group in households without children. As shown in the following table, the American Community Survey groups together households with heads age 15 to 34. The majority of Wilmette households (88 percent) are owners and only 12 percent are renters. Given that owners have apparently already found suitable housing in Wilmette, the households most likely to need or want alternative housing in the Village are renters.

Household Characteristics

Figure 4

		Householder age	Householder age 35 to	Householder age 65 years and over	
	Total Households	15 to 34 years	64 years		
Total:	10,210				
Owners	9,022				
Renters	1,188				
Family households:	581				
Married-couple family:	400	86	256	58	
Other family:	181				
Male householder, no					
spouse present:	101	0	91	10	
Female householder, no					
spouse present:	80	0	58	22	
Nonfamily households:	607				
Householder living alone:	591	77	268	246	
Householder not living					
alone:	16	0	7	9	

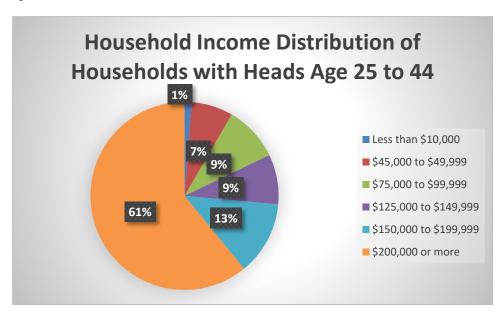
Source: American Community Survey 2016-2020 estimates.

Young families comprise a fairly small percentage of households in Wilmette. Only 86 (22 percent) of the 400 married couples who are renters have heads age 15 to 34. No male or female householders living without spouses have heads age 15 to 34. This is in contrast to how desirable a location Wilmette is for young families, given the educational, social, and recreational opportunities found in the Village.

A very small percentage of young families have severe financial limitations. Data from the Census indicate 11 married couples age 25 to 44 had incomes within the past 12 months that were below the poverty level. Families headed by males or females in this age group without spouses did not have the same income limitation.

The few data points on young married households are in part a function of how Census data is available for income distributions of these families. However, it also highlights the issue of how challenging it can be for that population to afford living in the Village. More income data are available for households with householders under age 25 or age 25 to 44—much older than the upper age range on which this analysis focuses. Only 8 households under age 25 have incomes, all of which are below \$10,000. These young, very low-income households are less likely to be family units with children. For older households age 25 to 44 fewer than 150 households have incomes less than \$48,120, which was the IDHA income limit for three-person households with up to 60 percent of area median income. Similarly, fewer than 170 have incomes less than \$53,460, which was the IDHA limit for four-person households.

Figure 5



Source: American Community Survey 2015-2019 estimates.

### Policy Implications for Young Families

Young families who would like to become homeowners in Wilmette will probably need moderately priced, for-sale housing, which is limited in Wilmette. In 2021 the median price of a single-family detached home was \$850,000; and no single-family detached homes in the Village sold for \$145,669 or less, which is estimated price of an affordable home as defined by the State of Illinois Affordable Housing Planning and Appeal Act (AHPAA). Similarly, only 8 single-family attached homes priced at or below \$145,669 were sold in Wilmette in 2021.

Unfortunately, many of the most affordably priced single-family homes in Wilmette might be at risk of demolition and replacement with higher cost housing. The housing market in and around Wilmette does little to retain smaller, older, somewhat less expensive homes that could be of interest for young families. Current efforts with Community Partners for Affordable Housing and review of zoning regulations to allow more single-family attached homes as townhouses or condominiums could also increase the supply of housing that is more affordable.

Some young families might not be ready in terms of finances or life stage to assume responsibilities of ownership and might need a wider variety of rental housing options. In 2019 only 13 percent of Wilmette's housing stock was rented, providing limited rental options for young families as well as households in other life stages. Additional rental options in townhouses as well as larger multifamily structures could accommodate some of this needs of young families.

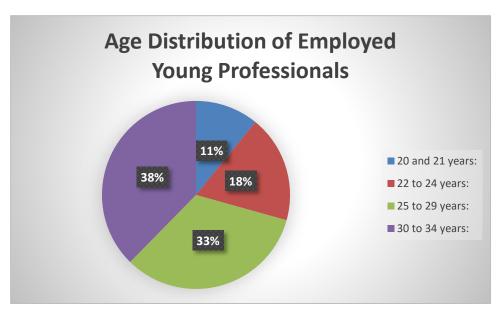
In addition to its limited availability, the cost of rental housing is fairly high. In 2021 the average monthly rent in Wilmette was \$1,773, compared to \$1,639 for Cook County. The Wilmette average was, however, less than the \$2,233 average for the far north suburban Cook County submarket. The \$1,773 average rent

in Wilmette was affordable by a household with an annual income of at least \$70,920 assuming no more than 30 percent of income is devoted to rent.

### Young Professionals

Young professionals considered in this analysis are Wilmette residents aged 20 to 34 who are currently employed in the Village or elsewhere. A total of 1,084 Wilmette residents are in this group, of whom 67 percent are in the labor force, 61 percent are employed, and 6 percent are unemployed. As shown in Figure 6, 38 percent of the employed young professionals are aged 30 to 34, in contrast to 11 percent of this group who are aged 20 to 21.

Figure 6



Source: American Community Survey 2015-2019 estimates.

Alternative housing needs for young professionals are similar to those of young families. Only 77 householders living alone as renters are age 20 to 34 and are likely to need alternative housing options in Wilmette. No additional renters in this age group live with one or more other persons in the Village.

The likely income ranges of young professionals are also similar to those of young families. Based on ACS 2019 estimates, only 8 households under age 25 have incomes, all of which are below \$10,000. These households are likely to be young professionals living in one- or two-person households. Older households with heads age 25 to 44 probably include some young professionals with income distributions similar to those for young families. Fewer than 100 households in this age group have incomes less than \$42,780, which is the IDHA affordable housing income limit for 2-person households with up to 60 percent of area median income.

### Policy Implications for Young Professionals

Similar to young families, young professionals who are currently renters are most likely to need or want other housing options. A few of the 77 persons living alone in the Census-defined age group 15 to 34 might want to purchase housing and would need moderately priced for-sale units. Townhouses and/or

condominium units would probably best suit the needs of persons in this life stage. However, few such units are available in Wilmette.

Other current young professional renters might want a wider variety of rental housing options. Although some might be able to afford upper end market rents, others might seek more affordable options. Given the current limited supply of rental units in the Village, additional units in multifamily structures would probably be attractive to this population group.

Another housing option that might be appropriate for some young professionals, especially those with parents or other relatives living in Wilmette, might be accessory dwelling units. These units could offer affordable housing close to family and friends.

### Persons with Disabilities

Another population group with special housing needs is persons with disabilities. This analysis focuses on adults under age 65, most of whom do not also qualify for age-restricted housing. This category includes persons with physical impairments that range from visual difficulties or loss of hearing to severe ambulatory difficulties. It also includes persons with substance abuse issues or mental or emotional impairments. Persons with physical impairments may need housing specifically designed to enable them to live independently. Persons with cognitive issues may benefit from living in a supportive environment but may also be able to live independently with access to supportive services.

Of the 14,197 persons aged 18 to 64 residing in Wilmette in 2019, 690 or 4.9 percent had a disability. A higher percentage (10.3 percent) of persons aged 18 to 34 had disabilities, while only 3.8 percent of the persons aged 35 to 64 had disabilities. The higher percentage of younger adults with disabilities might occur because some of these individuals continue to live with parents or other relatives.

Figure 7

Population with a Disability

	Age 18 to 34 years:		Age 35 to 64		Total	
	Number F	Percent	Number Percent		Number Percent	
With a disability	233	10.3%	457	3.8%	690	4.9%
No disability	2,032	89.7%	11,475	96.2%	13,507	95.1%
Total	2,265	100.0%	11,932	100.0%	14,197	100.0%

Source: American Community Survey 2015-2019 estimates.

The most common disability for adults aged 18 to 64 is cognitive difficulty. About 2.5 percent of the total population, or 349 persons have this disability. Less than one percent have hearing or vision disabilities, and 2.0 percent have ambulatory difficulties. Persons with self-care difficulty (0.9 percent) and difficulty with independent living (about 2 percent) account for the rest of the age 18 to 64 population with disabilities.

Disability Type by Age

Figure 8

Population	Total	With a Disability	Percent with a Disability	
Total civilian		2.00.0		
noninstitutionalized population	27,157	2,128	7.80%	
With a hearing difficulty	, -	, -		
Population 18 to 64 years	14,197	61	0.40%	
Population 18 to 34 years	2,265	12	0.50%	
Population 35 to 64 years	11,932	49	0.40%	
With a vision difficulty				
Population 18 to 64 years	14,197	110	0.80%	
Population 18 to 34 years	2,265	5	0.20%	
Population 35 to 64 years	11,932	105	0.90%	
With a cognitive difficulty				
Population 18 to 64 years	14,197	349	2.50%	
Population 18 to 34 years	2,265	216	9.50%	
Population 35 to 64 years	11,932	133	1.10%	
With an ambulatory difficulty				
Population 18 to 64 years	14,197	287	2.00%	
Population 18 to 34 years	2,265	27	1.20%	
Population 35 to 64 years	11,932	260	2.20%	
With a self-care difficulty				
Population 18 to 64 years	14,197	121	0.90%	
Population 18 to 34 years	2,265	66	2.90%	
Population 35 to 64 years	11,932	55	0.50%	
With an independent living				
difficulty				
Population 18 to 64 years	14,197	296	2.10%	
Population 18 to 34 years	2,265	146	6.40%	
Population 35 to 64 years	11,932	150	1.30%	

Source: American Community Survey 2015-2019 estimates.

Existing housing for persons with disabilities in Wilmette is limited. Although Shore Line Place and Gates Manor can accommodate persons with disabilities over the age of 18, in practice most of their residents meet age restrictions for seniors. A number of acute-care facilities that are not part of this general housing research are found in the Village. Federally assisted affordable housing specifically designed for persons with physical or cognitive difficulties is not available for persons under age 65 in Wilmette. Housing Our Own-Wilmette provides some financial assistance, including property tax payments and rent, that enables

some seniors and permanently disabled persons to remain in their homes; however, the organization does not provide physical housing units for aid recipients.

### Policy Implications for Persons with Disabilities

Additional housing for persons with physical and/or cognitive disabilities would provide housing options for adults aged 18 to 65 with very limited housing choices. In particular, housing options are needed for persons aged 18 to 34, who might currently be living with parents or other relatives. Some persons with disabilities may also need affordable housing.

Unfortunately, the American Community Survey has limited data on income in relation to disability, so it is difficult to identify the approximate number of persons who might need affordable housing within this segment of the population. Information on income and disability is not available for the Village. However, in Cook County, approximately three percent of the population over age 18 had disabilities and incomes below the poverty level. Assuming that Wilmette residents are similar to or somewhat higher income than residents of the overall county, a fairly small percentage of persons in the age group with disabilities have severe income limitations.

The U.S. Supreme Court's 1999 Olmstead decision, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, and Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act all affirm the right of persons with disabilities to live in integrated community settings and encourage government agencies to provide supportive housing and access to services that are not limited to institutional settings. Housing options that could benefit persons with disabilities and enable them to live integrated lives in the Village include:

- Affordable/Accessible Apartments. There is currently has a limited supply of affordable units in multifamily structures in the Village that are easily accessible for persons with disabilities.
- Federally Assisted, Affordable Group Homes for Persons with Physical Disabilities and/or Cognitive Disabilities. This type of housing is not currently available. However, zoning currently permits both market-rate and federally subsidized group homes.
- Accessory Dwelling Units. This type of housing could be especially useful for some persons with disabilities who currently live with parents or other family members.

### Persons Who Work in the Village but Live Elsewhere

Those currently working in the Village might be interested in moving their households to Wilmette in order to be close to their place of work. Over 6,300 people work in Wilmette but live elsewhere. Many of these employees (29 percent) live in the city of Chicago, while 23 percent live in communities surrounding Wilmette, and an additional 22 percent live elsewhere in Cook County. About 11 percent live in Lake County and 13 percent live in other communities, most of which are in the Chicago metropolitan area.

Figure 9



Given the relatively low earnings of people who work in Wilmette but do not live in the Village, most rental and for-sale housing in the Village is not affordable to them, based on their individual incomes. As shown in Figure 9, over 58 percent of the employees lacked sufficient income in 2019 to cover the \$1,077 monthly rent for affordable rental housing as defined by the State of Illinois Affordable Housing Planning and Appeal Act.

Similarly, most housing for sale is priced beyond the level that most of these employees can afford, based on their individual earnings. About 58 percent of employees had sufficient earnings to afford the purchase of a home priced at \$165,300 or less. In 2021 only 8 single-family attached homes sold for \$149,999 or less, and 11 sold for \$150,000 to \$199,999 of which a small number might have been affordable by area employees. No single-family detached homes sold for prices that were affordable by local employees.

Some of these employees might be able to afford somewhat higher rents or purchase prices, provided their household income exceeds their individual earnings.

Figure 10

# Persons Employed In Wilmette/Live Elsewhere Job Earnings 2019 and Affordable Rent

Monthly Job Earnings	Count	Share	Affordable Monthly Rent		Affordable Home Price*	
\$1,250 per month or less	1,942	27.1%	\$0 -	\$375	\$0 - \$62,000	
\$1,251 to \$3,333 per month	2,237	31.2%	\$375 -	\$1,000	\$62,000 - \$165,300	
More than \$3,333 per month	2,992	41.7%	\$1,000 or	more	\$165,300 or more	

<sup>\*</sup>Key housing purchase assumptions: interest rate equals 7 percent, mortgage term equals 30 years, down payment equals 10 percent.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau's OnTheMap, Applied Real Estate Analysis.

### Policy Implications for Local Employees Who Live Elsewhere

The major challenge facing persons employed in Wilmette who might want to live in the Village is housing affordability. As part of the Housing Plan, options to attract rental and for-sale housing development in the form of townhouse or multifamily structures can be investigated further. These housing formats have lower development costs than single-family detached homes and are more affordable. Additional research, including surveys and/or focus group sessions with area employees who live outside the Village, could obtain additional information about the housing needs of this group. For example, useful information would include the household size of Wilmette employees, the number of adults employed in each household in addition to the Wilmette employee, household income averages or ranges, and current housing location and tenure—whether rental or ownership.

### Existing Programs to Encourage Housing Diversity and Affordability

The Village of Wilmette already has implemented policies and programs to expand the variety of housing available for current and potential future residents, make more affordable housing available, and move toward its goal of increasing the Village's population diversity. These existing policies and programs are a starting point to identify additional program options in an updated Housing Plan.

Key existing programs and policies include:

- Development Incentives and Encouragement. The 2004 Affordable Housing Plan encourages development of affordable housing as part of new residential construction on Planned Unit Development (PUD) sites. Developments that have provided affordable units on site or provided a contribution for use by the Village in facilitating affordable housing development include Mallinckrodt in the Park (12 units), Residences of Wilmette (contribution), Artis Memory Care (contribution), and (Optima 14 units). In addition, Cleland Place consists of 16 units, all of which are affordable.
- Community Partners for Affordable Housing (CPAH) Affordable Housing and Community Land Trust (CLT). This not-for-profit organization has teamed with the Village and a market-rate housing developer to develop affordable housing offsite using funds from market-rate, multifamily developments. As part of its PUD approval, the developer of the 100-unit Optima Center Wilmette on Central Avenue was required to contribute \$1.6 million to be used by CPAH to develop or acquire 14 affordable rental and for-sale housing units in the community. CPAH created a Community Land Trust that builds or acquires and rehabilitates homes in Wilmette and other suburbs that are sold to qualified low- and moderate-income households at affordable prices. CPAH retains ownership of the underlying land, which is leased to the home purchaser using a 99-year, renewable ground lease.
- Housing Our Own-Wilmette (HOOW). This non-profit organization established and funded by the Village provides monthly rent, monthly mortgage assistance, and property tax assistance to resident Wilmette households with heads age 62 or older or disabled, who meet household income limits. The Village administers the program to keep administrative costs low.

# Appendix C

## Appendix C: Wilmette Talks Summaries

Community-wide events titled Wilmette Talks—held in the spirit of TED Talks—took place each "engagement season" featuring presentations and panel discussions with local experts, followed by questions and discussion from community participants. Each Talk was tailored to embrace the nuances of the topic at hand, and offered a range of perspectives, data, and "food-for-thought". Panelists ranged from diversity and inclusion experts and sustainability leaders to high school students, principals, and affordable housing specialists. Both the process of hosting and facilitating the Talks and the outcomes (learnings and questions raised during), were key to plan development.

Summaries of each talk have been compiled in this Appendix.

### **Contents**

Wilmette Talk #1: Community Character; Arts, Culture, Entertainment; Health, Safety, Wellness

Wilmette Talk #2: Moving Towards a More Welcoming Wilmette & What it Means to Belong

Wilmette Talk #3: Housing & Business / Commerce

Wilmette Talk #4: Active Transportation & Sustainability



#### Wilmette Talk #1

The Village of Wilmette Comprehensive Plan · Event Date: November 11th, 2021



The Ready Set Wilmette team hosted the first Wilmette Talk and project open house to kick off the comprehensive plan on the evening of Thursday, November 11<sup>th</sup>. Thank you to those who joined inperson to listen, learn, discuss, and participate in the activity stations! The planning process is just getting started and there are plenty more opportunities to engage: the Virtual Open House is now open and we are eager to hear everyone's ideas and vision for Wilmette's future!

### **Setting the Stage for Comprehensive Planning**

Michael Blue, Principal at Teska Associates and project manager for the comprehensive plan, began with a brief overview of comprehensive planning:

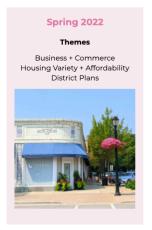
"In short, it's a **community-based collection of goals for the future and a set of actions to accomplish that vision**. The purpose of this plan is to help Wilmette **meet tomorrow sustainably and successfully**. It will do this by providing **insights and recommendations about places, programs, and policies** for the years to come. Communities and people are always changing, so is, technology, and the way we live, work, and play. The plan must guide the Village through those changes. It does this by understanding conditions that exist today, anticipating what tomorrow may bring, and **helping the community define its common goals**. In this way its more than data and demographics, it's a **process to help Wilmette focus on themes that together shape its "quality of life"**.

Ready Set Wilmette's approach will move through the typical planning process (data collection, research, stakeholder interviews, focus groups, visioning, developing recommendations, and future land use planning) while simultaneously conducting public engagement around a set of planning themes. November 11<sup>th</sup> was the first of a series of "Wilmette Talks" that will take place each season to facilitate community discussion on each of the planning themes. Learn more by watching the project overview video.

#### Wilmette Talks · Calendar of Events









## Wilmette Talk #1: Community Character | Arts, Culture, Entertainment | Health, Safety, Wellness

Project team members Michael Blue, Erin Cigliano, and Francie Sallinger of Teska Associates presented the Fall 2021 setlist of themes: Community Character (<u>video link</u>); Arts, Culture, and Entertainment (<u>video link</u>); and Health, Safety and Wellness (<u>video link</u>).

"Community Character refers to features that help shape a place's identity and the way residents live, work, play, and travel. It runs the gamut from architecture, design, and history, to environment, technology, people and cultures. It also includes your experience in a place: how you get there, what you do there, your enjoyment of the space, and the big collection of little things that affect your feelings about a community."

#### **Key Questions:**

- What factors contribute most towards Wilmette's community character and sense of place?
- What is the current "narrative" about Wilmette and should it be different in the future?

"Arts, Culture, and Entertainment help define what makes a place special and what attracts people to want to live, work and visit a community. They shape our shared experiences, beliefs, and values; help us understand other cultures in our community; promote personal well-being; and are essential to a well-rounded education.

#### **Key Questions:**

- What are the most impactful elements of Wilmette's art and cultural scene? Are they available to the entire community?
- What role should arts, culture, and entertainment have in Wilmette's future?

"Health, Safety, and Wellness focuses on the connection between the built and natural environment, access to green space, educational and recreational programming and factors that impact and support the holistic well-being of individuals, families, and the community at large."

#### **Key Questions:**

- What are the Village's most well-used health/wellness resources? Are there disparities geographically, racially, etc.?
- In what ways can Wilmette's future be healthier and safer?

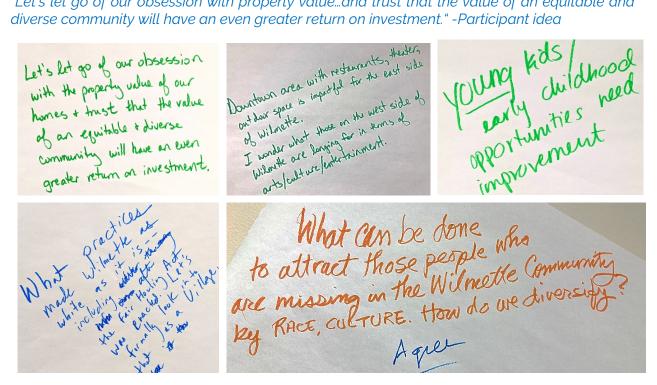
Following the presentation was a Q&A discussion with the audience. Ideas were shared around:

- love for the Wilmette Theater and excitement around its reopening
- desire for a live music venue
- desire for a space that accommodates a broad range of events
- how the arts have a powerful connection to culture and diversity and community events can better celebrate and showcase such

#### **Idea-Sharing + Visioning**

Following the Wilmette Talk and Q&A, folks headed to activity stations to share written comments and chat one-on-one with the project team and Village staff. See below for a snapshot of some of the insightful comments shared. Many ideas hit on the importance of equity and diversity, which will be specifically explored in more detail as part of the next Wilmette Talk in early 2022.

"Let's let go of our obsession with property value...and trust that the value of an equitable and diverse community will have an even greater return on investment." -Participant idea



### Continuing the Conversation

Fear not if you weren't able to attend the in-person workshop! The Virtual Open House is now open and awaiting community input - check out the different online stations to learn a bit more about Wilmette, the Comprehensive Plan, and to share your ideas and take part in shaping Wilmette's future:

- Station 1: Wilmette Talk #1 Video Trailers
- Station 2: Poll #1
- Station 3: Share + Map Insights
- Station 4: Be a Project Champion
- Station 5: Stay Informed

Finally, be sure to **Subscribe for Updates on the website** so that you don't miss out on future events, project news, and opportunities to participate. Ready Set Wilmette is just getting started!



### Wilmette Talk #2

The Village of Wilmette Comprehensive Plan · Event Date: March 15, 2022



### **Candid Stories & Reflections Meet Future Aspirations & Hopes**

"We all have role to play in this effort. The discussions and solutions around diversity and inclusiveness are not quick, and they are not always comfortable. But as we engage with one another it allows us to plan for what we strive for this community to be in the future." – Senta Plunkett, Village President

Wilmette Talk #2: Moving Towards a More Welcoming Wilmette & What it Means to Belong was a powerful evening of coming together, candid reflections, personal experiences, and future aspirations. Thank you to the wonderful residents, community members, panelists, and institutions who took part as Wilmette looks to make strides forward on the topics of inclusion, diversity, belonging.

### Watch the recordings here:

https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL40bXbznP6imnYlsf0dZ5jE-mnTwDVSzM



From Left to Right: Terri Johnson (C-Change in Action), Dr. Kassie Porreca (Regina Dominican HS), Gerry Smith (Human Relations Commission Chair), Kelly Jackson (Highcrest Middle School/District 39), Dr. Chimille Tillery (New Trier), Steve Wilson (Wilmette Park District), and George Davis (Baha'i House of Worship)

"We need to act as if the people we want to be here are already here..." – Neela Chandraraj, New Trier Junior, Wilmette's Human Relations Commission

"To belong, first people have to be recognized for who they are. And that gets complicated because of differences. You can choose to focus on the differences or, instead, what you may have in common." – George Davis, Baha'i House of Worship.

"We provide a platform where people come together – whether it's a major event or a Saturday soccer game. You see people coming together, slowly start talking, parents on the sidelines... it's not right out of the gates, but by the end of the year families are planning parties together. That's where I see successes throughout."– Steve Wilson, Wilmette Park District

### **Complex Topics + Ongoing Conversation**

As celebrated by some of the panelist quotes above and audience questions below – these topics are complex and the conversation is ongoing. We will be working to explore the answers to these questions and more as part of ongoing efforts by the Village, the Human Relations Commission, and Comprehensive Planning effort.

**Audience Questions:** How do we respond to people who feel that anti-racist efforts are unnecessary? Often times, conversations about diversity and inclusion don't mention people with disabilities, including those with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities. How should Wilmette embrace people with disabilities? Having more affordable housing options in Wilmette would be helpful to encourage diversity... is this possible? Can you give an example of an interaction/situation in Wilmette where you felt like you were treated as unwelcome, or an outsider, and what would have made all the difference?

**Special thanks** to Village President Senta Plunkett for sharing opening remarks, to our panelists: Neela Chandraraj (New Trier Junior, Wilmette's Human Relations Commission), George Davis (Baha'i House of Worship), Kelly Jackson (Highcrest Middle School/District 39), Dr. Kassie Porreca (Regina Dominican HS), Dr. Chimille Tillery (New Trier), Steve Wilson (Wilmette Park District), and our moderators Terri Johnson (C-Change in Action) and Gerry Smith (Wilmette Human Relations Commission Chair), and to Regina Dominican for sharing their auditorium for the event!



### Wilmette Talk #3

The Village of Wilmette Comprehensive Plan - Event Date: May 31, 2022









"Housing is multi-faceted; it is not all or nothing. By expanding the size of the pie and having a range of housing for a range of incomes, you end up creating a more vibrant community." –**Richard Koenig**, Housing Opportunity Development Corporation

"We are very appreciative of and amazed by our clientele – this is a great community to do business in." – **Dave Zier,** Zier's Prime Meats & Poultry

These are just two quotes of many fascinating insights shared during Tuesday evening's Wilmette Talk #3. The discussion covered the breadth and depth of two nuanced and complex topics which will be explored further in the Comprehensive Plan.

A sincere **thank you** from the Ready Set Wilmette team to all who participated, including our fabulous panelists (<u>read more about them here!</u>) and all who attended and asked thought-provoking questions.

The virtual discussion was divided into two parts, with Part 1 focusing on Wilmette's demographics and housing and Part 2 on business and commerce. Below are a handful highlights from each. View the presentation and watch the full recordings here!

#### Watch Part 1:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kaLmDFoT-TQ&list=PL40bXbznP6in3nJ5Fs2Sz0FlLwvwef\_\_M&index=2

Watch Part 2: <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xt2WdlkVAfE">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xt2WdlkVAfE</a>

View the Presentation:

https://readysetwilmette.files.wordpress.com/2022/06/wilmette-talk-3-presentation-final.pdf

### **Demographics & Housing**

- Compared to its neighboring communities, Wilmette is generally in the middle in terms of population size, number of households, and median household income.
- Potential housing needs for the future might include: more units to accommodate multiple demand segments, greater variety of housing types and price points, and updated housing stock with modern features and amenities. (see <u>presentation</u> for detailed data)
- The discussion of affordable housing consists of two separate points: housing
  affordability (housing which is naturally affordable for a range of incomes, i.e.
  some townhomes and condos in Wilmette) and affordable housing (the
  development of which is supported by a range of resources, i.e. Wilmette's
  new Cleland Place).
- An affordable home for the average hourly worker in Wilmette costs \$146,000. Over a 10 year period (2011 to 2021), there were just 111 homes for sale in Wilmette in this price range.

"Housing is important because it directly relates to who we are as a community."

Mike Braiman, Village Manager

#### **Business & Commerce**

- Reinvented Retail: The challenge in Wilmette is to retrofit a 20th-century community with 21st-century development and retail. Modern uses can't always fit into existing buildings or lots (i.e. former Treasure Island site can not accommodate a large grocer, but may be able to attract a new small-format grocer).
- Wilmette has all the right pieces in place to attract retailers Edens Plaza is a great example with amazing access to transportation, density of high income households, etc.
- Retailers like to locate next to other successful retailers. Restaurants have revived Village Center, a goal the Village has been working towards since adopting its Village Center in 2010.
- There need to be different types of retail in different environments (i.e. ground floor retail in a mixed use building vs. standalone stores).
- The business mix at Linden Square was discussed and will be evaluated further as part of the plan, along with potential for new development.

COVID has forced many retailers to re-invent themselves, which in the long run is going to be good for the industry."

Brendan Reedy, CBRE



#### Wilmette Talk #4

The Village of Wilmette Comprehensive Plan - Event Date: September 20, 2022



"There is a desire to move around the Village without a car, in a way that accommodates all ages and abilities." – Jill Hayes, Wilmette Transportation Commission

"Many people are expecting to live in a sustainable, walkable community – we need to meet that demand." – Beth Drucker, Go Green Wilmette

On Tuesday, September 20th, members of the consultant team and engaged community members gathered on Zoom to discuss the present state and future of transportation and sustainability in Wilmette.

The main takeaways? There is **a lot** of work already happening in the Village towards the goals of improving multi-modal transportation (for bikes, pedestrians, transit, and vehicles) and environmental sustainability! Some of these are big things like: adding new bike lanes, filling gaps in the sidewalk network, Village-wide

stormwater management, and community solar. Learn more about these initiatives in the Village-adopted <u>Master Bike and Active Transportation Plan</u> and the <u>Sustainability Plan</u>.

But there are also lots of smaller things can make an impact. For individuals, this might be: choosing to bike or walk to a local destination instead of driving, using native plantings in a yard, or composting. At the Village-level, this could involve: installing more bike racks and covered bike parking with fix-it stations, increasing community awareness of existing sustainability programs and resources, and integrating sustainability best practices in all new infrastructure improvements.

Other big ideas discussed include...

- Electric vehicle charing stations
- Connected east/west bikeway from the lake to west Wilmette
- The use of Low Speed Electric Vehicles (LSEVs)
- Renewable energy credits
- Expanding the use of community solar, geothermal energy, and permeable pavement
- Decreasing light pollution

<u>Watch the recordings here</u> to catch up on the entire discussion. Thank you again to our wonderful panelists (<u>read their bios here!</u>) and to those who tuned in live and asked smart, thoughtful questions.

### Recordings:

https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL40bXbznP6ilKugFXWIZnSDDCXgnxtVni

# Appendix D

Roadway Classification System Map



