

# 1 Introduction



## THE CITY OF WOOD DALE...

is located in DuPage County, Illinois, and is home to approximately 14,000 residents. It is comprised of residential and commercial areas, as well as a large industrial area reflective of the City's location; Wood Dale is roughly 25 miles from downtown Chicago, just west of O'Hare International Airport. The City benefits from a Metra train station and nearby I-290, I-355 and Route 83, as well as proximity to I-294 and I-90. This regional location is an asset for both its businesses and residents.

Wood Dale is known as a quiet and peaceful community, with many residents and business owners describing it as a small town. It is a traditional and affordable City with many community institutions. However, Wood Dale is not always known to people outside of the City; many do not know where it is. Although its proximity to O'Hare and its Metra train station are its most notable assets to the region, Wood Dale also is known for its local restaurants, Top Golf attraction at North Thorndale and Prospect Avenues, the industrial park in the north part of town, and the Target and Jewel-Osco center on Irving Park Road. The Irving Park Road Corridor is an important commercial area, especially where it crosses Wood Dale Road. Many residents described this corridor as needing enhancement. Last, but not least, Illinois Route 390 (IL 390) has recently been completed through the City and will play a large role in its future. (Other known names of IL 390 include: the Elgin-O'Hare Expressway, the Elgin-O'Hare Tollway, the Elgin O'Hare Access (EOWA) Project, and the Thorndale Corridor.)

This Comprehensive Plan, shaped by residents, businesses, investors, elected officials, and City staff, studies Wood Dale's past and present in order to understand the City's potential for the future.

## WHAT MAKES WOOD DALE UNIQUE?

Throughout the planning process, the following themes emerged that speak to the main characteristics of Wood Dale and help to define what makes the City unique.

### **Small-town Feel**

Residents appreciate and enjoy the small-town, "Mayberry-like" feel of Wood Dale. Many neighbors know each other, there are different places where residents gather, and there is a welcoming and friendly atmosphere throughout the City.

### **Illinois Route 390 + O'Hare Access**

Wood Dale is poised to take advantage of upcoming opportunities from the recently completed segment of the IL 390 Tollway and the potential for new western access to O'Hare Airport. That Wood Dale has a great location for commerce and industry was clear through the planning process, as was the observation by many that the City is a welcoming and thoughtful place to do business.

### **Irving Park Road Corridor**

Irving Park Road runs through the core of Wood Dale and is traveled by thousands of residents and visitors each day. It contains a mix of uses, with big-box and large scale retail on its western end, many smaller, local businesses along the eastern half, and the Metra Station in the middle near Wood Dale Road. As a corridor, it is traveled by many, but currently lacks a cohesive character and defined sense of place. This, combined with vacancies and developable land, present a variety of opportunities for a reimagining of Wood Dale's core. .

### **Future-Oriented**

From residents to City staff and leadership, Wood Dale is a community that thinks long-term and works toward what is best for its future. Ongoing efforts at noise reduction, improvements at Wood Dale and Irving Park Roads, and economic development programs are all aimed at a strong tomorrow. That said, decisions for the future balance current needs and opportunities with existing character and resident's quality of life. Business growth and development will be a part of the City's future, and so will its parks, schools and places where neighbors visit with each other.



## WHY HAVE A PLAN?

A Comprehensive Plan is a long-term, guiding document that describes a vision for a community's physical, social, and economic development. It is not regulatory or binding, but rather sets a blueprint for future policies and goals. It can inform public sector decisions—City Council can use the plan to shape budget and land use decisions—and it can help communicate to the private sector what a community hopes to see in the future. Perhaps most importantly, developing a Comprehensive Plan is a chance to start a conversation about the City's issues and opportunities and bring groups together to improve their community.

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## HOW WAS THIS PLAN DONE?

From the beginning, the City of Wood Dale emphasized the importance of engagement and reaching out to a wide cross-section of the community. As a result, this Comprehensive Plan is the product of a collaborative process involving residents, stakeholders, elected officials, and City staff. Outreach efforts included community-wide open houses, Steering Committee and stakeholder meetings, comments through a project website, and visual preference surveys. In total, over XX people contributed their ideas for what they wanted to see addressed in this plan.

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## HOW TO USE THIS PLAN?

The document is divided into 11 chapters that span a range of subject matters. Beginning with an overview of Wood Dale's existing conditions and the Plan's public engagement process, the chapters present the core of the plan: a section on vision, goals, and objectives, followed by recommendations for how to achieve these goals as they relate to economic development, land use and zoning, transportation and infrastructure, urban design, community services, and housing. Finally, an implementation chapter sets forth a timeline and call to action with short-, medium-, and long-term projects.

The Plan should be maintained by the City as a living document, used regularly to inform policy and land use decisions. The plan should be referenced when a development is considered for approval: does the proposal advance the goals and land use policies of the plan, does it reflect the design character expected of new development, does it help to advance the vision? Further, the plan should be reviewed annually, with focus on its goals and objectives: are they still relevant, is there an opportunity that didn't exist last year to advance an objective, do they suggest a new project that can be conducted in the coming year? Lastly the plan should be considered when the City prepares its annual budget: what community enhancement projects in the plan should be implemented in the coming year or soon after, are there policies outlined that can be supported by a new program or action? By using the plan in these ways, the City can continue to benefit from the good work that went into making this plan a reality by its residents, merchants, property owners, elected and appointed officials, representatives of other taxing bodies and City staff.

# PLANNING PROCESS



## EXISTING CONDITIONS ASSESSMENT

### PHASE 1

Preparation of an Existing Conditions Report was the first phase of the Wood Dale Comprehensive Plan. It focused on data collection and analysis of the planning area.



## COMMUNITY VISION FORMATION

### PHASE 2

Phase 2 focused on vision formation, with a central focus on a public workshop (open house) that engaged citizens and other stakeholders. Input from the public and from the project Steering Committee shaped a common vision for future growth and development in Wood Dale.



## BRAND DEVELOPMENT

### PHASE 3

On a parallel track to this plan, a visual identity system was developed for the City that includes a brand promise, positioning statement, and graphic elements (logo/symbol, typography, and colors).



## PREPARE DRAFT SUBAREA PLANS

### PHASE 4

Subarea plans which focus on specific, key areas within the City (Irving Park Road and the Thorndale Corridor) were the focus of Phase 4.



## PREPARE DRAFT PLAN

### PHASE 5

Prepared after a second public open house, the Draft Plan presents preliminary recommendations, which are informed by key findings from the Existing Conditions analysis and from community input.



## FINAL PLAN ADOPTION

### PHASE 6

The final plan document includes findings from the planning process, recommendations that reflect the community's vision, and implementation tasks to be carried out in the near- and long-term.