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Urban Design
Identity

URBAN DESIGN IDENTITY

Urban design is about connecting people to their places through the built environment, nature, and overall urban form. Done well, it creates a memorable space that improves the experience of all visitors.

Both public and private spaces can benefit from an urban design identity. In the public realm, streets, sidewalks, and open spaces should have consistent standards and a cohesive look and feel. Similarly, private properties have elements that contribute to the character of a given place: building form, massing, height, setbacks, facade treatments, and landscaping.

The City of Wood Dale and its residents recognize the importance and value of attractive urban design – throughout the planning process, one of the consistent themes was the desire to improve character and aesthetic appeal throughout the City. This section offers guidelines and principles to be considered and incorporated into future private development and public improvements to help to enhance the overall appearance of Wood Dale.

Public Realm & Major Corridors

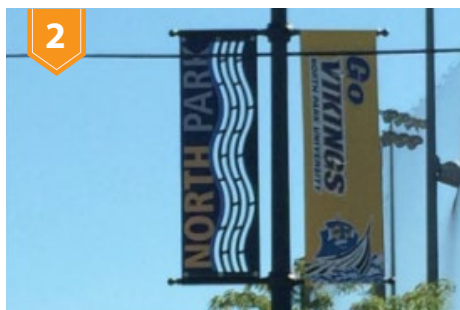
Wood Dale and Irving Park Roads are two main thoroughfares in the City. They are heavily trafficked, have high visibility, and serve as the main activity hubs for the community. Enhancing the appearance and quality of design along these corridors will help in fostering a positive image of Wood Dale. These enhancements should be evaluated and developed through preparation of a City streetscape program. Some notions to incorporate into such a program grew out of this planning process:

- While it is important that any new design concepts are impactful, they also must be sensitive to businesses along these corridors. For instance, streetscape improvements such as signs, light poles, and landscaping elements should not obstruct the visibility of businesses. Monument signs should be encouraged for businesses along the major corridors. These are low to the ground, understated yet visible to vehicles and pedestrians, and can be paired with landscaping.
- Streetscape elements should be consistent along a corridor and create a cohesive appearance that communicates to users that they are in a unified place. This can be achieved through sidewalk treatments, two-tiered lighting that is both pedestrian- and car-oriented, light pole banners, landscaping, and seating.
- Community members indicated their streetscape design thoughts through the visual preference survey that was conducted as part of the planning process. The top three image choices depicted wide, landscaped sidewalks; a side path for bicycles; and on-street bike lanes with a landscaped pedestrian island. These results highlight the interest of Wood Dale residents in streetscapes that are comfortable and have amenities for pedestrians and bicyclists. In terms of signage, options that are unique, bold and fun were preferred.

Streetscapes



Signage



Private Properties

Design standards can be applied to private development in order to set out a desired community character. Many communities apply such standards through the development approval zoning process. Other communities adopt guidelines that are applied to all new commercial developments through a formal design review process at an established City commission. As community character and appearance were highlighted through this planning process, it is recommended that the City adopt a design review program that is most appropriate for Wood Dale. This will help to define and apply design standards to new commercial and industrial development, which will be particularly important for the area around the Wood Dale Road and IL 390 interchange.

Commercial corridors should be attractive to make them more appealing to residents and visitors. When asked at an open house if residents agree with this statement, almost all respondents—over 75 people—said that they strongly agree.

Residential

Though Wood Dale is a built-out community, residential redevelopment (teardown) is a possible form of development. In the case of single-family homes, a formal design review process is not recommended, but homes will continue to be regulated through the Unified Development Ordinance (UDO). Should teardowns begin to occur, the City should review the UDO to ensure new construction reflects a balance of the City's desired character and the market forces driving the development. At this time, the market is seeing more demand for larger homes on smaller lots. This could result in a change in the current look on Wood Dale's residential streets and would merit review of requirements related to lot coverage, setback, or lighting standards.

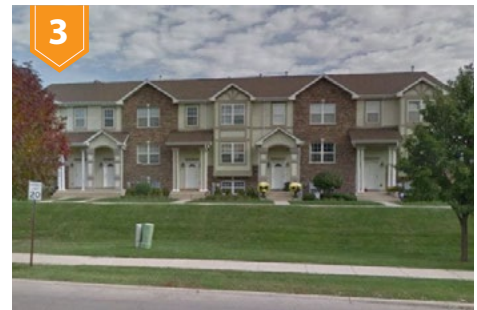
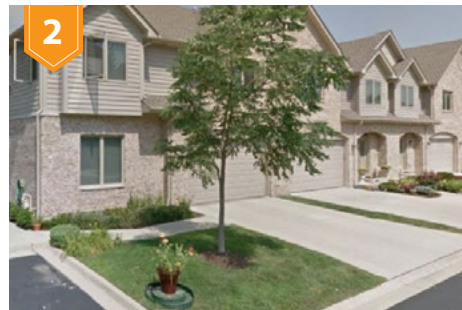
The visual preference survey done as part of this plan tested preferred housing types – the most well received designs are shown below. The results show acceptance of a range of housing types, styles and sizes.

While the entire community might not have direct control over the specific design of private development, residents should be proud of the way it looks. A visual preference survey is one way to gain a general understanding of the type of development preferred in Wood Dale. Over 60 people responded to an online survey, in which they were asked to rate images displaying examples of different types of development designs. These images are the top three winners in each category. ▼

Single-Family



Multi-Family



Commercial

To the extent possible (given existing lot sizes), commercial development along Wood Dale’s main corridors should be in the form of retail centers rather than strip malls. If the site allows, it is preferred to have a larger building that can accommodate multiple tenants, as this facilitates a connected internal network, coordinates access points, minimizes curb cuts, and unifies other site elements such as signage, lighting, landscaping, architectural elements, and stormwater facilities.

In considering parking layout, one row of “teaser parking” located between the front of a building and the street is appropriate. This shows potential customers that they can park near the stores. As noted in the transportation chapter, the majority of spaces should be located along the side or in the rear of the building where feasible.

The top three visual preference survey responses relating to retail and restaurant images indicate several community interests, particularly for outdoor seating and suburban in style shopping. These characteristics can be quantified and noted in design standards applied to new development.

Retail and Restaurants



Industrial and Office



Business/Industrial Parks

Wood Dale’s existing business parks in the northwest section of the City demonstrate the desired design and siting characteristics of future business park or industrial development. These types of districts should include architectural diversity, high quality landscape designs, and coordinated signage. Access and connectivity for all transportation modes (including bicycles and pedestrians) should be required through the design review process noted above.

Visual preference survey respondents ranked a modern building with high-quality design as the preferred building option. The second and third options had very different designs, indicating openness to a range of building types.

■ Design Guidelines

In order to ensure that future development in Wood Dale is in keeping with community expectations, it is helpful to have a set of standards that can guide developers and designers and against which the City can assess proposed development plans. Design guidelines are not intended to make all development look similar, but rather they are used to provide a basis of guidance to design buildings that fit with the context of the site and the larger community.

With the understanding that design guidelines can bring greater predictability and efficiency to the development review process, the City of Wood Dale can consider implementing the following recommendations.

- Establish design guidelines for different land uses to ensure high-quality and context-sensitive design in new developments.
- For new industrial development include standards for the “Appearance Zone.” This is the area with the most public visibility from the street which should be the emphasis of design for industrial buildings.
- Create a Design Review Checklist that can be used by applicants to effectively apply the design standards. This also allows City staff to review applications more efficiently and to make clear that all projects are expected to meet the same standards.



Wood Dale Junior High School

Gateways

More than just a pretty sign or piece of artwork, gateways serve an important purpose. They announce to people that they have arrived some place, and that place is special or important. Gateways located at the entrance to a City or a neighborhood can be a way to welcome visitors or provide a sense of pride for residents. Most often a gateway features a sign or landscaping, but a consistent character of buildings and architecture throughout a corridor or district is also a way to extend a gateway.

The City of Wood Dale has developed and begun to install a new gateway sign concept. Installation of additional gateway signs will be continuing in order to foster a sense of cohesiveness along its major corridors. Possible locations for future gateway signage and/or ornamentation include: the bike/pedestrian bridge over Irving Park Road, the IL 390 access ramp, and light poles along Irving Park Road and Wood Dale Road.

Wayfinding

In addition to the improved gateway signs, the City has begun installing new wayfinding signage. The design is consistent with the gateway signs, the street lighting along major corridors, and has similarities with the architecture of the Wood Dale Metra station.

For wayfinding to be most effective in providing clear navigation, a consistent sign hierarchy is needed through a signage family. A wayfinding signage plan should be considered as the current wayfinding program advances.



New gateway sign along Irving Park Road at City's western border

The signage plan would consider more than the look and design of the signs (which has been established). It would address the location of and information on wayfinding signage as well. These signs can direct visitors to community destination and guide them once they are there. For instance, strategically placed signs along the Thorndale Corridor near the IL 390 access ramp can communicate to passersby that just 1-mile south is a Metra station and commercial district that includes restaurants, Jewel-Osco, Target, and other retail uses.



Example of wayfinding signage family, showing hierarchy of sign types