

Village of Elm Grove Comprehensive Plan

Public Workshop Summary

Event Description

A Stakeholder Workshop that was organized as a component of the *Comprehensive Plan* was conducted at the Village Hall on October 3, 2006 from 7:00 to 9:00 pm. Invitees were identified by the *Comprehensive Plan Ad Hoc Committee* and Plan Commission, and later approved by the Village Board. Stakeholders represented organizations associated with civic, educational, religious, intergovernmental and home owner/condominium organizations. Approximately 72 people representing some 36 organizations were invited to the workshop. A total of six participants attended the forum.

The workshop was designed to solicit input regarding (1) qualities of the Village that were valued, and therefore important to protect and retain, and (2) issues and concerns to be addressed in the Plan that may require change, modification or enhancement. Comments were organized into categories relevant to economic, social and environmental qualities of the Village. Active dialogue between attendees and meeting facilitators generated input that will be used to help formulate plan goals and to identify plan recommendations.

A final exercise included envisioning the future of Elm Grove by stating desired conditions and circumstances.

The following statements represent a summary of public comment provided at the Workshop:

QUALITIES AND ISSUES

Housing

Qualities:

- Stable value and quality of private residences
- Well-kept properties (both public and private)
- A significant percentage of Village residents choose to remain in the local community, even when reducing the scale of their living accommodations

Issues:

- Although there is a perception that Elm Grove residents have “deep pockets,” there is a need for condominium units valued at an affordable \$200,000-\$250,000 price range
- There has not been an evaluation to determine local need for affordable housing options (seniors) that encourage long-term residents to remain in the Village
- Condominium occupants are less likely to become involved in Village affairs

Transportation

Qualities:

- Walkability of Village and neighborhoods
- Narrow roads that (by default) control traffic speed and traffic volumes

Issues:

- The downtown area, in particular, is in need of pedestrian-friendly improvements
- Expansion of the pathway system, as delineated in early plans, is necessary to implement
- There is a perceived focus on upgrading internal roads and intersections, and failure to observe transportation-related issues that occur on streets that lie at the Village’s borders
- There is a need for improving traffic circulation, congestion and safety in the downtown
- A need exists for sufficient vehicular parking east of the railroad tracks in the downtown area
- Increasing the speed of vehicular traffic on Watertown Plank Road adversely impacts businesses that rely on high visibility

- Beneficial and adverse impacts that result from widening or narrowing Watertown Plank Road – especially regarding commercial enterprise – needs to be measured prior to reconstruction of the road
- 124th Street extension to Blue Mound Road should be an important priority for the Village

Utilities and Community Facilities

Qualities:

- The library is a very important and valued community resource
- Services provided by the Public Works Department, Police and Fire Departments are first-rate
- The location of a public park and the municipal government facility within the heart of the community is a notable characteristic of the Village
- Serious efforts are made by municipal government to address Village issues
- Crime rates are low, and safety record is satisfactory
- The entire Village lies east of the subcontinental divide, and therefore qualifies for utilizing water from Lake Michigan

Issues:

- Threats to library budget (county governance study) may create obstacles for retaining library facility
- School facilities may not provide ample space to serve children in the future
- The cost of municipal water (public and private) has not been evaluated
- Negotiations for municipal water must be proactive and negotiated prior to collapse of well water quality

Natural and Cultural Resources, Community Design

Qualities:

- Mature tree canopy throughout the Village that engenders a “welcoming” feeling
- The Village retains a “small town atmosphere” that is characterized by its small population, modest-scale downtown area, narrow roads and absence of “urbanism”
- The Village remains proximate to cultural advantages provided by a metropolitan area, yet offers a retreat from urban environments
- Residents express community pride
- Volunteerism and citizen involvement is high
- Local events and parades engender community spirit
- Recreation programs

Issues:

- Concern that implementation of a riverwalk or open channel west of the railroad tracks will adversely impact business district parking facilities and income generated from businesses
- Historic elm trees are at risk for Dutch Elm Disease, and therefore require a stewardship plan that outlines maintenance, monitoring and revegetation efforts
- The Village Park has sustained a loss in value due to obliteration of mature tree canopy (flood mitigation engineering), and needs to be restored to capture this “small-town” feature

Economic Development

Qualities:

- The downtown district provides for proximate, clustered shopping for residents of the Village
- Basic living needs are met through existing commercial enterprise (total of 335 businesses Village-wide)
- Neighborhood retail has not yielded to franchise development
- Clustering of business fosters village feel
- High quality of new commercial buildings and development

Issues:

- Autumn Grove development on Blue Mound is not physically connected to other areas of the Village via paths or streets

- The physical quality of the downtown area suffers from an outdated appearance; building facades need to undergo redesign or enhancement
- The downtown area is in need of efforts to augment landscaping and plantings (especially on north side of the street)
- There is a perceived lack of space (infill) for business redevelopment

Intergovernmental Cooperation

Issues:

- Threats of increasing taxation (schools, county government) require scrutiny to ensure that the Village does not succumb to other governmental pressures
- Village staff should present information to citizens thoroughly, and allow residents to resolve decisions
- More communication is needed via local newsletters
- Decline of Milwaukee could potentially have an adverse impact the Village

Land Use

Qualities:

- Land use organization includes a balanced mix that serves residents and businesses

Issues:

- Railroad infrastructure creates a physical and troublesome “divide” within the village
- Downtown business district boundaries need to be identified through physical delineators
- Downtown redevelopment “guidelines” that recommend widening Watertown Plank Road via landscaped medians threaten to adversely impact businesses
- Ordinances that restrict commercial enterprise, such as signage regulations, work against promoting economic development and commercial successes

VISION

- Elm Grove engenders a “No place like home” feeling
- Residents are invested in the community over the long-term
- The community is characterized by a strong, established and concerned social network
- The Village is distinguished from neighboring communities by its small-town character that is human-scaled
- The namesake of the Village is exemplified by a mature canopy of elm trees
- The community continues to cultivate and nurture the environment that provides for a bird sanctuary
- Village Park increases as a valued and important natural resource
- The downtown is noted for its pedestrian-friendliness, sidewalk activity and memorable pocket parks while providing sufficient vehicular parking for commercial uses
- Villagers enjoy active recreation through an extensive path system that connects residents with destinations
- Affordable choices of housing are available for persons and families of all ages
- Public schools are noted for their excellent quality teaching and learning
- The Village provides a safe environment for its residents
- Retail and commercial enterprise provide substantial opportunities to employ youth that reside in the Village
- Municipal boards and commissions continue to represent a pure form of governance that is comprised of volunteers