Reimagine River Grove

Comprehensive Plan

July 2024



Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning

Acknowledgments

This project's success is due to the residents, business owners, village employees, and elected officials who helped create this plan.

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"The first time I drove through River Grove I said 'wow, this is it.' I wouldn't live anywhere else."

- River Grove resident


RIVER GROVE
MUNICIPAL
BUILDING
MAYOR
DAVID B. GUERIN
DAKTRONICS
GALAXY
RIVER GROVE
VILLAGE OF FRIENDLY NEIGHBORS

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Introduction

Reimagine River Grove is the village's first comprehensive plan. The plan was created through a collaborative process that engaged residents, interest groups, village staff, and others who call River Grove home. Research, data collection, and deep community engagement shaped the planning process into this comprehensive plan, meant to usher River Grove into its future — one where the community can grow, develop, and strengthen its ties not only within, but also by making it a landmark in the region.

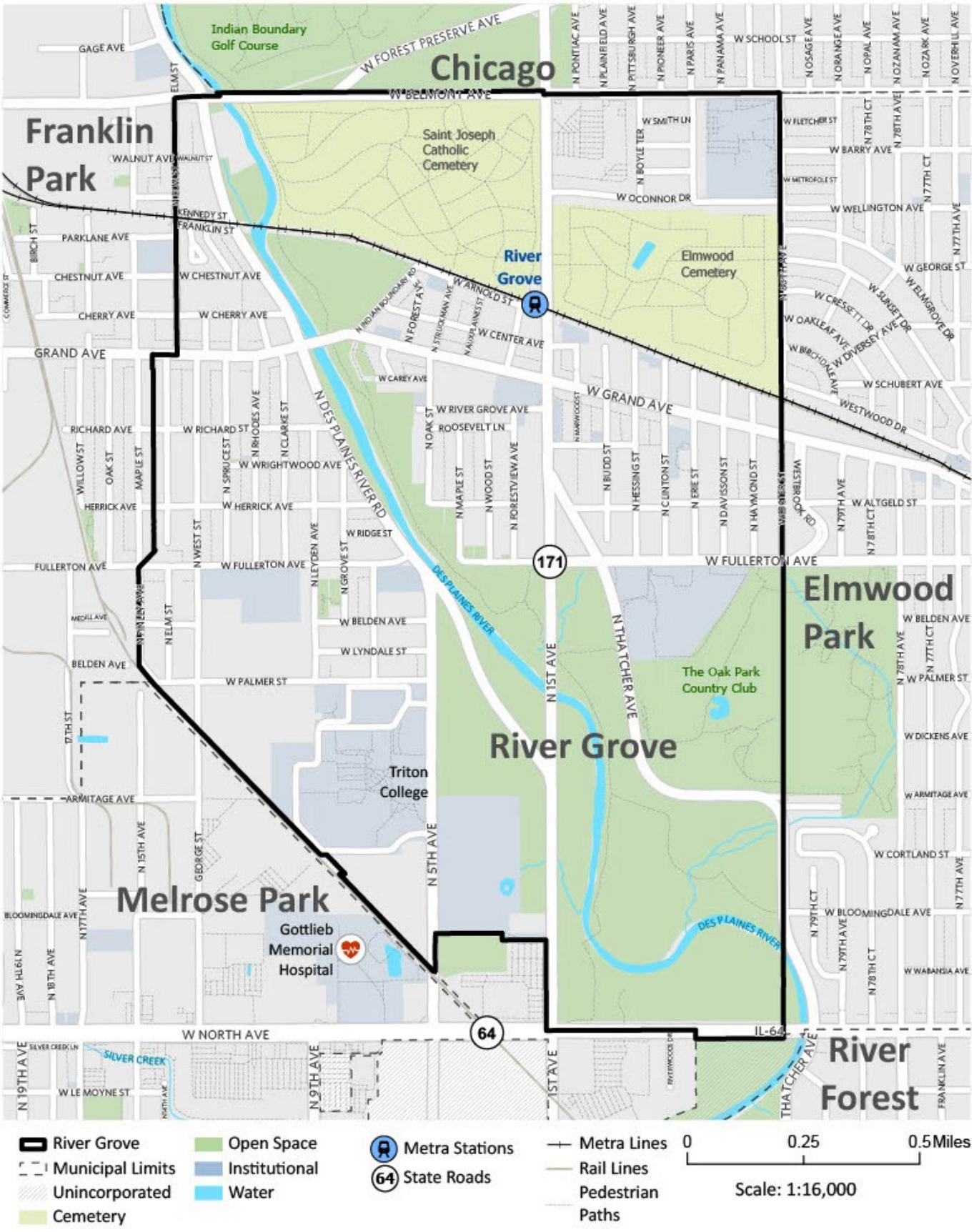
The comprehensive plan is a policy document and is not legally-binding. *Reimagine River Grove* is meant to be the village's guiding north star over the next ten to twenty years. The plan will serve as a framework for elected officials, village staff, and community members to make informed decisions regarding land use, community development, transportation, economic development, and green space improvements throughout River Grove. The plan is flexible and should be adapted as changes occur throughout the village, with updates to ensure the document stays relevant to River Grove's growth trajectory. If necessary, the comprehensive plan should be reviewed and updated every five years.







Figure 1: Study area map





The future of land use

Propelling River Grove into its envisioned future rests on a balanced approach to land use in supporting the village's growing diversity of needs and activities. Parks, employment centers, housing, and shopping centers all contribute to the village growing into a community that residents call home.

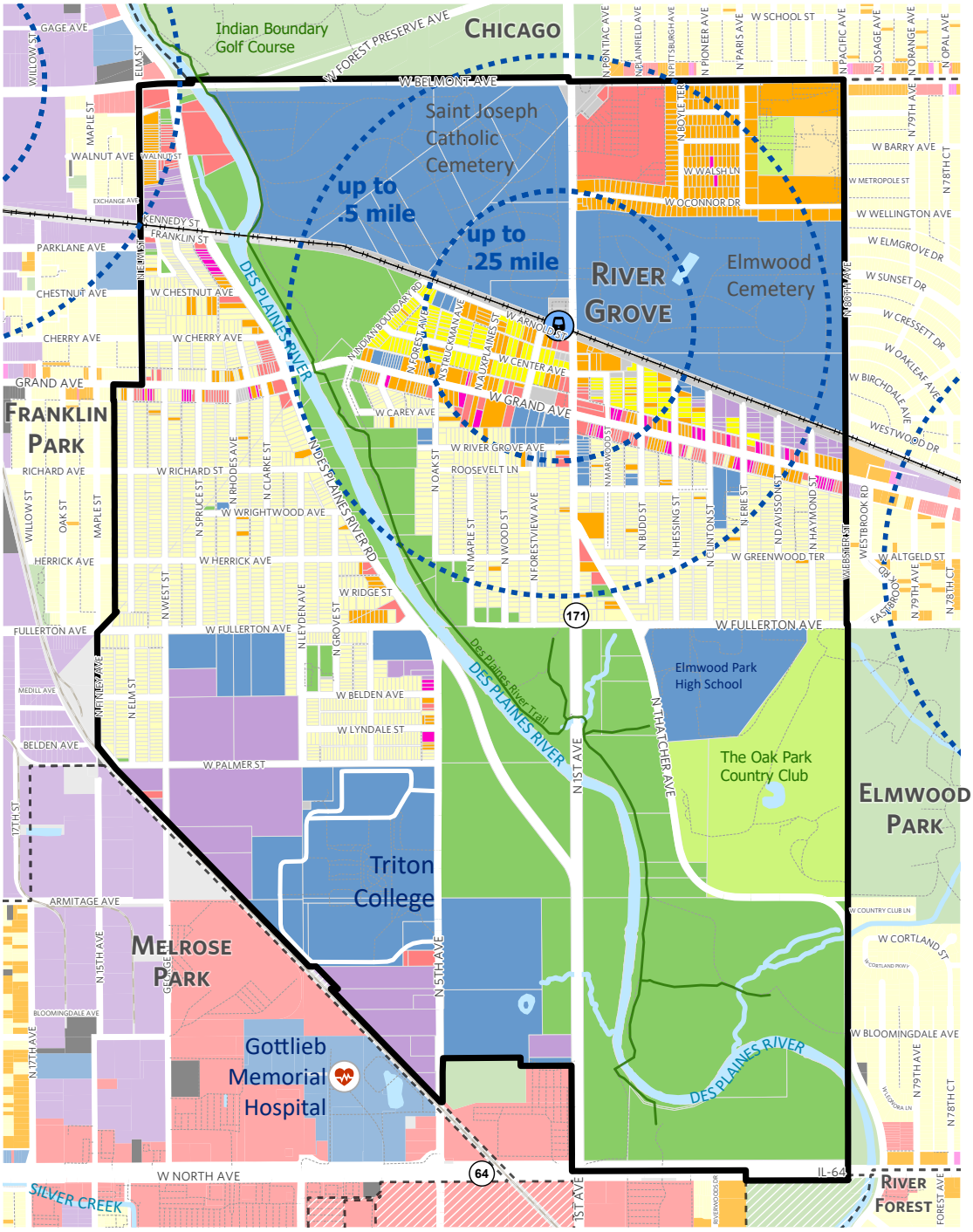
Following extensive community engagement and research on market forces and trends, the future land use map was created to act as a guide. The most common land uses in River Grove are defined in this chapter, as well as a map showing where these land uses are recommended to encourage their maximum potential. Parks and the desire for low-density multi-family housing was a common theme across all public engagement, as well as increasing walkability by providing more destinations for residents to visit.

While the future land use map is not legally binding, it does influence future zoning ordinances and amendments, which ultimately regulate how properties within River Grove may develop. It is important for the village to change the zoning code to reflect the future land use map so that the envisioned future can become a reality.

Figure 2: Land use designations in River Grove

Land use designation		Primary use	Corresponding zoning	Example
Single family residential		Single family detached	R1	Homes south of Grand Ave
		Single family attached	R2	
		Mobile home parks and trailer courts	R4	
Medium-density residential		Single family detached	R1	Homes north and south of Grand Ave
		Single family attached	R2	
		Duplexes and triplexes	R3	
Townhomes		Single family attached	R2	The Grove townhomes
Multi-family		Multi-family residential	R3, R4	River Grove Station
Urban mix with residential component		Urban mix with residential component	R4, C1	Grand Ave and Spruce
Commercial		Shopping malls	C4	Gene and Jude's
		Regional and community retail centers	C4	
		Single large-site retail	C4	
		Urban mix	R4, C1	
		Office	C1, C2	
		Cultural/entertainment	C1-4	
		Hotel/motel	C1-4	
Industrial		Mineral extraction	M2	Regent Products Corporation
		General industrial <100,000 sq ft	M1, M2	
		Manufacturing/processing >=100,000 sq ft	M2	
		Warehousing/distribution >=100,000 sq ft	M2	
		Flex or indeterminate >=100,000 sq ft	M1, M2	
		Storage	M1, M2	
Institutional		Medical facilities	G/E	River Grove School District
		K-12 educational facilities	G/E	
		Post-secondary educational facilities	G/E	
		Government administration and services	G/E	
		Religious facilities	R1-4, C1-4	
		Cemeteries	OS	
		Other institutional	G/E	
Open space		Open space, primarily recreation	OS	Jerome Huppert Woods
		Golf course	OS	
		Open space, primarily conservation	OS	
		Non-public open space	OS	
		Common open space in residential development	OS	
		Trail or greenway	OS	
		Open space	OS	
Water		Water	OS	Des Plaines River

Figure 3: River Grove future land use map



River Grove's Future Land Uses

- River Grove
- Parcels
- Unincorporated
- State Roads
- Metra Stations
- Metra Lines
- Rail Lines
- Single-family Residential
- Medium-density Residential
- Townhomes
- Multi-family Residential
- Urban Mix with Residential Component
- Commercial
- Industrial
- Institutional
- Public Open Space
- Private Open Space
- Water
- Transportation Oriented Development (TOD) Eligible Areas
- Transportation/Utilities/ Communication/Other

Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning, 2024.

Single family residential

Currently, the majority of River Grove's housing stock is comprised of single-family homes. This type of housing typically hosts one family and can come attached or detached. Attached homes are two-unit and townhouse residential developments while detached homes house a single family on its own lot. Much of River Grove south of Grand Avenue and north of Fullerton is comprised of single-family homes, as well as the area west of the Des Plaines River.



Medium density housing

Single-family homes are cherished in River Grove; once a resident moves in, they stay for a long time. To create some additional flexibility in housing choice, particularly surrounding transit, this classification seeks to allow for the building of small-scale multi-family units like attached single-family townhomes, duplexes, and triplexes.



Source: Google Maps

Townhomes

Townhomes can create vibrant, walkable communities with a mix of housing options, and are often located near amenities such as transit, parks, schools, and retail areas. Townhomes offer efficient use of space while maintaining privacy and individual ownership, making them an attractive option for young professionals, families, and seniors. Current townhomes are located within the new development, The Grove.



Source: The Grove

Multi-family residential

While not as abundant as its single-family counterpart, multi-family homes can also be found throughout River Grove. These are multi-unit homes, containing two or more units within the same structure and can be three or more stories high. Current multi-family homes are located north of Elmwood Cemetery and around the River Grove Metra station. There are plans to build more dense housing like this near the Metra station, encouraging transit-oriented development and walkability.



Source: Jonathan Splitt architects

Urban mix

The urban mix is a unique type of land use that is commonly known as mixed-use development. This land use is comprised of businesses, stores, and offices on the first floor with residential apartments and other living quarters above the ground floor. Storefronts open to the sidewalk, which creates a welcoming, walkable environment for pedestrians.



Source: Athletico Physical Therapy

Commercial

Grand Avenue is River Grove's commercial corridor. Lined with shops, businesses, offices, and the occasional residential unit in the upper floors, Grand Avenue bustles with activity as it carries people between and to their destinations. Most of River Grove's commercial development is made up of the food services industries. Institutions such as Gene and Jude's and Liborio Baking Company help put River Grove's commercial strength on the map.



Industrial

Industrial and manufacturing centers encompass activities anywhere between warehousing and storage to research and development facilities. These centers tend to be large employment hubs for a community. Most of River Grove's industrial areas are located on the west side of the village.



Source: Go2 Logistics

Institutional

Institutional spaces such as schools, libraries, and government buildings located throughout the village that provide public services to a community. Institutional spaces contribute to the quality of life of residents by providing better access to resources.



Source: River Grove School District

Open space and water

Parks, rivers, and recreational areas provide a space for residents and visitors to enjoy River Grove's natural areas in a sustainable and healthy way. The forest preserves draw visitors away from the hustle and bustle and into the quiet peace of nature, while the river provides a selection of water activities, such as fishing, boating, and kayaking. The Des Plaines River is an example of a source of nature in the heart of an urban environment.



Source: Village of River Grove

Transportation and accessibility

Vision statement: A reimagined River Grove provides safer and more efficient paths to destinations both inside and outside of town.

An accessible transportation system serves as a catalyst for opportunity, facilitating the seamless flow of people, ideas, and goods. The streets of River Grove are arenas of vibrant social interaction, where safety and accessibility empower all residents to navigate with confidence and ease.



Goal: Improve roadway safety for all users

Recommendation 1: Reduce speeds on neighborhood roads

Most residents live on low-volume and low-speed streets. Yet, speeding often occurs on these roads. Caused in part by delays from passing and stopped trains, vehicles often cut through neighborhood streets at unsafe speeds. Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) data shows that River Grove has a higher crash rate on local roads than nearby municipalities. This is significant because speed is the number one factor in serious and fatal injuries from automobile collisions. Community members listed reducing speeds on neighborhood roads as a top priority for the plan. Intentional planning and design could create a self-enforcing street, which encourages drivers to reduce travel speeds.

Strategies

1.1 Consider placement of speed bumps on neighborhood crash and speeding hot spots.

Implementation timeline: short

Funding sources:

- Community Development Block Grants



Raised crosswalk as a form of traffic-calming.
Source: The Salt Lake Tribune

1.2 Install traffic calming measures near key destinations like schools, parks, and municipal buildings.

Implementation timeline: short-medium

Funding sources:

- Safe Routes to School Program
- Transportation Alternatives Program
- Local or state transportation funding
- Grants focused on child safety or active transportation

1.3 Place "your speed" feedback signs on streets with high incidences of speeding.

Implementation timeline: short

Funding sources:

- Highway Safety Improvement Program
- Local road safety funds
- State highway safety grants
- Federal safety improvement funds
- Public-private partnerships with insurance companies or health organizations



Speeding Awareness Monitor.
Source: The Powerful Effect of Immediate Feedback — Dr Zac Fitz-Walter (zacfitzwalter.com)

Case study

The Washington Avenue repaving and improvement project
Philadelphia, PA

Completed in 2023, this innovative project serves as a model for enhancing street safety, efficiency, and sustainability. Managed by Philadelphia's Office of Transportation, Infrastructure, and Sustainability and Department of Streets, the project aimed to improve transportation safety and curbside management, heavily involving community and legislative support. A year after this project was implemented, a report showed impacts such as reduced speeding, fewer illegal parking instances, and maintained vehicle travel times and transit operations. Notably, the project spurred increases in Route 64 bus ridership and bicycle usage, with bike volumes surging up to 181% during peak hours.



Traffic-calming along Washington Avenue.
Source: City of Philadelphia

1.4 Explore closing certain routes to through traffic or designate local traffic only.

Implementation timeline: short-medium

Funding sources:

- Surface Transportation Program – Local
- Community development grants

1.5 Install rapid-flashing beacons at key crossings.

Implementation timeline: short-medium

Funding sources:

- Federal Highway Administration safety funds
- The Illinois Transportation Enhancement Program



Rapid-flashing beacons.
Source: Google Maps

Case study

Griffith Park Drive closure
Los Angeles, CA

Los Angeles' closure of Griffith Park Drive enhanced urban livability and safety by restricting through-traffic to eliminate cut-through traffic into the area; calming traffic speeds; and separating active transportation facilities from auto-related activities. This strategic approach resulted in a large reduction of nearly 2,000 cars cutting through the area, which promotes the safety and comfort of pedestrians and cyclists alike.



Road closure on Griffith Park Drive, allowing for a cyclist to comfortably use the road.
Source: LA City Council Member, 4th District

Recommendation 2: Improve access and safety getting to schools

As a relatively compact community, River Grove's two elementary schools are walking distance for many students. However, certain places within the village lack accessible sidewalks and marked crossings, which can result in conflicts between drivers and pedestrians.

River Grove Elementary, Rhodes Elementary, and Elmwood Park High School are located on or near state roads, which see high traffic volumes and speeds. Unfortunately, there have been multiple incidents of students being hit by automobiles in recent years. River Grove's control of state routes is limited. However, creating a special enforcement zone could allow local law-enforcement to better enforce the rules of the road.

Strategies

2.1 Fill in sidewalk gaps and place pedestrian crossings around schools when possible (e.g., West Fullerton Avenue near Elmwood Park High School).

Implementation timeline: medium

Funding sources:

- Safe Routes to Schools Program
- Active Transportation Alliance
- America Walks

2.2 Install additional marked crossings and other safety improvements such as signage and flashing lights near Rhodes Elementary.

Implementation timeline: short-medium

Funding sources:

- AARP Community Challenge

Case study

Crosswalks to classrooms
Tallahassee, FL

Tallahassee's project promotes pedestrian safety around schools and underscores the effectiveness of using art and design for traffic calming. As a result, driver behavior changed through the evidence of lower traffic speeds. Drivers even came to a complete stop while pedestrians crossed. This initiative not only contributes to the aesthetic enhancement of the urban landscape but also plays a crucial role in protecting the lives of pedestrians, especially young students navigating their way to and from school.



Source: Crosswalks to classrooms



2.3 Strategically work with IDOT to create school zones on routes where available.

Collaborating with IDOT will be integral in establishing designated school zones along state routes near schools. These zones typically feature reduced speed limits during school hours, enhanced signage, and traffic calming measures to ensure drivers slow down and exercise caution.

Implementation timeline: medium-long

Funding sources:

- Safe Routes to Schools Program
- Active Transportation Alliance
- America Walks

Resources:

- The Active Transportation Alliance has crafted a comprehensive resource guide — Working Collaboratively with IDOT. The guide lists strategies designed to foster a successful collaboration with IDOT and is intended to support municipalities in making the vision of Complete Streets a tangible reality, thereby enhancing the safety, accessibility, and sustainability of local transportation networks.

2.4 Continue and expand enforcement efforts against speeding, running red lights, and other dangerous and aggressive driving behaviors.

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration defines aggressive driving as when individuals commit a combination of moving traffic offenses to endanger other persons or property. Enhanced enforcement to deter unsafe driving includes targeted traffic stops, the use of speed cameras, and public awareness campaigns about the consequences of dangerous driving near schools.

Implementation timeline: short-medium

Funding sources:

- The State and Community Highway Safety Grant Program (Section 402)

Resources:

- Strategies on how to address aggressive driving

2.5 Form a coalition with Melrose Park and Canadian National (CN) Railway to create a safe route to school for Rhodes Elementary students who live south of the CN right-of-way.

Building a partnership between River Grove, the neighboring community of Melrose Park, and CN Railway could help to develop a safe passage for students traveling to Rhodes Elementary from south of the tracks. This coalition would work together to identify and mitigate barriers to safe travel.

Implementation timeline: long

Funding sources:

- Safe Routes to Schools Program



Source: Village of Melrose Park

Case study

Rail coalition
Fort Collins, CO

In Fort Collins, a strategic coalition aimed at enhancing public safety around railway lines has showcased the potential of collaborative efforts between local government, federal agencies, and railway companies. This initiative, establishing quiet zones by focusing on reduced train horn noise, represents a comprehensive approach to public safety and community well-being.

The heart of this strategy lies in the partnership between the city of Fort Collins, the Federal Railroad Administration, and Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railway. Together, these entities embarked on a mission to address community concerns about noise pollution while ensuring that safety at railway crossings was not compromised. This illustrates the effective use of coalition-building as a strategy for promoting public safety.



A Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railway train traveling along Mason Street.
Source: City of Fort Collins

Recommendation 3: Encourage IDOT to implement traffic calming measures

All major roadways in River Grove — such as Thatcher Avenue, Grand Avenue, and Des Plaines River Road. — are under IDOT's jurisdiction. While this limits what River Grove can do on these streets, there are recommendations IDOT could consider to make these roads safer. These recommendations could decrease the amount of effort IDOT needs to contribute to incorporate traffic calming, which can quicken implementation timelines.

3.1 Initiate a traffic study to examine potential redesigns of Grand Avenue.

Implementation timeline: medium-long

Funding sources:

- Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement

3.2 Encourage IDOT to re-stripe parking lanes on Grand Avenue east of Thatcher Avenue, continuing west to Des Plaines River Road.

Implementation timeline: medium-long

Funding sources:

- Highway Safety Improvement Program

3.3 Install rubber curbs or flex posts in the center line of each road near an intersection.

Implementation timeline: short-medium

Funding sources:

- Surface Transportation Program – Local

Case study

Turn calming program
New York City, NY

The New York City Department of Transportation's turn calming program demonstrated substantial safety improvements at treated intersections. Introducing rubber curbs and flexible delineators contributed to an 18% decrease in pedestrian injuries, a 33% reduction in pedestrian severe injuries, and notably, a 60% decrease in senior pedestrians killed or severely injured. Additionally, the median left turn speeds saw a 54% reduction, with the average left turn speeds decreasing by 53%. Right turn speeds also decreased significantly, illustrating the broad efficacy of these treatments in calming traffic.



West End Avenue & 96th Street, Manhattan.
Source: NYC Department of Transportation

3.4 Modify traffic lights to hold all cars for a few seconds while pedestrians are given a walk symbol.

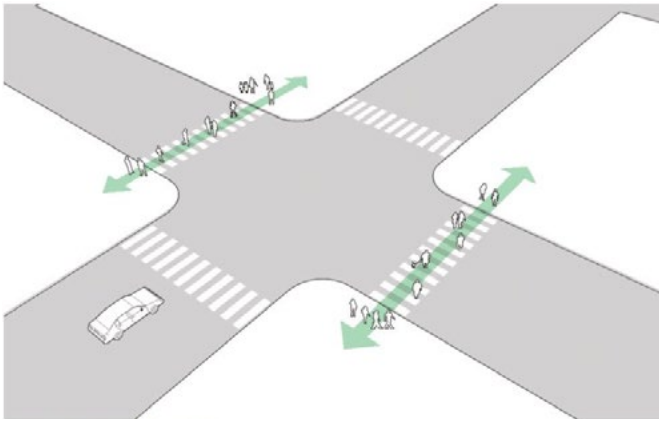
Implementation timeline: short-medium

Funding sources:

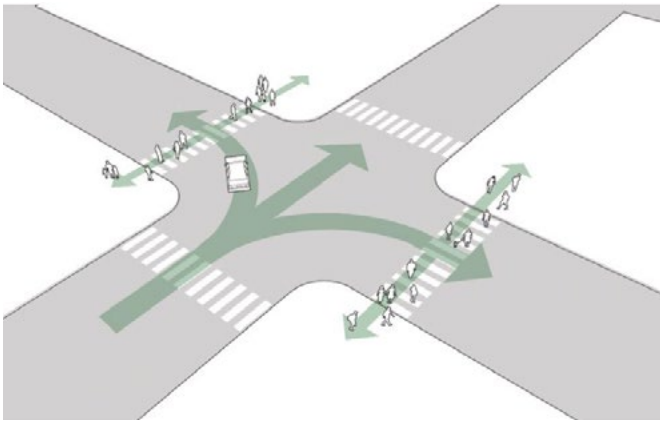
- Safe Streets for All

Resources:

- How to implement a leading pedestrian interval



Phase 1: Pedestrians only
Pedestrians are given a minimum three to seven second head start entering the intersection



Phase 2: Pedestrians and cars
Through and turning traffic are given the green light. Turning traffic yields to pedestrians already in the crosswalk.

A leading pedestrian interval allows pedestrians to cross while automobile traffic is stopped. This creates additional visibility for pedestrians.
Source: National Association of Transportation Officials







Goal: Fill in gaps in the bike and pedestrian network

Recommendation 4: Increase east-west connectivity

Many of the village's services, forest preserve entrances, and commercial development are east of the Des Plaines River. However, residents wished there were more points of connection and easier ways to cross from the east side of the village to the west side, where most of these services lie. Creating access points, walkability, and additional destinations could encourage residents to travel from one side of town to another. Instead of the river acting as a divide, it can become a part of everyday transportation, whether it's by walking, biking, or rolling.

Strategies

4.1 Work with IDOT to implement streetscape improvements to improve safety at Grand Avenue and River Road.

Implementation timeline: medium

Funding sources:

- Highway Safety Improvement Program
- Surface Transportation Program - Local



Streetscape improvements include trees, benches, and trash receptacles along the street, creating traffic-calming and a cozier pedestrian environment.
Source: Denise Retallack, Arcadis IBIS Group

4.2 Construct a pedestrian bridge over the Des Plaines River at Fullerton Avenue.

Implementation timeline: long

Funding sources:

- Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE) grants
- Economic Development Program

Resources:

- Bob Kerrey Pedestrian Bridge - There are many resources that illustrate how pedestrian bridges can connect communities, foster recreational activities, and serve as landmarks. The project's funding model, design process, and community benefits offer valuable insights for similar efforts.
- CMAP Inventory of Greenways and Trails
- Illinois Greenway and Trails Program

4.3 Create bike greenways on one-way streets to connect to trails and other destinations.

Implementation timeline: medium-long

Funding sources:

- Illinois Transportation Enhancement Program
- Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement

4.4 Provide a pedestrian connection to the Fullerton Woods Family Picnic Area.

Implementation timeline: short-medium

Funding sources:

- The Recreational Trails Program
- Bike Path Program

Resources:

- The Recreational Trails Program
- Bike Path Program

Recommendation 5: Increase pedestrian access to forest preserves

The Forest Preserves of Cook County are one of River Grove's most valuable assets. However, residents note difficulties accessing them as a pedestrian. Areas such as the Fullerton Woods Family Picnic Area, Jerome Huppert Woods, Evans Field, and Sunset Bridge Meadow all lack safe pedestrian connections, while missing connections also limit the accessibility of the Des Plaines River Trail. Improving connections could capitalize on the investments the Forest Preserves of Cook County are making in trail network.

Strategies

5.1 Work with the Forest Preserves of Cook County, Leyden Township, and IDOT to add sidewalks and increase accessibility.

Implementation timeline: medium

Funding sources:

- Community Development Block Grants
- Safe Routes to School Program





"It can be very challenging to bike around River Grove. While the sidewalk network is good, there are few bike amenities."

- River Grove resident

5.2 Continue partnership with the Forest Preserves of Cook County to bring planned improvements to the Des Plaines River Trail.

Implementation timeline: medium-long

Funding sources:

- Surface Transportation Program - Shared
- Transportation Alternatives Program

Resources:

- Appalachian Trail and Pacific Crest Trail

5.3 Add sidewalks or a marked crossing into the trailhead at Fullerton Avenue and 1st Avenue.

Implementation timeline: short

Funding sources:

- Surface Transportation Program - Shared
- Transportation Alternatives Program

Resources:

- Request for new facilities and infrastructure through Cook County Forest Preserve's Capital Improvement Plan
- Illinois Greenways and Trails Program
- American Trails

Recommendation 6: Improve ADA compliance

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) outlines design standards to make a building, facility, or infrastructure physically accessible to people with disabilities. One of CMAP's tasks is bringing the region's municipalities and communities up to compliance by offering tools, resources, and trainings. Communities can also move towards compliance by creating a transition plan and hiring an ADA coordinator to carry out that plan.

As the population of River Grove continues to age, people with disabilities will make up a larger portion. Taking steps to solve this problem could not only protect the village from ADA lawsuits, but could also make it community more walkable for everyone — which is the top transportation goal from the plan's visioning survey.

Strategies

6.1 Establish an ADA coordinator by either hiring an external candidate or designating someone who is already on staff.



Implementation timeline: short

Resources:

- The Role of an ADA Coordinator
- ADA National Network
- CMAP Accessibility and ADA

6.2 Initiate an ADA transition plan and self-evaluation, ensuring engagement with people with disabilities.



Implementation timeline: short-medium

Resources:

- CMAP Accessibility and ADA
- ADA Best Practices Toolkit for State and Local Governments
- PROWAG ADA Transition Plan Guide

Goal: Increase transit use

Recommendation 7: Improve transit stop accessibility and amenities

River Grove is served by the Chicago Transit Authority (CTA), Pace, and Metra. While River Grove is widely accessible by transit, it lacks amenities such as bus shelters and viable waiting areas for transit stops. Transit could become a more viable and realistic form of transportation if it's comfortable, safe, and easy to use.

Strategies

7.1 Construct a pedestrian bridge over Thatcher Avenue to provide a safe crossing near the Metra station.

Implementation timeline: medium-long

Funding sources:

- Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE) grants
- Economic Development Program
- Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement Program

7.2 Work with Pace to provide accessible routes to all their stops in the village and add amenities such as benches and shelters at key stops.

Implementation timeline: medium-long

Resources:

- Installing PACE bus shelters
- Metra passenger amenities



A pedestrian bridge that has an ADA-compliant ramp.
Source: STS Steel



Recommendation 8: Work with nearby municipalities and transit service boards to increase service

COVID-19 changed the way people travel. More people are working from home and taking midday trips more often. As the CTA, Pace, and Metra adapt to these trends, building a coalition of nearby municipalities could strengthen the village's voice. Currently, residents rank public transit as the least desirable option for travel because it is unreliable and does not come at convenient times. The following strategies could help alleviate these discomforts so that transit can become a more attractive option to travel.

Strategies

8.1 Engage with nearby municipalities to advocate for increased service along shared lines.

This strategy involves forming partnerships with neighboring municipalities neighboring to collectively advocate for increased public transit services along shared lines. By presenting a united front, to the village could leverage greater influence in negotiations with transit providers, thus enhancing service frequency and reliability, which, in turn, could boost public transit use among residents.

Implementation timeline: medium

Funding sources:

- Surface Transportation Program - Local

8.2 Work with the CTA to explore how more buses can make River Grove a destination.

Implementation timeline: medium-long



Recommendation 9: Grow around key transit corridors

In 2014, the village worked with the Regional Transportation Authority on a transit-oriented development (TOD) plan. One of the hallmarks of a TOD is housing in walking vicinity to transit stations; this milestone was accomplished by the development of the River Grove Station Apartments. Today, these apartments are fully leased, allowing tenants to be close to work, shopping, and transit. The village could continue to expand River Grove's TODs by implementing other strategies so every community member can live, work, and play in the community.

What is Transit-Oriented Development?

Transit-oriented development is commonly defined as high-density, mixed-use development within walking distance (0.5 mile) of transit.



Source: Trimet

Strategies

9.1 Expand the permittable TOD area to include areas of Grand Avenue.

This strategy aims to broaden the designated TOD area to include sections of Grand Avenue through zoning regulation amendments. Expanding this zone could facilitate projects that align with TOD principles, potentially transforming Grand Avenue into a corridor that supports increased density, mixed-use development, and pedestrian-friendly spaces.

Implementation timeline: medium-long

Case study

Transit-oriented development program
Portland, OR

Portland, renowned for its forward-thinking city planning, began its TOD program in 1998. Since its conception, the program has invested over $40 million in Portland's transit system, which supported the construction of nearly 7,000 new housing units in within its TOD area. The program acquired grant funding, investments for public spaces and services, and land for future affordable housing. The expansion of the TOD program encouraged higher-density development near transit lines, making it easier for developments to include mixed-use projects. This enhanced access to public transportation, thereby reducing urban sprawl and fostering communities where people can live, work, and play without relying on cars.



Source: Portland Metro

Goal: Reduce freight-related delays

Recommendation 10: Explore the feasibility of grade separation

Congestion from freight trains, including stopped trains, is a consistent issue in River Grove. Bisecting the village from the east and west, the two crossings in River Grove — Thatcher Avenue and Des Plaines River Road — respectively cause heavy delays for the average motorist. Grade separation — which involves construction of either an underpass or an overpass — could be a possible solution to this longstanding issue.

Strategies

10.1 Conduct a Planning and Environmental Linkages study to determine the feasibility of grade-separation.



Implementation timeline: medium-long

Funding sources:

- Grade Crossing Protection Fund

Resources:

- USDOT Federal Highway Administration

10.2 Collaborate with nearby municipalities pursuing grade separation projects.



Implementation timeline: medium-long

Funding sources:

- Surface Transportation Program - Shared

Resources:

- CREATE program

10.3 Coordinate with CN Railway and Canadian Pacific Kansas City to remain informed of changes in schedule or frequency.

This strategy involves establishing and maintaining communication channels with major freight railroads, such as CN Railway and Canadian Pacific Kansas City. Regular coordination would enable the village to stay informed about changes in train schedules or frequencies, allowing for better planning and mitigation of potential disruptions caused by freight train operations. This type of coordination often focuses on improving at-grade crossing safety, scheduling freight movements to minimize impact on local traffic, and planning for future rail infrastructure improvements.



Implementation timeline: medium-long

Funding sources:

- The Railway-Highway Grade Crossing Safety (Section 130) program

Environment, climate readiness, and parks

Vision statement: A reimagined River Grove is green and resilient, using natural solutions along with supporting infrastructure to improve quality of life and reduce climate impacts.

River Grove works to improve quality of life by addressing flooding and mitigating climate change impacts through green infrastructure, programming, and events. Supporting the continued implementation of green infrastructure, expanding programming and park services to residents, and providing safe drinking water to residents can be guided by the goals, recommendations, and strategies.



Goal: Increase access to parks, recreational activities, and programming

Recommendation 1: Explore establishing a park district to serve the east side of River Grove

Park districts provide a multitude of services to the community, creating public spaces and recreation as well as identifying park development and redevelopment priorities. Park access for residents is not evenly spread across the village. Some residents have several parks located nearby while other residents have none. The southwest side of River Grove is a part of a park district, but the east side of the village is not. Establishing a park district on the east side would generate tax revenue and capacity to fund new parks and programming, giving residents across River Grove more access to parks.

Strategies

1.1 Work with or consult Municipal Research and Services Center to explore strategies to establishing a park district.

Implementation timeline: short-medium

Resources:

- Illinois Association of Park Districts Guide to Organizing a Park District

1.2 Identify service area of potential park district.

Implementation timeline: short

1.3 Partner with the Veteran's Park District to explore expanding park services.

Implementation timeline: medium



Source: VPD Guide Drive

Recommendation 2: Transform vacant lots into pocket parks, especially on the east side of River Grove

Pocket Parks are smaller parks or green spaces found in urban neighborhoods. Transforming vacant lots into green space or parks would both beautify areas of River Grove and provide more access to public parks on the village's east side. Pocket parks can serve as a gathering space for residents, and residents expressed interest in public art and dog parks.

Strategies

2.1 Identify underused or vacant lots.

Implementation timeline: short

Resources:

- Creating mini-parks for increased physical activity

2.2 Collect community input and gauge interest about individual lots.

Implementation timeline: medium

2.3 Pursue partnerships, grants, and funding for pocket park construction, operation, and maintenance.

Implementation timeline: medium-long

Funding sources:

- Playworld®
- The Trust for Public Land
- Project for Public Spaces community placemaking grants
- Landscape Structures®



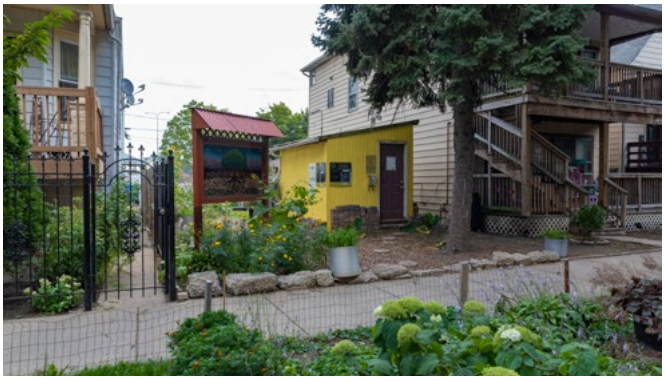
Example of a pocket park in Manhattan, New York
Source: MTA Away Midtown Manhattan

2.4 Create a management plan for pocket parks.

Implementation timeline: medium-long

Resources:

- AARP placemaking guides



Example of a pocket park in Avondale, Chicago

Recommendation 3: Establish a recreational center

Recreational centers provide a dedicated space for residents to gather and interact with each other through outdoor recreational sports and activities. Currently, River Grove's recreational activities are housed in River Grove Elementary School; having a designated recreational center could further expand activities the village already offers.

Strategies

3.1 Continue with plans to establish a recreational center in River Grove.

Implementation timeline: long

Funding sources:

- Park and Recreational Facilities Construction program
- National Recreation and Park Association grant and fundraising resources
- National Park Service State and Local Assistance programs

Resources:

- Starting a Recreational Center in Your Town -
  This resource provides more guidance about establishing a recreational center, which could help further the development of the center on a designated parcel.

3.2 Identify and pursue funding and partnerships to build a recreational center.

Implementation timeline: medium

Funding sources:

- State Park and Recreational Construction program
- National Recreation and Park Association grant
- National Park Service State and Local Assistance programs

Resources:

- Starting a Recreational Center in Your Town



Example of recreation center in Naperville, Illinois.
Source: Williams Architects

Recommendation 4: Continue to provide programming for River Grove residents and/or increase programming

River Grove residents enjoy annual events such as Flannel Fest and River Front Fest. However, there is a strong desire for increased programming, especially from parents who want to see age-specific events for older children. Some activities youth would like are swimming classes, soccer, and skateboarding. Moreover, activating the Des Plaines River is a goal for the village, could help increase activities or programming for residents, which could serve as a source of revenue (e.g., canoe or kayak rentals).

Strategies

4.1 Create programming for 10- to 13-year olds.

Implementation timeline: medium-long

Funding sources:

- MLB Youth Development Foundation Grant: Baseball Tomorrow Fund

Resources:

- Franklin Park programs - The Village of Franklin Park offers program for children as young as five to adults. These programs range from after school programs, classes, and trips. Residents are able to register on the village site.

4.2 Collaborate with the Forest Preserves of Cook County to increase activity along the Des Plaines River and incorporate activities or programming around the river for residents.

Implementation timeline: medium-long

Resources:

- Boating, canoeing, and kayaking - The Forest Preserves of Cook County have recreational activities available, with the potential to expand those activities to River Grove though partnerships.





Goal: Make River Grove climate resilient

Recommendation 5: Increase tree coverage in River Grove

Heat is a major health risk, especially for outdoor workers, older adults, people with certain health conditions, people without access to air conditioning, and communities with less tree cover. The forest preserves and greener areas lower surface temperatures by providing cover from the sun and retaining less heat, unlike concrete. Green spaces could improve River Grove's air quality, which is impacted by freight and industrial land uses. River Grove's urban forest could reduce heat, improve air quality, beautify neighborhoods, and help minimize flooding.

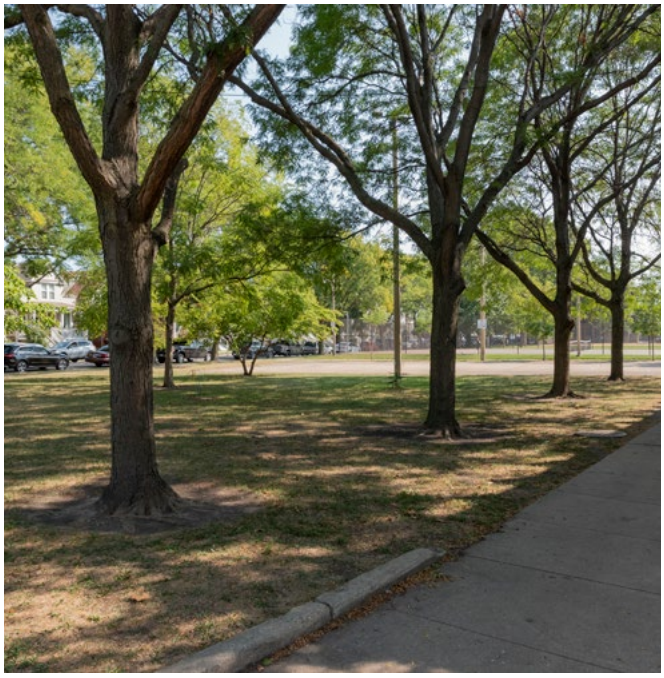
Strategies

5.1 Adopt a tree preservation ordinance.

Implementation timeline: medium

Resources:

- Model ordinance templates from the Chicago Region Trees Initiative



Case study

Village of Montgomery public review draft
Montgomery, IL

Montgomery's Unified Development Ordinance includes a tree management and preservation plan, which states that trees six inches or taller may not be removed without an approved plan from the zoning officer. The zoning officer determines whether the tree is eligible for removal if it meets these conditions:

- the tree is dead or dying
- the tree is a hazard
- the tree prevents development
- the tree isn't a preferred species for the village

Mature trees that are removed must be replaced. Montgomery prioritized trees that are native or naturalized to northeastern Illinois, and drought- and salt-tolerant. With these ordinances, Montgomery preserves and encourages both the planting and maturation of trees, to maximize the benefits for its community.

Source: Montgomery Unified Development Ordinance



5.2 Update development regulations to better support the urban forest (e.g., update tree and plant species list, tree planting standards, and tree replacement requirements).

Implementation timeline: medium

Resources:

- Tree species list

5.3 Host a community tree planting event and educate residents on urban tree benefits, planting, and maintenance.

Implementation timeline: short

Resources:

- Tree Keepers program

Recommendation 6: Invest in green infrastructure to manage stormwater

Like many older towns, River Grove suffers from urban flooding and poor drainage. Flooding also impacts water quality during combined sewer overflows. When untreated sewage and stormwater runoff flow into the river, sewage contamination enters the river, affecting water quality and the ecosystem, recreation, and safety surrounding the river.

Investing in green infrastructure such as rain gardens, stormwater ponds, and permeable pavement provides additional stormwater storage. This can reduce flooding and improve the sewer's ability to handle stormwater while providing additional benefits like increased open space, urban cooling, improved air and water quality, and more inviting streets. River Grove has implemented some green infrastructure — green alleys were installed throughout the community in partnership with the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District (MWRD) of Greater Chicago. The green alley program was completed in 2023 and residents reported reduced basement flooding.

Strategies

6.1

Partner with the MWRD to study flooding issues and identify solutions that reduce flooding and provide benefits to the community.



Implementation timeline: medium

Resources:

- MWRD: reducing flooding and stormwater partnerships
  The MWRD's website includes information tools to address and lessen flooding, as well as partnership with the MWRD.

6.2

Use capital improvement planning to establish an annual green alley program and add green infrastructure solutions into street improvements and resurfacing projects.



Implementation timeline: medium-long

Funding sources:

- MWRD green infrastructure partnership
- CMAP Capital Improvement Technical Assistance

6.3 Partner with other public, non-profit, and private entities to construct stormwater management improvements into parks, schoolyards, parking lots, and other sites.

Implementation timeline: medium-long

Funding sources:

- Illinois River Watershed Partnership

6.4 Foster partnership with neighboring villages through Cross Community Climate Collaborative.

Implementation timeline: long

6.5 Create additional programs and initiatives for residents without alleys to manage stormwater flooding.

Implementation timeline: medium-long



Source: Village of River Grove

Case study

Green stormwater infrastructure in the right-of-way
Milwaukee, WI

In 2013, the City of Milwaukee created its Green Streets Stormwater Management Plan. Its main goal was to manage 36 million gallons of stormwater — equivalent to 143 acres of green space — using green infrastructure by 2030. To achieve this goal, the city partnered with municipal services and the Environmental Collaboration Office, which fostered other partnerships with non-profits and external stakeholders to promote and develop long-term plans and city ordinance updates.

The City of Milwaukee also partnered with the Milwaukee Metropolitan Sewerage District, a regional government agency that provides water reclamation and flood management services. The Milwaukee Metropolitan Sewerage District partnered with member communities to fund green stormwater infrastructure projects on municipal properties. The city installed bioswales, which collect and filter stormwater and has captured 105,997 gallons of water.



Source: Alliance for the Great Lakes

Recommendation 7: Inventory and maintain existing and future stormwater infrastructure and protect homes and businesses from basement backups

Most of River Grove is served by a combined sewer system that collects stormwater and sanitary sewage in the same pipe. When it rains, combined sewer systems quickly reach capacity, causing sewer backups in basements of homes or businesses that are not protected by an overhead sewer or a backflow prevention device. While investing in green infrastructure and stormwater system maintenance will help protect homes from basement backups, investing in the operations and maintenance of existing and future stormwater and sewer infrastructure is as important as capital investments. Inadequate maintenance and poor infrastructure conditions are a common culprit of urban flooding and drainage problems, especially during extreme storms. River Grove published a stormwater management plan that provides some education on stormwater and river contamination.

Strategies

7.1 Consider implementation of a stormwater fee to fund maintenance and capital improvement projects.

Implementation timeline: short-medium

Resources:

- Stormwater utility fee

A stormwater fee is a village or city tax that addresses flooding caused by sewer overflow. Revenue from a stormwater fee depends on how the fee is imposed and its rate. The fee could be a percentage added to a water bill, a flat rate based on the percentage of impermeable surfaces, or a fee added onto property taxes.

City	Basis fee	Rate
Highland Park	Per unit of impervious surface	$4.50/month
Rolling Meadows	Per unit of impervious surface	$3.36/month
Downers Grove	Per unit of impervious surface	$8.40/month
Northbrook	Drinking water use	$2.33/month
Aurora	Flat fee	$3.45/month
Orland Park	Drinking water use	$3.74/month
Tinley Park	Drinking water use	$1.68/month
Richton Park	Flat fee	$5.97/month

Source: How different cities impose their stormwater fees

7.2 Inventory and assess conditions of combined sewer infrastructure.



Implementation timeline: medium

7.3 Establish a rebate program for overhead sewers, backflow preventers, and other improvements.



Implementation timeline: medium

7.4 Educate residents, landlords, and business owners on flood prevention, response, and recovery.



Implementation timeline: ongoing

Case study

Sewer rebate program
Lincolnwood, IL

The Village of Lincolnwood offers three sewer rebate programs to help offset the costs residents face related to problems and improvements to their property:

1. The sewer line repair rebate program is for residents whose private sanitary lines have failed and need a repair or replacement.
2. The private flood control rebate helps residents make improvements to protect their property. Covered projects include overhead sewer conversions and backwater check valve installation.
3. The private drainage rebate program offers a rebate from the village for drainage improvements on private property that include, but are not limited to, the installation of French drains, sump pumps, drywells, pop-up drains, and re-grading.

Source: Village of Lincolnwood Rebate Programs

Recommendation 8: Coordinate with partners to reduce river flood risk

Flooding from the Des Plaines River, including the Grand Avenue Bridge, is a major challenge for River Grove. Solving the challenge of river flooding cannot be done by the village alone — it requires extensive studies, investments, and collaboration with a host of entities such as the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Illinois Department of Natural Resources, IDOT, and others. Coordination and preparation could improve River Grove's protection from river flooding.

Strategies

8.1 Participate in the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' Fullerton-Grand levee project.

Implementation timeline: medium-long

8.2 Explore opportunities to increase collaboration with key implementers and share local knowledge on river flooding challenges and desired improvements.

Implementation timeline: medium-long

8.3 Continue investment in emergency preparedness and response.

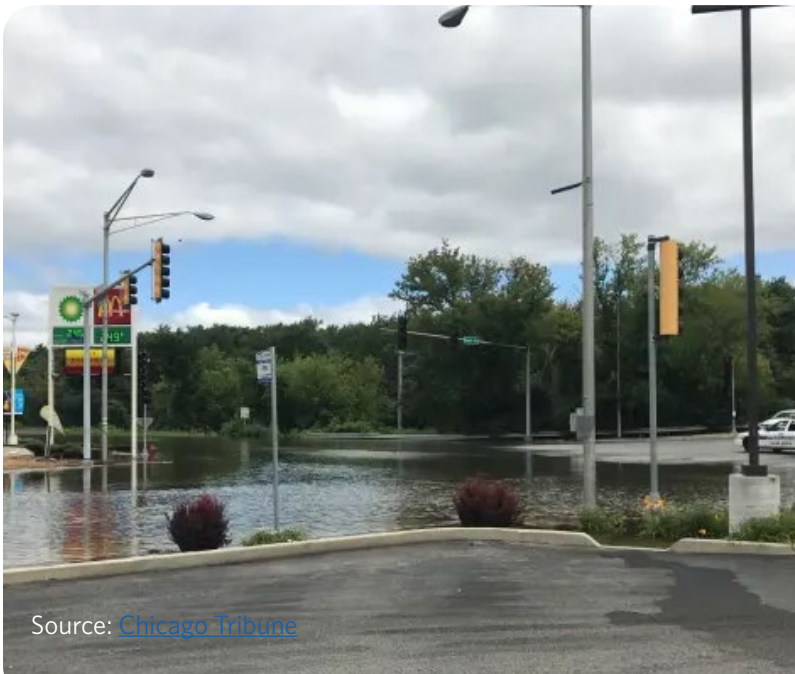
Implementation timeline: ongoing

Funding sources:

- FEMA grants for preparedness



Source: Illinois Department of Transportation



Source: Chicago Tribune

Recommendation 9: Foster environmental stewardship

River Grove residents expressed interest in actively addressing environmental issues. While the village will address major issues like riverine flooding — when the river exceeds its capacity — partnerships with external organizations could help support residents to manage flooding on their personal property and change behaviors that negatively impact the natural environment.

Strategies

9.1 Create an environmental sub-committee to share information on climate readiness and initiatives to residents, which can also host interactive events for residents and kids.

Implementation timeline: short-medium

9.2 Advertise the MWRD's rain barrel program and continue to provide residents with free rain barrels.

Implementation timeline: short



Source: Article by Allison Fore, posted on LinkedIn

9.3 Explore the feasibility of a green-infrastructure cost-share program that allows residents to share the cost of installing green solutions on their property.

Implementation timeline: medium

Resources:

- St. Louis cost-share programs for sustainability -
  St. Louis has many cost-share programs for residents. The Depave SLP program provides residents with partial reimbursement when they remove pavement (asphalt or concrete) and replace it with native plants, trees, rain gardens, pollinator habitats, or permeable pavers.

9.4 Continue providing educational materials about flooding, water run-off, and water quality.

Implementation timeline: ongoing

Goal: Improve drinking water quality

Recommendation 10: Identify and replace lead service lines

Contaminated drinking water is usually a result of eroding household pipes that allow particles to enter the drinking water. In River Grove, 1,741 service lines contain lead or lead and copper. While copper is a safe material for pipes, lead has extremely negative health effects, especially for babies and children. Having safe drinking water is imperative to the wellbeing and quality of life of River Grove residents.

Strategies

10.1 Create a prioritization plan with technical assistance from partners.

Implementation timeline: medium

Resources:

- Free lead pipe testing program

10.2 Be grant ready to leverage funding opportunities (grants, SRF loans, EPA, etc.)

Implementation timeline: medium-long

Funding sources:

- Illinois wastewater/stormwater and drinking water grants
- Illinois Environmental Protection Agency inventory funding



10.3 Apply for technical assistance for grant readiness from CMAP.

Implementation timeline: short-medium

Resources:

- Grant readiness program

10.4 Consider implementation of a program fee on water bills.

Implementation timeline: medium

10.5 Consider allocation of a portion of sales tax proceeds toward pipe replacement program.

Implementation timeline: short-medium

10.6 Provide information to childcare providers about LeadCare Cook County.

Implementation timeline: short-medium

Resources:

- LeadCare Cook County

10.7 Pursue partnerships with the Illinois State Water Survey and ZeroWater for residential water test kits and filters.

Implementation timeline: short-medium

Resources:

- Illinois State Water Survey
- ZeroWater



Source: Chris Trento/Suez

Housing

A reimagined River Grove has a diverse mix of housing types, offering appealing and affordable options for residents of all ages and incomes.



Goal: Continue diversifying housing options

Recommendation 1: Promote a variety of housing options for young people, families, and senior residents

Residents of all ages can benefit from a wide range of housing options in River Grove. The village values its single-family homes, which are essential to maintaining the community's character and should be preserved and improved as needed. However, many older residents prefer smaller, multi-family units to maintain independence and reduce the responsibilities associated with larger properties. Similarly, many millennials are drawn to compact housing units in densely populated areas close to transportation, jobs, and amenities. Taking proactive measures to ensure that River Grove's housing options cater to its diverse population will both attract new families and keep existing residents, regardless of their life stage.

Strategies

1.1 Expand the supply of underrepresented housing types, including attached single-family dwelling units and small-scale multi-family projects that are consistent with the design character of a single-family neighborhood.

Implementation timeline: medium-long

Resources:

- Missing Middle Housing
- What Is Missing Middle Housing?

The missing middle framework identifies five key characteristics of housing that River Grove can use as a guide when exploring what types of housing options might fit best in the existing development context of River Grove:

1. Located in livable communities (walkable context)
2. Compatible with single family homes
3. Provide small, well-designed units
4. Provide fewer off-street parking spaces
5. Create a strong sense of community



Sources: Opticos Design, Inc.

1.2 Develop new housing options and improve existing housing to accommodate young families looking to move to River Grove and seniors looking to downsize or age in place.

River Grove's proximity to downtown Chicago and small-town culture make it a desirable location for young professionals, families, and seniors. However, several challenges are limiting housing options for those groups. Stakeholders have noted that there are limited housing options for seniors who want to stay in River Grove rather than downsizing. This trend of aging in place has a domino effect, reducing available homes for families and first-time homebuyers.

Implementation timeline: medium-long

Funding sources:

- IHDA Low Income Housing Tax Credits
- Tax Increment Financing

Resources:

- Making Room - Housing for a Changing America
- River Grove inventory of vacant, village-owned lots
- Local housing counseling agencies, which can provide foreclosure prevention counseling, as well as financial coaching and pre-purchase counseling. Nearby agencies include:
  - The Oak Park Regional Housing Center
  - Navicore Solutions

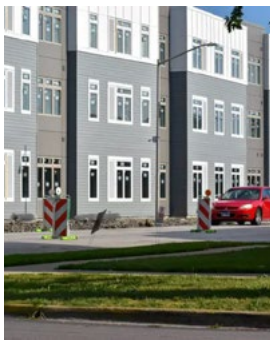
Case study

Broadview Senior Apartments
Broadview, IL

Recognizing a need for more affordable senior housing in the community, Broadview donated village-owned land to the Housing Opportunity Development Corporation, a nonprofit entity that partnered with Ross Financial, a development firm, to build the Broadview Senior Apartments. Through a lease agreement, the village created terms that ensured the developer upheld a high level of operation and used the development strictly for senior housing.

Located at 211 S. 17th Avenue, the Broadview Senior Apartments opened in 2021. The three-story building featured 70 dwelling units for senior citizens and veterans. To live there, tenants must be 55 years of age or older and make at or below 30% of the area median income. The building is certified by the National Green Building Standard and incorporated energy efficient features.

This innovative development allowed seniors and veterans to remain in their community and opened up additional homes for families and first-time homebuyers to live in the community.





Sources: Village Free Press, Housing Opportunity Development Corporation, HACC

1.3 Identify zoning and regulatory barriers to new housing development.

Most of River Grove's residential areas are zoned R1, which only permits single-unit dwellings. The village should explore a map amendment to modify the zoning designation of certain residential areas from R1 to R2. This would provide flexibility to respond to the changing dynamics of the local housing market and permit small multi-unit buildings like townhomes and two-unit dwellings, while preserving the character of the community. Ideal areas to change the zoning designation from R1 to R2 include residential areas within a half mile of transit or adjacent to commercial development.

Implementation timeline: short-medium

Resources:

- Zoning changes to allow for higher residential density

1.4 Amend the village's zoning ordinance and building code to permit additional dwelling units in attics, basements, and accessory buildings.

Implementation timeline: short-medium

Resources:

- All About Accessory Dwelling Units
- Better Basement Manual
- Granny Flat Academy
- Guide to Accessory Dwelling Units in Oak Park



Coach house behind a bungalow in Forest Glen
Source: VHT Studios

Figure 4: Comparing ADU zoning codes in other northeastern Illinois communities

	Bull Valley	Evanston	Park Forest	Elgin
Maximum number per lot	Attached and detached	Attached and detached	Attached	Attached and detached
Location	1 ADU per single-family home	1 ADU per single-family home	1 ADU per single-family home	Same as the number of principal dwellings permitted
Maximum size	Subject to side and rear setback requirements	Subject to side and rear setback requirements	Subject to side and rear setback requirements	Subject to rear setback requirement if ADU is detached
Occupancy	No more than 30% of the net floor area of the principal dwelling; 2 bedrooms	1,000 square feet (detached)	Parking	Parking
Parking	1 full floor (attached)	Not more than 40% of the gross floor area of the principal structure; or 800 square feet	900 square feet	Parking
Design requirement	Property owner must live in principal dwelling or ADU	None required	Property owner must live in principal dwelling or ADU	None required
Admin	1 space per ADU	None required	1 space per ADU	1 space per ADU

Recommendation 2: Promote affordable rental units

Housing costs in River Grove have remained relatively low compared to surrounding suburbs, which has allowed people from different socioeconomic, racial, and ethnic backgrounds to live in the community and contribute to its identity. However, rent in River Grove has consistently increased since 2018 and many of the new rental housing developments cater to higher-income tenants. Currently, 28% of River Grove's renters earn between $20,000 to $49,999 a year, and renting is generally more common for residents in the lower income brackets and younger age cohorts. Therefore, providing housing options across different price ranges is critical to upholding inclusivity and long-term residency in River Grove.

Strategies

2.1 Expand rental housing options for residents with lower incomes, including subsidized housing through Low-Income Housing Tax Credits and other sources.



Implementation timeline: medium

Funding sources:

- IHDA Low Income Housing Tax Credits
- Housing Authority of Cook County housing choice voucher program
- Cook County Assessor's Office Affordable Housing Special Assessment program

Resources:

- River Grove inventory of vacant, village-owned lots -
  The village can bundle village-owned parcels to make the property more appealing to prospective developers.



of renters earned between $20,000 and $50,000 in 2020.

$500-$1,250

in monthly housing costs would be considered affordable for this cohort of earners.

$1,338

is the average asking rent for 1-to-3-bedroom units in River Grove in 2023

$1,650-$2,300

is the range of rents in newer developments like River Grove Station and Grove on Grand, which are unattainable for renters with low income.

2.2 Collaborate with organizations to strengthen the rental market and quality of rentals through landlord and tenant training.

Many local, independent landlords own smaller rentals in River Grove. Like any small business, these landlords can experience challenges with limited access to capital and capacity that help tackle maintenance issues. The village can connect these local landlords to trainings that can build their capacity and help them effectively manage properties and maintain their buildings. River Grove currently requires a certificate of occupancy for rental dwellings, along with an inspection every three years. Landlord training requirements could build off these efforts to ensure quality rental housing in the community.

Implementation timeline: short

Resources:

- Community Investment Corporation property management training
- Fannie Mae guidance and readiness checklist



Community Investment Corporation property management training.
Sources: Community Investment Corporation

Case study

Oak Park Landlord Management Seminar
OIak Park, IL

Property owners and managers are required to participate in the Annual Landlord Management Seminar to ensure they fully understand fair housing in Oak Park and latest housing legal updates. Attendance is part of the village's existing rental property licensing requirement for all rental property.

Source: Village of Oak Park

Case study

RENT Evanston
Evanston, IL

RENT Evanston (Rental Empowerment, Networking, and Training) aims to empower landlords through resources like quarterly newsletters, training sessions, and discussions on topics relevant to property management and ownership.

Source: City of Evanston

Goal: Preserve the existing appearance and quality of housing

Recommendation 3: Connect homeowners with resources to make repairs and accessibility improvements

Well-maintained properties enhance the aesthetics of a community, which can lead to increased property values and a better quality of life for residents. According to stakeholders, homeowners in River Grove maintain their homes and take pride in their appearance. However, most of the housing stock was built between the 1940s and 1970s, which presents a variety of maintenance challenges that can burden homeowners, especially seniors, low-income residents, and individuals with disabilities. Furthermore, some residential neighborhoods experience flooding which can impact the condition of properties and prompt unexpected repairs. Numerous resources are available to help alleviate the burden of property maintenance for homeowners in River Grove.

Strategies

3.1 Identify resources for homeowners to mitigate the impacts of flooding and other extreme weather events.



Implementation timeline: medium

Funding sources:

- The Federal Emergency Management Agency's Individuals and Households Program

Resources:

- Cook County Department of Emergency Management and Regional Security
- You can help prevent flooding and protect water quality
- Protect your home from flooding

3.2 Connect homeowners with owner-occupied repair programs to assist with deferred maintenance.

Implementation timeline: short

Funding sources:

- IHDA revitalization and repair programs
- Neighborhood Housing Services home repair programs
- CEDA home weatherization program

Resources:

- Establishing and running a local home repair program
- List of contractors that are licensed in the village of River Grove, expanding on the village's pre-existing list of local businesses available



Case study

Home Repair and Accessibility Program
Park Forest, IL

The Village of Park Forest partnered with the Illinois Housing Development Authority (IHDA) to provide loans up to $21,500 to eligible homeowners for roof repairs. By leveraging funding through IHDA's Home Repair and Accessibility Program, the village was able to assist low-income homeowners with home projects, which helped to preserve affordable housing stock, invest in disadvantaged communities, improve health of homeowners, and help low-income and disabled residents remain in their homes. To be eligible for the loan, program applicants could not exceed 80% of the area median income, and preference was given to households below 50% AMI.

Sources: Village of Park Forest, Illinois Housing Development Authority

Recommendation 4: Encourage strategies to help seniors live safely and independently as they grow older

River Grove is expected to serve even more seniors residents in the years ahead as baby boomers age and the region's population continues to age. Furthermore, the village boasts a longstanding community with most homeowners residing in their homes for over two decades. While some seniors seek assisted living and supportive housing, many will choose to age in place at their homes. CMAP defines aging in place as sustaining residents' ability to remain in their homes and communities as they grow older if they choose. However, buildings and communities have not been designed to address the needs of seniors. Implementing aging-in-place strategies will ensure that River Grove remains comfortable and safe for residents at all stages of life.

Strategies

4.1 Identify zoning and regulatory barriers to accessibility improvements to ensure safety and promote aging in place.



Implementation timeline: short

Funding sources:

- Metropolitan Mayors Caucus Age-Friendly Communities Collaborative
- IHDA revitalization and repair programs
  The Home Repair and Accessibility Program assists low- and very low-income homeowners with funds for health and safety repairs and accessibility improvements

Resources:

- Partners for Livable Communities A Blueprint for Action -
  Outlines roles that local government can play enable modifications and home repairs for seniors
- How communities are helping residents age in place
- Aging in place
- Safe Home. Happy Home. Tips for keeping it that way.

Case study

Updated building code to improve accessibility
Bolingbrook, IL

In 2003, the Village of Bolingbrook created a visitability code that requires all new homes to include design principles that allow access for all people, regardless of age or physical ability. While a perception of higher construction costs caused some initial hesitation, the village found that costs are minimal and homes incorporating visitability features are more marketable. There are now over 1,700 homes with full compliance. The ordinance includes the following criteria:

- Entrance: all homes must have at least one step-free entrance.
- Doors and hallways: all exterior and interior doors must be at least three feet wide.
- Bathroom: there must be at least one bathroom on the floor closest to grade level. Bathroom walls must be provided with wall framing to support grab bars.
- Electrical wall switches: all wall switches that control light fixtures and fans must be located no higher than four feet above the floor.

Source: Village of Bolingbrook municipal code

4.2 Communicate housing options and promote housing resources to seniors.

Programs that benefit seniors must be marketed to seniors. River Grove currently promotes resources on its senior and disabled services webpage. It also helps seniors safely age in place through the Senior Snow Removal Program, in partnership with East Leyden High School. The village should build on these efforts, with an emphasis on communicating housing options and resources.

In addition to the village website, other mediums should be considered to promote resources to a diverse audience. Examples include flyers at Village Hall or a blurb in the village newsletter or the back of water bills.

Implementation timeline: short

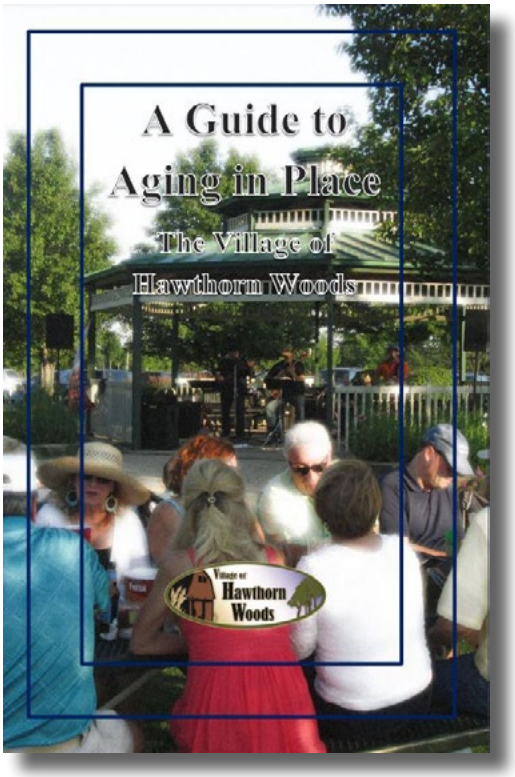
Resources:

- Senior exemption – Cook County Assessor's Office -
  Many seniors age 65+ are eligible for a tax exemption in Cook County. This exemption can provide valuable financial relief for seniors, many of whom live on a fixed income. The village can spread awareness and connect seniors with educational materials to learn more about the exemption.
- Leyden Township senior services
- Leyden Township senior snow removal program

Case study

A Guide to Aging in Place
Hawthorn Woods, IL

The median age in Hawthorn Woods (44.5 years) is significantly older than Lake County overall (37.5 years). To embrace their growing senior population, the Village of Hawthorn Woods created A Guide to Aging in Place in 2019. The guide provides tools and resources to help residents remain healthy and happy in their community, including information on transportation, community services, socialization, and more.



Source: Village of Hawthorn Woods

Goal: Develop new housing in strategic locations throughout the village

Recommendation 5: Pursue opportunities for mixed-use development near transit

TOD concentrates housing and commercial development close to existing transit infrastructure, thereby providing an alternative to automobile trips. Most TODs radiate roughly a half mile or less than 10 minutes walking distance from their anchoring rail station. Developing housing near transit benefits residents by providing reliable transportation for them to access jobs and other essential services. Since the Thatcher Avenue TOD Plan was adopted in 2014, River Grove has seen increased investment near the Metra station, including two high-density residential developments. However, there are still opportunities for the village to explore additional housing options and mixed-use development in the TOD area.

Strategies

5.1 Explore infill development opportunities on vacant residential lots in the TOD area.



Implementation timeline: medium

Funding sources:

- Tax Increment Financing
- Incentives

Resources:

- The Fiscal Implications of Development Patterns
- Database of vacant village-owned parcels -
  The village can consider how current vacant residential lots will be used for future housing development.

5.2 Diversify housing options near transit, especially mixed-use and multi-family housing.



Implementation timeline: medium-long

Resources:

- How Transit-Oriented Housing Can Advance Access to Opportunity While Curbing Climate Change

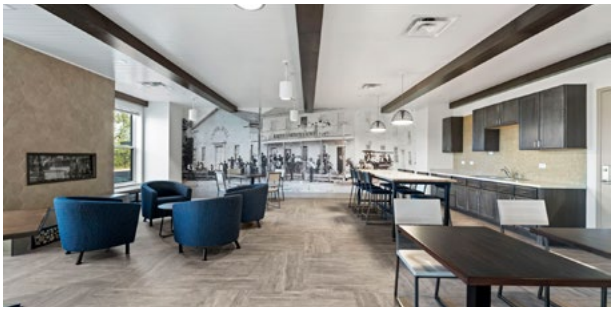
Case study

Union Apartments
Wheeling, IL

In 2023, Union Apartments became a new home for residents in Wheeling, Illinois. This affordable workforce housing development features 53 residential apartments, including 27 three-bedroom, 12 two-bedroom, and 14 one-bedroom units. Residents are offered shared amenities like a business center, clubhouse, lounge, fitness center, playground, game room, and media center/movie theatre. Located next to Wheeling's Metra Station and in the heart of the Wheeling Town Center, residents have easy access to transit, shopping, entertainment, and recreational opportunities.

Union Apartments is a mixed-income housing development for families with one-, two- and three-bedroom project-based voucher units. Units are available for different income-level limits, and residents are required to pay 30% of their income on rent, while the Housing Authority of Cook County subsidizes the remainder.
The project was financed with a combination of tax credits, debt, and equity from various sources including the IHDA, Merchants Capital Investments, Merchants Bank of Indiana, the Wisconsin Preservation Fund, and General Capital.





Source: Village of Wheeling, Housing Authority of Cook County

5.3 Align future housing development with recommendations from the 2014 Thatcher Avenue TOD Plan.

Implementation timeline: medium-long

Funding ssources:

- Tax Increment Financing

Resources:

- Thatcher Avenue TOD plan



As recommended in the Thatcher TOD Plan, the River Grove State Apartments were fully constructed in 2022.
Source: Noah Properties

Recommendation 6: Create a strategy for developing vacant residential lots

To accommodate future residential demand, River Grove will need to be strategic about development on vacant and underused parcels. While the village faces limitations due to being landlocked, scattered vacant parcels offer prospects for future development. River Grove can leverage existing vacant parcels to diversify its housing stock, thereby catering to a broader range of residents and contributing to the vibrancy and inclusivity of the community.

Strategies

6.1 Prioritize underrepresented housing types when developing vacant residential lots located outside of the TOD area.

While River Grove residents value the suburban, low-density character of the community, there are opportunities to integrate underrepresented housing types. This includes two to four-unit homes, or missing middle housing that was discussed earlier in this section. While high-density residential development is ideal for TOD parcels, residential parcels outside the TOD area would be optimal for smaller multi-family housing.

Implementation timeline: medium

Funding sources:

- Cook County No Cash Bid Program

Resources:

- Database of vacant village-owned parcels

6.2 Leverage village-owned parcels as a strategic tool to attract affordable housing development that caters to the needs of the community.

Implementation timeline: medium-long

Funding sources:

- IHDA low-income housing tax credits

Resources:

- Database of vacant village-owned parcels



Example of small multi-family housing adjacent to a single-family home in River Grove.
Source: Google Maps

Economic development

A reimagined River Grove is home to a vibrant small business scene with a diverse selection of restaurants, services, and retail businesses serving residents and regional visitors.

River Grove enjoys a stable economy that's accessible and safe for residents and visitors alike. In the recent years, it has experienced growth in its downtown, which is further supported by rail and bus services and its small-town atmosphere. Its destinations make it competitive among its other surrounding municipalities. This upward trajectory can continue through recommendations and strategies that target its growing economy.



Goal: Increase business activity on Grand Avenue

Recommendation 1: Prioritize mixed-use development

Grand Avenue serves as River Grove's main street, connecting the east and west sides of the village via a bridge over the Des Plaines River. It has a diverse mix of uses, including iconic local businesses like Gene and Jude's, multi-family housing, light industrial businesses like auto body shops, and important community institutions and destinations such as River Grove School, River Grove Library, and River Front Park.



Source: Chicago's Gene & Jude's

As a mature, built-out community, River Grove has little available land for development. Much of its land uses — institutional, open spaces, and transportation — are tax-exempt, which means that the it does not receive tax revenue from these lands. This leads to a budget limitation for the village to provide goods, services, and amenities to its residents. Redeveloping vacant and underused land into an economic generator can assist in filling in gaps in its revenue streams. Mixed-use development, which features retail spaces on the first floor with residential above, unlocks the economic potential of existing land and can create new opportunities for retail and residential along River Grove's main street — Grand Avenue.

Strategies

1.1 Expand existing mixed-use zoning district along Grand Avenue between Des Plaines River Road and Budd Street as well as around the River Grove station.



Implementation timeline: long

Funding sources:

- TIF district around future mixed-use development

1.2 Permit certain accessory uses, including outdoor dining and pop-up spaces, to increase activity on the street.



Implementation timeline: short

Funding sources:

- Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity
- Partners for Places

Resources:

- Guide on how to activate public spaces
- What is a TIF and why it's beneficial

What is Tax Increment Financing?

According to the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity, TIF districts dedicate sales tax revenues and additional property tax revenues generated within the TIF for improvements within the district to encourage new economic development and job creation. Funds may be used for costs associated with the development or redevelopment of property within the TIF, allowing blighted, declining and underperforming areas to again become viable, and allowing these areas to compete with vacant land at the edge of urban areas.

Case study

Garema Plaza
Canberra, Australia

Through the #BackyardExperiment project, Garema Plaza experienced a complete transformation in the use of its public space. The project aimed to attract more people to the plaza through creating an open and warmer space for visitors to stay and mingle while implementing low-cost changes. The space saw a radical change through six easy-to-implement strategies:

1. Movable seats: this allowed visitors to gather their seats into groups as they liked.
2. Art and color: the hard pavement was painted and chalked over by volunteers, adding color to the otherwise drab concrete and metal fixtures.
3. Lighting: to attract visitors during the evening hours, eye-catching light displays were installed.
4. Green lawn: a lawn was added to soften the otherwise concrete space. Visitors have the opportunity to lounge and relax.
5. Digital amenities: wi-fi was provided, which encouraged longer visits.
6. Community collaboration: these improvements – the tree scarves, chalk, paint – were installed with the many hands that reside in the community the plaza is in.

During the eight-day experiment, foot traffic increased by 192 percent and visitors who stayed and mingled in the park increased by 247 percent. Before the experiment, the plaza experienced only adult visitors; during the experiment, more children visited. Because of the light installations and warmer atmosphere, the plaza saw visitors not only during the day but also at night. With these low-cost changes, a once abandoned and grey public space can come alive.







Source: #Backyard Experiment by White Paper

1.3 Host new or existing village events within downtown (e.g. using village parking lots, Metra parking, etc.) like farmers markets or 3-on-3 basketball tournaments to attract more residents to the area.

Implementation timeline: short

1.4 Modify parking requirements for mixed-use development and encourage shared parking arrangements.

Implementation timeline: short

Resources:

- How to implement shared parking facilities

Case study

Farmers market
Hyde Park, IL

The Hyde Park farmers market gathers twenty vendors selling a plethora of fresh and local produce for residents and visitors alike to enjoy. From June to September, market-goers can see and taste fresh produce, breads, desserts, as well as other traditional market fare. The market occurs weekly on the Hyde Park Bank parking lot, using this space on the weekend when the bank does not see many visitors., utilizing this space on the weekend on a day when the bank does not see many visitors. This alternative use generates additional income for not only the farmers in the market but also for Hyde Park, using the land that would have otherwise stayed vacant on the weekends.



Source: Southeast Chicago Commission

Recommendation 2: Create a more comfortable pedestrian environment with inviting storefronts

Throughout the planning process, residents have stated a desire to be able to walk to more destinations within town. However, Grand Avenue — the main corridor in River Grove — is a large arterial that connects to regional destinations that sees a high daily traffic count for a road its size. As a result, there are many incidents of speeding and traffic crashes, which does not make the corridor conducive for pedestrians and cyclists. Aside from a hostile transportation environment, business frontage on much of the corridor includes parking in front of the building and residential spaces set back from the street.

Studies have shown that taking a complete streets approach helps increase business activity because visitors on foot are more likely to stop at multiple locations than drivers. In combination with pursuing mixed-use development, these strategies can help build a more vibrant space along Grand Avenue.

Strategies

2.1 Restripe Grand Avenue from Des Plaines River Road to Webster Street to add parking lanes, improve safety for all users.

Implementation timeline: medium

2.2 Adopt development standards to reduce building setbacks and build to the street edge.

Implementation timeline: short

Funding sources:

- Illinois traffic safety grants





Source: Country Living



"My favorite thing about River Grove its easy access to Chicago and many areas of interest. Safe and quiet, but still plenty of dining and entertainment."

- River Grove resident

2.3 Continue to invest in streetscape improvements along Grand Avenue, including benches, street trees, and signage.

Implementation timeline: short

Funding sources:

- Rebuild Downtown and Main Streets Capital Grant

Reources:

- Tree Inventory and Management Plans

2.4 Create façade improvement program to fund storefront upgrades.

Implementation timeline: long

Funding sources:

- Historic preservation and landmarks organizations such as the National Trust for Historic Preservation and Landmarks Illinois
- Tax Increment Financing



Source: Social Life Project



Source: Apartments.com

Goal: Attract and facilitate investment in new and existing businesses

Recommendation 3: Promote 'the Village of Friendly Neighbors' to prospective businesses and developers

River Grove has seen continual investment in new and existing businesses in recent years. All efforts surrounding economic development are carried out by village staff and representatives. Residents have positively commented on the village's role in pursuing development opportunities. However, steps to formalize some of these efforts should be pursued, particularly from a public communications perspective. More can be done to communicate the community's assets, including locations, demographics, available properties, and economic development programs.

Additionally, the local retail market analysis details an opportunity for the village to work with regional retail brokers to better attract desired development. This is typical in many communities and helps provide the village with a level of expertise and visibility in the larger market area and is an opportunity for the village to work with regional retail brokers to better attract desired development. This is typical in many communities and helps provide the village with a level of expertise and visibility in the larger market area.

Strategies

3.1 Create marketing materials (web pages, one-pagers, brochures) that communicate advantages of locating in River Grove.

Implementation timeline: short

3.2 Publish available and village-owned properties to village website.

Implementation timeline: Medium

3.3 Advertise economic development incentives and programs on village website, including village point of contact and tax-increment finance districts.

Implementation timeline: short

3.4 Consider working with a regional retail broker to market vacant spaces or help assemble and configure a redevelopment opportunity in the village center.

Implementation timeline: medium-long

3.5 Develop checklist for prospective developers to help navigate the development process.



Implementation timeline: short

Recommendation 4: Attract specialty stores and restaurants that reflect community diversity

River Grove is a culturally diverse community. Half of village residents speak a language other than English at home and nearly a third of residents were born outside of the United States. Historically, it has been home to many Polish-speaking residents. In recent years, the village has seen an influx of Ukrainian residents due to the ongoing war in Ukraine. Finally, the Latino population has been continually growing – nearly a third of residents are Latino, up from under 20 percent in 2010.

Current retail offerings do not fully capture this diversity. There's an opportunity through village efforts and investments to work with business owners and entrepreneurs within these communities to build a richer, more diverse retail environment that benefits all residents.

Strategies

4.1 Use Grand and Thatcher Avenue TIF funds to invest in culturally diverse business opportunities.



Implementation timeline: ongoing

4.3 Seek opportunities to work with affinity business groups.



Implementation timeline: short

Resources:

- Polish American Chamber of Commerce
- Illinois Hispanic Chamber of Commerce

4.2 Develop a sales tax rebate program to help attract restaurants.



Implementation timeline: short-medium

Resources:

- Local Development Tax Incentives in Northeastern Illinois
- Improving Local Development Incentives

4.4 Provide economic development materials in additional languages (Spanish, Polish, Ukrainian).



Implementation timeline: short-medium

Implementation matrix

The following pages organize the Reimagine River Grove Comprehensive Plan **goals, recommendations, and strategies** into a user-friendly matrix. The matrix also includes a **priority level** for each recommendation, and **timeline, funding opportunities, and resources** for each strategy, which serve as a tools to ensure a structured approach to impelmentation.

Priority

Each recommendation is categorized on a scale from one to three, depending on their level of importance and urgency. One is low-priority, two is medium-priority, and three is high-priority. While every recommendation is equally important, priorities will help the village decide where to allocated limited resources to first. Level of priority was determined by input from community members and village staff.

Timeline

The timeline column of the matrix specifies the schedule for implementing each strategy, detailing the estimated length of time it would take to implement the strategy. This chronological framework helps track progress and ensure that the implementation stays on course. Short is five years or less, medium is five to 10 years, and long is 10 years or longer.



Transportation and accessibility

Goal: Improve roadway safety for all users			
Strategy	**Timeline**	**Funding sources**	**Resources**
Recommendation 1: Reduce speeds on neighborhood roads *Priority level - 2*			
1.1 Consider placement of speed bumps on neighborhood crash and speeding hot spots	Short	Community Development Block Grants	
1.2 Install traffic calming measures near key destinations like schools, parks, and municipal buildings	Short-medium	Safe Routes to School Programs Transportation Alternatives Program Local or state transportation funding Grants focused on child safety or active transportation	
1.3 Place "your speed" feedback signs on streets with high incidences of speeding	Short	Highway Safety Improvement Program Local road safety funds State highway safety grants Federal safety improvement funds Public-private partnerships with insurance companies or health organizations	
1.4 Explore closing certain routes to through traffic or designate local traffic only	Short-medium	Surface Transportation Program – Local Community development grants	
1.5 Install rapid-flashing beacons at key crossings	Short-medium	Federal Highway Administration safety funds The Illinois Transportation Enhancement Program	

Strategy	Timeline	Funding sources	Resources
Recommendation 2: Improve access and safety getting to schools *Priority level - 1*			
2.1 Fill in sidewalk gaps and place pedestrian crossings around schools when possible (e.g., West Fullerton Avenue near Elmwood Park High School)	Medium	Safe Routes to Schools Grant Active Transportation Alliance America Walks	
2.2 Install additional marked crossings and other safety improvements such as signage and flashing lights near Rhodes Elementary	Short-medium	AARP Community Challenge	
2.3 Strategically work with IDOT to create school zones on routes where available	Medium-long	Safe Routes to Schools (SRTS) Grant Active Transportation Alliance America Walks	The Active Transportation Alliance has crafted a comprehensive resource guide -- Working Collaboratively with IDOT
2.4 Continue and expand enforcement efforts against speeding, running red lights, and other dangerous and aggressive driving behaviors	Short-medium	The State and Community Highway Safety Grant Program (Section 402)	Strategies on how to address aggressive driving
2.5 Form a coalition with Melrose Park and Canadian National (CN) Railway to create a safe route to school for Rhodes Elementary students who live south of the CN right-of-way	Long	Safe Routes to Schools Program	
Recommendation 3: Encourage IDOT to implement traffic calming measures *Priority level - 3*			
3.1 Initiate a traffic study to examine potential redesigns of Grand Avenue	Medium-long	Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement	
3.2 Encourage IDOT to re-stripe parking lanes on Grand Avenue east of Thatcher Avenue, continuing west to Des Plaines River Road	Medium-long	Highway Safety Improvement Program	

Strategy	Timeline	Funding sources	Resources
3.3 Install rubber curbs or flex posts in the centterline of each road near an intersection	Short-medium	Surface Transportation Program – Local	
3.4 Modify traffic lights to hold all cars for a few seconds while pedestrians are given a walk symbol	Short-medium	Safe Streets for All (SS4A)	How to implement a leading pedestrian interval
Goal: Fill in gaps in the bike and pedestrian network			
Recommendation 4: Increase east-west connectivity *Priority level - 1*			
4.1 Work with IDOT to implement streetscape improvements to improve safety at Grand Avenue and River Road	Medium	Highway Safety Improvement Program Surface Transportation Program - Local	
4.2 Construct a pedestrian bridge over the Des Plaines River at Fullerton Avenue	Long	Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE) grants Economic Development Program	Bob Kerrey Pedestrian Bridge CMAP Inventory of Greenways and Trails
4.3 Create bike greenways on one-way streets to connect to trails and other destinations	Medium-long	Illinois Transportation Enhancement Program Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement	
4.4 Work with IDOT to implement streetscape improvements to improve safety at Grand Avenue and River Road	Short-medium	The Recreational Trails Program Bike Path Program	The Recreational Trails Program Bike Path Program
Recommendation 5: Increase pedestrian access to forest preserves *Priority level - 3*			
5.1 Work with the Forest Preserves of Cook County, Leyden Township, and IDOT to add sidewalks and increase accessibility	Medium	Community Development Block Grants (CDBG) Safe Routes to School (SRTS)	

Strategy	Timeline	Funding sources	Resources
5.2 Continue partnership with the Forest Preserves of Cook County to bring planned improvements to the Des Plaines River Trail	Medium-long	The Surface Transportation Program - Shared The Transportation Alternatives Program	Appalachian Trail and Pacific Crest Trail
5.3 Add sidewalks or a marked crossing into the trailhead at Fullerton Avenue and 1st Avenue	Short	Surface Transportation Program - Shared The Transportation Alternatives Program	Request for new facilities and infrastructure through Cook County Forest Preserve's Capital Improvement Plan Illinois Greenways and Trails Program American Trails
Recommendation 6: Improve ADA compliance *Priority level - 1*			
6.1 Establish an ADA coordinator by either hiring an external candidate or designating someone who is already on staff	Short		The Role of an ADA Coordinator ADA National Network CMAP's Guide to Accessibility
6.2 Initiate an ADA transition plan and self-evaluation, ensuring engagement with people with disabilities	Short-medium		CMAP's Guide to Accessibility ADA Best Practices Toolkit for State and Local Governments PROWAG ADA Transition Plan Guide
Goal: Increase transit use			
Recommendation 7: Improve transit stop accessibility and amenities *Priority level - 1*			
7.1 Construct a pedestrian bridge over Thatcher Avenue to provide a safe crossing near the Metra station	Medium-long	Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity grants Economic Development Program Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement Program	

Strategy	Timeline	Funding sources	Resources
7.2 Work with Pace to provide accessible routes to all their stops in the village and add amenities such as benches and shelters at key stops	Medium-long		Installing PACE bus shelters Metra passenger amenities
Recommendation 8: Work with nearby municipalities and transit service boards to increase service *Priority level - 2*			
8.1 Engage with nearby municipalities to advocate for increased service along shared lines	Medium	Surface Transportation Program - Local	
8.2 Work with the CTA to explore how more buses can make River Grove a destination	Medium-long		
Recommendation 9: Grow around key transit corridors *Priority level - 3*			
9.1 Expand permittable the TOD area to include areas of Grand Avenue	Medium-long		
Recommendation 10: Explore the feasibility of grade separation *Priority level - 3*			
10.1 Conduct a Planning and Environmental Linkages study to determine the feasibility of grade-separation.	Medium-long	Grade Crossing Protection Fund	USDOT Federal Highway Administration
10.2 Collaborate with nearby municipalities pursuing grade separation projects.	Medium-long	Surface Transportation Program - Shared	CREATE program
10.3 Coordinate with CN Railway and Canadian Pacific Kansas City to remain informed of changes in schedule or frequency.	Medium-long	The Railway-Highway Grade Crossing Safety (Section 130) program	

Environment, climate readiness, and parks

Goal: Increase access to parks, recreational activities, and programming			
Strategy	**Timeline**	**Funding sources**	**Resources**
Recommendation 1: Explore establishing a park district to serve the east side of River Grove *Priority level - 3*			
1.1 Work with or consult Municipal Research and Services Center to explore strategies to establishing a park district	Short-medium		Illinois Association of Park Districts Guide to Organizing a Park District
1.2 Identify service area of potential park district	Short		
1.3 Partner with the Veteran's Park District to explore expanding park services	Medium		
Recommendation 2: Transform vacant lots into pocket parks, especially on the east side of River Grove *Priority level - 1*			
2.1 Identify underutilized or vacant lots	Short		
2.2 Collect community input and gauge interest about individual lots	Medium		
2.3 Pursue partnerships, grants, and funding for pocket park construction, operation, and maintenance	Medium-long	Playworld® The Trust for Public Land Project for Public Spaces community placemaking grants Landscape Structures®	

Strategy	Timeline	Funding sources	Resources
2.4 Create a management plan for pocket parks	Medium-long		AARP placemaking guides
Recommendation 3: Establish a recreational center *Priority level - 3*			
3.1 Continue with plans to establish a recreational center in River Grove	Long	State Park and Recreational Construction program National Recreation and Park Association grant National Park Service State and Local Assistance programs	Starting steps of establishing a recreational center
3.2 Identify and pursue funding and partnerships to build a recreational center	Medium	State Park and Recreational Construction program National Recreation and Park Association grant National Park Service State and Local Assistance programs	Starting a Recreational Center in Your Town
Recommendation 4: Continue to provide programming for River Grove residents and/or increase programming *Priority level - 1*			
4.1 Create programming for children ages 10- to 13-year olds	Medium-long	MLB Youth Development Foundation Grant: Baseball Tomorrow Fund	Franklin Park programs
4.2 Collaborate with the Forest Preserves of Cook County to activate the Des Plaines River and incorporate activities or programming around the river for residents	Medium-long		Boating, canoeing, and kayaking Forest Preserves

Strategy	Timeline	Funding sources	Resources
Goal: Make River Grove climate resilient			
Recommendation 5: Increase tree coverage in River Grove *Priority level - 1*			
5.1 Adopt a tree preservation ordinance	Medium		Model ordinance templates from the Chicago Region Trees Initiative
5.2 Update development regulations to better support the urban forest (e.g., update tree and plant species list, tree planting standards, and tree replacement requirements)	Medium		Tree species list
5.3 Host a community tree planting event and educate residents on urban tree benefits, planting, and maintenance	Short		Tree Keepers program
Recommendation 6: Invest in green infrastructure to manage stormwater *Priority level - 2*			
6.1 Partner with the MWRD to study flooding issues and identify solutions that reduce flooding and provide benefits to the community	Medium		MWRD: reducing flooding and stormwater partnerships The MWRD's website includes information tools to address and lessen flooding, as well as partnership with MWRD.
6.2 Use capital improvement planning to establish an annual green alley program and add green infrastructure solutions into street improvements and resurfacing projects	Medium-long	MWRD green infrastructure partnership CMAP Capital Improvement Technical Assistance	

Strategy	Timeline	Funding sources	Resources
6.3 Partner with other public, non-profit, and private entities to construct stormwater management improvements into parks, schoolyards, parking lots, and other sites	Medium-long		
6.4 Foster partnership with neighboring villages through Cross Community Climate Collaborative	Long	Illinois River watershed partnership	
6.5 Create additional programs and initiatives for residents without alleys to manage stormwater flooding	Medium-long		
Recommendation 7: Inventory and maintain existing and future stormwater infrastructure and protect homes and businesses from basement backups *Priority level - 3*			
7.1 Consider implementation of a stormwater fee to fund maintenance and capital improvement projects	Short-medium		Stormwater utility fee
7.2 Inventory and assess conditions of combined sewer infrastructure	Medium		
7.3 Establish a rebate program for overhead sewers, backflow preventers, and other improvements	Medium		
7.4 Educate residents, landlords, and business owners on flood prevention, response, and recovery	Ongoing		

Strategy	Timeline	Funding sources	Resources
Recommendation 8: Coordinate with partners to reduce river flood risk *Priority level - 2*			
8.1 Participate in the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' Fullerton-Grand levee project	Medium-long		
8.2 Explore opportunities to increase collaboration with key implementers and share local knowledge on river flooding challenges and desired improvements	Medium-long		
8.3 Continue investment in emergency preparedness and response	Ongoing		FEMA grants for preparedness
Recommendation 9: Foster environmental stewardship in River Grove *Priority level - 1*			
9.1 Create an environmental sub-committee to share information on climate readiness and initiatives to residents, which can also host interactive events for residents and kids	Short-medium		
9.2 Advertise the MWRD's rain barrel program and continue to provide residents with free rain barrels	Short		
9.3 Explore the feasibility of a green-infrastructure cost-share program that allows residents to share the cost of installing green solutions on their property	Medium		St. Louis cost-share programs for sustainability

Strategy	Timeline	Funding sources	Resources
9.4 Continue providing educational materials about flooding, water run-off, and water quality	Ongiong		
Goal: Improve drinking water quality in River Grove			
Recommendation 10: Identify and replace lead service lines *Priority level - 3*			
10.1 Create a prioritization plan with technical assistance from partners	Medium		Free lead pipe testing program
10.2 Be grant ready to leverage funding opportunities (grants, SRF loans, EPA, etc.)	Medium-long	Illinois wastewater/stormwater and drinking water grants EPA inventory funding	
10.3 Apply for technical assistance for grant readiness from CMAP	Short-medium		Grant readiness program
10.4 Consider implementation of a program fee on water bills	Medium		
10.5 Consider allocation of a portion of sales tax proceeds toward pipe replacement program	Short-medium		
10.6 Provide information to childcare providers about LeadCare Cook County	Short-medium		
10.7 Pursue partnerships with the Illinois State Water Survey and ZeroWater for residential water test kits and filters	Short-medium		

Housing

Goal: Continue diversifying housing options			
Strategy	**Timeline**	**Funding sources**	**Resources**
Recommendation 1: Promote diverse housing options for young people, families, and senior residents *Priority level - 3*			
1.1 Expand the supply of underrepresented housing types, including attached single-family dwelling units and small-scale multi-family projects that are consistent with the design character of a single-family neighborhood	Medium-long		Missing middle housing What Is Missing Middle Housing?
1.2 Develop new housing options and improve existing housing to accommodate young families looking to move to River Grove and seniors looking to downsize or age in place	Medium-long	IHDA Low Income Housing Tax Credits Tax Increment Financing	Making Room - Housing for a Changing America Inventory of vacant village-owned lots Local housing counseling agencies, which can provide foreclosure prevention counseling, as well as financial coaching and pre-purchase counseling. Nearby agencies include: The Oak Park Regional Housing Center Navicore Solutions
1.3 Identify zoning and regulatory barriers to new housing development	Short-medium		Zoning changes to allow for higher residential density
1.4 Amend the village's zoning ordinance and building code to permit additional dwelling units in attics, basements, and accessory buildings	Short-medium		All About Accessory Dwelling Units Better Basement Manual Granny Flat Academy Guide to Accessory Dwelling Units in Oak Park

Strategy	Timeline	Funding sources	Resources
Recommendation 2: Promote affordable rental units *Priority level - 1*			
2.1 Expand rental housing options for residents with lower incomes, including subsidized housing through Low-Income Housing Tax Credits (LIHTC) and other sources	Medium	IHDA Low Income Housing Tax Credits Housing Authority of Cook County's housing choice voucher program Affordable housing special assessment program	Inventory of vacant village-owned lots
2.2 Collaborate with organizations to strengthen the rental market and quality of rentals through landlord and tenant training	Short		Community Investment Corporation property management training Fannie Mae landlord guidance and readiness checklist
Goal: Preserve the existing appearance and quality of housing			
Recommendation 3: Connect homeowners with resources to make repairs and accessibility improvements *Priority level - 3*			
3.1 Identify resources for homeowners to mitigate the impacts of flooding and other extreme weather events	Medium	FEMA's individual and households program	Cook County Department of Emergency Management and Regional Security You can help prevent flooding and protect water quality Protect your home from flooding
3.2 Connect homeowners with owner-occupied repair programs to assist with deferred maintenance	Short	IHDA revitalization and repair programs Neighborhood Housing Services home repair programs CEDA home weatherization program	Establishing and running a local home repair program List of contractors that are licensed in the village of River Grove, expanding on the village's pre-existing list of local businesses available
Strategy	**Timeline**	**Funding sources**	**Resources**

Recommendation 4: Encourage strategies to help seniors live safely and independently as they grow older *Priority level - 3*			
4.1 Identify zoning and regulatory barriers to accessibility improvements to ensure safety and promote aging in place	Short	Metropolitan Mayors Caucus Age-Friendly Communities Collaborative IHDA revitalization and repair programs	Partners for Livable Communities A Blueprint for Action How communities are helping residents age in place Aging in place Safe Home. Happy Home. Tips for keeping it that way.
4.2 Communicate housing options and promote housing resources to seniors	Short		Senior exemption – Cook County Assessor's Office Leyden Township senior services Leyden Township senior snow removal program
Goal: Develop new housing in strategic locations throughout the Village			
Recommendation 5: Pursue opportunities for mixed-use development near transit *Priority level - 3*			
5.1 Explore infill development opportunities on vacant residential lots in the TOD area	Medium	Tax Increment Financing	The Fiscal Implications of Development Patterns River Grove inventory of vacant, village-owned lots The village can consider how current vacant residential lots will be used for future housing development.
5.2 Diversify housing options near transit, especially mixed-use and multi-family housing	Medium-long		How Transit-Oriented Housing Can Advance Access to Opportunity While Curbing Climate Change

Strategy	Timeline	Funding sources	Resources
5.3 Align future housing development with recommendations from the 2014 Thatcher Avenue TOD Plan	Medium-long	Tax Increment Financing Incentives	Thatcher Avenue TOD plan
Recommendation 6: Create a strategy for developing vacant residential lots *Priority level - 3*			
6.1 Prioritize underrepresented housing types when developing vacant residential lots located outside of the TOD area	Medium	Cook County no cash bid	Database of vacant village-owned parcels
6.2 Leverage village-owned parcels as a strategic tool to attract affordable housing development that caters to the needs of the community	Medium-long	IHDA low-income housing tax credits	Database of vacant village-owned parcels

Economic development

Goal: Increase business activity on Grand Avenue			
Strategy	**Timeline**	**Funding sources**	**Resources**
Recommendation 1: Prioritize mixed-use development *Priority level - 2*			
1.1 Expand existing mixed-use zoning district along Grand Avenue between Des Plaines River Road and Budd Street as well as around the River Grove station	Long	TIF district around future mixed-use development	
1.2 Permit certain accessory uses, including outdoor dining and pop-up spaces, to activate street	Short	Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity Partners for Places	Guide on how to activate public spaces What is a TIF and why it's beneficial
1.3 Host new or existing village events within downtown (using village parking lots, Metra parking, etc.) like farmers markets or 3-on-3 basketball tournaments to attract more residents to area	Short		
1.4 Modify parking requirements for mixed-use development and encourage shared parking arrangements	Short		How to implement shared parking facilities
Recommendation 2: Create a more comfortable pedestrian environment with inviting storefronts *Priority level - 3*			
2.1 Restripe Grand Avenue from Des Plaines River Road to Webster Street to add parking lanes, improve safety for all users	Medium	Illinois traffic safety grants	
2.2 Adopt development standards to reduce building setbacks and build to the street edge	Short		

Strategy	Timeline	Funding sources	Resources
2.3 Continue to invest in streetscape improvements along Grand Avenue, including benches, street trees, and signage	Short	Rebuild Downtown and Main Streets Capital Grant	Tree Inventory and Management Plans
2.4 Create façade improvement program to fund storefront upgrades	Long	Historic preservation and landmarks organizations such as the National Trust for Historic Preservation and Landmarks Illinois. TIF districts	
Goal: Attract and facilitate investment in new and existing businesses			
Recommendation 3: Sell 'the Village of Friendly Neighbors' to prospective businesses and developers *Priority level - 2*			
3.1 Create marketing materials (web pages, one-pagers, brochures) that communicate advantages of locating in River Grove	Short		
3.2 Publish available and village-owned properties to village website	Medium		
3.3 Advertise economic development incentives and programs on village website, including village point of contact and tax-increment finance districts	Short		
3.4 Consider working with a regional retail broker to market vacant spaces or help assemble and configure a redevelopment opportunity in the village center	Medium-long		

Strategy	Timeline	Funding sources	Resources
3.5 Develop checklist for prospective developers to help navigate the development process	Short		
Recommendation 4: Attract specialty stores and restaurants that reflect community diversity *Priority level - 2*			
4.1 Use Grand and Thatcher Avenue TIF funds to invest in culturally diverse business opportunities	Ongoing		
4.2 Develop a sales tax rebate program to help attract restaurants	Short-medium		Local Development Tax Incentives in Northeastern Illinois Improving Local Development Incentives
4.3 Seek opportunities to work with affinity business groups	Short		Polish American Chamber of Commerce Illinois Hispanic Chamber of Commerce
4.4 Provide economic development materials in additional languages (Spanish, Polish, Ukrainian)	Short-medium		

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The Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP) is the region's comprehensive planning organization. The agency and its partners developed and are now implementing ON TO 2050, a long-range plan to help the seven counties and 284 communities of northeastern Illinois implement strategies that address transportation, housing, economic development, open space, the environment, and other quality-of-life issues.

See **cmap.illinois.gov** for more information.

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